Wissenschaftliches Seminar Online

Deutsche Shakespeare-Gesellschaft

Ausgabe 1 (2003)

Theatre of Passion: *Othello* and *The Two Noble Kinsmen*

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Herausgeber

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Erscheinungsweise

Das Wissenschaftliche Seminar Online erscheint im Jahresrhythmus nach den Shakespeare-Tagen der Deutschen Shakespeare-Gesellschaft und enthält Beiträge der Wissenschaftler, die das Wissenschaftliche Seminar zum Tagungsthema bestreiten.

Hinweise für Beiträger

Beiträge für das Wissenschaftliche Seminar Online sollten nach den Richtlinien unseres Stilblattes formatiert sein. Bitte laden sie sich das Stilblatt als PDF-Datei von unserer Webseite herunter:

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Dichterkulte: Formen und Funktionen bürgerlicher Kunstreligion

In einer säkularisierten Welt, heißt es, werden Dichter gern zu Göttern ausgerufen. Seit David Garrick 1769 eine opulente Shakespeare-Feier in Stratford upon Avon abhielt, avancierte die Kleinstadt zu einem nationalen Heiligtum. Der Pilgerschar, die fortan dorthin strömte, mußten passende Devotionalien geboten werden. Man schnitzte sie aus dem Holz eines Maulbeerbaums, den Shakespeare angeblich selbst gepflanzt hatte. Gegen alle Anfechtungen blieb der Glaube an die Echtheit dieser Reliquien ebenso unerschütterlich wie an die Echtheit der angeblichen Dokumente, die zum Ende des Jahrhunderts Shakespeares irdisches Leben in mildem Licht verklärten. Der philologische Nachweis ihrer Fälschung löste eine Flut apologetischer Schriften aus, in denen „die Gläubigen", wie sie sich selbst nannten, die wahre Dichterreligion verkündeten. Gegen historisch pedantische Textwissenschaft setzten sie die Kraft hingebungsvoller Lektüre, die „intuitiv" zum „Wesentlichen" vordringe und das „Genie" erspüre, wo es weht. Sogar die Selbsterklärungsschrift des Fälschers konnte die Idolatrie nicht bremsen – womöglich weil ihr Titel „Confessions" seinerseits einer religiösen Figur folgte.

Der Fall mag modellhaft zeigen, wie eine bürgerliche Leitkultur um 1800 das Literarische dem Religiösen angenähert und für das Politische genutzt hat. Das Modell bot Anschlußmöglichkeiten und diente nicht zuletzt deutschen Klassikern zu ihrer (Selbst-)Inszenierung. Goethe gestaltete den Treppenaufgang seines Hauses so, daß jeder Besucher förmlich in den Götterhimmel emporsteigen mußte, bevor ihm der Olympier selbst entgegentrat. Heine bekannte daher, fast hätte er den Hausherren auf griechisch angeredet, und Jean Paul erklärte, er wäre Goethe am liebsten selbst als Statue unter die Augen getreten. Der Monumentalisierung des Klassikers diente im weiteren der Hang zum öffentlichen Denkmal, der sich im 19. Jahrhundert rapide ausbreitete. Wer immer fremd an einem Bahnhof eintrifft, so dichtete später Wilhelm Busch, darf mit Erleichterung feststellen, daß die „ihm unbekannte Stadt / Gleich den bekannten Schiller hat". Wo alles in der modernen Welt auf Beschleunigung drängt, kann man sich wenigstens am Dichterstandbild festhalten.

Vor diesem Hintergrund drängen sich zahlreiche Fragen auf: Ist die Kunstreligion – und mit ihr der Dichterkult – überhaupt angemessen mit dem Begriff der Säkularisierung zu fassen? Oder handelt es sich hierbei nicht eher – wie Carl Dahlhaus in seinen Studien zur Musikgeschichte und -ästhetik des 19. Jahrhunderts gezeigt hat – um eine Form der Religion selbst? Wie kann der Dichterkult sowohl Verbindlichkeit wie auch Exklusivität verbürgen? Wie dient das Heilige, das er zelebriert, zugleich zur Teilhabe und zur Distinktion? Welche rituellen Formen nimmt es an und borgt es? Was für politische Funktionen übernimmt es und für wen? Auch wenn die Konjunktur von vielen Kultautoren nur kurz währt, ist das Phänomen an sich von Dauer. Neben literarischen Gesellschaften lebt vielleicht gar die Philologie, die viele Begriffe ohnehin der Theologie entlehnt hat, insgeheim von der Dichterreligion, da sie dem Kult die Ministranten schult.

