

THE TRAGEDY OF  
OTHELLO, THE  
MOOR OF VENICE

## LIST OF ROLES

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OTHELLO	the Moor [a general in the service of Venice]
BRABANTIO	<i>father to Desdemona [a Venetian senator]</i>
CASSIO	<i>an honourable lieutenant [who serves under Othello]</i>
IAGO	<i>a villain [Othello's ancient or ensign]</i>
RODERIGO	<i>a gulled gentleman [of Venice]</i>
DUKE	<i>of Venice</i>
SENATORS	<i>[of Venice]</i>
MONTANO	<i>governor of Cyprus [replaced by Othello]</i>
GENTLEMEN	<i>of Cyprus</i>
LODOVICO and GRATIANO }	<i>two noble Venetians [Desdemona's cousin and uncle]</i>
SAILOR	
CLOWN	
DESDEMONA	<i>wife to Othello [and Brabantio's daughter]</i>
EMILIA	<i>wife to Iago</i>
BIANCA	<i>a courtesan [and Cassio's mistress]</i>

[Messenger, Herald, Officers, Gentlemen,  
Musicians and Attendants  
*Scene: Act 1, Venice; Acts 2–5, Cyprus]*

# THE TRAGEDY OF OTHELLO, THE MOOR OF VENICE

[1.1] *Enter* RODERIGO *and* IAGO.

RODERIGO

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

IAGO

'Sblood, but you'll not hear me. If ever I did dream  
Of such a matter, abhor me.

RODERIGO

Thou told'st me 5

Thou didst hold him in thy hate.

IAGO

Despise me

If I do not. Three great ones of the city,

LIST OF ROLES. See LN.

1.1 For the act and scene divisions, see p. 359, and *Texts*, 31. Location: a street outside Brabantio's house in Venice. Shakespeare is vague about many details (*this*, 3, *him*, 6, *her*, 73): we have to piece them together. Iago and Roderigo, it seems, have been arguing for some time. It is night (*Awake*, 78).

1 **Tush** a mild oath, removed from some play-texts as 'profanity' (Marlowe, 2, 247). Such exclamations (cf. '*Sblood*, 4) could be treated as extra-metrical.

**much unkindly** with much dissatisfaction

2 **thou** might be misread as *you* (cf. *Q*; *Texts*, 83)

**Iago** three syllables

3 **strings** 'threaded strings by drawing which the mouth of a purse is closed' (*OED*); hence, to hold the purse strings

4 '**Sblood** God's blood, an oath expurgated in *F* (see pp. 358–9)

4–5 **If . . . matter** semi-proverbial (Dent, D592, 'He never dreamed of it')

4–6 For the scansion, see *Texts*, 122–3.

5 **abhor** '*Abhor* retains the literal sense of the Latin *abhorreo*, "shrink from me in horror"' (Kittredge).

6 **him** Othello: not identified until 32, and persistently misrepresented by Iago in 1.1

7 **great ones** Did Shakespeare know of Venice's *Savii Grandi* (elected by the Senate to superintend boards beneath it, in effect ministers of state)? See Wotton, 1.413n.

1.1] *Actus Primus. Scoena Prima. F*; not in *Q* 0.1 RODERIGO *and* IAGO] as *F* (Roderigo) throughout; Iago and Roderigo *Q* (Roderigo) throughout 1 Tush] *Q*; not in *F* 2 thou] *F*; you *Q* hast] *F*; has *Q* 3 the] *ŷ* *F* 4–7] as *F*; *Q* lines hear me, / abhorre me. / hate. / City 4 'Sblood] *Q*; not in *F* you'll] you'l *F*; you will *Q*

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. 10  
 But he, as loving his own pride and purposes,  
 Evades them, with a bombast circumstance  
 Horribly stuffed with epithets of war,  
 And in conclusion  
 Nonsuits my mediators. For 'Certes,' says he, 15  
 '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 20  
 That never set a squadron in the field

8 **lieutenant** In *H5* Ancient Pistol is also 'lieutenant' (2.1.26, 39): Cassio is a different kind of lieutenant, hence the sharp distinction in 31, 32. See LN.

9 **Off-capped** took off their caps (any headdress for men, not a modern cap), as a sign of respect

10 **price** worth; suggesting 'the price by which my support may be purchased' (*OED* 4), i.e. the lieutenancy

12 **Evades** avoids giving a direct answer, puts off (a questioner) (*OED* 3b, first here)

**bombast** (cotton or cotton wool, used as stuffing for clothes): bombastic (language)  
**circumstance** circumlocution; formality (*OED* 6, 7)

13 **stuffed** padded; crammed (of speech: *OED* 9)

**epithets** terms, expressions. Cf. *MA* 5.2.66, 'Suffer love! a good epithite!' (Q)

15 **Nonsuits** stops the suit of, refuses (legal: causes the voluntary withdrawal of the petition) (unique in Shakespeare)

**mediators** suitors, go-betweenes

**Certes** truly (an 'upper-class' word; could be monosyllabic). As QF use no quotation marks, we could read '“For, certes,” says he’.

16 **my officer** The captain appoints and dismisses his own officers (see LN, 1.1.8), hence is their *master* (41ff.).

17 **And . . . he?** seems to complete 14 as one pentameter (cf. 5.2.81ff.). Perhaps Iago raises his voice at *And* (14, 17), suggesting an interrupted line.

18 **Forsooth** sneering at 'genteel' oaths: cf. Iago's '*Sblood*, 4, Othello's *Certes*, 15.  
**arithmetician** sneering at Cassio's lack of experience of battle (cf. *bookish theoretic*, 23). Yet others think differently, appointing Cassio to succeed Othello (4.1.236).

19 **Florentine** Machiavelli was seen as the quintessential Florentine, hence 'a crafty devil'. Cf. 3.1.41n., 2.1.235–46.

20 **A . . . wife** unexplained. Perhaps a line deleted by Shakespeare: an unmarried Cassio suits his plot better (*Texts*, 36). See LN.

21 **squadron** a body of soldiers drawn up in square formation

9 Off-capped] *F*; Oft capt *Q* 11 purposes] *QF*; purpose *Theobald* 14] *Q*; not in *F* 16–17] one line *QF* 16 chose] *F*; chosen *Q* 20 damned] dambd *Q*; damn'd *F*

Nor the division of a battle knows  
 More than a spinster – unless the bookish theoric,  
 Wherein the toged consuls can propose  
 As masterly as he. Mere prattle without practice 25  
 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-leed and calmed  
 By debtor and creditor. This counter-caster 30  
 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:

- 22 **division** methodical arrangement  
**battle** a body of troops or the main body of an army (*OED* 8, 9)  
 23 **unless** but for  
 24 **toged** togèd. Both Q and F are possible, *toged* from Lat. *togatus*, wearing the toga (the garb of peace), *tongued* as in *Cym* 3.2.5, 'as poisonous tongued as handed'. Tongue could be spelled *tong* (*R2* 5.5.97, Q), so this may be misreading (*Texts*, 83), as in *Q MV* 1.1.112 (togue) and *F Cor* 2.3.115 (*tongue* for *toge*).  
**consuls** councillors  
**propose** hold forth  
 25 **prattle** . . . **practice** Cf. Dent, P550.1, 'more prattle than practice' (first recorded 1611; echoing *Oth*?).  
 26 **election** formal choosing of a person for an office, usually by a vote (*OED* 1a, c). Whether or not others voted, Iago believes that it was Othello's decision.  
 27 **his** i.e. Othello's  
 28 **on** . . . **grounds** in . . . lands  
 29 **be-leed** left without wind (of ships), left high and dry  
**calmed** becalmed  
 30 **By** . . . **creditor** by a mere bookkeeper. Or is it hinted that Cassio was promoted to pay back a favour? Cf. *Cym* 5.4.168.  
**counter-caster** a coinage; 'one who counts with the assistance of counters or an abacus, but here much the same as the *arithmetician* [18]' (Ridley)  
 31 **in good time** indeed (ironical, expressing amazement, incredulity: *OED* time 42c). Cf. *Forsooth*, 18.  
 32 **God** . . . **mark** Dent, G179.1, 'God bless (save) the mark': cf. *RJ* 3.2.53. 'An apologetic or impatient exclamation when something horrible or disgusting has been said' (*OED* mark 18).  
**Moorship's** Shakespeare's coinage, on the analogy of kingship, generalship, worship (sarcastic)  
**ancient** a standard-bearer, ensign. 'Our "colour-sergeant" or perhaps "regimental sergeant-major" would be an approximation' (Ridley).  
 34 **no remedy** no help for it, no alternative. Cf. *TN* 3.4.296, 305, 333.  
**service** public or military service; serving a master

24 toged] Q; Tongued F 26 th'] F; the Q 28 Cyprus] F (Ciprus); Q (Cipres) throughout other] Q; others F 29 Christian] Q; Christen'd F be-leed] F; be led Q 32 God] Q; not in F; Sir Q2 (Sir (blesse the marke) . . .) Moorship's] as F; Worships Q 34] QF lines remedy, / service, / Why] F; But Q

Preferment goes by letter and affection 35  
 And not by old gradation, where each second  
 Stood heir to th' 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! 40  
 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, 45  
 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

35 i.e. promotion comes if you have supporting letters and the goodwill of friends, viz. by favouritism. Cf. 7: did *three great ones* really plead for Iago?

36 **old gradation** advancing step by step, according to seniority, as of old

38 **Whether** could be monosyllabic ('whe'er')

**term** respect; footing. Usually plural, 'in ... terms'.

**affined** bound

39 **follow** serve

40 **content you** don't worry about that!

41 **serve my turn** common (= to serve my purpose), less usual with *upon*. Hinting at 'to turn the tables upon him'?

42 **We ... masters** Dent, M107: 'Every man cannot be a master' (from 1592).

43 **truly faithfully**  
**shall mark** i.e. may observe

44 **duteous** subservient

**knee-crooking** bowing, making a leg, as in *Ham* 3.2.61, 'crook the pregnant hinges of the knee' (Ridley) (unique in Shakespeare)

**knave** servant; anyone of low status

45 **obsequious** obedient, dutiful; cringing (*OED* 1, 2)

**bondage** slavery; subjection (*OED* 2, 3)

46 **Wears out** passes, spends

**time** life-time (*OED* 7). Cf. *AYL* 2.7.142, 'one man in his time plays many parts'.

47 **provender** food; fodder (for animals). Apprentices and servants often received board and lodging in their master's house.

**cashiered** i.e. he's cashiered. But this word, hanging loose in the sentence, could be an exclamation: 'and when he's old – cashiered! –'

48 **me** as far as I'm concerned (ethic dative, 'for me'). Almost 'for my sake'. Petty offenders (usually *dishonest knaves*) were whipped.

36 And ... by] *F*; Not by the *Q* 37] as *F*; two lines *Q* first: / to th'] to th' *F*; to the *Q* 38 affined] *F*; assign'd *Q* 42 all be] *F*; be all *Q* 47 nought] noughte *Q*; naught *F* 48–51] as *F*; *Q* lines knaves: / formes, / hearts, / throwing / Lords, /

Who, trimmed in forms and visages of duty,  
 Keep yet their hearts attending on themselves 50  
 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, 55  
 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  
 But seeming so, for my peculiar end,  
 For when my outward action doth demonstrate 60  
 The native act and figure of my heart  
 In complement extern, 'tis not long after

49 **trimmed** dressed up

**forms** images; customary ways; set methods of behaviour (*OED* 2, 11, 14)

**visages** assumed appearances (*OED* 8); i.e. faces like masks, concealing their feelings

50 Cf. the 'clever slave' of classical comedy who boasts 'My dependence is wholly on myself (e.g. Terence, *Phormio*, 139).

51 **throwing** directing (*OED* 15, 16)

52 elide: *by 'm, they've* (see *Texts*, 121)

**lined their coats** Dent compares 'to line one's purse' (P664; from 1521).

53 **Do . . . homage** i.e. pay themselves their due, serve their own interests. Here we begin to see two Iagos.

**soul** i.e. spirit. Cf. Othello's use of the word!

54 **For, sir** extra-metrical

56–7 **\*Were . . . myself**: F follows Q's colon and full stop, but this punctuation is probably without authority (*Texts*, 127ff.). Reversing the colon and stop we make the

lines slightly less baffling. 'Were I the Moor, I would not wish to be Iago. [But, being Iago,] I only follow him to follow my own interests.'

58 **Heaven . . . judge** Dent, G198.1, 'God (Heaven) is my judge.'

**not . . . love** I do not follow him out of love.

59 **peculiar end** private purpose

60 **demonstrate** (probably stressed on second syllable) manifest, exhibit

61 **native** innate, i.e. secret

**act** activity or active principle (*OED* 3; Hulme, 288)

**figure** appearance; design

62 **complement extern** outward show or completeness. Complement and compliment were not distinguished: Iago implies outward 'civility' or 'complement' to the inner. 'When his actions exhibit the real intention and motives of his heart *in outward completeness*' (Knight, in Furness).

52–3] *QF* lines 'em, / coates, / homage, / soule, / 52 them] *F*; 'em *Q* 53 these] *F*; Those *Q* 54 For, sir] as *QF*; om. *Pope* 56–7 Iago. . . myself:] *this edn*; Iago: . . . my selfe. *QF* 60 doth] *F*; does *Q*

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 thicklips owe 65  
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 70  
Yet throw such changes of vexation on't  
As it may lose some colour.

RODERIGO

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

IAGO

Do, with like timorous accent and dire yell 75  
As when by night and negligence the fire

63 **wear . . . sleeve** 'I will expose my feelings to everyone' (*OED* heart 54f). Cf. Greene's *Planetomachia* (1585), Elb, 'they weare their hearts in their handes . . . their thoughts in their tongues end'; Dent, F32, 'He pins his faith (etc.) on another man's sleeve.' Servants wore their master's badge on their sleeve.

64 **daws** jackdaws, proverbially foolish  
**I . . . am** appears to mean 'I am not what I seem' (cf. *TN* 3.1.141). Profanely alluding to God's 'I am that I am' (Exodus 3.14: cf. 1 Corinthians 15.10).

65 **full fortune** perfect good fortune  
**thicklips** unique in Shakespeare (but cf. *Tit* 4.2.175, the Moor to his child, 'you thicklipp'd slave')  
**owe** own, possess

66 **carry't** carry it off, win the day (*OED* 15). Cf. *MW* 3.2.69–70.

67 **him . . . him . . . his** i.e. Brabantio. Some editors think 'the "him" throughout is Othello' (Walker), because of F's punctuation: yet F's punctuation has little authority (*Texts*, 127ff.).

**make after** pursue

69 **though** even though (he already dwells in a fertile climate, plague him with more flies)

70–2 **Plague . . . colour** plague him with further irritations; though his delight be (unalloyed) delight, yet direct such various harassments against it that it may lose some reason for its existence (*OED* colour 12b). Some editors prefer F *chances* (*OED* 2: mischances, accidents).

70 **Though that** i.e. though

74 **timorous** fear-inspiring, terrible

**accent** tone, voice

75 elliptical: as when a fire which gained hold by negligence at night

64 daws] *F*; Doues *Q* 65 full] *Q*; fall *F* thicklips] *Q*; Thicks-lips *F* 66 't] *F*; 'et *Q* 68 streets, incense] streete, incense *Q*; Streets. Incense *F* 71 changes] *Q*; chances *F* on't] *F*; out *Q* 74 timorous] timerous *QF*



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 bags!  
Thieves, thieves!

80

BRABANTIO [*appears above*] at a window.

BRABANTIO

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

RODERIGO

Signior, is all your family within?

IAGO

Are your doors locked?

BRABANTIO

Why? Wherefore ask you this?

IAGO

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

85

Your heart is burst, you have lost half your soul,  
Even now, now, very now, an old black ram

78, 80 **thieves** Iago's repetitions generate hysteria: cf. 87.

79 **bags** money bags

80.1 **\*window** Some Elizabethan play-houses had an upper stage or balcony and/or upper windows.

81 **What is scan** *what's* **terrible** stronger than today: terrifying

85 **Zounds** = by God's (or Christ's) wounds **for shame** fie. How characteristic of Iago

to accuse Brabantio of shamelessness just when he himself speaks so shamelessly!

**gown** coat; or, senator's gown

**burst** broken

86 **very** (intensive) i.e. at this very moment **old** the first hint as to Othello's age

**ram** Cf. *OED* rammish: lustful, lascivious. An old husband with a young wife was a traditional butt of comedy (Plautus, *Miles Gloriosus*, 965; see pp. 38–41).

77 Signior] Seignior *Q* (*throughout*); Signior *F* 78 <sup>3</sup>thieves] *Q*; not in *F* 79 <sup>2</sup>your] *F*; you *Q* 80.1] *this* *edn*; Brabantio at a window. *Q*; Bra. *Aboue*. *F*(*SP*) 81 terrible summons?] *Q*; *F* lines terrible / there? / 84 your . . . locked] *F*; all doore lockts *Q* Why?] *F*; Why, *Q* 85 Zounds] *Q*; not in *F* you're] y'are *F*; you are *Q* 87 <sup>2</sup>now] *F*; not in *Q*

Is tuppung your white ewe! Arise, arise,  
 Awake the snorting citizens with the bell  
 Or else the devil will make a grandsire of you, 90  
 Arise I say!

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 bravery dost thou come  
 To start my quiet? 100

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.

88 **tuppung** (of rams) copulating with. Cf. 3.3.399, *topped*.

**white** white (as opposed to black); pure, unstained; precious, beloved (*OED* 7, 9)

89 **snorting** snoring, sleeping heavily; or, snorting like animals

**bell** alarm bell

90 **devil** monosyllabic. Othello, because devils were thought to be black. Cf. 1.2.63, 'Damned as thou art', 5.2.129.

92 **reverend** respected

**know my voice** It is too dark to see him.

94 **worser** double comparative, not unusual (Abbott, 11)

98 **distempering draughts** intoxicating liquor

99 **Upon . . . bravery** in bravado, in defiance (*OED* 1). *F knauerie* 'is slightly redundant after *malicious*' (Ridley).

100 **start** startle

101 **Sir . . . sir** extra-metrical. Brabantio's two half-lines really make a pentameter: Roderigo attempts to interrupt, perhaps several times, as Brabantio speaks on (cf. Hankey, 143).

**But . . . sure** You had better be clear about this.

102 **spirit . . . place** character . . . social position

103 **bitter** painful

90–1 Or . . . say!] *F*; one line *Q* 94 worser] *F* (worsser); worse *Q* 99 bravery] *Q*; knauerie *F* 100 quiet?] *Q*; quiet. *F* 102 spirit] *Q*; spirits *F* them] *Q*; their *F*

RODERIGO

Patience, good sir!

BRABANTIO

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

RODERIGO

Most grave Brabantio, 105

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 covered with a Barbary horse; 110  
you'll have your nephews neigh to you, you'll have  
coursers for cousins and jennets for Germans!

BRABANTIO What profane wretch art thou?

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

BRABANTIO

Thou art a villain!

103 **Patience, good sir!** could be 'Patience!  
good sir –'

105 **grange** country house or outlying  
farmhouse, i.e. more vulnerable than a  
house in a city  
**grave** respected

106 **simple** free from duplicity, honest (*OED* 1)  
**pure** unblemished, sincere

110 **covered** Cf. *OED* cover 6: of a stallion, to  
copulate with a mare.

**Barbary** Barbary, the home of Berbers or  
Moors (see pp. 24–5, 40, 112–14), could  
refer to all Saracen countries along the  
north coast of Africa (*OED* 4). Barbary  
horse = barb, Arab horse, i.e. Othello.

111 **nephews** grandsons, descendants

**neigh** Notice the alliteration in 111, 112:  
and *neigh* would echo *neph*[ews] if *-gh-*  
was sounded as in enough, laugh, etc. Cf.  
Jeremiah 5.8, 'In the desire of uncleanly  
lust they are become like the stoned horse,

every man neigheth at his neighbour's  
wife'; 13.27, 'Thy adulteries, thy neighings  
... thy abominations have I seen.'

112 **coursers** could be a powerful horse, ridden  
in battle, or a racehorse

**jennets** small Spanish horses. (He chooses  
this word because the Moors had settled in  
Spain?)

**Germans** close relatives

113 **profane wretch** foul-mouthed despicable  
person

115 **making** . . . **backs** copulating. Cf. Dent,  
B151, 'the beast with two backs' (Fr. and  
It. proverb); Rabelais, 1.3, '*faisoient . . . la  
beste a deux doz*', and 5.30. Shakespeare  
seems to have known the works of  
Rabelais. Cf. *AYL* 3.2.225, 'Gargantua's  
mouth'.

116 **Thou** . . . **You** *Thou* is contemptuous or  
familiar, *You* is (usually but not here)  
respectful.

104–5] as *Q*; *F* lines Robbing? / Grange. / 104 What] *F*; What, *Q* 107 Zounds] *Q*; not in *F* 109 and]  
*F*; not in *Q* 112 jennets for Germans] jennets for lermans *Q*; Gennets for Germanes *F* 114 comes] *F*;  
come *Q* 115 now] *Q*; not in *F*

IAGO

You are a senator!

BRABANTIO

This thou shalt answer. I know thee, Roderigo!

RODERIGO

Sir, I will answer anything. But I beseech you,  
 If't be your pleasure and most wise consent,  
 As partly I find it is, that your fair daughter 120  
 At this odd-even and dull watch o'th' 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, 125  
 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. 130  
 Your daughter, if you have not given her leave,  
 I say again, hath made a gross revolt,  
 Tying her duty, beauty, wit and fortunes

116 **a senator** contemptuous (perhaps he spits as he speaks). Pause after *You* or *are* or *a?* Notice the class feeling. Between equals, the epithet *villain* would lead to a duel.

117 **answer** answer for. Brabantio knows Roderigo, not Iago.

119 **pleasure** delight; will (sarcastic) **wise** fully aware, as in modern 'he's wise to that one' (Ridley)

120 **As . . . is** 'as, by your refusal to listen to us, I am half inclined to believe it *is*' (Kittredge)

121 **\*odd-even** a coinage = (?)neither one thing nor the other, neither night nor day. Cf. 'What is the night? / Almost at odds with morning, which is which' (*Mac* 3.4.125–6). **dull** drowsy, lifeless **o'th'** so F. Perhaps a scribal contraction of

*o' the* (see *Texts*, 140).

122–3 elliptical (Roderigo stumbles, speaking hastily): he means 'your daughter *has been* transported . . . *than* with a knave'.

123 **But** One expects 'Than'.

**knave** male servant

**gondolier** F *Gundelir* suggests two syllables, accent on first.

124 **clasps** embraces

125 **and your allowance** and has your approval

126 **saucy** insolent

127 **manners** good breeding

129 **from** away from, without

**civility** civilized behaviour

130 **your reverence** a respectful form of address, in general use

132 **gross** great (Folger); or, disgusting

In an extravagant and wheeling stranger  
 Of here and everywhere. Straight satisfy yourself: 135  
 If she be in her chamber or your house  
 Let loose on me the justice of the state  
 For thus deluding you.

BRABANTIO                      Strike on the tinder, ho!  
 Give me a taper, call up all my people.  
 This accident is not unlike my dream, 140  
 Belief of it oppresses me already.  
 Light, I say, light! *Exit above.*

IAGO                      Farewell, for I must leave you.  
 It seems not meet, nor wholesome to my place,  
 To be produced, as, if I stay, I shall,  
 Against the Moor. For I do know the state, 145  
 However this may gall him with some check,  
 Cannot with safety cast him, for he's embarked  
 With such loud reason to the Cyprus wars,  
 Which even now stands in act, that for their souls  
 Another of his fathom they have none 150

134 **In** i.e. to. Could be corrupt.

**extravagant** roaming, vagrant, as in *Ham*  
 1.1.154, the 'extravagant and erring spirit  
 hies / To his confine': cf. 'erring Barbarian'  
 (1.3.356)

**wheeling** (?)reeling, hence giddy, unstable.  
 Though first recorded 1661, *wheeling* (= using soft flattering words) is not impossible (cf. *Per* 5, chor. 5, *neele* for *needle*).

135 **Of** . . . **everywhere** of uncertain background

138 **Strike** . . . **tinder** strike a light with the tinderbox

139 **taper** candle; light

140 **accident** occurrence, (unforeseen) event

143 **meet** fitting, proper

**place** i.e. as Othello's ensign (lightly ironic)

144 **\*produced** F may be correct but would be meaningless today.

146 **gall** vex

**check** reprimand

147 **cast** discharge

**for** the third *for* in six lines. A copyist's error? Omit?

**embarked** involved (*OED* 2); or, loosely speaking, his belongings are embarked

148 **loud** urgent

148–9 **wars** . . . **stands** Shakespeare sometimes has the plural verbal -s (Abbott, 338), but these could be misprints (*Texts*, 85).

149 **act** action, i.e. have started

**for their souls** to save their souls

150 **fathom** ability (*OED* 2b)

134 wheeling] *F*; wheedling *Collier*<sup>2</sup> 138 thus . . . you] *F*; this delusion *Q* 142 SD] *F*; not in *Q* 143 place] *F*; pate *Q* 144 produced] *Q*; product *F* 146 However] How euer *Qu*, *F*; Now euer *Qc* 147 cast him] *Q*; cast-him *F* 150 fathom] *Q*; Fadome *F* none] *F*; not *Q*

To lead their business – in which regard,  
 Though I do hate him as I do hell-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, 155  
 Lead to the Sagittary the raised search,  
 And there will I be with him. So farewell. *Exit.*

*Enter BRABANTIO in his night-gown and Servants  
 with torches.*

BRABANTIO

It is too true an evil, gone she is,  
 And what's to come of my despised time  
 Is nought but bitterness. Now Roderigo, 160  
 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

151 **business** three syllables

**in which regard** for which reason.  
 Notice how loosely this speech hangs  
 together.

152 **\*hell-pains** the torments of hell (cf. hell-  
 fire, hell-hound, etc.)

153 i.e. because it is necessary for my  
 livelihood

154 **sign** Lat. *signum* = (1) token, sign; (2)  
 military standard, banner. Iago is Othello's  
 ancient or standard (sign)-bearer.

155 **sign** show, pretence

156 **Sagittary** an inn or house with the sign of  
 Sagittarius (= the Centaur: a mythological  
 figure, with head, trunk, arms of a man and  
 lower body and legs of a horse. Alluding to

Othello's 'divided nature'?). Cf. *CE* 1.2.9.  
 Either Q or F may be correct (*Texts*, 85),  
 but cf. *TC* 5.5.14, 'the dreadful Sagittary'  
 (Q and F).

**search** search party

157.1 **night-gown** dressing-gown

159 and what lies ahead in my despised life:  
 despised because a father whose daughter  
 has eloped suffers from loss of face (like a  
 cuckolded husband)

160–5 Cf. Shylock's reported distraction  
 after Jessica's elopement (*MV* 2.8.15ff.),  
 a comedy routine. 'O treason of the blood'  
 = Shylock's 'My own flesh and blood to  
 rebel!' (3.1.34).

161 **unhappy** miserable, wretched cf. p. 395

152 hell-pains] hells paines *Q*; hell apines *F* 155–6] as *F*; *Q* lines surely / search, / 156 Sagittary]  
 Sagittar *Q*; Sagitary *F* 157.1] as *Q* (Barbantio); *Enter Brabantio, with Seruants and Torchcs.* *F* 160  
 nought] *Q*; naught *F* bitterness. Now] *F*; bitternesse now *Q* 161–4] *F* uses brackets: (Oh vnhappy  
 Girle) . . . (Who . . . Father?) . . . (Oh she . . . thought:) 163 she deceives] *F* (deccaues); thou deceiuest *Q*;  
 she decaued (*Furness*)

Past thought! – What said she to you? – Get more  
tapers,

Raise all my kindred. Are they married, think you? 165

RODERIGO

Truly I think they are.

BRABANTIO

O heaven, how got she out? O treason of the blood!

– Fathers, from hence trust not your daughters' minds

By what you see them act. – Is there not charms

By which the property of youth and maidhood 170

May be abused? Have you not read, Roderigo,

Of some such thing?

RODERIGO

Yes sir, I have indeed.

BRABANTIO

Call up my brother. – O, would you had had her!

Some one way, some another. – Do you know

Where we may apprehend her and the Moor? 175

RODERIGO

I think I can discover him, if you please

To get good guard and go along with me.

BRABANTIO

Pray you lead on. At every house I'll call,

I may command at most: get weapons, ho!

And raise some special officers of night. 180

On, good Roderigo, I'll deserve your pains. *Exeunt.*

164 **Past thought!** beyond comprehension

**more** F *moe* = more

167 **O heaven** extra-metrical

**treason** . . . **blood** (1) betrayal of her father  
and family; (2) rebellion of the passions  
(Folger)

169 **Is** . . . **charms** are there not magical powers

170 **property** nature

171 **abused** perverted; deceived; violated

173 **brother** Cf. 5.2.199n.

176 **discover** expose to view, find

180 **officers of night** Discussed by Lewkenor,  
who prints 'Officers of night' in the  
margin.

181 **deserve your pains** requite the trouble you  
take

164 **more**] Q; **moe** F 167] *as Q; F lines out? / blood. /* 170 **maidhood**] F; **manhood** Q 172 **thing**] QF;  
things Q3 Yes . . . indeed] F; I haue sir Q 173 **would**] F; that Q 178 **you lead**] F; **leade me** Q 180  
**night**] Q; **might** F 181 **I'll**] Q; **I will** F

[1.2] *Enter OTHELLO, IAGO and Attendants with torches.*

IAGO

Though in the trade of war I have slain men  
 Yet do I hold it very stuff o'th' conscience  
 To do no contrived murder: I lack iniquity  
 Sometimes to do me service. Nine or ten times  
 I had thought t'have yerked him here, under the ribs. 5

OTHELLO

'Tis better as it is.

IAGO

Nay, but he prated  
 And spoke such scurvy and provoking terms  
 Against your honour,  
 That with the little godliness I have  
 I did full hard forbear him. But I pray, sir, 10  
 Are you fast married? Be assured of this,  
 That the magnifico is much beloved  
 And hath in his effect a voice potential

1.2 Location: a street outside the Sagittary (cf. 1.1.156n.)

1 **trade** business (cf. Othello's *occupation*, 3.3.360)

2 **stuff** (?) stock-in-trade (*OED* 1j); (?) alluding to 'the stuffs of war', the munitions of an army (*OED* 1c)

3 **contrived** contrived. Cf. *H5* 4.1.162, 'premeditated and contriv'd murder'.

4 **Nine . . . times** With Iago's pretended indecisiveness, cf. 2.3.149ff.

5 **yerked** to yerk or yark = strike, esp. with rod or whip; Iago means with a dagger. *Q ierk'd* (jerked) is possible (facetious understatement).

**him** Roderigo (hence 58)? But could refer to Brabantio.

6 **prated** chattered foolishly

7 **scurvy** contemptible

10 **I . . . him** I put up with (or spared) him with

great difficulty.

11 **fast** firmly (*OED* 4: firmly tied). So *MM* 1.2.147, 'she is fast my wife'. Sometimes a couple could be divorced (cf. 14) if the marriage was not consummated: that may be Iago's point.

12 **magnifico** 'The chief men of Venice are by a peculiar name called *Magnifici*, i.e. *Magnificoes*' (Tollet, quoted Ridley). So *MY* 3.2.280.

**is . . . beloved** has many good friends

13 **effect** i.e. power

**potential** potent; possible as opposed to actual, latent (*OED* 1, 2)

13–14 **a . . . duke's** Shakespeare 'supposed (erroneously) that the "duke" had a casting vote, and so, on an equal division, two votes'; Iago says Brabantio is so popular that he can 'get his own way as effectively as if he also had two votes' (Ridley).

1.2] *Scena Secunda. F; not in Q 0.1 and] Q; not in F 2 stuff o'th'] F; stuf of Q 4 Sometimes] Q; Sometime F 5 t'] F; to Q yerked] F; ierk'd Q 10 pray] Q; pray you F 11 Be assured] F; For be sure Q*



As double as the duke's: he will divorce you  
 Or put upon you what restraint or grievance 15  
 The law, with all his might to enforce it on,  
 Will give him cable.

OTHELLO Let him do his spite;  
 My services, which I have done the signiory,  
 Shall out-tongue his complaints. 'Tis yet to know –  
 Which, when I know that boasting is an honour, 20  
 I shall 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 25  
 I would not my unhoused free condition  
 Put into circumscription and confine  
 For the sea's worth. But look, what lights come yond?

*Enter CASSIO, with Officers and torches.*

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <p>15 <b>grievance</b> infliction, oppression<br/>         16 <b>his</b> could refer to Brabantio or to the law<br/>         (<i>his</i> = modern <i>its</i>)<br/> <b>enforce it on</b> press it home<br/>         17 <b>cable</b> i.e. scope. For Iago's nautical<br/>         metaphors, cf. 1.1.29, 150, 2.3.59, etc.<br/> <b>do his spite</b> do his spiteful worst<br/>         18 <b>signiory</b> the governing body (Signoria) of<br/>         Venice<br/>         19 <b>out-tongue</b> outspoke, i.e. get the better of<br/>         (unique in Shakespeare)<br/>         'Tis . . . <b>know</b> i.e. it is not yet known<br/>         (Folger)<br/>         21 <b>promulgate</b> make publicly known.<br/> <i>Q</i> <i>provulgate</i> means the same but<br/>         was a rarer word, and could well<br/>         be Shakespeare's (Lat. <i>promulgare</i>,<br/> <i>provulgare</i>).</p> | <p>22 <b>siege</b> rank (lit. seat); <i>Q</i> <i>height</i> (= high rank,<br/> <i>OED</i> 7) is possible<br/> <b>demerits</b> merits; deficiencies<br/>         23 <b>speak</b> . . . <b>to</b> appeal to (<i>OED</i> 13c); or<br/>         (loosely), claim<br/> <b>unbonneted</b> Fr. <i>bonnetier</i> = to put off one's<br/>         bonnet (headdress), out of respect;<br/> <i>unbonneted</i> seems to mean 'without<br/>         removing my bonnet', but some editors prefer<br/>         'having removed my bonnet'. Cf. 1.1.9.<br/> <b>proud</b> high, grand<br/>         26 <b>unhoused</b> unhoused. Othello had lived in<br/>         tents (1.3.86).<br/> <b>free</b> unmarried<br/>         27 i.e. restrict and confine (<i>confine</i> =<br/>         confinement)<br/>         28 <b>For</b> . . . <b>worth</b> for all the treasures buried in<br/>         the sea</p> |
|---|--|

14 duke's] *QF*; Duke *Q3* 15 or] *F*; and *Q* 16 The] *F*; That *Q* 17 Will] *F*; Weele *Q* 18 services] *QF*;  
 service *Q3* 20 Which . . . know] *F*; not in *Q* 21 promulgate] *F*; provulgate *Q* 22 siege] *F* (Seige);  
 height *Q* 28 sea's] *Theobald*; seas *QF*; seas' *Cam* (*anon.*) yond] *F*; yonder *Q* 28.1] *Enter Cassio with*  
*lights, Officers, and torches. Q opp.* 28; *Enter Cassio, with Torchcs. F*

IAGO

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

OTHELLO

Not I, I must be found.

30

My parts, my title and my perfect soul  
Shall manifest me rightly. Is it they?

IAGO

By Janus, I think no.

OTHELLO

The servants of the Duke? and my lieutenant?  
The goodness of the night upon you, friends.  
What is the news?

35

CASSIO

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

OTHELLO

What's the matter, think you?

CASSIO

Something from Cyprus, as I may divine;  
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,

40

29 **raised** raised = roused, for attack or defence; roused from sleep

30 **I . . . found** it is fitting that I be found

31 **parts** (good) qualities; actions

**title** legal right or claim

**perfect** flawless, blameless; 'fully prepared for what may occur' (Hart)

32 **manifest me rightly** reveal me correctly as I am

33 **Janus** Roman god with two faces, at front and back of the head. Iago, himself 'two-faced', may mean 'by the god who sees what others cannot see', because it is dark.

34 This line could be *either* one or two questions, *or* one or two exclamations

('!' was often printed '?'). For F's punctuation, see *Texts*, 127ff.

35 May the goodness of the night (peace? rest?) light upon you.

36 **general** Cf. 53, *captain*; see LN, 1.1.8.

37 **haste-post-haste** urgent. Often written as a command on letters, here used as an adjective. Cf. 1.3.47.

40 **heat** i.e. urgency

**galleys** still used in Venice in the seventeenth century, not in England

41 **sequent** successive

43 **consuls** Cf. 1.1.24n.

**raised** roused (from sleep), or gathered (*OED* 4, 26)

29 Those] *F*; These *Q* 32 Is . . . they?] *F*; it is they. *Q* 34 Duke *Q*; Dukes *F* Duke? . . . lieutenant?] *as Q*; *F* lines Dukes? / Lieutenant? / 35 you, friends.] you (Friends) *F*; your friends, *Q* 38 What's] *Q*; What is *F* 41 sequent] *F*; frequent *Q*

Are at the duke's already. You have been hotly called  
for,  
When, being not at your lodging to be found, 45  
The Senate hath sent about three several quests  
To search you out.

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

CASSIO Ancient, what makes he here?

IAGO  
Faith, he tonight hath boarded a land carrack: 50  
If it prove lawful prize, he's made for ever.

CASSIO  
I do not understand.

IAGO He's married.

CASSIO To whom?

IAGO  
Marry, to –

*Enter* OTHELLO.

Come, captain, will you go?

OTHELLO Ha' with you.

- 44 **hotly** urgently (prize = capture, booty). Cf. 11n.  
45 **When** whereupon; inasmuch as, since 52 **\*To whom?** Cf. 3.3.94ff., where Cassio seems to know all that has happened. Some think he feigns ignorance here. The 'inflection of *who* is frequently neglected' (Abbott, 274, citing also 2.3.15, 4.2.101); yet *whom* might be misread as *who* (*Texts*, 89).  
46 **about** around, in the city  
47 **quests** searches  
48 **spend** utter (cf. *R2* 2.1.7, *Ham* 5.2.131). It may be that Othello does not exit and re-enter but speaks to someone in the doorway.  
49 **makes he** is he doing 53 **Marry** (originally) by the Virgin Mary, a mild exclamation  
50 **boarded** gone on board of, entered (a ship), often with sexual implications: Paris 'would fain lay knife aboard' (*RJ* 2.4.202), 'board her, woo her, assail her' (*TN* 1.3.57)  
51 **carrack** treasure ship (usually Spanish)  
52 **captain** Cf. 36n., 2.1.74.  
53 **\*Ha' with you** = I'm ready (cf. *AYL* 1.2.256). Q mistook *Ha* as an exclamation, so *Ha* must have stood in the Q manuscript; F modernized to *Haue*.

46 hath . . . about] *F*; sent about *Q* 48 I will but] *F*; Ile *Q* 49 Ancient] *F* (Anciant) SD] Rowe; not in *QF* 50 carrack] Carrick *Q*; Carract *F* 51 he's made] *Q*; he' made *F* 52 whom] *Q2*; who *QF* 53 SD] Rowe (after go?); not in *QF* Ha' with you] Ha, with who? *Q*; Haue with you. *F*

CASSIO

Here comes another troop to seek for you.

*Enter BRABANTIO, RODERIGO, with Officers and torches  
and weapons.*

IAGO

It is Brabantio: general, be advised, 55  
He comes to bad intent.

OTHELLO

Holla, stand there!

RODERIGO

Signior, it is the Moor.

BRABANTIO

Down with him, thief!

[*They draw on both sides.*]

IAGO

You, Roderigo! come sir, I am for you.

OTHELLO

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

Good signior, you shall more command with years 60  
Than with your weapons.

BRABANTIO

O thou foul thief, where hast thou stowed my daughter?

54.1–2 Cf. John 18.1–11. Like Jesus, Othello is challenged by enemies in the dark (*officers, with torches and weapons*), and is led off to a higher authority. Compare 59 and John 18.11, ‘Jesus said unto Peter, Put up thy sword into the sheath’ (Mrs Rosamond K. Sprague, private communication). Note that the SD differs in Q and F. Just a coincidence?

55 **advised** careful56 **to bad intent** with bad intention

**Holla** stop! or, a shout to excite attention  
(*OED* 1, 2)

58 **You** . . . you Iago picks on Roderigo as if to

confirm that Roderigo *prated* (6) and was the cause of Othello’s trouble. Perhaps ‘I’m for you!’

59 Cf. 54 SD n., *KJ* 4.3.79, ‘Your sword is bright, sir, put it up again.’ When Kean spoke this famous line, it was as if his voice ‘had commanded where swords were as thick as reeds’, according to John Keats; Salvini’s voice was ‘touched with gallant laughter’ (Rosenberg, 62–3, 105).

60 **you** Cf. 62, *thou*!

62 **foul** loathesome; wicked; ugly (*OED* 1, 7, 11)  
**stowed** placed, i.e. hidden

54.1–2] *Enters Brabantio, Roderigo, and others with lights and weapons. Q* (after To who 52); *Enter Brabantio, Rodorigo, with Officers, and Torches. F* 55 Brabantio: general,] *subst. F* 57 SP BRABANTIO] *F; Cra. Q* SD] *Rowe; not in QF* 58 You . . . come] *as Q; You, Rodorigoc? Cme F* 59–61] *as Q; prose F* 59 them] *F; em Q;* 62] *as Q; F lines Theefe, / Daughter? /*

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

- 63 **Damned** . . . **art** Devils were thought to be black, so black implied damnation ('his soul may be as damn'd and black / As hell', *Ham* 3.3.94; 'the complexion of a devil', said of Morocco, *MV* 1.2.130).  
**enchanted** cast a spell on  
 64 **refer me** submit my case  
**things of sense** persons (*OED* 10)  
 66 **tender** delicate; gentle; sensitive  
**fair** unblemished (of character or reputation)  
**happy** contented; perhaps = successful (?conventional) in doing what the circumstances require (*OED* 5)  
 67 **opposite** opposed  
 68 **curled** curlèd. May imply artificial curls, worn by men.  
 69 **mock** mockery  
 70 **guardage** guardianship (first recorded here)

- 71 **thing** (contemptuous)  
**to . . . delight** either 'run . . . to fear, not to delight' (two nouns), or 'a thing . . . to fear (frighten) not to delight' (two infinitives)  
 72 **gross in sense** obvious in meaning  
 73 **practised on** plotted against  
 74 **minerals** mineral medicines or poisons (*OED* 4c)  
 75 **weakens** *Hanmer's waken* is attractive (*Texts*, 88).  
**motion** desire, inclination (so 1.3.331); or, inward impulse or prompting (i.e. against Othello)  
**disputed on** looked into (lit. debated)  
 77 **attach** arrest  
 78 **abuser** deceiver  
 79 **inhibited** prohibited  
**out of warrant** illegal  
 81 **Subdue** overpower

64 things] *F*; thing *Q* 65] *F*; not in *Q* 68 darlings] *Q*; Deareling *F* 69 t'] *F*; to *Q* 72–7] *F*; not in *Q* 75 weakens] *F*; waken *Hanmer* 78 For] *F*; Such *Q*

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

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

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

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

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

81 **Hold** i.e. don't move  
82 **my inclining** my side ('you who incline  
towards me')  
83 **cue** Q's *Qu.* is Shakespeare's spelling  
elsewhere (*Texts*, 160).  
84 **Where** F *Whether* is a variant spelling of  
whither, where.  
86 **direct session** 'normal process of law'  
(Ridley)  
90 **present** immediate, urgent  
93 **I am** read 'I'm'  
94 **In** at (Abbott, 161)  
95 **idle** groundless: frivolous  
96 **cause** (legal) case  
96 **brothers . . . state** fellow Senators  
(Sanders)  
97 **as** as if  
98 **passage** the fact of 'passing current' or  
being generally accepted (*OED* 6)  
99 **Bond-slaves** Cf. 1.3.139: Othello was once a  
slave. Brabantio's *pagans* implies (rightly or  
wrongly) that he was or is a heathen (see  
pp. 35–6). For slaves as their masters'  
masters in a topsy-turvy world, the same  
sarcasm, see Cicero, *Letters to Atticus*, 2.1:  
'Are we to be slaves of freedmen and slaves?'

83 cue] *F* (Cue); Qu. *Q* 84 Where] *Q*; Whether *F* 85 To] *F*; And *Q* 87 I] *Q*; *not in F* 91 bring] *F*;  
beare *Q*

[1.3] *Enter DUKE and Senators, set at a table,  
with lights and Attendants.*

DUKE

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

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

DUKE

And mine a hundred forty.

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

DUKE

Nay, it is possible enough to judgement:  
I do not so secure me in the error                      10  
But the main article I do approve  
In fearful sense.

SAILOR (*within*)    What ho, what ho, what ho!

1.3 Location: a council chamber. For the importance of this scene, see pp. 114–16.

1.3.0.1 DUKE i.e. the Doge (a word not used in *Oth* or *MT*)

1 **composition** consistency  
**news** reports

2 **credit** credibility  
**disproportioned** out of proportion

3–4 Cf. *JC* 4.3.175ff.

5 **jump** agree  
**just account** exact estimate. For the same QF variants, cf. 2.1.288.

6 **aim** guess, conjecture. Before modern methods of communication were invented the movements of foreign armies and navies were reported to the Privy Council

(or guessed at) exactly as here: cf. HMC, Hatfield House, Part 12 (1602), 386.

8 **bearing up** proceeding

9 **to judgement** i.e. when you think about it

10 **secure** feel overconfident (because of the discrepancy of the numbers)

11–12 But I believe the chief point (that a Turkish fleet is making for Cyprus) to be true, with frightening implications (for us).

12–17 In *F* the ‘sailor shouts “within” and is then introduced by the officer. In *Q* “one within” [the sailor?] shouts and the sailor then introduces himself (Ridley). This passage, and others in this scene, may have been rewritten by Shakespeare (*Texts*, 16–18).

1.3] *Scoena Tertia. F; not in Q 0.1–2] Q; Enter Duke, Senators, and Officers. F 1 There is] Q; There's F these] Q; this F 4 forty] F; and forty Q 5 account] Q; accompt F 6 the aim] F; they aym'd Q 10 in] F; to Q 11 article] F; Articles Q 12] as F; In fearefull sense. Enter a Messenger. / One within. What ho, . . . Q*

*Enter Sailor.*

OFFICER

A messenger from the galleys.

DUKE

Now? what's the business?

SAILOR

The Turkish preparation makes for Rhodes, 15  
 So was I bid report here to the state  
 By Signior Angelo.

DUKE

How say you by this change?

1 SENATOR

This cannot be,  
 By no assay of reason: 'tis a pageant 20  
 To keep us in false gaze. When we consider  
 Th'importancy of Cyprus to the Turk,  
 And let ourselves again but understand  
 That as it more concerns the Turk than Rhodes  
 So may he with more facile question bear it,  
 For that it stands not in such warlike brace 25  
 But altogether lacks th'abilities  
 That Rhodes is dressed in. If we make thought of this

15 **preparation** force, or fleet (prepared for action)

17 **By . . . Angelo** The 'governor of Cyprus' (cf. 2.1.0.1n.) would be the appropriate person to report 'to the state': Shakespeare could have confused Angelo and Montano. A deleted half-line, printed in error by F?

18 **by** about

19 **assay** trial, judgement

**pageant** show; trick (*OED* 1c)

20 **in false gaze** 'looking in the wrong direction, with our attention diverted' (Sanders); 'a specific metaphor from hunting' (Ridley)

21 **importancy** importance; import,

significance

22 **again** moreover

24 'carry it (in the military sense of "win it") with less arduous fighting' (Ridley, adding 'but question is not elsewhere used in Shakespeare in that sense'). Perhaps *question* = a subject of debate or strife (*OED* 4), viz. physical 'argument', fighting.

25 **For that** because

**brace** state of defence (*OED* 1c, the only entry); or a coinage from the verb (*OED* brace 4; to brace oneself), i.e. 'bracedness', resoluteness

26 **abilities** power, means

27 **dressed in** prepared with

13 galleys] *F*; Galley *Q* 14] *as F*; Now, the businesse? *Q* 17 By . . . Angelo] *F*; not in *Q* 18–19 This . . . pageant] *F*; *Q* lines reason – / Pageant, / 21 Th'] *F*; The *Q* 25–31 For . . . profitless.] *F*; not in *Q*



We must not think the Turk is so unskilful  
 To leave that latest which concerns him first,  
 Neglecting an attempt of ease and gain 30  
 To wake and wage a danger profitless.

DUKE

Nay, in all confidence, he's not for Rhodes.

OFFICER

Here is more news.

*Enter a Messenger.*

MESSENGER

The Ottomites, reverend and gracious,  
 Steering with due course toward the isle of Rhodes, 35  
 Have there injoined with an after fleet –

1 SENATOR

Ay, so I thought; how many, as you guess?

MESSENGER

Of thirty sail; and now they do re-stem  
 Their backward course, bearing with frank appearance  
 Their purposes toward Cyprus. Signior Montano, 40  
 Your trusty and most valiant servitor,  
 With his free duty recommends you thus

28 a more respectful view of non-Europeans than Iago's (346, 356, 399ff.)

31 **wage** risk, hazard (*OED* 5)

34 **Ottomites** Turks, Ottomans  
**reverend and gracious** respected and gracious (senators)

35 **due** appropriate

36 **injoined** joined. Why did F insert *them*? Perhaps intending *enjoined them*. 'Injoin' is first recorded by *OED* in *Oth.* Cf. *AC* 1.2.92, 'jointing their force 'gainst Caesar'. **after fleet** unexplained. Perhaps 'a following fleet'. In 1570 a Turkish fleet

sailed towards Rhodes, then joined another fleet to attack Cyprus, as here: Shakespeare must have known this (see Honigmann, 'Date of *Othello*', 218–19).

38–9 **they . . . course** they navigate back again (*stem* = to keep on a fixed course, of a ship)

39 **frank** unchecked; open

41 **servitor** servant. He is the governor of Cyprus (*Texts*, 37), hence *relieve him* (43).

42 **free duty** willing service (Walker); 'unstinted devotion' (Kittredge)

**recommends you** reports to you

32 Nay] *F*; And *Q* 33.1 a Messenger *F*; a 2. Messenger *Q* 34 Ottomites] *Ottamites QF* 36 injoined] as *Q*; inioynted them *F*; injoin'd Rowe 37] *F*; not in *Q* 38 re-stem] *F*; resterine *Q* 40 toward] *F*; towards *Q*

And prays you to relieve him.

DUKE

'Tis certain then for Cyprus.

Marcus Luccicos, is not he in town? 45

1 SENATOR

He's now in Florence.

DUKE

Write from us to him; post-post-haste, dispatch.

1 SENATOR

Here comes Brabantio and the valiant Moor.

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

DUKE

Valiant Othello, we must straight employ you  
Against the general enemy Ottoman. 50

[*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

43 \***relieve** QF *beleuee* is feeble, in such a situation, and *relief* is sent immediately.

45 **Marcus Luccicos** a strange name, probably a misreading (but with the same spelling in Q and F). Some think it alludes to Paulo Marchi Luchese, master of an Italian inn in London: unlikely.  
**in town** OED town 4b: in the town (pre-Shakespearian)

47 **post-post-haste** a variant of *haste-post-haste* (1.2.37)  
**dispatch** send (OED: 'the word regularly

used for the sending of official messengers')  
48–9 **Moor** . . . **Othello** Others mostly speak of him as the Moor, *to* him as Othello.

50 Against the general enemy (of all Christians), the Turk. *Ottoman* is oddly placed, if an adjective: perhaps we should read *Ottoman enemy*, or *enemy, Ottoman* (transpose, or insert comma).

51 **gentle** a polite form of address to a gentleman

54 **place** (official) position or rank  
**ought** anything

43 relieve] Johnson (*T. Clark*); beleuee QF 45 Luccicos] QF; Lucchese / Capell he] F; here Q 47] as Q; F lines vs. / dispatch. / to] F; wish Q 48.1–2] as F; Enter Brabantio, Othello, Roderigo, Iago, Cassio, Desdemona, and Officers. Q (after 47) 51 SD] Theobald; not in QF 52 lacked] F; lacke Q

Hath raised me from my bed, nor doth the general  
 care 55  
 Take hold on me, for my particular grief  
 Is of so flood-gate and o'erbearing nature  
 That it engults and swallows other sorrows  
 And it is still itself.

DUKE Why? What's the matter?

BRABANTIO

My daughter, O my daughter!

1 SENATOR

Dead?

BRABANTIO

Ay, to me: 60

She is abused, stolen 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. 65

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 70

55 **from my bed** an afterthought, hence extra-metrical?

**care** anxiety, concern

56 **particular** private

57 **flood-gate** (sluice-gate; hence, of the water held back) torrential

58 Dent, G446, 'The greater grief drives out the less.'

**engults** devours

59 **And . . . itself** i.e. it is unaffected by other sorrows

61 **abused** wronged; cheated, deceived. Notice how Brabantio surrenders to a fixed idea, as Othello does later.

62 **mountebanks** quacks, charlatans. Sidney referred scornfully to 'the mountebanks at

Venice' (*Apology*, ed. G. Shepherd [1965], 131); cf. Jonson, *Volpone*, 2.2.4ff.

63–5 Confusing, because of a change of construction: 64 and 65 need *err*, not *to err*, in 63. 'For, without witchcraft, nature – as long as it is not deficient, blind or defective in sense – could not err so preposterously.'

67 i.e. made her act so unlike herself

68–70 **the . . . sense** 'you shall yourself pronounce the sentence (from) the death-decreeing book of law, (taking it) in its (most) severe interpretation, according to your own judgement'. Witchcraft (65) was a capital crime (Sanders).

70 **our proper** i.e. my own

56 hold on] *F*; any hold of *Q* grief] *F*; griefes *Q* 59 Why?] *F*; Why, *Q* 60 SP 1 SENATOR] *Sen. F*; *All. Q* 64] *F*; not in *Q* 65 Sans] *F*; Since *Qu* (Sauce *Qc*) 70 your] *F*; its *Q* yea] *F*; not in *Q*

Stood in your action.

BRABANTIO Humbly I thank your grace.

Here is the man, this Moor, whom now it seems

Your special mandate for the state affairs

Hath hither brought.

ALL We are very sorry for't.

DUKE [*to Othello*]

What in your own part can you say to this? 75

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. 80

The very head and front of my offending

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

And little blest 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 85

Their dearest action in the tented field,

And little of this great world can I speak

More than pertains to feats of broil and battle,

71 **Stood . . . action** were (the other) party in your legal action (*OED* stand 95)

74 SP ALL Probably one senator speaks, others indicate agreement (see Honigmann, 'Stage direction').

75 **in** i.e. on

76 **but** except

78 **approved** proved (by experience); esteemed

79 **this old man's** A tactless way of speaking of his new father-in-law, perhaps triggered by 72, 'Here is the man'.

81 **head and front** (*OED* head 41, first here) height, highest extent

82 **Rude** Lat. *rudis*, rough, unskilled

83 **soft** pleasing; gentle; quiet

**phrase** style of expression, language

84 **pith** strength. He has helped in battles from the age of 7 (cf. 133, 'from my boyish days'), like the Boy in *H5*.

85 **wasted** gone; with a hint of squandered, as he devotes his life to war (Adamson, 62)

86 **dearest** worthiest

**tented** Cf. 1.2.26n.

87 **this great world** Perhaps he bows to the senators. Venice was an independent state and cultural centre in 1600.

88 **broil** confused disturbance, tumult, turmoil

75 SD] *Theobald*; not in *QF* 82 extent, no more.] extent no more. *Q*: extent; no more. *F* 83 soft] *F*; set *Q* 88 feats of broil] feate of broyle *Q*: Feats of Broiles *F*

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 a judgement maimed and most imperfect                      100  
That will confess perfection so could err  
Against all rules of nature, and must be driven  
To find out practices of cunning hell  
Why this should be. I therefore vouch again  
That with some mixtures powerful o'er the blood                      105  
Or with some dram conjured to this effect  
He wrought upon her.

91 **round** honest, plain  
**unvarnished** unpolished (unique in Shakespeare)

92-5 Note the change of construction: *either* 'with what drugs . . . I won', or 'what drugs . . . won'. Perhaps *with* was dropped because of *withal* (= with), 94.

95 **never bold** How well does he know his daughter?

96 **motion** (any) inward impulse or desire (*OED* 9)

97 **in . . . nature** i.e. in spite of *differences of* nature

98 **credit** reputation

100 **mained** *F main'd* is a variant spelling.

101 **err** go astray

102 **and . . . driven** i.e. and *sound judgement* must be driven

103 **practices** intrigues, treacheries

104 **vouch** affirm

105 **blood** (the supposed seat of) passion; sexual appetite (*OED* 5, 6)

106 **drum** a small draught of medicine  
**conjured** (accent on second syllable) made by magic

107 **wrought upon** worked on, influenced (*OED* work 30)  
**To . . . proof** Dent, S1019, 'Suspicion (Accusation) is no proof.'

145

Without more certain and more overt test  
 Than these thin habits and poor likelihoods  
 Of modern seeming do prefer against him. 110

1 SENATOR

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, 115  
 Send for the lady to the Sagittary,  
 And let her speak of me before her father.  
 If you do find me foul in her report  
 The trust, the office I do hold of you  
 Not only take away, but let your sentence 120  
 Even fall upon my life.

DUKE

Fetch Desdemona hither.

OTHELLO

Ancient, conduct them, you best know the place.  
 And till she come, as truly as to heaven

*Exeunt [Iago and] two or three.*

108 **overt** manifest. An overt act (in law) was  
 'an outward act, such as can be clearly  
 proved to have been done, from which  
 criminal intent is inferred' (*OED* 2b).

**test** proof; trial; witness; evidence (*OED*  
*sb.* 1, 3)

109 **thin** implausible

**habits** (clothes; appearances, hence)  
 suggestions

**poor likelihoods** weak probabilities

110 **modern seeming** commonplace appearance.

Is this an appeal against racial prejudice?

**prefer** bring

112 **indirect** devious

**forced** forcèd: constraining

113 **poison** pervert morally (*OED* 3)

114 **question** talk; questioning. 'Or did it come  
 about by (your or her) request and such  
 blameless talk as one soul can grant  
 another?' Hinting that (1) Desdemona took  
 the initiative, (2) it was a 'soul to soul'  
 relationship.

116 **Sagittary** Cf. 1.1.156n.

117 **before** in the presence of

118 **foul** wicked; guilty

119 **office** position (as general)

122 **Desdemona** He knows her name without  
 being told. The leading Venetians are a  
 closed circle; Othello is very much an  
 outsider.

108 certain . . . overt] *Q* (ouert); wider . . . ouer *F* 109 Than these] *F*; These are *Q* 110 seeming do] *F*;  
 seemings, you *Q* 111 SP] *Q*; *Sen. F* 116 Sagittary] Sagittar *Q*; Sagitary *F* 119] *F*; not in *Q* 123] as  
*Q*; *F* lines them: / place. / Ancient] *Q*; Aunciant *F* 124 till] *Q*; tell *F* truly] *F*; faithfull *Q* SD] *Exit* two  
 or three. *Q*; not in *F*

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

DUKE Say it, Othello.

OTHELLO

Her father loved me, oft invited me,  
 Still questioned me the story of my life 130  
 From year to year – the battles, sieges, fortunes  
 That I have passed.  
 I ran it through, even from my boyish days  
 To th' very moment that he bade me tell it,  
 Wherein I spake of most disastrous chances, 135  
 Of moving accidents by flood and field,  
 Of hair-breadth scapes i'th' imminent deadly  
 breach,  
 Of being taken by the insolent foe  
 And sold to slavery; of my redemption thence

125 **vices** depravities; or, faults ('without implication of serious wrong-doing': *OED* 4)

**blood** Cf. 105n.

126 **justly** faithfully

**present** (legal) lay before a court

128 **And . . . mine** perhaps read 'And she *did thrive* in mine' (Proudfoot, private note)

**Say it** an unusual turn of phrase, not quite the same as 'Speak'. Also, a short line: something missing (see previous note)?

129 **Her . . . 'me** Did Othello or Brabantio deceive himself? How does Brabantio react to this line?

**oft** i.e. the lovers took their time (cf. 85, *nine moons*)

130 **Still** constantly

131 **From . . . year** This half-line adds nothing

essential; perhaps cancelled, and printed in error (*Texts*, 36–7)?

132 **passed** gone through; escaped

135 **spake** for *o:a* misreading, see *Texts*, 83.

**disastrous** ill-starred, unlucky (*OED* 1)

**chances** 'Chance' seems to have been against Othello from an early age, so he thinks: cf. 5.2.339, 'these unlucky deeds'.

136 **moving** changeful; affecting (the feelings)

**accidents** occurrences

**flood and field** by water and by land; or, by sea (fight) and on the (battle) field

137 **scapes** escapes

**imminent** hanging over one's head, ready to fall

**breach** a gap in a fortification made by battery

138 **insolent** overbearing; insulting; exulting

125] *F*; not in *Q* 131 battles] *Q*; Battaile *F* fortunes] *Q*; Fortune *F* 134 To th'] Toth' *QF* 135 spake] *Q*; spoke *F* 136 accidents by] *F*; accident of *Q* 139 of] *F*; and *Q*

And portance in my travailous history; 140  
 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 145  
 Do grow beneath their shoulders. This 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 150

140 **portance** bearing, behaviour. Cf. *Cor* 2.3.224.

\***travailous** toilsome, wearisome. *Q* *trauells* perhaps resulted from the phonetic spelling of *-ous* as *-es* or *-s*, as in *Ham* 2.1.3, 'meruiles [F 'maruels'] wisely' (Q2); *TC* 1.2.136, 'a maruel's white hand' (QF).

141 **antres** caves (Lat. *antrum*); *OED* first records here.

**vast** . . . **idle** Both words could mean empty (Lat. *vastus*).

**deserts** As Venice did not possess (or wage war in) deserts he refers to a time before he entered the service of Venice.

142 **quarries** perhaps = large masses of stone or rock (*OED* 2); or in the modern sense, places where men (?slaves) hew rocks

143 **hint** occasion, opportunity. Could be *hent* in the seventeenth century (so *Q*).

**process** proceeding (cf. 94); drift; story

145 **Anthropophagi** 'man-eaters', cannibals. With *Q*'s *-ie* ending, cf. '*Andronicie*' (*Tit* 2.3.189).

145–6 **men** . . . **shoulders** See p. 17; cf. *Tem* 3.3.44ff., 'Who would believe . . .

that there were such men / Whose heads stood in their breasts?', *Patient Grissill*, 5.1.25 (Dekker, 1.278). The *F* reading is possible if there is a heavy pause after 'Grew—' (Shakespeare's revision?).

