

The Tragedy of Othello, The Moor of Venice.

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

Duke of Venice [i.e. the Doge]

Brabantio, a senator

Othello, a noble Moor in the service of the Venetian state

Cassio, his lieutenant

Iago, his ancient

Roderigo, a Venetian gentleman

Montano, Othello's predecessor in the government of Cyprus

Desdemona, daughter to Brabantio and wife to Othello

Emilia, wife to Iago

Bianca, mistress to Cassio

Written about 1603

Scene: Venice (I act), Cyprus (II, III, IV, V acts)

Time: between 1489 (when Catherine Cornaro abdicated and Cyprus became a colony of the [Republic of Venice](#)) and 1571 (when Cyprus was conquered by the Ottomans). Most probably in the early 16th century.

Sources: Giambattista Giraldi Cinthio (Cinzio)'s (1504-1573) novella "Un capitano moro", in *Hecatommithi* (1565), translated into French in 1584, into English only in 1753.

1. ACT I, scene 1

A street in Venice. Night-time

[...]

Rod. 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!

Brabantio appears above, at a window.

Bra. What is the reason of this terrible summons?

What is the matter there?

Rod. Signior, is all your family within?

Iago. Are your doors lock'd?

Bra. Why, wherefore ask you this?

Iago. 'Zounds, sir, you're robb'd; for shame, put on
your gown;

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

**Even now, now, very now, an old black ram
Is tupping your white ewe.** Arise, arise;
Awake the snorting citizens with the bell,
Or else the devil will make a grandsire of you:

Arise, I say.

Bra. What, have you lost your wits?

[...]

Iago. [...]

**you'll have your daughter covered with
a Barbary horse; you'll have your nephews
neigh to you; you'll have coursers for cousins,
and gennets for Germans.**

Bra. 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.**

Bra. Thou art a **villain.**

[...] *[Exit above.*

Exeunt.

2. Act I, Scene 3

A council-chamber.

The Duke and Senators sitting at a table; Officers attending.

[...]

Oth. [...] **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
Their dearest action in the tented field; —

And little of this great world can I speak,

[...]. Yet, by your gracious patience,

I will a round unvarnish'd tale deliver

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

What conjuration and what mighty magic—

For such proceeding I am charged withal—

I won his daughter.

Bra. A maiden never bold;

Of spirit so still and quiet that her motion

Blush'd at herself; and **she—in spite of nature,**

Of years, of country, credit, every thing—

To fall in love with what she fear'd to look on!

It is a judgement maim'd and most imperfect

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.

[...]

Oth. Her father loved me, oft invited me,

Still questioned me the story of my life

From year to year, the battles, sieges, fortunes,

That I have pass'd.

I ran it through, even from my boyish days

To the very moment that he bade me tell it:

[...]. **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**

Devour up my discourse: [...].

[...] **My story being done,**

She gave me for my pains a world of sighs:

**She swore, in faith, 'twas strange, 'twas passing
strange;**

'Twas pitiful, 'twas wondrous pitiful:

She wish'd she had not heard it, yet she wish'd

That heaven had made her such a man:

[...]

She loved me for the dangers I had pass'd,

And I loved her that she did pity them.

This only is the witchcraft I have used.

Here comes the lady; let her witness it.

[...]

Des. **My noble father,**

I do perceive here a divided duty:

To you I am bound for life and education;

My life and education both do learn me

How to respect you; you are the lord of duty,

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

And so much duty as my mother show'd

To you, preferring you before her father,

So much I challenge that I may profess

Due to the Moor my lord.

[...]

First Sen. Adieu, brave Moor; use Desdemona well.

**Look to her, Moor, if thou hast eyes to see
She has deceived her father, and may thee.**

[Exeunt

[...]

Iago. [...] I hate the Moor;

[soliloquy]

**And it is thought abroad that 'twixt my sheets
He has done my office: I know not if 't be true;**

But I for mere suspicion in that kind

Will do as if for surety. He holds me well;

The better shall my purpose work on him.

Cassio's a proper man: let me see now:

To get his place, and to plume up my will

In double knavery—How, how?—Let's see:—

After some time, to abuse Othello's ear

That he is too familiar with his wife.

He hath a person and a smooth dispose

To be suspected; framed to make women false.

The Moor is of a free and open nature,

That thinks men honest that but seem to be so;

And will as tenderly be led by the nose

As asses are.

I have't. It is engender'd. Hell and night

Must bring this monstrous birth to the world's light.