Die Shakespeare-Tage 2004 finden vom 22. bis 25. April in Weimar zum Thema „Shakespeare – Goethe – Schiller“ statt. In diesem Rahmen will ein wissenschaftliches Seminar die aktuellen Debatten um „Autorschaft“ (vgl. *Shakespeare-Jahrbuch* 2003) aufgreifen und Fragen zum Dichterkult durch Diskussion, Austausch und Kontroverse nachgehen. Gesucht werden dazu kurze und prägnante Beiträge (max. 15 Minuten), die Thesen und Fallbeispiele präsentieren und so zur Seminardiskussion anregen. Vorschläge in Form von Abstracts (ca. 300 Wörter) bitte bis spätestens zum **31. Oktober 2003** an die Koordinatoren schicken (die auch für weitere Anregungen und Fragen offen sind).

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ZUM GELEIT

Trotz der langen und traditionsreichen Geschichte der Deutschen Shakespeare-Gesellschaft findet sich immer noch Raum und Gelegenheit für Innovation. Das 2003 erstmalig abgehaltene Wissenschaftliche Seminar zählt zu diesen Innovationen und soll vor allem den Bedürfnissen jüngerer Shakespeare-Forscher nach intensiver wissenschaftlicher Diskussion entgegenkommen. Das Format des Seminars sieht sechs Kurzvorträge zu je 15 Minuten vor, die – so die Vorgabe an die Referenten – „Thesen statt Exegesen“ zum Gegenstand haben sollen. Insgesamt stehen den Diskutanten drei Stunden zur Verfügung, um ihrem „spontaneous overflow of powerful academic opinions“ Ausdruck zu verleihen. Das Thema des Wissenschaftlichen Seminars bezieht sich auf das Thema der Shakespeare-Tage selbst – wird jedoch, um eine konkrete Diskussionsgrundlage geben zu können, enger gefaßt. So standen dieses Jahr zwei Stücke Shakespeares im Mittelpunkt der Beiträge: *Othello* und *The Two Noble Kinsmen*.

Das *Wissenschaftliche Seminar Online* ist die Dokumentation der Diskussionsbeiträge. Von nun an soll es der Öffentlichkeit regelmäßig die Denkansätze vorstellen, mit denen sich die Seminarteilnehmer auf den Tagungen auseinandersetzen. Es soll darüber hinaus besonders jüngeren Wissenschaftlern eine Publikationsmöglichkeit bieten.

Die Beiträge im *Wissenschaftlichen Seminar Online* liegen sowohl im HTML-Format als auch in PDF-Form vor. Die im Design an die Gestaltung der Website angepaßte HTML-Version eignet sich für die kurze Einsichtnahme am Bildschirm, die PDF-Version mit ihrem höheren Ansprüchen genügendem Seitenlayout und ihrer Seitennummerierung ist hingegen für den Ausdruck und die Zitierung gedacht.

Susanne Rupp, Tobias Döring, Jens Mittelbach

PREFATORY NOTE

In spite of a long history of academic creativity there is, within the Deutsche Shakespeare-Gesellschaft, still space for innovation. One of the novelties is our Academic Seminar introduced at the conference “Shakespeare-Tage” in April 2003. From now on, this Seminar will be held annually at our spring conferences.

The Seminar wants to provide young scholars with ample opportunity for discussion. Within three hours there are six short papers of 15 minutes each that should be hypothetical rather than exegetical in matter. Participants are invited to give vent to their spontaneous overflow of powerful academic opinion. The topic of the Academic Seminar is related to the respective conference topic, yet there is, for the sake of a focussed discussion, a thematic restriction onto special aspects of the subject. This year’s Seminar was concerned with two Shakespearean plays, *Othello* and *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, which were viewed in the light of theories of passion.

The *Wissenschaftliches Seminar Online* is intended as the documentation of the Academic Seminar. It presents to the public the ideas that have been formed in the discussions. However, it is also to be understood as an opportunity especially for the younger generation of scholars to publish their research results.