146 **This to hear** Either hearing this would make Desdemona incline earnestly, or in order to hear this Desdemona would incline (towards me) earnestly. Incline = physical or mental inclination (bend towards, or bend mind or heart towards). For the *QF* variants, see *Texts*, 35–6.

148 Desdemona seems to be a mother-less girl, in charge of household affairs, partly because her mother is not mentioned (except as a memory, 4.3.24).

149 **Which** A Latin construction: '(And) ever as she could dispatch them (which), she'd come again'.

150 **greedy ear** Cf. *Faerie Queene*, 6.9.26, 'Whylest thus he talkt, the knight with greedy eare / Hong still upon his melting mouth attent' (Malone). But *greedy* . . . *Devour* has stronger implications (cf. *MA* 3.1.28, 'greedily devour the treacherous bait').

140 portance in] *F*; with it all *Q* travailous] (*R. Proudfoot* (*N&Q*, NS 21 [1974], 130–1)); trauells *Q*; Trauellours *F* 141 antres] Antrees *Q*; Antars *F* 142 and hills] *Q*; Hills *F* heads] *Q*; head *F* 143 hint] *F*; hent *Q* 2my] *F*; the *Q* 144 other] *Q*; others *F* 145 Anthropophagi] *Anthropophagie* *Q*; Antropophague *F* 146 Do grow] *Q*; Grew *F* This] *Q*; These things *F* 148 thence] *Q*; hence *F* 149 Which] *F*; And *Q* 150 She'd] as *Q*; She'l'd *F*



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 155  
 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 sighs, 160  
 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, 165  
 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.

151–4 **which** . . . **dilate** i.e. Othello took the very first step

152 **pliant** suitable (*OED* 2c); or, an hour when she was easily influenced (transferred epithet)

153 **earnest** intense, ardent

154 **pilgrimage** i.e. life's journey, implying that his was a dedicated life  
**dilate** relate

155 **by parcels** in bits and pieces (parcel = part). Cf. *2H4* 4.2.36, 'the parcels and particulars of our grief.'

156 **intently** attentively, with steady application

157 **often** implying that the story was told more than once or over a period of time

**beguile** A smiling allusion to 'practices of cunning hell' (103)?

158 **distressful** 'A literary and chiefly poetical word' (*OED*). Of how many other words in Othello's longer speeches could the same be said?

**stroke** blow; calamitous event (*OED* 3b, first entry 1700)

161 **swore** affirmed emphatically

**passing** very, surpassingly

164 **made her** Romance heroines sometimes wish they were men (*MA* 4.1.317), but this could also mean 'made such a man *for her*'.

166 **but** only

167 **hint** occasion, opportunity; a suggestion conveyed indirectly (first here)

168–9 How well does he understand her love, or his own?

169 **that** because

155 parcels] *F*; parcell *Q* 156 intently] *Q*: instinctively *F* 158 distressful] *F*; distressed *Q* 160 sighs] *Q*; kisses *F* 161 in faith] *F*; Ifaith *Q* 167 hint] *F*; heate *Q*

This only is the witchcraft I have used: 170

*Enter* DESDEMONA, IAGO, *Attendants*.

Here comes the lady, let her witness it.

DUKE

I think this tale would win my daughter too.

Good Brabantio, take up this mangled matter at the  
best:

Men do their broken weapons rather use  
Than their bare hands.

BRABANTIO I pray you, hear her speak. 175

If she confess that she was half the wooer,  
Destruction on my head if my bad blame  
Light on the man. Come hither, gentle mistress:  
Do you perceive, in all this noble company,  
Where most you owe obedience?

DESDEMONA My noble father, 180

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,

170 Shakespeare probably recalled Pliny's account of a former bonds slave, C. Furius Cresinus, who, accused of acquiring wealth by 'indirect means, as if he had used sorcery', pointed to his plough and farm implements and said 'Behold, these are the sorceries . . . and all the enchantments that I use' (E. H. W. Meyerstein, quoted Bullough, 211).

**only** alone

171 **lady** For her age, see p. 96.

**witness** furnish evidence concerning, bear witness to

173 **Good Brabantio** extra-metrical

**mangled** mutilated; i.e. 'accept this less than perfect business in the best possible

way'. Cf. Dent, B326, 'Make the best of a bad bargain'.

177 **bad** incorrect, mistaken (*OED* 2, first entry 1688)

178 **Light on** fall or descend on **gentle mistress** This is not how a father normally addressed his daughter.

179 **noble** perhaps an error, anticipating *noble*, 180 (Walker)

182 **bound** tied, united; obliged; subjected **education** upbringing

183 **learn** teach

184 **lord** master. She distinguishes two kinds of *lord* (cf. 189) and duty: 'you are the master of my duty hitherto, but now I owe a wife's duty to the Moor, my new lord'. Cf. *KL* 1.1.91ff.

170.1 *Attendants*] *F*; and the rest. *Q*: *SD* follows 171 *QF* 177 on my head] *F*; lite on me *Q* 184 the lord of] *F*; Lord of all my *Q*

I am hitherto your daughter. But here's my  
husband: 185

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.

BRABANTIO

God be with you, I have done. 190

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 195

I would keep from thee. For your sake, jewel,  
I am glad at soul I have no other child,  
For thy escape would teach me tyranny  
To hang clogs on them. I have done, my lord.

DUKE

Let me speak like yourself, and lay a sentence 200

Which as a guise or step may help these lovers  
Into your favour.

- 185 **hitherto** implying that her new identity as wife now supersedes the previous one as daughter  
187 **preferring** placing; loving (you more than)  
188 **challenge** claim (as a right). In effect she also challenges her father (and later Othello: 3.3.60ff.).  
189 **the Moor** Cf. 48–9n., 249, 253. **my lord** the male head of a household, as in the Bible (e.g. Matthew 24.45)  
190 probably four syllables originally, 'God bye (= God be with you), I've done', making a complete verse line with 189  
191 **Please it** may it please  
192 **get** beget  
194 i.e. in the circumstances he is glad to be rid of her  
195 **but thou hast** except that thou hast it  
196 **For your sake** because of you  
198 **escape** elopement; outrageous transgression (*OED* 7)  
199 **clogs** blocks of wood, etc., attached to the neck or legs of man or beast to prevent escape  
200–2 Could be prose.  
200 **like yourself** i.e. by giving advice; or, as ideally you would speak  
**lay** expound  
**sentence** opinion; decision (of a court); pithy saying or maxim. He adopts the conventional wisdom that 'What cannot be eschew'd must be embrac'd' (*MW* 5.5.237).  
201 **grise** stairway; step

190] *F*: God bu'y, I ha done *Q* 195] *F*: not in *Q* 199 them] *F*: em *Q* 200] as *Q*: *F* lines selfe: / Sentence, / 202 Into your favour] *Q*: not in *F*

When remedies are past the griefs are ended  
 By seeing the worst which late on hopes depended. 205  
 To mourn a mischief that is past and gone  
 Is the next way to draw new mischief on.  
 What cannot be preserved when fortune takes,  
 Patience her injury a mockery makes.  
 The robbed that smiles steals something from the  
 thief,  
 He robs himself that spends a bootless grief. 210

## 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 which from thence he hears. 215  
 But he bears both the sentence and the sorrow  
 That, to pay grief, must of poor patience borrow.  
 These sentences to sugar or to gall,  
 Being strong on both sides, are equivocal.  
 But words are words: I never yet did hear  
 That the bruised heart was pierced through the ear. 220

203 Cf. Dent, R71.1, 'Where there is no remedy it is folly to chide'; i.e. 'when it is too late for remedies'.

**griefs** suffering; sorrows

204 i.e. because we have seen the worst happen, which formerly was subject to hopes (that it would not happen); or, *hope* = expectation 'of ill as well as of good, and so is sometimes practically equivalent to "fear"' (Kittredge)

205 **mischief** evil; misfortune; injury

206 **next** nearest

207–8 When fortune takes away what cannot be saved, (your) patience makes a mockery of (= mocks, defeats) fortune's wrongful action.

210 **spends** expends; wastes

**bootless** pointless

213–14 He bears your *sentence* (200) well

who suffers only the free (?cheap) consolation which he hears (and not the grief that occasioned it). *Bears the sentence* 'plays on the meaning, "receives judicial sentence"' (Bevington).

216 **pay** pacify

217 **gall** (bile, hence) bitterness

218 **equivocal** equally appropriate

219 **words are words** Dent, W832, 'Words are but words'.

220 **bruised** crushed, battered (a stronger word than today)

**pierced** piercèd: 'That the crushed heart was relieved by mere words that reach it through the ear.' *Through* could be disyllabic (*thorough*) but probably isn't here. F has two errors, *eares* (the rhyme supports Q *eare*), and *pierc'd*. Kittredge preferred 'piecèd' (= mended, cured).

206 new] F; more Q 211 So let] QF; So, let *Theobald* 220 pierced] Q; pierc'd F; pieced Warburton ear] Q; eares F

I humbly beseech you, proceed to th' affairs of state.

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

OTHELLO

The tyrant custom, most grave senators, 230  
Hath made the flinty and steel couch of war  
My thrice-driven bed of down. I do agnize  
A natural and prompt alacrity  
I find in hardness, and do undertake

222–9 The switch to prose is all the more jolting after two speeches of rhymed couplets. We move from private to public business, and this makes Othello's verse rhythms (230ff.) sound self-indulgent.

222 **preparation** Cf. 15n.

223 **fortitude** physical or structural strength; ?fortification

224 **substitute** deputy. This seems to refer to Montano, the 'governor of Cyprus': see *Texts*, 37.

225 **allowed** praised. The sense 'acknowledged' is not recorded before 1749 (*OED* 3).

**sufficiency** ability; qualification

**opinion** Lat. *opinio* (feminine, hence *mistress*, 226). 'General opinion, which finally determines what ought to be done, will feel safer with you in command' (Ridley).

226 **effects** purposes; results

**voice** preference; vote

227 **slubber** obscure; smear, sully  
**gloss** lustre; fair semblance

228 **stubborn** difficult; rough ('more' so than the 'gloss of . . . new fortunes')

229 **boisterous** (painfully) rough, violent  
**expedition** military enterprise; haste (cf. 277)

230 **custom** Dent, C933, 'Custom makes all things easy'. Cf. Henry Howard in *A Defensive* (1583), 'That irregular and wilfull tyraunt Custome' (Kittredge); *Ham* 3.4.161, 'that monster custom'.

231 **flinty and steel** He refers to sleeping on the ground in armour (Sanders).

232 **thrice-driven** 'softest possible; a current of air drifted the finer and lighter feathers away from the coarser and heavier' (Ridley)  
**agnize** acknowledge. 'I acknowledge (that) I find a natural and ready eagerness (in myself) in (situations of) hardship.'

233 **natural** inherent, innate

**alacrity** cheerful readiness

234 **hardness** difficulty; (sleeping on) the hard ground

**undertake** take in charge

221] *as F*; Beseech you now, to the affaires of the state. *Q* 222 a most] *F*; most *Q* 225 a] *Q*; a more *F* 230 grave] *F*; great *Q* 231 couch] *Pope*; Cooch *Q*; Coach *F* 233 alacrity] *Q*; Alacartie *F* 234 do] *F*; would *Q*

This present war against the Ottomites. 235  
 Most humbly therefore, bending to your state,  
 I crave fit disposition for my wife,  
 Due reverence of place, and exhibition,  
 With such accommodation and besort  
 As levels with her breeding. 240

DUKE

Why, at her father's.

BRABANTIO

I'll not have it so.

OTHELLO

Nor I.

DESDEMONA Nor would I there reside

To put my father in impatient thoughts  
 By being in his eye. Most gracious duke,  
 To my unfolding lend your prosperous ear 245  
 And let me find a charter in your voice  
 T'assist my simpleness.

DUKE

What would you, Desdemona?

DESDEMONA

That I did love the Moor to live with him

235 **\*war** For the QF plural, 'common errors' and final -s errors, see *Texts*, 85, 89, 90.

236 **bending** . . . **state** submitting to your high office. He may bow respectfully as he speaks.

237 **crave** request  
**disposition** arrangements

238 proper respect for her place (as my wife) and maintenance

239 **accommodation** room and suitable provision (*OED* 7, first here); supply of necessities

**besort** suitable company (*OED*, first

here). A coinage: cf. the verb, *KL* 1.4.251, 'Such men as may besort your age' (first here).

240 **levels with** equals, is on a par with  
**breeding** upbringing

242 Removing Q's first *I*, *F* softens Desdemona's refusal (*Texts*, 16–18).

244 **eye** sight. So *Ham* 4.4.6, 'We shall express our duty in his eye.'

245 **unfolding** what I shall unfold (say)  
**prosperous** favourable

246 **charter** privilege; pardon  
**voice** expressed judgement (*OED* 3)

235 war] *Q2*; warres *QF* Ottomites] *Ottamites QF* 238 reverence] *Q*; reference *F* 239 With] *F*; Which *Q* accommodation] *Q* (accomodation?) 241 Why, . . . father's.] Why at her Fathers? *F*; If you please, bee't at her fathers. *Q* I'll] as *Q*; I will *F* 242 Nor would I] *F*; Nor I, I would not *Q* 245 your prosperous] *F*; a gracious *Q* 247 T'assist] *F*; And if *Q* simpleness.] *F*; simplenesse. – *Q* 248 you, Desdemona?] *F*; you – speake. *Q* 249 did] *Q*; not in *F*

My downright violence and scorn of fortunes 250  
 May trumpet to the world. My heart's subdued  
 Even to the very quality of my lord:  
 I saw Othello's visage in his mind,  
 And to his honours and his valiant parts  
 Did I my soul and fortunes consecrate, 255  
 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. 260

250 **downright** positive, absolute

**violence** i.e. violent rupture with conventional behaviour

**scorn** Both *scorn* and *storm* of fortune were commonplaces (cf. Q and F): thus Heywood, *Edward the Fourth* (1600), 'stormes of fortune' (Part 1, B3b), 'ouerthrowne, / By fortunes scorne' (Part 2, 16a). Also *TC* 1.3.47, 'storms of fortune' (classical in origin: Seneca, *Agamemnon*, 594: *procella Fortunae*). Both are possible here; each could be misread as the other.

250 **fortunes** So QF: a misreading of *fortune*?

251 **trumpet** proclaim (*OED*, here first with this sense)

252 **quality** profession (Malone); nature, moral and mental identity (Cowden-Clarke, quoted Furness). The thought is as in *Son* 111, 'My nature is subdued / To what it works in, like the dyer's hand': her inmost being (*OED* heart 6) has been assimilated to Othello's nature (and military profession). Q *vtmost pleasure* looks like a first thought, changed because it might suggest sexual pleasure.

253 'I saw (the colour of) Othello's face in (the quality of) his mind', i.e. his face was transformed, in her eyes, by his mind. She does not refer to his colour directly but

seems to be half apologizing for it.

254 **parts** personal qualities or attributes (*OED* 12), as in *MA* 5.2.60–1, 'For which of my bad parts didst thou first fal in loue with me?' (Q).

256 **dear** worthy, honoured

257 **moth** either drone, idler; or alluding to the moth's attraction to light: if he goes away to war, she, deprived of his *honours* and *valiant parts*, will be like a moth in the dark. Cf. *Cor* 1.3.82ff., 'You would be another Penelope: yet they say, all the yarn she spun in Ulysses' absence did but fill [Ithaca] full of moths.'

258 **rites** *Right* and *rite* were interchangeable spellings. Probably both are intended here: *right* = enjoyment of privileges, 'sharing his life and dangers' (Walker); *rite* as in *rites of love*, a cliché (cf. *R3* 5.3.101, *AW* 2.4.41).

**bereft** ('with double object: to bereave *any one a possession*', *OED* 1c), i.e. the rights-rites are taken from me. So *2H6* 3.1.84–5, 'all your interest in those territories / Is utterly bereft you'.

259 **heavy** distressful

**support** endure (with quibble on propping up something heavy)

260 **dear** grievous (cf. *Son* 37, 'Fortune's dearest spite')

250 scorn] Q; storme F; Q2 252 very quality] F; vtmost pleasure Q 258 which] Q; why F

## 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, 265  
 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  
 When she is with me. No, when light-winged toys  
 Of feathered Cupid seel with wanton dullness 270  
 My speculative and officed instrument,  
 That my disports corrupt and taint my business,

261 **voice** support, approval

262 **Vouch** bear witness (*OED* 5b, first here)

263 **palate** taste; liking

**appetite** (sexual) desire

264 **comply with** act in accordance with; satisfy

**heat** passion; sexual excitement in animals, esp. females

**affects** appetites, lusts

265 **defunct** extinct, dead (*Hulme*, 153–4)

\***proper** in conformity with rule (*OED* 4, 10), permissible; correct. ‘Nor to satisfy sexual passion – the youthful appetites that are extinct in me – and permissible gratification of desire.’ Many editors feel that the passage is corrupt. For the misreading of final *-e/-y* (as apparently in *me/my* here), see *Texts*, 85.

266 **free** generous, liberal

**her mind** Cf. *his mind*, 253. They both almost repudiate the body: how well do they know themselves?

267 **defend** forbid

268 **scant** stint, neglect

269 **light-winged** (?)insubstantial, trifling (a coinage)

**toys** amorous sport, dallying; light caresses; trumpery, rubbish (*OED* 1, 2, 5)

270 **feathered** referring to Cupid’s wings or arrows

**seel** close (the eyes), alluding to blind Cupid. In falconry, young hawks were trained by having their eyes seeled (hooded).

**wanton dullness** drowsiness, resulting from amorous dalliance

271 ‘my organ of sight, which has this particular function (i.e. to see clearly)’. *Speculative* (of faculties), exercised in vision; *officed*, having a particular office or function; *instrument*, a part of the body with a special function, an organ. Q’s *foyles* = overthrows; *active instruments* = hands and feet (*Malone*).

272 **disports** (sexual) sports

**taint** injure

**business** diligence; care; official duties (*OED* 1, 6, 12)

261–2 Let . . . heaven] *F*; Your voyces Lords: beseech you let her will, / Haue a free way *Q* 265 me] *Capell* (*Upton*); my *QF* defunct] *QF*; distinct *Theobald* 266 2to] *F*; of *Q* 268 great] *F*; good *Q* 269 When] *F*; For *Q* 270 Of] *F*; And *Q* seel] *F*; foyles *Q* 271 officed instrument] *F*; active instruments *Q*



Let housewives make a skillet of my helm  
 And all indign and base adversities  
 Make head against my estimation. 275

DUKE

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

1 SENATOR You must away tonight.

DESDEMONA

Tonight, my lord?

DUKE This night.

OTHELLO With all my heart.

DUKE

At nine i'th' morning here we'll meet again. 280  
 Othello, leave some officer behind  
 And he shall our commission bring to you,  
 And 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. 285

273 **housewives** Perhaps 'hussies'?

**skillet** cooking pot, a metal container  
 similar in shape to a helmet but lacking its  
 dignity (Elliott, 15)

**helm** helmet

274 **indign** shameful (unique in Shakespeare)

275 **Make head** advance, rise up

**estimation** the way I am valued;  
 reputation. Five syllables.

277 **cries** calls for (*OED* 7: first here)

278 **answer it** i.e. be answerable  
 (corresponding) to it; with quibble on *cries*  
 and *answer*

**tonight** viz. their wedding night

279 **With . . . heart** 'Othello gazes longingly,  
 even despairingly, at his new wife . . . then  
 says with a sigh . . . "With all my heart" '  
 (Mack, 141). Or he pretends, covering up his  
 disappointment, or to persuade Desdemona.

280 **we'll meet** The Duke and senators will  
 meet; Othello will have sailed. Note that  
 Iago leaves later but arrives in Cyprus  
 before Othello: hence 2.1.67ff.

283–4 'and such other things as concern your  
 rank and the respect due to you'; import =  
 relate to

285 **honesty** could = honour; integrity; good  
 reputation

273 housewives] *F*; huswiues *Q* skillet] *F*; skellet *Q* 275 estimation] *F*; reputation *Q* 277 her] *F*;  
 not in *Q* th'affair cries] *F*; the affaires cry *Q* 278–9] And speede must answer, you must hence to night,  
 / *Desd.* To night my Lord? / *Du.* This night. / *Q*; And speed must answer it. / *Sen.* You must away to night.  
 / *F* 280 nine] *F*; ten *Q* i'th'] *F*; i'the *Q* 283 And] *F*; With *Q* and] *F*; or *Q* 284 import] *F*; concerne  
*Q* So please] *F*; Please *Q*

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. And, noble signior,  
 If virtue no delighted beauty lack 290  
 Your son-in-law is far more fair than black.

1 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, Brabantio, Senators, Officers].*

OTHELLO

My life upon her faith. Honest Iago, 295  
 My Desdemona must I leave to thee:  
 I prithee, let thy wife attend on her  
 And bring them after in the best advantage.  
 Come, Desdemona, I have but an hour  
 Of love, of worldly matter and direction 300  
 To spend with thee. We must obey the time.

*Exeunt Othello and Desdemona.*

286 **conveyance** escort(ing)

287 'with whatever else your good grace shall think needful'

290 **delighted** delightful291 **fair** fair-skinned; free from moral stain (*OED* 9), after *virtue*, 290

294 Cf. Dent, D180, 'He that once deceives is ever suspected.'

SD As Brabantio turns to leave, Desdemona 'is often directed to kneel to him for a blessing, and his rejection is another shock to her' (Rosenberg, 213).

295 **My . . . faith** ('I would wager) my life on her good faith.'

**Honest** 'a vague epithet of appreciation or praise, esp. as used in a patronizing way to

an inferior' (*OED* 1c); cf. 'good Iago' (2.1.97).

297 He does not ask Desdemona whether this arrangement suits her. As she has just eloped, this will be the first time Emilia attends on her.

298 **in . . . advantage** as opportunity best serves (Ridley)

300 **love** (?) loving talk; not 'love-making' (cf. 2.3.9)

**direction** instruction. He is in charge.

301 **obey the time** i.e. 'we must comply with the needs of this emergency'. In effect *she* must obey. Cf. Dent, T340.2, 'To obey the time' (probably Shakespeare's coinage).

293 if . . . see] *F*; haue a quicke eye to see *Q* 294 and may] *F*; may doe *Q* SD *Exeunt*] *Q*; *Exit F* 298 them] *F*; her *Q* 300 worldly] *Q*; wordly *F* matter] *F*; matters *Q* 301 the] *Q*; the the *F* SD] *Exit Moore and Desdemona. Q; Exit. F*

RODERIGO Iago!

IAGO What sayst thou, noble heart?

RODERIGO What will I do, think'st thou?

IAGO Why, go to bed and sleep. 305

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 310  
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 a man  
that knew how to love himself. Ere I would say I 315  
would drown myself for the love of a guinea-hen I  
would change my humanity with a baboon.

303 **thou** Iago's ascendancy has grown since 1.1, where he addressed Roderigo *as you and sir; noble heart* (drawled?) is close to insolence.

304 **What . . . do** Cf. Terence, *Phormio*, 540, 'Geta. Quid faciam? *Antiph.* Invenias argentum' (*G.* What am I to do? *A.* You must raise the money), and 'Put money in thy purse', 340.

306 **incontinently** immediately; with unconscious quibble on sexual incontinence, since he cannot control his 'love'

**drown myself** clearly not a heroic death. Cf. the Clown in *Mucedorus* (1598), B2a, 'I wil go home and put on a cleane shirt, and then goe drowne my selfe.'

307–8 **Why . . . gentleman?** could be a question or an exclamation

310 **prescription** doctor's prescription; ancient custom (*OED* 4c)

310–11 **death . . . physician** Cf. Dent, D142.3, 'Death is a physician' (could be post-

Shakespearian).

312 **villainous** shameful

313 **four . . . years** Why does Shakespeare make such a point of Iago's precise age? Cf. *Ham* 5.1.143–62; *Oth* 3.4.173ff. (a similar round-about calculation). Iago is younger than Othello and older than young Roderigo (5.1.11).

316 **guinea-hen** a showy bird with fine feathers (Johnson); (?)prostitute (*OED* 2b, 'slang': but not recorded in this sense before *Oth*). Since *hen* could = female, and *ginny* = cunning, ensnaring, seductive (*OED*, first recorded 1615), perhaps 'cunning female'. Pliny mentions 'Ginnie or Turkey Hens . . . in great request' in Numidia (p. 296).

317 **change** exchange

**baboon** sometimes glossed as simpleton, i.e. a fitting victim for a 'ginny hen'. Baboons were, thought to be particularly lecherous (*TNK* 3.5.132, 'the bavian [baboon] with long tail and eke long tool').

304 think'st] *F*; thinkest *Q* 307 If] *F*; Well, if *Q* after] *F*; after it *Q* 307–8 Why, thou . . . gentleman?] Why, thou . . . Gentleman. *Q*: Why thou . . . Gentleman? *F* 309 torment] *F*; a torment *Q* 310 have we] *F*; we haue *Q* 312 O villainous! I have] *as F*; I ha *Q* 314 betwixt] *F*; betweene *Q* a man] *Q*; man *F*

- RODERIGO What should I do? I confess it is my shame  
to be so fond, but it is not in my virtue to amend it.
- IAGO Virtue? a fig! 'tis in ourselves that we are thus, or 320  
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 325  
– why, the power and corrigible authority of this lies  
in our wills. If the balance of our lives had not one  
scale of reason to poise another of sensuality, the  
blood and baseness of our natures would conduct us  
to most preposterous conclusions. But we have 330  
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.

319 **fond** infatuated; foolish

**virtue** power; moral excellence

320 **a fig!** contemptuous exclamation (cf. *2H4* 5.3.118); an obscene gesture 'which consisted in thrusting the thumb between two of the closed fingers or into the mouth' (*OED* fig 2)

**in ourselves** i.e. in our own power

320–1 **thus, or thus** Cf. *STM*, 'It is in heaven that I am thus and thus' (Addition III.1, sometimes ascribed to Shakespeare).

321 **gardens** alluding to Galatians 6.7, 'whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap'. Iago's speech is a mock sermon, using theological commonplaces: cf. St Teresa on the good Christian as a gardener (*The Life*, ch. 18), or Robert Mason, *Reasons Monarchie* (1602), 71–3, on the 'motions of lust . . . against Reason'.

322 See LN.

323 **set** plant

324 **gender** kind

**distract it with** divide it among

325 **sterile with idleness** unproductive because of our inactivity

**manured** managed; cultivated; enriched with manure; worked upon by hand (*OED* 1–4)

326 **power** control (of oneself)

**corrigible authority** corrective power to influence others (*OED* authority 4)

327 **balance** scales; equilibrium. F *braine* could be a misreading of *beame* (= the bar from the ends of which the scales of a balance are suspended; or, 'the balance itself' [*OED* 6]).

328 **poise** hold in equilibrium, counterpoise

329 **blood** (the supposed seat of) animal appetite, fleshly nature

330 **preposterous** perverse, irrational (placing last what should be first)

**conclusions** results

331 **motions** impulses

332 **unbitted** i.e. unrestrained

**lusts** pleasures; appetites; sexual desires

333 **sect** cutting

**scion** graft; sucker

321 gardens] *Q*: our Gardens *F* 323 hyssop] *F* (Hisope); Isop *Q* 327 balance] *Q*: braine *F*; beam *Theobald* 332 our] *Q*: or *F* 333 sect] *QF*; Set *Johnson* scion] syen *Q*; Seyen *F*

RODERIGO It cannot be.

IAGO It is merely a lust of the blood and a permission of 335  
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 340  
the wars, defeat thy favour with an usurped beard;  
I say, put money in thy purse. It cannot be that  
Desdemona should long continue her love to the  
Moor – put money in thy purse – nor he his to her. It  
was a violent commencement in her, and thou shalt 345  
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

335 **permission** perhaps alluding to God's  
'permissive will', which tolerates the  
existence of evil (see *Paradise Lost*, 3.685)

336 **be a man** Cf. 4.1.66.

337 **blind** i.e. new-born, therefore helpless

338 **deserving** desert, worthiness

**cables** strong ropes. Cf. Polonius, 'Those  
friends thou hast, and their adoption tried, /  
Grapple them unto thy soul with hoops of  
steel' (*Ham* 1.3.62–3).

339 **perdurable** imperishable

**stead** help, serve the needs of

340 **Put . . . purse** Cf. 304n. He means 'sell  
your assets to raise money' and Roderigo  
understands (380).

**follow** i.e. as a hanger-on, not as a soldier

341 **defeat** destroy the beauty of, disfigure

**favour** appearance; face

**usurped** false, counterfeit; i.e. make  
yourself less pretty by wearing a false  
beard (Roderigo is too young to have a  
beard of his own: see 313n., 5.1.11n.). Cf.

*TN* 5.1.250, 'my masculine usurp'd attire'  
(Ridley). Kittredge thinks 'spoil thy pretty  
face by growing a beard to which it has no  
right'.

344–8 The dashes come from Q. I  
suspect that Iago is 'otherwise engaged' as  
he speaks – tying a lace? fencing with his  
shadow? – and throws out 'Put money . . .'  
as if it's no concern of his. Cf. Rosenberg,  
126.

346 **answerable** corresponding

**sequestration** (lit. an act of sequestering or  
cutting off); (prob. = cessation, or  
sequel (Lat. *sequor*, I follow). Cf. Dent,  
B262, 'Such beginning such end'; N321,  
'Nothing violent can be permanent.'

347 **will**s desires; whims; wilfulness

349 **locusts** 'The carob groweth in Apulia . . .  
so full of sweet juice that it is used to  
preserve ginger . . . [This is] thought to be  
that which is translated *locusts*' (Gerard's  
*Herball*, 1597, quoted Ridley).

337 have professed] *F*; professe *Q* 340 thou the] *F*; these *Q* 342 be] *Q*; be long *F* 343 should long]  
*Q*; should *F* to] *F*; vnto *Q* 344 his] *F*; not in *Q* 345 in her] *F*; not in *Q*

acerb as coloquintida. She must change for youth; 350  
 when she is 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 sanc- 355  
 timony, and a frail vow betwixt an erring Barbarian  
 and a super-subtle Venetian, be not too hard for my  
 wits and all the tribe of hell, thou shalt enjoy her –  
 therefore make money. A pox of drowning thyself, it  
 is clean out of the way: seek thou rather to be hanged 360  
 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 365  
 told thee often, and I re-tell thee again and again, I

350 **acerb** bitter (from Cinthio's *acerbissimo*:  
 see p. 382)

**coloquintida** colocynth, a bitter apple. Its  
 bitterness and use as a purgative were  
 noted in herbals.

**for youth** for a younger man than Othello

351 **sated** satiated

353–4 **wilt needs** must

354 **delicate** (ironical) delightful; finely  
 sensitive

355 **make raise**

355–6 **sanctimony** lit. holiness;  
 pretended holiness (*OED* 3, from 1618): cf.  
 262, 'Vouch with me, heaven'. Or perhaps  
 more general, pretended goodness.

356 **erring** wandering; straying; sinning. Cf.  
*extravagant*, 1.1.134n.

**Barbarian** native of Barbary, the Berber  
 country; foreigner; a savage. Cf. *Barbary*  
*horse*, 1.1.110.

357 **super-subtle** super-crafty, referring to  
 Desdemona as a typically depraved  
 Venetian (see pp. 22–3) (unique in  
 Shakespeare)

358 **tribe** i.e. population; 'and all the tribe of  
 hell' may be an aside

360 **clean . . . way** vaguely facetious (because a  
 drowned body is clean and out of the way?)  
 and colloquial. We would say 'that's  
 barking up the wrong tree'. *Clean* =  
 completely.

**hanged** (as a rapist?)

361 **compassing** obtaining; embracing

363–4 **fast . . . issue** firmly fixed (to  
 support) my hopes, if I await the outcome.  
 Both *fast* and *depend* (*OED* 1: hang down,  
 be suspended) imply tying.

365 **Thou . . . me** Cf. 3.3.482, 'I am your own  
 for ever.'

**art sure** can be sure

350 acerb as] acerbe as the *Q*; bitter as *F* She . . . youth] *F*; not in *Q* 352 error] *Q*; errors *F* she must  
 . . . must] *Q*; not in *F* 357 a] *Q*; not in *F* 359 of] *F*; a *Q* thyself] *F*; not in *Q* 359–60 it is] *F*; tis  
*Q* 363–4 if . . . issue] *F*; not in *Q* 366 re-tell] *F*; tell *Q*

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 370  
 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'th' morning?

IAGO At my lodging. 375

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 sell all my land. *Exit.*

IAGO Go to, farewell, put money enough in your purse. 381

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

367 **hearted** fixed in the heart, determined

368 **conjunctive** united. Occurs twice in Shakespeare ('She is so conjunctive to my life and soul', *Ham* 4.7.14); *Q* *communicative* (= in touch, in communication) occurs nowhere else in Shakespeare.

369 **cuckold** make (him) a cuckold (by seducing his wife)

370 **sport** amusement

**events** (from Lat. *evenire*, to come out or forth) consequences, outcomes

371 **delivered** i.e. brought forth (like a new-born child); declared, made known (in due time)

372 **Traverse** a military command (cf. *2H4* 3.2.272) of uncertain meaning; perhaps 'quick march!'

376 **betimes** early, in good time

377, 381 **Go to** a favourite phrase of his, used to jolly others along, sometimes almost meaningless (= come on; well

then). Also biblical (Genesis 11.4, James 4.13, 5.1). 'The Folio compositor, one guesses, jumped from *Go too, farewell*, opening 377, to the later line which also opens with *Go to, farewell*, and omitted the intervening words. A conflation of Folio and Quarto is necessary to restore the original text' (Sisson, *Readings*, 2.249).

378–81 **What . . . purse** For the different readings of *Q* and *F*, see *Texts*, 47.

382 **ever** Iago is already a hardened cheater.

383 **profane** treat (the sacred) irreverently. He cynically misuses the word, since his *knowledge* is evil, not sacred as usually understood.

384 **expend** spend

**snipe** fool (*OED*: a term of abuse, first recorded here); woodcock (a long-billed bird like a snipe) meant 'gull' or 'dupe' before Shakespeare

367 hath] *F*; has *Q* 368 conjunctive] *F*; communicative *Q* 370 me] *F*; and me *Q* 378–80 What . . . changed.] *Q*; not in *F* 380 I'll . . . land.] *F*; not in *Q*; Ile goe sell . . . land. *Q2* 381 Go . . . purse.] *Q*; not in *F*

But for my sport and profit. I hate the Moor 385  
 And it is thought abroad that 'twixt my sheets  
 He's done my office. I know not if't be true,  
 But I for mere suspicion in that kind  
 Will do as if for surety. He holds me well,  
 The better shall my purpose work on him. 390  
 Cassio's a proper man: let me see now,  
 To get his place, and to plume up my will  
 In double knavery. How? How? let's see:  
 After some time to abuse Othello's ear  
 That he is too familiar with his wife. 395  
 He hath a person and a smooth dispose  
 To be suspected, framed to make women false.  
 The Moor is of a free and open nature  
 That thinks men honest that but seem to be so,

385 **sport** Cf. 370, 2.3.374.

386 **And** 'Rarely is a conjunction used so effectively: the hate is prior, and a motive is then discovered' (Heilman, 31).

**abroad** i.e. generally, widely

387 **He's Has** (or, *h'as, ha's*) could = he has: cf. 2.1.67.

**office** service, duty, function. A curious word for marital intercourse. Cf. 4.3.86, 'Say that they slack their duties'.

388 **in that kind** of that nature

389 **do** proceed; perhaps picking up 'done my office' (387), i.e. 'do *his* office' (cf. 2.1.293–7). Cf. 2H4 2.1.41–2, 'do me your offices'.

**for surety** for certain (*OED* 4c), i.e. as if it's a certain fact

**holds . . . well** He is well-disposed towards me.

391 **proper** handsome; also admirable, perfect; appropriate (*OED* 6–9)

**let me see** . . . Cf. the free-wheeling improvisations of the 'clever slave' of

classical comedy, and 402n.

392 **his place** Cf. 1.1.7ff.

**plume up** uncertain. Perhaps = ruffle the feathers, like a bird that 'displays', hence make a show of, exhibit. Cf. *Lust's Dominion* (printed 1657, dated c. 1600), 'Ambition plumes the *Moor* . . . to act deeds beyond astonishment' (Dekker, 4. 182).

**will** inclination; pleasure; determination

395 **he** Cassio

**his** Othello's

396 **person** bodily presence

**smooth dispose** insinuating disposition

397 **framed** made, formed

398 **free** spontaneous, frank, unreserved

**open** not given to concealing thoughts or feelings; without defence or protection (*OED* 16, 15). Curiously, Ben Jonson echoed these words in describing Shakespeare.

399 Cf. Dent, T221, 'They that think none ill are soonest beguiled.'

387 He's] Ha's *Q*; She ha's *F* 388 But] *F*; Yet *Q* 392 his] *F*; this *Q* plume] *F*; make *Q* 393 In] *F*; A *Q* knavery. How? How?] *F*; knavery – how, how, – *Q* let's] *F*; let me *Q* 394 ear] *Q*; eares *F* 396 hath] *F*; has *Q* 398] *F*; The Moore a free and open nature too, *Q* 399 seem] *F*; seemes *Q*



And will as tenderly be led by th' nose 400  
 As asses are.  
 I have't, it is engendered! Hell and night  
 Must bring this monstrous birth to the world's light. *Exit.*

[2.1] *Enter MONTANO and two Gentlemen.*

MONTANO

What from the cape can you discern at sea?

1 GENTLEMAN

Nothing at all, it is a high-wrought flood:  
 I cannot 'twixt the haven and the main  
 Descry a sail.

MONTANO

Methinks the wind hath spoke aloud at land, 5  
 A fuller blast ne'er shook our battlements:  
 If it hath ruffianed so upon the sea  
 What ribs of oak, when mountains melt on them,

400 **tenderly** easily, gently (sarcastic)

**led** . . . **nose** Cf. Dent, N233, 'To lead one by the nose (like a bear, ass)'.

402 **I have't** Cf. the clever slave's *habeo!* (= I've got it, I've solved the problem!) in Latin comedy: e.g. Terence, *Andria*, 344, 498, etc. Echoed by Elizabethan dramatists: cf. *TS* 1.1.189, *Ham* 4.7.154ff., 'Soft, let me see . . . I ha't!'

**engendered** begotten, conceived

403 **birth** (*OED* 3b:) that which is borne in the womb. Cf. 371.

2.1.0.1 MONTANO probably the governor of Cyprus replaced by Othello: see t.n. and Honigmann, *Stability*, 44–6

1 **cape** projecting headland, land jutting into the sea. Presumably the Gentleman speaks from the side or back of the stage. In classical plays those on stage sometimes observe a ship at sea (Plautus, *Rudens*,

162ff.; cf. *WT* 3.3.88ff.).

2 **high-wrought** agitated to a high degree (*OED*); or, flinging itself high into the air (cf. 12ff.) (unique in Shakespeare)

**flood** (body of) water

3 **main** main sea, open ocean

4 **Descry** 'To catch sight of, esp. from a distance, as the scout or watchman who is ready to announce the enemy's approach' (*OED* 6)

5 **at land** on the land

6 **fuller** more complete (as in 'full flood', 'full tide': *OED* 8d)

7 **ruffianed** acted the ruffian (unique in Shakespeare as verb)

8 **ribs** curved frame-timbers of a ship

**mountains** i.e. huge masses of water. Cf. 'hills of seas', 184. Adapted from Judges 5.5, 'The mountains melted from before the Lord' (Steevens).

400 led . . . nose] led bit'h nose *Q*: lead by' th' Nose *F* 402 have't] *F*; ha't *Q* 403 SD] *Q*: not in *F* 2.1] *Actus* 2. / *Scœna* 1. *Q*; *Actus Secundus. Scœna Prima. F* 0.1] *F*; *Enter Montanio, Gouvernor of Cypres, with two other Gentlemen. Q* 3 haven] *Q*; Heauen *F* 5 hath spoke] *F*; does speake *Q* 7 hath] *F*; ha *Q* 8 when . . . them] *F*; when the huge mountaine meslt *Q*

Can hold the mortise? What shall we hear of this?

2 GENTLEMAN

A segregation of the Turkish fleet: 10

For do but stand upon the foaming shore,

The chidden billow seems to pelt the clouds,

The wind-shaked surge, with high and monstrous mane,

Seems to cast water on the burning bear

And quench the guards of th'ever-fired pole. 15

I never did like molestation view

On the enchafed flood.

MONTANO

If that the Turkish fleet

Be not ensheltered and embayed, they are drowned.

It is impossible to bear it out.

*Enter a Third Gentleman.*

9 **\*hold the mortise** keep their joints intact (Sanders)

10 **segregation** dispersion, separation (unique in Shakespeare)

11 **foaming** *Q* **banning**, the 'harder reading', could mean cursing, chiding; an easy misreading, improbable here

12 **chidden** i.e. repelled by the shore  
**pelt** strike, beat (stronger than today: cf. *KL* 3.4.29, 'the pelting of this pitiless storm')

**clouds** See LN.

13 **wind-shaked** unique in Shakespeare (but cf. *wind-shaken*, *Cor* 5.2.111)

**surge** a high rolling swell of water

**mane** with high-flying mane like a monstrous beast. Knight's spelling brings out the mane-main quibble. Furness compared *2H4* 3.1.20ff., where *surge* and *winds* 'take the ruffian billows by the top, / Curling their monstrous heads'. According

to Sisson, *Readings*, the 'sense of main is as in "with might and main"' (= power), and *monstrous* = portentous (2.250). But *monstrous* could = huge, gigantic (*OED* 4), and the line's imprecision may be deliberate.  
14 **bear** the constellation Ursa Minor (i.e. the Little Bear), 'since the *guards* are the two stars in that constellation next in brightness to the Pole Star' (Ridley)

15 See LN.

16 **molestation** unique in Shakespeare; from *Cinthio* (cf. p. 375). Lat. *molestia* = trouble, vexation; Shakespeare seems to mean turmoil.

17 **enchafed** (probably enchafèd, eliding *the* to *th'*): excited, furious

**If that if**

18 **ensheltered** unique in Shakespeare

**embayed** unique in Shakespeare (= sheltered in a bay)

19 **bear it out** hold out, survive it

9 mortise] morties *QF* 10 SP] 2 *Gent. Q*; 2 *F* 11 foaming] *F*; banning *Q* 12 chidden] *F*; chiding *Q* 13 mane] *Knight*; mayne *Q*; Maine *F* 15 ever-fired] euer fired *Q*; euer-fixed *F* 19 to] *F*; they *Q* 19.1 Third] *Q*; not in *F*

3 GENTLEMAN

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

MONTANO

How? Is this true?

3 GENTLEMAN

The ship is here put in, 25  
 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.

MONTANO

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

3 GENTLEMAN

But this same Cassio, though he speak of comfort

*Enter CASSIO.*

Touching the Turkish loss, yet he looks sadly  
 And prays the Moor be safe, for they were parted

20 **lads** With the QF variants, cf. *TC* 3.1.108,  
 lad (Q), Lord (F); and *Texts*, 83, on *a:o*  
 misreading.

21 **desperate** terrible

22 **designment** enterprise

**halts** (lit. 'is lame') is in doubt; stops

**noble** great, stately

23 **wrack** disaster, destruction (cf. 'wrack and  
 ruin'); shipwreck

**sufferance** damage (inflicted on)

26 See LN.

29 and is (heading) for Cyprus with full

delegated authority here (*OED*  
 commission 5)

30 **governor** ungrudging praise from the man  
 replaced as governor: see 2.1.0.1n.

31 **comfort** support, relief; a cause of  
 satisfaction (*OED* 5)

\*31.1 Cassio must enter earlier than QF  
 direct, as he overhears Montano's speech.  
 SDs were often placed in the margins of a  
 text, not precisely where required (see  
 Honigsmann, 'Stage direction').

32 **sadly** gravely

20 SP] 3 *Gent. Q*: 3 *F* (*throughout*) lads] *F*; Lords *Q* our] *F*; your *Q* 21 Turks] *F*; *Turke Q* 22 A  
 noble] *F*; Another *Q* 24 their] *F*; the *Q* 25–6] as *Q*; one line *F* 25 in.] in: *QF* 26 Veronessa] *Q*;  
*Veronessa F* 28 on shore] *F*; ashore *Q* himself] *QF*; himself's Rowe 30] as *Q*; *F* lines on't: /  
 Gouverneur. / 31.1] *this edn*; after 42 *QF* 33 prays] *Q*; praye *F*

With foul and violent tempest.

MONTANO Pray heavens he be,  
 For I have served him, and the man commands 35  
 Like a full soldier. Let's to the seaside, ho!  
 As well to see the vessel that's come in  
 As to throw out our eyes for brave Othello,  
 Even till we make the main and th'aerial blue  
 An indistinct regard.

3 GENTLEMAN Come, let's do so, 40  
 For every minute is expectancy  
 Of more arrivance.

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

MONTANO  
 Is he well shipped?

CASSIO  
 His bark is stoutly timbered, and his pilot  
 Of very expert and approved allowance,  
 Therefore my hopes, not surfeited to death, 50

- 34 **With** by  
 35 **served** served under  
 36 **full** perfect  
 39 **aerial** atmospheric: 'even till our eyes  
 make the sea and atmospheric blue a single  
 indistinguishable sight'  
 41 **expectancy** expectance (a new word c.  
 1600)  
 42 **arrivance** (a coinage, unique in  
 Shakespeare) i.e. more arrivals  
 44 **approve** commend  
 48 **bark** a sailing vessel; 'in 17th century  
 sometimes applied to the *barca-longa* of  
 the Mediterranean' (*OED* 3)  
 49 **approved** proved  
**allowance** acknowledgement (*OED* 3), i.e.  
 is acknowledged to be skilled and proved  
 good by experience  
 50–1 **not** . . . **cure** not indulged in excessively,  
 persist in their optimism (*OED* stand 72;  
*bold* = confident, *cure* = care). 'A verbal  
 bubble that disappears if one examines it  
 too closely' (Ridley).

34 heavens] *F*; Heaven *Q* 38 throw out] *Q*; throw-out *F* 39–40 Even . . . regard] *F*; not in *Q* 39  
 aerial] *Pope*; Eriall *F*; Ayre all *Q2* 40 SP] as *Q*; *Gent. F* 42 arrivance] *Q*; Arriuncie *F* 43 Thanks,  
 you] Thanks you, *F*; Thanks to *Q* this] *Q*; the *F* warlike] *F*; worthy *Q* 44 O] *F*; and *Q* 45 the] *F*;  
 their *Q* 48 pilot] *F* (Pylot); Pilate *Q* 50 hopes, not . . . death] hope's not . . . death *Q*; hope's (not . . .  
 death) *F*

Stand in bold cure.

A VOICE (*within*) A sail! a sail! a sail!

CASSIO

What noise?

2 GENTLEMAN

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

CASSIO

My hopes do shape him for the governor. *A shot.*

2 GENTLEMAN

They do discharge their shot of courtesy, 56  
Our friends at least.

CASSIO

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

2 GENTLEMAN

I shall. *Exit.*

MONTANO

But, good lieutenant, is your general wived? 60

CASSIO

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

51 SD *within* i.e. off stage

53 **brow** projecting edge of a cliff (over-looking the sea)

54 **ranks** rows

55 **shape** shape him (in imagination) to be the governor; portray

56 **shot of courtesy** a cannon shot, in friendly salute (off stage)

60 **wived** not quite the same as 'married'. Cf. 3.4.195, 'womaned'.

61 **achieved** acquired

62 **paragons** surpasses (*OED* 3, first here)

**wild fame** report at its wildest

63 **quirks** verbal subtleties

**blazoning** describing; boasting; proclaiming

64 **And . . . creation** = (?) in the essential clothing in which she was created. I suggest 'in her innermost nature' (*essential vesture* = soul, not body). Or, in the 'vesture that is her essence' (Capell).

51 *opp. cure*] *Enter a Messenger. Q* SP] *Mess. Q; Within. F* 53 SP] *Mess. Q; Gent. F* 55 governor] *F; guernement Q* SD] *Q* (after least 57); *not in F* 56 SP] *Q; Gent. F* their] *F; the Q* 57 friends] *F; friend Q* 59 SP] *Q; Gent. F* SD] *Q; not in F* 63 quirks of] *F; not in Q* 64 th'] *F; the Q*

Does tire the inginer.

*Enter Second Gentleman.*

How now? Who has put in? 65

2 GENTLEMAN

'Tis one Iago, ancient to the general.

CASSIO

He's had most favourable and happy speed.  
 Tempests themselves, high seas, and howling winds,  
 The guttered rocks and congregated sands,  
 Traitors ensteeped to clog the guiltless keel, 70  
 As having sense of beauty, do omit  
 Their mortal natures, letting go safely by  
 The divine Desdemona.

MONTANO

What is she?

CASSIO

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

65 **tire the inginer** = (?)exhaust the (powers of the) divine inventor (God); i.e. she is God's masterpiece. Ingerin (= author, inventor) is modern 'engineer', but stressed on first syllable; could = a human artist (a painter, or one who describes verbally), i.e. exhausts the one who tries to do her justice. Muir notes that 'tyre' can mean 'attire', as well as 'weary'. Possibly 'tire' was suggested by 'vesture' through an unconscious quibble.' Not too clear, hence Q's weak substitution.

**put in landed**

66 **ancient** . . . **general** i.e. Iago was attached to the general rather than to the army: see p. 339.

67 **happy** fortunate; successful

**speed** 'includes the idea of "fortune", as well as that of celerity' (Ridley)

68–73 The idea may come from the Orpheus legend: Orpheus' music made wild animals

omit their deadly natures.

69 **guttered** furrowed, grooved (by wind and water). Ovid mentioned the rocks that surround Cyprus (*Metamorphoses*, 10.6).

**congregated sands** sandbanks

70 **ensteeped** under water (a coinage). Q *enscerped* could = enscaeped (= sloping, from *escarp*: Hulme, 282).

**clog** obstruct

**guiltless** having no familiarity with or experience of (these 'traitors') (*OED* 3, from 1667)

71 **omit** forbear to use

72 **mortal** deadly

73 **divine Desdemona** Cf. 'divine Zenocrate' in *I Tamburlaine*, 5.1.135.

74 **captain's captain** So *AC* 3.1.22; cf. *Oth* 2.3.305, 'Our general's wife is now the general', *R3* 4.4.336, 'Caesar's Caesar', *TN* 3.1.102, 'Your servant's servant'.

65 tire the inginer] *F* (tyre the Ingeniuer); beare all excellency *Q* SD] *Q* (after 65); *Enter Gentleman. F* (after Ingeniuer) How] *F*; not in *Q* 66 SP] as *Q*; *Gent. F* 67 SP] as *F*; not in *Q* He's] He has *Q*; Ha's *F* 68 high] *F*; by *Q* 69 guttered rocks] *Q*; gutter'd-Rockes *F* 70 ensteeped] *F*; enscerped *Q* clog] *Q*; enclogge *F* 72 mortal] *F*; common *Q* 74] *F* lines of: / Captaine, / spake] *F*; spoke *Q*

Left in the conduct of the bold Iago, 75  
 Whose footing here anticipates our thoughts  
 A se'nnight's speed. Great Jove, Othello guard,  
 And swell his sail with thine own powerful breath  
 That he may bless this bay with his tall ship,  
 Make love's quick pants in Desdemona's arms, 80  
 Give renewed fire to our extincted spirits  
 And bring all Cyprus comfort! –

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

O, behold,  
 The riches of the ship is come on shore:  
 You men of Cyprus, let her have your knees!  
 Hail to thee, lady, and the grace of heaven, 85  
 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. 90

75 **conduct** charge, conducting

76 **footing** setting foot upon land (*OED* 1b, first here)

76–7 **Whose . . . speed** occurs earlier than we expected by a week. She left after Cassio and Othello, who sailed together (91; 1.3.278).

77–8 In Renaissance maps and pictures supernatural beings blow ships, etc., across the seas.

79 **tall** tall-masted

80 **love's quick pants** 'The quick breathing that accompanies and ensues upon the orgasm' (Partridge, 162). Perhaps, but note that Cassio later resists sexual imagery applied to Desdemona (2.3.14ff.). The

'panting of loving hearts' was a commonplace (Lyly, 2.373, and Lyly, *Sapho*, 1.1.22), 'quick pants' less so.

81 **extincted** extinguished (unique in Shakespeare)

84 **let . . . knees** kneel to her (out of courtesy)

85–7 Cassio uses (familiar) *thee* here, but *you* later (165). An echo of 'Hail Mary', reinforced by kneeling and 'the grace of heaven'?

86 Could Shakespeare have known Donne's (unpublished) Elegy 19, 'Going to Bed'? 'License my roving *hands*, and let them, go / *Before, behind*, between, above, below'.

**on every hand** on all sides

87 **Enwheel** encircle: a coinage

80 Make . . . in] *F*; And swiftly come to *Q* 82 And . . . comfort!] *Q*; not in *F* SD] as *F*; *Enter* Desdemona, Iago, Emilia, and Roderigo. *Q* (after 80) 83 on shore] *F*; ashore *Q* 84 You] *F*; Ye *Q* 88 me] *Q*; not in *F*

DESDEMONA

O, but I fear . . . how lost you company?

CASSIO

The great contention of the sea and skies

Parted our fellowship. (A VOICE *within*: 'A sail! a sail!')

But hark! a sail!

[*A shot is heard.*]

2 GENTLEMAN

They give their greeting to the citadel:

This likewise is a friend.

CASSIO

See for the news.

[*Exit Gentleman.*]

Good ancient, you are welcome. [*to Emilia*] Welcome,

mistress. 96

Let it not gall your patience, good Iago,

That I extend my manners; 'tis my breeding

That gives me this bold show of courtesy.

[*He kisses Emilia.*]

IAGO

Sir, would she give you so much of her lips 100

As of her tongue she oft bestows on me

You'd have enough.

DESDEMONA

Alas! she has no speech.

93 **Parted our fellowship** separated our ships

96, 97 **Good . . . good** Note the touch of  
condescension in *good*.

97 **gall** vex. For Iago's delayed response, cf.  
167ff.

98–9 **That . . . courtesy** i.e. that I offer a polite  
greeting to your wife; it is my good  
manners (or upbringing) that prompt me to  
this bold display of elegant behaviour  
(kissing the ladies). Such kissing was 'an

English habit rather than an Italian one'  
(Bullough, 219).

99.1 \*Perhaps Emilia accepts the kiss too  
willingly, irritating Iago. Does she have to  
give . . . *her lips*?

101 **her tongue** Iago coarsely hints at kissing,  
as well as scolding, with the tongue.

**bestows** confers as a gift (sarcastic)

102 **Alas . . . speech** Poor thing! you have put  
her out; or, alas, she's not a talker.

91] as *Q*; *F* lines feare: / company? / 92 the sea] *Q*; Sea *F* 93 'SD] [*within*,] *A saile, a saile. Q* (*after*  
91); *Within. A Saile, a Saile. F* (*after* 93) 2SD] *Guns / Capell*; not in *QF* 94 their] *Q*; this *F* 95 See . . .  
news] *F*; So speaks this voyce: *Q* SD] *Capell*; not in *QF* 96 SD] *Rowe*; not in *QF* 99 SD] as *Johnson*;  
not in *QF* 100 Sir] *F*; For *Q* 101 oft bestows] *F*; has bestowed *Q* 102 You'd] *Q*; You would *F*



IAGO

In faith, too much!  
 I find it still when I have list to sleep.  
 Marry, before your ladyship, I grant, 105  
 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 parlours, wild-cats in your kitchens, 110  
 Saints in your injuries, devils being offended,  
 Players in your housewifery, and housewives in . . .  
 Your beds!

DESDEMONA O, fie upon thee, slanderer!

IAGO

Nay, it is true, or else I am a Turk:

104 **still** always

**list** inclination. *F* *leafe* is possible: when I have her permission to sleep (because she still goes on talking).

105 **before** in the presence of

106–7 'holds her tongue and thinks the more' (Ridley)

109–13 prose in *F*, verse in *Q*: could be either. Cf. Dent, W702, 'Women are in church saints, abroad angels, at home devils.' There were many variations before Shakespeare, e.g. 'a shrew in the kitchen . . . an ape in the bed'.

109 **you** He cheekily includes Desdemona!

**pictures** 'silent appearances (of virtue)' (Sanders). Or, pretty as pictures, when you put on your best clothes to go out, 'with a suggestion that they owe their beauty to painting' (Kittredge).

110 **Bells** i.e. jangling bells

**parlours** A parlour was originally a room for conversation (*Fr.* *parler*).

**wild-cats** Cf. *TS* 1.2.196, 'Will you woo this wild-cat?'

**kitchens** i.e. in defending your territories

111 **Saints . . . injuries** 'When you have a mind to do injuries, you put on an air of sanctity' (Johnson); or, (you pretend to be) innocent when others have injured you.

112 **Players** i.e. you play at housekeeping; it is not what you give serious attention to  
**\*housewives** After the antitheses of 111, one expects 'workers in your beds'. Housewife = a woman who manages her household with skill, or a 'light' woman, now *hussy* (*OED* 1, 2). Hence 'you are skilful managers in your beds' (notice the plural: he includes Desdemona).'

114 **or . . . Turk** a variant of 'I am a Jew (rogue, villain) else' (Dent, J49.1)

103 In faith] *F*; I know *Q* 104 it . . . have] *F*; it, I; for when I ha *Q* list] *Q*; leafe *F* 108 have] *F*; ha *Q* 109–13 Come . . . beds] *prose F*; *Q* lines as verse adores: / Kitchens: / offended: / beds. / 109 of doors] adores *Q*; of doore *F* 112–13 in . . . / Your beds] *this edn* 113 SP] *F*; not in *Q*

You rise to play, and go to bed to work. 115

EMILIA

You shall not write my praise.

IAGO

No, let me not.

DESDEMONA

What wouldst thou write of me, if thou shouldst praise me?

IAGO

O, gentle lady, do not put me to't,  
For I am nothing if not critical.

DESDEMONA

Come on, assay. There's one gone to the harbour? 120

IAGO

Ay, madam.

DESDEMONA

I am not merry, but I do beguile  
The thing I am by seeming otherwise.  
Come, how wouldst thou praise me?

IAGO

I am about it, but indeed my invention 125  
Comes from my pate as birdlime does from frieze,

115 **You** He speaks even more directly to Desdemona than at 109, attacking her sense of sexual privacy. Cf. the voyeurism of 1.1.109ff., 3.3.413ff., 4.1.1ff.

117–64 'One of the most unsatisfactory passages in Shakespeare' (Ridley). Yet it shows how Iago wins an ascendancy over others, his improvising skills (note how Cassio is overshadowed), and that Desdemona understands sexual innuendo.

117 **of me** She is not asking for compliments, but wants to stop the marital bickering and places herself in the firing line (as later with Othello-Cassio).

**shouldst** were to; had to

118 **put me to't** challenge me to (do) it (*OED* put 28)

119 **critical** censorious

120 **assay** try, put me to the test

**one** someone

122–3 'I . . . **otherwise** perhaps an aside. Cf. *AW* 2.2.60–1, 'I play the noble housewife with the time, / To entertain it so merrily with a fool.'

122 **beguile** disguise; divert attention from. An ominous echo of Iago's 'I am not what I am' (1.1.64)?

123 **The** . . . **am** i.e. the fact that I am an anxious wife

125 **invention** inventiveness; the thing invented. Slur as 'my 'nvention'. But 125–8 may be meant as prose.

126 **birdlime** a viscous preparation spread on bushes to snare birds (Ridley)

**frieze** coarse woollen cloth; i.e. comes from my thick head just as sticky birdlime comes (with difficulty) from frieze

117 wouldst thou] *Q*; would'st *F* 120] as *Q*; *F* lines assay. / Harbour? / 125–8] as *Q* (*verse*); *prose F*

It plucks out brains and all; but my muse labours  
And thus she is delivered:

If she be fair and wise, fairness and wit,  
The one's for use, the other useth it.

130

DESDEMONA

Well praised. How if she be black and witty?

IAGO

If she be black, and thereto have a wit,  
She'll find a white that shall her blackness fit.

DESDEMONA

Worse and worse.

EMILIA

How if fair and foolish?

135

IAGO

She never yet was foolish that was fair,  
For even her folly helped her to an heir.

127–8 **but** . . . **delivered** quibbles on being in labour and giving birth; *my muse* = my inspiring goddess (jocular: he compares himself with Homer and classical poets who invoke their Muse). Iago affects a gentlemanly facility as versifier: cf. Jonson's Stephano, who will 'write you your halfe score or your dozen of sonnets at a sitting' (*Jonson*, 3.228), and *LLL* 4.2.50ff.

129–30 **If** . . . **it** semi-proverbial. Cf. Dent, F28, 'Fair and foolish, black and proud, long and lazy, little and loud'; *fair* = beautiful, or fair-haired; *wit* = intellect, wisdom.

130 **The** . . . **it** Perhaps = each one is for use, and the other (beauty or brains) makes use of it, i.e. they both need each other.

131 **black** dark-haired.

**witty** endowed with good judgement

133 **find** Cf. 245–6, 'the woman hath found him already'.

**white** a quibble on *wight* (cf. 158) = person; man. Here *black* and *white* hint at a mixed union like Othello's and Desdemona's. Q *hit* is possible: cf. *The Wit of a Woman* (1604), B1b, 'when you haue your mistresse, hange your selfe, if you can not teach her a right hit it', and *LLL* 4.1.125–8.

**blackness** could = pudendum. 'To hit the white' = to hit the centre of the target (cf. *TS* 5.2.186), and 'shall her blackness hit' may quibble accordingly.

134 said admiringly in wit combats (Lyly, *Endimion*, 4.2.52; *Midas*, 1.2.101); i.e. 'progressively worse' (*OED* 1c)

137 **folly** foolishness; unchastity (cf. 5.2.130: 'She turned to folly, and she was a whore') (Sanders)

**an heir** to marry an heir; to have a bastard child

127 brains] *F*; braine *Q* 129–30, 132–3, 136–7, 141–2, 148–58, 160] as *Q*; italics *F* 130 useth] *F*; vsing *Q* 131] as *Q*; *F* lines prais'd: / Witty? / 133 fit] *F*; hit *Q* 137 an heir] *F*; a haire *Q*

DESDEMONA These are old fond paradoxes to make  
fools laugh i'th' alehouse. What miserable praise hast  
thou for her that's foul and foolish? 140

IAGO

There's none so foul, and foolish thereunto,  
But does foul pranks which fair and wise ones do.

DESDEMONA O heavy ignorance, thou praisest the worst  
best. But what praise couldst thou bestow on a  
deserving woman indeed? One that in the authority 145  
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, 150  
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,

138 **fond** foolish

**paradoxes** contradictory or absurd sayings

139 **miserable** miserly, stingy; wretched; despicable

140 **foul** ugly; dirty

142 **pranks** i.e. sexual pranks or acts (cf. 3.3.205). Iago's rhymes have become more and more overtly sexual.