[Exit.]

3. ACT II, Scene I

A sea-port in Cyprus, An open place near the quay.

[...]

Cas.

[...]

Enter Desdemona, Emilia, Iago, Roderigo, and Attendants.

O, behold.

The riches of the ship is come on shore

Ye men of Cyprus, let her have your knees.

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

Before, behind thee, and on every **hand**,

Enwheel thee round.

[...].

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 catch thee in thine own courtship.

[...] Yet again

your fingers to your lips? would they were clyster-pipes for your sake!—

[Trumpet within.]

The Moor! I know his trumpet.

[...]

Iago. That Cassio loves her, I do well believe it; That she loves him, 'tis apt and of great credit: The Moor, howbeit that I endure him not, Is of a constant, loving, noble nature;

[soliloquy]

And I dare think he'll prove to Desdemona
A most dear husband. Now, I do love her too,
Not out of absolute lust, though peradventure
I stand accountant for as great a sin,
But partly led to diet my revenge,
For that I do suspect the lusty Moor
Hath leap'd into my seat: the thought whereof
Doth like a poisonous mineral gnaw my inwards;
And nothing can or shall content my soul
Till I am even'd with him, wife for wife;
Or failing so, yet that I put the Moor
At least into a jealousy so strong
That judgement cannot cure

[...]

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;

[...]. *[Exit.]*

[After getting drunk, Cassio is removed from office. 'Reputation' speech and Iago's advice to talk to Desdemona. Iago's 'villain speech']

[...]

5. ACT III, Scene 3

The garden of the castle.

Enter Desdemona, Cassio, and Emilia.

[...]

Enter Othello and Iago, at a distance.

[...] *[Exit Cassio.]*

Iago. Ha! I like not that. **[prelude to temptation scene]**

[...]

[Exeunt Desdemona and Emilia.]

[temptation scene begins]

Iago. My noble lord,—

Oth. What dost thou say, Iago?

Iago. Did Michael Cassio, when you woo'd my lady,
Know of your love?

Oth. He did, from first to last: why dost thou ask?

Iago. **But for** a satisfaction of my thought;

No further harm. **[negations, understatement, litotes]**

Oth. Why of thy thought, Iago?

Iago. I did not think he had been acquainted with her.

Oth. O, yes, and went between us very oft.

Iago. Indeed!

Oth. Indeed! ay, indeed: discern'st thou aught in that?

Is he not honest?

Iago. Honest, my lord! **[echo effect]**

Oth. Honest! ay, honest.

Iago. My lord, for aught I know. **[ellipsis, suspension of speech, omission]**

Oth. What dost thou think?

Iago. Think, my lord!

Oth. Think, my lord! By heaven, he echoes me. **[repetitions, echo effect]**

As if there were some monster in his thought

Too hideous to be shown. Thou dost mean something:

I heard thee say even now, thou **likedst 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!'

And didst contract and purse thy brow together, **[body language]**

As if thou then hadst shut up in thy brain

Some horrible conceit: **if thou dost love me,**

Show me thy thought.

[...]

Iago. **O, beware, my lord, of jealousy;**

It is the green-eyed monster, which doth mock
The meat it feeds on: that cuckold lives in bliss
Who, certain of his fate, loves not his wronger;
But, O, what damned minutes tells he o'er
Who dotes, yet doubts, suspects, yet strongly loves.

[...]

Oth. [...] '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

[...]

For she had eyes, and chose me. No, Iago;
I'll see before I doubt; when I doubt, prove;
And on the proof, there is no more but this,
Away at once with love or jealousy!

Iago. I am glad of it; for now I shall have reason
To show the love and duty that I bear you
With franker spirit: [...]

I know our country disposition well; [works on cultural differences & O's otherness]

In Venice they do let heaven see the pranks

They dare not show their husbands; their best conscience

Is not to leave't undone, but keep't unknown.

[...]

She did deceive her father, marrying you; [cfr. Act I, First Sen. "[...] Look to her, Moor, if thou
hast eyes to see/ She has deceived her father, and may thee."]

And when she seem'd to shake and fear your looks,

She loved them most.

Oth. And so she did.

[...]

I am bound to thee for ever. [exchange of roles: master becomes servant (or
slave)/servant becomes master]

[...] [Exit Iago.]

[Re-enter Desdemona and Emilia.]

[...]

Oth. I have a pain upon my forehead here.

Des. Faith, that's with watching; 'twill away again:

Let me but bind it hard, within this hour

It will be well.