Articles in the *Wissenschaftliches Seminar Online* are in HTML-format conforming with the general website design. There is also available a full-layout paginated PDF-version of each issue, which should be used for printing and citation.

Susanne Rupp, Tobias Döring, Jens Mittelbach

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Vorwort

von

Susanne Rupp und Tobias Döring

Das Thema

Das Themenfeld unserer Seminardiskussion läßt sich anhand eines Buches umreißen, das 1601 in London – im Jahr der ersten Aufführung von Shakespeares *Hamlet* – herauskam und, wie die drei Jahre später folgende, erheblich erweiterte zweite Auflage zeigt, seinerzeit sehr viel beachtet und gelesen wurde (weitere Auflagen sollten 1620, 1621 und 1630 folgen). In *The Passions of the Minde* unternimmt der Autor eine umfassende Bestandsaufnahme möglicher Gefühlsregungen – „certaine internall actes or operations of the soule bordering upon reason and sense“ (14) – und diskutiert ausführlich deren Funktion und Gebrauch. Dabei sind ihm seelische Erregungen, getreu einer alten Einsicht der Rhetorik, unentbehrlich für moralische, ja religiöse Selbsterhebung. Anders als die Stoiker behaupten, sollten sie daher keineswegs gezügelt, sondern gezielt genutzt werden: „passions are spurres that stirre up sluggish and idle souls, from slouthfulnesse to diligence, from carelesnesse to consideration“[1]. Solch positiver Nutzen der Passionen ist die Aufgabe und das erklärte Ziel, denen Redner wie auch Prediger verpflichtet sind, wenn sie ihr Publikum durch die Wirkung ihrer Rede zu rechtem Denken und Handeln führen. Um dies zu erreichen, bedarf es allerdings selbst einer leidenschaftlichen Natur, die ihre eigene Bewegtheit an andere weitergeben kann bzw. die im Adressaten zu erzielende Bewegung zunächst in sich selbst hervorbringt: „to imprint a passion in another, it is requisit first it be stamped on our hearts; the passion which is in our brest, must be fountaine & origen of al external actions“ (174). Dies klingt für moderne Leser ganz nach dem Programm des *Method Acting*, und tatsächlich bieten Bühne und Theater auch für diesen elisabethanischen Autor das Modell, das sein Programm illustriert und zugleich beispielhaft einübt. “But how shall this be performed? ... this the best may be marked in stage plaiers, who act excellently; for as the perfection of their exercise consisteth in imitation of others, so they that imitate best, act best” (179). Damit aber scheint der Autor alle äußerlich kenntlichen Körperzeichen der Passionen unter Schauspielverdacht zu stellen und öffnet so den Ambiguitäten von Imitation und Simulation ein weites Spielfeld, das es beim Gefühlsgebrauch auszumessen und -nutzen gilt. Dieses Feld soll mit der Formulierung unseres Themas „Performances of Passion“ bezeichnet werden, die wie viele Genitiv-Phrasen doppeldeutig ist: die Passionen sind sowohl Subjekt der Darbietung – im Sinne des passionierten Redners, der sein Publikum in gleicher Weise mitreißt – als auch deren Objekt, das im Spiel oder in der Rede vorgeführt und dargeboten wird. In diesem Spannungs-

[1] Thomas O. Sloane, Hg., *The Passions of the Minde*, Nachdruck der Ausgabe von 1604, Urbana (u. a.): University of Illinois Press, 1971), S. 32. Weitere Seitenangaben beziehen sich auf diese Ausgabe.

feld sind alle einschlägigen, oftmals körpersprachlich indizierten Gefühlsäußerungen zu verorten. Denn wenn uns, wie in der zitierten Passage, der Schauspieler als professioneller Gefühlsvortäuscher zum Vorbild empfohlen wird, müssen wir grundsätzlich bedenken, daß womöglich jede Leidenschaftsäußerung auch kalkuliert und simuliert sein kann. Ob die „external show" daher tatsächlich einer „passion in the brest" entspricht, ist durchaus fraglich. Ein guter Schauspieler kann vor unseren Augen sogar wahrhaft Tränen vergießen und doch um nichts als Hekuba weinen – in der Fiktion, im Traum der Leidenschaften. Um dieses Problem kreist *The Passions of the Minde*. Der Autor, Thomas Wright, ist sich der Doppeldeutigkeiten seines Gegenstandes wohlbewußt und will sie doch für seine „pollicie" nutzen: die Passionen sind eben, genau wie die Rhetorik, „a twoo edged sword" (152), und alles hängt von der jeweils speziellen Funktions- und Gebrauchsweise ab. (Auch in seiner historischen Selbstpositionierung hat Wright, Ex-Jesuit und katholisch-englischer Patriot, sich vor Ambiguitäten nicht gescheut; sein Buch schrieb er in Bridewell Prison und schickte das Manuskript dem Bishop of London, der ihm zwar die Protektion versagte; gleichwohl wurde es als einziges von Wrights Werken in London gedruckt und frei vertrieben).