**do** Cf. 3.3.435n.

143 **heavy** grievous; distressing

143–4 **thou . . . best** (because he has said less in dispraise of the worst?)

145 **indeed** 'freq. placed after a word in order to emphasize it' (*OED* 1b), i.e. 'a truly deserving woman'. Thinking of herself? Or pointing to Emilia?

146 **put on** encourage, urge on (*OED* 46h), as in *KL* 1.4.208, 'That you protect this course and put it on / By your allowance.' Hence, 'one who, authorised by her merit, did reasonably encourage (others to give) the testimony of malice itself': i.e. one

who, sure of her own merit, did not fear the worst that could be said against her.

148–60 **She . . . beer** Cf. the nonsense verses in *KL* 3.2.81 ff., spoken by the Fool. Here Iago plays the fool to mask his true character, as in 2.3.64ff., and to show off his cleverness.

149 **Had . . . will** was never lost for words. Hart compared Plutarch's *Lives* (Cato), 'he became a perfect pleader, and had tongue at will'.

150 **gay** finely dressed

151 i.e. modestly refrained from what she wanted, and yet knew when she might have it

153 i.e. did not seek to right her wrong and commanded her anger to cease. Cf. Plautus, *Stichus*, 119 ff., 'The best proof of a woman's excellence of character. Her . . . having the chance to do wrong and the self-restraint not to.' Cf. *Son* 94.1, 'They that have power to hurt and will do none'.

138 **fond**] *F*; *not in Q* 139 **i'th'**] *F*; *i'th' the Q* 142 **wise ones**] *Q*; *wise-ones F* 143 **thou praisest**] *F*; *that praises Q* 146 **merit**] *F*; *merrits Q*

She that in wisdom never was so frail  
 To change the cod's head for the salmon's tail, 155  
 She that could think, and ne'er disclose her mind,  
 See suitors following, and not look behind,  
 She was a wight, if ever such wights were –

DESDEMONA

To do what?

IAGO

To suckle fools, and chronicle small beer. 160

DESDEMONA O, most lame and impotent conclusion!

Do not learn of him, Emilia, though he be thy  
 husband. How say you, Cassio, is he not a most  
 profane and liberal counsellor?

CASSIO He speaks home, madam, you may relish him 165  
 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 courtesies. You say true, 'tis 170

154 **frail** weak; morally weak, unable to resist  
 temptation (cf. Mrs Frail in Congreve's  
*Love for Love*)

155 See LN.

156 Cf. *AYL* 3.2.249, 'Do you not know I am a  
 woman? when I think, I must speak.'

158 **wight** creature, person. Iago now pretends  
 to be stuck. Cf. 4.1.32n.

160 **chronicle** register, record; 'be concerned  
 with trivialities' (Sanders)

**small beer** trivialities (*OED*, first here, but  
 likely to be earlier)

161 **lame** (crippled, hence) weak

**impotent** ineffective, weak

164 **profane** brutal in expression (Johnson);  
 irreverent

**liberal** unrestrained, licentious; could =  
 gentlemanly (as in 'liberal education').  
 Cassio picks up the second sense.

165 **home** directly, to the point  
**relish** appreciate

166 **in** in the role of  
**scholar** an unfortunate remark, as Cassio's  
 bookishness particularly irritates Iago  
 (1.1.23ff.)

167 **palm** could = hand (*OED* 1); but cf. 252  
**well said** Cf. 4.1.116n.

168 **web** could = a subtly woven snare,  
 something flimsy and unsubstantial (*OED*  
 4c). Iago stands aside, like a spider watching  
 a fly. If Cassio still holds Desdemona's hand  
 when Othello enters, this could be a  
 poisonous image in Othello's mind later.

169 **fly** i.e. simpleton

170 \***gyve** fetter, shackle

**courtesies** courtly or elegant gestures

**say true** ironic: he does not hear what  
 Cassio says, ridiculing his body language

157] *F*; not in *Q* 158 wights] *F*; wight *Q* 167 SD] *Rowe*; not in *QF* 168 With] *F*; not in *Q* 1] *F*; not  
 in *Q* 169 fly] *F*; Flee *Q* 170 gyve . . . courtesies] giue thee in thine owne Courtship *F*; catch you in your  
 owne courtesies *Q*

so indeed. If such tricks as these strip you out of  
 your lieutenantry, it had been better you had not  
 kissed your three fingers so oft, which now again you  
 are most apt to play the sir in. Very good, well kissed,  
 and excellent courtesy: 'tis so indeed! Yet again, your 175  
 fingers to your lips? would they were clyster-pipes  
 for your sake! (*Trumpets within*)

The Moor! I know his trumpet!

CASSIO 'Tis truly so.

DESDEMONA

Let's meet him and receive him.

*Enter OTHELLO and Attendants.*

CASSIO

Lo, where he comes!

OTHELLO

O my fair warrior!

DESDEMONA

My dear Othello!

180

OTHELLO

It gives me wonder great as my content

To see you here before me! O my soul's joy,

171 **tricks** capricious or foolish acts; feats of dexterity (*OED* 2, 5). Could also refer to Iago's own tricks.

172 **lieutenantry** lieutenantcy (*OED*, first here)

173 See LN.

174 **apt** ready, disposed

**sir** gentleman. For Iago's 'class hatred', see pp. 17–18.

176 **clyster-pipes** 'a tube or pipe for administering clysters' (*OED*, first here). A clyster was a medicine injected into the rectum. Ridley glossed as 'syringe for a (vaginal) douche'. The imagery (fingers, lips, pipes) is partly sexual.

178 **trumpet** could = trumpeter; trumpet call; or, the instrument. 'Distinguished people had their own recognizable calls . . . [cf.]

KL 2.1.80 . . . [and] "Your husband is at hand; I hear his trumpet" (*MV* 5.1.121) (Ridley).

179 **receive** i.e. welcome

SD Notice the build-up for this entry.

180 **warrior** Cf. 1.3.249ff., 3.4.152. In love poetry the woman is sometimes addressed as a warrior (in love): cf. Spenser's *Amoretti*, 57.1, 'Sweet warrior! when shall I have peace with you?' Is it significant that Othello turns first to Desdemona, though he arrives on official duty as governor?

181 **content** pleasure, contentment; repeated (189, 194) the word acquires overtones of self-indulgent 'satisfaction'

182 **soul's joy** Notice how often he refers to his soul.

173 kissed] *F*; rist *Q* 174 Very] *F*; not in *Q* 175 and] *F*; an *Q* 176 to] *F*; at *Q* clyster-pipes] as *Q*; Cluster-pipes *F* 177 SD] *Q* (*opp.* 178); not in *F* 178 The . . . trumpet!] *speech cont. Q*; new line *F* 179 SD] after trumpet 178 *Q*; after comes 179 *F* 182] *Q*; *F* lines me. / loy: /

If after every tempest come such calms  
 May the winds blow till they have wakened death,  
 And let the labouring bark climb hills of seas, 185  
 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 190  
 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. 195  
 And this, and this the greatest discords be                      *They kiss.*

183 Cf. Dent, S908, 'After a storm comes calm';  
*calms* = calms at sea; inner tranquillity.

184 **wakened** aroused, summoned into  
 existence, i.e. till they threaten our death

186 **Olympus-high** (a coinage) as high as  
 Mount Olympus, the fabled abode of the  
 gods in Greek mythology

187–91 **If . . . fate** a common sentiment in  
 classical writers. Cf. Virgil, *Aeneid*, 4.660,  
 Terence, *The Eunuch*, 551–2, 'O heavens!  
 this is a moment when I could bear  
 dissolution for fear life pollute this  
 exultation with some distress.'

187 **If it were** elliptical: if it were (my fate)  
 now . . .

189 **content** quibble on content = containing  
 capacity (*OED* 5)

190 **comfort** delight, gladness; relief (after  
 distress)

191 **Succeeds . . . fate** can follow in our  
 unknown, predetermined futures. After  
*Olympus-high*, *unknown fate* has Greek

overtones.

191–2 **forbid / But that** double negative, i.e.  
 ensure that

193 **grow** increase

**Amen . . . powers** *Amen* is biblical, *sweet  
 powers* suggests the pagan classical gods  
 (esp. after 186, 191) (but cf. *Ham* 3.1.141,  
 'Heavenly powers, restore him!'). Cf.  
 5.2.217, 'O heavenly God' (Q), 'oh  
 heavenly Powres' (F).

194 **speak enough of** perhaps 'speak highly  
 enough of' or 'my words cannot express'.  
 But Shakespeare may have intended 'I  
 cannot speak. Enough of this content!'  
 (referring back to 181, 189).

195 **stops** chokes (*OED* 9). Preparing for his  
 later choking, esp. 4.1.36.

**here** pointing to his throat?

196 **discords** absence of harmony (music);  
 disagreement, strife. From Lat. *cor* = heart  
 (cf. 197). Iago takes it in the musical  
 sense.

183 calms] *F*; calmenesse *Q* 192] *as Q*; *F* lines Loues / encrease / 193 powers] *F*; power *Q* 194  
 speak . . . content] *QF* 196 discords] *F*; discord *Q* SD] *Q*; not in *F*

That e'er our hearts shall make.

IAGO [aside]

O, you are well tuned now: but I'll set down  
The pegs that make this music, as honest  
As I am.

OTHELLO Come, let us to the castle. 200  
News, friends, our wars are done, the Turks are  
drowned.

How does my old acquaintance of this isle?  
Honey, you shall be well desired in Cyprus,  
I have found great love amongst them. O my sweet,  
I prattle out of fashion, and I dote 205  
In mine own comforts. I prithee, good Iago,  
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; 210  
Once more, well met at Cyprus.

[Exeunt all but Iago and Roderigo.]

198 **set down** slacken (the strings or pegs of a musical instrument); perhaps also 'bring low, or take down the (human) pegs (= Othello, Desdemona) that make this joyful music' (*OED* set 143)

199–200 \***as** . . . **am** for all my supposed honesty (Ridley). Why does Iago suddenly bridle at the thought of his honesty? I suspect that we need to complete 197: 'That e'er our hearts shall make. Honest Iago!' (Othello greets Cassio warmly, and merely nods to Iago saying 'Honest Iago!', i.e. well met, then turns back to Desdemona).

202 **old acquaintance** old friend(s). Cf. *IH4* 5.4.102, 'What, old acquaintance! could not all this flesh / Keep in a little life?' (Hal to Falstaff); *Auld Lang Syne*, 'Should auld

acquaintance be forgot'.

203 **desired** sought after; with dramatic irony, since Roderigo and Iago desire her more literally

205 **out of fashion** improperly, contrary to what is expected (*OED* 11). Cf. *Tem* 3.1.57, 'I prattle / Something too wildly'.

207 **coffers** trunks, baggage. In Latin comedy a slave or servant sometimes has to disembark his master's luggage (e.g. Plautus, *Amphitruo*, 629; cf. *CE* 5.1.410). Othello treats Iago almost as a personal servant.

208 **master** captain (of merchant vessel) or navigating officer (of ship of war) (*OED* 2)

210 **challenge** deserve

211 **at** As they are in Cyprus, *at* may be an error, anticipating *at*, 212.

198 SD] Rowe; not in QF 198–200 O . . . am] this edn; prose F; Q lines now, / musique, / am. / 201] as Q; F lines done: / drown'd. / 202 does my] F; doe our Q this] F; the Q 211 SD] Exit. Q; Exit Othello and Desdemona. F



IAGO Do thou meet me presently at the harbour. 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 215 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, and let thy soul be instructed. Mark me with what violence she first loved the Moor, 220 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, again 225 to inflame it, and to give satiety a fresh appetite, loveliness in favour, sympathy in years, manners and

212 **Do** . . . **harbour** Perhaps addressed to a soldier, as Iago tells Roderigo to meet him at the citadel (281). *Exit* does not have to mean that Iago and Roderigo are left alone (211, QF).

**presently** in a little while

213–15 **as** . . . **them** This could be an aside. Cf. Dent, D216, 'Despair (love) makes cowards courageous.'

213 **base** worthless, ignoble

215 **native** natural

**list** listen to

216 **watches** is on duty or on guard  
**court of guard** body of soldiers on guard (*OED*, corps de garde); or, the watchpost occupied by the soldiers on guard

217 **directly** plainly; completely

219 **thus** 'On thy mouth, to stop it while thou art listening to a wiser man' (Johnson). Cf. *TC* 1.3.240, 'Peace, Troyan, lay thy finger on thy lips!'; Judges 18.19, 'Hold thy peace: lay thine hand upon thy mouth, and come with us.'

**let** . . . **instructed** a mock catechism, with Iago as priest!

221 **but** . . . **lies** Iago dislikes Othello's high-flown speech (cf. 1.1.12–13); *but* = only; *fantastical* = existing only in imagination, fabulous.

222 **still** always, constantly  
**prating** boasting; idle chatter  
**discreet** discerning, judicious

223 **fed** *Feed* = gratify (the vanity or passion of); *feed one's eyes* is pre-Shakespearean (cf. *Faerie Queene*, 2.7.4).

224 **devil** Cf. 1.1.90n.

225 **dull** sluggish, listless  
**sport** sexual intercourse: cf. 5.2.210, 'the act of shame'

226 **satiety** satiation

227 **\*loveliness** loveableness; beauty. For the QF 'common error' in punctuation, see *Texts*, 100.

**favour** attractiveness; appearance (*OED* 8, 9)

**sympathy** affinity; likeness

213 hither] *Q*; thither *F* 215 list me] *Q*; list-me *F* 216 must] *F*; will *Q* 217 thee this:] *F*; thee, this *Q* 221–2 'and . . . love] *Q*; To loue *F* 222 thy] *F*; the *Q* 223 it] *F*; so *Q* 225 again] *Q*; a game *F* 2to] *F*; not in *Q* 226–7 appetite, loveliness] *Theobald*; appetite. Loue lines *Q*; appetite. Louelinesse *F*

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 230  
 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 235  
 very voluble, no farther conscionable than in putting  
 on the mere form of civil and humane seeming, for  
 the better compassing of his salt and most hidden  
 loose affection. Why none, why none: a slipper and  
 subtle knave, a finder out of occasions, that has an 240  
 eye, can stamp and counterfeit advantages, though  
 true advantage never present itself – a devilish knave;

- 229 **required** necessary  
**conveniences** correspondences; aptitudes;  
 advantages; comforts  
 230 **tenderness** youthfulness; sensitiveness to  
 impression (*OED* 1, 3)  
**abused** cheated; injured  
 230–1 **heave the gorge** vomit  
 231 **disrelish** *OED* dis- 6: *dis-* forms compound  
 verbs which reverse the action of the  
 simple verb. She relished what went down  
 as food but does not relish what comes up  
 as vomit.  
**very nature** natural instincts themselves  
 (Ridley)  
 233 **pregnant** obvious, cogent  
 234 **unforced position** natural proposition  
**eminent** high  
 235 **degree** (lit. step, one of a flight of steps)  
 stairway leading to  
**fortune** good fortune  
**knave** crafty rogue  
 236 **voluble** inconstant, variable; fluent or glib  
 of tongue (more true of Iago than Cassio!)  
**conscionable** governed by conscience  
 236–7 **putting on** feigning (*OED* put 46e);  
 putting on the mask of  
 237 **form** prescribed behaviour  
**civil** . . . **seeming** well-bred and courteous  
 appearance  
 238 **compassing** attaining; embracing  
**salt** lecherous (cf. 3.3.407)  
 239 **loose** wanton, immoral  
**affection** emotion; lust  
**slipper** slippery  
 240 **subtle** skilful; crafty, cunning  
**occasions** opportunities  
 241 **eye** perhaps a roving eye. Cf. 2.3.21, ‘What  
 an eye she has!’  
**stamp** make a coin; engender. Cf. *Cym*  
 2.5.4ff.: ‘my father was I know not where /  
 When I was stamped. Some coiner with his  
 tools / Made me a counterfeit’.  
**advantages** opportunities  
 \***though** *Q* *the* must be a misreading of *tho*  
 (*Texts*, 44).  
 242 **true** honest, virtuous

232 in it] *F*; to it *Q* 234 eminent] *F*; eminently *Q* 236 farther] *farder Q*; further *F* 237 humane  
 seeming] *F*; hand-seeming *Q* 238 compassing] *Q*; *comasse F* 238–9 most . . . affection] *F*; hidden  
 affections *Q* 239 Why . . . none] *F*; not in *Q* 239–40 slipper and subtle] *F*; subtle slippery *Q* 240 out  
 of occasions] *Q*; of occasion *F* has] *Q*; he’s *F* 241–2 advantages . . . advantage] *F*; the true advantages  
*Q* 242 itself . . . knave] *as F*; themselves *Q*

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 245 hath found him already.

RODERIGO I cannot believe that in her, she's full of most blest condition.

IAGO Blest fig's-end! The wine she drinks is made of grapes. If she had been blest she would never have 250 loved the Moor. Blest 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 255 prologue to the history of lust and foul thoughts. They met so near with their lips that their breaths embraced together. Villainous thoughts, Roderigo: when these mutualities so marshal the way, hard at hand comes the master and main exercise, th'in- 260

244 **folly** foolishness; wickedness; wantonness  
**green** immature

245 **look after** search for  
**pestilent** poisonous, confounded (*OED* 4, often used humorously)

246 **found** unclear (deliberately?); 'seen sympathetically what he is after' (Sanders); or perhaps = had. Cf. 133, *KL* 5.1.10–11, 'have you never found my brother's way / To the forfended place?'

247 **I . . . her** Like Sir Andrew (*TN* 1.3.67) he is comically overemphatic.

248 **condition** disposition; nature; quality

249 **fig's-end** Cf. 1.3.320n.

249–50 **The . . . grapes** one of Iago's vague general assertions, which we have to interpret for ourselves. Cf. Dent, W466, 'No wine made of grapes but hath lees, no woman created of flesh but hath faults'

(1580).

251 **pudding** could = sausage (as in black pudding). I suspect euphemisms for 'blest vagina' (249), 'blest penis' (251).

252 **paddle** toy, fondle. So *Ham* 3.4.185, 'paddling in your neck with his damned fingers', *WT* 1.2.115.

255 **index** table of contents prefixed to a book; preface, prologue

**obscure** unclearly expressed, hidden

259 **mutualities** intimacies

**hard** close

260 **master** (adj.) principal

**exercise** action, exertion, (sexual) 'sport'

260–1 **incorporate** 'united in one body', i.e. the 'beast with two backs' (1.1.115). Cf. *VA* 539–40, 'Her arms do lend his neck a sweet embrace; / Incorporate then they seem, face grows to face.'

246 hath] *F*; has *Q* 251 Blest pudding] *F*; not in *Q* 252–3 Didst . . . that?] *F*; not in *Q* 254 that I did] *F*; not in *Q* 255 obscure] *F*; not in *Q* 258 Villainous . . . Roderigo] *F*; not in *Q* 259 mutualities] *Q*; mutabilities *F* hard] *F*; hand *Q* 260 master and] *F*; not in *Q* th'] *F*; the *Q*

corporate 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 265 loud or tainting his discipline, or from what other cause you please which the time shall more favourably minister.

RODERIGO Well.

IAGO Sir, he's rash and very sudden in choler, and 270 haply with his truncheon may strike at you: provoke him that he may, for even out of that will I cause these of Cyprus to mutiny, whose qualification shall come into no true trust again but by the displanting of Cassio. So shall you have a shorter journey to your 275 desires, by the means I shall then have to prefer them, and the impediment most profitably removed, without the which there were no expectation of our prosperity.

RODERIGO I will do this, if you can bring it to any opportunity. 280

IAGO I warrant thee. Meet me by and by at the citadel:

261 **Pish!** Cf. 4.1.42: exclamation of disgust or vexation, it shows Iago reacting to his own voyeurism (or is he pretending?).

261–2 **But . . . me** Iago switches to *sir* and *you*: he is coming to the point.

261 **ruled** guided

263 **For . . . you** As for taking the lead (in our joint action), I'll leave it to you; 'I'll arrange for you to be appointed, given orders' (Bevington).

266 **tainting** disparaging

**discipline** military skill or professionalism

268 **minister** supply

270 **sudden** impetuous, abrupt, suddenly roused

**choler** (one of the four 'humours') in an

irascible state

271 **haply** perhaps; by good luck

**truncheon** staff (carried by officers)

273 **mutiny** riot

**qualification** condition, nature; or, pacification: i.e. the Cypriots will not be trustworthy again except by the cashiering of Cassio

274 **displanting** removal

276 **prefer** advance

277 **profitably** advantageously

278 **prosperity** success. Note how Iago befogs with abstractions.

281 **warrant** assure, promise

**thee** Iago has won him over, and reverts to *thee*.

261 Pish] *F*; not in *Q* 263 the] *F*; your *Q* 267 cause] *Q*; course *F* 270 he's] *F*; he is *Q* 271 haply] *Q*; happily *F* with . . . truncheon] *Q* (Trunchen); not in *F* 274 trust] *Q*; taste *F* again] *F*; again't *Q* 278 the which] *F*; which *Q* 280 if you] *F*; if I *Q*

I must fetch his necessities ashore. Farewell.

RODERIGO Adieu.

*Exit.*

IAGO

That Cassio loves her, I do well believe it,  
 That she loves him, 'tis apt and of great credit. 285  
 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 peradventure 290  
 I stand accountant for as great a sin –  
 But partly led to diet my revenge,  
 For that I do suspect the lusty Moor  
 Hath leaped into my seat, the thought whereof  
 Doth like a poisonous mineral gnaw my inwards . . . 295  
 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

282 **necessaries** i.e. coffers, 207.

**Farewell** Iago dismisses him. *Adieu*, 283, is more 'upper-class'.

284 **loves** For Iago's curious reasoning, and the meaning of 'love', see Honigsmann, *Seven Tragedies*, 87.

285 **apt** likely; fitting (in view of the theories he has expounded, 220ff.)

**credit** credibility

286 **howbeit** however it may be  
**endure him not** cannot stand him

289 **dear** fond, loving

290 **absolute** mere, pure and simple

**peradventure** as it happens

291 **accountant** responsible

**as . . . sin** i.e. revenge

292 **diet** Why not 'feed'? Because revenge needs a special diet.

293 **For that** because

**lusty** lustful

294 **Hath . . . seat** Cf. *OED* leap 9: 'of certain beasts: to spring upon (the female) in copulation'; *IH4* 1.2.9, 'leaping-houses' (= brothels); *Son* 41.9, 'Ay me, but yet thou mightst *my seat* forbear'; *H5* 5.2.139, 'I should quickly leap into a wife'. *Seat* = sexual seat, his wife.

295 hinting at ulcers?

**mineral** Cf. 1.2.74n.

296 echoing 189, 'My soul hath her content so absolute'

297 **evened** Cf. *womaned* (3.4.195), *weaponed* (5.2.264): made even or quits.

**wife for wife** Cf. Exodus 21.1, 23–4, 'These are the laws . . . life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth'.

284 it] *Q*; 't *F* 286 howbeit] *F*; howbe't *Q* 287 loving, noble] *F*; noble, louing *Q* 291 accountant] *Q*; accomptant *F* 292 led] *F*; lead *Q* 293 lusty] *F*; lustfull *Q* 296 or] *F*; nor *Q* 297 evened] *F* (eeuen'd); euen *Q* ²wife] *Q*; wift *F* 299 jealousy] *as Q*; Ielouizie *F*

That judgement cannot cure; which thing to do, 300  
 If this poor trash of Venice, whom I trash  
 For his quick hunting, stand the putting on,  
 I'll have our Michael Cassio on the hip,  
 Abuse him to the Moor in the rank garb –  
 For I fear Cassio with my night-cap too – 305  
 Make the Moor thank me, love me, and reward me  
 For making him egregiously an ass,  
 And practising upon his peace and quiet  
 Even to madness. 'Tis here, but yet confused: 309  
 Knavery's plain face is never seen, till used. *Exit.*

[2.2] *Enter Othello's Herald, with a proclamation.*

HERALD [*Reads.*] *It is Othello's pleasure, our noble and  
 valiant general, that, upon certain tidings now arrived,*

300 **That** . . . **cure** that no one's good sense can  
 cure it

301 **poor trash** worthless person  
 \***trash** See LN.

302 **For** . . . **hunting** 'to prevent him from  
 hunting too fast. Iago has had to restrain  
 and pacify Roderigo many times, no doubt'  
 (Kittredge). Cf. *for* = 'to prevent' in *2H6*  
 4.1.73–4, 'dam up this thy yawning  
 mouth / For swallowing the treasure of the  
 realm'.

**quick** energetic (ironic)

**stand** . . . **on** goes along with my incitement  
 (*OED* put 46h)

303 **our** vaguely contemptuous: cf. 2.3.57.

**on the hip** at a disadvantage (a wrestling  
 term). Cf. *MV* 4.1.334, Dent, H474, 'To  
 have one on the hip'.

304 **Abuse** slander

**rank** lustful

**garb** manner of doing anything, behaviour

(*OED* 3); i.e. misrepresent him as lecherous  
 305 **night-cap** a head covering, worn in bed.  
 Not likely to be worn by a lover: Iago's  
 sense of humour runs away with him.

308 **practising upon** plotting against

309 **Even** to even till I bring him to  
**here** here in my head. Cf. the clever slave  
 in classical comedy (Plautus, *Pseudolus*,  
 576).

**confused** not yet clearly worked out

310 **plain** simple, honest (sarcastic). Cf. *Luc*  
 1532.

**seen** i.e. seen clearly, until the moment  
 comes when it has to be used

2.2.0.1 \***Herald** The Herald probably  
 addresses the audience, as if it consists of  
 Cypriots. It is not clear how much is read,  
 how much spoken. QF print in roman  
 throughout, I print 1–7 in italics (assuming  
 that this is proclaimed, the rest spoken).

2 **upon** on the occasion of (*OED* 7a)

301 <sup>2</sup>trash] *Steevens*; crush *Q*; trace *F* 304 rank] *Q*; right *F* 305 night-cap] *Q*; Night-Cape *F* 2.2]  
*Scena Secunda. F*; not in *Q* 0.1] as *F*; Enter a Gentleman reading a Proclamation. *Q* 1 SP] *F*; not in  
*Q* SD] not in *QF* 1–7] italics this edn; roman *QF*

*importing the mere perdition of the Turkish fleet, every man put himself into triumph: some to dance, some to make bonfires, each man to what sport and revels his addiction leads him. For besides these beneficial news, it is the celebration of his nuptial.* – So much was his pleasure should be proclaimed. All offices are open, and there is full liberty of feasting from this present hour of five till the bell have told eleven. Heaven bless the isle of Cyprus and our noble general Othello! *Exit.*

[2.3] *Enter* OTHELLO, CASSIO *and* DESDEMONA.

OTHELLO

Good Michael, look you to the guard tonight.  
Let's teach ourselves that honourable stop  
Not to outsport discretion.

CASSIO

Iago hath direction what to do,  
But notwithstanding with my personal eye  
Will I look to't. 5

OTHELLO

Iago is most honest.  
Michael, good night. Tomorrow with your earliest  
Let me have speech with you. Come, my dear love,

- |   |  |   |
|---|--|---|
| 3 | <b>importing</b> communicating, stating                              | is recognized as proper ( <i>OED</i> 5), as in <i>MM</i>  |
|   | <b>mere perdition</b> total destruction                              | 1.3.29, 'liberty plucks justice by the nose'  |
| 4 | <b>triumph</b> public festivity, revelry (cf. the Venetian carnival) | 10 <b>told</b> counted; proclaimed; tolled  |
|   |  | <b>2.3.2 stop</b> restraint   |
| 6 | <b>*addiction</b> inclination; <i>addition</i> would = rank          | 3 not to carry our revelling beyond the bounds of discretion; <i>outsport</i> : unique in Shakespeare |
|   | <b>beneficial</b> beneficent, good                                   |   |
| 8 | <b>offices</b> kitchens, butteries, etc. (Ridley)                    | 7 <b>with your earliest</b> at your earliest convenience  |
| 9 | <b>liberty</b> freedom of behaviour, beyond what                     |   |

3 *every*] as *F*; that every *Q* 4 <sup>2</sup>*to*] *F*; not in *Q* 6 *addiction*] *Q*2; minde *Q*; addition *F* 7 *nuptial*] as *F*; Nuptials *Q* 9 of feasting] *F*; not in *Q* 10 have] *F*; hath *Q* 10–11 Heaven bless] *Q*; Blesse *F* 12 SD] *F*; not in *Q* 2.3] *new scene Theobald*; scene cont. *QF* 0.1] as *Q*; *Enter Othello, Desdemona, Cassio, and Attendants.* *F* 2 that] *F*; the *Q* 4 direction] *F*; directed *Q* 6 <sup>1</sup>*t*] *F*; it *Q*

The purchase made, the fruits are to ensue:  
 That profit's yet to come 'tween me and you. 10  
 Good-night. *Exeunt Othello and Desdemona.*

*Enter IAGO.*

CASSIO Welcome, Iago, we must to the watch.

IAGO Not this hour, lieutenant, 'tis not yet ten o'th'  
 clock. Our general cast us thus early for the love of  
 his Desdemona – whom let us not therefore blame; 15  
 he hath not yet made wanton the night with her, and  
 she is sport for Jove.

CASSIO She's a most exquisite lady.

IAGO And I'll warrant her full of game.

CASSIO Indeed she's a most fresh and delicate creature. 20

IAGO What an eye she has! methinks it sounds a parley  
 to provocation.

CASSIO An inviting eye; and yet methinks right modest.

IAGO And when she speaks is it not an alarum to love?

9 **purchase** (a richer word than now)  
 acquisition; gain; bargain; prize; something  
 bought

**fruits** anything resulting from an action  
 (OED 7), implying that the marriage has  
 still to be consummated (see p. 44). Cf.  
*Homilies*, 446 ('Of matrimony'): marriage  
 was instituted by God 'to bring forth fruit',  
 i.e. children.

10 **profit** benefit; but after *purchase* the  
 commercial sense is also present

13–17 **Iago** switches to prose; Cassio  
 (weakly?) follows suit.

13 **Not this hour** not for an hour yet  
**ten** Cf. 2.2.10, *five*.

14 **cast** got rid of

15 **\*whom** Cf. 1.2.52n.

16 **hath** . . . **her** i.e. has not yet slept with her

17 **sport** Cf. 2.1.225.

**Jove** Jupiter, a notorious womanizer in  
 classical legends

18 **exquisite** accomplished; consummately  
 perfect or beautiful

19 **game** sport, spirit; 'expert in love-play'  
 (Ridley)

20 Cassio comes halfway to Iago's view. He  
 might speak thus of a prostitute (cf. *Per*  
 4.2.6–10, 'We were never so much out of  
 creatures . . . let's have fresh ones'); *fresh*  
 could = in prime condition; *delicate* could  
 = pleasing to the palate. Is he weak – or  
 innocent?

21 **What . . . has** Cf. Marlowe, *The Jew of*  
*Malta*, 4.2.127, 'What an eye she casts on  
 me?' (Ithamore of the courtesan).

**parley** makes a trumpet call to an  
 opponent: the usual love-war metaphor

22 **provocation** challenge, defiance (military  
 or sexual)

23 **right** properly; very

24 **alarum** call to arms; sudden attack

10 That] *F*; The *Q* 'tween] *F*; twist *Q* 11 SD] *Q*; Exit. *F* 13–14 o'th' clock] *F*; a'clock *Q* 15 whom] *F*2;  
 who *QF* 18 She's] *F*; She is *Q* 20 she's] *F*; she is *Q* 21–2] *QF* lines (as verse?) has? / prouocation. /  
 22 to] *F*; of *Q* 23–4] *F* lines eye: / modest. / speakes, / Loue? / 24 alarum] *F*; alarme *Q*



- CASSIO She is indeed perfection. 25
- IAGO Well: happiness to their sheets! Come, lieutenant,  
I have a stoup of wine, and here without are a brace  
of Cyprus gallants that would fain have a measure to  
the health of black Othello.
- CASSIO Not tonight, good Iago, I have very poor and 30  
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. 35
- 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 40  
desire it.
- CASSIO Where are they?
- IAGO Here, at the door, I pray you call them in.
- CASSIO I'll do't, but it dislikes me. *Exit.*
- IAGO
- If I can fasten but one cup upon him, 45

25 **perfection** Cf. 1.3.101.

26 **sheets** Cf. *Pigmaliions Image* (1598),  
'Sweet sheetes . . . Sweet happy sheetes'  
(lover to loved one's bedsheets) (John  
Marston, *Poems*, ed. A. Davenport  
[Liverpool, 1961], p. 58).

27 **stoup** flagon, tankard (of varying sizes)

**without** outside

**brace** couple (Iago may understate, to get  
Cassio to agree)

28 **fain** gladly

**measure** liquid measure, i.e. toast

31 **unhappy** troublesome; unfortunate (*OED*  
1, 3)

33 **entertainment** social behaviour; receiving  
guests (*OED* 4, 11)

34 **cup** wine cup (which could have a foot and  
stem and lid); or, a cup with the wine it  
contains, a cupful

37 **craftily** skilfully

**qualified** diluted

**innovation** revolution, change. What is  
Iago to *behold*? Is Cassio unsteady on his  
legs (= *here*, 38)?

39 **task** test

40 **man** (less polite, putting pressure on  
Cassio)

**gallants** (military) followers; men of  
pleasure

44 **it dislikes me** I'm not happy about it

45 **fasten . . . upon** induce acceptance of: 'if I  
can get him to drink just one cupful'

25 She] *F*; *Q* 29 black] *F*; the blacke *Q* 36 have] *F*; ha *Q* 38 unfortunate] as *Q*; infortunate *F*



- If consequence do but approve my dream  
 My boat sails freely, both with wind and stream. 60  
 CASSIO 'Fore God, they have given me a rouse already.  
 MONTANO Good faith, a little one, not past a pint, as  
 I am a soldier.  
 IAGO Some wine, ho!  
 [*Sings.*]  
 And let me the cannikin clink, clink, 65  
 And let me the cannikin clink.  
 A soldier's a man,  
 O, man's life's but a span,  
 Why then let a soldier drink!  
 Some wine, boys! 70  
 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. 75

- 59 if that which follows only confirms my daydream, i.e. if the result bears out my hopes  
 60 Cf. Dent, W429, 'Sail with wind and tide'; *freely* = without hindrance, just as I want. For similar summing-up lines, cf. *TC* 2.3.266, 'Light boats sail swift, though greater hulks draw deep'; *JC* 5.1.67, 'Why now blow wind, swell billow, and swim bark!'; *Cym* 4.3.46.  
 61 **rouse** carouse, a full bumper  
 65ff. For the song cf. p. 401.  
 65 **cannikin** small drinking can; *-kin* is diminutive (= German *-chen*), as probably in napkin (*OED* *-kin*, suffix)  
**clink** i.e. against someone else's  
 68 Cf. Dent, L251, 'Life is a span', from Psalms 39.6, 'thou hast made my days as it were a span long'; *span* = a short distance or space of time.  
 72 **in England** This draws attention to the play as a play: cf. *Ham* 5.1.148ff.  
 73 **potent in potting** go in for drinking in a big way. Drinking songs before *Oth* praised the superior potting of the English (Lyly, *Sapho*, 3.2.76ff., 'O! thats a roring Englishman, / Who in deepe healths do's so excell, / From Dutch and French he beares the bel') or of the singers themselves (Lyly, *Mother Bombie*, 2.1.149ff.).  
 73–9 **Your** Note the force of Iago's repeated *your* (not quite the same as the indefinite article or 'a typical Dane', etc.): Iago wants to generate camaraderie.  
 74 **swag-bellied** with a belly that sags or wobbles  
 61 God] *Q*; heauen *F* 62–3] *prose F*; *verse Q* pint, / Good faith] *Q*; Good-faith *F* 64.1] Rowe; not in *QF* 65–9, 85–92] *italics QF* (except 85 *Q*) 65 cannikin] *Q*; Cannakin *F* 66 clink] *F*; clinke, clinke *Q* 67–8] *one line QF* 68 O, man's] *F*; a *Q* 71 God] *Q*; Heauen *F*

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. 80

CASSIO To the health of our general!

MONTANO I am for it, lieutenant, and I'll do you justice.

IAGO O sweet England!

[Sings.]

King Stephen was and-a worthy peer, 85

His breeches cost him but a crown,

He held them sixpence all too dear,

With that he called the tailor lown.

He was a wight of high renown

And thou art but of low degree, 90

'Tis pride that pulls the country down,

Then take thine auld cloak about thee.

Some wine, ho!

CASSIO 'Fore God, this is a more exquisite song than the other! 95

IAGO Will you hear't again?

CASSIO No, for I hold him to be unworthy of his place

76 **exquisite** accomplished. Cassio, drunk, gets 'stuck' on this word, which he had used before (2.3.18); slurred by some actors as 'ex-qust'.

78 **he . . . overthrow** he can easily outdrink **Almain** German

79 **pottle** a half-gallon tankard

82-3 **do you justice** drink level with you (Ridley)

85ff. See LN.

85 **and-a** Cf. *TN* 5.1.389, 'When that I was and a little tine boy'; *KL* 3.2.74. A metrical

'fill in' used in ballads (Furness).

86 **a crown** five shillings

88 **lown** loon, rogue; a man of low birth

89-91 Does Iago sing these lines at Cassio, thus provoking 105ff.?

91 perhaps 'it is extravagance in dress that causes hard times in our country' (Kittredge)

92 **auld** old, as in 'auld lang syne' (dialectal)

97 **unworthy** Vaguely aware of professional misconduct, he is too befuddled to pin down or complete his thought.

76 Englishman] *Q*; Englishmen *F* exquisite] *F*; expert *Q* 82 I'll] *F*; I will *Q* 84 SD] *not in QF* 85 and-a] *F*; a *Q* 87 them] *F*; 'em *Q* 92 Then] *Q*; And *F* thine] *Q*; thy *F* auld] *owd Q*; awl'd *F* 94 'Fore God] *Q*; Why *F* 97 to be] *F*; *not in Q*

that does . . . those things. Well, God's above all, and  
there be souls must be saved, and there be souls must  
not be saved. 100

IAGO It's true, good lieutenant.

CASSIO For mine own part, no offence to the general  
nor any man of quality, I hope to be saved.

IAGO And so do I too, lieutenant.

CASSIO Ay, but, by your leave, not before me. The 105  
lieutenant is to be saved before the ancient. Let's have  
no more of this, let's to our affairs. God forgive us  
our sins! Gentlemen, let's look to our business. Do  
not think, gentlemen, I am drunk: this is my ancient,  
this is my right hand, and this is my left. I am not 110  
drunk now: I can stand well enough, and I speak well  
enough.

GENTLEMAN Excellent well.

CASSIO Why, very well then; you must not think then  
that I am drunk. *Exit.*

MONTANO

To th' platform, masters, come, let's set the watch. 116

IAGO

You see this fellow that is gone before,

98 **God's above all** Cf. Dent, H348, 'Heaven (God) is above all.'

99 **be saved** find salvation, go to heaven. Cf. Matthew 10.22, 'he that endureth to the end shall be saved'.

102-3 Cf. Sir Andrew (*TN* 1.3.117-18) who thinks himself as good as 'any man in Illyria, whatsoever he be, under the degree of my betters'.

103 **quality** high birth, good social position (i.e. excluding Iago)

105 **not . . . me** Cf. *MA* 4.2.19-20, 'write God

first, for God defend but God should go before such villains!'

107 **affairs** i.e. duties

107-8 **God . . . sins** Cf. the Lord's Prayer.

110 **right . . . left** Cf. Dent, H74, 'He knows not (knows) his right hand from his left.'

116 **platform** gun-platform

**masters** gentlemen

**set the watch** mount the guard

117 **fellow** man; but could = worthless person (*OED* 9, 10c), i.e. obliquely contemptuous

98 does . . . those] *this edn*; does those *QF* God's] *Q*; heau'ns *F* 99 'must] *F*; that must *Q* 99-100 and . . . saved] *F*; not in *Q* 101 It's] *F*; It is *Q* 104 too] *F*; not in *Q* 106 have] *F*; ha *Q* 107 God] *Q*; not in *F* 110 left] *F*; left hand *Q* 111 I speak] *F*; speake *Q* 113 SP] *Gent. F. All. Q* 114 Why] *F*; not in *Q* 2] then] *F*; not in *Q* 116 To th' platform] *F*; To the platforme *Q*

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, 120  
 The one as long as th'other. 'Tis pity of him:  
 I fear the trust Othello puts him in  
 On some odd time of his infirmity  
 Will shake this island.

MONTANO But is he often thus?

IAGO  
 'Tis evermore the prologue to his sleep: 125  
 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 130  
 And looks not on his evils: is not this true?

*Enter RODERIGO.*

IAGO [*aside*]  
 How now, Roderigo?

118 **stand by Caesar** i.e. as an equal; or, as his right-hand man

120 It counterbalances his virtue as exactly as day and night are equal at the equinox.

121 **pity of** a pity about

122 **trust** position of trust. But Capell's *in him* (for *him in*) may be right.

123 at some unusual (or, unexpected) time, when he suffers from his infirmity

124 **shake** (?) convulse (deliberately vague?)

125 **evermore** emphatic form of 'ever'

126 He'll stay awake twice round the clock or *horologe* ('while the clock strikes two rounds, or four-and-twenty hours' [Johnson]).

127 **cradle** unexplained; perhaps 'if drink doesn't rock him asleep, like a baby in a cradle'. But this is suspiciously abrupt: cf. *2H4* 3.1.19–20, 'Seal up the ship-boy's eyes, and rock his brains / In cradle of the rude imperious surge', which is immediately intelligible. Perhaps a misreading (*cradle* for *nodle*)? Viz. 'if drink doesn't unsteady his brain'. Cf. *TS* 1.1.64, 'your noddle' (= your head).

128 **put in mind** made aware

130 **Prizes** esteems

**virtue** unusual ability

131 **looks not on** disregards

**evils** i.e. faults

118 He is] *Q*; He's *F* 122 puts] *F*; put *Q* 125 the] *Q*; his *F* 127–8 It were . . . it] *as F*; *one line Q* 127 It were] *F*; Twere *Q* 130 Prizes] *F*; Praises *Q* virtue] *F*; virtues *Q* 131 looks] *F*; looke *Q* 132 SD] *Capell*; *not in QF*

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 135  
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  
*A cry within: 'Help! help!'*  
To cure him of this evil. But hark, what noise? 140

*Enter CASSIO pursuing RODERIGO.*

CASSIO Zounds, you rogue! you rascal!

MONTANO What's the matter, lieutenant?

CASSIO A knave teach me my duty? I'll beat the knave  
into a twiggen bottle!

RODERIGO Beat me? 145

CASSIO Dost thou prate, rogue?

MONTANO Nay, good lieutenant! I pray you, sir, hold  
your hand.

CASSIO Let me go, sir, or I'll knock you o'er the  
mazzard. 150

135–6 should risk such a place as that of his own deputy by entrusting it to one with an ingrained weakness (*ingraft* = engrafted, grafted on)

137 **action** three syllables. Perhaps 'so' should begin 138.

140.1 Q '*driuing in*' = *Tem* 5.1.255, '*Enter Ariell, driuing in Caliban*', i.e. chasing on to the stage, whereas usually *in* = off stage, like *within* (cf. 5.2.84ff.). See *Texts*, 161.

143 **beat** Social inferiors were beaten, equals had to be challenged. In classical comedy

and its derivatives beatings were a comic routine: cf. *TS* 4.1.165, etc., *CE* 2.2.23.

144 **twiggen** made of twigs or wicker-work (= Q *wicker*), 'like a Chianti flask' (Ridley); i.e. the criss-cross of weals on his body will look like wicker-work

146 **prate** chatter; could = speak boastfully or officiously

150 **mazzard** cup, bowl; (jocular) head. Cf. *Ham* 5.1.89. No doubt bottles and drinking cups were used in this scene.

133 SD] *Q*; not in *F* 137–8 It were . . . Moor] as *F*; one line *Q* 138 Not] *F*; Nor *Q* 139 SD] *Helpe, helpe, within Q*; not in *F* 140.1] *pursuing F*; *driuing in Q* 141 Zounds] *Q* (Zouns); not in *F* 143 duty? I'll] as *F*; duty; but I'll *Q* 144 twiggen bottle] *Twiggen-Bottle F*; wicker bottle *Q* 147–50] as *Q*; *F* lines as verse Lieutenant: / hand. / (Sir) / Mazzard. / 147 Nay . . . I pray you] *F*; Good . . . pray *Q*

MONTANO Come, come, you're drunk.

CASSIO Drunk?

*They fight.*

IAGO [*aside to Roderigo*]

Away, I say, go out and cry a mutiny. [*Exit Roderigo.*]

Nay, good lieutenant! God's will, gentlemen –

Help ho! Lieutenant! sir – Montano – sir – 155

Help, masters, here's a goodly watch indeed. *A bell rings.*

Who's that which rings the bell? Diablo, ho!

The town will rise, God's will, lieutenant, hold,

You will be shamed for ever!

*Enter OTHELLO and Attendants.*

OTHELLO

What is the matter here?

MONTANO

Zounds, I bleed still; 160

I am hurt to th' death: he dies! [*Lunges at Cassio.*]

OTHELLO

Hold, for your lives!

IAGO

Hold, ho! Lieutenant! sir – Montano – gentlemen –

Have you forgot all sense of place and duty?

Hold, the general speaks to you: hold, for shame!

OTHELLO

Why, how now, ho? From whence ariseth this? 165

153 **mutiny** riot

155 **ho!** could = *whoa*, a call to stop or cease  
what one is doing (*OED* int. 2)

156 **goodly** fine (ironical)

157 **the bell** the alarm bell

**Diablo** devil. Only once in Shakespeare in  
this Spanish form (Iago is a Spanish name:  
see p. 338).

158 **rise** take up arms; revolt

159 **shamed** disgraced (*Texts*, 118, 141)

161 **he dies** I'll kill him (cf. 5.1.10). Some,  
following Q2, treat *he dies* as a SD, but (1)  
Montano does not die, (2) the metre  
requires *he dies*.

**for your lives** if you value your lives

163 \*Hanmer's transposition must be right.

151 you're] *F*; you are *Q* 152 SD] *Q*; not in *F* 153 'SD] *Aside Capell*; not in *QF* 'SD] not in *QF*;  
*Exit Rod. Q2* 154 God's will] *Q*; *Alas F* 155 Montano – sir] *Montanio*, sir, *Q*; *Montano: F* 156 SD]  
*A bell rung: Q opp.* 153; not in *F* 157 which] *F*; that *Q* 158 God's will] *Q*; *Fie, fie F* hold] *Q*; not in  
*F* 159 You . . . shamed] *Q*; You'll be ashamed *d F* 159.1] *F*; *Enter Othello, and Gentlemen with weapons.*  
*Q* 160 Zounds] *Q*; not in *F* 160–1 I bleed . . . dies] *one line F* 161 th'] *F*; the *Q* he dies!] He dies. *F*;  
not in *Q*; he faints. *Q2 (SD)* SD] *this edn*; not in *QF*; assailing Cassio again. *Capell* 162 ho] *F*; hold  
*Q* sir – Montano –] *sir Montanio, Q*; *Sir Montano, F* 163 sense of place] *Hanmer*; place of sence  
*QF* 164 hold] *F*; hold, hold *Q* 165 ariseth] *F*; arises *Q*



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. 170  
 Silence that dreadful bell, it frights the isle  
 From her propriety. What is the matter, masters?  
 Honest Iago, that look'st dead with grieving,  
 Speak: who began this? on thy love I charge thee.

IAGO

I do not know, friends all, but now, even now, 175  
 In quarter and in terms like bride and groom  
 Divesting them for bed; and then, but now,  
 As if some planet had unwitting men,  
 Swords out, and tilting one at other's breasts  
 In opposition bloody. I cannot speak 180  
 Any beginning to this peevish odds,  
 And would in action glorious I had lost  
 Those legs that brought me to a part of it.

166–7 See LN.

168 **put by** give up  
**barbarous** Cf. 1.3.356n.

169 **carve** cut, cleave. Cf. Dent, C110, 'To be one's own carver'; *Faerie Queene*, 2.8.22, 'I can carve with this inchaunted brond [sword]'. Perhaps alluding to 'carving' meat at table.

170 **light** of small value  
**upon his motion** the instant he moves (Ridley)

171 **dreadful** (stronger than now) terrifying

172 **propriety** proper character, own nature (i.e. peacefulness)

**masters** (He recognizes their social standing.)

174 **on . . . thee** By your love (affection) for me, I order you (to speak).

175 **all**, Some editors drop F's comma.

**but** only

176 **quarter** relations with, conduct towards, another (*OED* 17)

**terms** language

**like . . . groom** Is this meant to be cheeky (glancing at Othello and Desdemona)?

177 **Divesting them** undressing themselves

178 **unwitted** deprived of wits (*OED*, first here). It was thought that planets, if they came too near, could make men mad. Cf. Dent, P389, 'To be planet-struck', and 5.2.108–10.

179 **tilting** thrusting

180 **speak** reveal (*OED* 28)

181 **peevish** senseless; headstrong (*OED* 1, 4)  
**odds** disagreement, quarrel (*OED*: in sixteenth century regularly construed as singular)

183 **a . . . it** i.e. take part in it

167 hath] *F*; has *Q* 169 for] *F*; forth *Q* 172 What is] *F*; what's *Q* 173 look'st] *Hanmer*; looks *QF* 175 all,] *F*; all *Q* 177 for] *F*; to *Q* 179 breasts] *F*; breast *Q* 183 Those] *F*; These *Q*

OTHELLO

How comes it, Michael, you are thus forgot?

CASSIO

I pray you pardon me, I cannot speak. 185

OTHELLO

Worthy Montano, you were wont to be civil:  
 The gravity and stillness of your youth  
 The world hath noted, and your name is great  
 In mouths of wisest censure. What's the matter  
 That you unlace your reputation thus 190  
 And spend your rich opinion for the name  
 Of a night-brawler? Give me answer to it.

MONTANO

Worthy Othello, I am hurt to danger:  
 Your officer Iago can inform you,  
 While I spare speech, which something now offends  
 me, 195  
 Of all that I do know; nor know I aught  
 By me that's said or done amiss this night  
 Unless self-charity be sometimes a vice,  
 And to defend ourselves it be a sin  
 When violence assails us.

OTHELLO

Now, by heaven, 200

My blood begins my safer guides to rule  
 And passion, having my best judgement collied,

184 **are thus forgot** have thus forgotten yourself186 **civil** civilized (as befits a citizen)187 **stillness** quietness of temper188 **great** i.e. greatly praised189 **In . . . censure** in the mouths of men of wisest judgement190 **unlace** undo (the laces of a purse); cut or carve (a boar or rabbit: a hunting term) (*OED* 1, 3)191 **spend** waste, destroy**opinion** reputation192 **night-brawler** unique in Shakespeare193 **to danger** to the point of danger195 **something** somewhat**offends** hurts (understatement)198 **self-charity** regard for one's self (unique in Shakespeare). Many new compounds with 'self' appeared in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries; Shakespeare coined several (cf. 3.3.203).201 **blood** passion, anger202 **collied** darkened: so *MND* 1.1.145, 'Brief as the lightning in the collied night'

184 comes . . . are] *F*; came . . . were *Q* 186 Montano . . . wont to] *F*; *Montanio* . . . wont *Q* 189 mouths] *F*; men *Q* 192 it] *F*; 't *Q* 198 sometimes] *F*; sometime *Q* 202 collied] *F*; coold *Q*; quell'd *Capell*

Assays to lead the way. Zounds, if I once stir,  
 Or do but lift this arm, the best of you  
 Shall sink in my rebuke. Give me to know 205  
 How this foul rout began, who set it on,  
 And he that is approved in this offence,  
 Though he had twinned with me, both at a birth,  
 Shall lose me. What, in a town of war  
 Yet wild, the people's hearts brimful of fear, 210  
 To manage private and domestic quarrel?  
 In night, and on the court and guard of safety?  
 'Tis monstrous. Iago, who began't?

MONTANO

If partially affined or leagued in office  
 Thou dost deliver more or less than truth 215  
 Thou art no soldier.

IAGO

Touch me not so near.

I had rather have this tongue cut from my mouth  
 Than it should do offence to Michael Cassio,  
 Yet I persuade myself to speak the truth

203 **Assays** tries

**stir** begin to act, bestir myself

205 **sink** fall; go down to hell (*OED* 2, obsolete)

**my rebuke** the shameful check (or, disgrace; reprimand) that I shall give him

206 **foul rout** disgraceful brawl

207 **approved** confirmed (guilty)

208 **twinned** . . . **birth** been my twin, both born at one birth. Twins can be born close together or with an interval between them.

209 **town of war** garrison town

210 **wild unruly**, uncontrolled  
**the** . . . **fear** But cf. 2.1.201, 'our wars are done'.

211 **manage** conduct

**domestic** internal

212 **In night** usually 'in th(e) night': in Shakespeare's hand *th* sometimes looked like a meaningless squiggle (*Texts*, 84), so was dropped by a copyist

**and on** . . . **safety** and on the courtyard and (during) the guard duty meant to protect our general safety. But Theobald's transposition, 'of guard and', may be right (cf. 163).

213 **monstrous** a trisyllable (monsterous) (Malone)

214 **\*If** . . . **office** if bound (to Cassio) by partiality, or because he's a colleague

215 **more** . . . **truth** Cf. Dent, T590, 'The truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth'.

216 **Touch** charge, take to task (*OED* 19)

**near** closely

218 **offence** harm

203 Zounds] as *Q*; not in *F* once] *F*; not in *Q* 210 brimful] *Q*; brim-full *F* 211 quarrel] *F*; quarrels *Q* 212 and guard of] *QF*; of Guard and as *Theobald* 213 began't] *F*; began *Q* 214 partially] *F*; partiality *Q* leagued] *Pope*; league *QF* 217 have] *F*; ha *Q* cut] *F*; out *Q*

Shall nothing wrong him. Thus it is, general: 220  
 Montano and myself being in speech,  
 There comes a fellow crying out for help  
 And Cassio following him with determined sword  
 To execute upon him. Sir, this gentleman  
 Steps in to Cassio and entreats his pause, 225  
 Myself the crying fellow did pursue  
 Lest by his clamour, as it so fell out,  
 The town might fall in fright. He, swift of foot,  
 Outran my purpose, and I returned the rather  
 For that I heard the clink and fall of swords 230  
 And Cassio high in oath, which till tonight  
 I ne'er might say before. When I came back,  
 For this was brief, I found them close together  
 At blow and thrust, even as again they were  
 When you yourself did part them. 235  
 More of this matter cannot I report.  
 But men are men, the best sometimes forget;  
 Though Cassio did some little wrong to him,  
 As men in rage strike those that wish them best,  
 Yet surely Cassio, I believe, received 240  
 From him that fled some strange indignity

220 **nothing** (adverb) not at all, in no way

**Thus it is** so *Cor* 1.3.96

223 **him** perhaps an error (anticipating *him*, 224) (Malone)

**determined** transferred epithet: Cassio was determined

**sword** At 2.1.269ff. Iago spoke of what might happen. At 2.3.143 Cassio said he would *beat* Roderigo, perhaps with the flat of his sword.

224 **execute upon** bring (a weapon) into operation against; but also implies 'put to death' (*OED* 1b, 6)

**this gentleman** Montano

225 **his pause** i.e. him to pause

229 **the rather** all the more quickly

230 **fall** downward stroke (of a sword): so *R3* 5.3.111

231 **high** loud (as in 'high words')

235 This short line may mark a pause (Iago wipes his brow?). It also marks a change of tactics: having described what happened, he 'defends' Cassio.

237 Cf. Dent, M541, 'Men are (but) men'; B3 16.1, 'The best go astray': *forget* = forget themselves, or, forget their responsibilities.

238 **him** Montano

239 **those . . . best** even those who are most favourably disposed towards them

241 **indignity** insult

220 Thus] *Q*; This *F* 229 the] *Q*; then *F* 231 oath] *F*; oaths *Q* 232 say] *F*; see *Q* 236 cannot I] *F*; can I not *Q*

Which patience could not pass.

OTHELLO I know, Iago,  
Thy honesty and love doth mince this matter,  
Making it light to Cassio. Cassio, I love thee,

*Enter DESDEMONA, attended.*

But never more be officer of mine. 245  
Look if my gentle love be not raised up!  
I'll make thee an example.

DESDEMONA

What is the matter, dear?

OTHELLO All's well now, sweeting,  
Come away to bed. – Sir, for your hurts  
Myself will be your surgeon. Lead him off. 250  
[*Montano is led off.*]

Iago, look with care about the town  
And silence those whom this vile brawl distracted.  
Come, Desdemona: 'tis the soldier's life  
To have their balmy slumbers waked with strife.  
*Exeunt [all but Iago and Cassio.]*

IAGO What, are you hurt, lieutenant? 255

242 **pass** let pass, agree to

243 **love** affection (for Cassio). The word is used three times in four lines, with different connotations.

**mince this matter** Cf. Dent, M755, 'To mince the matter'. Viz. make light of or extenuate this fault.

244 **Making** . . . Cassio making light of it for Cassio's benefit

245 Cf. LN, 1.1.8 and 1.1.16n. Othello personally appoints and dismisses his officers.

247 Cf. Dent, E212.1, 'To make one an example'.

248 **sweeting** sweetheart

250 I'll make it my business that your wounds are properly treated, presumably by the general's surgeon (5.1.100). Some think that Othello himself dresses Montano's wounds (Bradshaw, 151, 164).

**Lead him off.** 'I am persuaded, these words were originally a marginal direction' (Malone), i.e. were accidentally printed as dialogue. Cf. *Texts*, 38.

252 **distracted** threw into confusion

254 **balmy slumbers** Having just heard that Othello and Desdemona are bride and groom (14, 171), are we really to believe in their balmy slumbers?

244.1] *F* (after 245); *Enter* Desdemona, with others. *Q* (opp. 245, 246) 248 dear] *F*; not in *Q* now] *Q*; not in *F* 250 SD] as *Capell*; not in *QF* 252 vile] *Q*; vil'd *F* 254 SD] *Exit* Moore, Desdemona, and attendants. *Q* (after 255); *Exit. F*

CASSIO Ay, past all surgery.

IAGO Marry, God forbid!

CASSIO Reputation, reputation, reputation! O, I have  
lost my reputation, I have lost the immortal part of  
myself – and what remains is bestial. My reputation, 260  
Iago, my reputation!

IAGO As I am an honest man I thought you had  
received some bodily wound; there is more of sense  
in that than in reputation. Reputation is an idle and  
most false imposition, oft got without merit and lost 265  
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 270  
offenceless dog to affright an imperious lion. Sue to  
him again, and he's yours.

CASSIO I will rather sue to be despised, than to deceive  
so good a commander with so slight, so drunken, and

257 **God forbid** common in the Bible (Genesis  
44.7, Joshua 22.29, Romans 3.4, 6, 31,  
etc.): usually a pious person's phrase

259ff. Cf. *R2* 1.1.177–8, 'The purest treasure  
mortal times afford / Is spotless reputation';  
Dent, C817, 'He that has lost his credit is  
dead to the world.' Usually one's *soul* is  
'the immortal part'.

263 **sense** capability of feeling

264 **idle** baseless, useless

265 **imposition** something imposed (by others)

266–7 **You . . . loser** Cf. Dent, M254, 'A man  
is weal or woe as he thinks himself so.'

267 **repute** consider  
**man** Cf. 40.

268 **recover** regain (possession of), win back

269 **cast . . . mood** cast off in his (passing)  
mood of anger

270 **malice** ill-will, enmity

270–1 **as . . . lion** Cf. Dent, D443, 'Beat the  
dog (whelp) before the lion.' Also  
proverbial in French: Cotgrave glossed 'To  
punish a mean man in the presence of  
and for an example to the mighty'. Here  
the 'lion' is either the Venetian army or the  
Cypriots (Othello has to establish his  
authority with both).

271 **offenceless** unoffending

**Sue** petition (him to pardon you)

274 **slight** worthless

257 God] *Q*; Heauen *F* 258–61] *as F*; *Q* lines my reputation: / selfe, / reputation, / reputation. /  
Reputation] *twice Q*; *three times F* O, I have] *F*; I ha *Q* 259 have] *F*; had *Q* part] *F*; part sir *Q* 262  
thought] *Q*; had thought *F* 263 of sense] *Cam 1892 (anon.)*; offence *Q*; sence *F* 268 ways] *Q*; more  
ways *F* 274 slight] *F*; light *Q*

so indiscreet an officer. Drunk? and speak parrot? and 275  
squabble? swagger? swear? and discourse fustian with  
one's own shadow? 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? 280  
What had he done to you?

CASSIO I know not.

IAGO Is't possible?

CASSIO I remember a mass of things, but nothing dis-  
tinctly; a quarrel, but nothing wherefore. O God, that 285  
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? 290

CASSIO It hath pleased the devil drunkenness to give  
place to the devil wrath; one unperfectness shows me  
another, to make me frankly despise myself.

IAGO Come, you are too severe a moraler. As the time,  
the place and the condition of this country stands, I 295  
could heartily wish this had not befallen; but since it  
is as it is, mend it for your own good.

275 **indiscreet** lacking in sound judgement;  
inconsiderate

**Drunk?** F often uses? where we would  
put! (as perhaps here).

**speak parrot** babble senselessly. Cf. Dent,  
P60, 'To speak (prate) like a parrot'.

276 **swagger** quarrel, squabble  
**fustian** nonsense

287 **pleasance** pleasure, enjoyment

288 **transform** . . . **beasts** perhaps alluding to  
the Circe story

289–90 **how** . . . **recovered** How did it come  
about that you have thus recovered?

291–2 Cf. Ephesians 4.27, 'Neither give place

to the devil'. Drunkenness (= gluttony?)  
and wrath could be two of the seven deadly  
sins. 'The whole of Cassio's apostrophe . . .  
finds a close parallel in Ecclus. 31.25–31'  
(Noble, 217).

292 **wrath** could mean anger with himself  
(273ff.), and that he has not recovered,  
because still angry; or, anger with  
Roderigo  
**unperfectness** (unique in Shakespeare)  
imperfection

293 **frankly** undisguisedly; unreservedly

294 **moral** moralizer (a coinage)

297 **mend** rectify

275 so] *F*; not in *Q* 275–7 Drunk? . . . shadow?] *F*; not in *Q* 285 God] *Q*; not in *F* 287–8 pleasance,  
revel] *F*; Reuell, pleasure *Q* 289 Why.] *Q*; Why? *F* 295 and] *F*; not in *Q* 296 not] *F*; not so *Q*

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 300 sensible man, by and by a fool, and presently a beast! O strange! – Every inordinate cup is unblest, and the ingredience is a devil.