Oth. Your napkin is too little;

[He puts the handkerchief from him; and she drops it.]

[...]

[Emilia collects the handkerchief and gives it to Iago, who drops it in Cassio's bedroom]

[...]

Re-enter Othello.

[...]

Oth. Villain; be sure thou prove my love a whore;
Be sure of it; **give me the ocular proof;**

[...]

Iago. [...]

I lay with Cassio lately, [Cassio's 'dream']

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:

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 pluck'd up kisses by the roots,

That grew upon my lips: then laid his leg

Over my thigh, and sigh'd and kiss'd, and then

Cried 'Cursed fate that gave thee to the Moor!'

Oth. O monstrous! monstrous!

[...]

Iago. Nay, but be wise : yet we **see** nothing done;

She may be honest yet. Tell me but this

Have you not sometimes seen a handkerchief

Spotted with strawberries in your wife's hand?

Oth. I gave her such a one; 'twas my first gift.

Iago. I know not that: but **such a handkerchief—** [litotes]

I am sure it was your wife's—did I to-day

See Cassio wipe his beard with.

[...]

Oth. O, blood, blood, blood!

[...]

Within these three days let me hear thee say

That Cassio's not alive.

[...]

[In the meantime, Cassio gives Bianca Desdemona's handkerchief because he wants her to copy the pattern. O. sees the handkerchief in Bianca's hands when she reproaches Cassio while O. is 'encaved'. O decides that D. must be killed]

6. ACT V, Scene 2

A bedchamber in the castle: Desdemona in bed asleep; a light burning.

Enter Othello.

Oth. It is the cause, it is the cause, my soul
Let me not name it to you, you chaste stars
It is the cause. **Yet I 'll not shed her blood,
Nor scar that whiter skin of hers than snow
And smooth as monumental alabaster.**

Yet she must die, else she'll betray more men.

Put out the light, and then put out the light:

If I quench thee, thou flaming minister,

I can again thy former light restore,

Should I repent me: **but once put out thy light,**

Thou cunning'st pattern of excelling nature,

I know not where is that Promethean heat

**That can thy light relume. When I have pluck'd
the rose,**

I cannot give it vital growth again,

It must needs wither: I'll smell it on the tree.

[Kissing her.]

Ah, balmy breath, that dost almost persuade

Justice to break her sword! One more, one more:

Be thus when thou art dead, and I will kill thee,

And love thee after: one more, and this the last:

So sweet was ne'er so fatal. I must weep,

But they are cruel tears: this sorrow's heavenly;

It strikes where it doth love.

[...]

[O. smothers D. and tells Emilia that he had to do it bcs D. was unfaithful. Everybody arrives to after Emilia cries for help. Emilia exposes Iago]

Oth. [...]

O ill-starr'd wench !

Pale as thy smock ! when we shall meet at compt, [apocalyptic visions, cfr Faust in final monologue: he knows he'll be damned]

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 slave!
Whip me, ye devils
From the possession of this heavenly sight!
Blow me about in winds! roast me in sulphur!
Wash me in steep-down gulfs of liquid fire
O Desdemona ! Desdemona! dead
Oh! Oh! Oh!**

Enter Lodovico, Montano, Cassio carried in a chair, and Officers, with Iago, prisoner.

[...]

**Iago. Demand me nothing ; what you know, you know:
From this time forth I never will speak word.**

[...]

Oth. Soft you; a word or two before you go.
I have done the state some service, and they know 't.

No more of that. I pray you, in your letters,

**When you shall these unlucky deeds relate
Speak of me as I am; nothing extenuate.**

**Nor set down aught in malice : then must you speak
Of one that loved not wisely but too well ;**

Of one not easily jealous, but, being wrought,
Perplex'd in the extreme; of one whose hand,

Like the base Indian, threw a pearl away

Richer than all his tribe; of one whose subdued eyes,

Albeit unused to the melting mood,

Drop tears as fast as the Arabian trees

Their medicinal gum. **Set you down this;**

And say besides, that in Aleppo once,

Where a malignant and a turban'd Turk

Beat a Venetian and traduced the state,

I took by the throat the circumcised dog

And smote him, thus. [Stabs himself.]

[...]

Lod. [...]

Look on the tragic loading of this bed;

This is thy work: the object poisons sight;

Let it be hid. [...]

Myself will straight aboard, and **to the state**

This heavy act with heavy heart relate. [Exeunt.]