Unser Seminar ging in je unterschiedlicher Vorgehensweise solchen Fragen nach – und zwar im Hinblick auf zwei Shakespeare-Dramen, deren Gehalt und Gestalt dafür besonders aussichtsreich erscheinen. In *Othello* wird an der Titelfigur der Prozeß leidenschaftlicher (Ver-)Führung durch einen professionellen Täuschungskünstler mit Erfolg und Drastik vorgeführt; in *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, einem späten, kollaborativen und daher „unkanonischen" Theatertext, bieten sowohl das mythisch-mittelalterlich konstruierte Setting als auch das soziale Spektrum seines Personals eine kritische Arena zur *performance* klassischer Passionen wie Liebeswerben, Eifersucht, Trauer oder Zorn.

OTHELLO'S APPRENTICESHIP IN THE THEATRE OF PASSION

BY

DANIELLA JANCSÓ

It is my argument that *Othello*, Shakespeare's paradigmatically Aristotelian tragedy revolves around Platonic ideas and ideals. The play presents the development from a belief in absolute love and knowledge to an experience of the relativity of both love and knowledge as Othello's theory of absolutes is put to the test in Iago's theatre.

The identification of "the whole being" with one passion is what most characterizes the heroes in Shakespeare's tragedies.[1] To Bradley's well-known critical opinion it may be added that this total identification applies not only to Shakespeare's heroes, but also to his villains. And a later reformulation of the Bradleyan view claiming that "Shakespeare's conception of tragedy plainly and constantly concerns the man who is passion's slave"[2] suggests that this identification is not necessarily voluntary, and may entail the loss of freedom.

In *Othello*, the characters affected are conscious of this loss[3], and they either welcome it (like Othello and Desdemona) or are plagued by it (like Bianca and Roderigo), or simply acknowledge it (like Iago). Either way, passion (at least that of the protagonists) provokes an urge to explain, to reach an understanding of their state of mind, and the desire to explain desire is felt by the characters affected and the audience alike. (Just to note in passing: the need to explain can be accounted for both in terms of Renaissance theories of the 'passions of the mind' and modern psychology; accordingly, the explanations may compensate for the loss of freedom, their function is to restore a mental balance, a peace of mind.)

That Iago embarks on a quest that Coleridge famously termed the "motive-hunting of motiveless malignity", trying to identify (I think not only for the audience, but also for himself) the source of his passionate hatred, is a critical commonplace. What is often overlooked is that this quest for knowledge is also pursued by Othello and Desdemona, who are putting forward various explanations for their passionate love. Othello identifies Desdemona's pity (that is, her compassion) as the spark of his passion for her. In turn, her love for him, he explains, was aroused by his deeds and accomplishments. Desdemona construes their story differently, and locates the source of her passion in the undefined "rites for which [she] love[s] him" (1.3.258).

[1] Cf. A. C. Bradley, *Shakespearean Tragedy* (London: Macmillan, 1905), p. 20.

[2] A. P. Rossiter, *Angel with Horns* (New York: Theatre Art Books, 1961), p. 263.

[3] Cf. Othello's "For know, Iago, / But that I love the gentle Desdemona / I would not my unhoused free condition / Put into circumspiction and confine / For the sea's worth" (1.2.24–28) and Desdemona's "My heart's subdued / Even to the very quality of my lord" (1.3.251–252). All quotations of the play are taken from the Arden edition of *Othello*, edited by E. A. J. Honigmann (1997).

That Iago's explanations for his hatred are unsatisfactory is indicated by the sheer amount of scholarly (and unscholarly) response they generated. There seems to be a gap between the motives given and his 'actual' motive(s), Iago's explanations (it is felt) cannot account for the intensity of his passion. It is this gap that sends critics, performers and audiences alike on an endless quest for Iago's 'real' motives.