IAGO Come, come, good wine is a good familiar creature, if it be well used: exclaim no more against it. 305 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 some time, man. I'll tell you what you shall do. Our general's wife is now the general. I may say so in this 310 respect, for that he hath devoted and given up himself to the contemplation, mark and denotement of her parts and graces. Confess yourself freely to her, importune her help to put you in your place again.

299 **Hydra** The many-headed monster of Greek mythology, which it was one of Hercules' tasks to destroy; 'as each head was cut off, two more grew in its place' (Ridley). Cf. Dent, H278, 'As many heads as Hydra'.

300 **stop** plug, close. Cf. Dent, M1264, 'To stop one's mouth'.

301 **by and by** soon afterwards  
**presently** in a little while  
**beast** Cf. Dent, B152.1, 'A drunken man is a beast.'

302 **inordinate** immoderate. Only found three times in Shakespeare: *Luc* 94, *IH4* 3.2.12 both read *in-*, so *F* is likely to be right here.

303 **ingredience** that which enters into a mixture (*OED*); cf. *Mac* 1.7.11, 4.1.34.

304 **familiar** friendly; 'punning on the sense of "familiar spirit", with an emphasis on *good*; he half admits that wine may be a devil, but good wine well used is a *good*

devil' (Ridley)

304–5 See LN.

305 **well** properly

307 **approved** proved by experience

**sir** Cassio senses that Iago puts pressure on him.

309–10 **Our . . . general** Cf. 2.1.74; Ovid, *Heroides*, 9.114, 'you are victor over the beast, but she over you'.

311 **for that that**

312 **mark** marking, observation

**\*denotement** Cf. 3.3.126. Here = nothing(?); *Q* 'deuoted . . . to the . . . deuotement' must be wrong. *F* followed *Q*; the corruption may involve more than a turned letter (u/n).

313 **parts** personal qualities. Cf. *MA* 5.2.60, 'for which of my bad parts didst thou first fall in love with me?'

**graces** pleasing qualities

300 them] *F*; em *Q* 302 O strange!] *F*; not in *Q* inordinate] *F*; vnordinate *Q* 303 ingredience] *Q*; Ingredient *F* 308 some] *Q*; a *F* 309 man] *F*; not in *Q* I'll] *Q*; I *F* 311 hath] *F*; has *Q* 312 mark] *Q*; marke: *F* denotement] *Q2*; deuotement *QF* 314 help] *F*; shee'll helpe *Q*



She is of so free, so kind, so apt, so blest a disposition 315  
 that she holds it a vice in her goodness not to do  
 more than she is requested. This broken joint between  
 you and her husband entreat her to splinter – and my  
 fortunes against any lay worth naming, this crack of  
 your love shall grow stronger than it was before. 320

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 325  
 for me. I am desperate of my fortunes if they check  
 me here.

IAGO You are in the right. Good-night, lieutenant, I  
 must to the watch. 329

CASSIO Good-night, honest Iago. *Exit.*

IAGO

And what's he then that says I play the villain?  
 When this advice is free I give and honest,  
 Probal to thinking and indeed the course

315 **free** generous; ready, willing (to grant)  
 (*OED* 4, 20)

**apt** fit, ready

**blest a disposition** He appropriates a  
 thought he had previously ridiculed  
 (2.1.249–51).

317–18 **This . . . splinter** Cf. Dent, B515, 'A  
 broken bone is the stronger when it is well  
 set'; 2H4 4.1.220, 'like a broken limb  
 united, / Grow stronger for the breaking';  
*splinter* = apply splints to.

319 **lay** wager

**crack** partial fracture (*OED* 7b)

323 **kindness** natural inclination; affection

324 **freely** unreservedly

**betimes** early

325–6 **undertake for me** take my case in hand

326 **I . . . of** I have lost hope concerning  
**check** stop

328 **You . . . right** You are right; also hinting  
 'you have justice on your side', i.e. you  
 have been badly treated.

331 He picks up where he left off at 2.1.308,  
 but now *knavery* sees clearly how to  
 proceed. Note his alertness to possible  
 reactions.

332 **free** frank and open; honourable; freely  
 given

333 **Probal** probable; or, 'such as approves  
 itself' (from Lat. *probo*, I prove, make  
 credible). A nonce word. Cf. *admiral* =  
 admirable (Dekker, *Patient Grissill*,  
 2.2.91). Iago has a habit of weighing  
 probabilities: 2.1.282ff., 5.1.11ff.

315 of so] *F*; so *Q* 316 that] *Q*; not in *F* 317 broken joint] *F*; braule *Q* 320 it was] *F*; twas *Q* 324–  
 5 I will] *F*; will I *Q* 327 here] *Q*; not in *F* 331] as *Q*; *F* lines then, / Villaine? /

To win the Moor again? For 'tis most easy  
 Th'inclining Desdemona to subdue 335  
 In any honest suit. She's framed as fruitful  
 As the free elements: and then for her  
 To win the Moor, were't to renounce his baptism,  
 All seals and symbols of redeemed sin,  
 His soul is so enfeathered to her love 340  
 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! 345  
 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, 350  
 I'll pour this pestilence into his ear:

334 **win** regain the favour of

335 **inclining** mentally inclining (to be helpful); perhaps physically leaning (towards a suitor)

**subdue** win

336 **framed** made, fashioned

**fruitful** beneficial; generous

337 **As . . . elements** It is her nature to be as beneficial (to others) as the unrestrained elements are there to be used.

338 **win** win over

339 **seals** tokens. Cf. Ephesians 4.30, 'the holy spirit of God, by whom ye are sealed unto the day of redemption' (i.e. the Anglican doctrine of baptism: Noble, 218).

**redeemed** redeemed (Christ as Redeemer delivers us from sin); paid for, ransomed

341 **list** likes

342 **her appetite** 'his desire for her' (Ridley); or, her fancy, inclination

343 **weak** enslaved

**function** natural instincts (Ridley); or perhaps 'functioning (of mental and moral powers)'

344 **parallel course** i.e. it seems to lead straight to his advantage but in fact takes him in the opposite direction, to his destruction.

345 **Divinity of hell!** 'O, the theology of hell!' Or, he addresses Satan, 'O god of hell!' Cf. 1.3.358.

346 **devils** (including himself!). Cf. Dent, D231, 'The devil can transform himself into an angel of light.'

**put on** incite

347 **suggest** prompt, tempt

349 **Plies** solicits

351 **pestilence** that which is morally pernicious. Cf. *Ham* 1.5.63–4, 'in the porches of my ears did pour / The leprous distillment'.

334] as *Q*: *F* lines againe. / easie / 335 Th'] *F*; The *Q* 338 were't] *Q*: were *F* 346 the] *F*; their *Q* 348 whiles] *F*; while *Q* 349 fortune] *F*; fortunes *Q*

That she repeals him for her body's lust.  
 And by how much she strives to do him good  
 She shall undo her credit with the Moor—  
 So will I turn her virtue into pitch 355  
 And out of her own goodness make the net  
 That shall enmesh them all.

*Enter* RODERIGO.

How now, Roderigo?

RODERIGO I do follow here in the chase not like a  
 hound that hunts, but one that fills up the cry. My  
 money is almost spent, I have been tonight 360  
 exceedingly well cudgelled, and I think the issue will  
 be I shall have so much experience for my pains: and  
 so, with no money at all, and a little more wit, return  
 again to Venice.

IAGO

How poor are they that have not patience! 365  
 What wound did ever heal but by degrees?  
 Thou know'st we work by wit and not by witchcraft,  
 And wit depends on dilatory time.  
 Does't not go well? Cassio hath beaten thee  
 And thou by that small hurt hast cashiered Cassio. 370

352 **repeals** tries to get him restored to his  
 former position (*OED* 3d); lit. recalls

354 **credit** reputation; trustworthiness

355 **pitch** suggests blackness and foulness, and  
 'a snaring substance, like birdlime . . .  
 leading on to the *net*' (Ridley)

357 **enmesh** catch or entangle, as in a net  
 (unique in Shakespeare). Cf. 2.1.168  
*ensnare*.

359 **cry** pack, 'the hounds who merely give  
 tongue as they follow those who are really  
 running the scent' (Ridley)

361 **cudgelled** Cf. 143n.

361–2 **I . . . pains** Cf. Dent, L1, 'He has his  
 labor for his pains'; i.e. so much experience  
 and nothing more.

363 **wit** sense

365 Cf. Dent, P103, 'He that has no patience  
 has nothing.'

367 **we** How much wit has Roderigo  
 contributed?

**wit** cleverness, good judgement

370 **cashiered** (succeeded in having Cassio)  
 dismissed; cf p. 338 (to 'cass' = to cashier).

357] *QF* lines all: / *Roderigo?* / enmesh them] enmesh *em Q*; en-mash them *F* SD] *opp.* all 357 *Q*; after  
 357 *Roderigo F* 360 have] *F*; ha *Q* 361 and] *F*; not in *Q* 362–4 pains . . . Venice] as *F*; paines, as that  
 comes to, and no money at all, and with that wit returne to Venice. *Q* 365 have] *F*; ha *Q* 367 know'st]  
*F*; knowest *Q* 369 Does't] Do'st *Q*; Dos't *F* hath] *F*; has *Q* 370 hast] *Q*; hath *F*

Though other things grow fair against the sun  
 Yet fruits that blossom first will first be ripe;  
 Content thyself a while. By the mass, 'tis morning:  
 Pleasure and action make the hours seem short.  
 Retire thee, go where thou art billeted, 375  
 Away, I say, thou shalt know more hereafter:  
 Nay, get thee gone. *Exit Roderigo.*

Two things are to be done:  
 My wife must move for Cassio to her mistress,  
 I'll set her on.  
 Myself the while to draw the Moor apart 380  
 And bring him jump when he may Cassio find  
 Soliciting his wife: ay, that's the way!  
 Dull not device by coldness and delay! *Exit.*

[3.1] *Enter CASSIO and some Musicians.*

CASSIO

Masters, play here, I will content your pains;

371–2 'Though other plants grow vigorously when exposed to (= *against*) the sun, yet fruit trees that blossom first will bear ripe fruit first' (NB this is not always true); i.e. though others thrive in Desdemona's favour, we'll succeed in bringing our plots to fruition. In this false analogy blossom = Cassio's cudgelling!

373 **By the mass** a mild oath, hence changed in F, found also in plays with Protestant settings (*Ham* 2.1.50, 3.2.378, etc.). Cf. 3.3.74n.

374 Cf. Dent, H747, 'Hours of pleasure are short.'

375 **billeted** assigned quarters (troops, or others)

378 **My wife** Do husbands think of 'my wife', or think of her by name? Here *my wife*

helps the audience. Cf. 5.2.95–6.

**move** solicit

379 Short lines in Iago's soliloquies suggest pauses, as he thinks of a new stratagem (cf. 1.3.400, 3.3.323).

380 **\*the while** in the meantime

381 **jump** precisely (at the moment when)

383 **Dull** an imperative, addressed to himself: 'don't let the plot lose its momentum'

**device** plot, stratagem; pleasure, desire (*OED* 3, 6)

**coldness** lack of enthusiasm

**3.1.1–20** Cf. *RJ* 4.5.102ff., *AYL* 5.3.34ff.: the Clown's baiting of the Musicians was a 'comic turn'.

1 **content your pains** reward you for taking the trouble

372 Yet] *F*; But *Q* 373 By the mass] *Q*; Introth *F* 377] as *Q*; *F* lines gone. / done: / SD] *F*; not in *Q* Two] *F*; Some *Q* 379–80] as *Q*; one line *F* 380 Myself the while] *Theobald*; My selfe awhile, *Q*; my selfe, a while, *F* 383 SD] *F*; *Exeunt. Q* 3.1] *Actus Tertius. Scena Prima. F*; not in *Q* 0.1] *Enter Cassio, with Musicians and the Clowne. Q*; *Enter Cassio, Musicians, and Clowne. F*

Something that's brief, and bid 'Good morrow,  
general.'

*They play. Enter CLOWN.*

- CLOWN Why, masters, have your instruments been in  
Naples, that they speak i'th' nose thus?
- 1 MUSICIAN How, sir? how? 5
- CLOWN Are these, I pray you, wind instruments?
- 1 MUSICIAN Ay marry are they, sir.
- CLOWN O, thereby hangs a tail.
- 1 MUSICIAN Whereby hangs a tail, sir?
- CLOWN Marry, sir, by many a wind instrument that I 10  
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.
- 1 MUSICIAN Well, sir, we will not.
- CLOWN If you have any music that may not be heard, 15  
to't again. But, as they say, to hear music the general  
does not greatly care.
- 1 MUSICIAN We have none such, sir.

2 **Good morrow** the traditional *aubade* to wake bride and groom after the wedding night. Cf. Donne's 'The Good-Morrow' (morrow = morning).

2.1 CLOWN *Clown* could = peasant, countryman; ignorant or rude fellow; fool or jester (in a great house or in the theatre). Here the theatre clown plays a clown (a comic servant). Shakespeare gave names to most of his clowns and fools, but not in *Oth* and *KL*.

3–4 See LN.

8 **tail** i.e. a penis (or animal tail?). Cf. *AYL*

2.7.28; Dent, T48, 'Thereby hangs a tale' (= there's a story about that).

10 **wind instrument** 'Podex – or *ars musica*' (Partridge). A joke about flatulence.

12–13 **for love's sake** So Philemon, 1.9, 'Yet for love's sake I rather beseech thee'; for Q's *of all loues*, cf. *MND* 2.2.154.

13 **noise** could mean 'an agreeable or melodious sound' (*OED* 5): the clown specializes in ambiguous insults

18 **none such** perhaps a quibble: 'None-such' was the name of a popular tune (R. King, as in 3–4n.)

2.1] as Q2 (*They play, and enter the Clowne.*); not in QF 3 have] F; ha Q in] F; at Q 4 i'th'] F; i'the Q 5 SP] Boy Q (*throughout*); Mus. F (*throughout*) 6 pray you,] F; pray, cald Q 12–13 for . . . sake] F; of all loues Q 18 have] F; ha Q

- CLOWN Then put up your pipes in your bag, for I'll  
away. Go, vanish into air, away! *Exeunt Musicians.*
- CASSIO Dost thou hear, mine honest friend? 21
- CLOWN No, I hear not your honest friend, I hear you.
- CASSIO Prithee keep up thy quillets; there's a poor piece  
of gold for thee – if the gentlewoman that attends the  
general's wife be stirring, tell her there's one Cassio 25  
entreats her a little favour of speech. Wilt thou do  
this?
- CLOWN She is stirring, sir; if she will stir hither, I shall  
seem to notify unto her.

*Enter IAGO.*

- CASSIO  
Do, good my friend. (*Exit Clown.*) In happy time,  
Iago. 30
- IAGO  
You have not been a-bed then?
- CASSIO  
Why no, the day had broke before we parted.  
I have made bold, Iago, to send in  
To your wife: my suit to her is that she will

- 19 **put** . . . **pipes** could = desist, 'shut up' (OED pipe *le*), or pack up your pipes
- 19–20 perhaps alluding to the practice of carrying away a tedious Fool in a cloak-bag (cf. Leslie Hotson, *Shakespeare's Motley*, 1952, ch. 4); i.e. put your pipes, not me, in your bag, for I'll go away on my own
- 22 To 'mistake the word' (TGV 3.1.284) was a regular clown routine.
- 23 **keep up** refrain from
- quillets** quibbles
- 24 **gentlewoman** originally, a woman of good birth; then, a female attendant on a lady of rank
- 26 **entreats** . . . **speech** begs the favour of briefly speaking with her (here *little* looks like a transferred epithet)
- 28 **stirring** He understands it as 'sexually exciting' (cf. OED stirring 3, quoting Dekker, 'Capon is a stirring meate'; Partridge, *stir*).
- 28–9 **I . . . her** i.e. I shall have notified her
- 29 The Clown makes fun of Cassio's courtliness or accent (cf. Iago, 2.1.166ff.), and perhaps quibbles on *stir*–*steer*.
- 30 **In happy time** well met; *happy* = fortunate
- 31–9 These lines could be prose or verse (see p. 367).

19 up] *F*; not in *Q* 20 into air] *F*; not in *Q* SD] *Exit Mu. F*; not in *Q* 21 hear, mine] heare my *Q*; heare me, mine *F* 22] as *Q*; *F* lines Friend: / you. / 25 general's wife] *Q*; General *F* 30 Do, . . . friend] *Q*; not in *F* SD] *F* (*Exit Clo.*, after 29); not in *Q* 31, 33 have] *F*; ha *Q* 32–6 Why . . . access] *Q* lines parted: / her, / *Desdemona*, / *accesse*. /; *F* lines parted. / wife: / *Desdemona* / *accesse*. /

To virtuous Desdemona procure me 35  
Some access.

IAGO I'll send her to you presently,  
And I'll devise a mean 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 40  
A Florentine more kind and honest.

*Enter EMILIA.*

EMILIA

Good morrow, good lieutenant. I am sorry  
For your displeasure, but all will sure be well.  
The general and his wife are talking of it,  
And she speaks for you stoutly; the Moor replies 45  
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 50  
To take the safest occasion by the front

37 **mean** opportunity

41 **Florentine** Did Shakespeare delete 1.1.19–20 (*Texts*, 36)? If he did, Cassio is naively ignorant that Florence, the home of Machiavelli, was not generally thought a centre of honesty; if not, he praises Iago as if a fellow countryman, and also misunderstands him.

43 **displeasure** loss of favour

**all . . . well** Cf. 3.4.19, 4.2.173, *RJ* 4.2.40: a common saying.

45 **stoutly** vigorously (stronger than today)

47 **great** important, powerful

**affinity** kindred, family. This half-line may have been deleted and printed in error

(*Texts*, 37). Cf. Ruth 2.20, 'The man is nigh unto us, and of our affinity.'

48 **wholesome** beneficial; health-giving: i.e. wisdom that restores the well-being of Cyprus

**he . . . but** he could only; or, he was forced to

49 **Refuse** dismiss; decline to reappoint; i.e. he had (earlier or now) no choice except to *refuse* you  
**loves** is fond of

51 **front** forelock. The proverb (Dent, T311, 'To take time (occasion) by the forelock') refers to the classical *Occasio*, long-haired in front, bald behind.

40 for't] *F*; for it *Q* SD] *opp.* 39 *QF* 41.1] *Enter Emilia. Q: Enter Æmilia. F* 43 sure] *F*; soone  
*Q* 46–9] *QF* lines *Cypres*, / wisdome, / loues you, / 51] *Q*; not in *F*





DESDEMONA

Be thou assured, good Cassio, I will do  
All my abilities in thy behalf.

EMILIA

Good madam, do, I warrant it grieves my husband  
As if the cause were his.

DESDEMONA

O, that's an honest fellow. Do not doubt, Cassio, 5  
But I will have my lord and you again  
As friendly as you were.

CASSIO

Bounteous madam,  
Whatever shall become of Michael Cassio,  
He's never anything but your true servant.

DESDEMONA

I know't, I thank you. You do love my lord, 10  
You have known him long, and be you well assured  
He shall in strangeness stand no farther off  
Than in a politic distance.

CASSIO

Ay, but, lady,  
That policy may either last so long,  
Or feed upon such nice and waterish diet, 15  
Or breed itself so out of circumstance,  
That, I being absent and my place supplied,  
My general will forget my love and service.

DESDEMONA

Do not doubt that: before Emilia here

- |    |   |   |
|----|---|---|
| 3  | <b>warrant</b> be bound (common asseveration);<br>monosyllabic (warr'nt), as in <i>Ham</i> 1.2.242,<br>'I warn't it will' (Q2), <i>MND</i> 5.1.320. | course of action  |
| 7  | <b>Bounteous</b> good, virtuous (Fr. <i>bonté</i> ,<br>goodness, kindness)  | 15 or feed on such a poor diet (i.e. as to fade<br>away); <i>nice</i> = delicate, thin                  |
| 9  | <b>true</b> faithful, sincere   | 16 or engender itself to such an extent from<br>non-essential factors, i.e. depend so much<br>on chance |
| 12 | <b>strangeness</b> coldness, aloofness  | 17–18 Cf. Dent, F596, 'Long absent soon<br>forgotten'.  |
| 13 | <b>politic</b> sagacious, shrewd; i.e. than the<br>distance required by judiciousness   | 17 <b>supplied</b> filled   |
| 14 | <b>policy</b> sagacity, diplomacy; an expedient   | 19 <b>doubt</b> fear  |

3] as Q; F lines do: / Husband, / warrant] F; know Q 4 cause] F; case Q 10 I know't] F; O sir Q 12  
strangeness] F; strangest Q 14 That] F; The Q 16 circumstance] Q; Circumstances F

I give thee warrant of thy place. Assure thee, 20  
 If I do vow a friendship I'll perform it  
 To the last article. My lord shall never rest,  
 I'll watch him tame and talk him out of patience,  
 His bed shall seem a school, his board a shrift,  
 I'll intermingle everything he does 25  
 With Cassio's suit: therefore be merry, Cassio,  
 For thy solicitor shall rather die  
 Than give thy cause away.

*Enter OTHELLO and IAGO.*

EMILIA

Madam, here comes my lord.

CASSIO

Madam, I'll take my leave. 30

DESDEMONA

Why, stay and hear me speak.

CASSIO

Madam, not now; I am very ill at ease,  
 Unfit for mine own purposes.

DESDEMONA

Well, do your discretion. *Exit Cassio.*

IAGO

Ha, I like not that.

OTHELLO

What dost thou say? 35

IAGO

Nothing, my lord; or if – I know not what.

20 **warrant** assurance, pledge. This seems as  
 impetuous as her elopement with Othello.

**Assure thee** be certain

22 **article** item

23 **I'll . . . tame** a metaphor from the training  
 of hawks (*watch* = keep awake, to make  
 obedient). Cf. *TC* 3.2.43, 'you must be  
 watch'd ere you be made tame, must you?'  
 (Ridley).

24 **bed . . . board** Marriage was a 'bond of

board and bed' (*AYL* 5.4.142: cf. *3H6*  
 1.1.248); *board* = table, *shrift* = place of  
 confession. Without realizing it, she puts  
 her marriage at risk.

26 **merry** happy

27 **solicitor** advocate

28 **give . . . away** abandon thy suit

34 **do your discretion** do as you think fit.  
 Usually 'use your discretion' (*AYL* 1.1.146;  
*Lyly, Endymion*, 1.4.5).

28 thy cause away] *F*; thee cause: away *Q* 28.1] *F*; *Enter* Othello, Iago, and Gentlemen. *Q* 33  
 purposes] *F*; purpose *Q* 34 Ha.] *Q*; Hah? *F* 36 if –] *F*; if, *Q*

OTHELLO

Was not that Cassio parted from my wife?

IAGO

Cassio, my lord? no, sure, I cannot think it  
That he would steal away so guilty-like  
Seeing you coming.

OTHELLO

I do believe 'twas he.

40

DESDEMONA

How now, my lord?  
I have been talking with a suitor here,  
A man that languishes in your displeasure.

OTHELLO

Who is't you mean?

DESDEMONA

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

45

50

OTHELLO

Went he hence now?

DESDEMONA

Yes, faith, so humbled  
That he hath left part of his grief with me  
To suffer with him. Good love, call him back.

OTHELLO

Not now, sweet Desdemon, some other time.

55

DESDEMONA

But shall't be shortly?

OTHELLO

The sooner, sweet, for you.

39 **steal away** Cf. *Cor* 1.1.252 SD, '*Citizens*  
*steale away*'.

**guilty-like** unique in Shakespeare; his  
coinage

42 **suitor** petitioner46 **grace** pleasing quality; privilege (OED 1, 8)**move** influence47 **present** immediate**reconciliation** restoration to favour (OED 1c)**take** accept, agree to49 **in cunning** wittingly50 **in** of

39 steal] *F*; sneake *Q* 40 you] *Q*; your *F* 52 Yes, faith] *Q*; I sooth *F* 53 hath] *F*; has *Q* grief] *F*;  
griefes *Q* 54 To] *F*; I *Q* 55 Desdemon] *F*; *Desdemona Q*

DESDEMONA

Shall't be tonight, at supper?

OTHELLO

No, not tonight.

DESDEMONA

Tomorrow dinner then?

OTHELLO

I shall not dine at home.

I meet the captains at the citadel.

DESDEMONA

Why then, tomorrow night, or Tuesday morn; 60  
 On Tuesday, noon or night; on Wednesday morn!  
 I prithee name the time, but let it not  
 Exceed three days: i'faith, he's penitent,  
 And yet his trespass, in our common reason  
 – Save that they say the wars must make examples 65  
 Out of their best – is not, almost, a fault  
 T'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 70  
 That came a-wooing with you? and so many a time  
 When I have spoke of you dispraisingly  
 Hath ta'en your part, to have so much to do  
 To bring him in? By'r lady, I could do much!—

58 **dinner** a midday meal at this time

64 **common reason** general way of thinking

65 **wars** i.e. the military profession

66 **their best** their best men. If *wars* = war generally, singular *her* (as in QF) is possible. But *their* (or *ther*) could be misread as *her*.

**not, almost** hardly. 'I have not breathed almost, since I did see it' (CE 5.1.181) (Ridley).

67 **check** rebuke

70 **mamm'ring** (1) hesitating, (2) stammering, muttering. Editors prefer (1), but (2) could

be appropriate for 56ff. An unkind word, unique in Shakespeare, signalling her critical surprise. It echoes *Euphues*, 'neither stand in a mammering whether it be best to departe or not' (Lyly, 1.253) (Malone).

71 **That . . . you** Cf. 1.2.52n.

72 **dispraisingly** i.e. she has been critical of him before – 'of course, in order to hear Cassio praise him in reply' (Kittredge)

74 **bring him in** Cf. 3.1.52n.

**By'r lady** a mild oath, changed by F, found also in 'Protestant' plays (e.g. *Ham* 3.2.133). Cf. 2.3.373n.

60 or] Q; on F 61 Tuesday, noon] Tuesday morne, Q; Tuesday noone, F on] F; or Q 63 i'faith] Q; Infaith F 65–6] (Sauc . . . examples / . . . her best) Q; (Sauc . . . example) / . . . her best, F 66 their best] Rowe; her best QF 67 T] F; To Q 69 would] F; could Q 70 mamm'ring] F (mam'ring); muttering Q What,] What Q; What? F 74 By'r lady] Q; Trust me F

OTHELLO

Prithee, no more. Let him come when he will, 75  
I will deny thee nothing.

DESDEMONA

Why, this is not a boon,  
'Tis as I should entreat you wear your gloves,  
Or feed on nourishing dishes, or keep you warm,  
Or sue to you to do a peculiar profit 80  
To your own person. Nay, when I have a suit  
Wherein I mean to touch your love indeed  
It shall be full of poise and difficult weight  
And fearful to be granted.

OTHELLO

I will deny thee nothing.  
Whereon I do beseech thee, grant me this,  
To leave me but a little to myself. 85

DESDEMONA

Shall I deny you? No, farewell, my lord.

OTHELLO

Farewell, my Desdemona, I'll come to thee straight.

DESDEMONA

Emilia, come. – Be as your fancies teach you:  
Whate'er you be, I am obedient.

*Exeunt Desdemona and Emilia.*

76 **I . . . nothing** Cf. Plautus, *Trinummus*, 357, 'I cannot keep refusing you anything you wish': 'Non edepol tibi pernegare possum quicquam quod velis.'

**boon** favour

77 **as** as if

**gloves** worn by the well-off as a sign of their importance; i.e. to do what is normal and natural

79–80 **do . . . person** i.e. do something that will be of special benefit to yourself

81 **touch** test

82 **poise** weight; balance

**difficult weight** difficult to weigh; i.e. it shall be so finely balanced (between the possible and impossible) that it will be a momentous thing for you to grant it. Cf. 2.3.120n. Or, more simply, it will be 'too heavy'.

83 **fearful** terrible (stronger than today)

84 **Whereon** almost = in return for which

87 **straight** immediately

88 **fancies** whims (another unkind word)

89 **obedient** Wives were expected to obey their husbands. She means, 'However good or bad you may be as a husband, I am a good wife.'

82 difficult weight] *F*; difficulty *Q* 87 to thee] *QF*; *om. Pope* 88 Be] *F*; be it *Q* 89 SD] *Exit Desd. and Em. Q; Exit. F*

OTHELLO

Excellent wretch! perdition catch my soul 90  
 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. 95

Why dost thou ask?

IAGO

But for a satisfaction of my thought,  
 No further harm.

OTHELLO

Why of thy thought, Iago?

IAGO

I did not think he had been acquainted with her.

OTHELLO

O yes, and went between us very oft. 100

IAGO

Indeed?

OTHELLO

Indeed? Ay, indeed. Discern'st thou aught in that?

90 **wretch** could be a term of endearment, or the opposite. Perhaps meant to imply both, playfully. Cf. *RJ* 1.3.44, 'The pretty wretch left crying and said, "Ay".'

**perdition** destruction, i.e. damnation  
**catch** take

91 **But** could = 'if . . . not', i.e. 'may I be damned if I don't love thee', almost 'may I be damned if I stop loving thee'. Yet *but* could be a fairly meaningless part of an asseveration (*MV* 2.6.52, 'Beshrow me but I love her heartily'). For *when* = if, see *OED* 8.

92 **Chaos** 'The allusion is to the classical legend that Love was the first of the gods to spring out of original chaos. Cf. Ben Jonson, *Love Freed from Ignorance*, 26–7: "without me / All again would Chaos be" (Sanders, quoting a speech by Love).

97 **satisfaction** information that answers a person's demands, removal of doubt; satisfying proof (*OED* 6b, first in 1601)

99 **he had** probably one syllable

100 **went between** *OED* first records *go-between* in *MW* 2.2.263.

102 **ought** i.e. anything strange

94–5 Did . . . love?] *Q*: *F* lines Cassio / loue? / you] *Q*: he *F* 95–6 He . . . ask?] as *F*; one line *Q* 97 thought] *F*; thoughts *Q* 100 oft] *F*; often *Q* 102 Ay] *F* (1); not in *Q*

Is he not honest?

IAGO

Honest, my lord?

OTHELLO

Honest? Ay, honest.

105

IAGO

My lord, for aught I know.

OTHELLO

What dost thou think?

IAGO

Think, my lord?

OTHELLO

Think, my lord! By heaven, thou echo'st me  
 As if there were some monster in thy thought 110  
 Too hideous to be shown. Thou dost mean something,  
 I heard thee say even now thou lik'st not that  
 When Cassio left my wife: what didst not like?  
 And when I told thee he was of my counsel  
 In my whole course of wooing, thou criedst 'Indeed?' 115  
 And didst contract and purse thy brow together  
 As if thou then hadst shut up in thy brain  
 Some horrible conceit. If thou dost love me  
 Show me thy thought.

IAGO

My lord, you know I love you.

OTHELLO

I think thou dost. 120  
 And for I know thou'rt full of love and honesty  
 And weigh'st thy words before thou giv'st them breath,

110 **monster** prodigy; monstrosity; monstrous creature (cf. 168)

111 **hideous** ugly; repulsive; detestable

114 **of my counsel** i.e. in my confidence; or, he advised me

116 **purse** contract in wrinkles, 'suggesting the tightly drawn-in mouth of a purse' (*OED* 4, first here)

118 **conceit** idea, conception

119 **you . . . you** 'a horrible reminiscence of Peter's "thou knowest that I love thee" (John 21.15-17)' (Ridley)

119-21 For the emphasis on knowing and thinking here, cf. *MM* 5.1.203-4, 'Who thinks he knows that he ne'er knew my body, / But knows he thinks that he knows Isabel's'.

121 **for** because

109 By . . . echo'st] By heauen he echoes *Q*; Alas, thou echos't *F* 110 thy] *F*; his *Q* 111 dost] *F*; didst *Q* 112 even] *F*; but *Q* 115 In] *Q*; Of *F* 118 conceit] *F*; counsell *Q* 121 thou'rt] *F*; thou art *Q* 122 weigh'st] *F*; weighest *Q* giv'st them] *F*; giue em *Q*

Therefore these stops of thine fright me the more.  
 For such things in a false disloyal knave  
 Are tricks of custom, but in a man that's just 125  
 They're close delations, working from the heart,  
 That passion cannot rule.

IAGO For 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. 130

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 prithee speak to me, as to thy thinkings,  
 As thou dost ruminate, and give thy worst of  
 thoughts 135  
 The worst of words.

IAGO Good my lord, pardon me;

123 **stops** pauses

125 **tricks** stratagems; characteristic practices  
 (*OED* 1, 7)

**of custom** customary

126 **close** secret

\***delations** See LN.

127 **That . . . rule** i.e. (self-accusations or self-  
 betrayals) that passion cannot control

128 **be sworn** Q's *presume* is attractive,  
 creating uncertainty and confusion (Iago's  
 aim in this scene).

\***think**, The inserted comma makes Iago  
 more doubtful.

129 **Men . . . seem** Tilley, S214, 'Be what thou  
 would seem to be.'

130 'Or, those that be not (what they seem),  
 would that they might not seem (honest) at  
 all', taking *none* = by no means, not at all  
 (*OED* adv. 3, first recorded 1651).

132 **then** (= in that case) hints at reservations  
**I think** Cf. 128.

134 **thinkings** spoken as if in inverted  
 commas, *thy 'thinkings'*, picking up 108,  
 128, 132

135 **ruminate** lit. chew the cud; hence, 'just as  
 thou dost turn them over in thy mind'

123 fright] *F*; affright *Q* 126 They're] *F*; They are *Q* delations] *Steevens*; dilations *F*; denotements  
*Q* 128 be sworn] *F*; presume *Q* think,] *this edn*; thinke *QF* 129 what] *F*; that *Q* 133 this:] *F*  
 (this?) 134 as to] *F*; to *Q* 135 thy] *F*; the *Q* thoughts] *F*; thought *Q* 136 words] *F*; word *Q*



Though I am bound to every act of duty  
 I am not bound to that all slaves are free to –  
 Utter my thoughts? Why, say they are vile and false?  
 As where's that palace whereinto foul things 140  
 Sometimes intrude not? Who has a breast so pure  
 But some uncleanly apprehensions  
 Keep leets and law-days and in session sit  
 With meditations lawful?

OTHELLO

Thou dost conspire against thy friend, Iago, 145  
 If thou but think'st him wronged and mak'st his ear  
 A stranger to thy thoughts.

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 oft my jealousy 150  
 Shapes 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:

138 **that** what

**free** to not bound to (do). Dent, T244,  
 'Thought is free.'

142 **uncleanly** filthy

**apprehensions** ideas

143 **leets** special courts, held by some lords of  
 the manor once or twice a year

**law-days** days for the meeting of a court of  
 law; the session of such a court

145 **friend** He speaks in general terms but  
 clearly sees himself as the friend,  
 redefining their relationship. Cf. 5.2.150.

147ff. Two consecutive parentheses confuse  
 Iago's thought, viz. 148 and 149–51 ('As  
 . . . not'), interrupting 'I do beseech you  
 that your wisdom'.

148 **Though** could = if (*OED* 4), but the  
 sentence is deliberately serpentine  
**vicious** wicked; blameworthy; faulty,  
 mistaken (*OED* 2, 3, 6). It suits Iago to use  
 elastic words.

149 **plague** affliction

150 **spy into** look out for; pry into  
**jealousy** zeal (against abuses); devotion  
 (to serve someone); vigilance (*OED* 1–3)

151 **Shapes** devises, imagines

152 **conceits** conceives, imagines; could be a  
 misreading of Q's *coniects* (= conjectures), the  
 'harder reading', preferred by some editors

154 **scattering** scattered, i.e. disordered  
**observance** observant care (*OED* 4);  
 observation

138 that . . . to –] that all slaues are free to, *Q*; that: All Slaues are free: *F* 139 vile] *Q*; vild *F* 141 a] *Q*;  
 that *F* 142 But some] *Q*; Wherein *F* 143 session] *Q*; Sessions *F* 146 think'st] *F*; thinkest *Q* mak'st]  
*F*; makest *Q* 150 oft] *Q*; of *F* 151 that your wisdom] *F*; I intreate you then *Q* 152 conceits] *F*; coniects  
*Q* 153 Would] *F*; You'd *Q* 154 his] *F*; my *Q*

It were not for your quiet nor your good 155  
 Nor for my manhood, honesty and wisdom  
 To let you know my thoughts.

OTHELLO Zounds! 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- 160  
 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, 165  
 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

155 **were not for** would not be conducive to  
**quiet** peace of mind

159 See LN.

160 **purse** (= money, 161). Cf. his advice to  
 Roderigo, 1.3.340ff.

**trash** could = slang for money (*OED* 3d),  
 as in *JC* 4.3.72ff., 'wring / From the hands  
 of peasants their vile trash'

\***something-nothing** (?) something trivial.  
 Cf. Dent, S620.1, 'Something nothing',  
 quoting Porter, *Two Angry Women* (1599),  
 'let me heare that something nothing then'  
 (MSR 698), T. Powell, *Welch Bayte* (1603,  
 C2b), 'newes of a something nothing'.

165 Cf. Dent, H331.2, 'To have someone's  
 heart (leaping, panting) in one's hand', and  
 1.1.63. The hearts of traitors were ripped out  
 and held up immediately after their  
 execution. Here *if* = even if.

168 **green-eyed** Cf. *MV* 3.2.110, 'green-eyed  
 jealousy'; *OED* green 3, 'of bilious hue,  
 indicative of fear or jealousy', hence  
 'green with envy'.

**monster** Cf. *KL* 1.1.122, 'Come not  
 between the dragon and his wrath': an  
 emotion is externalized.

**doth mock** makes sport of, teases (*OED*  
 2b, 3) (perhaps as a cat with a mouse)

156 and] *F*; or *Q* 157 Zounds . . . mean?] Zouns. *Q*: What dost thou meane? *F* 158 woman, . . . lord,]  
 woman's deere my Lord; *Q*: woman (deere my Lord) *F* 159 their] *F*; our *Q* 160] as *Q*: *F* lines trash: /  
 nothing: / something-nothing] *this edn*; something, nothing *QF* 164 By heaven] *Q*; not in *F* thoughts]  
*F*; thought *Q* 167 OTHELLO Ha!] *Oth*. Ha? *F*; not in *Q* my lord, of] *F*; not in *Q* 168 mock] as *QF*;  
 make *Hanmer* (*Theobald*)

The meat it feeds on. That cuckold lives in bliss  
 Who, certain of his fate, loves not his wronger, 170  
 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 175  
 To him that ever fears he shall be poor.  
 Good God, the souls of all my tribe defend  
 From jealousy.

OTHELLO

Why — why is this?  
 Think'st thou I'd make a life of jealousy 180  
 To follow still the changes of the moon  
 With fresh suspicions? No: to be once in doubt  
 Is once to be resolved. Exchange me for a goat  
 When I shall turn the business of my soul

169 **meat** food; i.e. suspicions. But the image of a self-devourer is also present, as in *Cor* 4.2.50, 'Anger's my meat; I sup upon myself.'

**cuckold** (refers to Othello indirectly, but still an explosive word)

170 **Who** . . . **fate** who, though sure that his wife is unfaithful

**wronger** = wife, or wife's lover. Othello probably spoke of his love for Cassio in Iago's presence (2.3.244).

171 'what accursed minutes does he suffer (count)'; *minutes* = dragging minutes, slow time

172 **dotes** is infatuated; hinting 'is weak-minded from age' (*OED* 2, 3), which points at Othello

**strongly** intensely

174 **Poor and content** Cf. 1.1.40ff. (Iago is not content to be poor), 2.1.129ff.; Dent, C629,

'Contentment is great riches.'

175 **fineless** boundless

177 **Good God** not the modern (devalued) exclamation but an appeal to God's goodness. Cf. Dent, J38.1, 'From jealousy the good Lord deliver us' (not recorded before Shakespeare).

**tribe** Cf. 1.1.180n.

180 **make** suffer (*OED* 64); i.e. that I would let jealousy take over my life

181 wax and wane (in suspicion) like the moon (Ridley), i.e. to act like a lunatic; *still* = always

183 **once** once for all. But F could be right: 'Is — to be resolved.'

**resolved** determined (on a course of action); freed from doubt

**goat** because a horned animal? Or because goats, highly sexed, spend too much time in lustful activity?

169 The] *F*; That *Q* 172 strongly] *Q*; soundly *F*; fondly *Knight* 177 God] *Q*; Heauen *F* 183 Is once] *Q*; Is *F*

To such exsufflicate and blown surmises, 185  
 Matching thy inference. 'Tis not to make me jealous  
 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 190  
 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! 195

IAGO

I am glad of this, 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:

185 **\*exsufflicate** = (?)inflated, i.e. improbable. *OED* records no other example, but cites exsufflation (sixteenth century) from Lat. *exsufflare* = blow up.

**blown** Editors suggest (1) fly-blown, (2) inflated, (3) rumoured.

**surmises** allegations (esp. if unfounded or unproved); suspicions; conjectures (*OED* 2-4)

186 **inference** 'It looks as though the unhappy confusion of "infer" and "imply" was as old as the Elizabethans' (Ridley, citing *2H4* 5.5.14, *R3* 3.7.12, *Tim* 3.5.72); or, conclusion, i.e. the conclusion you have drawn from the evidence (*OED* 2, first in 1612).

**jealous** *F* always has *iealous*, an alternative spelling.

187 **feeds well** could be an 'irrelevant interpolation', making this a long line. So Walker, citing Cinthio on women who 'with beauty of body and under a semblance of virtue, for instance in *singing, playing,*

*dancing* lightly and *speaking* sweetly, hide an ugly and abominable soul' (Bullough, 7.240). But Othello's point is that a woman given over to sociable and physical pleasures need not have an 'ugly soul', so *feeds well* fits in. Cf. 343n.

188 **free** unreserved

190 **weak** deficient  
**draw** deduce

191 **revolt** 'any "falling off" from allegiance or obedience'; can = revulsion, as in *TN* 2.4.99, 'their love may be called appetite . . . That suffer surfeit, cloyment, and revolt' (Ridley)

193 **prove** prove it one way or the other

194 **on the proof** when I have proof

195 i.e. either love or jealousy will be ruled out. *Away*: a gesture is needed. Cf. 266.

197 **love and duty** Cf. 1.1.58, 'not I for love and duty'!

198 **franker** more open, unreserved

199 **proof** proof of guilt. Othello spoke of proof of guilt or *innocence*.

185 exsufflicate] *Malone*; exufflicate *QF* blown] *Q*; blow'd *F* 188 well] *Q*; not in *F* 196 this] *F*; it *Q*

Look to your wife, observe her well with Cassio. 200  
 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 God see the pranks 205  
 They dare not show their husbands; their best  
 conscience  
 Is not to leave't undone, but keep't unknown.

OTHELLO

Dost thou say so?

IAGO

She did deceive her father, marrying you,  
 And when she seemed to shake, and fear your looks, 210  
 She loved them most.

OTHELLO

And so she did.

IAGO

Why, go to then:

She that so young could give out such a seeming  
 To seel her father's eyes up, close as oak —

200 **Look to** echoing 1.3.293, 'Look to her, Moor'

**Cassio** a dangerous moment: he names Cassio (prepared for in 94ff.)

201 **Wear** present (the look of) (*OED* 7)

**thus** A gesture is needed.

**secure** free from apprehension

202 **free** generous

203 **self-bounty** Shakespeare's coinage. Many new 'self-' compounds appeared in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (see 2.3.198; *OED*). Here *self* = your own, as in *TC* 2.3.171–2, 'pride / That quarrels at self-breath'. For *bounty* (= kindness, goodness), cf. 7n.

**abused** abuse = take advantage of; cheat, deceive; injure, wrong

204 **our country** our country's. Implies that Iago, despite his Spanish name, is a Venetian. Cf. 5.1.89. He means 'I know, but you cannot know . . .'.

205 **In Venice** See pp. 22–3. He means 'they prefer to defy God rather than their husbands', a variant of a commonplace: cf. *R3* 1.4.197–8, 'Will you then / Spurn at his [God's] edict, and fulfill a man's?'; Acts 5.4. **pranks** Cf. 2.1.142n.

206–7 i.e. the best their conscience aspires to is not to leave it (wickedness) undone, but to keep it unknown. Cf. *The Book of Common Prayer*, 'We have left undone those things which we ought to have done' (Noble, 219).

209 again echoing 1.3.293–4

211 **go** to there you are

212 **give out** give it out to be believed (that such a 'seeming' was the truth). Cf. 129–31.

213 **seel** Cf. 1.3.270n.

**close as oak** Cf. Dent, O1, 'As close as oak' (not recorded before Shakespeare). 'Usually explained by reference to the close grain of oak' (Ridley).

201 eyes] *F*; eie *Q* 205 God] *Q*; Heauen *F* 206] as *Q*; *F* lines Husbands. / Conscience, / 207 leave't] *F*; leaue *Q* keep't] *F* (kept); keepe *Q*

He thought 'twas witchcraft. But I am much to  
blame,

I humbly do beseech you of your pardon 215  
For too much loving you.

OTHELLO

I am bound to thee for ever.

IAGO

I see this hath a little dashed your spirits.

OTHELLO

Not a jot, not a jot.

IAGO

I'faith, I fear it has.

I hope you will consider what is spoke 220  
Comes from my love. But I do see you're moved;  
I am to pray you not to strain my speech  
To grosser issues nor to larger reach  
Than to suspicion.

OTHELLO

I will not.

IAGO

Should you do so, my lord, 225  
My speech should fall into such vile success  
As my thoughts aimed not at: Cassio's my worthy  
friend.

214 **to** QF *too* may be a reading taken by F from Q (see *Texts*, 94ff.), but 'too blame' is found elsewhere.

215 **of** for

217 **bound** indebted; tied (cf. 482n.)

218 Iago's delight in Othello's alleged misfortune expresses itself in faked solicitude.

219 **Not a jot** a common phrase (e.g. *Ham* 5.1.113, 207)

221 F *your* could = my love of you

222 **am** have (*OED* be 16a)

223 'There is a suggestive undertone of our

sense of "gross" and of the Elizabethan sense of "large" = "licentious", as in "some large jests he will make" (*Ado* 2.3.198) (Ridley); *issues* = conclusions; *reach* = scope, extent of application (*OED* 9); *gross* could = flagrant.

225 **Should . . . lord** completes a pentameter with 224: 'I will not' is probably an interruption (cf. 1.1.101n.)

226 **fall . . . success** come to such a vile result; *success* = outcome (good or bad)

227 **aimed** F *aym'd* (without *at*) is probably correct (*OED* 3: to guess, conjecture).

214] *as Q; F lines* Witchcraft. / blame: / to] *too QF* 219 I'faith] *Q; Trust me F* 221] *as Q; F lines* Loue. / moou'd: / my] *Q; your F* you're] *F (y're); you are Q* 226 vile] *Q; vilde F* 227] *As my thoughts aime not at: Cassio's my trusty friend: Q; Which my Thoughts aym'd not. / Cassio's my worthy Friend: / F*

My lord, I see you're moved.

OTHELLO

No, not much moved.

I do not think but Desdemona's honest.

IAGO

Long live she so; and long live you to think so. 230

OTHELLO

And yet how nature, erring from itself –

IAGO

Ay, there's the point: as, to be bold with you,  
Not to affect many proposed matches  
Of her own clime, complexion and degree,  
Whereto we see, in all things, nature tends – 235

Foh! one may smell in such a will most rank,

Foul disproportion, thoughts unnatural.

But pardon me, I do not in position

Distinctly speak of her, though I may fear

Her will, recoiling to her better judgement, 240

May fall to match you with her country forms,

And happily repent.

OTHELLO

Farewell, farewell.

229 **but** but that: 'I do not think Desdemona is anything other than *honest*' (= chaste, honourable)

230 **and** . . . **so** 'and long may you live thinking so'. *Think* is meant to ring alarm bells, after 107ff., 132ff.

233–5 He follows up Othello's recollection of 1.3.63 by echoing Brabantio again (1.2.67–71).

233 **affect** like

**proposed** proposèd

234 of her own *clime* (= region, country), *temperament* (the combination of qualities that determines the nature of a person; or, *skin colour*), and *rank*

235 Cf. Tilley, L286, 'Like will to like.'

236 **smell** could = suspect. Cf. *KL* 1.1.16, 'Do

you smell a fault?'

**will** wilfulness; carnal desire. Cf. 240, and *Texts*, 16–18 (Shakespeare's wish to protect Desdemona from the charge of wilfulness).

**rank** rebellious; excessive; lustful; (after smell) rancid, foul-smelling

237 **disproportion** lack of a sense of proportion  
238–9 **in position** / **Distinctly** in (making this) proposition speak specifically of her

240 **recoiling to** i.e. giving way to

241 may come to compare you with the *forms* of her own country; *form* = body (in its outward appearance); example; behaviour. *Fall to* = come to, or sink (so low as) to.

242 **happily** perchance (with a hint of 'fortunately?')

228 you're] *F* (y'are); you are *Q* 230] as *Q*; *F* lines so; / . . . so. / 232] as *Q*; *F* lines point: / you) / 236 Foh! one] *F*; Fie we *Q* 237 disproportion] *Q*; disproportions *F* 242–4] *Q* lines if more / set on / *Iago*. /; *F* lines farewell: / know more: / obserue. / *Iago*. /

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.

OTHELLO                      Why did I marry?                      245  
This honest creature doubtless  
Sees and knows more – much more – than he unfolds.

IAGO

My lord, I would I might entreat your honour  
To scan this thing no farther. Leave it to time;  
Although 'tis fit that Cassio have his place, 250  
For sure he fills it up with great ability,  
Yet if you please to hold him off a while  
You shall by that perceive him, and his means:  
Note if your lady strain his entertainment  
With any strong or vehement importunity, 255  
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 honour.

OTHELLO

Fear not my government. 260

IAGO

I once more take my leave. *Exit.*

245 **Why . . . marry?** Cf. Thorello, the jealous husband, in *Every Man in His Humour* (1601), 3.3.15, 'what meant I to marrie?'

246 **creature** could = fellow, person (without contemptuousness) but here sounds unflattering. Othello speaks to himself.

247 unfolds reveals

249 Cf. Dent, T324, 'Time brings the truth to light.'

251 Cf. *JC* 3.2.99, 'And sure he is an honourable man' (Antony, like Iago, means the opposite of what he says).

253 **means** intermediaries; methods (*OED*  
9, 10)

254 **strain his entertainment** press (insist on)  
his reinstatement

257 **busy** officious, meddlesome

258 **worthy** good

259 **hold her free** consider her innocent; or, let her have her freedom (to betray herself)

260 **government** self-government,  
management: 'don't be uneasy about the  
way I'll handle it (or, about my self-  
control)'

245–6 Why . . . doubtless] *as F; one line Q* 248 SP] *Qc, F; not in Qu* 249 farther] *F; further Q* 250  
Although 'tis] *F; Tho it be O* 252 hold] *O; not in F; put F2* 254 his] *F; her O* 261 SD] *Oc, F; not in Qu*



## OTHELLO

This fellow's of exceeding honesty  
 And knows all qualities, with a learned spirit,  
 Of human dealings. If I do prove her haggard,  
 Though that her jesses were my dear heart-strings, 265  
 I'd whistle her off and let her down the wind  
 To prey at fortune. Haply for I am black  
 And have not those soft parts of conversation  
 That chamberers have, or for I am declined  
 Into the vale of years – yet that's not much – 270  
 She's gone, I am abused, and my relief  
 Must be to loathe her. O curse of marriage  
 That we can call these delicate creatures ours  
 And not their appetites! I had rather be a toad  
 And live upon the vapour of a dungeon 275

263 **qualities** characters, natures

264 **dealings** intercourse

**haggard** wild, untamed (lit. a wild female hawk caught in her adult plumage)

265 **Though that** even if

**jesses** straps, fastened round the legs of a hawk, attached to the falconer's wrist

**heart-strings** tendons or nerves supposed to brace and sustain the heart (in early anatomy)

266 Hawks were sent off with a whistle, against the wind in pursuit of prey, with the wind when turned loose; i.e. Desdemona is too wild to tame. Cf. Dent, W432, 'To go down the wind' = to go to ruin. N.B. He does not intend to kill Desdemona at this stage.

267 **To . . . fortune** to fend for herself; to prey as fortune wills

**Haply** for perhaps because

268–9 **soft . . . have** pleasing qualities in my social behaviour that drawing-room gallants have (*chamberers* here first in this sense). Cf. Romans 13.13, 'Let us walk

honestly . . . not in rioting and drunkenness, neither in chambering and wantonness.'

270 **vale of years** Alluding to 'the valley of the shadow of death' (Psalms 23.4)?

271 **gone** ruined, undone (*OED* gone 1)

**abused** wronged

**relief** assistance in time of need; alleviation of a pain; 'deliverance (esp. in *Law*) from some . . . burden, or grievance' (*OED* 6, from 1616)

272 **O . . . marriage** either 'it is the curse of marriage that', or 'O, the curse of marriage! – that'

273 **ours** Upper-class English wives were, in effect, the property of their husbands and addressed them as 'my lord' (= my master): 1.3.184n.

274–7 Cf. 4.2.58ff. Kean spoke these lines 'with a peculiar, snarling, sardonic laugh, but yet extremely quiet in manner' (Rosenberg, 64).

274 **toad** a type of anything hateful or loathsome; pre-Shakespeare (*OED* 1b)

263 *qualities*] *Q*; Quantities *F* learned] *Q*; learn'd *F* 264 *dealings*] *F*; dealing *Q* 267 *Haply*] *F*; Happily *Q* 270 *vale*] *F*; valt *Q* 275 *of*] *F*; in *Q*

Than keep a corner in the thing I love  
 For others' uses. Yet 'tis the plague of great ones,  
 Prerogativèd are they less than the base;  
 'Tis destiny unshunnable, like death –  
 Even then this forked plague is fated to us 280  
 When we do quicken.

*Enter* DESDEMONA *and* EMILIA.

Look where she comes:  
 If she be false, O then heaven mocks itself,  
 I'll not believe't.

DESDEMONA How now, my dear Othello?  
 Your dinner, and the generous islanders  
 By you invited, do attend your presence. 285

OTHELLO

I am to blame.

DESDEMONA Why do you speak so faintly?  
 Are you not well?

276 **corner** *keep a corner* = reserve a small place (*OED* 6c), here with secondary sexual sense. Cf. *Cambises* (1st edn, n.d., c. 1570), Bla-b: 'Where-soeuer I goe, in eche corner I will grope. *Ambidexter*. What and ye run in the corner of some prittie maide? *Snuf*. To grope there good fellow I will not be affraid.'

**thing** Cf. 306n.

277 **uses** Cf. 5.2.69n.

277–81 Ridley thought this nonsense: 'There is no question of the great being either less or more liable to be cuckolded than the base; every one is equal.' But Shakespeare may mean that great ones are in greater danger because their duties keep them from home.

277 **plague** affliction

278 **Prerogativèd** privileged  
**base** lower orders

279 **unshunnable** inescapable. A coinage (cf. *MM* 3.2.60, 'an unshunned consequence'; Dent, C889, 'Cuckolds come by destiny').

280 **forked** forkèd: horned

281 **do quicken** are conceived

282 **mocks** makes a mockery of; counterfeits, makes a false pretence of (*OED* 4b)

284 **generous** noble. We hear no more of the dinner, but perhaps should now hear laughter from a nearby room, voices, music?

285 **attend** await; give attendance to

286 **to blame** blameworthy, i.e. I'm wrong (*OED* blame 6)

276 the] *F*; a *Q* 277 of great ones] *Q*; to Great-ones *F* 281 SD] *after* beleeeue it 283 *Q*; *after* 281 *F* Look ... she] *F*; *Desdemona* *Q* 282 O ... mocks] *Q*; Heauen mock'd *F* 283 't] *F*; it *Q* 284 islanders] *F*; Ilander *Q* 286 do ... faintly] *F*; is your speech so faint *Q* 286–7 Why ... well?] *as F*; *one line Q*

OTHELLO

I have a pain upon my forehead, here.

DESDEMONA

Faith, that's with watching, 'twill away again.

Let me but bind it hard, within this hour 290

It will be well.

OTHELLO

Your napkin is too little.

[*She drops her handkerchief.*]

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

DESDEMONA

I am very sorry that you are not well.

*Exeunt Othello and Desdemona.*

EMILIA

I am glad I have found this napkin,

This was her first remembrance from the Moor. 295

My wayward husband hath a hundred times

Woody me to steal it, but she so loves the token

– For he conjured her she should ever keep it –

That she reserves it evermore about her

To kiss and talk to. I'll have the work ta'en out 300

And give't Iago: what he will do with it

Heaven knows, not I,

288 Cf. Thorello (as in 245n.), 1.4.191, 'Troth my head akes extreamely on a suddaine': he fears horns. Othello *may* have a headache, but 287 gives him an excuse for claiming one.

289 **watching** i.e. not sleeping enough

291 **napkin** handkerchief

\*SD See LN.

292 **in** i.e. to join the others. Or are they out of doors (cf. 3.3n)?

293 SD The F SD may mean that Othello sweeps out without listening to Desdemona's last line, or it may be misplaced.

295 **remembrance** keepsake

296 **wayward** self-willed; wrong-headed;

perverse. Might be confused with *weird*, which could be spelt *weyward* (as in *Mac* 1.3.33).

297 **token** love token

298 **conjured** conjured: earnestly entreated

299 **reserves** preserves

300 **To . . . to** For Desdemona's age see p. 96.

**work** pattern; embroidery

**ta'en out** copied (*OED* 85e). From Cinthio: see pp. 386, 390; cf. 3.4.180, 4.1.153.

302 Cf. Dent, G189.1, 'God he knows, not I' (cf. R3 3.1.26). She implies 'I don't want to know.'

289 Faith] *Q*: Why *F* 290 it hard] *F*; your head *Q* 291 well] *F*; well againe *Q* SD] *Rowe*; not in *QF* 293 SD] *Ex. Oth. and Desd. (opp. 294) Q*; *Exit. (opp. 292) F* 300 have] *F*; ha *Q* 301 he will] *F*; hee'll *Q*

I nothing, but to please his fantasy.

*Enter* IAGO.

IAGO

How now! What do you here alone?

EMILIA

Do not you chide, I have a thing for you – 305

IAGO

You have a thing for me? it is a common thing –

EMILIA Ha?

IAGO

To have a foolish wife.

EMILIA

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

IAGO

What handkerchief? 310

EMILIA

What handkerchief?

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, faith, she let it drop by negligence 315  
And, to th'advantage, I being here, took't up.

303 **I nothing** 'I am nothing (in his eyes; he thinks I'm here) only to please his whims'; or, 'I know nothing, except to please . . .'. See p. 48.

**fantasy** could = habit of deluding oneself (*OED* 3)

305 **a thing** could = something (*Ham* 5.2.90)

306 **thing** Iago pretends to misunderstand *thing* as *puendum*: cf. *TGV* 3.1.351, *IH4*

3.3.115ff.

**common** free to be used by everyone; undistinguished, ordinary (*OED* 6, 11)

310 **handkerchief** This is F's form throughout; Q always reads *handkercher*, and this may be what Shakespeare wrote (*Texts*, 70).

312 **that** that which

316 **to th'advantage** i.e. seizing the opportunity

303 but to please] *F*; know, but for *Q* 303.1] as *F*; *opp.* 302 *Q* 306] as *Q*; *F* lines me? / thing – / You have] *F*; *not in Q* 308 wife] *F*; thing *Q* 310 handkerchief] *F* (*throughout*); handkercher *Q* (*throughout*) 314 stolen] *F* (stolne); stole *Q* 315 No, faith,] as *Q*; No: but *F* 316 th'] *F*; the *Q*

Look, here it is.

IAGO A good wench, give it me.

EMILIA

What will you do with't, that you have been so earnest  
To have me filch it?

IAGO [*Snatching it*] Why, what's that to you?

EMILIA

If it be not for some purpose of import 320  
Give't me again. Poor lady, she'll run mad  
When she shall lack it.

IAGO Be not known 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 325

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 330  
But with a little art upon the blood

317 A **good wench** good girl. *Wench* (girl, young woman) could be 'an endearing form of address' (*OED* 1c).

318 **you have** elide: *you've*

319 **filch** pilfer (something of small value) (originally slang)

\*SD Some Iagos snatch the handkerchief, others get it by coaxing (Sprague, 197).

**Why . . . you** Dent, W280.4, 'What is that to you?'

320 **import** weighty significance

321 **run mad** Cf. *IH4* 3.1.209, 'Nay, if you melt, then will she run mad.' We would say 'go frantic'.

322 **lack** miss; need

**acknown** unique in Shakespeare; usually *acknown of* (*OED* 4d). Seems to mean 'acknowledged'; in effect, don't

acknowledge that you have a part in it, keep out of it.

323 **leave me** Cf. 85, Othello's request to *his* wife to leave: the two marriages are brought into focus.

325 **Trifles . . . air** Cf. Dent, A90, 'As light as air'. Perhaps he toys with the handkerchief (blows it into the air? Cf. 448).

327 **As . . . writ** alluding to the Bible as Holy Writ, i.e. holy writing

329 **conceits** thoughts

330 **distaste** cause disgust, offend the taste (*OED*, first here)

331 **art** skill. Iago prides himself on his 'art' elsewhere: cf. 'double knavery' (1.3.393 and 400), 'we work by wit' (2.3.367–8).

**upon the blood** to arouse passion

317 it is] *Q*: 'tis *F* 318–9] *verse Q* (bin/); *prose F* 318 't] *F*; it *Q* 319 SD] *Rowe*; not in *QF* what's] *Q*; what is *F* 321 Give't me] *F*; Giue mee't *Q* 322–3 Be . . . me] as *F*; one line *Q* 322 acknown] *F*; you knowne *Q* 328] *F*; not in *Q* 329 natures] *QF*; nature *Pope* 331 art] *Q*; acte *F*

Burn like the mines of sulphur.

*Enter* OTHELLO.

I did say so:

Look where he comes. Not poppy nor mandragora  
Nor all the drowsy syrups of the world  
Shall ever medicine thee to that sweet sleep 335  
Which thou owedst yesterday.

OTHELLO Ha! Ha! false to me?

IAGO

Why, how now, general? No more of that.

OTHELLO

Avaunt, be gone, thou hast set me on the rack!  
I swear 'tis better to be much abused  
Than but to know't a little.