What about the rationalization of passion on the part of Othello and Desdemona? Is it any more satisfactory? Critics and audiences accept it more readily than Iago's account, and their only concern (if any) seems to be the discrepancy between *his* and *her* story, not the realness of motives. The characters in the play, however, find it hard to swallow the lovers' explanations for their passion. For Brabantio (and perhaps not only for him), Desdemona's behaviour is beyond comprehension unless it is to be accounted for by supernatural powers: he cannot bring himself to believe the 'natural' motives given. Within the world of the play, it is his disbelief that points to the existence of a gap between a given explanation and the real motive, between a Platonic shadow of an explanation and the 'ideal' explanation. Brabantio is the first victim to be swallowed up by this gap (which we may term epistemological), but not the only one. Exploiting the epistemological gap, Iago can send Othello on a passionate quest for knowledge about Desdemona's real motives, real self, Platonic essence. The potential of the epistemological gap (and thus Iago's power) is unlimited because absolute knowledge is by definition unreachable, the essence unknowable, and thus the quest for knowledge interminable, endless. There exists always something else beyond what we already know, there remains always something to be discovered: "Nay, yet there is more in this" (3.3.133), as Othello says. The Hamletian dread of the life to come (the dreams to come) is transformed into an Othellonian dread of the knowledge to come.

At the start, however, Othello is still a man of 'absolutes': he believes that his knowledge of Desdemona is absolute ("My life upon her faith.", 1.3.295), and he believes that his love for her is absolute ("My soul hath her content so absolute / That not another comfort like to this / Succeeds in unknown fate", 2.1.189). He cannot imagine that either his happiness or knowledge could increase. Like Lear, Othello thinks he is at his journey's end and 'knows not' that he is only at the beginning. Yet his sense of completeness is challenged by Desdemona's immediate response as she invites him to enter a world of relativity: "The heavens forbid / But that our loves and comforts should increase / Even as our days do grow" (2.1.191–93). Her suggestion that there is even more love beyond their love runs against his theory of the absolute. Desdemona will shake Othello's belief in absolute love, and having thus prepared the ground for her enemy, Iago can shake Othello's belief in absolute knowledge.

Desdemona disproves Othello's theory of absolute love behind the scenes, and thus we have only indirect evidence of this (at this stage still) pleasurable process. In all likelihood it is the passionate consummation of the marriage in Act 2, Scene 3 that proves her right. Othello's oft quoted remark – "Excellent wretch! perdition catch my soul / But I do love thee! and when I love thee not / Chaos is come again" (3.3.90–93) – can be read as evidence for the increase of the intensity of his love: his passion, till then the organizing principle on a personal level, is now ascribed cosmic dimensions. The expansion of the scope of Othello's language is indicative of the expansion

of the scope of his experience: what he could not imagine before – the increase of his love – has now happened.

In contrast to his theory of absolute love, Othello's theory of absolute knowledge is confuted openly, the painful process of the increase of his knowledge is staged in its entirety. Iago, a witness to Othello's public declaration ("My life upon her faith.", 1.3.295) deeply despises the theoretical – just think of his vehement objections to Cassio's promotion. Iago is a practical man through and through, and he puts Othello's theory of absolute knowledge to the test. He wants to prove that knowledge is relative. For this he requires an experimental arena, and so he transforms the epistemological gap into a theatrical space. In this theatrical space he arranges an investigative set-up with invented crime and criminals; Othello is first assigned the role of the spectator, but later acts himself as the investigator. His task is not to find the criminals – he 'knows' them right from the start –, but to fill in the epistemological gap he has become aware of. Thus, Iago's answer to Othello's theory is the theatre: the etymological relationship between *theatre* (literally a place for seeing) and *theory* (originally meaning spectacle), both words stemming from the Greek *theastai* (to see, to behold) is dramatised in the play as the development from sight to insight is acted out.