IAGO How now, my lord? 340

OTHELLO

What sense had I of her stolen hours of lust?  
I saw't not, thought it not, it harmed not me,  
I slept the next night well, fed well, was free and  
merry;

332 Cf. Pliny, quoted Hart: 'Sulphur . . . is engendered within the Islands of Aeolia, which lie between Italy and Sicily . . . [which] do always burn by reason thereof' (i.e. are difficult to put out).

333 **poppy** opium  
**mandragora** (the juice of the) mandrake plant, a soporific. Cf. *AC* 1.5.4–5, 'Give me to drink mandragora . . . That I might sleep out this great gap of time', and Marlowe, *Jew of Malta*, 5.1.80–1.

334 **drowsy** inducing sleepiness

335 **medicine** bring by medicine (nonce use)

336 **owedst** didst own or possess

**Ha! Ha! Ha**, like *O*, was a signal to the actor to make the appropriate noise: cf.

*OED* 1, 4.2.56n.

337 **how now** what's this

338 **Avaunt** away!

**rack** Cf. *KL* 4.7.45–6, 'I am bound / Upon a wheel of fire'.

339 **abused** wronged, deceived

340 **Than . . . little** than only to know a little of what has happened

341 Othello's imagination has persuaded him of Desdemona's guilt (in Iago's absence!).  
**sense** feeling, consciousness

**stolen** secret

342 Cf. Dent, *K179.1*, 'What one does not know does not hurt.'

343 **fed well** Cf. *feeds well*, 187.

**free** unreserved in behaviour; (?)carefree

332 mines] *F*; mindes *QSD*] *opp.* 331 *Q*: after 332 *F* 336 owedst] *Q*: owd'st *F* to me?] *F*; to me, to me? *Q* 340 know't] *F*; know *Q* 341 'of] *Q*; in *F* 343 fed well] *F*; not in *Q*

I found not Cassio's kisses on her lips;  
 He that is robbed, not wanting what is stolen, 345  
 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 350  
 Farewell the tranquil mind, farewell content!  
 Farewell the plumed 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, 355  
 The royal banner, and all quality,  
 Pride, pomp and circumstance of glorious war!

345–6 Cf. Ovid, *Amores*, 3.14, 'That you should not err, since you are fair, is not my plea, but that I be not compelled, poor wretch, to know it . . . let me think you honest though you are not'; *Son* 138; Dent, L461, 'He that is not sensible of his loss has lost nothing.'

345 **wanting** missing

348 **camp** i.e. army

349 **Pioneers** the lowest kind of soldier; carried spades, pickaxes, etc., to dig trenches – perhaps relevant, in view of Othello's inflamed imagination

**and all** Cf. *KL* 3.6.62, 'The little dogs and all'.

**tasted** handled, explored by touch; had carnal knowledge of (*OED* 1, 3b, citing *Cym* 2.4.57–8, 'make't apparent / That you have tasted her in bed', as first example).

350 **So** so long as

350–60 The 'farewell' speech was a commonplace (e.g. Ovid, *Heroides*, 9.165ff.). Shakespeare's version was much echoed by other dramatists, esp. Beaumont and Fletcher (in *Bonduca*; *The Loyal Subject*; *The Prophetess*, 'farewell Pride and Pomp / And circumstance of glorious Majesty, / Farewell for ever' (4.6.72–4,

quoted Malone).

351 **tranquil** serene, peaceful (*OED*, from Lat. *tranquillus*, first here)

352 **plumed** plumed: decked with feathers  
**big** mighty; violent

353 **makes** Cf. 1.1.148–9n.

354–5 perhaps an echo of Lyly's *Campaspe*, 2.2.35; Alexander the Great, in love, neglects 'the warlike sound of *drumme* and *trumpe* . . . the *neighing* of barbed *steeds*'. *Trump* = trumpet.

356 **royal** magnificent (*OED* 8–10): Othello did not proclaim his own royal descent (1.2.19ff.).

**quality** essential nature

357 **Pride, pomp** usually deplored, not admired (as here). Cf. L. Wright, *Summons for Sleepers* (1589), A4a: 'pomp, pride, and superfluity'; Plutarch, *Lives* (1579), '[he] brought all the pride and pompe of those Courts into GRÆCE' ('Agis and Cleomenes', p. 850); *Homilies*, 280, 282.

**circumstance** formality, ceremony. See Parker (as in 126n.).

**glorious** possessing glory; eager for glory; ostentatious, boastful (*OED* 1–5)

347 this.] *Q*: this? *F* 352 troops] *F*; troope *Q* 355 th'] *F*; the *Q*

And, O you mortal engines whose rude throats  
Th'immortal Jove's dread clamours counterfeit,  
Farewell: Othello's occupation's gone. 360

IAGO

Is't possible? my lord?

OTHELLO

Villain, be sure thou prove my love a whore,  
Be sure of it, give me the ocular proof,  
[Catching hold of him]

Or by the worth of man's eternal soul  
Thou hadst been better have been born a dog 365  
Than answer my waked 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 – 370

358 **mortal** deadly

**engines** machines, i.e. cannons

**rude** rough, rugged

359 **clamours** (Lat. *clamor*, a shout), i.e. thunder

360 **occupation** employment, hence life, because life has lost all meaning for him. Hulme (124) thinks Othello refers to his military role but 'must refer also to his loss of Desdemona' (since *occupy* could = cohabit with). Iago spoke of the *trade* of war (1.2.1).

361 'Is it possible that you should feel like this?'

362ff. close to Cinthio: cf. p. 385. Brabantio flared up more quickly (1.1.116). Barton Booth took Iago by the throat during this speech; other actors did so later (371) – an

action authenticated by 5.2.353.

362 **my love** Does he still love her?

363 **ocular proof** Cf. *Cynthia's Revels* (1600), 2.3.11ff., 'You shall now, as well be the ocular, as the eare-witnesse'; *Poetaster* (1601), 4.5.75, 'wilt thou suffer this ocular temptation?'

364 See LN.

366 **answer** have to answer to, or defend yourself against

368–9 **That . . . on** 'that the proof permits of no support to attach a doubt to'. *Hinge* = pivot (*OED* 4, first here); *loop* = looped string or cord. Cf. *OED* hang 9b, 'to be supported or suspended at the side, as on a hinge or pivot, so as to be free to turn or swing horizontally': i.e. the proof must be so secure that doubts will not move it.

358 you] *F*; ye *Q* rude] *F*; wide *Q* 359 Th'] *F*; The *Q* dread clamours] *F*; great clamor *Q* 361 possible? my] *Capell subst.*; possible my *QF* 362 thou] *Qc, F*; you *Qu* 363 SD] *Rowe*; not in *QF* 364 man's] *Q*; mine *F*



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 375  
 Greater than that!

IAGO

O grace! O heaven forgive me!

Are you a man? have you a soul, or sense?  
 God buy you, take mine office. O wretched fool  
 That lov'st to make thine honesty a vice!  
 O monstrous world! Take note, take note, O world, 380  
 To be direct and honest is not safe.  
 I thank you for this profit, and from hence  
 I'll love no friend, sith love breeds such offence.

OTHELLO

Nay, stay, thou shouldst be honest.

IAGO

I should be wise, for honesty's a fool 385

371ff. Cf. *KJ* 4.3.117–34, 'Beyond the infinite and boundless reach / Of mercy, if thou didst this deed of death, / Art thou damn'd'.

372 **remorse** repentance (because you cannot win forgiveness for what you have done); compassion

373 **head** perhaps = summit (*OED* 12)  
**accumulate** heap up. Cf. a similar image in *Ham* 5.1.280ff., 'let them throw / Millions of acres on us'.

374 **heaven weep** Cf. *MM* 2.2.122: man 'makes the angels weep'.

**amazed** stronger than today: 'paralyzed with horror' (Kittredge)

376 **forgive** i.e. for daring to be 'honest': more subtle than *Q* *defend*

377 **sense** consciousness; intelligence

378 **God buy you** here = (God be with you, i.e.) God help you, I wash my hands of you  
**office** his position of trust, *either* as ensign,

or as Othello's 'friend' and informer

378–9 **O . . . vice** He addresses himself; vice = defect, fault.

380 could be punctuated 'O monstrous! world, take note . . .' Cf. *KL* 4.1.10, 'World, world, O world!'; *TC* 5.10.36.

381 **direct** straightforward  
**honest** honourable

382 **profit** profitable lesson (Sanders). Cf. Montaigne, bk 3, ch. 1, 'Of profit and honesty'.

**from hence** henceforth

383 **sith** since (archaic)

**breeds** begets  
**offence** hurt; pain; disgrace

384 **stay** *Either* Iago is about to slip away, or Othello asks him not to proceed in that way of thinking.

**shouldst be** appear to be, or, ought to be

385 **should be** ought to be

376 forgive] *F*; defend *Q* 378 buy you] *F*; buy, you *Q* mine] *Qc*, *F*; thine *Qu* 379 lov'st] *F*; liuest *Q* thine] *Qc*, *F*; mine *Qu* 383 sith] *F*; since *Q*

And loses that it works for.

OTHELLO

By the world,

I think my wife be honest, and think she is not,

I think that thou art just, and think thou art not.

I'll have some proof. Her name, that was as fresh

As Dian's visage, is now begrimed and black 390

As mine own face. If there be cords or knives,

Poison, or fire, or suffocating streams,

I'll not endure it. Would I were satisfied!

IAGO

I see, sir, you are eaten up with passion.

I do repent me that I put it to you. 395

You would be satisfied?

OTHELLO

Would? nay, and I will!

IAGO

And may – but how? how satisfied, my lord?

Would you, the supervisor, grossly gape on?

Behold her topped?

OTHELLO

Death and damnation! O!

386 **By the world** common asseveration, as in *LLL* 4.3.17, 5.1.102, 105; *R3* 4.4.375; but more meaningful here, after 380 (cf. also 90–2, 4.3.63–9)

387–8 elide: 'she's', 'thou'rt not' (*Texts*, 119)

388 **just** honourable (in what you say)

389 **I'll have** I must have

\***Her name** Ridley defends *F*: 'Othello is maddened by the befoulment of his own honour.' But the comparison with Diana (the moon goddess, patron of chastity) points to a woman and *her* chastity, not to a man.

390 **begrimed grime** = soot, smut, coal dust.

The actor's face was *begrimed*: he had to be careful to keep his makeup off Desdemona's clothes (Lois Potter in *The Arts of Performance*, ed. Murray Biggs [1991], 118). A curious way to speak of his

own face?

391–3 Is he thinking of suicide (Sanders)? In *Faerie Queene*, 1.9.50, Despair offers 'swords, ropes, poison, fire, / And all that might him to perdition [i.e. suicide] draw'. But Othello may have in mind murder, not suicide: cf. 445, 4.1.175.

393 **satisfied** set free from doubt, satisfied one way or the other. Iago plays with the word to suggest a voyeur's satisfaction. Cf. *WT* 1.2.232ff.

394 **eaten up** devastated. Cf. *gnaw my inwards* (2.1.295).

395 **put** suggested

398 **supervisor** onlooker, spectator (*OED* 2, first here; previously 'one who directs the work of others')

**grossly** indelicately, brutally

399 **topped** Cf. 1.1.88n., 5.2.134.

386–93 By . . . satisfied!] *F*; *not in Q* 389 Her] *Q2*; My *F* 394 sir] *Q*; *not in F* 396 Would? . . . and] *as F*; Would, nay *Q* 398 supervisor] *Q*; super-vision *F* 399 topped] topt *Q*; top'd *F*; tupp'd *Theobald*

IAGO

It were a tedious difficulty, I think, 400  
 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 405  
 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 410  
 Will give you satisfaction, you may have't.

OTHELLO

Give me a living reason she's disloyal.

IAGO

I do not like the office.  
 But sith I am entered in this cause so far,  
 Pricked to't by foolish honesty and love, 415

400 **tedious** tiresome; disagreeable401 **prospect** view; spectacle

**Damn them then** He appears to pick up 399 ('Yes, their death and damnation is right'), but changes construction ('May they be damned if ever . . .').

402 **bolster** must mean 'have sexual intercourse'. *OED* guesses 'to lie on the same bolster'. Perhaps a misreading of *balter* = tumble about, dance clumsily; to form tangled knots, stick together (by coagulation) (*OED* 1, 5).

403 **More** other

404 **satisfaction** (?)satisfying proof (*OED* 6b, first in 1601). He edges towards the thought that to behold her 'topped' can give pleasure.

406-7 See LN.

407 **gross** stupid

409 **imputation** attribution (Lat. *imputare*, to bring into the reckoning)

**circumstances** circumstantial evidence

410 **door** 'I think the slightest of pauses after *door*; Othello is led in imagination to stand outside the closed bedroom door' (Ridley).

411 **may** I prefer *Q may*, repeating 397 *may*.

412 **living** valid. Perhaps on the analogy of 'the living God' (Hebrews 10.31).

413 **office** task, duty. Iago manoeuvres to a position of pretended reluctance to speak: cf. 2.3.216, 3.3.196, 4.1.277, etc.

414 **cause** matter

415 **Pricked** urged or spurred on, like a horse or beast: pretending that he is helpless

401 them] *F*; em *Q* (*twice*) 402 do] *F*; did *Q* 411 may have't] *may ha't Q*; might haue't *F* 412 she's] *F*; that shee's *Q* 414 in] *F*; into *Q*

I will go on. I lay with Cassio lately  
 And being troubled with a raging tooth  
 I could not sleep. There are a kind of men  
 So loose of soul that in their sleeps will mutter  
 Their affairs – one of this kind is Cassio. 420  
 In sleep I heard him say ‘Sweet Desdemona,  
 Let us be wary, let us hide our loves,’  
 And then, sir, would he gripe and wring my hand,  
 Cry ‘O sweet creature!’ and then kiss me hard  
 As if he plucked up kisses by the roots 425  
 That grew upon my lips, lay his leg o’er my thigh,  
 And sigh, and kiss, and then cry ‘Cursed fate  
 That gave thee to the Moor!’

OTHELLO

O monstrous! monstrous!

IAGO

Nay, this was but his dream.

OTHELLO

But this denoted a foregone conclusion. 430

416 **I lay** i.e. shared a bed with (bed-sharing was not uncommon: cf. the great bed of Ware, *TN* 3.2.48). Erotic dreams are already found in classical literature (e.g. Ovid, *Heroides*, 15, 123ff.), but Cassio’s dream is Iago’s fabrication.

417 **raging** aching furiously. Before modern dentistry, toothache was more of a problem: cf. the ‘hellish torment of the teeth’ (Epigram 36 in *Epigrammes and Elegies* [c. 1599] of Sir John Davies and Marlowe).

419 **loose** dissolute  
**sleeps** The plural was idiomatic when referring to more than one person (*OED* 2b).

420 **affairs** could be three syllables (Abbott, 477)

421–8 (*Arden of Faversham*) and *Doctor Dodypoll* (1600), B3a, where lovers cry out

and betray themselves in their sleep (both plays prior to *Oth*).

423ff. **then** Notice the force of repeated *then*: it seems to authenticate several actions by placing them in sequence.

**gripe** clutch, grasp

**would he** governs *gripe*, *wring*, *Cry*, *kiss*, *lay*, *sigh*, *kiss*, *cry* (which all become repeated actions)

424 **hard** passionately (cf. *WT* 2.1.5)

426 **\*lay** I guess that Q misread *laye* as *layd*, then misread or changed the following verbs, and that F *laid* followed Q; *lay his* probably slurred as *lay’s*.

427 **Cursed** cursèd

430 **foregone conclusion** a coinage (not in modern sense); *conclusion* = experiment, trial (Malone); *foregone* = previous

417–20] as F; Q lines sleep. / soule, / affaires, / Cassio: / 422 wary] F; merry Q 424 Cry ‘O] Cry, oh F; Cry out, Q and] Q; not in F 426–8 That . . . Moor!] as F; Q lines leg / then / Moore. / 426 lay] Rowe; then layed Q; laid F o’er] F; Ouer Q 427 sigh . . . kiss . . . cry] F; sigh’d . . . kissed . . . Cried Q

IAGO

'Tis a shrewd doubt, though it be but a dream,  
And this may help to thicken other proofs  
That do demonstrate thinly.

OTHELLO

I'll tear her all to pieces!

IAGO

Nay, yet be wise, yet we see nothing done, 435  
She may be honest yet. Tell me but this,  
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, 440  
I am sure it was your wife's, did I today  
See Cassio wipe his beard with.

OTHELLO

If it be that—

431 This line could be Othello's, as in F. Alexander and Sisson prefer Q. Othello 'does not entangle himself; he is entangled [by Iago]' (Sisson).

**shrewd** strongly indicative; vexatious; sharp  
**doubt** suspicion; fear

432 **thicken** i.e. confirm

433 **demonstrate** establish the truth (*OED* 4, first intransitive use); accent on second syllable

**thinly** weakly. Cf. 1.3.109, *thin* evidence.

434 Is the urge to *tear her* a sign of his 'primitiveness'? Not necessarily: cf. *RJ* 5.3.35, 'I will tear thee joint by joint', *Cym* 2.4.147, 'tear her limb-meal', and also Psalms 50.22.

435 **yet** If we retain F *yet*, the third *yet* (436) in two lines receives a special emphasis: 'She may be honest – yet' (i.e. even if not for long).

<sup>2</sup>**yet** up to now

**wise** Cf. 4.1.233.

**done** Perhaps a quibble on *do* = copulate: cf. *Tit* 4.2.76, 'I have done thy mother'; *MM* 1.2.87–8, 'what has he done? Pompey. A woman.'

436 **yet** still; nevertheless; after all

**Tell . . . this** The same words occur, in a scribe's hand, in *Sir Thomas More*, Addition II, 237 (usually assigned to Shakespeare).

438 **Spotted** decorated

**strawberries** might suggest a hidden evil, or the purity of the Virgin (L. J. Ross, in *Studies in the Renaissance*, 7 [1960], 225–40). Or drops of blood?

439 **first gift** Cf. 295.

440 **I . . . that** He validates his lies by refusing to say more than he knows.

441 **today** As Iago has only just received it (319), he takes a risk in saying this. Othello could have seen it if it was Desdemona who dropped it: cf. 291 SD n.

431 SP] Q; not in F 432 And] Q; Iago. And F 435 'yet] F; but Q 442 it] F; 't Q

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! 445  
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 the hollow hell, 450  
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, blood, blood! *Othello kneels.*

IAGO

Patience, I say, your mind perhaps may change. 455

OTHELLO

Never, Iago. Like to the Pontic sea

443 \*<sup>2</sup>**that** could be written 'yt' and misread as  
yt (it), hence Malone's emendation

444 **proofs** What proofs?

445 Cf. 4.1.175. The *slave* = Cassio.

447–8 Some action is required ('Look *here*',  
'*thus*'), but what? He blows something  
upwards, then looks down and addresses  
'vengeance' in hell.

448 **fond** foolish; affectionate

450 **black vengeance** Cf. *A Larum for London*  
(1602; SR: 27 May 1600), A4b, 'send  
blacke vengeance to that hated towne'.

**hollow hell** See LN.

451 **hearted** fixed in the heart (*OED* 5, first  
here; but cf. 1.3.367)

452 **fraught** burden

453 **aspics'** (*aspic* = asp, a small venomous

serpent, found in Egypt and Libya): cf.  
3.4.58

**content** calm; satisfied in mind (a harmless  
word, yet calculated to infuriate him). Cf.  
*satisfied*, 396–9.

454 SD SDs placed in the margin (as in Q) are  
not always placed precisely in manuscripts:  
the kneel could be intended for 457 or 463.  
For revengers who kneel, cf. *Tit* 4.1.87ff;  
*Arden of Faversham* (Revels), 9.37, 'Then  
he kneels down and holds up his hands to  
heaven'; Marlowe, *Edward II*, 3.1.127,  
*Jew of Malta*, 1.2.165.

456–9 Cf. Pliny (see pp. 15–17). The  
Pontic Sea, Propontic and Hellespont =  
Black Sea, Sea of Marmora and the  
Dardanelles.

443 <sup>2</sup>that] *Malone*; it *QF* 447 true] *F*; time *Q* 448–9] *one line QF* 450 the . . . hell] *F*; thy . . . Cell  
*Q* 453 Yet] *F*; Pray *Q* 454] *F*; O blood, Iago, blood. *Q* SD] *Q* (*he kneels. opp. 453*); not in *F* 455  
perhaps] *Q*; not in *F* 456–63 Iago . . . heaven] *F*; not in *Q*

Whose icy current and compulsive course  
 Ne'er keeps retiring ebb but keeps due on  
 To the Propontic and the Hellespont:  
 Even so my bloody thoughts with violent pace 460  
 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  
 I here engage my words.

IAGO Do not rise yet. *Iago kneels.*  
 Witness, you ever-burning lights above, 466  
 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 470  
 And to obey shall be in me remorse

457 **compulsive** caused by compulsion, compelled; or, compelling

458 See LN.

461 **humble** The lover is usually humble; appropriate here because Lat. *humilis* (from *humus*, earth) could = low-lying. Olivier paused after *humble* and then 'forced himself to say the word "love"' (J. R. Brown, quoted Hankey, 253).

462 **capable** able to receive, contain; capacious (*OED* 1, 2)

**wide** vast, spacious

463 **marble** indifferent to the sufferings of others. Malone compared *Antonio* and *Melida* (printed 1602, acted 1599 or 1600), 'pleased the marble heavens' (*Revels*, 2.1.230). Cf. *Tim* 4.3.191, 'the marbled mansion all above', *Cym* 5.4.87, 'Peep through thy marble mansion' (both = heaven).

464 **due** proper; necessary

465 **engage** pledge

466 **Witness** Such formal invocations were

more often addressed to God or heaven: cf. *TGV* 2.6.25, *2H6* 4.8.62.

**ever-burning** Cf. 2.1.15, *ever-fired*. Implies 'ever-watchful' and 'never-ending'.

467 **elements** heavenly bodies (*OED* 10); or, powers of nature (Ridley)

**clip** clasp; encompass

469 **execution** performance; implying the 'execution' of Cassio

**wit** mind

470 **Othello's** Speaking of 'Othello' to his face, Iago takes a liberty acknowledged by 472, *thy love*. Cf. 4.1.48n.

**service** At 1.1.41ff. he saw himself as Othello's servant; now, despite his assurances, Othello is almost the ventriloquist's dummy.

471 **remorse** glossed as 'a solemn obligation' by *OED* (4c, first here, citing no other instance). But the usual sense (= pity, compassion) is possible: 'to obey shall be an act of pity (for "wronged Othello") whatever bloody task I have to undertake'.

458 'keeps] *F*; feels *Q2*; Never retiring ebbs, but keeps due on *Sisson* 465 SD] *Q* (*Iago kneels.*) *opp.* 467; not in *F* 469 execution] *F*; excellency *Q* hands] *F*; hand *Q* 471 in me] *F*; not in *Q*

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 475  
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 480  
For the fair devil. Now art thou my lieutenant.

IAGO I am your own for ever. *Exeunt.*

[3.4] *Enter* DESDEMONA, EMILIA *and* CLOWN.

DESDEMONA Do you know, sirrah, where lieutenant  
Cassio lies?

472 **ever** soever  
**greet** welcome; salute  
473 **vain** empty  
**bounteous** 'normally used of the giver  
rather than the receiver' (Ridley). Cf. 203n.  
Implies 'whole-hearted', or perhaps a  
bounteous reward?

474 **to't** to the test  
476 **My . . . dead** Cf. 2.3.161, *he dies!*  
477 **But . . . live** He means the opposite,  
noticing that Othello seems preoccupied  
with Cassio.

478 **lewd** (a richer word than now) base,  
worthless; wicked; lascivious  
**minx** wanton (woman), trull: cf. 4.1.152

479 **apart** aside, away from here  
480 **some . . . death** He has not decided on the  
*means*.

481 **Now . . . lieutenant** The first sign that he  
knows of Iago's wish for promotion.

482 **for ever** Cf. 1.3.365, 3.3.217: a special

emphasis on *for ever*. Cf. LN, 1.1.8.  
Othello welcomes Iago as '*my lieutenant*';  
Iago acknowledges this, 'I am your own –  
for ever' (also implying the opposite: '*you*  
belong to *me* through all eternity'. So  
Faustus belongs to his servant-master  
Mephistopheles).

3.4.1–22 This clown episode was once  
regularly omitted in performance (Sprague,  
202). The Clown, like the Porter in  
*Macbeth* (2.3), arrests the play as it gathers  
tragic momentum, and is equally self-  
absorbed.

1 **sirrah** term of address used for servants or  
social inferiors  
**lieutenant** Othello dismissed him, but she  
gives him his title.

2ff. **lies** Cf. the quibbles on *hear* (3.1.22), and  
on *lives* in *TN* 3.1.1ff. The clowns in *TN*  
and *Oth* were probably played by the same  
actor, Robert Armin.

472 business] *F*; worke so *Q* 477] as *Q*; *F* lines Request. / liue. / at your request.] *F*; as you request,  
*Q* 478] one line *Q*; *F* lines Minx: / her. / <sup>3</sup>damn her] *F*; not in *Q* 481] as *Q*; *F* lines Diuell. / Lieutenant.  
/ 3.4.] *Scœna Quarta. F*; not in *Q* 1 lieutenant] *F*; the Lieutenant *Q*



- CLOWN I dare not say he lies anywhere.  
 DESDEMONA Why, man?  
 CLOWN He's a soldier, and for me to say a soldier lies, 5  
      'tis stabbing.  
 DESDEMONA Go to, where lodges he?  
 CLOWN To tell you where he lodges is to tell you  
      where I lie.  
 DESDEMONA Can anything be made of this? 10  
 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 enquire him out and be edified by  
      report? 15  
 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. 20  
 CLOWN To do this is within the compass of man's wit,  
      and therefore I will attempt the doing it. *Exit.*

6 **stabbing** i.e. to run the risk of being stabbed. Cf. Raleigh, *The Lie*: 'Because, to give the lie, / Deserves no less than stabbing'.

9 **I lie** *Lie* could = dwell, as in *MW* 2.1.179–80, 'Does he lie at the Garter?' The Clown quibbles 'To tell you where *he* lies is to tell you where *I* lie (because *I* don't know)'.

12 **devise** invent; guess (*OED* 5, 10)

13 **lie . . . throat** to lie foully or infamously (*OED* throat 3c). In the finely graded art of giving the lie (for which see *AYL* 5.4.68ff.), to say that someone lied in his throat was a stronger reproof than simply to say he lied:

cf. *R3* 1.2.93, *TN* 3.4.156, Dent, T268.

14 **edified** informed, instructed, often in religious sense. Cf. *TN* 5.1.290, 'Look then to be well edified when the fool delivers the madman.'

16 **catechize** Cf. *TN* 1.5.62ff., '*Clown*. I must catechize you for it, madonna': perhaps joking at a 'clown routine' (cf. 2n., 14n.).

17 **questions . . . answer** (as in the Catechism) **by them** 'i.e. and by them, when answered, form my own answer to you' (Malone)

19 **moved** urged

21 **compass** due limits: so *RJ* 4.1.47, 'It strains me past the compass of my wits.'

5 SP] *F*; not in *Q* He's] *F*; He is *Q* me] *F*; one *Q* 6 'tis] *F*; is *Q* 8–10] *F*; not in *Q* 12 here . . . there] *F*; there *Q* 13 mine own] *F*; my *Q* 17 by] *QF*; bid *Theobald* 19 on] *F*; in *Q* 21 man's wit] *F*; a man *Q* 22 I will] *F*; I'll *Q* it] *F*; of it *Q*

DESDEMONA

Where should I lose that handkerchief, Emilia?

EMILIA

I know not, madam.

DESDEMONA

Believe me, I had rather have lost my purse 25  
Full of crusadoes; and but my noble Moor  
Is true of mind, and made of no such baseness  
As jealous creatures are, it were enough  
To put him to ill-thinking.

EMILIA

Is he not jealous?

DESDEMONA

Who, he? I think the sun where he was born 30  
Drew all such humours from him.

EMILIA

Look where he comes.

*Enter* OTHELLO.

DESDEMONA

I will not leave him now till Cassio  
Be called to him. How is't with you, my lord?

OTHELLO

Well, my good lady. [*aside*] O hardness to dissemble!—  
How do you, Desdemona?

DESDEMONA

Well, my good lord. 35

23 **should I lose** could I have lost

25 **my purse** Cf. 3.3.160, 'Who steals my purse steals trash'.

26 **crusadoes** Portuguese coins, bearing the figure of the cross. Mentioned nowhere else by Shakespeare – why here? Perhaps to remind us that Christian Venice was threatened by Muslim states. A *crusado* was also a crusader.  
**but** except that

27 **baseness** inferior quality

29 **Is . . . jealous** probably meant as a warning.

31 **humours** the four chief fluids of the body, which were thought to determine a person's mental and physical qualities; moods, whims

34 **O . . . dissemble** The stock formula was 'I must dissemble!' (as in *2H6* 5.1.13, *Per* 2.5.23); here = O how hard it is to dissemble!

23 that] *Q*; the *F* 25 have lost] *F*; loose *Q* 31.1] *F*; *opp.* 31 *Q* 32–3] as *Steevens* 1793; *Q* lines now, / Lord? /; *F* lines be / Lord? / 32 till] *F*; 'Tis *Qu*; Let *Qc* 33 is't] *F*; is it *Q* 34 SD] *Hanmer*; not in *QF*

OTHELLO

Give me your hand. This hand is moist, my lady.

DESDEMONA

It yet hath felt no age, nor known no sorrow.

OTHELLO

This argues fruitfulness and liberal heart:

Hot, hot, and moist. This hand of yours requires

A sequester from liberty, fasting and prayer, 40

Much castigation, exercise devout,

For here's a young and sweating devil, here,

That commonly rebels. 'Tis a good hand,

A frank one.

DESDEMONA You may indeed say so,

For 'twas that hand that gave away my heart. 45

OTHELLO

A liberal hand. The hearts of old gave hands

But our new heraldry is hands, not hearts.

DESDEMONA

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

OTHELLO

What promise, chuck?

36 **moist** Cf. Tilley, H86, 'A moist hand argues an amorous nature'; AC 1.2.52–3, 'if an oily hand be not a fruitful prognostication'.

38 **argues** gives grounds for inferring  
**fruitfulness** fertility in offspring  
**liberal** bountiful; unrestrained, licentious.  
Here ambiguous near-synonyms (fruitful, liberal) can be taken favourably or unfavourably (Elliott, 30): so *frank*, 44.

39 **Hot** could = passionate; lustful, sexually excited

40 **sequester** sequestration, isolation; probably séquester, lib'rt'y

41 **castigation** corrective discipline

**exercise devout** exercises of devotion, religious discipline

42 **sweating** i.e. hot and moist; toiling (for Satan)

44 **frank** free (from restraint); generous, lavish  
45 (in the troth-plighting or marriage ceremony)

46 **gave** perhaps with a quibble on *give* = display as armorial bearing (*OED* 24)

47 See LN.

**heraldry** heraldic practice

48 **I . . . this** Cf. 3.3.440, 'I know not that'.

49 **chuck** term of endearment (perhaps = chick). So Macbeth to Lady Macbeth (3.2.45), Antony to Cleopatra (4.4.2).

36] as *Q*; *F* lines your hand. / Lady. / 37 yet hath] yet has *Q*; hath *F* 39 Hot, hot] *F*; Not hot *Q* 40 prayer] *F*; praying *Q* 46 hearts . . . hands] *QF*; hands . . . hearts *Hanmer* 48] as *Q*; *F* lines this: / promise. / Come, now] *F*; come, come *Q*

DESDEMONA

I have sent to bid Cassio come speak with you. 50

OTHELLO

I have a salt and sullen rheum offends me,  
Lend me thy handkerchief.

DESDEMONA

Here, my lord.

OTHELLO

That which I gave you.

DESDEMONA

I have it not about me. 55

OTHELLO

Not?

DESDEMONA

No, faith, my lord.

OTHELLO

That's a fault. That handkerchief

Did an Egyptian to my mother give,  
She was a charmer and could almost read  
The thoughts of people. She told her, while she kept  
it 60

'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 65  
And bid me, when my fate would have me wive,

51 **salt** vexatious**sullen** unyielding; *F* *sorry* would = painful, grievous**rheum offends** running cold that troubles

57–8 Cf. 5.2.215n.

58 **Egyptian** probably a true Egyptian (see pp. 49–51), not a Gipsy59 **charmer** one who uses spells and enchantments59–60 **and . . . people** N.B. the importanceof reading 'the thoughts of people' in *Othello*!61 **amiable** lovable

62–5 This sounds like superstition but (if not fabricated by Othello) the prediction later comes true, in so far as Othello and Desdemona are concerned.

64 **loathed** perhaps loathed**spirits** perhaps an error for *spirit*65 **fancies** amorous inclinations, loves51 sullen] *Q*; sorry *F* 56 Not?] *F*; Not. *Q* 57 faith] *Q*; indeed *F* 62] line repeated *Q* from foot of *H4*<sup>o</sup> to top of *II* 64 loathed] *F*; lothely *Q* 66 wive] *Q*; Wiu'd *F*

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? 70  
 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, 75  
 And it was dyed in mummy, which the skilful  
 Conserved of maidens' hearts.

DESDEMONA I' faith, is't true?

OTHELLO

Most veritable, therefore look to't well.

DESDEMONA

Then would to God that I had never seen't!

OTHELLO

Ha! wherefore? 80

DESDEMONA

Why do you speak so startingly and rash?

67 **her** i.e. my wife

**take heed on't** pay attention; or, look after it  
 68 Cf. Dent, E249.1, 'To love as one's own  
 eye'.

69 **perdition** loss; ruin; echoing 3.3.90

71 **web** woven fabric

72–3 See LN.

74 **prophetic fury** Perhaps Ariosto's 'furor  
 profetico' (*Orlando Furioso*, c. 46, st. 80);  
 if so, Shakespeare knew Ariosto in the  
 original, as the English translation had no  
 'prophetic fury'. But he may have found  
 the phrase in the writings of Joshua  
 Sylvester (Muir, 183, 305n.).  
**fury** inspired frenzy

**sewed** The fabric was woven but the  
 embroidered *work* (3.3.300n.) was sewn.

75 **worms** T. Moffett's *The Silkwormes* was  
 published in 1599. A matter of topical  
 interest?

**hallowed** consecrated  
**breed** produce

76 **mummy** medicinal liquid, supposedly  
 made from embalmed bodies

77 **Conserved of** made or preserved from  
**maidens' virgins'**

78 **veritable** unique in Shakespeare

81 **startingly** (?)disconnectedly (Ridley); or,  
 jumpily (*OED* start 5); startlingly  
**rash** hastily, urgently

67 so,] *Q*: so; *F* 68 eye!] eye, *Q*: eye; *F* 69 lose't] *F*: loose *Q* 73 course] *F*: make *Q* 76 which] *F*:  
 with *Q* 77 Conserved] *F*: Conserues *Q* I' faith] *Q*: Indeed? *F* 79 God] *Q*: Heauen *F* seen't] *F*: seene  
 it *Q* 80 Ha!] Ha, *Q*: Ha? *F* 81 rash] *F*: rashly *Q*

OTHELLO

Is't lost? Is't gone? Speak, is't out o'the way?

DESDEMONA

Heaven bless us!

OTHELLO

Say you?

DESDEMONA

It is not lost, but what an if it were? 85

OTHELLO

How?

DESDEMONA

I say it is not lost.

OTHELLO Fetch't, let me see't.

DESDEMONA

Why, so I can, sir; but I will not now.  
This is a trick to put me from my suit.  
Pray you, let Cassio be received again. 90

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.

82 **out** . . . **way** lost, missing. Cf. 1.3.359–60.

83 **Heaven bless us** expresses surprise, but could be ironical = what's all the fuss about (*OED* bless 9)

84 **Say you?** 'do you say so!' or 'what do you say?' Cf. *Ham* 4.5.28, *MM* 5.1.274, *Cym* 4.2.379.

85 This sounds like a lie, because *we* know that she has lost it (cf. 23); but *she* may believe that, though missing, it will turn up again; *an if* = if.

88 **sir** This word creates distance between them.

90 **received** readmitted to his post as lieutenant; received as guest

91–9 **misgives** has misgivings. Cf. *RJ* 1.4.106, 'my mind misgives / Some consequence yet hanging in the stars'.

93 **sufficient** capable

94 F's omission could be caused by eye-skip. Equally, the Q compositor might have 'cast off badly and invented these words to fill a gap: *talk me* is unusual (*Texts*, 47).

82 is't] *F*; is it *Q* o'the] *Q*; o'th' *F* 83 Heaven bless] *Q*; Blesse *F* 86 How?] *F*; Ha. *Q* 87 see't] *F*; see it *Q* 88 sir] *Q*; not in *F* 90 Pray you] *F*; I pray *Q* 91] as *Q*; *F* lines Handkerchiefe, / mis-giues. / the] *F*; that *Q* 92–3] one line *QF* 94] *Q*; not in *F*

251

And lo, the happiness! go and importune her.

DESDEMONA

How now, good Cassio, what's the news with you? 110

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 honour. I would not be delayed: 115  
If my offence 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; 120  
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,  
My advocacy is not now in tune;  
My lord is not my lord, nor should I know him 125  
Were he in favour as in humour altered.  
So help me every spirit sanctified

109 **happiness** lucky chance (happy = lucky).  
Cf. Lyly, *Sapho*, 5.3.2, 'And loe how  
happilye shee sitteth in her caue.'

**importune** sue to; probably importune

112 **by** . . . **means** by your good (or efficacious)  
help; or, 'by means of you, virtuous  
madam' (Kittredge)

113 **Exist** be myself (as Lieutenant Cassio)  
**member of** one who participates in

114 **office** duty (Lat. *officium*)

115 **I . . . be** I don't want to be

116 **mortal** fatal

117 that neither my (military) service in the  
past nor my regrets now (for misbehaving)

119 **ransom** elliptical: set me free (from his  
displeasure, and bring me back) into his  
love

120 merely to know that must be my gain  
(because I'll know the worst)

121 so I shall invest myself with enforced  
contentment (*OED* clothe 7b, citing Job  
39.19)

122–3 and commit myself to some other  
course (leading) to fortune's charitable  
relief. Cf. *Mac* 2.1.16, 'shut up / In  
measureless content'; *KL* 1.1.277–8,  
'receiv'd you / At fortune's alms'.

123 **thrice-gentle** unique in Shakespeare

124 **advocation** (unique in Shakespeare)  
advocacy

125 **My . . . lord** Cf. 1.1.64, 'I am not what I am.'

126 **favour** appearance

**humour** mood

127 Cf. 'so help me God'.

114 office] *F*; duty *Q* 117 nor my] *F*; neither *Q* 122 shut] *F*; shoote *Q*



As I have spoken for you all my best  
 And stood within the blank of his displeasure  
 For my free speech. You must awhile be patient: 130  
 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.

IAGO

Can he be angry? I have seen the cannon 135  
 When it hath blown his ranks into the air  
 And like the devil, from his very arm,  
 Puffed his own brother – and can he be angry?  
 Something of moment then. I will go meet him,  
 There's matter in't indeed, if he be angry. 140

DESDEMONA

I prithee do so. (*Exit [Iago.]*) Something sure of state  
 Either from Venice, or some unhatched practice  
 Made demonstrable here in Cyprus to him,  
 Hath puddled his clear spirit, and in such cases  
 Men's natures wrangle with inferior things 145

128 **all my best** to the best of my ability

129 **blank** once explained as 'the white spot in the centre of a target' (so *OED*). But J. R. Hale shows that *blank* here = 'point-blank range' ('The true Shakespearian blank', *SQ*, 19 [1968], 33–40).

130 **free** frank, unreserved

134 **unquietness** disquiet, perturbation

135 **Can . . . angry?** Iago knows that he can be angry (3.3.434ff.). Elliptical: 'I have seen his ranks blown into the air . . . and meanwhile have seen him cool and unruffled. And can he now be angry?' (Malone).

138 **brother** In this scene we hear of Othello's father, mother, brother, of the Egyptian, the sibyl – i.e. his background.

139 **moment** importance

140 **There's . . . indeed** some importance attaches to it (*OED* matter 11c)

141 **Something . . . state** surely some affair of state

142 **unhatched practice** plot that is still hatching

143 **demonstrable** known, 'capable of being proved' (unique in Shakespeare)

144 **puddled . . . spirit** muddled or confused his (usually) clear mind

145–6 **wrangle . . . object** dispute angrily about (or with) less important things though important ones are their real concern. She appears to class herself with the less important things, taking for granted that Othello's business comes first.

138 can . . . be] *Q*: is he *F* 141 *SD*] *F* (*opp.* 140); not in *Q*

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 150  
 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 155  
 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 so:  
 They are not ever jealous for the cause, 160

147 **indues** (?) brings to a certain state (*OED* 4b, first here, no other instance cited). At this time *indue* and *endue* were interchangeable, and included 'all the senses of *endow*' (*OED*).

148 **members** limbs or parts of the body to i.e. with

149 **think** keep in mind  
**men . . . gods** Cf. Dent, M593, 'We are but men, not gods.'

150 **observancy** respectful attention; observance of forms (unique in Shakespeare)

151 **As . . . bridal** as befits the wedding  
**Beshrew me** evil befall me (mild oath)

152 **unhandsome** unskilful (*OED* 3, first here, no other instance cited); could = unseemly, discourteous (*OED* 4, from 1645; handsome = seemly, recorded 1597); or,

unsoldierly (handsome = soldierly, first in 1665)

**warrior** Cf. 2.1.180, 'O my fair warrior!'

153 **Arraigning** accusing, calling to account  
**unkindness** (a richer word than now) unnatural conduct; lack of natural affection; unkind action

**with my soul** i.e. from my heart and soul

154 **suborned** corrupted  
**witness** i.e. herself

156 **conception** mere fancy

157 **jealous** *F* *lealious* could be two syllables (as in 159) or three  
**toy** fantastic notion; unreasoning dislike; trifle (*OED* 4, 5)

158 **Alas the day** Cf. 4.2.43.

159–62 an indirect comment on Iago's 'motiveless malignity' (see pp. 57–8), not really true of Othello?

146–9] *as F*; *Q* lines obiect, / ake, / members, / thinke, / gods, / 146 their] *F*; the *Q* 148 that] *Q*; a *F* 150 observancy] *F*; obseruances *Q* 155–7] *as F*; *Q* lines thinke, / toy / you.

But jealous for they're 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 here about, 165  
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.

*Exeunt Desdemona and Emilia.*

*Enter* BIANCA.

BIANCA

Save you, friend Cassio!

CASSIO

What make you from home?

How is't with you, my most fair Bianca? 170  
I'faith, 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 eight hours? and lovers' absent hours  
More tedious than the dial, eight score times! 175

161 **monster** Cf. 3.3.168n.; Cor 5.3.36, 'As if a man were author of himself'. For a similar monster, cf. *Faerie Queene*, 4.10.41, 'She syre and mother is her selfe alone, / Begets and eke conceives, ne needeth other none.'

165 **here about** Othello and Desdemona talked in a private place (a garden?): Cassio now walks to a more public place, where Bianca finds him.

166 **fit** i.e. in a suitable mood

168.1 SD BIANCA Elizabethan prostitutes apparently wore red petticoats: cf. *IH4* 1.2.10, 'a fair hot wench in a flame-coloured taffeta' (Ard<sup>2</sup>, n.).

169 **Save** God save, i.e. protect, as in 'God save the King'

**make you** are you doing

173-5 Bianca counts correctly (168 hours): has she been brooding about her wrongs?

175 **dial** clock

161 they're . . . It is] *F*; they are . . . tis *Q* 163 that] *Q*; the *F* 165 here about] *QF*; hereabout *F3* 168 SD] as *Q* (opp. 166); Exit *F* (opp. 167) 168.2] *F*; opp. Cassio 169 *Q* 169 Save] *Q*; 'Saue *F* 170 is't] *F*; is it *Q* 171 I'faith] *Q*; Indeed *F*

O weary reckoning!

CASSIO Pardon me, Bianca,  
I have this while with leaden thoughts been pressed,  
But I shall in a more continue time  
Strike off this score of absence. Sweet Bianca,  
[Giving her Desdemona's handkerchief]  
Take me this work out.

BIANCA O Cassio, whence came this? 180  
This is some token from a newer friend!  
To the felt absence now I feel a cause:  
Is't come to this? Well, well.

CASSIO Go to, woman,  
Throw your vile guesses in the devil's teeth  
From whence you have them! You are jealous now 185  
That this is from some mistress, some remembrance:  
No, by my faith, Bianca.

BIANCA Why, whose is it?

CASSIO  
I know not neither, I found it in my chamber.  
I like the work well: ere it be demanded,  
As like enough it will, I'd have it copied. 190  
Take it, and do't, and leave me for this time.

176 **O weary reckoning** Cf. Ovid, *Heroides*, 2.7, 'Should you count the days, which we count well who love'.

177 **leaden** oppressive (cf. *R3* 5.3.105, 'leaden slumber')

**pressed** oppressed; harassed

178 **continue** uninterrupted; long-continued. Cf. *Tim* 1.1.11, 'an untirable and continue goodness'.

179 **Strike** . . . **score** i.e. pay my account, so that it can be struck out (cancelled); *score* = reckoning (quibbling on 174, 176).

180 **Take** . . . **out** the very words of Emilia (3.3.300)!

181 **friend** mistress

183 **Well, well** Cf. Dent, W269, 'Well, well is a word of malice.'

**Go to** get away with you!

**woman** Cf. 5.2.146n.

184 i.e. and not in my teeth. Cf. Dent, T429, 'To cast (hit) in the teeth'.

186 **remembrance** keepsake

188 **I know not** And yet Desdemona kept it 'evermore about her / To kiss and talk to' (3.3.299–300)!

**neither** used to strengthen a preceding negative (*OED* 3)

191 **leave me** Cf. 3.3.323n.

176 O] *F* (Oh); No *Q* reckoning] *Q*; reck'ning *F* 177 leaden] *F*; laden *Q* 178 continue] *F*; conuenient *Q* 179 SD] *Rowe*; not in *QF* 182 felt absence now] as *Q*; felt-Absence: now *F* 183 Well, well.] *F*; not in *Q* Go to, woman] *QF*; Woman, go to! *Capell* 184 vile] *Q*; vilde *F* 187 by . . . faith] *Q*; in good troth *F* whose] *Q2*; who's *QF* 188] as *Q*; *F* lines neither: / Chamber, / neither] *F*; sweete *Q* 190 I'd] *Q*; I would *F*

BIANCA

Leave you? Wherefore?

CASSIO

I do attend here on the general  
And think it no addition, nor my wish,  
To have him see me womaned.

BIANCA

Why, I pray you? 195

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,  
And say if I shall see you soon at night.

CASSIO

'Tis but a little way that I can bring you 200  
For I attend here, but I'll see you soon.

BIANCA

'Tis very good: I must be circumstanced. *Exeunt.*

[4.1] *Enter OTHELLO and IAGO.*

IAGO

Will you think so?

OTHELLO

Think so, Iago?

IAGO

What,

193 **attend** . . . **on** wait for

194 **addition** usually = title, or additional title,  
as at 4.1.105, but here 'seems to be  
'credit' ' (Ridley). Or perhaps 'no (good)  
addition to have him see me with a woman  
(added)', quibbling on two kinds of  
addition.

195 **womaned** (encumbered) with a woman  
(unique in Shakespeare)

197 Bianca interrupts?

199 **soon at night** Cf. Dent, S639.1, 'Soon at  
night (i.e., tonight)'.

202 **circumstanced** unique in Shakespeare;

'subject to or governed by circumstance' or  
'surrounded with conditions' (*OED*). Or,  
adapting the noun (*OED* circumstance III,  
'That which is non-essential . . . or  
subordinate'), 'I must be treated as  
insignificant.'

4.1.0.1 Q may be right in making Iago lead,  
Othello follow.

1 As at 1.1.1, the opening words imply that  
the speakers have talked for a while.  
Othello now echoes Iago, reversing their  
roles (cf. 3.3.103ff.); Iago continues to  
work on Othello's visual imagination.

195–6] *F*; not in *Q* 202 SD] *Q*; *Exeunt omnes. F* 4.1] *Actus. 4. Q*; *Actus Quartus. Scena Prima.*  
*F* 0.1] *F*; *Enter Iago and Othello. Q*

To kiss in private?

OTHELLO

An unauthorized kiss!

IAGO

Or to be naked with her friend in bed  
An hour or more, not meaning any harm?

OTHELLO

Naked in bed, Iago, and not mean harm? 5  
It is hypocrisy against the devil:  
They that mean virtuously, and yet do so,  
The devil their virtue tempts, and they tempt heaven.

IAGO

So they do nothing, 'tis a venial slip;  
But if I give my wife a handkerchief – 10

OTHELLO

What then?

IAGO

Why, then 'tis hers, my lord, and being hers  
She may, I think, bestow't on any man.

OTHELLO

She is protectress of her honour too:  
May she give that? 15

IAGO

Her honour is an essence that's not seen,

2 **unauthorized** i.e. not authorized by the conventions of polite society, which permitted some kissing (2.1.97ff.)

3–4 Early romances sometimes manoeuvred lovers into bed, 'not meaning any harm' (Chaucer's *Troilus*, bk 3, st. 157; Sidney's *Arcadia*, 1593 edn, fo. 190b), but not usually naked. See also A. S. Cairncross, 'Shakespeare and Ariosto', *RQ*, 29 (1976), 178–82.

6 **against** in front of, in full view of (*OED* 1; cf. 2.3.365). Or, towards (if they really mean no harm, they try to dissimulate with the devil); 'to cheat the devil' (Johnson).

8 **tempts** puts to the test; incites to evil. Cf.

Matthew 4.1, 7: Jesus went into the wilderness 'to be tempted of the devil', and said to him 'Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God' (Henley, in Malone).

9 **So** as long as  
**do nothing** Cf. 2.1.142, and *R3* 1.1.99–100, 'He that doth naught with her (excepting one) / Were best to do it secretly alone.'

**venial slip** A venial sin is a pardonable sin, admitting of remission; a *venial slip* would be less serious (*slip* = fault).

16 **essence** something that *is*, an entity; that by which anything subsists; foundation of being (*OED* 2, 5)

3, 5 in bed] *F*; abed *Q* 9 *So*] *Q*; If *F*

They have it very oft that have it not.  
But for the handkerchief –

OTHELLO

By heaven, I would most gladly have forgot it!  
Thou said'st – O, it comes o'er my memory 20  
As doth the raven o'er the infectious house  
Boding to all – he had my handkerchief.

IAGO

Ay, what of that?

OTHELLO

That's not so good now.

IAGO

What if I had said I had seen him do you wrong?  
Or heard him say – as knaves be such abroad 25  
Who, having by their own importunate suit  
Or voluntary dotage of some mistress  
Convinced or supplied them, cannot choose  
But they must blab –

OTHELLO

Hath he said anything?

IAGO

He hath, my lord, but be you well assured 30  
No more than he'll unsweat.

OTHELLO

What hath he said?

IAGO

Faith, that he did – I know not what. He did –

17 'One of Iago's cryptic remarks, meaning . . . that many people are erroneously credited with the possession of this invisible essence' (Ridley).

21–2 As . . . **all** Cf. Dent, R33, 'The croaking raven bodes misfortune.'

21 **infectious** presumably infected with the plague

22 **Boding** predicting (ominously)

23 **That's . . . now** Cf. Dent, G324.1, 'That's not so good (now).' A characteristic understatement. A nine-syllable line: perhaps *That's* should be *That is* (see *Texts*, ch. 12), a more ruminative line.

24 **I had** = I'd (twice)

25 **abroad** at large

27 **voluntary dotage** self-induced infatuation

28 **Convinced** (convinced) overcome

**supplied** satisfied a need or want (*OED* 5).

'*Supplied* relates to the words *voluntary dotage*, as *convinced* does to *their own importunate suit*.

"Having by their importunacy *conquered* the resistance of a mistress, or, in compliance with her own request . . . *gratified her desires*"' (Malone).

29 **blab** chatter; tell (what should be concealed)

32 **\*He did** – I repunctuate, and assume that Iago pauses tantalizingly (*Texts*, 132). Cf.

2.1.158n.

21 infectious] *F*; infected *Q* 27 Or] *F*; Or by the *Q* 28 Convinced] *Qc*, *F*; Coniured *Qu* 32 Faith] *Q*; Why *F* what. He did –] *this edn*; what he did. *QF*

OTHELLO

What? what?

IAGO

Lie.

OTHELLO With her?

IAGO

With her, on her, what you will.

OTHELLO Lie with her? lie on her? We say lie on her 35  
 when they belie her! Lie with her, zounds, that's  
 fulsome! – Handkerchief! confessions! handkerchief!  
 – To confess, and be hanged for his labour! First to be  
 hanged, and then to confess: I tremble at it. Nature  
 would not invest herself in such shadowing passion 40  
 without some instruction. It is not words that shakes  
 me thus. Pish! Noses, ears, and lips. Is't possible?  
 Confess! handkerchief! O devil!

[*He*] falls in a trance.

34 **what you will** Cf. Dent, W280.5, 'What you will'. A poisonous phrase: it implies 'anything you like to think (or do with her)'.

35–43 Othello's fit in some ways resembles the 'pill' episode in *Poetaster*, 5.3.465ff. (performed 1601), and the raging of the hero in Greene's *Orlando Furioso* (printed 1594). With his loss of control, cf. also Cassio's drunkenness (2.3.60ff.).

35–6 He worries at the meaning of lying *with* and *on* her (cf. 34). *Lie on* could = tell lies about (*OED* 2), therefore 'We say lie *on* her when they (i.e. people) tell lies about (believe) her.' But he cannot reason away lie *with* her (= copulate with her).

37 **fulsome** nauseating; obscene

38–9 **First . . . confess** Cf. Dent, C587, 'Confess and be hanged' (a proverbial phrase meaning, roughly, 'You lie' [*OED* confess 10]), L590, 'First hang and draw, then hear the cause.' Cf. also 2.3.105ff.

(Cassio on the correct sequence of things): tragedy teetering on the edge of comedy.

39–42 He tries to rationalize his trembling before he falls. 'Nature would not clothe (or endue) herself in such an all-enfolding passion without some special information (i.e. instinctive knowledge of the truth of what Iago has said, expressed in my trembling).' (*OED* invest 3; shadow 6b; instruction 3.)

41 **words** mere words

42 **Noses . . . lips** surrogate genital images. The thought is filled out later ('I see that nose of yours . . .'); or, as Steevens proposed, Othello imagines 'the familiarities which he supposes to have passed between Cassio and his wife' (as in *WT* 1.2.285–6).

43 *SD trance* J. P. Emery has shown that Othello suffers from several specific epileptic symptoms (in *Psychoanalysis and the Psychoanalytic Review*, 46 (1959), 30–2).

33 What? what?] *F*; But what? *Q* 36 zounds] *Q*; not in *F* 37 Handkerchief . . . handkerchief!] as *F*; handkerchers, Confession, handkerchers. *Q* 38–43 To . . . devil!] as *F*; not in *Q* 43 *SD*] *F* subst.; not in *Q*; *He falls downe. Qc* (after 37)



IAGO

Work on,  
 My medicine, work! Thus credulous fools are caught, 45  
 And many worthy and chaste dames even thus,  
 All guiltless, meet reproach. – What ho! my lord!  
 My lord, I say! Othello!

*Enter CASSIO.*

How now, Cassio?

CASSIO

What's the matter?

IAGO

My lord is fallen into an epilepsy; 50  
 This is his second fit, he had one yesterday.

CASSIO

Rub him about the temples.

IAGO

No, forbear:

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; 55  
 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.]*45 **medicine** i.e. poison. Cf. 2.1.292ff.**work** *F* *workes* is possible.47 **reproach** disgrace; censure. 'Almost always in Shakespeare stronger than our sense, e.g. "black scandal or foul-faced reproach" (*R3* 3.7.231)' (Ridley).**What . . . lord** He calls when he hears someone approaching.48 **Othello** He addresses Othello by name, perhaps because Othello is still unconscious.50 **epilepsy** also known as 'the falling sickness' (*JC* 1.2.254). Here it is *petit mal*,a milder form of the illness (cf. 43n.), but still a most difficult, exhausting episode for the actor. In *Look About You* (1600, acted by the Admiral's Men) a pursuivant has a similar fit (*F1b*): this could have given Shakespeare the idea to stage a seizure.53 **lethargy** morbid drowsiness (here, coma) **his** *its*54 **by and by** immediately; or, soon afterwards55 **savage** enraged58 **on great occasion** about an important matter

44–8] *as F; prose Q* 45 *work*] *Q*; *workes F* 48 *SD*] *as F; opp. Cassio* 48 *Q* 52 *No, forbear*] *Q*; *not in F* 58 *SD*] *Q2 (after mocke me? 60); not in QF*

How is it, general? have you not hurt your head?

OTHELLO

Dost thou mock me?

IAGO

I mock you? no, by heaven!

60

Would you would bear your fortune like a man!

OTHELLO

A horned 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,

65

Think every bearded fellow that's but yoked  
May draw 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,

70

59 **hurt your head** i.e. in falling. Othello thinks by sprouting horns.

60 **Dost . . . me?** so Lyly, *Mother Bombie*, 2.1.24, 'Dost thou mocke me, *Dromio*?'  
**no** For final -t variants (*no: not*), see *Texts*, 85.

61 **Would I wish**  
**fortune** bad fortune (but Iago, being Iago, also hints gleefully at 'good fortune'; cf. 'satisfaction', 3.3.404n.)

62 Cf. Dent, C876.2, 'A cuckold is a beast (monster)'; *beast* = horned beast.

64 **civil** civilized, courteous; city-dwelling (from Lat. *civis*, a citizen). Monsters were not usually *civil*: for the same pleasantry, cf. *Tem* 2.2.89, 'a most delicate monster'.

65 **be a man** Cf. 1.3.336: Iago has gained an ascendancy very like his hold on Roderigo.

The phrase helps to *unman* Othello.

66 **bearded fellow** Cassio has a beard (3.3.442). This could mean that Othello is bearded as well.

**yoked** yoked in marriage; suggesting, yoked like an ox (a horned beast)

67 **draw** pull (like an ox)

68 **unproper** 'not (solely) his own; *proper* often means little more than *own*' (Ridley). Also = improper, not in accordance with decorum. Unique in Shakespeare.

69 **peculiar** restricted to themselves. Cf. 3.3.79n.

**your . . . better** i.e. because you know the truth

70 **spite** envious malice

**arch-mock** a coinage. Note how the fiend Iago mocks throughout this scene (4.1.2ff., 61, 67–8, 102n.).

60 you? no, by heaven] *Q*: you not, by Heauen *F* 61 fortune] *F*; fortunes *Q* 65 confess it] *F*; confesse *Q* Good] *Qc*; *F*: God *Qu* 68 lie] *F*; lyes *Q*

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 a while apart, 75  
 Confine yourself but in a patient list.  
 Whilst you were here o'erwhelmed with your grief  
 – A passion most unsuiting such a man –  
 Cassio came hither. I shifted him away  
 And laid good 'scuse upon your ecstasy, 80  
 Bade him anon return and here speak with me,  
 The which he promised. Do but encave yourself  
 And mark the fleers, the gibes and notable scorns  
 That dwell in every region of his face;

71 \*To . . . couch roughly = to kiss an unchaste woman in a bed free from anxiety (transferred epithet). But the words are more suggestive, esp. *lip*, which could = kiss obscenely (cf. *WT* 1.2.286); also, because the *wanton* points to Desdemona.

72–3 a slippery comparison of one who *supposes* with one who *knows*, for 'knowing what I am' (viz. an imperfect creature) only leads to another supposition, 'I know what she shall be' (i.e. she's bound to be unchaste). Cf. 1.3.350ff., and *Ham* 4.5.43–4, 'we know what we are, but know not what we may be'.

74 'tis certain Either it is certain that Iago is wise, or that Desdemona is unchaste.

75 Stand . . . apart A comedy routine: a victim is tricked into overhearing what others want him to hear. Cf. Plautus, *Miles Gloriosus*, 1175ff., *MA* 2.3.40ff., 3.1, 3.3.144ff.

76 i.e. only keep yourself within the boundary of patience. Cf. *TN* 1.3.8, 'confine yourself

within the modest limits of order'.

77 o'erwhelmed o'erwhelmèd; *ere while*, *mad* is one of Q's clearest instances of misreading: *Texts*, 41–2, 89.

78 unsuiting unique in Shakespeare. The Q press-corrector probably consulted the manuscript, otherwise he would not have changed *vnfitting*.

79 I . . . away I got him out of the way (*OED* shift 16, first here).

80 'scuse i.e. explanation (implying that Othello's fit was somehow shameful) *ecstasy* state of unconsciousness (swoon, trance, etc.)

81 anon soon; or, immediately

82 encave a coinage = conceal. Cf. *Cym* 4.2.138, 'Cave here, hunt here' (= to lurk, as in a cave).

83 fleers sneers  
 notable striking, noticeable

84 dwell abide; persist  
 region part or division of the body (*OED* 6)

71 couch] *F* (Cowch); Coach *Q* 73 she shall] *QF*; shall *Steevens* conj. 74 wise,] *Q*; wise: *F* 77 o'erwhelmed] *F*; *ere while*, *mad* *Q* 78 unsuiting] *vn*suiting *Qc*; *vn*fitting *Qu*; resulting *F* 80 'scuse] *Q* (scuse); scuses *F* 81 Bade] *F*; Bid *Q* return] *F*; retire *Q* 82 Do] *F*; not in *Q* 83 fleers] *F*; leeres *Q*

- For I will make him tell the tale anew 85  
 Where, how, how oft, how long ago, and when  
 He hath and is again to cope your wife.  
 I say, but mark his gesture; marry, patience,  
 Or I shall say you're all in all in spleen  
 And nothing of a man.
- OTHELLO Dost thou hear, Iago? 90  
 I will be found most cunning in my patience  
 But – dost thou hear? – most bloody.
- IAGO That's not amiss,  
 But yet keep time in all. Will you withdraw?  
 [Othello withdraws.]
- Now will I question Cassio of Bianca,  
 A housewife that by selling her desires 95  
 Buys herself bread and clothes: it is a creature  
 That dotes on Cassio – as 'tis the strumpet's plague  
 To beguile many and be beguiled by one.  
 He, when he hears of her, cannot refrain  
 From the excess of laughter. Here he comes. 100

*Enter CASSIO.*

- 87 **hath** A teasing pause is effective (cf. 32n.), and helps to explain the change of construction.  
 88 **cope** encounter, come into contact with, i.e. copulate with. A *cope(s)mate* is a paramour (*OED* 3).  
 89 **gesture** bearing, deportment; expression  
 89 **'all . . . spleen** altogether turned into spleen (the seat of melancholy and sudden or violent passion)  
 91 Cf. *TC* 5.2.46, the comedy routine of the impatient man swearing patience.  
 92 **not amiss** quite in keeping with the object in view (*OED* 2). A strangely detached remark.  
 93 **keep time** Cf. Dent, T308.1, 'Keep time in all'; = maintain control (Ridley); or, everything in good time. SD In fact he *hides* (becoming more like Iago, who habitually 'hides').  
 94 **of** about  
 95 **housewife** Perhaps we should read hussy (a woman of light character, or prostitute: cf. 1.3.273n.).  
 97–8 Cf. Dent, D179, 'He that deceives (beguiles) another is oft deceived himself', and 'Wily beguiled' (Tilley, W406). *Plague* = affliction; *beguile* = deceive; charm.  
 99 **refrain** F *restraine* is possible (*OED* 7 = refrain). Q or F misreads.  
 100 **Here he comes** Cassio's opportune arrival suggests that everything plays into Iago's hands.