Following Aristotle, ancient and Renaissance doctrine presumed the primacy of sight among the senses, particularly its efficacy in provoking intense emotional responses.[4] It is significant for Shakespeare's play that sight, the most highly developed sense, is closely associated with imagination; as Aristotle remarks in his *De Anima*, "the name for imagination (phantasia) is taken from light (phaos), because without light it is not possible to see"[5]. Aristotle goes on to add that "[t]o the thinking soul images serve as sense-perceptions (*aisthemata*)"[6] or, in other words, a strong imagination begets the event itself. Quintilian (whom Shakespeare most certainly read) notes that intense *visiones* "naturally nourish the more violent passions, those belonging to the rhetorical category of *pathos*, namely anger, loathing, fear, hatred, grief and pity"[7]. And for the majority of Renaissance and classical moral philosophers the passions of the mind comprehended the whole spectrum of human emotions, including the realm of imagination.[8]

In the light of these doctrines it is not surprising that for Othello knowledge may come in the form of visions. It was Desdemona who activated Othello's imagination, and it is now Iago who nourishes it with his sickly diet. As a consequence, Othello's sickened imagination begets sickening events. This also marks an epistemological turn in the play: at the beginning, what was 'real' (Othello's adventurous life story) worked as if it were imagined, arousing Desdemona's imagination and passion. In turn, after

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[4] Cf. Joseph R. Roach, *The Player's Passion: Studies in the Science of Acting* (Newark etc.: University of Delaware Press etc., 1985), p. 47.

[5] D. W. Hamlyn, ed., *Aristotle's* De Anima (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968), p. 56.

[6] Hamlyn, p. 63.

[7] Roach, p. 25.

[8] Cf. Arthur Kirsch, *The Passions of Shakespeare's Tragic Heroes* (Charlottesville and London: University Press of Virginia, 1990), p. 1.

her passion activates Othello's imagination (and at the same time domesticates his life), what is imagined works as if it were real. Othello wants to put an end to the endless (and for him unbearable) process of discovery by killing both the object of his imagination and his imagination itself: "Put out the light, and then put out the light!" (5.2.7).

As the lights go out Othello's imagination comes to a halt. With his desperate act he seeks to force knowledge and love to an end, he wants to close the epistemological gap. Yet his words immediately following the murder – "Methinks it should be now a huge eclipse / Of sun and moon, and th' affrighted globe / Should yawn at alteration" (5.2.97–99) – point in the opposite direction. With Desdemona dead, the gap explodes into a chasm, a gaping void: chaos (also meaning chasm, or void) is come again, and its return is also reinforced by the etymological relationship between the words *yawn* and *chaos*.[9]

Though Othello's imagination is at rest, the process of discovery does not come to a halt with Desdemona's death. As the epistemological gap is filled by an alternative chain of events, Othello learns what the audience knew all along. He learns (paradoxically or Platonically) what he knew at the start: Desdemona was faithful. His relative knowledge is now identical with the knowledge he thought was absolute: this is his journey's end.

Othello begins to see in the darkness, after he put out the light: he exchanges sight for insight. In that he is reminiscent of the hero of another paradigmatically Aristotelian tragedy, namely King Oedipus. And like Oedipus at the end of his passionate quest for knowledge, it is himself that Othello finally finds. He was the one who 'committed the crime', it is he whom Desdemona slept with. That all along it was himself he was jealous of is Othello's final insight.[10] And this 'doubleness' (Othello as his own *doppelgänger*) is enhanced by his suicide speech in which he is both the executioner and the criminal, upholder of 'civilised' justice *and* 'barbaric' Turk.

Zusammenfassung

Die These des Papers ist, daß *Othello*, Shakespeares paradigmatisch aristotelianische Tragödie, sich um platonische Ideen und Idealen dreht. In Platons Hierarchie der Ideen gibt es ein nicht zu überbrükkendes „ontological gap" zwischen den Abbildungen einer Idee und der Idee selbst. Analog kann man ein „epistemological gap" postulieren, das zwischen Wissen und der platonischen Idee eines absoluten Wissens zu situieren ist. Am Anfang glaubt Othello fest an die Absolutheit seiner Liebe (zu Desdemona) und sein Wissen (über Desdemona): eine Steigerung ist für ihn unvorstellbar. Desdemona führt ihn jedoch in eine Welt der Relativität, da sie eine Steigerung der Liebe für möglich, sogar für wünschenswert hält. Sie erschüttert Othellos Glauben an die Absolutheit seiner Liebe, oder anders ausgedrückt, sie macht Othello die Existenz eines „epistemological gap" bewußt. Dadurch ebnet sie (unbewußt) den Boden für Iago, der Othellos Glauben an die Absolutheit seines Wissens erschüttern will. Um sein Vorhaben zu verwirklichen, schafft Iago einen experimentellen Raum: er transformiert das

[9] Cf. Ernest Klein, *A Comprehensive Etymological Dictionary of the English Language*, vol. I–II (Amsterdam, London, New York: Elsevier Publishing Company, 1966).