87 *hath*] *F*; has *Q* 89 you're] *F* (*y'*are); you are *Q* 93 SD] *Rowe*; *not in QF* 96 clothes] *Q*; Cloath  
*F* 99 refrain] *Q*; *restraine F* 100.1] *as F*; *opp.* 98 *Q*

As he shall smile, Othello shall go mad.  
 And his unbookish jealousy must construe  
 Poor Cassio's smiles, gestures and light behaviour  
 Quite in the wrong. How do you now, lieutenant?

CASSIO

The worser, that you give me the addition 105  
 Whose want even kills me.

IAGO

Ply Desdemona well, and you are sure on't.  
 [*Speaking lower*] Now if this suit lay in Bianca's power  
 How quickly should you speed!

CASSIO

Alas, poor caitiff!

OTHELLO

Look how he laughs already! 110

IAGO

I never knew a woman love man so.

CASSIO

Alas, poor rogue, I think i'faith she loves me.

OTHELLO

Now he denies it faintly, and laughs it out.

IAGO

Do you hear, Cassio?

OTHELLO

Now he importunes him

102 **unbookish** a coinage. Cf. 1.1.23: Iago is  
 equally scornful about the bookish and  
 unbookish!

\***construe** interpret. See *Texts*, 83.

103 **light** frivolous

104 **in the wrong** erroneously

105 **addition** title

106 **want** lack

107 **Ply** handle; keep working on

**sure on't** i.e. sure to get what you

want

108 **power** Sisson thinks Iago has Bianca's  
 'marriage to Cassio in mind' and reads  
*dower* (= F). A turned letter (*p:d*)?

109 **speed** succeed

**caitiff** wretch

112 **rogue** could be a term of endearment

113 **faintly** i.e. without expecting to carry  
 conviction

**out** away

102 construe] *Rowe*; conster *Q*; conserue *F* 103 behaviour] *Q*; behauiours *F* 104 now] *Q*; not in  
*F* 108 SD] *Rowe*; not in *QF* power] *Q*; dowre *F* 110–57] all *Othello's* speeches marked 'Aside',  
*Theobald*; not in *QF* 111 a] *Q*; not in *F* 112 i'faith] *Q*; indeed *F* 114–15 him . . . o'er] as *F*; him to tell  
it on, *Q*

To tell it o'er; go to, well said, well said.

115

IAGO

She gives it out that you shall marry her;  
Do you intend it?

CASSIO

Ha, ha, ha!

OTHELLO

Do ye triumph, Roman, do you triumph?

CASSIO I marry! What, a customer! prithee bear some 120  
charity to my wit, do not think it so unwholesome.

Ha, ha, ha!

OTHELLO So, so, so, so: they laugh that win.

IAGO Faith, the cry goes that you shall marry her.

CASSIO Prithee say true!

125

IAGO I am a very villain else.

OTHELLO Have you stored me? Well.

CASSIO This is the monkey's own giving out. She is

115 **o'er** i.e. over again

**well said** = well done (sarcastic). Often said when no words have been spoken (e.g. 5.1.98; *Poetaster*, 3.4.345).

118 **Ha, ha, ha** a signal for the actor to laugh, for as long as he sees fit: cf. 5.1.62n.

119 **triumph** prevail (over an enemy); exult; celebrate a triumph (a ceremonial entry by a victorious general). 'Othello calls him *Roman* ironically. *Triumph*, which was a Roman ceremony, brought Roman into his thoughts' (Johnson).

120 **customer** one who purchases (sexual services) (= Cassio); or, a prostitute (= Bianca) (*OED* 3, 4)

120–1 **bear . . . wit** think more kindly of my judgement

121 **unwholesome** unhealthy, defective

123 **they . . . win** Cf. Dent, L93, 'He laughs that wins', i.e. they that laugh last laugh best.

124 **cry goes** rumour is current

126 I am a true villain if it's not so. Cf. 2.1.114n.

127 **stored** could mean to provide for the continuance of a stock or breed, or to produce offspring (cf. Heywood, *Golden Age* [1611], H2, 'from your own blood you may store a prince / To do those sacred rights', quoted *OED* 2): i.e. 'Have you begotten children for me?' F's *scoar'd* (= wounded) is less likely.

128 **monkey's** 'Used as a term of playful contempt, chiefly of young people' (*OED* 2b), more usually of boys than girls. Cf. *Mac* 4.2.59, 'God help thee, poor monkey!'; *Tem* 3.2.45.

115 <sup>2</sup>well said] *F*; not in *Q* 119 ye] *F*; you *Q* 120–2] *QF* line as verse wit / ha. / *Q*; beare / it / ha. *F* 120 marry!] as *F*; marry her? *Q* What . . . customer!] *F*; not in *Q* prithee] *F*; I prethee *Q* 123 they] *F*; not in *Q* win] *F4*; wins *QF* 124 Faith] *Q*; Why *F* that you shall] you shall *Q*; that you *F* 127 Have] *F*; Ha *Q* stored] *Q*(stor'd); scoar'd *F* me? Well] *F*; me well. *Q* 128–30] *prose Q*; *F* lines out: / marry her / promise. /

persuaded I will marry her, out of her own love and  
flattery, not out of my promise. 130

OTHELLO 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  
and, by this hand, falls me thus about my neck – 135

OTHELLO Crying 'O dear Cassio!' as it were: his gesture  
imports it.

CASSIO So hangs and lolls and weeps upon me, so  
shakes and pulls me! Ha, ha, ha!

OTHELLO Now he tells how she plucked him to my 140  
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!

*Enter* BIANCA.

130 **flattery** in the sense of 'she flatters herself  
that' (Ridley)

131 **beckons** makes a signal to. Could be  
spelled *becon* (*OED*); F probably misread  
*becon(e)s*.

133 **sea-bank** sea coast or shore

134 **bauble** a childish or foolish person (*OED*  
5b, first here): originally a child's toy or  
childish foolery

135 **by this hand** probably omitted from F by  
Crane (*Texts*, 166)  
**me** ethic dative

137 **imports** implies

138 **lolls** hangs down, dangles

139 **shakes** *Q* *hales* = hauls, drags

141 **chamber** private room; bedroom **nose** Cf.

Martial: 'Husband, you have disfigured the  
wretched gallant, and his countenance,  
deprived of nose and ears, regrets the loss  
of its original form' (2.83; cf. 3.85); also 42  
above: 'Noses, ears, and lips.' Hulme, 135,  
thinks *nose* suggests penis.

141–2 **but . . . to** Cf. Exodus 22.30, 'neither  
shall ye eat any flesh that is torn of beasts  
in the field, but shall cast it to a dog'.

143 **company** could mean 'sexual connection',  
as in Caxton, 'Thamar, that had company  
with her husbondes fader' (*OED* 2)

144 **Before me** perhaps formed on the analogy  
of 'before God' (= by God). So *TN* 2.3.178,  
'Before me, she's a good wench'; *Cor*  
1.1.120.

131 beckons] *Q*; becomes *F* 133 the other] *F*; tother *Q* 134 the] *F*; this *Q* 135 and . . . me] by this  
hand she fals *Q*; and falls me *F* 138–9] *prose Q*; *F* lines vpon me: / ha. / 139 shakes] *F*; hales *Q* 140–  
2] *prose F*; *Q* lines Chamber, / to. / 141 O] *F*; not in *Q* 142 it] *F*; 't *Q* 144.1] as *F*; opp. 143 *Q*

CASSIO 'Tis such another fitchew; marry, a perfumed 145  
one. 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 150  
should find it in your chamber and know not who  
left it there! This is some minx's token, and I must  
take out the work? There, give it your hobby-horse;  
wheresoever you had it, I'll take out no work on't!

CASSIO How now, my sweet Bianca, how now, how now? 155

OTHELLO By heaven, that should be my handkerchief!

BIANCA If you'll come to supper tonight, you may; if  
you will not, come when you are next prepared for. *Exit.*

IAGO After her, after her!

CASSIO Faith, I must, she'll rail in the streets else. 160

IAGO Will you sup there?

CASSIO Faith, I intend so.

IAGO Well, I may chance to see you, for I would very  
fain speak with you.

CASSIO Prithee come, will you? 165

IAGO Go to, say no more. *Exit Cassio.*

145 **such another** another of the same sort  
(*OED* 1c); like all the rest of them (Ridley)  
**fitchew** polecat, notoriously malodorous  
and lecherous. Cf. *OED* polecat 2: a vile  
person; prostitute.

145–6 **marry . . . one** F's punctuation could  
imply 'Do they think that I'll marry a  
perfumed fitchew?!'

147 Cf. Dent, D225, 'The devil and his dam';  
*dam* = mother (dame).

149 **even** just

149–50 **I must . . . work** Cf. 3.4.180n.

150 **A . . . work** i.e. a likely story! *A piece of  
work* was a set phrase, as in *Ham* 2.2.303,  
'What a piece of work is a man'.

152 **minx's** Cf. 3.3.478n.  
**token** pledge, present

153 **hobby-horse** loose woman, prostitute

154 **on't** from it

155 **How now** (meant to soothe or restrain)

156 **should** i.e. must

158 **when . . . for** when next I make preparations  
for you, i.e. never

164 **fain** gladly

145 SP] *F*; *not in Q* 145–6 fitchew; marry, . . . one.] ficho; marry a perfum'd one, *Q*; Fitchew: marry a  
perfum'd one? *F* 150 the] *F*; the whole *Q* 151 know not] *F*; not know *Q* 153 your] *F*; the *Q* 155] *as*  
*Q*; *F* lines Bianca? / now? / 157 If] *F*; An *Q* if] *F*; an *Q* 160 Faith] *Q*; *not in F* in . . . streets] *F*; i'the  
streete *Q* 162 Faith] *Q*; Yes *F* 166 SD] *Q*; *not in F*



- OTHELLO How shall I murder him, Iago?
- IAGO Did you perceive how he laughed at his vice?
- OTHELLO O Iago!
- IAGO And did you see the handkerchief? 170
- OTHELLO Was that mine?
- IAGO Yours, by this hand: and to see how he prizes the foolish woman your wife! She gave it him, and he hath given it his whore.
- OTHELLO I would have him nine years a-killing. A fine 175 woman, a fair woman, a sweet woman!
- IAGO Nay, you must forget that.
- OTHELLO Ay, let her rot and perish and be damned tonight, for she shall not live. No, my heart is turned to stone: I strike it, and it hurts my hand. O, the 180 world hath not a sweeter creature: she might lie by an emperor's side and command him tasks.
- IAGO Nay, that's not your way.
- OTHELLO Hang her, I do but say what she is: so delicate with her needle, an admirable musician. O, 185 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.

167ff. For the first time Iago and Othello converse in prose.

172–4 **Yours . . . whore** Q's omission comes at the end of a page (Kla), an error in 'casting off' (*Texts*, 46–7).

172 **prizes** esteems

175 **a-killing** in the killing, i.e. I'd have him die a very slow death (unique in Shakespeare)

175–6 **A . . . woman** Here, and in the next speeches, with their sudden flip-over from hate to love, tragedy comes close to farce: cf. *MV* 3.1.97ff.

179–80 **my . . . stone** Dent, H311, 'A heart of (as hard as a) stone'. Cf. Job 41.15, 'His

heart is as hard as a stone, and as fast as the stithy that the smith smiteth upon.'

181 **creature** any created being; person

181–2 **she . . . tasks** i.e. (if she had been chaste) her sweetness would have had an irresistible power over an emperor. An image inspired by folk tale or romance? Normally the lady commanded tasks *before* marriage.

183 **your way** 'like you' or 'the best course'

185–6 **O . . . bear** like Orpheus?

186 **high** superior

187 **wit and invention** even if taken as 'understanding and imagination', unexpected attributes

167 murder] Q; murther F 172–4] F; not in Q 175–6] prose Q; F lines killing: / woman? / 177 that] F; not in Q 178 Ay] F (I); And Q 181 hath] F; has Q

- OTHELLO O, a thousand, a thousand times: and then  
of so gentle a condition. 190
- 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 her iniquity, give her patent  
to offend, for if it touch not you it comes near 195  
nobody.
- OTHELLO I will chop her into messes! Cuckold me!
- IAGO O, 'tis foul in her.
- OTHELLO With mine officer!
- IAGO That's fouler. 200
- OTHELLO Get me some poison, Iago, this night. I'll  
not expostulate with her, lest her body and beauty  
unprovide my mind again. This night, Iago.
- IAGO Do it not with poison, strangle her in her bed –  
even the bed she hath contaminated. 205

190 **so** . . . **condition** probably 'so sweet-natured a disposition', but could = so well bred in social background. Cf. 2.1.247–8.

191 **gentle** mild; yielding, pliant

192 **the** . . . **it** Cf. *MM* 2.3.42, 'Tis pity of him' (*of* = in respect of: *OED* pity 3b). Othello appeals as the weaker to the stronger.

**pity** Cf. 1.3.162, 'Twas pitiful, 'twas wondrous pitiful', 169: pity plays a significant part in their relationship.

193 **O** . . . **Iago!** Cf. 2.3.260–1, 'My reputation, Iago'.

194–5 If you be so doting as regards her wickedness, give her a licence to sin (*OED* over *prep.* 4c: concerning).

194 **patent** licence; a papal licence or indulgence. Malone compared *E3* 2.1.422

(1596 edn, D1b), 'Why then giue sinne a pasport to offend' (meaning a sexual offence, in both plays).

195–6 **if** . . . **nobody** if it doesn't hurt you it hurts nobody. See p. 385; Holland's *Livy* (1600): 'In this last speech he came neere unto the LL. of the Senat, and touched them to the quick' (quoted *OED*, near, 12b).

197 **messes** (servings of) meat; we might say 'chop her into mincemeat'. The 'Barbarian' has many European cousins: cf. Plautus, *Truculentus*, 613, 'I'll take this blade and here hew thee into gobbets!'

199 **officer** an act of whoredom and insubordination!

202 **expostulate** set forth my grievances, argue  
203 **unprovide** i.e. disarm

189–90] as *Q*; *F* lines times: / condition? 189 O . . . <sup>2</sup>thousand] *F*; A thousand thousand *Q* 192–3] as *Q*; *F* lines certain: / 192 Nay] *F*; I *Q* 193 O, Iago . . . Iago!] *F*; the pity. *Q* 194 are] *F*; be *Q* 195 touch] *F*; touches *Q* 199 officer!] Officer? *F* 201 night. I'll] *F*; night I'll *Q* 204–9] *prose Q*; *F* lines bed, / contaminated. / good: / very good. / vndertaker: / midnight. /

OTHELLO Good, good, the justice of it pleases; very good!

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

OTHELLO Excellent good. *A trumpet within.* What trumpet is that same?

IAGO I warrant something from Venice.

*Enter* LODOVICO, DESDEMONA *and Attendants.*

'Tis Lodovico, this, comes from the duke.

See, your wife's with him.

LODOVICO God save you, worthy general. 215

OTHELLO With all my heart, sir.

LODOVICO

The duke and senators of Venice greet you.

*[Gives him a letter.]*

OTHELLO

I kiss the instrument of their pleasures.

*[Opens the letter and reads.]*

DESDEMONA

And what's the news, good cousin Lodovico?

206–7 **Good** . . . **good** Some repetitions in this scene suggest that Othello's mind is half-tranced. Cf. Marston, *Antonio and Mellida* (Revels), 3.2.30, 'Good, very good, very passing, passing good'. There are comic overtones, as in *AYL* 5.1.27, "'So, so" is good, very good, very excellent good'.

206 **justice of it** Cf. 193, 'the pity of it'.

208 **undertaker** one who (1) carries out work for another; (2) takes up a challenge; (3) 'takes on' something. *OED* first records 'one who makes arrangements for funerals' in 1698, but this sense may be glanced at.

212.1 Though not named, Gratiano probably enters here.

216 **With** . . . **heart** (I thank you) with all my heart, or, (I wish it) with all my heart. One expects Othello to return the wish. He merely accepts it.

218 **instrument** formal document in which they express their commands (*OED* pleasure 2)

219 **cousin** could = kinsman. Gratiano is Desdemona's uncle (5.2.252): Shakespeare reminds us that she is well connected in Venice.

210 SD] A Trumpet. *Q* (*opp.* 209); *not in F* 212–14] *F*: Something from Venice sure, tis Lodouico, / Come from the Duke, and see your wife is with him. *Q*: 'Tis Lodovico – this comes from the Duke. *Sisson* 212.1] *QF* (*after* 209) 215 God save] *Q*: Saue *F* you] *F*; the *Q* 217 and] *Q*; and the *F* SD] *Rowe*; *not in QF* 218 SD] *Capell* *subst.*; *not in QF*

IAGO

I am very glad to see you, signior. 220  
Welcome to Cyprus.

LODOVICO

I thank you. How does Lieutenant Cassio?

IAGO

Lives, sir.

DESDEMONA

Cousin, there's fallen between him and my lord  
An unkind breach, but you shall make all well – 225

OTHELLO

Are you sure of that?

DESDEMONA

My lord?

OTHELLO [Reads.]

*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? 230

DESDEMONA

A most unhappy one: I would do much  
T'atone them, for the love I bear to Cassio.

OTHELLO

Fire and brimstone!

DESDEMONA

My lord?

OTHELLO

Are you wise?

220 Iago butts in, as often elsewhere.

223 Cf. Plautus, *Curculio*, 235, '*quid agis?* – *Vivo* (How are you? – Living [lit. I live])'; *Persa*, 17; also *2H4* 3.2.200.

225 **unkind** unnatural; strange

**breach** disagreement, quarrel; a breaking of relations (*OED* 5, first recorded 1605)

229 **in** in reading230 **division** disagreement231 **unhappy** unfortunate232 **atone** reconcile

**love** affection, goodwill (Othello thinks sexual love)

233 **Fire and brimstone** first recorded by *OED* as ejaculation in *TN* 2.5.50, but biblical in origin (Genesis 19.24, Revelation 19.20). *Fire* is disyllabic here (Abbott, 480). Traditionally associated with hell (*Faerie Queene*, 1.9.49).

**wise** in your right mind, sane (*OED* 4)

220–1] as *F*; *prose Q* 226] (Aside) *Theobald* 228 *SD*] *Theobald*; not in *QF* 230 'twixt my] *F*; betweene thy *Q* 232 *T*] *F*; To *Q*

DESDEMONA

What, is he angry?

LODOVICO                      Maybe the letter moved him.

For, as I think, they do command him home,                      235

Deputing Cassio in his government.

DESDEMONA

By my troth, I am glad on't.

OTHELLO                      Indeed!

DESDEMONA                      My lord?

OTHELLO

I am glad . . . to see you mad.

DESDEMONA                      Why, sweet Othello?

OTHELLO

Devil!    [*Striking her*]

DESDEMONA

I have not deserved this.                      240

LODOVICO

My lord, this would not be believed in Venice  
Though I should swear I saw't. 'Tis very much;  
Make her amends, she weeps.

OTHELLO                      O devil, devil!

If that the earth could teem with woman's tears  
Each drop she falls would prove a crocodile:                      245

236 **Deputing** appointing (not necessarily as deputy)

**government** appointment as governor (OED 3b, first in 1617); tenure of office (OED 4b, first in 1603)

237 **on't** of it

**Indeed** as at 3.3.101, but with different implications

238 He echoes or mimics Desdemona's 'I am glad', i.e. to see you so foolish (mad) (as to admit your love for Cassio). But *mad* may be corrupt.

**Why, sweet Othello?** This could be an exclamation of surprise or remonstrance, rather than a question. Cf. *AYL* 4.3.157,

'Why, how now, Ganymed, sweet Ganymed'.

239 \*SD Some actors strike her with the letter, but 272 suggests that he strikes her with his hand. Calderwood thinks that the letter 'arouses his passion' but Desdemona's innocent remarks are surely the cause.

241–2 Cf. Dent, E264.1, 'To believe one's (own) eyes'.

242 '**Tis very much** it goes too far

244 **teem** give birth, bring forth (as a result of women's tears)

245 **falls** lets fall. Cf. Dent, C831, 'Crocodile tears'.

**prove** turn out to be

234 the letter] *Q*; thLetter *F* 237 By . . . troth] *Q*; Trust me *F* Indeed!] Indeed. *Q*; Indeed? *F* 238 glad . . .] *this edn*; glad *QF* Why] *F*; How *Q* 239 SD] *Theobald*; not in *QF* 244 woman's] *F*; womens *Q*

Out of my sight!

DESDEMONA I will not stay to offend you.

LODOVICO

Truly, an obedient lady.

I do beseech your lordship, call her back.

OTHELLO

Mistress!

DESDEMONA

My lord? 250

OTHELLO

What would you with her, sir?

LODOVICO

Who, I, my lord?

OTHELLO

Ay, you did wish that I would make her turn.

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

And turn again. And she can weep, sir, weep.

And she's obedient: as you say, obedient, 255

Very obedient. – Proceed you in your tears. –

Concerning this, sir – O well-painted passion! –

I am commanded home. – Get you away.

I'll send for you anon. – Sir, I obey the mandate

And will return to Venice. – Hence, avaunt! – 260

[Exit Desdemona.]

249 **Mistress** not the normal way of addressing one's wife. Cf. 1.3.178, 5.2.181.

250 **My lord?** her fourth 'My lord?' since 227, part of the crescendo effect here

252–3 **turn** turn back; be fickle (turn = change); also implying 'the best turn i'th' bed' (*AC* 2.5.59). A. Shickman compared 'turning pictures', which could show different images of a person at the same time (weeping, a devil, etc.) (*N&Q*, 223 [1978], 145–6).

255 **obedient** yielding to desires or wishes; compliant (*OED* 3); he means sexually

compliant.

256 **Proceed . . . tears** This could be a question (Warner, in Malone, 1821).

257 **this** i.e. the letter from Venice

**well-painted** well-pretended

258 **home** might = Venice or Mauretania (4.2.226), but 260 proves that he understands it as Venice. *Q* *here* looks like misreading but is possible (giving an unfinished sentence).

259 **mandate** command

260 **avaunt** (usually expresses loathing or horror) away! be off!

247 an] *Q*; not in *F* 258 home] *F*; here *Q* 260 SD] *Rowe*; not in *QF*

Cassio shall have my place. And, sir, tonight

I do entreat that we may sup together.

You are welcome, sir, to Cyprus. Goats and monkeys! *Exit.*

LODOVICO

Is this the noble Moor whom our full senate

Call all in all sufficient? This the nature 265

Whom passion could not shake? whose solid virtue

The shot of accident nor dart of chance

Could neither graze nor pierce?

IAGO

He is much changed.

LODOVICO

Are his wits safe? Is he not light of brain?

IAGO

He's that he is: I may not breathe my censure 270

What he might be; if what he might, he is not,

I would to heaven he were!

LODOVICO

What! strike his wife!

IAGO

Faith, that was not so well; yet would I knew

261 **Cassio** . . . **place** This may be shouted at Desdemona as or after she leaves; *place* = his place as commander; perhaps, his place as lover (cf. *KL* 5.1.10–11, 'have you never found my brother's way / To the forfended place?').

263 **Goats and monkeys** Cf. 'as prime as goats, as hot as monkeys' (3.3.406–7n.). 'These words, we may suppose, still ring in the ears of Othello' (Malone).

264 **full** complete

265 **sufficient** competent, capable

\***This the nature** *Q* *noble* and *F* *Is* look like unconscious repetitions.

266 **shake** upset. (Has Othello been shaking with passion? Cf. 39ff., 5.2.44.)

**solid** substantial (*OED* 13, first in 1601)

**virtue** (moral) excellence; manliness

267 (neither) accidental shot nor a chance spear

(thrust), i.e. no unforeseen misfortune

269 **safe** in sound health

270–2 Cf. 2.3.117–24, where Iago also draws attention to a change (in Cassio) that he has brought about.

270 **breathe** whisper

**censure** opinion; criticism

271–2 'Perhaps the most cryptic of all Iago's similar remarks' (Ridley). *Might* seems to change its meaning: first, Othello might be at fault (therefore to be censured); second, he might be unchanged (hence 'would to heaven he were'). Or, 'if he isn't of unsound mind, then it might be better to wish he were in fact insane, since only that could excuse his wild behaviour' (Bevington).

273 **that** . . . **well** Cf. 23, 'That's not so good now.'

263] as *Q*; *F* lines Cyprus. / Monkeys. / SD] *Qc*, *F*; not in *Qu* 265 This the nature] as *Pope*; This the noble nature *Q*; Is this the Nature *F* 270 is:] *F*; is, *Q* censure] (see *Furness*); censure, *Q*; censure. *F* 271 be: if what] *F*; be, if as *Q*

That stroke would prove the worst.

LODOVICO

Is it his use?

Or did the letters work upon his blood 275  
And new-create this fault?

IAGO

Alas, alas!

It is not honesty in me to speak  
What I have seen and known. You shall observe him,  
And his own courses will denote him so  
That I may save my speech. Do but go after 280  
And mark how he continues.

LODOVICO

I am sorry that I am deceived in him. *Exeunt.*

[4.2]

*Enter OTHELLO and EMILIA.*

OTHELLO

You have seen nothing, then?

EMILIA

Nor ever heard, nor ever did suspect.

OTHELLO

Yes, you have seen Cassio and . . . she together.

EMILIA

But then I saw no harm, and then I heard  
Each syllable that breath made up between them. 5

OTHELLO

What, did they never whisper?

274 **stroke** blow; (?)masterstroke (first recorded in later seventeenth century)

**use** custom

275 **blood** passion

279 **courses** habitual actions

**denote** be the outward visible mark of (*OED* 3), reveal

282 **I am . . . I am** read 'I'm . . . I am'; or 'I am sorry that I'm'

**deceived** mistaken

4.2 Location: this scene starts indoors (cf. 28), and in some productions in Desdemona's bedroom. Later Roderigo wanders

in (174n.), and it seems to be outdoors: one of the advantages of unlocalized staging.

1–11 Note the abrupt opening. And the tug between prose and verse rhythms, coming to rest in 'That's strange'.

2 **suspect** Othello may interrupt before she can finish.

3 **\*seen . . . she** While *she* was sometimes used as object, I assume that Othello hesitates to use Desdemona's name. Cf. *AC* 3.13.98 (repunctuated), 'So saucy with the hand of – she here, what's her name'.

276 this] *Q*; his *F* 4.2.1 then?] *F*; then. *Q* 3 you] *F*; and you *Q* and . . . she] *this edn*; and she *QF* 5 them] *F*; 'em *Q*



- EMILIA  
 OTHELLO  
 Nor send you out o'th' way?  
 EMILIA  
 Never.  
 OTHELLO  
 To fetch her fan, her gloves, her mask, nor nothing?  
 EMILIA  
 Never, my lord. 10  
 OTHELLO  
 That's strange.  
 EMILIA  
 I durst, my lord, to wager she is honest,  
 Lay down my soul at stake: if you think other  
 Remove your thought, it doth abuse your bosom.  
 If any wretch have put this in your head 15  
 Let heaven requite it with the serpent's curse,  
 For if she be not honest, chaste and true  
 There's no man happy: the purest of their wives  
 Is foul as slander.  
 OTHELLO  
 Bid her come hither; go. *Exit Emilia.*  
 She says enough; yet she's a simple bawd 20  
 That cannot say as much. This is a subtle whore,  
 A closet, lock and key, of villainous secrets;
- 9 **mask** Venetian ladies wore masks during the Carnival.  
 12 **honest** chaste  
 13 **at stake** at hazard (after *wager*); at the stake (like a martyr dying for his faith)  
 14 **abuse** deceive; wrong  
**bosom** breast (considered as the seat of secret thoughts and feelings: *OED* 6a). Cf. 3.1.57.  
 15 She contradicts her earlier view that jealousy is self-begotten (3.4.159–62). This prepares for 132ff.  
 16 **serpent's curse** Cf. Genesis 3.14, where God curses the serpent.  
 20 **enough** elliptical: enough to sound plausible  
**simple** naive, artless, feeble  
**bawd** procuress  
 21 **This** seems to refer to Emilia, but *kneel and pray* to Desdemona  
 22 **closet** private room; safe, cabinet (as in *Mac* 5.1.6)  
**lock and key** with lock and key. But cf. *Homilies*, 385, 'this article . . . is even the very lock and key of all our Christian religion'.
- 7 o'th'] *F*; o'the *Q* 9 gloves, her mask] *F*; mask, her gloues *Q* 15 have] *F*; ha *Q* 16 heaven] *F*; heauens *Q* requite] *Q*; requit *F* 18 their wives] *F*; her Sex *Q* 19 SD] *F*; opp. slander *Q* 21 subtle] *Q*; subtile *F* 22 closet, . . . key.] *Q*; Closset Locke and Key *F*; closet-lock and key *Rowe*

And yet she'll kneel and pray, I have seen her do't.

*Enter* DESDEMONA *and* EMILIA.

DESDEMONA

My lord, what is your will?

OTHELLO

Pray, chuck, come hither.

DESDEMONA

What is your pleasure?

OTHELLO

Let me see your eyes. 25

Look in my face.

DESDEMONA

What horrible fancy's this?

OTHELLO [to Emilia]

Some of your function, mistress,

Leave procreants alone and shut the door;

Cough, or cry hem, if anybody come. 29

Your mystery, your mystery: nay, dispatch! *Exit Emilia.*

DESDEMONA

Upon my knees, what doth your speech import?

I understand a fury in your words

But not the words.

OTHELLO

Why, what art thou?

DESDEMONA

Your wife, my lord: your true and loyal wife. 35

OTHELLO

Come, swear it, damn thyself,

23 **she'll** (special emphasis: he avoids naming Desdemona as at 3, but may mean Emilia here)

24 **chuck** Cf. 3.4.49.

25 **pleasure** wish, will

27 **function** the action proper to a person who is the holder of an office. He treats Emilia as if she has a function in a brothel: 'behave as a bawd should, leave us alone'.

28 **procreants** procreators (usually an adjective, as in *Mac* 1.6.8)

29 **cry hem** give a warning cough

30 **mystery** trade; here, facetiously, your trade as bawd

**dispatch** hurry

31 **Upon my knees** Kneeling in submission was not unusual.

23 have] *F*; ha *Q* 24 Pray] *Q*; Pray you *F* 27 SD] *Hanmer*; not in *QF* 30 nay] *Q*; May *F* 31 knees] *Q*; knee *F* doth] *F*; does *Q* 33 But . . . words] *Q*; not in *F* 36-9 Come . . . honest!] as *Q*; prose *F*

Lest, being like one of heaven, the devils themselves  
Should fear to seize thee: therefore be double-damned,  
Swear thou art honest!

DESDEMONA

Heaven doth truly know it.

OTHELLO

Heaven truly knows that thou art false as hell. 40

DESDEMONA

To whom, my lord? with whom? how am I false?

OTHELLO

Ah, Desdemon, away, away, away!

DESDEMONA

Alas the heavy day, why do you weep?  
Am I the motive of these tears, my lord?  
If haply you my father do suspect 45  
An instrument of this your calling back,  
Lay not your blame on me: if you have lost him  
Why, I have lost him too.

OTHELLO

Had it pleased heaven

To try me with affliction, had they rained  
All kinds of sores and shames on my bare head, 50

37–8 **Lest** . . . **thee** Devils may only carry off to hell those who spiritually belong to them. *Lest* = for fear that.

38 **double-damned** (1) for adultery, (2) for perjury

40 **false as hell** Cf. Dent, H398, 'As false as hell' (not recorded before Shakespeare).

42 **away** *Either* she clings to him and he pushes her away, *or* he wants to get away, *or* he means 'let's get away from this pointless talk': cf. *TC* 5.3.88, *KL* 1.4.89–91, *Cor* 1.1.12.

43 **heavy** sorrowful. Cf. 3.4.158.

44 **motive** cause

45 **haply** by chance

46 **instrument** usually 'a person made use of by another person for the accomplishment of a purpose' (*OED* 1b); here 'as instrumental in'

**calling back** recall (to Venice)

47 **lost him** lost him as a friend

48–54 Referring to the *afflictions* of Job: God *rained* these (sores, poverty, etc.) upon him; Job 2.7, 20.23.

48–9 **heaven** . . . **they** Should we read *he* for *they* (cf. *Texts*, 83), *God* for *heaven*?

49 **rained** Note the 'water' imagery: *rained*, *Steeped*, *drop*, *fountain*, *current*, *dries up*, *cistern*.

41] *as Q; F lines* Lord? / false? / 42 Ah, Desdemon] *F; O Desdemona Q* 44 motive . . . these] *F; occasion . . . those Q* 45 haply] *Q; happily F* 47, 48 lost] *F; left Q* 48 Why] *Q; not in F* 49 they rained] *F; he ram'd Q* 50 kinds] *Q; kind F* bare head] *Q; bare-head F*

Steeped me in poverty to the very lips,  
 Given to captivity me and my utmost hopes,  
 I should have found in some place of my soul  
 A drop of patience; but, alas, to make me  
 The fixed figure for the time of scorn 55  
 To point his slow and moving finger at!  
 Yet could I bear that too, well, very well:  
 But there where I have garnered up my heart,  
 Where either I must live or bear no life,  
 The fountain from the which my current runs 60  
 Or else dries up – to be discarded thence!  
 Or keep it as a cistern for foul toads  
 To knot and gender in! Turn thy complexion there,

51 perhaps alluding to Tantalus, who was punished in hell with intense thirst and placed in water up to the chin, but unable to drink

52 **utmost** lit. 'farthest from the centre'; greatest; latest. Perhaps referring to his *utmost* descendants.

55 Perhaps we should read 'The fixed figure, for the time, of scorn', i.e. the fixed target of scorn for the whole age (*OED* time 4) to point its (his) slow and (relentlessly) moving finger at. Or does 'the time of scorn' merely = the scornful time?

**fixed** fixé

**figure** Cf. Hebrews 10.33, 'ye were made a gazing stock both by reproaches and afflictions'.

56 Cf. Dent, D321, 'To move as does the dial hand, which is not seen to move'. Perhaps referring to 'the finger of God' (Exodus 8.19 and Luke 11.20). 'The finger of the scornful world is slowly raised to the position of pointing; and then . . . it becomes *unmoving*' (Kittredge, defending Q). No: Othello sees himself as unmoving (the 'fixed figure'), so Q seems unlikely here. *Finger* (if F is correct) may be a

collective noun.

\*For Q *oh, oh*, cf. 5.1.62n.

58ff. The sequence *there where, where, from the which, thence, there, here*, 'helps the passage to cohere' (Elliott, 180).

**garnered up** stored (the products of the earth) as in a garner. Perhaps *heart* = all my emotions, or hopes.

60 See LN.

62 **cistern** an artificial reservoir for water; a pond (*OED* 3, first in *AC* 2.5.94–5, 'So half my Egypt were submerged and made / A cistern for scaled snakes').

**toads** Cf. 3.3.274n.

63 **knot . . . gender** i.e. copulate. A 'Marstonian' image: cf. *Antonio's Revenge* (1602), 'Clipping the strumpet with luxurious twines . . . clinged in sensuality' (Revels, 1.4.18, 31); also *TC* 2.3.158–9, 'I do hate a proud man, as I do the engend'ring of toads.'

**complexion** countenance, face (*OED* 4c, only this instance cited). The gloss 'Grow pale when that happens' (Sanders) is unlikely: after *there*, 58, *Turn* must mean 'switch', not 'change colour'. A corrupt line?

52 utmost] *F*; not in *Q* 53 place] *F*; part *Q* 55 The] *F*; A *Q* time] *QF*; hand Rowe 56 and moving] *F*; vnmouing *Q* finger at] *F*; fingers at – oh, oh *Q*

Patience, thou young and rose-lipped cherubin,  
Ay, here look, grim as hell!

65

DESDEMONA

I hope my noble lord esteems me honest.

OTHELLO

O, ay, as summer flies are in the shambles,  
That quicken even with blowing. O thou weed  
Who art so lovely fair and smell'st so sweet  
That the sense aches at thee, would thou hadst ne'er  
been born!

70

DESDEMONA

Alas, what ignorant sin have I committed?

OTHELLO

Was this fair paper, this most goodly book  
Made to write 'whore' upon? What committed!

64 **Patience** 'Even Patience, that rose-lipped cherub, will look grim and pale at this spectacle' (Bevington). Cf. a near-contemporary personification, 'She sate like Patience on a monument, / Smiling at grief' (*TN* 2.4.114–15).

**rose-lipped** a coinage (with sexual overtones?)

**cherubin** survived in popular usage as a singular to the eighteenth century (*OED*)

65 **\*here look**, First he speaks obliquely of Desdemona (58–64), now he turns on her: it is not some remote place he means, it is *here*, it is Desdemona! The difference between *here*, *look* and *here look*, is not huge. Both are possible, as is *there* (for *here*): *Texts*, 90.

**grim** unrelenting; cruel, savage

66 **honest** chaste, virtuous

67 **shambles** slaughter-house; meat market

68 **quicken** receive life, are inseminated, i.e. with the blowing of the wind

68–9 Weeds are neither lovely nor sweet-

smelling; he means, 'thou weed, pretending to be a beautiful flower'. But weed could = any herb or small plant (*OED* 2: 'chiefly poetical'). He perhaps savours the sweet smell, anticipating 5.2.15ff.

70 a regular verse line if we read 'would thou'dst ne'er been born!' (*Texts*, 119)

**aches** 'the keenness and intensity of the pleasure becomes even painful' (Kittredge)

71 **ignorant** unknowing (transferred epithet: she, not the sin, is ignorant); or, unknown (*OED* 4). Cf. Middleton, *The Witch* (MSR 752), 'What secret syn have I committed'.

72 For the loved one as a book, cf. *RJ* 1.3.87, 'This precious book of love, this unbound lover', *KJ* 2.1.485.

73 **committed** 'Othello's furious iteration of Desdemona's unhappily chosen word depends on its Elizabethan use absolutely as = "commit adultery"; "commit not with man's sworn spouse" (*KL* 3.4.81)' (Ridley). Cf. *OED* 6c.

64 thou] *F*; thy *Q* 65 here look,] *this edn*; here looke *QF*; there look *Theobald*; there, look *Capell* 67 as] *Q*; *Fc*; as a *Fu* summer] *F* (Sommer); summers *Q* 68–70] O . . . faire? / at thee, / borne. *Q*; weed: / sweete, / at thee, / borne. *F* 68–9 thou weed / Who] *F*; thou blacke weede, why *Q* 69 and] *F*; Thou *Q* 70 thou hadst] *QF*; thou'dst *F4* ne'er] *Q*; neuer *F* 73 upon] *F*; on *Q*

Committed? O thou public commoner!  
 I should make very forges of my cheeks 75  
 That would to cinders burn up modesty  
 Did I but speak thy deeds. What committed!  
 Heaven stops the nose at it, and the moon winks,  
 The bawdy wind that kisses all it meets  
 Is hushed within the hollow mine of earth 80  
 And will not hear't. What committed!  
 Impudent strumpet!

DESDEMONA By heaven, you do me wrong.

OTHELLO

Are not you a strumpet?

DESDEMONA

No, as I am a Christian.  
 If to preserve this vessel for my lord 85  
 From any hated foul unlawful touch  
 Be not to be a strumpet, I am none.

OTHELLO

What, not a whore?

DESDEMONA No, as I shall be saved.

- 74 **public commoner** common whore  
 75 **forges** A forge consisted of an open hearth with bellows attached, used for heating iron: here the *cheeks* are the bellows, her *modesty* is tough as iron.  
 78 **Heaven** . . . **it** Cf. Ezekiel 39.11, 'those that travel thereby, shall stop their noses'.  
**moon** (symbol of chastity)  
**winks** shuts its eye(s)  
 79 Cf. Dent, A88, 'As free as the air (wind)'; John 3.8, 'The wind bloweth where it listeth'; *MV* 2.6.16, 'the strumpet wind'.  
 80 **mine** cave. In Virgil (*Aeneid*, 1.52), Aeolus, controller of the winds, keeps the winds in a vast cavern. Cf. *2H6* 3.2.89, 'he that loos'd them [winds] forth their brazen caves'.  
 81 **will not** refuses to

- 82 **Impudent** (shockingly) shameless: stronger than now  
 85 **vessel** body. Cf. 1 Thessalonians 4.3ff., 'abstain from fornication: That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in holiness and honour'; 1 Peter 3.7, let the husband give honour to his wife, 'as unto the weaker vessel'. Cf. jokes in other plays about woman as 'the weaker vessel' (*AYL* 2.4.6), 'the emptier vessel' (*2H4* 2.4.60).  
 86 **hated** *F* other might imply that Othello's touch is foul and unlawful.  
**touch** Cf. Plautus, *Amphitruo*, 831ff. (a wife to her suspicious husband), 'I swear . . . no mortal man, save you only, has taken me to him as a wife' (*corpus corpore contigit* = has touched my body with his).

74–7 Committed? . . . committed!] *F*; not in *Q* 80 hollow] *F*; hallow *Q* 81 hear't] *QF*; hear it Steevens 82 Impudent strumpet] *Q*; not in *F* 86 hated] *Q*; other *F*

OTHELLO

Is't possible?

DESDEMONA

O heaven, forgive us!

OTHELLO

I cry you mercy then,

90

I took you for that cunning whore of Venice

That married with Othello. You! Mistress!

*Enter* EMILIA.

That have the office opposite to Saint Peter

And keep the gates of hell – you, you, ay you!

We have done our course, there's money for your  
pains,

95

I pray you turn the key and keep our counsel.

*Exit.*

EMILIA

Alas, what does this gentleman conceive?

How do you, madam? how do you, my good lady?

DESDEMONA

Faith, half asleep.

EMILIA

Good madam, what's the matter with my lord?

100

89 **Is't possible?** Note how this question echoes through the play: 2.3.283, 3.3.361, 3.4.70, 4.1.42.

90 **O . . . us** With Q, compare R2 5.5.90, 'Forgiveness, horse!' But as Desdemona has done no wrong, *forgive us* (i.e. for misunderstanding and hurting each other?) seems more appropriate. Perhaps she now collapses, and Othello rants as she lies insensible, coming out of a state of shock at 99 (hence Emilia's concern). This would then be her equivalent to Othello's fit.

90–1 **I . . . for** 'I beg your pardon, I mistook you

for' (sarcastic). Cf. KL 3.6.52, 'Cry you mercy, I took you for a join-stool' (the same pretence of misunderstanding).

93–4 Cf. Matthew 16.18–19, 'the gates of hell shall not prevail . . . I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven' (Noble, 276).

95 **course** the rush together of two combatants, bout, i.e. sexual encounter

96 **keep our counsel** i.e. don't give us away

97 **this gentleman** Cf. 3.4.100, 'this man'.

**conceive** imagine

99 **asleep** stunned, numb (*OED* 4)

90 forgive us] F; forgiveness Q then] F; not in Q 92.1] as F; opp. saued 88 Q 94 keep] Rowe; keeps QF gates] Q; gate F of] F; in Q 'you . . . you] F; I, you, you, you Q 95 have] F; ha Q 100] as Q; F lines Madam, / Lord? /

DESDEMONA

With whom?

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 answers have I none 105  
But what should go by water. Prithee, tonight  
Lay on my bed my wedding sheets; remember,  
And call thy husband hither.

EMILIA

Here's a change indeed!

*Exit.*

DESDEMONA

'Tis meet I should be used so, very meet.  
How have I been behaved that he might stick 110  
The small'st opinion on my greatest misuse?

*Enter IAGO and EMILIA.*

IAGO

What is your pleasure, madam? How is't with you?

DESDEMONA

I cannot tell. Those that do teach young babes

101 \***whom** For omitted *m*, see *Texts*, 89.

106 **go by water** be conveyed by tears. There was much traffic 'by water' on the River Thames.

107 **wedding sheets** to remind Othello of their former love (but, according to 'short time', their wedding sheets were used the previous night: see pp. 51–3). Also ominous, as wives were sometimes buried in their wedding sheets.

109 **meet** fitting

**used** treated

110–11 i.e. 'how have I misbehaved myself that he thinks it right to attach the smallest (adverse) judgement to my greatest fault?' Walker paraphrased F, 'how enormous my smallest fault must have been that the least significance could be attached to it'.

112 **How . . . you?** so *Ham* 3.4.116

101 whom] F2; who QF 103] F; not in Q 104 have] F; ha Q 105 answers] F; answer Q 107 ²my] F; our Q 108 Here's] F; Here is Q 109 ²meet] F; well Q 111 small'st] F; smallest Q greatest] Q; least F misuse] F; abuse Q 112] as QF; Q lines Madam, / you? /



Do it with gentle means and easy tasks.  
 He might have chid me so, for, in good faith, 115  
 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  
 That true hearts cannot bear it.

DESDEMONA

Am I that name, Iago?

IAGO What name, fair lady? 120

DESDEMONA

Such as she said my lord did say I was.

EMILIA

He called her whore. A beggar in his drink  
 Could not have laid such terms upon his callat.

IAGO

Why did he so?

DESDEMONA

I do not know; I am sure I am none such. 125

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,

- 114 **tasks** perhaps = reproofs, from *task* (*OED* *vb* 5) = chide, censure. Cf. *KL* 1.4.343, 'much more at task for want of wisdom, / Then prai'sd for harmefull mildnesse' (F).  
 117 **bewhored** i.e. berated her as if she were a whore; a coinage, from the verb 'to whore' (as in *Ham* 5.2.64, 'whor'd my mother'), to make a whore of, with prefix *be-* (= thoroughly)

118 **despite** outrage; anger; abuse

**heavy** angry; violent; distressing  
**terms** words

122 **whore** She feels Desdemona's pain, yet adds to it by repeating the word.

**in . . . drink** when drinking or drunk

123 **laid . . . upon** applied to  
**callat** slut

127 **forsook** declined, given up  
**matches** marriages; husbands

115 have] *F*; ha *Q* 116 to] *F*; at *Q* 119 That . . . bear it] *Fc* (heart *Fu*); As true hearts cannot beare *Q* 121 said] *F*; sayes *Q* 127–8] punctuated as *Q*; *F* punctuates Matches? . . . Father? . . . Country? . . . Friends? 127 Hath] *F*; Has *Q* 128 'and] *F*; all *Q*

To be called whore? would it not make one weep?

DESDEMONA

It is my wretched fortune.

IAGO

Beshrew him for't, 130

How comes this trick upon him?

DESDEMONA

Nay, heaven doth know.

EMILIA

I will be hanged if some eternal villain  
Some busy and insinuating rogue,  
Some cogging, cozening slave, to get some office,  
Have not devised this slander, I'll be hanged else! 135

IAGO

Fie, there is no such man, it is impossible.

DESDEMONA

If any such there be, heaven pardon him.

EMILIA

A halter pardon him, and hell gnaw his bones!  
Why should he call her whore? who keeps her  
company?  
What place, what time, what form, what likelihood 140  
The Moor's abused by some most villainous knave,

130 **Beshrew** evil befall (a refined oath)

131 **trick** a freakish or stupid act

**heaven doth know** (only) heaven knows

132 **I will** let me

**eternal** 'Used to express extreme abhorrence' (*OED* 7, citing *JC* 1.2.159–60, 'There was a Brutus once that would have brooked / Th'eternal devil to keep his state in Rome'); or, used as an intensive (Hart). Cf. 15–16. An *eternal villain* almost = a devil.

133 **busy** meddlesome

**insinuating** wriggling into favour, subtly penetrating (as in *IH6* 2.4.35, 'base insinuating flattery')

134 some cheating, deceiving scoundrel, to obtain some position. Emilia senses that someone like Iago is responsible, and may suspect him.

138 **A halter** the hangman's noose. Cf. T. Harman, *Groundworke of Conny-catching* (?1592), C1b, 'a halter blesse him for mee'.  
**hell . . . bones** Cf. Middleton, *Your Five Gallants* (?1608), D4a, 'Hel gnawe these dice'.

140 **form** manner, way. Presumably Shakespeare knew that his 'short time' allowed no *time* or *likelihood* for adultery, and trusted his audience not to notice.

141 **abused** deceived

130 for't] *F*; for it *Q* 135 I'll] *Q*; I will *F* 138–40] as *Q*; *F* lines him: / bones. / Whore? / companie? / Time? / liklyhood? / 141 most villainous] *F*; outrageous *Q*

Some base notorious knave, some scurvy fellow.  
 O heaven, that such companions thou'dst unfold  
 And put in every honest hand a whip  
 To lash the rascals naked through the world 145  
 Even from the east to th' west.

IAGO Speak within doors.

EMILIA

O fie upon them! some such squire he was  
 That turned your wit the seamy side without  
 And made you to suspect me with the Moor.

IAGO

You are a fool, go to.

DESDEMONA O God, Iago, 150

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 trespass 'gainst his love  
 Either in discourse of thought or actual deed, 155

142 **notorious** gross (Johnson: but *OED* 6 first records in 1666)

**scurvy** contemptible, worthless

143 **companions** fellows (contemptuous)

**unfold** expose

145 Cf. 4.3.37–8, her other geographical fantasy: the guilty have to travel huge distances in some discomfort.

**lash** Sexual and minor offenders were lashed in public. Cf. *KL* 4.6.160–1, 'Thou rascal beadle, hold thy bloody hand! / Why dost thou lash that whore?'

146 Cf. Dent, E43.1, 'as far as (from) the east from (to) the west'.

**within doors** less loudly (*OED* door 5: speak so as not to be heard outside the door). Or perhaps 'keep your thoughts to yourself.

147 **squire** used contemptuously (*OED* 1d)

148 **the . . . without** inside out. The *seamy side* of a garment = the worst or roughest side. Cf. 2.3.49, 1.3.385–7, 2.1.289ff.

150 **go to** Cf. 194n.

\***God** F *Alas* looks like expurgated profanity: cf. 2.3.147, 5.2.116, where F *alas* is clearly expurgated. Q *Good* could be an error for *God* (cf. 4.1.65 t.n.; *good* was not normally capitalized). Cf. *Ham* 5.2.344, 'O *god* Horatio, what a wounded name' (Q2; *good* F).

151 **win** regain the affection of

154 **trespass** sin (noun or verb)

155 **discourse** process. Noble (34–5) notes that here Q2 has independent support from the Liturgy: 'sins (committed) by thought, word, and deed' (taking discourse = word).

143 heaven] Q; Heuens F thou'dst] thoudst Q; thou'd'st F 145 rascals] F; rascall Q 146 to th'] F; to the Q doors] Q; doore F 147 them] F; him Q 150 O God] *this edn*; O Good Q; Alas F 153–66 Here . . . me.] F; not in Q 155 of] F; or Q2

Or that mine eyes, mine ears or any sense  
 Delighted them in any other form,  
 Or that I do not yet, and ever did,  
 And ever will – though he do shake me off  
 To beggarly divorcement – love him dearly, 160  
 Comfort forswear me! 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 165  
 Not the world's mass of vanity could make me.

IAGO

I pray you, be content, 'tis but his humour;  
 The business of the state does him offence  
 And he does chide with you.

DESDEMONA

If 'twere no other –

IAGO

'Tis but so, I warrant. 170

[*Trumpets.*]

Hark how these instruments summon to supper:  
 The messengers of Venice stay the meat,

156 **that** if (= 158)157 **form** (human) body; person158 **Or** . . . **yet** or if I do not still159 **shake me off** Cf. 3.3.266, 'I'd whistle her off'.161 **Comfort** may relief or aid (in want or distress)**forswear** abandon**Unkindness** absence of affection; unnatural conduct; hostility162 **defeat** destroy163 **taint** corrupt164 **It** . . . **me** I feel abhorrence. A quibble, as in 'Abhorson' (*MM* 4.2.19), though *abhor* comes from Lat. *abhorreo* and *whore* from OE *hore*. Cf. *Homilies*, 109 ('against Whoredom'), 'whoredom . . . ought to be abhorred'.165 **addition** title166 **mass** greater part (*OED* 6)**vanity** vain or worthless things (treasure? fine clothes?). Cf. Ecclesiastes 1.2, 'Vanity of vanities . . . all is vanity.'167 **be content** don't worry**humour** temporary state of mind (*OED* 5)168 **does him offence** displeases him, gives him pain169 **And** and therefore**chide** quarrel (*OED* 2b)170–1 *Q* has *you* in 170 and 171, both omitted by *F*. Perhaps *you* was a later addition for 170 (where *warrant* could be a monosyllable), marked unclearly, and so wrongly inserted in 171.172 **stay** stay for, await**meat** food

157 them in] *Q2*; them; or *F* 169] *Q*; not in *F* 170 'Tis] *Tis Q*; It is *F* warrant] *F*; warrant you *Q* SD] *Rowe* (after 171); not in *QF* 171 summon] *F*; summon you *Q* 172 The . . . meat] as *F* (staies the meate); And the great Messengers of Venice stay *Q*

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. 175

IAGO What in the contrary?

RODERIGO Every day thou doff'st me with some device,  
Iago, and rather, as it seems to me now, keep'st from  
me all conveniency than suppliest me with the least  
advantage of hope. I will indeed no longer endure it; 180  
nor am I yet persuaded to put up in peace what  
already I have foolishly suffered.

IAGO Will you hear me, Roderigo?

RODERIGO Faith, I have heard too much; and your  
words and performances are no kin together. 185

IAGO You charge me most unjustly.

RODERIGO With nought but truth. I have wasted myself  
out of my means. The jewels you have had from me to  
deliver to Desdemona would half have corrupted a  
votarist. You have told me she hath received them, 190

173 **all** . . . **well** a common saying (cf. 3.1.43,  
3.4.19–20)

175 a verse line (it follows a verse passage) or  
prose (it begins a passage of prose)?

177 **doff'st** dost put me off, get rid of me  
**device** trick

179 **conveniency** opportunity (*OED* 4c, first in  
1645)

180 **advantage** opportunity, favourable occasion

181 **put up** put up with

184–5 \***Faith** . . . **together** For the misplaced  
'And hell gnaw his bones' (t.n.), see  
Walton, 215–27.

**your** . . . **together** Cf. Dent, P602, 'Great  
promise small performance'.

190 **votarist** one bound by vows to a religious  
life (and to renounce fornication)

173 SD] as *F*; *Exit women*. *Q* 173.1] *F*; *opp.* 174 *Q* 175] as *Q*; *F* lines finde / me. / 177–82] *prose F*;  
*Q* lines Iago; / from me, / least / indure it, / already / sufferd. / 177 doff'st] doffist *Q*; dafts *F* 178 now,  
keep'st] *F*; thou keepest *Q* 184–5 RODERIGO . . . words and] as *Q*, *F*; And hell gnaw his bones, *Fu* 184  
Faith] *Q*; not in *F* 185 performances] *F*; performance *Q* 187 With . . . truth.] *F*; not in *Q* 188 my  
means] *F*; meanes *Q* 189 deliver to] *Q*; deliuer *F* 190 hath] *F*; has *Q* them] *F*; em *Q*

and returned me expectations and comforts of sudden  
respect and acquittance, but I find none.

IAGO Well, go to; very well.

RODERIGO 'Very well,' 'go to'! I cannot go to, man,  
nor 'tis not very well. By this hand, I think it is 195  
scurvy, and begin to find myself fopped in it.

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 200  
unlawful solicitation; if not, assure yourself I will  
seek satisfaction of you.

IAGO You have said now.

RODERIGO Ay, and said nothing but what I protest  
intendment of doing. 205

IAGO Why, now I see there's mettle in thee, and even  
from this instant do build on thee a better opinion  
than ever before. Give me thy hand, Roderigo. Thou  
hast taken against me a most just exception – but yet

191–2 **returned** . . . **acquittance** sent back  
favourable promises and encouragements  
(implying) imminent consideration and  
repayment. *F* *acquittance* is possible.

194 <sup>2</sup>**go to** Roderigo takes Iago's all-purpose  
phrase (= be quiet; come, come; yes, yes; or,  
leave me alone) as 'copulate'. Cf. Montaigne,  
1.97, 'Married men, because . . . they may go  
to it when they list, ought never to press'; *AC*  
1.2.63–4, 'O, let him marry a woman that  
cannot go, sweet Isis'; *Per* 4.6.74.

196 **scurvy** shabby

**fopped** fobbed, cheated; made a fool

198–9 <sup>2</sup>**I** . . . **known** I will introduce myself (to

Desdemona and ask for an explanation).

200 **repent** a curious repentance, standing on  
conditions!

201 **solicitation** petition; sexual soliciting

202 **satisfaction** repayment; atonement for an  
offence; the opportunity of satisfying one's  
honour by a duel (*OED* 4, first in 1602)

203 **said** said your say (statement or question)

204–5 **protest intendment** solemnly declare  
my intention

206 **mettle** spirit, courage; quibbling on *metal*,  
after *satisfaction*, with its hint of a duel

209 **taken** . . . **exception** made objection, found  
fault

191 expectations] *F*; expectation *Q* 192 acquittance] *Q*; acquaintance *F* 193 well] *F*; good *Q* 194–5  
nor 'tis] *F*; it is *Q* By this hand] *Q*; Nay *F* think it is] *F*; say tis very *Q* 196 fopped] fopt *QF*; fob'd  
Rowe 198 I . . . 'tis] *F*; I say it is *Q* 201 I will] *F*; I'll *Q* 204 and said] *F*; and I haue said *Q* 207  
instant] *F*; time *Q* 209 exception] *F*; conception *Q*

- I protest I have dealt most directly in thy affair. 210  
 RODERIGO It hath not appeared.
- IAGO I grant indeed it hath not appeared, and your  
 suspicion is not without wit and judgement. But,  
 Roderigo, if thou hast that in thee indeed which I  
 have greater reason to believe now than ever – I mean 215  
 purpose, courage, and valour – this night show it. If  
 thou the next night following enjoy not Desdemona,  
 take me from this world with treachery and devise  
 engines for my life.
- RODERIGO Well – what is it? Is it within reason and 220  
 compass?
- IAGO Sir, there is especial commission come from  
 Venice to depute Cassio in Othello's place.
- RODERIGO Is that true? Why, then Othello and  
 Desdemona return again to Venice. 225
- IAGO O no, he goes into Mauretania and taketh away  
 with him the fair Desdemona, unless his abode be  
 lingered here by some accident – wherein none can  
 be so determinate as the removing of Cassio.
- RODERIGO How do you mean, removing of him? 230
- IAGO Why, by making him incapable of Othello's place:  
 knocking out his brains.
- RODERIGO And that you would have me to do!
- IAGO Ay, if you dare do yourself a profit and a right.

210 **directly** straightforwardly; correctly  
**affair** business

216 **purpose** determination

219 **engines** plots, snares; engines of torture  
 (OED 5b)

221 **compass** the bounds of possibility

223 **depute** appoint

226 **Mauretania** the homeland of the north  
 African Moors. If this is a lie (cf. 4.1.235),  
 what does Iago gain by it? In Mauretania

Desdemona will be out of Roderigo's  
 reach, so he must act now.

227 **abode** abiding, stay

228 **lingered** prolonged

229 **determinate** decisive

**removing** See 2.1.274–5, 'the *displanting*  
 of Cassio'; and KL 5.1.64–5, 'Let her who  
 would be rid of him devise / His speedy  
 taking off.'

234 **profit** benefit

210 affair] *F*; affaires *Q* 214 in] *F*; within *Q* 217 enjoy] *F*; enjoyest *Q* 220 what is it?] *F*; not in  
*Q* 222 especial] *QF*; a special (*Malone*) commission] *F*; command *Q* 222–8] *prose F*; *Q* lines as if  
 verse *Venice*, / place. / *Desdemona* / *Venice*. / him / linger'd 226 taketh] *F*; takes *Q* 230 removing of] *Q*;  
 remouing *F* 231–2] *prose F*; *Q* lines as if verse place, / braines. / 234 if] *F*; and if *Q* a right] *F*; right *Q*

He sups tonight with a harlotry, and thither will I go 235  
 to him. He knows not yet of his honourable fortune:  
 if you will watch his going thence – which I will  
 fashion to fall out between twelve and one – you may  
 take him at your pleasure. I will be near to second  
 your attempt, and he shall fall between us. Come, 240  
 stand not amazed at it, but go along with me: I will  
 show you such a necessity in his death that you shall  
 think yourself bound to put it on him. It is now high  
 supper time, and the night grows to waste: about it.  
 RODERIGO I will hear further reason for this. 245  
 IAGO And you shall be satisfied. *Exeunt.*

[4.3] *Enter* OTHELLO, LODOVICO, DESDEMONA,  
 EMILIA *and Attendants.*

LODOVICO

I do beseech you, sir, trouble yourself no further.

235 **harlotry** harlot (so *RJ* 4.2.14, *IH4* 2.4.395).

236 **He . . . fortune** Iago cannot know this for certain. It implies that Cassio will not be attended, as the new governor might be, and can be struck down more easily.

238 **fashion** arrange, contrive  
**fall out** happen

239 **take** strike; come upon suddenly (*OED* 5, 8b); i.e. kill  
**second** support

240 **fall between us** fall down (or, be wounded; or, die) by our joint action. Deliberately vague.

241 **go along** walk; join in

241–3 **I . . . him** Iago (or Shakespeare) sometimes shrugs off explanations (3.3.322–3, 5.2.301–2, 320); in this instance the explanations follow off stage (5.1.8–10).

243 **put** *Put*, like *removing* (229) and *take* (239), is vague, screening the suggestion of murder. Cf. *Ham* 5.2.383, ‘deaths put on by cunning and forced cause’, *WT* 3.3.34–5.

**high** well advanced (as in high noon, high time)

244 **grows to waste** approaches its end (*OED* waste 10c); implies ‘we’re wasting our time (talking)’

**about it** i.e. bestir yourself, make a move!

246 **satisfied** content (with satisfactory reasons); convinced

4.3.0.1–2 Q’s entry, two lines before the end of 4.2, looks like another misplaced or misinterpreted marginal SD. The scene seems to be a public room or place, but later becomes a more private place where Desdemona unpins.

1–8 prose or verse? The short lines confuse the issue. See p. 367.

235 harlotry] *F*; harlot *Q* 246 SD] *Ex. lag. and Rod. Q*; *Exeunt. F* 4.3] *Scena Tertia. F*; not in *Q* 0.1–2 SD] as *F*; *Enter Othello, Desdemona, Lodouico, Emilia, and Attendants. Q* (after 4.2.244)



OTHELLO

O, pardon me, 'twill do me good to walk.

LODOVICO

Madam, good night: I humbly thank your ladyship.

DESDEMONA

Your honour is most welcome.

OTHELLO

Will you walk, sir?

O, Desdemona –

DESDEMONA

My lord?

OTHELLO

Get you to bed

5

On th' instant, I will be returned forthwith.

Dismiss your attendant there: look't be done.

DESDEMONA

I will, my lord.

*Exeunt Othello, Lodovico and Attendants.*

EMILIA

How goes it now? He looks gentler than he did.

DESDEMONA

He says he will return incontinent,

10

And hath commanded me to go to bed

And bid me to dismiss you.

EMILIA

Dismiss me?

DESDEMONA

It was his bidding; therefore, good Emilia,

Give me my nightly wearing, and adieu.

We must not now displease him.

15

EMILIA

Ay. – Would you had never seen him!

6 **returned** back

Desdemona unconsciously indicates that she needs help.

10 **incontinent** at once. Could also mean 'wanting in self-restraint: chiefly with reference to sexual appetite' (*OED* 1), therefore an odd word here. Cf. *AYL* 5.2.38–9.

16 \***Ay** 'I' was a normal spelling for 'Ay', and F's comma suggests a stop after *Ay*. Heard in the theatre, 'I' and 'Ay' would be indistinguishable, hence Desdemona's reply (*Texts*, 132–3).

14 **wearing** apparel

15 **We** Associating Emilia with herself,

2 'twill] *F*; it shall *Q* 4–7] *prose QF* 6 On th'] *F*; o'the *Q* 7 Dismiss] *F*; dispatch *Q* 't] *F*; it *Q* 8.1] *Exeunt. Q*; Exit. *F* (*opp.* 7 *QF*) 11 And] *F*; He *Q* 12 bid] *F*; bad *Q* 16 Ay. – Would] *this edn*; I would *Q*; I, would *F*; Would *Q2*

DESDEMONA

So would not I: my love doth so approve him  
 That even his stubbornness, his checks, his frowns  
 – Prithee unpin me – have grace and favour.

EMILIA

I have laid those sheets you bade me on the bed. 20

DESDEMONA

All's one. Good faith, how foolish are our minds!  
 If I do die before thee, prithee shroud me  
 In one of these same sheets.

EMILIA

Come, come, you talk.

DESDEMONA

My mother had a maid called Barbary,  
 She was in love, and he she loved proved mad 25  
 And did forsake her. She had a song of 'willow',  
 An old thing 'twas, but it expressed her fortune  
 And she died singing it. That song tonight

17 **approve** commend18 **stubbornness** roughness: cf. 1.3.228.  
**checks** reprimands19, 33 **unpin** The word occurs nowhere else in Shakespeare. It refers to the unpinning of Desdemona's dress or hair. Ellen Terry wrote 'Hair' in her text (Hankey, 297), but editors and stage histories give little help. Either way, the unpinning brings the two women intimately together.19 **grace and favour** So *Homilies*, 469, *R3* 3.4.91, *KL* 1.1.229; *favour* = charm, attractiveness.20 **those sheets** Perhaps the bed is already visible (see pp. 51–3), and she points to those sheets. But beds were less easy to bring on stage than chairs: *those* probably means 'those sheets you asked for' (4.2.107).21 **All's one** It's all the same, it doesn't matter.  
**\*faith** F's misreading, *Father*, is also found in *RJ* 4.4.21 (Q2), 'good father (=faith) tis day'. See *Texts*, 169.**foolish** i.e. in thinking about death (a half-apology)23 **you talk** i.e. how you talk! She speaks almost as if to a child; Desdemona's reference to her mother continues this redefinition of their roles.24 **Barbary** Cf. 1.1.110. The name suggests the Barbary coast, home of the Moors. Did her mother have a maid who was a Moor? Not necessarily: the name was in use in England. Shakespeare's lawyer, Francis Collins, had a daughter called 'Barbery', named in his will, 1617.25 **proved** turned out to be  
**mad** lunatic; or 'wild' (Johnson)26 **willow** F's *Willough* was probably Crane's spelling (*Texts*, 66).27 **fortune** fate28 **And . . . it** Desdemona's attendant, Emilia, also dies singing the Willow Song (5.2.245ff.).

18 'his] *F*; and *Q* 19 favour] *F*; fauour in them *Q* 20 those] *F*; these *Q* 21 one. Good faith,] one good faith: *Q*; one: good Father, *F* 22 before thee] *Q*; before *F* 23 these] *F*; those *Q* 26 had] *F*; has *Q* willow] *Q*; Willough *F* (throughout)

- Will not go from my mind. I have much to do  
 But to go hang my head all at one side 30  
 And sing it like poor Barbary. Prithee dispatch.  
 EMILIA Shall I go fetch your night-gown?  
 DESDEMONA No, unpin me here.  
 EMILIA This Lodovico is a proper man. A very hand  
 some man. 35  
 DESDEMONA He speaks well.  
 EMILIA I know a lady in Venice would have walked  
 barefoot to Palestine for a touch of his nether lip.  
 DESDEMONA [*Sings.*]  
 The poor soul sat sighing by a sycamore tree,  
 Sing all a green willow: 40  
 Her hand on her bosom, her head on her knee,  
 Sing willow, willow, willow.  
 The fresh streams ran by her and murmured her  
 moans,  
 Sing willow, willow, willow:

29–30 **I** . . . **But** it is all I can do not to (Ridley)  
 30 **hang my head** let my head droop (in  
 despondency)

31 **dispatch** hurry

32 **night-gown** dressing-gown

34–5 \***This** . . . **man** F prints ‘This . . . proper  
 man’ as one line, as if it is verse (which it  
 may be). I follow Ridley’s conjecture in  
 moving the SP. For Desdemona to praise  
 Lodovico at this point seems out of  
 character. Shakespeare sometimes omitted  
 SPs or added them later (cf. his pages in  
*STM*), so misplaced SPs are  
 understandable: but see S. N. Garner,  
 ‘Shakespeare’s Desdemona’ (*SSSt*, 9 [1976],  
 233ff.).

34 **proper** good-looking; admirable; complete

37–8 This suggests a penitential pilgrimage: the  
 chastest kiss would have required a

considerable mortification of the flesh! But  
 pilgrims normally went from Venice to  
 Palestine by sea (as in *The Book of Margery  
 Kempe*, ch. 28).

38 **nether lip** Cf. 5.2.43, ‘Alas, why gnaw you  
 so your nether lip?’

39ff. For the song, see LN.

39 **sycamore** a species of fig tree. ‘It was not  
 traditionally associated with the forsaken  
 in love (except perhaps by the punning  
 “sick-amour”); but it is in a grove of  
 sycamore that the love-sick Romeo is  
 found wandering by Benvolio (*RJ* 1.1.121)’  
 (Sanders).

40 **a** of. Steevens quoted a ballad printed in  
 1578 with the refrain ‘Willow, willow,  
 willow, sing all of green willow’.

**willow** symbol of grief for unrequited love  
 or the loss of a mate

29–52 I have . . . next.] *F*; not in *Q* 34 SP] *Ard*<sup>2</sup>; before A very *F* 39 SD] as *Q2*; not in *F* 39ff.] song  
 in italics *F* 39 sighing] *Q2*; singing *Fc*; sining *Fu*

Her salt tears fell from her and softened the 45  
stones,

Sing willow, willow, willow.

[*Speaks.*] Lay by these.

Willow, willow –

[*Speaks.*] Prithee hie thee: he'll come anon.

Sing all a green willow must be my garland. 50

Let nobody blame him, his scorn I approve –

[*Speaks.*] Nay, that's not next. Hark, who is't that  
knocks?

EMILIA

It's the wind.

DESDEMONA [*Sings.*]

I called my love false love; but what said he then?

Sing willow, willow, willow: 55

If I court moe women, you'll couch with moe men.

[*Speaks.*] 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 – 60

That there be women do abuse their husbands

In such gross kind?

EMILIA There be some such, no question.

45 Cf. Dent, D618, 'Constant dropping will  
wear the stone.'

47 **Lay by these** put these things aside

49 **hie** haste

51–2 **Let . . . next** a Freudian slip (unconsciously  
she wants to shield Othello from  
blame)?

56 **moe** more

**couch** lie.

57–8 **Mine . . . weeping** 'I find in MacGregor's  
*Folklore of North-East Scotland* that "An  
itching in the eyes indicated tears and  
sorrow" ' (Hart).

58 Cf. Dent, H438, 'It is neither here nor there.'

60 **in conscience** truly

62 **gross kind** disgusting manner

47, 49, 52, 57SD] *this edn* 49 hie] high *F* 52 who is't] *F*; who's *Q* 53 It's] *F*; It is *Q* 54–6] *F*; *not in Q* 57–8] *F*; *Q* lines night; / weeping? / 57 So] *F*; Now *Q* 58 Doth] *F*; does *Q* 59–62  
DESDEMONA . . . question.] *F*; *not in Q*

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: 65

I might do't as well i'th' 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

Good troth, I think thou wouldst not.

EMILIA By my troth, I think I should, and undo't when I 70

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? ud's pity, who would not make

63–6 **\*Why . . . dark** See *Texts*, 34–5. I think that these lines were cancelled by Shakespeare, who reused 63 as 67. Emilia knows, after 4.2, that Desdemona's chastity is not a joking matter.

63 Cf. Matthew 16.26, 'For what doth it profit a man if he win all the whole world and lose his own soul?'

**do . . . deed** = have sexual intercourse (Partridge, citing *LLL* 3.1.198–9, 'one that will do the deed / Though Argus were her eunuch and her guard')

**for . . . world** resumes 4.2.165–6 (as 'by this heavenly light' picks up 'by this light of heaven', 4.2.152). She and Othello both think each other, and 'honesty', worth the whole world.

64 **by . . . light** an oath not used elsewhere by Shakespeare (but cf. 4.2.152, 'by this light of heaven'); adapted from 'by this light' or '[God]'s light'

68 **price** price to be paid; or, prize (variant spelling)

72 **joint-ring** a finger-ring formed of two separable halves to make one, like husband and wife. Often given by lovers. She perhaps implies 'for a mere promise of marriage'.

**measures of lawn** quantities of fine linen

73 **petty** trivial; inferior  
**exhibition** gift, present

74 **ud's** God's. Cf. 5.2.69.

74–5 **who . . . monarch** Her 'easy virtue' is in character, but her willingness to do anything for Iago less so. Is she joking?

66 do't] *F*; doe it *Q* i'th'] *F*; in the *Q* 67 Wouldst] *F*; Would *Q* deed] *F*; thing *Q* 68–9] as *Q*; *F* lines thing: / vice. / 68 world's] *F*; world is *Q* 69 Good troth] *Q*; Introth *F* 70 By my troth] *Q*; Introth *F* 71 done] *F*; done it *Q* 72 'nor] *F*; or *Q* 73 petticoats] *F*; or Petticoates *Q* petty] *F*; such *Q* 74 all] *F*; not in *Q* ud's pity] *Q*; why *F*

her husband a cuckold to make him a monarch? I 75  
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'th' world; and  
having the world for your labour, 'tis a wrong in your 80  
own world, and you might quickly make it right.

DESDEMONA I do not think there is any such woman.

EMILIA Yes, a dozen, and as many to th' vantage as would  
store the world they played for.  
But I do think it is their husbands' faults 85  
If wives do fall. Say that they slack their duties  
And pour our treasures into foreign laps;  
Or else break out in peevish jealousies,  
Throwing restraint upon us; or say they strike us,

76 **venture** risk

**purgatory** a reminder that the play is set in  
a Catholic world

77 **Beshrew me** Cf. 3.4.151n.

82 Cf. 4.2.136.

83–4 A prose beginning for a verse speech is  
unusual, but 85–102 are more likely to be a  
cut in Q than an afterthought in F: see  
*Texts*, 12.

83 a **dozen** a facetious understatement,  
cancelled out by what follows. Cf. Falstaff,  
who 'went to a bawdy-house not above  
once in a quarter – of an hour' (*IH4*  
3.3.16–17).

**to th' vantage** over and above

84 **store** stock

**played** gambled; sported amorously

85–102 She resumes 3.4.104–7. Though  
she begins by thinking of Othello, it is soon  
clear that she refers to her own marriage.  
Such protests against 'double standards'  
were not uncommon: cf. *CE* 2.1.10ff.

86 **fall** fall from virtue

**slack** neglect; cease to prosecute in a  
vigorous manner (*OED* 1, 2)

**duties** The *Book of Common Prayer* ('Of  
matrimony') explained 'the duty of  
husbands toward their wives, and wives  
toward their husbands', but sexual duties  
were treated less explicitly than in some  
bibles. Cf. 1 Corinthians 7.2–3, 'But  
because of fornication let every man have  
his own wife . . . Let the husband render his  
debt to the wife'. (This is the Catholic  
'Rheims' bible of 1582; for *debt* Protestant  
bibles read 'due benevolence'.)

87 perhaps alluding to the myth of Danaë,  
who was impregnated by Zeus disguised as  
a shower of gold. But *treasure* = seed was  
not uncommon: cf. *IH4* 2.3.45, 'my  
treasures and my rights of thee' (Lady  
Hotspur to Hotspur); *Son* 20, 'Mine be thy  
love, and thy love's use their treasure'.

**foreign** another woman's

**laps** lap could = pudendum (*OED* 2b)

88 **peevish** foolish; mad; spiteful; perverse;  
irritable (a word that has narrowed in  
meaning)

89 **Throwing** . . . **us** i.e. restricting our  
freedom

76 for't] *F*; for it *Q* 79 i'th'] *F*; i'the *Q* 83 to th'] *F*; to the *Q* 85–102 But . . . so.] *F*; not in *Q* 89  
upon] *F*; on *Rowe*<sup>3</sup>

Or scant our former having in despite, 90  
 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 95  
 When they change us for others? Is it sport?  
 I think it is. And doth affection breed it?  
 I think it doth. Is't frailty that thus errs?  
 It is so too. And have not we affections?  
 Desires for sport? and frailty, as men have? 100  
 Then let them use us well: else let them know,  
 The ills we do, their ills instruct us so.

DESDEMONA

Good night, good night. God me such usage send  
 Not to pick bad from bad, but by bad mend! *Exeunt.*

[5.1] *Enter IAGO and RODERIGO.*

IAGO

Here, stand behind this bulk, straight will he come.  
 Wear thy good rapier bare, and put it home;

90 or reduce what we had before (our  
 'treasures') out of spite

91 **we have galls** i.e. we can feel resentment 103  
**grace** mercy 104

93 **sense** sensation, or sensual appetite  
 (Malone); or, emotional consciousness  
 (*OED* 16)

96 **change** exchange  
**sport** recreation, fun

97 **affection breed** passion (or lust) produce

98 **frailty** moral weakness

101 **use us well** Cf. 1.3.292, 'use Desdemona  
 well', and 5.2.69n.

102 **ills** wicked or sinful acts

**so** i.e. so to do (Malone). Cf. *MV* 3.1.71–2,  
 'The villainy you teach me, I will execute'.

This speech (Shylock's 'Hath not a Jew  
 eyes?') is close to Emilia's here.

**usage** treatment; behaviour  
 not to select (and copy) bad from what is  
 bad, but to improve by (knowing what is)  
 bad

5.1.1 \***Here, stand** So F (no comma Q). Or,  
 'Here stand,'. In *Arden of Faversham*  
 killers also wait for their victim outside a  
 shop when it is 'very late' ('stand close,  
 and take your fittest standing', Revels,  
 3.39).

**bulk** stall, a framework projecting from  
 the front of a shop

**bare** ready, drawn

**home** i.e. as far as it will go

103] as Q; F lines good night: / send, / God] Q; Heauen F usage] Q; vses F 5.1] Actus. 5. Q; Actus  
 Quintus. Scena Prima. F 1] as Q; F lines Barke, / come: / bulk] Q; Barke F

Quick, quick, fear nothing, I'll be at thy elbow.  
 It makes us or it mars us, think on that  
 And fix most firm thy resolution.

5

RODERIGO

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

IAGO

Here, at thy hand: be bold, and take thy stand.

[Retires.]

RODERIGO

I have no great devotion to the deed  
 And yet he hath given me satisfying reasons:  
 'Tis but a man gone. Forth, my sword: he dies.

10

IAGO

I have rubbed this young quat almost to the sense  
 And he grows angry. Now, whether he kill Cassio  
 Or Cassio him, or each do kill the other,  
 Every way makes my gain. Live Roderigo,  
 He calls me to a restitution large  
 Of gold and jewels that I bobbed from him  
 As gifts to Desdemona:  
 It must not be. If Cassio do remain

15

- 3 **at thy elbow** Cf. Dent, EE5, 'To be at one's elbow'; D243.1, 'The devil is at one's elbow.'  
 4 **It . . . 'us** Dent, M48, 'To make or mar'.  
 5 **resolution** five syllables  
 7 **stand** position. Cf. *JC* 2.4.25, 'I go to take my stand, / To see him pass.'  
 8 **devotion** enthusiasm for; incongruous, suggesting religious devotion (to commit murder)  
 9 **reasons** Cf. 4.2.245–6, 5.2.305–9. We do not hear the reasons: Shakespeare sometimes states that there are reasons without giving them (*KL* 4.3.51 ff., *Tem* 1.2.266). Scan 'he'th giv'n'.  
 10 **Forth** Only now does he manage to draw

- his sword!  
 11 **quat** pimple, small boil, 'which rubbing irritates' (Ridley). Note that Iago, aged 28, thinks Roderigo *young*: he may be a boy in his teens (cf. 1.3.341n.).  
**to the sense** to the quick  
 12 **angry** could = inflamed (*OED* 8: 'sores with often touching waxe angry')  
 14 **gain** profit. *Q game* = 'gives me the game' (Ridley; so Kittredge).  
**Live** should Roderigo live  
 16 **bobbed** diddled (more playful than 'cheated')  
 18 **It . . . be** metrically 'amphibious', because these words could also complete 17 (*Texts*, 105–6)

4 on] *F*; of *Q* 7 stand] *F*; sword *Q* SD] as *Capell*; not in *QF* 8 deed] *F*; dead *Q* 9 hath] *F*; has *Q* 11 quat] *F*; gnat *Q* 12 angry. Now,] *F*; angry now: *Q* 14 gain] *F*; game *Q* 16 Of] *F*; For *Q*



He hath a daily beauty in his life  
 That makes me ugly; and besides, the Moor 20  
 May unfold me to him – there stand I in much peril.  
 No, he must die. Be't so! I hear him coming.

*Enter CASSIO.*

RODERIGO

I know his gait, 'tis he. Villain, thou diest!  
*[Makes a thrust at Cassio.]*

CASSIO

That thrust had been mine enemy indeed  
 But that my coat is better than thou know'st: 25  
 I will make proof of thine.  
*[Draws, and wounds Roderigo.]*

RODERIGO

O, I am slain!  
*[Iago from behind wounds Cassio in the leg, and exit.]*

CASSIO

I am maimed for ever! Help, ho! murder! murder!

*Enter OTHELLO.*

OTHELLO

The voice of Cassio. Iago keeps his word.

19 **daily beauty** i.e. an ever-present attractiveness. Does this suggest searing self-contempt (so Rosenberg, 174) on the part of Iago? Or is he describing the conventional view of Cassio's beautiful manners (cf. 2.1.98ff.) compared with his own bluntness (2.1.164ff.)?

21 **unfold** expose. Scan 'May 'nfold me to'm' (*Texts*, 121).

25 **coat** undercoat (of proof armour)

26 **make proof** test (the proof of)  
<sup>2</sup>SD Iago wounds him in the leg, having heard that his *coat* protects his upper body (Malone).

27 **maimed** For Q *maind*, cf. 1.3.100n.

27.1 Othello usually enters 'above'. Does he arrive by chance, or did Iago tell him that Cassio would be killed here?

19 hath] *F*; has *Q* 21 much] *F*; not in *Q* 22 Be't] *Q*; But *F* hear] *Q*; heard *F* 23 SD] *Rowe subst.* (*He runs at Cassio, and wounds him.*); not in *QF* 24 mine] *F*; my *Q* 25 know'st] *F*; think'st *Q* 26 'SD] *this edn*; not in *QF* <sup>2</sup>SD] *Theobald subst.* (*Fight. Iago cuts Cassio behind in the Leg, and Exit.*); not in *QF* 27ff. murder] *Q*; murder *F* throughout scene 27] as *Q*; *F* lines euer: / murder. / maimed] *F*; maind *Q* Help] *F*; light *Q* 27.1] *QF*; *Enter Othello, above at a Window / Rowe*

RODERIGO

O, villain that I am!

OTHELLO

It is even so.

CASSIO

O, help ho! light! a surgeon! 30

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 unblest fate hies; strumpet, I come.

Forth of my heart those charms, thine eyes, are  
blotted, 35

Thy bed, lust-stained, shall with lust's blood be  
spotted. *Exit.*

*Enter* LODOVICO *and* GRATIANO.

CASSIO

What ho, no watch, no passage? murder, murder!

GRATIANO

'Tis some mischance, the voice is very direful.

CASSIO

O help!

LODOVICO

Hark! 40

29 **O . . . am** Cf. Romans 7.24, 'O wretched man that I am'.

**It . . . so** Q *Harke* implies that Othello can hear but not see. He does not know about Roderigo, cannot see him, and thinks Cassio speaks. *Even* = just.

31 **brave** worthy, good; courageous

32 **sense** Cf. 4.3.93n.

**friend's** Having called himself 'thy friend' (3.3.145) to get information from Iago, while thinking of him as 'This . . . creature' (3.3.246), he now *thinks* Iago a friend.

33 **Minion** hussy (contemptuously, addressing

the absent Desdemona); more usually 'darling' (endearingly)

34 **unblest** unholy (i.e. she is damned)

**hies** makes haste, hurries nearer

35 **Forth** out

**blotted** obliterated

36 **blood** Cf. 3.3.454 ('O blood, blood, blood!'), 4.1.201ff., 5.2.3. Is it Shakespeare or Othello who cannot decide how she should be killed?

**spotted** stained

37 **passage** i.e. people passing

38 **mischance** mishap

**direful** dreadful, terrible

29 It is] *F*; Harke tis *Q* 34 unblest fate hies] *F* (highes); fate hies apace *Q* 35 Forth] *Q*; For *F* 37] as *Q*; *F* lines passage?/Murther. / 38 voice] *F*; cry *Q*

RODERIGO

O wretched villain!

LODOVICO

Two or three groan. It is a heavy night;  
These may be counterfeits, let's think't unsafe  
To come in to the cry without more help.

RODERIGO

Nobody come? then shall I bleed to death. 45

*Enter IAGO, with a light.*

LODOVICO

Hark!

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? 50

GRATIANO

This is Othello's ancient, as I take it.

42 **heavy** overcast, dark

44 **come in to** approach(?); or, Cassio and Roderigo staggered into the *bulk* (1) and he fears to follow. Cf. 59.

45 This could be two questions.

47 **in his shirt** in his night attire; without his outer garments (*OED* 2b)

48 **noise** *Q* *noise* could be a misreading of *voice*, leading to a 'common error' in F: 'whose noise is this, that cries' sounds odd.

Cf. 5.2.85 t.n.

**cries on** exclaims against

50 **heaven's** F *heaven* could be the old genitive, as in *KJ* 4.1.77, 'For heauen sake', or Chaucer, *Wife of Bath's Tale*, 325, 'Jesus, hevene king', or -s dropped before s, as in *MV* 4.1.379, Q, 'for Godsake'. Cf. *Barnavelt* (a Crane manuscript; MSR 1383), 'for heaven-sake'.

42 groan. It is a] grones, it is a *Q*; groane. 'Tis *F* 44 in to] *Capell*; into *QF* 45.1] as *Q*; *Enter Iago*. *F* 47 light] *F*; lights *Q* 49 We] *F*; I *Q* Did] *Q*; Do *F* 50 heaven's] *Q*; heauen *F*

LODOVICO

The same indeed, a very valiant fellow.

IAGO

What are you here that cry so grievously?

CASSIO

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

Give me some help.

55

IAGO

O me, lieutenant! What villains have done this?

CASSIO

I think that one of them is hereabout

And cannot make away.

IAGO

O treacherous villains!

What are you there? Come in, and give some help.

RODERIGO

O, help me here!

60

CASSIO

That's one of them.

IAGO

O murderous slave! O villain!

[*Stabs Roderigo.*]

RODERIGO

O damned Iago! O inhuman dog!

IAGO

Kill men i'th' dark? Where be these bloody thieves?

How silent is this town! Ho, murder, murder!

52 **fellow** They do not remember his name (he is a social inferior), but he remembers theirs (67, 93).

53 **grievously** piteously, wretchedly

54 **spoiled** destroyed. Cf. *CE* 5.1.37.

56 **O me** A 'genteel' exclamation: cf. *RJ* 1.1.173.

58 **make** i.e. get

59 **What . . . there?** What kind of men are you there? This seems to anticipate 65, but

might also be printed 'What, are you there?' (addressing supposed villains).

**Come in** Iago has entered the *bulk* (1) to help Cassio.

62 **'O . . . dog!** Q's 'o, o, o' is a signal to the actor to groan or make whatever noise is appropriate; more common in F than in Q texts. See Honigmann, 'Stage direction'.

64 Iago enjoys uproar: cf. 1.1.66ff., 2.3.153.

56] as *Q*; *F* lines Lieutenant! / this? / me,] *F* (mee.); my *Q* 57 that] *F*; the *Q* 60 here] *Q*; there *F* 61 them] *F*; em *Q* murderous] *Q*; murd'rous *F* SD] as *Q2*, *Rowe*; not in *QF* 62 dog!] as *F*; dog, - o, o, o. *Q* 63] as *Q*; *F* lines darke? / Theeues? / men i'th'] *F*; him i'th' the *Q* these] *F*; those *Q*

What may you be? Are you of good or evil? 65

LODOVICO

As you shall prove us, praise us.

IAGO

Signior Lodovico?

LODOVICO

He, sir.

IAGO

I cry you mercy: here's Cassio hurt by villains.

GRATIANO

Cassio? 70

IAGO

How is't, brother?

CASSIO

My leg is cut in two.

IAGO

Marry, heaven forbid!

Light, gentlemen, I'll bind it with my shirt.

*Enter* BIANCA.

BIANCA

What is the matter, ho? who is't that cried?

IAGO

Who is't that cried?

BIANCA

O my dear Cassio! 75

My sweet Cassio! O Cassio, Cassio, Cassio!

65 Lodovico and Gratiano have kept their distance, and now step forward. *of* on the side of. The idea is familiar (Joshua 5.13, 'Art thou on our side, or on our adversaries'?) but the phrasing is odd.

66 **prove** find or prove (us to be)  
**praise** appraise, value. Cf. Dent, P614.2, 'Prove (assay, try) ere you purpose (. . . praise)'; i.e. as you prove our value, so esteem us.

69 **I . . . mercy** I beg your pardon (*you* is indirect object): a 'genteel' phrase.

71 **brother** From Cinthio: discovering the

71 is't] *F*; is it *Q* 76 My] *F*; O my *Q* O] *F*; not in *Q*

wounded Cassio, Iago grieved 'as if he had been his own brother' (cf. p. 391), the words of the narrator. Shakespeare gives the word to Iago, who wants to impress the Venetians.

72 **heaven forbid** Cf. 2.3.257n.

73 **Light** Iago has put down his own light, to bind Cassio's wounds.

75 **Who . . . cried** Iago has a dangerous tendency to mock others by echoing them: cf. 1.1.116, 2.1.249, 3.3.104ff., 306, 443. **Cassio** three syllables, for emphasis. Two in 76.

IAGO

O notable strumpet! Cassio, may you suspect  
Who they should be that have thus mangled you?

CASSIO

No.

GRATIANO

I am sorry to find you thus; 80  
I have been to seek you.

IAGO

Lend me a garter. So. – O for a chair  
To bear him easily hence!

BIANCA

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

IAGO

Gentlemen all, I do suspect this trash 85  
To be a party in this injury.  
Patience awhile, good Cassio. Come, come,  
Lend me a light. Know we this face, or no?  
Alas, my friend and my dear countryman,  
Roderigo? No – yes sure! – O heaven, Roderigo! 90

GRATIANO

What, of Venice?

IAGO

Even he, sir. Did you know him?

GRATIANO

Know him? Ay.

IAGO

Signior Gratiano? I cry you gentle pardon:  
These bloody accidents must excuse my manners

77 **notable** known, conspicuous  
**strumpet** Cf. *R3* 3.4.71, 74, where another  
murderer's moral outrage at a strumpet is  
equally hypocritical.

77–8 **may** . . . **be** have you any idea who they are

78 **mangled** hacked; wounded

80–1 Even with elision (I'm, I've) this would  
be an irregular verse line.

82 **garter** a band, worn as a sash or belt

85 **trash** Cf. 2.1.301, 3.3.160.

87 **Cassio** three syllables

89 **countryman** fellow countryman

93 **I** . . . **pardon** a 'genteel' turn of phrase,  
again! A variant of 'I cry you mercy' (69n.,  
4.2.90).

94 **accidents** unforeseen happenings

78 have thus] *F*; thus haue *Q* 80–3] *divided as F* 82–3] *F*; not in *Q* 86 be] *F*; beare *Q* party . . .  
injury] *F*; part in this *Q* 87 Come, come] *F*; not in *Q* 90 O heaven] *Q*; Yes, 'tis *F* 93 you] *Q*; your *F*

That so neglected you.

GRATIANO

I am glad to see you.

95

IAGO

How do you, Cassio? O, a chair, a chair!

GRATIANO

Roderigo?

IAGO

He, he, 'tis he. [*A chair is brought in.*] O, that's well said, the chair.

Some good man bear him carefully from hence,  
I'll fetch the general's surgeon. [*To Bianca.*] For you,  
mistress,

100

Save you your labour. – He that lies slain here,  
Cassio,

Was my dear friend. What malice was between you?

CASSIO

None in the world, nor do I know the man.

IAGO [*to Bianca*]

What, look you pale? – O, bear him out o'th' air.

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

105

– Do you perceive the gastness of her eye?

– Nay, if you stare we shall hear more anon.

– Behold her well, I pray you, look upon her:

95 **neglected** ignored, paid no attention to

96 **chair** i.e. a seat (or litter?) to carry Cassio to the surgeon

98 **well said** Cf. 4.1.115n.

**the chair** F *the* presupposes 82–3, Q *a* doesn't (Q omits 82–3). Revision?

99 **man** Emend to *men*?

100 **For** as for

101 **Save . . . labour** don't trouble yourself, i.e. leave him alone

102 **malice** ill-will

104 **O . . . air** Cf. Tilley, A93, 'Fresh air is ill for the diseased or wounded man.'

106 **gastness** dread, terror; ghastliness

107 **Nay . . . anon** i.e. if you stare (it is a sign of guilt) we'll soon hear more (we'll make you confess). Q *stirre* (= try to get away) would imply much the same. Cf. 5.2.184, 'Nay, stare not'.

98] as Q; F *lines* 'tis he / Chaire. / He, he] F; He Q SD] *Capell subst.*; not in QF the] F; a Q 100 SD] *Johnson*; not in QF 102 between] F; betwixt Q 104 out] Q; not in F 105 gentlemen] F; Gentlewoman Q 106 gastness] F; ieastures Q 107 if] F; an Q stare] F; stirre Q hear] F; haue Q

Do you see, gentlemen? nay, guiltiness will speak  
Though tongues were out of use.

*Enter EMILIA.*

EMILIA 'Las, what's the matter? 110  
What's the matter, husband?

IAGO

Cassio hath here been set on in the dark  
By Roderigo and fellows that are 'scaped:  
He's almost slain, and Roderigo dead.

EMILIA

Alas, good gentleman! alas, good Cassio! 115

IAGO

This is the fruits of whoring. Prithee, Emilia,  
Go know of Cassio where he supped tonight.  
What, do you shake at that?

BIANCA

He supped at my house, but I therefore shake not.

IAGO

O, did he so? I charge you, go with me. 120

EMILIA

O fie upon thee, strumpet!

BIANCA

I am no strumpet  
But of life as honest as you, that thus  
Abuse me.

EMILIA

As I? Foh, fie upon thee!

109–10 **nay** . . . **use** i.e. guilt will betray itself,  
even if we were all struck dumb (*out of*  
*use* = not used). Dent, M1315, 'Murder  
will out.'

114 **dead** Cf. 5.2.326.

115 She seems to think the two men equally  
'good'. This brings out her failure to look  
below the surface.

116 **This** . . . **whoring** Cf. R3 2.1.135, 'This is  
the fruits of rashness', and 77n.

117 **know** learn

120 **charge** order

121–3 \*sometimes printed as irregular verse  
lines, but can be spoken as verse if *I am* is  
slurred as *I'm*, and heavy stress on *you*: see  
*Texts*, 123

122 **honest** i.e. sexually honest. In a more  
general sense she is indeed more honest  
than Emilia, who lied about the  
handkerchief (3.4.24).

123 **Foh** signifies disgust, *fie* disapproval. Cf.  
*Ham* 2.2.587, 'Fie upon't, foh!'

109–10] *as F*; *Q* lines guiltinesse / vse. / 110 SD] *Q* (*Enter Em.*) *opp.* vse; *not in F* 'Las, what's] *Q*; Alas,  
what is *F* 111 What's] *Q*; What is *F* 112 hath] *F*; has *Q* 114 dead] *Q*; quite dead *F* 116 fruits] *F*;  
fruit *Q* Prithee] *F*; pray *Q* 121 O fie] *F*; Fie, fie *Q* 121–3] *this edn*; *QF* lines honest, / me. / thee.  
/ 123 Foh, fie] *Q* (fough); Fie *F*



IAGO

Kind gentlemen, let's go see poor Cassio dressed.  
 Come, mistress, you must tell's another tale. 125  
 Emilia, run you to the citadel  
 And tell my lord and lady what hath happened.  
 – Will you go on afore? – This is the night  
 That either makes me or fordoes me quite.

*Exeunt.*

[5.2] *Enter* OTHELLO, *with a light*. DESDEMONA *in her bed*  
*[asleep]*.

OTHELLO

It is the cause, it is the cause, my soul!  
 Let me not name it to you, you chaste stars,  
 It is the cause. Yet I'll not shed her blood  
 Nor scar that whiter skin of hers than snow

124 **Kind** almost = good (but more ingratiating)  
**dressed** bandaged

125 Cf. Dent, T49, 'To tell another tale'; *tell's* = tell us.

127 **and lady** Should Iago register that he thinks the lady already dead, perhaps by the slightest hesitation after *lord*?

128–9 **This . . . quite** He fails to realize that the night may make *and* 'fordo' him.

129 **makes me** i.e. brings me success  
**fordoes me quite** ruins, undoes me completely (*quite* = completely, *OED* 1). He repeats 5.1.4.

5.2 For the staging, see LN. For 5.2.1–20 see also pp. 370–4.

1 **cause** could = ground for action; the case of one party in a law suit; a matter before a court for decision. How characteristic of Othello that he does not define the cause (= chastity? purity? the good of the world in general?)! See J. Money, in SS,

6 (1953), 94–105.

**my soul** Addressing one's soul is common in the Bible (Genesis 49.6, Psalms 16.2, etc.) and in classical literature. For the biblical imagery of this speech, see J. E. Hankins, *Shakespeare's Derived Imagery* (1953); also J. Tobin, in *N and Q*, NS 24 (1977), 112; and in *SS*, 31 (1978), 33–43.

2 **stars** any celestial bodies, including the chaste moon (*MND* 2.1.162). In classical myth reluctant ladies pursued by Zeus were changed into stars.

4 Cf. Dent, S591, 'As white as (the driven) snow'. Snow, though, was connected with chastity (Money, as in *In.*, citing *Cym* 2.5.13, 'As chaste as unsunn'd snow'), so contradicts the charge of Desdemona's unchastity. Shakespeare also reanimates the cliché by *not* writing 'that skin of hers whiter than snow'.

124] *as Q; F lines* Gentlemen: / drest. / 127 hath] *F*; has *Q* 128 afore] *F*; I pray *Q* 129 makes] *F*; makes *Q* quite] *Q; F* (quight) 5.2] *Scoena Secunda. F*; not in *Q* 0.1–2] *Enter* Othello *with a light. Q*; *Enter Othello, and Desdemona in her bed. F*

And smooth as monumental alabaster: 5  
 Yet she must die, else she'll betray more men.  
 Put out the light, and then put out the light!  
 If I quench thee, thou flaming minister,  
 I can again thy former light restore  
 Should I repent me. But once put out thy light, 10  
 Thou cunning'st pattern of excelling nature,  
 I know not where is that Promethean heat  
 That can thy light relume: when I have plucked the rose  
 I cannot give it vital growth again,  
 It needs must wither. I'll smell thee on the tree; 15  
 O balmy breath, that dost almost persuade

5 **monumental** i.e. as used for monuments; here referring to funeral monuments (where effigies often lie on their backs, heads resting on a stone 'pillow', hands pressed together in prayer, as if awaiting the resurrection. A hint for staging? The 'church' tableau is also suggested by Othello's candle).

**alabaster** often spelt alabaster c. 1600 (= QF). Cf. *Luc* 419, 'her alabaster skin', Dent, A95.2, 'As white as alabaster'.

6 **betray** prove false to; cheat (*OED* 2, 3)  
**more men** His motives are as confused as Iago's. Does he really care what happens to *more men*?

7 **and . . . light** i.e. extinguish her life. Cf. Sidney's *Arcadia* (1593 edn, fos 231b, 237, of killing a princess), 'so soone may the fayrest light in the world be put out', 'become not the putters out of the worlds light' (from Steevens); C. A., *A Fig for Fortune* (1596), B3b, 'Out with thy candle [= life], let it burne no more', *Mac* 5.5.23, 'Out, out, brief candle! A commonplace.

8 **flaming minister** Cf. Psalms 104.4, 'God maketh his angels spirits: and his ministers

a flaming fire', Hebrews 1.7; *minister* = servant.

10 **repent me** (reflexive verb) regret it, change my mind

**But once** but if I once

11 thou most skilful instance (or specimen, image, design, model) of nature excelling herself. Cf. 2.1.63–5, 'One that excels . . .'

12 **Promethean** 'Shakespeare seems to be combining two separate Greek myths about Prometheus, one in which Prometheus gave fire to human-kind and one in which he was the creator of human-kind' (Folger).

13 **relume** relight (*OED*, first here, from late Lat. *reluminare*)

14 **vital** living

15 **needs** necessarily, inevitably

16 **O Q A** could = Ah.

**balmy** deliciously fragrant; cf. 20, 'So sweet'. Q's SD, 'He kisses her', may refer to three kisses but, as the sense of smell is so important to him, I think he smells at 17, again at 19, here finishing with a kiss, as is also suggested by the placing of Q's SD. Q2 and later editors moved the SD, without authority.

5 alabaster] QF (Alabaster) 7 then put] QF; then – put *Hanmer* 10 thy light] F; thine Q 11 cunning'st] F; cunning Q 13] as Q; F lines re-Lume. / Rose, / relume] F; returne Q the] Q; thy F 15 needs must] F; must needs Q thee] F; it Q 16 O] F; A Q dost] F; doth Q

Justice to break her sword! Once more, once more:  
 Be thus when thou art dead and I will kill thee  
 And love thee after. Once more, and that's the last.

*He [smells, then] kisses her.*

So sweet was ne'er so fatal. I must weep, 20  
 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. 25

OTHELLO

If you bethink yourself of any crime  
 Unreconciled as yet to heaven and grace,  
 Solicit for it straight.

DESDEMONA

Alack, my lord, what may you mean by that?

17 **Justice . . . sword** The sword and scales were emblems of Justice (traditionally female). The scales weighed the evidence (not here!), the sword punished.

17, 19 **Once** Either *one* or *once* looks like a minim error, common in Shakespeare generally (*Texts*, 82). Each is possible; I prefer *once more* since he refers, initially, to smelling, not kissing. But Shakespeare could have revised this speech (see p. 373).

20 **fatal** destructive; fateful

21 **cruel tears** 'meaning, I think, that the tears

are no sign of faltering purpose' (Ridley)

21–2 **This . . . love** Cf. Proverbs 3.12, 'For whom the Lord loveth, him he chasteneth', Hebrews 12.6.

23 **Ay** Note this word in this scene: at first quietly menacing (here, 33, 41, 70), then still resolute (139, 143), finally exhausted (295). Here it could be the pronoun: 'Yes, it is indeed) I, Desdemona.'

26 **bethink yourself** call to mind **crime** sin

27 **grace** (the source of grace, i.e.) God. So *AW* 1.3.220.

28 **Solicit** pray for pardon

17] Iustice her selfe to breake her sword once more, *Q*; Iustice to breake her Sword. One more, one more: *F* 19 Once] *Q*; One *F* that's] *F*; this *Q* SD] *Q* (*opp.* 19, 20); not in *F* SD *smells, then*] *this edn*; not in *QF* 22 where it doth] *F*; when it does *Q* She wakes] *QF*; as SD (*Cam anon.*) 23 Ay] *QF* (l) 25 Desdemona] *F*; *Desdemona Q* 29] as *Q*; *F* lines Lord, / that? / Alack] *F*; Alas *Q*

OTHELLO

Well, do it, and be brief; I will walk by. 30  
 I would not kill thy unprepared spirit,  
 No, heaven forfend, I would not kill thy soul.

DESDEMONA

Talk you of killing?

OTHELLO

Ay, I do.

DESDEMONA

Then, heaven,

Have mercy on me!

OTHELLO

Amen, with all my heart.

DESDEMONA

If you say so, I hope you will not kill me. 35

OTHELLO Hum!

DESDEMONA

And yet I fear you, for you're fatal then  
 When your eyes roll so. Why I should fear I know not,  
 Since guiltiness I know not. But yet I feel I fear.

OTHELLO

Think on thy sins.

DESDEMONA

They are loves I bear to you. 40

OTHELLO

Ay, and for that thou diest.

DESDEMONA

That death's unnatural that kills for loving.

30 by i.e. aside

31–2 If he killed her *unprepared spirit* he would  
 'kill' her soul by sending it to hell (cf. *Ham*  
 3.3.73–95). Cf. Matthew 10.28, 'fear ye not  
 them which kill the body, but are not able to  
 kill the soul . . . fear him which is able to  
 destroy both body and soul in hell'.

32 **heaven forfend** Cf. 182. Already a set  
 phrase (as in *IH6* 5.4.65); *forfend* = forbid.

33–4 **Then . . . me!** Cf. 'Lord have mercy upon  
 us!', a frequent response in the *Book of*  
*Common Prayer*. Cf. 57.

34 **Amen** a liturgical response, as at 57

36 **Hum!** probably our 'hmm!', a threatening  
 sound

38 **Why . . . not** Cf. Ovid, *Heroides*, 1.71  
 'quid timeam, ignoro' (what – or how, why  
 – I am to fear I know not).

40 **They . . . you** 'An allusion to the sin of  
 loving a human being more than God'  
 (Sanders). Yet she does not say she loves  
 him more than God. Did Shakespeare write  
*bore*, misread *bere*? Then Othello would  
 mean 'you die because you have stopped  
 loving me'.

42 **That death's** i.e. that killing is

32 heaven] *Q*: Heuens *F* 33–4 Then . . . me] as *Cam*<sup>3</sup>; one line *QF* 35 so] *Q*: not in *F* 36 Hum] *Q*:  
*F* (Humh) 37 you're] *F*; you are *Q* 38] as *Q*; *F* lines so. / not, / 41 Ay] *F* (I); not in *Q*

Alas, why gnaw you so your nether lip?  
 Some bloody passion shakes your very frame,  
 These are portents: but yet I hope, I hope 45  
 They do not point on me.

OTHELLO Peace, and be still.

DESDEMONA

I will. So: what's the matter?

OTHELLO That handkerchief

Which I so loved and gave thee, thou gavest  
 To Cassio.

DESDEMONA No, by my life and soul:

Send for the man and ask him.

OTHELLO Sweet soul, take heed, 50

Take heed of perjury. Thou art on thy death-bed.

DESDEMONA

I? – but not yet to die!

OTHELLO Yes, presently.

Therefore confess thee freely of thy sin,

For to deny each article with oath

Cannot remove nor choke the strong conception 55

43 Cf. *R3* 4.2.27, 'The King is angry, see, he gnaws his lip.' Burbage played both Richard and Othello.

44 **bloody** portending bloodshed  
**frame** body

45 **portents** omens

46 **They . . . me** i.e. they are not portents for me.

**Peace . . . still** Cf. Mark 4.39, 'he arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, and be still'.

47 **\*I will. So:** 'I will so' (as in most editions) is odd. 'Be still' implies that she is agitated: she becomes still ('I will'), then adds 'So' = So, I have done as you asked. Cf. 5.1.82, 'Lend me a garter. So.'

48 strong accusing stress on *thou*

50 **Sweet soul** usually an expression of

tenderness (*MV* 5.1.49, *H5* 4.6.17)

51 **Thou art** scan 'Thou'rt'

52 **\*I?** could be 'Ay,' but a strange reply either way; *but not yet to die* is a cry, an appeal, not a statement

**presently** immediately

53 confess your sin unreservedly, without holding anything back. He seems to mean 'confess to heaven *and to me*'.

54 **article** item (in the accusation)

55 **choke** smother, silence

**strong** grievous; irresistible (*OED* 11, 16)  
**conception** notion. But could = embryo, offspring: this submerged image makes Othello the mother who *groans* and wants to *remove* an unwanted child (the notion of her adultery). For similar images, cf. 1.3.402–3, 2.1.127–8.

45 ?I hope] *F*; not in *Q* 47 will. So:] *this edn*; will, so, *Q*; will so: *F* 47–52] *Q* lines gauge thee, / Cassio. / soule, / him. / periury, / death-bed. / die. / presently: /; *F* lines Handkerchiefe / Cassio. / man, / him. / Periury, / 48 gavest] *Q*; gau'st *F* 52 I? – but] *this edn*; I, but *QF* die!] *this edn*; die. *QF* Yes] *Q*; not in *F* 55 conception] *F*; conceit *Q*

That I do groan withal. Thou art to die.

DESDEMONA

Then Lord have mercy on me.

OTHELLO

I say amen.

DESDEMONA

And have you mercy too. I never did  
Offend you in my life, never loved Cassio  
But with such general warranty of heaven 60  
As I might love: I never gave him token.

OTHELLO

By heaven, I saw my handkerchief in's hand!  
O perjured woman, thou dost stone my heart  
And makest me call what I intend to do  
A murder, which I thought a sacrifice! 65  
I saw the handkerchief.

DESDEMONA

He found it then,  
I never gave it him. Send for him hither,  
Let him confess the truth.

OTHELLO

He hath confessed.

DESDEMONA

What, my lord?

OTHELLO

That he hath – ud's death! – used thee.

57 Cf. 33–4n., and Psalms 6.2, 9.13, 27.7.

59 **Offend** wrong, sin against

60 **warranty** authorization

61 **might** am allowed to

**token** i.e. love token

63 **stone** turn to stone, make hard like stone (*OED* 2, first here). Repeating 4.1.179–80.

**my** Johnson defended *Q* *thy*: thou dost harden thy heart, leaving this life 'in the state of the *murdered* without preparation for death, when *I intended* that thy punishment should have been *a sacrifice* atoning for thy crime'.

65 Cf. *JC* 2.1.166.

68 **confess** declare, testify to

**\*the truth** a 'common error' (*Texts*, 95)?

That is, *F* followed *Q*. At 126 *Q* again misprints *a* (for *the*) *truth*.

69 **That . . . thee** As *F* normally softens or omits profanity, and *Q* has lost something leading up to 'How, vnlawfully?', I retain both *Q* *vds death* and *F* *vs'd thee*, even though *vds* and *vsd* consist of the same three letters (which suggests transposition in *Q* or *F*). To retain *Q* profanity and eke out obvious *Q* omissions from *F* is normal procedure, and here yields regular metre.

**used** had sexual intercourse with (*OED* 10b). Cf. 3.3.277; *Tim* 4.3.84, 'Be a whore still. They love thee not that use thee', *Son* 20.14.

57 Then Lord] *Q*; O Heauen *F* 58–9] as *F*; *Q* lines too: / Cassio, / 62 in's] *F*; in his *Q* 63 my] *F*; thy *Q* 64 makest] *Q*; makes *F* 65ff. murder] *Q*; Murther *F* throughout scene 68 Let] *F*; And let *Q* the] *thi* *edn*; a *QF* 69 hath] *F*; has *Q* ud's death! – used thee] *Alexander*; *vds* death. *Q*; *vs'd* thee. *F*

DESDEMONA

How? unlawfully?

OTHELLO

Ay.

DESDEMONA

He will not say so.

70

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.

75

OTHELLO

Out, strumpet, weep'st thou for him to my face?

DESDEMONA

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 –

80

70 **He will not** i.e. surely he will not.71 **mouth is stopped** Cf. 2.3.300.72 **ta'en order** taken measures  
**interprets** i.e. guesses the worst73 **Had . . . lives** Cf. Dent, H30, 'As many as there are hairs on the head'; Psalms 40.15, 'my sins . . . are more in number than the hairs of my head'.74 **had stomach** would have had appetite (to consume them all). Cf. 3.3.462–3.75 **betrayed** treacherously destroyed by hisenemies; Othello thinks 'revealed (as her lover)' (*OED* 6)76 **Out** exclamation of abhorrence or reproach  
**weep'st . . . him** He misinterprets again.77 **banish** send or drive away78 **Down** The stage image (a man forcing a woman down on a bed) is suggestive. Note that his three speeches in Q make up a pentameter: 'Downe strumpet. – Nay, an you strue. – It is too late.'80 **strive** struggle, resist71–2] *this edn*; QF *lines* stop'd, / for't. / 72–4] *this edn*; Q *lines* dead? / liues, / all. /; F *lines* dead? / Reuenge / all. / 72 O . . . interprets] F; My feare interprets then Q 74 them] F; 'em Q 76 Out] F; O Q weep'st] F; weepst Q 80 if] F; an Q

DESDEMONA

But half an hour!

OTHELLO

Being done, there is no pause –

DESDEMONA

But while I say one prayer!

OTHELLO

It is too late.

DESDEMONA

O Lord! Lord! Lord! [*He*] *smothers her*.

EMILIA (*within*)

My lord, my lord! what ho, my lord, my lord!

OTHELLO

What noise is this? Not dead? not yet quite dead? 85

I that am cruel am yet merciful,

I would not have thee linger in thy pain.

So, so.

EMILIA (*within*) What ho! my lord! my lord!

OTHELLO

Who's there?

EMILIA [*within*]

O good my lord, I'd speak a word with you.

OTHELLO

Yes. 'Tis Emilia. – [*to Emilia.*] By and by. – She's  
dead. 90

81 But only

**Being** . . . **pause** perhaps = (while it is) being done, there must be (room for) no pause (stopping or hesitation)

82 But . . . **prayer** a common request: cf. Marlowe, *Massacre*, 301, 'O let me pray before I dye'. Othello's disregard of it reflects on his Christianity. I assume that she cries 'O Lord . . . ' before he begins to smother her: it is more a prayer than a shriek.

83 O . . . <sup>3</sup>Lord! Granville-Barker defended Q's line, omitted by some editors. 'Imagine it: Desdemona's agonised cry to God, and as the sharp sound of it is slowly stifled,

Emilia's voice at the door rising through it, using the same words in another sense. A macabre duet' (*Othello* [1945], p. 122). SD See LN.

85 In some productions Emilia knocks on the door, with an effect like that of the 'knocking at the gate in *Macbeth*' (see De Quincey's famous essay).

88 **So, so** Cf. 4.1.123. Some actors and critics think Othello now stabs Desdemona (see M. Ware, in *ES*, 45 [1964], 177–80; Furness, 302ff.; Hankey, 319): I think it unlikely.

90 **By and by** soon. Common in Shakespeare and the Bible.

81 OTHELLO Being . . . pause] *F*; not in *Q* 82 It is] *F*; 'Tis *Q* 83 O . . . <sup>3</sup>Lord] *Q*; not in *F* SD] *he stifles her. Q*; *Smothers her. F* (*QF* place SD after too late 82) 84 SD] *Emilia calls within. Q*; *Aemilia at the doore. F* 84] as *Q*; *F* lines *hoa?* / Lord. / 85 noise] *F*; *voyce Q* 86 that am] *Q. Fc*; am that *Fu* 88 SD] *F*; not in *Q* 89 SD] *Malone*; not in *QF* I'd] *Q*; I would *F* 90] *this edn*; Yes, tis *Emilia*, by and by: shee's dead: *Q*; Yes: 'Tis *Aemilia*: by and by. Shee's dead. *F*



'Tis like she comes to speak of Cassio's death,  
 The noise was high. Ha, no more moving?  
 Still as the grave. Shall she come in? were't good?  
 I think she stirs again. No – what's best to do?  
 If she come in, she'll sure speak to my wife. 95  
 My wife, my wife! what wife? I have no wife.  
 O insupportable, O heavy hour!  
 Methinks it should be now a huge eclipse  
 Of sun and moon, and that th'affrighted globe  
 Should yawn at alteration.

EMILIA [*within*] I do beseech you 100  
 That I may speak with you! O good my lord!

OTHELLO

I had forgot thee: O come in, Emilia.  
 Soft, by and by. Let me the curtains draw.  
 Where art thou? What's the matter with thee now?  
 [*He unlocks the door.*]

*Enter* EMILIA.

EMILIA

O my good lord, yonder's foul murders done! 105

- 91 **like** likely  
 92 **high** loud. The brawl outside was audible indoors (which explains the arrival of Lodovico and Gratiano in 5.1).  
 93 **Still . . . grave** Dent, D133.1, 'As dumb (silent, still) as death (the grave)'.  
 93, 95 **she** Emilia  
 94 **she** Desdemona  
 95 **my wife** Cf. 2.3.378n., 4.2.104.  
 97 **insupportable** unendurable. Could be an exclamation on its own (= O insupportable loss!) or an adjective qualifying *hour*. Cf. 1.3.259n. and JC 4.3.151, 'O insupportable and touching loss!'  
**heavy** sorrowful  
 98–100 See LN.  
 99 **globe** earth  
 100 **yawn** gape (i.e. chasms should open in response to the changed appearance of sun and moon). Hart quoted Pliny, 2.80, 'Of the Gaping Chinks of the Earth': 'They [earthquakes] fortune also to be when the Sun and Moon are eclipsed.'  
**alteration** this change (brought about by Desdemona's death). A limp last word: could it be an error?  
 103 **curtains** bed curtains  
 104 **What's . . . now?** What do you want now?

92 high] *F*; here *Q* moving?] *F*; mouing, *Q* 94 best to do?] *F*; the best *Q* 96 what . . . have] *F*; my wife; I ha *Q* 97 insupportable.] *this edn*; insupportable: *Q*; insupportable! *F* 99 th'] *F*; the *Q* 100] Should *Q*; Did *F* SD] *not in QF* 101 That] *F*; *not in Q* O] *F*; *not in Q* 104.1] as *Theobald*; *not in QF* 104.2] as *F*; *opp.* 103 *Q*

OTHELLO

## What? now?

EMILIA

But now, my lord.

OTHELLO

It is the very error of the moon,  
She comes more nearer earth than she was wont  
And makes men mad.

EMILIA                        Cassio, my lord, hath killed          110  
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!      115

EMILIA

O lord, what cry is that?

OTHELLO

That? what?

106 **What? now?** I prefer F to Q: it better conveys his sense of shock.

107 **But now** just now, only this moment (*OED*  
but 6b)

108 **very** *either* 'solely' (adverb), *or* 'indeed' (intensive) (Elliott, 104)

**error** mistake; wandering off course (Lat. *erro*, I wander)

109 **She** *Luna*, the moon, is feminine in Latin.  
Cf. 17n.

**more nearer** double comparative,  
common in Shakespeare

**110 makes men mad** The word lunacy shows how long and firmly men have believed in a connection between the moon and madness (Ridley).

111 **Venetian** (four syllables)

113 **Not . . . killed?** more disorientated than  
'Cassio not killed!'

114–15 and . . . **harsh** and (the sweet music of)  
revenge grows harsh

115 **falsely** wrongly, mistakenly. She seems to reply to 114. See also 325–6n., and *Warning for Fair Women* (1599), Fla, ‘What sound was that? it was not he that spake’ (a ‘dead’ person speaks).

**murdered** disyllabic, which gives a nine-syllable line. The verse can be divided differently but, however we rearrange it, always breaks down. The broken lines highlight the speakers' tension.

116 **cry** utterance (not necessarily loud).  
Desdemona is concealed behind the bed  
curtains.

106 What? now?] *F*; What, now? *Q* 109 nearer] *F*; neere the *Q* 110 hath] *F*; has *Q* 113–15] *this edn*;  
*OF lines tune. / harsh. / murdered. /* 116 O lord] *O*; Alas *F*

EMILIA

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

[*She draws the bed-curtains.*]

Help, help, ho, help! O lady, speak again,

Sweet Desdemona, O sweet mistress, speak! 120

DESDEMONA

A guiltless death I die.

EMILIA

O, who hath done

This deed?

DESDEMONA Nobody. I myself. Farewell.

Commend me to my kind lord – O, farewell! *She dies.*

OTHELLO

Why, how should she be murdered?

EMILIA

Alas, who knows?

OTHELLO

You heard her say herself it was not I. 125

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 blacker devil!

OTHELLO

She turned to folly, and she was a whore. 130

EMILIA

Thou dost belie her, and thou art a devil.

118 **Out and alas** Cf. 76n. Usually 'out alas' (*Tit* 2.3.258, *MW* 4.5.63, *WT* 4.4.110); 'Out and' may be for emphasis.

121–2 Dividing as here, 'done / This deed', is unusual, but gives two consecutive pentameters instead of short lines. A slight pause after *done* mirrors Emilia's consternation. See *Texts*, 108.

124 **how** . . . **be** how should she come to be

127–8 Perhaps he thinks also of 58ff., though primarily of 122–3.

130 **folly** wickedness; unchastity (*OED* 2, 3). Cf. Deuteronomy 22.21, 'She hath wrought folly in Israel, to play the whore in her father's house.'

131 **Thou** Cf. *you* 129. Her indignation carries her away. *Belie* = slander.

118 that was] *F*; it is *Q* SD] *Cam*<sup>2</sup> *subst.*; not in *QF* 121 hath] *F*; has *Q* 121–2 O . . . deed?] as *Capell*; one line *QF* 123 SD] *Q*; not in *F* 125 heard] *Q*; heare *F* 126 the truth] *F*; a truth *Q* 127 burning] *QF*; burne in *Q3* 128–9 O . . . devil] as *Q*; prose *F*

OTHELLO

She was false as water.

EMILIA

Thou art rash as fire to say  
That she was false. O, she was heavenly true!

OTHELLO

Cassio did top her: ask thy husband else.  
O, I were damned beneath all depth in hell 135  
But that I did proceed upon just grounds  
To this extremity. Thy husband knew it all.

EMILIA

My husband?

OTHELLO

Thy husband.

EMILIA

That she was false?  
To wedlock?

OTHELLO

Ay, with Cassio. Had she been true,  
If heaven would make me such another world 140  
Of one entire and perfect chrysolite,  
I'd not have sold her for it.

EMILIA

My husband?

132 **false as water** Cf. Dent, W86.1, 'As unstable (false) as water' (from Genesis 49.4).

**rash as fire** Cf. Dent, F246.1, 'As hasty as fire'. Scan 'wat'r / Thou'rt' (Abbott, 464, 465).

133 **heavenly true** Cf. Dent, G173, 'As false as God is true'. True = true to you; virtuous.

134 **top** Cf. 1.1.88n.

**else** i.e. if you don't believe me (*OED* 4c)

135 Cf. Psalms 86.13, 'thou hast delivered my soul from the nethermost hell'.

137 **extremity** utmost penalty; extreme rigour or measure (*OED* 3b, 6, 9)

138, 142, 145 **My husband?** 'Emilia's repeated astonishment at Iago's complicity is the argument in favour of her not having suspected him to be the "eternal villain" [of

4.2.132]' (Hart). Hart, however, interpreted QF '?' as '!' in all three lines. If we retain '?', she could speak quietly at first, adjusting to an explanation that she had already suspected (a different kind of surprise).

138–9 Cf. 121–2: an unusual line division again gives 'regular' metre (*Texts*, 120).

140 **such another** (*OED* 1c) another of the same sort (but made of chrysolite)

141 Cf. *Faerie Queene*, 1.7.33 (Arthur's shield), 'But *all of Diamond perfect* pure and cleene / It framed was, one massy *entire* mould.'

**entire** complete, perfect, pure  
**chrysolite** See LN.

142 **sold** exchanged. Cf. *2H6* 3.1.92, 'Or sell my title for a glorious grave'.

132–3 Thou . . . true] *as F; Q* lines fire, / true. / 132 art] *F; as Q* 134 top] *QF*; tup *Pope* 138–9 That . . . wedlock] *this edn; one line QF* 139 Had] *as F; nay, had Q*

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 145

This iterance, 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. 150

EMILIA

If he say so, may his pernicious soul  
 Rot half a grain a day! he lies to th' heart:  
 She was too fond of her most filthy bargain!

OTHELLO

Ha!

EMILIA

Do thy worst: 155  
 This deed of thine is no more worthy heaven  
 Than thou wast worthy her.

OTHELLO

Peace, you were best!

143 **on** of; *tell on* = play the informer (*OED* 16)144 **slime** suggests sexual slime: *filthy* (= obscene) *deeds* are sexual here (cf. 4.2.72ff., 4.3.63ff.)146 **iterance** repetition. Shakespeare's coinage; *Q* *iteration* was common.146 **woman** deliberately discourteous, as often in the Bible (John 2.4, 'Jesus sayth unto her, Woman, what have I to do with thee?')147 **made mocks with** usually *at* or *of*: 'made a mock(ery) of'150 **friend** Cf. 3.3.145, 5.1.32n.151 **pernicious** destructive; evil152 **grain** particle. A slow death is the worst: cf. 4.1.175, 'nine years a-killing'.**lies . . . heart** lies down to his very heart, i.e. he's an out-and-out liar. More emphatic than the proverbial 'To lie in one's throat' (Dent, T268).153 **filthy** a 'racist' jibe, provoked by his *filthy* 145156 **worthy** worthy of. She returns to 127ff., their dispute about the *angel* and *devil*.157 **you were best** it would be best for you

143 on her] *F*; not in *Q* 145–6 What . . . husband] *one line Q*; *F* lines Woman? / Husband. / 146 iterance, woman?] *F* *subst.*; iteration? woman, *Q* 147–50] *F*; not in *Q* 147] *F* lines Mistris, / loue: /; *one line Q2* 154 Ha!] *QF* (Ha?)

Thou hast not half that power to do me harm  
As I have to be hurt. O gull, O dolt,  
As ignorant as dirt! Thou hast done a deed 160  
[*He threatens her with his sword.*]  
– I care not 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!

What is the matter? How now, general?

O, are you come, Iago? you have done well 165  
That men must lay their murders on your neck.

## What is the matter?

Disprove this villain, if thou be'st a man;  
He says thou told'st him that his wife was false,  
I know thou didst not, thou'rt not such a villain. 170  
Speak, for my heart is full.

I told him what I thought, and told no more  
Than what he found himself was apt and true.

But did you ever tell him she was false?

158–9 **Thou . . . hurt** i.e. she can endure more than he can inflict (*harm* = hurt). Cf. *H8* 3.2.387ff., ‘able . . . To endure more miseries . . . Than my weak-hearted enemies dare offer’.

159 **gull** dupe  
**dolt** block-head, i.e. slow thinker

160 **dirt** resuming *filthy* (153), a jibe that went home. *OED* 1 glosses dirt as ‘ordure = excrement’, so this is another racist jibe at Othello’s colour.

161 **care not for** don’t fear  
**make thee known** expose you

164 **How now** could be a question or interjection (*OED* how 4: modern equivalent ‘What?’ or ‘What!’)

166 **on your neck** to your charge

173 **apt** likely

158 that] *F*; the *Q* 160 SD] *not in QF* 161 known] *F*; know *Q* 162 ho] *F* (hoa); O *Q* 163 hath] *F*;  
has *Q* 163.1] *F*; Enter Montano, Gratiano, Iago, and others. *Q* 166 murders] *F* (Murthers); murder  
*Q* 167 SP] as *F*; All *Q* 170 thou't] *F*; thou art *Q* 172] as *Q*; *F* lines thought, / more / 174] as *Q*; *F*  
lines him, / false?

IAGO

I did. 175

EMILIA

You told a lie, an odious, damned 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 your tongue.

EMILIA

I will not charm my tongue, I am bound to speak: 180  
 My mistress here lies murdered in her bed.

ALL

O heavens forfend!

EMILIA

And your reports have set the murder on.

OTHELLO

Nay, stare not, masters, it is true indeed.

GRATIANO

'Tis a strange truth. 185

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! 190

176 **odious, damned** *either* 'o-di-ous damn'd',  
*or* 'od-yus dam-nèd'

177 **Upon my soul** by the salvation of my soul  
 (more deeply felt than the later 'pon my  
 soul')

**wicked** evil, depraved, malicious (a richer  
 word than today)

179 **charm** control. Cf. *TS* 4.2.58, *2H6* 4.1.64.

180 **bound** duty-bound; compelled, obliged  
 (*OED* 7)

183 **set . . . on** incited

184 **masters** Cf. 2.3.116n.

185 **a strange truth** Cf. *MND* 5.1.2, *MM* 5.1.44.

187 **Villainy** a richer word than now, ranging  
 from boorishness to discourtesy to extreme  
 wickedness (*OED* 1, 6)

188 **think upon** remember, call to mind  
 (*OED* 5c).

**smell** suspect, detect

178] as *Q*; *F* lines *Cassio?* / *Cassio?* / 179] as *Q*; *F* lines *Mistris?* / tongue. / 180] as *Q*; *F* lines *Tongue;*  
*/ speake, /* 181–90] *F*; *not in Q* 181 murdered] *F* (murthered) 182 heavens] *F* (Heauens,) 184] *Q2*;  
*F* lines *Masters, / indeede. /* 188 think I smell't, O] *this edn*; *thinke: I smel't: O F*

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. 194

OTHELLO

O! O! O!

*Othello falls on the bed.*

EMILIA

Nay, lay thee down and roar

For thou hast killed the sweetest innocent

That e'er did lift up eye.

OTHELLO

O, she was foul.

I scarce did know you, uncle: there lies your niece

Whose breath, indeed, these hands have newly  
stopped; 200

I know this act shows horrible and grim.

GRATIANO

Poor Desdemon, I am glad thy father's dead;

Thy match was mortal to him, and pure grief

Shore his old thread in twain. Did he live now

This sight would make him do a desperate turn, 205

193 Cf. Ephesians 5.24, 'as the Church is subject unto Christ, likewise the wives to their own husbands in all things'.

195 a prolonged *roar*, not three separate sounds. Cf. 5.1.62n. A 'Herculean' feature: 'so did he with his roarings smite the stars' (Seneca, *Hercules Oetaeus*, 801ff.).

196 *Nay* used as an introductory word, without any negation (*OED* 1d); almost = yes

198 *lift up eye* Cf. Luke 6.20 and Psalms 121.1, 'I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills'; perhaps implying that she usually kept her eyes modestly down.

199 *uncle* i.e. Desdemona's uncle, presumably

Brabantio's brother: cf. 1.1.173.

200 *these hands* He speaks as if his hands, not he, killed Desdemona. Cf. Macbeth's 'detached' hands, 2.2.56, 'What hands are here? Hah! they pluck out mine eyes.'

201 *shows* appears  
*grim* merciless, cruel

203 *mortal* fatal  
*pure* (intensive: *OED* 3b) utter

204 *Shore* sheared. Cf. *MND* 5.1.340, 'you have shore / With shears his thread'.

*thread* i.e. thread of life, 'which it was the prerogative of the Fate Atropos to sever with her shears' (Ridley)

205 *turn* act

191] as *Q*; *F* lines mad? / home. / 195 SD] *Q*; not in *F* 201 horrible] *F*; terrible *Q* 202] as *Q*; *F* lines Desdemon: / dead, / Desdemon] *F*; Desdemona *Q* 204 in twain] *F*; atwane *Q*



Yea, curse his better angel from his side  
And fall to reprobance.

OTHELLO

'Tis pitiful; but yet Iago knows  
That she with Cassio hath the act of shame  
A thousand times committed. Cassio confessed it, 210  
And she did gratify his amorous works  
With that recognizance and pledge of love  
Which I first gave her: I saw it in his hand,  
It was a handkerchief, an antique token  
My father gave my mother. 215

EMILIA

O God, O heavenly God!

IAGO

Zounds, hold your peace!

EMILIA

'Twill out, 'twill out! I peace?  
No, I will speak as liberal as the north.  
Let heaven and men and devils, let them all,  
All, all cry shame against me, yet I'll speak. 220

206 **better angel** Cf. the Good and Bad Angel in Marlowe, *Doctor Faustus*, and *Son* 144, 'Tempteth my better angel from my side'.

207 **reprobance** a coinage: the state of being a reprobate, a sinner rejected by God. With QF *reprobation-Reprobance*, cf. QF *iteration-itterance* (146) and *Texts*, 86.

208 **pitiful** Cf. 4.1.192-3.

209 **act of shame** Cf. 2.1.225, 'the act of sport'.

211 **gratify** reward

**works** acts, deeds (*OED* 1), i.e. caresses

212 **recognizance** token

214 **antique** olden, belonging to former times; or, old-fashioned (*OED* 3, first in 1647). Perhaps stressed on first syllable.

215 This contradicts 3.4.57ff. Some think that he wanted to frighten Desdemona in 3.4, but the contradiction may be an oversight.

217-18 These lines may be revised in F: see *Texts*, 18.

217 **'Twill out** i.e. the facts will come out. But is there a hint that Emilia has bottled up a guilty secret, which now bursts forth? Cf. *Look About You* (1600), D4a, 'Twill out, twill out, my selfe my selfe can ease'.

218 **'as . . . north** as freely as the north wind speaks (or blows), Cf. 2.1.5, 'the wind hath spoke aloud', *TC* 1.3.253, 'Speak frankly as the wind'.

220 **shame** because she defies her husband?

202 reprobance] F; reprobation Q 212 that] F; the Q 216 'God] Q; Heauen F 'God] Q; Powres F Zounds] Q; Come F 217-18] F; 'Twill out, 'twill: I hold my peace sir, no, / I'll be in speaking, liberall as the ayre, Q 219 them] F; em Q

IAGO

Be wise, and get you home.

EMILIA

I will not. [*Iago tries to stab Emilia.*]

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 225  
 – More than indeed belonged to such a trifle –  
 He begged of me to steal't.

IAGO

Villainous whore!

EMILIA

She give it Cassio? No, alas, I found it  
 And I did give't my husband.

IAGO

Filth, thou liest!

EMILIA

By heaven I do not, I do not, gentlemen! 230  
 O murderous coxcomb, what should such a fool  
 Do with so good a wife?

[*Othello runs at Iago. Iago stabs his wife.*]

OTHELLO

Are there no stones in heaven

But what serves for the thunder? Precious villain!

GRATIANO

The woman falls, sure he hath killed his wife. 234

222 **Your sword upon** use your sword against223 **dull** obtuse, stupid224 **fortune** chance225 **solemn** imposing226 **belonged** was appropriate231 **coxcomb** (a cap worn by a professional fool, hence) fool, simpleton232 **Do** have to do (*OED* 40), i.e. what business has he to have so good a wife?SD **runs at** either 'rushes at', or 'runs his sword at, strikes at' (*OED* 5, 14, 48). Apart

from entrances and exits, this is the only centred SD in Q, and it is unusually specific. Note the sequence: Othello attacks, Iago dodges away and, doing so, stabs Emilia.

**stones** thunderbolts or 'thunder-stones' (*JC* 1.3.49), to punish offenders; cf. *Cym* 5.5.240. 'Has not heaven one supernumerary bolt, to hurl directly at . . . this atrocious villain? Must all . . . of its arsenal be reserved for . . . ordinary thunder?' (Malone).

233 **Precious** (intensive) egregious

222 SD] as Rowe [*Iago offers to stab his wife*]; not in QF 223] as Q; F lines Moore, / of / of] F; on Q 227 't] F; it Q 228 give] F; gaue Q 232 wife] F; woman Q SD] *The Moore runnes at Iago. Iago kils his wife.* Q; not in F 233] as Q; F lines Thunder? / Villaine. / Precious] QF; pernicious Q2 234] as Q; F lines falles: / Wife. / hath] F; has Q

EMILIA

Ay, ay; O lay me by my mistress' side.

*Exit Iago.*

GRATIANO

He's gone, but his wife's killed.

MONTANO

'Tis a notorious villain. Take you this weapon  
Which I have here recovered from the Moor;  
Come, guard the door without, let him not pass  
But kill him rather. I'll after that same villain, 240  
For 'tis a damned slave. *Exeunt Montano and Gratiano.*

OTHELLO

I am not valiant neither,  
But every puny whipster gets my sword.  
But why should honour outlive honesty?  
Let it go all.

EMILIA

What did thy song bode, lady?

Hark, canst thou hear me? I will play the swan 245  
And die in music. [*Sings.*] Willow, willow, willow.  
– Moor, she was chaste, she loved thee, cruel Moor,  
So come my soul to bliss as I speak true!

237 **notorious** obvious, evident (*OED* 3, first in 1608)

238 **recovered** obtained, got hold of (*OED* 6); not 'taken back from'

239 **without** from the outside

241 **damned** damnable, accursed. Probably 'damned', although 'damn'd' and 'I'm' would give a pentameter.

**neither** 'used to strengthen a preceding negative: = either' (*OED* 3). He seems to voice an unspoken train of thought: I am a 'dull Moor', I have failed to kill Iago, I am a failure – and 'I am not valiant either'. He is no longer the 'valiant Othello' of 1.3.48–9. A process of self-assessment has begun.

242 **whipster** an insignificant person; one who wields a whip. This is not to disparage

Montano: he means 'every whip can defeat my sword'.

**gets** = takes

**sword** The Moors in other plays carry a scimitar: not Othello.

243 **honour** esteem (from others), an honourable reputation

**honesty** integrity

244 **Let** . . . **all** more emphatic than 'Let it all go.' But *all* may be an adverb = entirely.

**bode** forebode; mean

245 **Hark** . . . **me** alluding to the belief that the souls of the dead linger near the body for a while

**swan** Cf. Dent, S1028, 'Like a swan, he sings before his death', *MV* 3.2.44, *KJ* 5.7.21.

235 SD] *Q*; not in *F* 237 you this] *F*; your *Q* 238 here] *Q*; not in *F* 241 SD] *Exit* Mont. and Gratiano. *Q*; *Exit. F* 244–6 What . . . <sup>3</sup>willow] *F*; not in *Q* 246 SD] as Dyce; not in *QF* Willow] *F* (*Willough*)

So speaking as I think, alas, I die.

*She dies.*

OTHELLO

I have another weapon in this chamber, 250

It is a sword of Spain, the ice-brook's temper;

O, here it is. Uncle, I must come forth.

GRATIANO [*within*]

If thou attempt it it will cost thee dear;

Thou hast no weapon, and perforce must suffer.

OTHELLO

Look in upon me then, and speak with me, 255

Or, naked 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

Upon a soldier's thigh. I have seen the day

That with this little arm and this good sword 260

I have made my way through more impediments

Than twenty times your stop: but, O vain boast,

Who can control his fate? 'Tis not so now.

Be not afraid, though you do see me weaponed:

Here is my journey's end, here is my butt 265

249 Cf. Dent, S725, 'To speak as one thinks'.

**alas** sometimes substituted for profanity in F (e.g. 2.3.154, 5.2.116) so Q *I die* may be corrupt. *I die, I die* sounds uncomfortably like *MND* 5.1.306, 'Now die, die, die, die, die'.

251 See LN.

252 **Uncle** Cf. 199n.

254 **suffer** i.e. be injured or killed

256 **naked** without weapon (or armour) (*OED* 4)

258 **sustain** maintain its position (*OED* 11e)

259 **I . . . day** Cf. Dent, D81.1, 'I have seen the

249 alas, I die] F; I die, I die Q SD] Q; not in F

Isebrookes Q 253 SD] Q (Gra. *within.*) opp. 252

QF 262 your] F; you Q 264–70] F; not in Q

day'; RJ 1.5.21, KL 5.3.277.

262 **your stop** the obstruction you offer

**vain** empty; vainglorious

263 **control** command, exercise control over

**fate** Cf. Dent, F83, 'It is impossible to avoid fate'. He blames fate, the stars, luck, etc. (270, 339) to minimize his own guilt.

264 **weaponed** armed. Cf. *wived, womaned* (2.1.60, 3.4.195).

265 **Here** Desdemona? Or, here in this place?

**butt** terminal point; that towards which his efforts are directed, end

251 is] Q; was F ice-brook's] F (Ice brookes);

255 with] F; to Q 256.1] as *Theobald*; not in

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?  
 Now: how dost thou look now? O ill-starred wench, 270  
 Pale as thy smock. When we shall meet at compt  
 This look of thine will hurl my soul from heaven  
 And fiends will snatch at it. Cold, cold, my girl,  
 Even like thy chastity. O cursed, cursed slave!  
 Whip me, ye devils, 275  
 From the possession of this heavenly sight!  
 Blow me about in winds, roast me in sulphur,  
 Wash me in steep-down gulfs of liquid fire!

266 **sea-mark** the boundary or limit of the flow of the sea; a conspicuous object which guides sailors in navigation

**utmost** farthest; last (*OED* 1, 3). Cf. *MM* 2.1.36, 'that's the utmost of his pilgrimage'.

267 **dismayed** appalled (stronger than today)  
**lost** groundless

268 **Man . . . against** use a mere rush as a weapon against. Cf. *KJ* 4.3.129–30, 'a rush will be a beam / To hang thee on'.

270 **ill-starred** ill-fated. A coinage, like 'star-crossed' (*RJ* Prol. 6). Perhaps alluding to Desdemona's name (= the unfortunate one, to which Cinthio drew attention: p. 395).  
**wench** Cf. 3.3.317n.

271 **Pale . . . smock** Cf. Dent, C446, 'As pale as a clout (= piece of cloth)'.

**compt** the Day of Judgement ([ac]compt = account); cf. *AW* 5.3.57, 'the great compt'. This was a popular subject with Renaissance painters, who depicted the damned being hurled from heaven and seized in mid-air by devils: also found in bibles, stained-glass windows, emblem books, etc.

273–4 **Cold . . . chastity** Cf. Dent, 11, 'As

chaste as ice (snow)'. Cf. 3.4.39, 'Hot, hot, and moist', 5.2.4.

274 **O . . . slave** He curses himself (or possibly Iago). Placed in the same line with *Even . . . chastity* in both Q and F (Q has only one *cursed*, = cursèd; F has two, = curs'd, curs'd). Some editors move the words down one line and print 'O cursèd, cursèd slave! Whip me, ye devils /'.

276 **possession** i.e. having, enjoying (he does not deserve to enjoy a 'heavenly sight': his rightful place is hell)

**heavenly** a word associated with 'the divine Desdemona': cf. 4.3.65, 5.2.133

277–8 See LN.

277 **roast . . . sulphur** Cf. 3.3.332n.

278 **steep-down** precipitous (unique in Shakespeare)

**gulfs** perhaps influenced by Luke 16.19ff.: the rich man, tormented by flames in hell, looks up and sees Lazarus in Abraham's bosom. Between them is a 'great gulf'.

**liquid fire** Cf. Revelation 19.20, 'cast quick into a pond of fire, burning with brimstone'.

271 compt] *F*; count *Q* 274 <sup>2</sup>cursèd] *F*; not in *Q* 275 ye] *F*; you *Q*

O Desdemon! dead, Desdemon. Dead! O, O!

*Enter* LODOVICO, MONTANO, *Officers with* IAGO, *prisoner, and*  
CASSIO *in a chair.*

LODOVICO

Where is this rash and most unfortunate man? 280

OTHELLO

That's he that was Othello? here I am.

LODOVICO

Where is that viper? bring the villain forth.

OTHELLO

I look down towards his feet, but that's a fable.

If that thou be'st a devil, I cannot kill thee.

[*Wounds Iago.*]

LODOVICO

Wrench his sword from him.

IAGO

I bleed, sir, but not killed. 285

OTHELLO

I am not sorry neither, I'd have thee live:

For in my sense 'tis happiness to die.

279 Like Lear's 'Never, never . . .' (5.3.309), this line can be spoken in many ways. F's punctuation is not likely to be Shakespeare's. O, O! probably a single prolonged moan or cry: cf. 195n.

281 **That's . . . Othello** Some editors take this as a statement. I prefer a question (*That's* = that's to say): 'You mean – he that was Othello?' He is on the verge of disowning himself. Cf. the *he-I* switch at 353–4, and, in a different context, *TN* 1.5.234, 'such a

one I was this present'.

283 **his** Iago's. Othello means the fable that the devil has a cloven foot (Tilley, D252).

285 **Wrench** Others hold Othello now; he probably surrenders his sword without a struggle.

**I . . . killed** sarcastic: 'I bleed (like a human being), but I'm not killed (therefore I may be a devil).

287 for one who feels as I do would think it happiness to die

279] *F*; O *Desdemona*, *Desdemoua*, dead, O, o, o. *Q* 279.1–2] *Enter* Lodouico, Montano, Iago, and *Officers*, Cassio *in a Chaire*. *Q*: *Enter* Lodouico, Cassio, Montano, and Iago, with *Officers*. *F*: . . . Cassio *led in wounded*, Montano, and Iago *Prisoner*, with *Officers*. *Rowe* 280 unfortunate] *F*; infortunate *Q* 281 Othello?] *this edn*; *Othello*, *Q*; *Othello*: *F* 282] as *Q*; *F* lines Viper? / forth. / that] *F*; this *Q* 284 If that] *F*; If *Q* SD] *Rowe*; not in *QF* 285 Wrench] *F*; Wring *Q* 286 live] *Qc*, *F*; loue *Qu*.

LODOVICO

O thou Othello, that wert once so good,  
 Fallen in the practice of a cursed slave,  
 What shall be said to thee?

OTHELLO

Why, anything; 290

An honourable murderer, if you will,  
 For nought I did in hate, but all in honour.

LODOVICO

This wretch hath part confessed his villainy.  
 Did you and he consent in Cassio's death?

OTHELLO

Ay. 295

CASSIO

Dear general, I never gave you cause.

OTHELLO

I do believe it, and I ask your pardon.  
 Will you, I pray, demand that demi-devil  
 Why he hath thus ensnared my soul and body?

IAGO

Demand me nothing. What you know, you know. 300

288 **O thou Othello** a curious form of address, but common in this play, usually spoken to or by Othello: 'O thou foul thief', 'O thou weed', 'O thou public commoner', 'O thou dull Moor', 'O thou pernicious caitiff' (1.2.62; 4.2.68, 74; 5.2.223, 316). Less respectful than *you*.

289 **in the practice** through the treachery or intrigue  
**cursed** cursèd

290 **What . . . thee?** What can we possibly say to you?

**anything** anything you like; or perhaps a question, 'why (say) anything?'

292 **in honour** with honourable intent. Is he deceiving himself?

293 **part** partly

294 **consent in** agree in planning

296 **Dear general** Othello can inspire strong affection, not only in Desdemona.

**I . . . cause** Cf. 3.4.158.

297 Cf. Hamlet's similar apology to Laertes, shortly before his death, 'Give me your pardon, sir. I have done you wrong' (5.2.226).

298 **demi-devil** apparently Shakespeare's coinage. Othello accepts that Iago bleeds, therefore is not a proper devil: cf. 284–5.

299 **and body** He foresees his own damnation. Cf. *Homilies*, 82, 'damnation both of body and soul', and 357; Matthew 10.28, quoted 31–2n.

288 wert] *Q*: was *F* 289 cursed] *F*: damned *Q* 290 shall] *F*: should *Q* 292 I did] *F*: did I *Q* 296 never gave] *F*: did neuer giue *Q* 297 your] *F*: you *Q* 298 I pray] *F*: pray *Q*

From this time forth I never will speak word.

LODOVICO

What, not to pray?

GRATIANO

Torments will ope your lips.

OTHELLO

Well, thou dost best.

LODOVICO

Sir, you shall understand what hath befallen,  
Which, as I think, you know not. Here is a letter 305  
Found in the pocket of the slain Roderigo,  
And here another: the one of them imports  
The death of Cassio, to be undertook  
By Roderigo.

OTHELLO

O villain!

CASSIO Most heathenish and most gross! 310

LODOVICO

Now here's another discontented paper  
Found in his pocket too, and this, it seems,  
Roderigo meant t'have sent this damned villain  
But that, belike, Iago in the nick  
Came in, and satisfied him. 315

301 For his refusal to explain, cf. Hieronimo in *The Spanish Tragedy*, 'Sufficeth I may not, nor I will not tell thee' (Revels, 4.4.182); 'I'll speak no more but "Vengeance rot you all!"' (*Tit* 5.1.58). How does Iago bear himself from now on? Some actors make him 'switch off', as if he has lost interest; others make him gloat in triumph.

302 **Torments** tortures

303 Does he mean 'Thou dost best not to tell us'?  
304ff. Such summaries of the action are common in plays of the period: cf. *Tit* (as in 301n.) and Friar Lawrence in *RJ* 5.3.229ff. Here Shakespeare focuses less on events than on reactions to events.

304 **befallen** happened

305 **a letter** Letters that conveniently help the plot are a convention of comedy: *TGV* 4.4.121ff., *LLL* 4.3.191ff., *TN* 5.1.330ff.

310 **gross** monstrous; obvious. Cf. J. Chamber, *A Treatise* (1601), Cla, 'so grosse and heathenish a superstition'.

311 **discontented** i.e. filled with grievances

313 **damned** damnèd

314 **belike** probably

**in the nick** at that point. Colloquial and 'low', hence 'sophisticated' in F (where *interim* gives a long line) or revised by Shakespeare. Cf. Dent, N160, 'In the nick (nick of time)'.

315 i.e. arrived and gave a satisfactory explanation

304 Sir,] as *Q*: *F* lines Sir, / befallne, / 308–9] as *F*: one line *Q* 313 t'] *F*; to *Q* 314 nick] *Q*: interim *F*



OTHELLO

O thou pernicious caitiff!  
 How came you, Cassio, by that handkerchief  
 That was my wife's?

CASSIO

I found it in my chamber,

And he himself confessed but even now  
 That there he dropped it for a special purpose 320  
 Which wrought to his desire.

OTHELLO

O fool, fool, fool!

CASSIO

There is besides in Roderigo's letter  
 How he upbraids Iago, that he made him  
 Brave me upon the watch, whereon it came  
 That I was cast; and even but now he spake, 325  
 After long seeming dead, Iago hurt him,  
 Iago set him on.

LODOVICO [to Othello]

You must forsake this room and go with us.  
 Your power and your command is taken off  
 And Cassio rules in Cyprus. For this slave, 330  
 If there be any cunning cruelty  
 That can torment him much and hold him long,

316 **caitiff** scoundrel, villain

317 In some productions (Hankey, 239, 333)  
 the handkerchief now bandages Cassio's  
 leg (a good idea, or too obvious?). If no  
 handkerchief is visible, we may prefer Q  
 'a' to F 'that', since Cassio was not present  
 when Emilia explained its significance  
 (223ff.). But the audience knows its  
 significance, which may be enough.

319 **\*but** Q it was 'caught by the compositor's  
 eye' from 318 or 320 (so Malone). This is a  
 QF 'common error' (*Texts*, 90), if Malone  
 is right.

320 **special purpose** Cf. 4.2.241–3n.

321 i.e. which had the effect he wanted

O . . . **fool** He sees only the least of his

errors: contrast Roderigo, 'O, villain that I  
 am!' (Heilman, 164–5). This cry is almost a  
 reply to his own 'O, blood, blood, blood!'  
 (3.3.454).

324 **Brave** defy

**whereon it came** whereupon (or, for which  
 cause) it happened

325 **cast** dismissed325–6 **and . . . dead** Cf. Desdemona (115–23).328 **forsake** leave; i.e. he is under arrest

**room** could = employment, appointment  
 (*OED* 12; Hulme, 273)

329 **taken off** withdrawn330 **For** as for

332 **hold him long** keep him alive a long time  
 before he dies

316 thou] *F*; the *Q* 317 that] *F*; a *Q* 319 but even] *Capell*; it euen *Q*; it but euen *F*

It shall be his. You shall close prisoner rest  
 Till that the nature of your fault be known  
 To the Venetian state. Come, bring him away. 335

OTHELLO

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, 340  
 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 Indian, threw a pearl away 345  
 Richer than all his tribe; of one whose subdued eyes,  
 Albeit unused to the melting mood,  
 Drops tears as fast as the Arabian trees

333 **You** (to Othello)

**close** confined, shut up  
**rest** remain

336 **Soft you** See L.N.

**word or two** Note the understatement:  
*some service, unlucky, not wisely, Perplexed*, etc. He tries to 'rewrite the past'.

338 **No . . . that** Cf. 3.3.337.

340 **Speak of** i.e. in writing (*OED* 11)

**extenuate** lessen, tone down. The sense  
 'extenuate the guilt of' first recorded 1741:  
*OED* 7b.

342 **Of** **one** Is this *one* a way of shifting  
 some of the blame? With repeated *of*,  
 cf. 1.3.135–40.

342 **loved not wisely** So Ovid, *Heroides*, 2.27,  
 'non sapienter amavi' (I loved not wisely).

343 **wrought** agitated (hence 'over-wrought'),  
 worked upon

344 **Perplexed** 'not so much "puzzled" as  
 "distracted"' (Ridley). *We* know that the  
 stronger 'distracted' is applicable, but *he* may  
 mean bewildered by misleading evidence.

345 **base** lowly (with 'Indian'); depraved,  
 despicable (if we read 'Judean')

**Indian** See L.N.

346 **Richer** of more worth

**tribe** could be the tribes of Israel or an  
 Indian tribe

**subdued** overcome

347 **unused** (unused, if *Albeit* is disyllabic).  
 Not strictly true: cf. his weeping elsewhere.

348–9 **Arabian** . . . **gum** Pliny (see p. 15)  
 wrote at length about trees and gums (bks  
 12, 13). J. O. Holmer thinks *Arabian trees*  
 = not balsam but myrrh trees, since they  
 alone correspond fully to Shakespeare's  
 specifications (Arabian, medicinal uses,  
 profuse 'weeping'): *SSr*, 13 (1980), 145ff.

335 him] *Q*; not in *F* 336 before you go] *F*; not in *Q* 340 me as I am] *F*; them as they are *Q* 341] *as*  
*Q*; *F* lines malice. / speake, / 345 Indian] *Q*, *F*2; Judean *F* 348 Drops] *QF*; Drop *Q*2

Their medicinable gum. Set you down this,  
 And say besides that in Aleppo once, 350  
 Where a malignant and a turbanned Turk  
 Beat a Venetian and traduced the state,  
 I took by th' throat the circumcised dog  
 And smote him – thus! *He stabs himself.*

LODOVICO

O bloody period!

GRATIANO All that's spoke is marred. 355

OTHELLO

I kissed thee ere I killed thee: no way but this,  
 Killing myself, to die upon a kiss.  
*[Kisses Desdemona, and] dies.*

CASSIO

This did I fear, but thought he had no weapon,  
 For he was great of heart.

LODOVICO *[to Iago]* O Spartan dog,

349 **medicinable** medicinal

**Set** . . . **this** He asks for a written report; Lodovico speaks of an oral report (368–9).

350 **Aleppo** Not mentioned before, Aleppo reminds us that much of Othello's past remains a closed book. It was an important staging post for trade between Europe and the East: an English factor lived there (as in Venice).

351 **turbanned** A turban was a symbol of Islam.

352 **traduced** *Malignant* and *traduced* refer obliquely to Iago, who slandered Venetian women. But Othello, stabbing himself, also identifies himself with the Turk: see pp. 32–6.

353 **took** . . . **throat** Cf. 3.3.362n., 5.2.200n. **circumcised** See LN.

354 SD This was one of Salvini's most sensational moments as Othello: see pp. 72–4. N.B. Should Othello's fall here remind us of his fit (4.1.43)?

355 **period** conclusion; appointed end of a journey (cf. 265–6). In some productions the curtain came down after *period* (Hankey, 339).

356 I . . . **thee** If *Judean* is right and not *Indian* (see 345 LN), this line refers to the kiss and suicide of Judas (Matthew 26.49, 27.5).

**ere** before

**no** . . . **this** Cf. Dent, W148, 'There is no way but one (i.e., death).'

357 **to** . . . **kiss** For the conventional 'last kiss', cf. also *RJ* 5.3.120, 'Thus with a kiss I die', *AC* 4.15.20.

358 SD Several Othellos 'died in attempting to reach the bed, or just after reaching it' (Sprague, 220–1, Hankey, 237–8), i.e. not 'upon a kiss'. But 'no way *but this*' seems to imply that he kisses her.

359 **great of heart** 'great-hearted' = high-spirited, proud (*OED*)

**Spartan dog** See LN.

349 *medicinable*] *F*; *medicinal* *Q* 351 *malignant* . . . Turk] *Malignant* and a *Turbanned Turk* *Q*; *malignant*, and a *Turbanned-Turke* *F* 354 SD] *Q*; *not in F* 355 *that's*] *Q*; *that is F* 357 SD] *He dies. Q*; *Dyes F* 359 *Spartan*] *F* (*Spartan*)

More fell than anguish, hunger, or the sea, 360  
 Look on the tragic loading of this bed:  
 This is thy work. The object poisons sight,  
 Let it be hid. Gratiano, keep the house  
 And seize upon the fortunes of the Moor  
 For they succeed to you. To you, lord governor, 365  
 Remains the censure of this hellish villain,  
 The time, the place, the torture: O, enforce it!  
 Myself will straight aboard, and to the state  
 This heavy act with heavy heart relate. *Exeunt.*

## FINIS.

360 **fell** savage, ruthless

**anguish** excruciating bodily or mental pain

361 This line suggests (cf. 358 SD n.) that both Desdemona and Othello lie on the bed.

362 **object** spectacle; the presentation of something to the eye. Cf. *Cor* 1.1.20, 'the object of our misery'.

363 **hid** i.e. by a sheet, or by pulling the bed curtains (thus concealing the actors' breathing)

**keep** guard

364 **seize upon** take possession of  
**fortunes** possessions

365 **they** . . . **you** pass to you by succession (as Desdemona's uncle: 199n.)

**to** *F on* is possible, but awkward after *upon*.

**lord governor** He reminds Cassio, who is mildly ineffective when sober, to take charge firmly as governor; hence, too, *enforce it*, 367.

366 **censure** formal judgement; correction

367 **torture** i.e. to make Iago confess his motives (cf. 301n.). Notice how insistently the end of this scene focuses on motives: 292, 296, 298–9, 301–2, 317, 320, 341ff.

368 **straight aboard** immediately go on board ship

369 **heavy** . . . **heavy** distressful . . . sorrowful  
**act** action, deed

361 loading] *F*; lodging *Q* 362] as *Q*; *F* lines worke: / Sight, / 365 to] *Q*; on *F* 369 SD] *F*; *Exeunt omnes. Q*

# LONGER NOTES

LIST OF ROLES 'The Names of the Actors' was printed in the Folio, at the end of the play, in two columns (*Texts*, 70). It is one of seven such lists in F and may have been compiled by Ralph Crane, who is thought to have transcribed other F plays which have similar lists (*Tem*, *TGV*, *MM*, *WT*: see *Texts*, 70–2). The embellishment below 'The Names of the Actors', consisting of brackets, colons and asterisks, resembles similar ones found in other Crane manuscripts, but I have not seen one that is exactly the same in Crane's work or elsewhere. Apart from changing the heading and printing the names in capitals, the Arden 3 list adopts the sequence and layout of the Folio, and therefore places female parts separately. All additions to F's list are in square brackets.

Dramatists would have found such lists useful when they wrote their plays, or even before they began to write (Honigmann, *Stability*, 44–6). Did Crane copy his list from Shakespeare's own papers? It is curious that his list for *MM* begins '*Vincentio: the Duke.*', for the text of *MM* never mentions the Duke's name. Shakespeare had a weakness for naming his characters even when names are not strictly necessary: the *MM* list could be authorial. So, too, the *Othello* list calls Montano '*Gouernour of Cyprus*', an authorial intention that we may deduce from the dialogue (see *Texts*, 71–2), though not one spelt out in F. In Q *Othello*, however, occurs the SD '*Enter Montanio, Gouernor of Cypres*' (2.1.0), and Crane might have taken these words from Q. It follows that we cannot tell whether Crane copied or tidied such lists from Shakespeare's papers or whether Crane alone was responsible for them. It should be noted, though, that Crane usually placed the play-world's ruler first whereas in *Othello* the Duke is placed sixth, and that the *Othello* list differs from Crane's lists in other ways.

In Cinthio Shakespeare found only one name, Disdemona. In the French translation of Cinthio (1583) this became Disdemone. While Shakespeare's 'Desdemona' and 'Desdemon' (3.1.55, 3.3.55, etc.) may indicate that he knew the Italian and French versions (see p. 375), feminine names ending in -a lose the -a at times in other plays (Helena in *AW*, Isabella in *MM*). It is just possible, in view of the not uncommon *e:i* confusion in *Othello* (*Texts*, 88–9), that Shakespeare actually wrote Disdemon(a) and that Desdemona was a misreading that stuck (compare Imogen–Innogen in *Cym*). The misreading 'Montanio' likewise stuck in Q, where F has 'Montano', and the misreading 'Rodorigo' stuck in F, instead of Q's

'Roderigo'. As F adopted many 'common errors' from Q (*ibid.*, 95–8), 'Desdemona' for 'Disdemona' could be one as well.

On a different tack, how should we pronounce 'Othello'? The medial -th- in *Hecatomithi* must be sounded as -t-; Ben Jonson's 'Thorello' (*Every Man In*) derives from Italian 'torello', a young bull; 'Othoman' was an alternative spelling for 'Ottoman': it seems possible that Shakespeare wrote 'Othello' and meant 'Otello'. He might have heard of the Jesuit, Girolamo Otello of Bassano (1519–81); according to T. Sipahigil ('Othello's name, once again', *N&Q*, 18 (1971), 147–8), 'Jesuit historians invariably speak of the notoriety of Girolamo Otello as an over-ardent spirit, quick to follow zealous impulses', i.e. he had something in common with Othello. But Otello was an out-of-the-way name; if Shakespeare knew it he might still want to change it, as also in the case of Disdemona.

Several of the play's names were probably invented or adapted by Shakespeare. (1) Othello: from Otello, or from Otho, Othoman or Thorello (see F. N. Lees, 'Othello's name', *N&Q*, 8 (1961), 139–41; R. F. Fleissner, 'The Moor's nomenclature', *N&Q*, 25 (1978), 143). (2) Desdemona: from Disdemona. (3) Brabantio: cf. Brabant Senior in *Jack Drum's Entertainment* (1601) and the Duke of Brabant in *The Weakest Goeth to the Wall* (1600). (4) Montano: the name reappears in Q1 *Hamlet* (1603): see p. 350. (5) Michael Cassio: the only person in *Othello* with two names. Compare Cassius in *JC*. The verb 'to cass' was 'a frequent form of our word "cashier"' (Hart).

Several of the names have curious associations. Both Iago and Roderigo are Spanish forms (and Iago's 'Diablo!', 2.3.157, unique in Shakespeare, is the Spanish form of this word). The most famous Spanish Iago was Sant'Iago (St James of Compostella), known as 'Matamoros' ('the Moor-killer') (see Bullough, 217; Everett, "'Spanish" Othello'). Iago's 'I know our country disposition well' (3.3.204) nevertheless appears to refer to Italy (where Spain was a dominant power in the later sixteenth century).

Disdemona, said Cinthio (see p. 395), was 'a name of unlucky augury' (it meant 'unfortunate'). Bianca (= Blanche, white, i.e. pure), a name previously used by Shakespeare in *TS* for a less than perfect young lady, was the Christian name of the notorious Bianca Capello (1548–87), a Venetian courtesan whose story Middleton dramatized in *Women Beware Women* and Webster perhaps glanced at when he created his 'white devil'.

Iago is usually trisyllabic ('I-a-go'). Cassio is more often disyllabic, but can be trisyllabic (1.1.19). See *Texts*, 104.

- 1.1.8 **his lieutenant** The military ranks of an ancient (i.e. ensign, or standard-bearer), a lieutenant and a general may confuse readers because ‘Elizabethan field-grade officers had also a different company rank’ (Paul A. Jorgensen, *Shakespeare’s Military World* (1956), 100–18: in this note I am indebted to Jorgensen’s helpful discussion). Cinthio’s ‘Cassio’ is a corporal, but Shakespeare made him a lieutenant, apparently lieutenant of a company: as such he would be superior to the ancient, though there would be ‘a troublesome overlapping of the two offices, and an occasion for friction’. A company-rank captain personally chose his company’s lieutenant, ensign and lower officers; Othello did so and, it seems, gave Cassio accelerated promotion, therefore we should recognize that Iago has ‘what to him seem real grievances’. Yet when Othello is replaced as general in command of Cyprus the Venetians appoint ‘Cassio in his government’ and ‘Cassio rules in Cyprus’ as ‘lord governor’ (4.1.236, 5.2.330, 365). Towards the end of the play Shakespeare appears to think of Cassio not as a lieutenant of a company but as a staff officer, a lieutenant-general – two ranks that are incompatible (unlike Othello’s two ranks as captain of a company and as general of an army). Shakespeare either forgot Cassio’s junior rank as a mere company lieutenant or assumed that his audience would forget (just as he probably assumed that the audience would not notice the double time scheme). See also Julia Genster, ‘Lieutenancy, standing in and *Othello*’, *ELH*, 57 (1990), 785–805.
- 1.1.20 Furness cites several pages of explanation, including the following: ‘he is not yet *completely damned*, because he is not *absolutely married*’ (Steevens, referring to 4.1.124: but the later suggestion that Cassio is expected to marry Bianca does not help at 1.1.20); ‘a man almost degraded into a woman (through feminine tastes and habits) . . . as when one says “A soldier wasted in a parson”’ (Earl of Southesk); ‘a fellow who is willing to go to perdition . . . for a beautiful woman’ (Crosby). Cf. Sisson, *Readings*, ‘he is given to women, practically married and likely therefore to be uxorious and distracted from soldierly virtue’ (2.246). I prefer Johnson’s candid admission that the line is obscure and/or corrupt.
- 1.3.322 **nettles** Pliny has a chapter ‘Of the nettle’ (22.13), which was cultivated for medicinal purposes. J. T. McCullen thinks each pair of herbs here contains an aphrodisiac and an anti-aphrodisiac, a combination used by physicians to treat love sickness. Ridley compared Lyly, *Euphues* (1.187), ‘good Gardeiners . . . mixe Hisoppe wyth Time as ayders the one to the growth of the other, the one beeing drye, the other moyste’.
- 2.1.12 **clouds** Perhaps an echo of Ovid, *Tristia*, 1.2.19ff., ‘what vast mountains of water heave themselves aloft . . . you think, they will touch the highest stars . . . you think they will touch black Tartarus’ (T. Sipahigil,

- ‘Ovid and the Tempest in *Othello*’, *SQ*, 44 (1993), 468–71). But cf. Psalms 107.25ff.: such poetical storms were widely copied.
- 2.1.15 **guards, pole** These stars gave navigators their bearings. Both *everfired* and *-fixed* are possible: cf. *KL* 3.7.61, ‘quenched the stelled fires’, where *stelled* = either ‘starry’ (from Lat. *stella*) or ‘fixed’ (from ME *stellen*). Cf. also *Oth* 3.3.466, ‘you ever-burning lights above’.
- 2.1.26 **Veronessa** = from Verona. The feminine ending *-essa* (as in *contessa*) is wrong here: the Italian word is Veronese (four syllables, perhaps what Shakespeare wrote). Verona, though an inland city, had ships at the battle of Lepanto; Shakespeare may have meant ‘a ship on the side of Venice, belonging to Verona’. QF punctuation (unlikely to be Shakespeare’s) implies that *Veronessa* refers to Cassio!
- 2.1.155 **change** exchange; hence, ‘to make a foolish exchange’ (Ridley). Shakespeare no doubt knew that ‘the taile-piece [of many fishes] is in greatest request’ (Pliny, quoted Hart), and that the cod’s head is worthless. Puns on *cod* (= penis) and *tail* (= pudenda). Balz Engler compared Tilley, H240, ‘Better be the head of yeomanry than the tail of the gentry’, and proverbs ‘directed against foolish ambition’ (‘To change the cod’s head for the salmon’s tail’, *SQ*, 35 (1984), 202–3).
- 2.1.173 **three fingers** i.e. one after the other. ‘The kissing of his hand was a quite normal courteous gesture from a gentleman to a lady’ (Ridley, citing *LLL* 4.1.146, ‘To see him kiss his hand’, *TN* 3.4.32, ‘Why dost thou smile so, and kiss thy hand so oft?’). But both extracts refer to foppish, extravagant behaviour, as Iago does here.
- 2.1.301 **\*trash** check a hound, hence, hold back, restrain. An easy misreading in Q (less easy in F), and agrees with Roderigo’s later complaint that Iago has not advanced his cause (4.2.175ff.). F *trace* might = pursue, dog (*OED* 5), i.e. whom I dog in the hope that he will help me with quick hunting; or, ‘whom I keep hungry so that he may hunt the more eagerly’ (a hawking metaphor: Hulme, 254–6).
- 2.3.85ff. Iago’s song is adapted from an early ballad known as ‘Bell my wife’ or ‘Take thy old cloak about thee’. The ballad predated *Othello*, being quoted in Robert Greene’s *Quip for an Upstart Courtier* (1592), ‘it was a good and blessed time heere in Englane [*sic*], when k. Stephen wore a paire of cloth breeches of a Noble a paire, anf [*sic*] thought them passing costlye’ (sig. C3b). A complete text was printed in Thomas Percy’s *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry* (1765), eight eight-line stanzas, consisting of the words of Bell and of her husband. They have been together forty-four years; it is bitter winter weather, and she tells him to put on his old cloak and to go out and save the old cow. Her stanzas end ‘man! put (or, take) thine old cloak about thee!’, his – ‘for I’ll



have a new cloak about me'. *He* wants to abandon his peasant life and seek advancement at court, *she* warns him against pride. Stanzas 6 and 7 leave us in no doubt that the ballad expresses impatience with privilege (appropriately for Iago):

O Bell my wiffe! why doest thou flyte?  
now is nowe, and then was then;  
seeke all the world now throughout,  
thou kens not Clownes from gentlemen;  
they are cladd in blacke, greene, yellow, and blew,  
soe ffarr about their owne degree;  
once in my liffe Ile take a vew,\* [\*= ?give myself some licence]  
ffor Ile haue a new cloake about mee.

King Harry was a verry good K[ing;]  
I trow his hose cost but a Crowne;  
he thought them 12<sup>d</sup>. ouer to deere,  
therfore he called the taylor Clowne.  
he was King and wore the Crowne,  
and thouse but of a low degree;  
itts pride *that* putts this cumtrye downe;  
man! put thye old Cloake about thee!<sup>1</sup>

We cannot be certain that Percy printed the ballad exactly as Shakespeare knew it: if he did, which is unlikely, Shakespeare introduced changes in every line, though apparently retaining the character of the original and its 'class' feeling. We may assume that Shakespeare's audience was familiar with the ballad, even if Italian Cassio seems not to be. The ballad tune associated with the song is found in Robert Bremner's *Thirty Scots Songs* (1770), reproduced in Sternfeld, 149, and below on p. 402. (See also the books on music in Shakespeare cited in the LN on 4.3.39ff.).

- 2.3.166–7 Cf. *MA* 3.4.57, 'and you be not turned Turk'; Dent, T609, 'To turn Turk'. To Elizabethans, Turks and Moors must have seemed much alike (see p. 341): 166–8 bring out Othello's 'otherness'. Chew (108) notes 'the well attested fact that Turkish soldiers, though they might bicker and squabble among themselves, never came to blows with each other'; see Rodney Poisson, 'Which heaven has forbid the Ottomites',

1 Reprinted from *Bishop Percy's Folio Manuscript*, ed. J. W. Hales and F. J. Furnivall, 3 vols (1867), 2.320ff.

- SQ* 18 (1967), 67–70. That is, ‘do we fight amongst ourselves, which the Turks are forbidden to do by their religion?’ Walker glossed 167 ‘by destroying their fleet’. Cf. also *Homilies*, 456, ‘Surely it is a shame that Paynims [pagans] should be wiser than we.’
- 2.3.304–5 **creature** 1 Timothy 4.1–4 warns against seducing spirits that ‘abstain from meats which God hath created to be received with giving thanks . . . For every *creature* of God is good’. Intoxicating drink was called a *creature* (facetiously) before Shakespeare, as also later by Dryden, ‘My master took too much of the creature last night’ (*OED* 1d); but *creature* could = any created thing (including food and drink).
- 3.1.3–4 He refers to the Neapolitan (venereal) disease (cf. *TC* 2.3.18), which could eat away the nose (*Tim* 4.3.157). He means that the instruments snuffle or scrape instead of ringing out musically; they ‘must have double reeds (like modern oboe reeds) which produce a nasal sound’ (R. King, ‘“Then murder’s out of tune”: the music and structure of *Othello*’, *SS*, 39 (1987), 155).
- 3.3.126 **\*delations** accusations; narrations; Q *denotements* = indications. ‘Delate’ and ‘dilate’ were interchangeable (cf. *Ham* 1.2.38, Q2, F): see Patricia Parker, ‘Shakespeare and rhetoric: “dilation” and “delation” in *Othello*’, in *Shakespeare and the Question of Theory*, ed. P. Parker and G. Hartman (1985), 54–74. Kittredge glossed *dilations* as swellings, i.e. ‘emotions that make the heart swell’.
- 3.3.159 **immediate** i.e. dearest; of a relation between two things: existing without any intervening medium or agency (*OED* 2). Cf. Proverbs 22.1, ‘A good name is more to be desired than great riches’, Ecclesiasticus 41.12 (Noble, 218); Dent, N22, ‘A good name is better than riches.’ Perhaps influenced by *Homilies*, 127, ‘there cometh less hurt of a thief, than of a railing tongue: for the one taketh away a man’s good name; the other taketh but his riches, which is of much less value’ (T. W. Craik, private communication). Compare Iago at 2.3.258ff.
- 3.3.291 **\*SD**. It is not clear here whether he or she drops the handkerchief: but cf. 315. If she tries to bind his head from behind he can push her hand away without looking at the handkerchief; *let it alone* then = leave my headache alone. See 441n. and L. Hartley, ‘Dropping the handkerchief: pronoun reference and stage direction in *Othello* III.iii’, *ELN*, 8 (1970–1), 173–6.
- 3.3.364 **man’s** (as opposed to a dog, which has no soul), i.e. he will consign Iago’s soul to eternal damnation (375). Q may imply that Iago risks his soul, F that Othello risks his (because of what he will do to Iago); but 364 could be less specific, i.e. a vague oath. See also Matthew 26.24–5, ‘woe unto that man by whom the son of man is betrayed: It had been good for

that man if he had not been born. Then Judas . . . said, Master, Is it I?' Did Shakespeare think of Iago as a Judas figure?

- 3.3.406–7 **prime, hot, salt, in pride** all synonyms for lecherous, 'on heat' (Ridley). *Prime* is not recorded in this sense elsewhere. I suggest *primed* = ready to discharge (sexually). Cf. Dent, G167, 'As lecherous as a goat'; also *TC* 3.1.130, 'hot thoughts beget hot deeds, and hot deeds is love'; *Tim* 4.3.84–6, 'Be a whore still . . . Make use of thy salt hours'; *Luc* 438–9, 'Smoking with pride . . . to make his stand / On her bare breast.'
- 3.3.450 **hollow hell** Cf. Seneca, *Thyestes*, tr. Jasper Heywood, 'Where most prodigious vglye thynges, / the hollowe hell dothe hyde' (1560 edn, sig. E4: 4th scene, added by translator). Q *Cell* is not unlike *Ham* 5.2.364–5, 'O proud death, / What feast is toward in thine eternal cell', and *Luc*, 881–2. F *hollow hell* anticipates *Tem* 1.2.214–15, 'Hell is empty, / And all the devils are here'. Cf. also Tourneur, *Transformed Metamorphosis* (1600), B6b, 'blacke horrors cell', R. Armin, *Two Maids* (1609), E1b, 'Rouse the blacke mischiefe from thy ebbenn cell'. Both Q and F are possible.
- 3.3.458 **\*keeps** It is possible that one *keeps* is a copyist's error, but which one? Editors who follow Q2 may have two errors in this line. Cf. a possible echo in T. Powell, *Virtue's Due* (1603), B6a, 'Her resolution was *Proponticke* right, / And forward stem'd against the Moones retreat', which suggests 'ne'er keeps retiring ebb but stems due on' (*stems* = heads, *OED* v. 3). But Shakespeare liked to repeat words in 'rhetorical' passages. Sisson thinks that the first *keeps* was an anticipation of the second (by Shakespeare or a scribe): 'we simply delete the first keeps, and read *ebbs* for *ebb*, no difficult misreading'.
- 3.4.47 i.e. we now give our hands (in marriage) without giving our love. Stressing *of old* and *our*, the actor can suggest 'a denial of Desdemona's assertion' in 45 (Capell).
- 'It is difficult . . . to escape from seeing here an allusion to the new order of baronetage instituted by King James in 1612, of which the badge was the addition of a hand gules to the coat of arms' (Ridley, from Warburton, etc.). But this would mean that the 'allusion' was later added to the Q and F manuscripts – unlikely. Others thought no allusion necessary. Dyce compared Warner's *Albion's England* (1596 edn, 282): 'My hand shall neuer giue my heart, my heart shall giue my hand'; Hart quoted Cornwallis, *Essays* (1600–1): people used to 'give their hands and their hearts together, but we think it a finer grace to look asquint, our hand looking one way, and our heart another'.
- 3.4.72–3 **sibyl** prophetess, as in ancient Greece and Rome. 'We say, *I counted the clock to strike four*; so she *numbred* the sun *to course*, to run . . . two hundred annual circuits' (Johnson); i.e. she had calculated

that the sun would make two hundred (further) circuits, that the world would end in two hundred years (hence *prophetic*). Calculating the date of the end of the world was a Renaissance pastime.

- 4.2.60 **fountain** spring, well (Lat. *fons*). The imagery picks up from 3.3.274, and from Proverbs 5.15–18, ‘Drink the water of thy cistern, and of the rivers out of the mids(t) of thine own well. Let thy fountains flow forth . . . let thy fountain be blessed, and rejoice with the wife of thy youth’ (Genevan Bible, which heads the chapter ‘Whoredom forbidden’; here *thy cistern, thine own well* = thy wife). Cf. also *Homilies*, 114: whoredom is ‘that most filthy lake, foul puddle, and stinking sink, whereunto all kinds of sins and evils flow’.
- 4.3.39ff. Shakespeare adapted the Willow Song ‘from a pre-existing text and probably intended that his version be sung to one of two pre-existing tunes’ (B. N. S. Gooch and D. Thatcher, *A Shakespeare Music Catalogue*, 5 vols (Oxford, 1991), 2.1255). The song was printed from an old ballad in Percy’s *Reliques* (1765), and reprinted with music by Furness, 278. We should not assume, however, that Percy’s version gives the ballad verbatim as Shakespeare found it. If it did, Shakespeare changed the sex of the singer and adapted quite freely, as the following extracts show.

A poore soule sat sighing under a sicamore tree;  
‘O willow, willow, willow!’  
With his hand on his bosom, his head on his knee:  
‘O willow, willow, willow!’  
‘O willow, willow, willow!’  
Sing, O the greene willow shall be my garlând.’  
...  
My love she is turned; untrue she doth prove:  
O willow, &c.  
She renders me nothing but hate for my love.  
O willow, &c.  
Sing, O the greene willow, &c.

The cold streams ran by him, his eyes wept apace;  
O willow, &c.  
The salt tears fell from him, which drowned his face;  
O willow, &c.  
Sing, O the greene willow, &c.

The mute birds sate by him, made tame by his mones:  
O willow, &c.

The salt tears fell from him, which softened the stones.

O willow, &c.

Sing, O the greene willow shall be my garlând!

Let nobody blame me, her scornes I do prove;

O willow, &c.

She was borne to be faire: I, to die for her love, . . .<sup>1</sup>

The earliest version of the tune is to be found in a 1583 manuscript lute book in the library of Trinity College Dublin. The version reproduced below on pp. 403–4 is the contemporary setting in BL Add. MS. 15117, fo. 118 as reprinted in Sternfeld, 43–4. See also Sternfeld, 23–52, for further discussion and other facsimiles and transcriptions of the music; J. H. Long, *Shakespeare's Use of Music* (1971), 153–61; and Gooch and Thatcher, *op. cit.* For Q's omission of the song, see *Texts*, 10–11.

- 5.2 The original staging of 5.2 has been explained in two different ways. (1) L. J. Ross suggested that a curtained structure was placed on the main stage, in front of the tiring-house façade ('The use of a "fit-up" booth in *Othello*', *SQ* 12 (1961), 359–70). The bed was concealed when the curtains were drawn (cf. 103, 363). The same structure would be useful elsewhere – e.g. for the 'discovery' of the Senate at 1.3.0.1, or as the *bulk* of 5.1.1. (2) R. Hosley held that 'the bed with Desdemona lying in it is "thrust out" of the tiring-house by stage-keepers . . . the bed curtains are manipulated as called for by the dialogue; and when Lodovico says "Let it be hid" the bed, on which are now lying the bodies of Desdemona, Emilia, and Othello, is "drawn in" to the tiring-house through one of its doors' ('The staging of Desdemona's bed', *SQ* 14 (1963), 57–65). Both kinds of staging were possible, and we must not suppose that staging at the Globe and, later, at the Blackfriars, was identical: but note the clear SD in *2H6* 3.2.146, '*Bed put forth*' (F). Othello's *light* (5.2.0.1) = a candle.
- 5.2.83 SD Q *stifles* could = throttles; F *Smothers* = suffocates (actors normally use a pillow). Cf. Marlowe, *Massacre* (1.400), SD, '*Now they strangle him*'; Dekker, *Old Fortunatus* (1600), where Anelocia is strangled on stage (1.191). In some productions Desdemona was smothered behind closed curtains (Rosenberg, 99, 113).
- 5.2.98–100 For supernatural manifestations before or after an important death, common in classical literature, cf. *JC* 2.2.13ff., *Mac* 2.4.1ff. Othello's apocalyptic vision here may be biblical in inspiration: 'lo, there was a great earthquake, and the sun was as black as sackcloth . . . and the

1 Reprinted from *Percy's Reliques*, ed. G. Gilfillan, 3 vols (Edinburgh, 1858), 1.158ff.

- moon waxed all even as blood. And the stars of heaven fell unto the earth' (Revelation 6.12–13).
- 5.2.141 **chrysolite** sometimes glossed as topaz; 'a name formerly given to several different gems of a green colour' (*OED*). Lynda Boose thinks that Shakespeare meant a 'translucent white' gem, as in the Genevan Bible, Song of Solomon, Revelation 21.20 ('Othello's "chrysolite" and the Song of Songs tradition', *PQ*, 60 (1981), 427ff.). Cf. also *Weakest Goeth to the Wall* (1600), C3a, 'walles of purest Chrysolyte'.
- 5.2.251 Spain was famous for its fine swords (e.g. Toledo blades). To *temper* = to strengthen metal by repeatedly heating and cooling it: *icebrook* (a coinage) could refer to the cooling process. 'Spanish rivers, such as the Tagus, being fed by melting snows, were considered to be partly responsible for the quality of Spanish blades' (Sanders). Q *Isebrookes* has been seen as a misreading of Innsbruck (which exported fine metal to England), and would be an easy misreading (*Texts*, 83–4); but this would be a poor exchange for the evocative *icebrook*, a word perhaps connected with the 'tempering' that Othello imagines in 275–8.
- 5.2.277–8 The 'torment of the damned in hell' was another popular subject in Renaissance art. It may be thought that to be blown about in winds would be a pleasant change for anyone roasting in sulphur – but cf. the similar vision of hell in *MM* 3.1.121ff., 'To bathe in fiery floods . . . To be imprison'd in the viewless winds / And blown with restless violence round about / The pendent world'.
- 5.2.336 **Soft you** *Soft* and *But soft* are common in Shakespeare (*Ham* 1.1.126, 1.5.58, 3.2.392); *soft you* (= not so fast) is rare. In this speech Othello's sense of his own unquestioned superiority shows through in his attitude to the *base Indian* and the *Turk*: he adopts a 'European' view of darker-skinned races. Surprisingly the only reference to Desdemona is as the *pearl* (but see LN, 5.2.345, below): his speech is largely self-centred.
- 5.2.345 **Indian** Both Q *Indian* and F *Iudean* have strong support from discerning editors. *Indian* has been more popular with editors, though *Iudean* was preferred by Johnson and Malone. I list some of the arguments for and against each. (1) For *Iudean*. Judas Iscariot is so called because he was the Judaeon disciple, unlike the others, who were Galileans. The kiss of Judas as a token of treachery was a commonplace (Matthew 26.49), hence 356; betraying Jesus, Judas threw away a 'precious pearl' (Matthew 13.46; in the Genevan Bible, 'a pearl of great price': see Noble, 92, 273). Judas, like Othello, committed suicide. Others think that *Iudean* could refer to Herod, who killed Mariamne, his 'pearl' of a wife (J. O. Holmer, 'Othello's Threnos: "Arabian trees" and "Indian" versus "Judean"', *SSSt*, 13 (1980), 145–67).

(2) Against *Iudean*. The word 'Judean' was not in use in Shakespeare's time (R. F. Fleissner, 'A clue to the "base Judean" in *Othello*', *N&Q*, 28 [1981], 137–8). The metre of 345 requires Júdean, not Judéan. These objections are not decisive, as Shakespeare often invented words or changed their stress.

(3) For *Indian*. The wealth of India, and the ignorance of Indians, unaware of the value of their gold and precious stones, were commented on by Renaissance and earlier writers. Pliny (34.17) mentioned Indians who barter and undervalue pearls. For Shakespeare's knowledge of these commonplaces, cf. 'as bountiful / As mines of India' (*IH4* 3.1.166–7) and 'Her bed is India, there she lies, a pearl' (*TC* 1.1.100). Such passages mostly refer to Indian Indians (e.g. Pliny), but Shakespeare could have meant American Indians.

A different kind of evidence also supports Q *Indian*: the fact that the second Folio (1632) switched from *Iudean* to *Indian*. In general F2 followed the first Folio (F) closely, introducing some corrections that are clearly unauthorized (i.e. are based on neither Q nor F). F2 *Indian* shows that a near-contemporary, who was far less interfering as an editor than the Q2 editor of 1630 (see *Texts*, 170), was dissatisfied with F *Iudean*: this was one of his most striking corrections of his copy. On the other hand, the F scribe corrected Q *Indian* to *Iudean*; although F also miscorrected Q (*ibid.*, 100), F's correction must carry some weight.

(4) Against *Indian*. The widely shared conviction that the Folio is the 'better text' has no doubt influenced those who argue for F *Iudean*. I have suggested that editors overrated F's reliability and underrated Q's (*ibid.*, 146), which leaves the balance finely poised.

*Conclusion*. The best analysis is, I think, Richard Levin's 'The Indian/Iudean crux in *Othello*' (*SQ*, 33 (1982), 60–7), which ends with a telling point. It is appropriate for Othello to compare himself with the Indian, whose action results from ignorance, and 'very inappropriate for him to compare himself to Judas, whose action was regarded as a conscious choice of evil'.

- 5.2.353 **circumcised** (?circumcised) Circumcision was a religious rite with Muslims, so Othello's contemptuous reference to it implies that he 'was not nor had ever been a Mohammedan' (Chew, 521n.). But it could be simply a term of abuse, like 'the uncircumcised' in the Bible. These lines may be influenced by 1 Samuel 17.26ff., 'what is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should revile the host of the living God?' (David of Goliath); 'I caught him by the beard, and smote him, and slew him' (David to Saul); 'And the Philistine [Goliath] said unto David, Am I a dog . . . ?'

- 5.2.359 **Spartan dog** a kind of bloodhound. Applied to men, bloodhound = a hunter for blood (*OED* 2). Envy, Iago's disease, was sometimes represented as a snarling dog; *Spartan* may = unmoved, impassive, inhumanely determined (like the Spartan boy who carried a fox under his tunic, was bitten, and gave no sign of pain). Cf. the hounds of Sparta that were used to hunt bears (*MND* 4.1.112ff.).