[10] Cf. I. Geher, *Shakespeare* (Budapest: Corvina, 1998), pp. 209–229.

„epistemological gap“ in einen „Theaterraum“. Dort inszeniert er Desdemonas Ehebruch und stellt dadurch den Glauben Othellos auf die Probe.

IMPOSSIBLE PASSIONS – SHAKESPEARE AND PARKER: *OTHELLO*[1]

BY

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According to the Oxford English Dictionary, *The Tragedy of Othello, the Moor of Venice*[2] may itself be called "a passion"[3], since it is definitely "a literary composition marked by strong emotion". "Suffering", "affection", and "affliction", given as synonyms for "passion" by the OED, are, moreover, being produced and displayed by most of the play's characters. "Painful disorder" is being staged in its social dimension – both political and domestic – as well as on the level of subjective identity – that is in its physical and its psychological components. Othello's jealousy, the predominant, yet far from only passion of the drama, is, as "an emotion" or "a mental state", well described as "a violent attack of disease" or, indeed, dis-ease. Moreover, Othello is certainly "affected or acted upon [by] the external agency" of Iago, whose manipulation causes first "a fit or outburst of anger or rage", then the eruption of "strong, barely controllable emotion" and finally brings about the smothering of Desdemona as the prototypical "crime of passion".

The racist discourse[4] of the Early Modern Period seems to pre-determine the black man as passion's typical prey, since his blackness[5], heavily charged with prejudice, was commonly associated with sensuality, irrationality and violence.[6] Following this logic, Othello – until far into the twentieth century[7] – appears as the man on stage/screen who is, qua race, most likely to be "eaten up with passion"[8]. Yet, within the religious discourse of the time, the so-called 'passions of the mind' were also considered "expressions of [...] the imperfection in man's nature that both caused the

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1 I would like to thank Torsten Graff for his contributions in the planning phase of this paper.

2 All quotations are taken from the 3rd edition of the Arden Shakespeare: William Shakespeare, *Othello*, ed. E. A. J. Honnigman (Walton-on-Thames: Arden, 1999).

3 This and all otherwise unmarked quotations are taken from the entry for 'passion' in the OED.

4 Cf. Virginia Mason Vaughan, "Racial discourse: black and white", in *Othello. A contextual history* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 51–70.

5 Cf. Diann L. Baecker, "Tracing the History of a Metaphor: All is Not Black and White in *Othello*" in: *Comitatus* 30 (1999), 113–129.

6 Cf. Maristella de Panizza Lorch, "Honest Iago and the Lusty Moor: the Humanistic Drama of *Honestas/ Voluptas* in a Shakespearean Context", in J.R. Mulryne/Margaret Shewring eds., *Theatre of the English and Italian Renaissance* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1991), p. 204–220.

7 For an enlightening analysis of the interplay of race and Othellonian passion displayed by white and black actors on stage cf. Elise Marks, "'Othello/me': Racial Drag and the Pleasures of Boundary-Crossing with *Othello*" in: *Comparative Drama* 35.1 (2001), 101–123.

8 *Oth* 3.3.394.

Fall and constituted his state forever after it"[9] and thus understood as a universal characteristic or integral part of the human condition. Elizabethan notions of 'blackness' and of 'passion', it seems, are not only partly projected into one another, but also organised within themselves by a similar structure, namely a minority/totality-division: While the racist discourse stresses the difference of the 'primitive', inferior and wicked minority who is 'black'/thought especially prone to giving in to their passions, Christian eschatology emphasises that all human beings are "black in their sinfulness, but become white in their knowledge of the Lord [...]"[10]/marked by their passions, but may hope to control them through the right faith.

Traces of both of these discursive traditions, the minorising and the universalising, can be found in Shakespeare's text. Thus, it is not only Othello whose state and conduct may be described by the vocabulary of passion. Roderigo for example *has* a passion in the sense of "a strong sexual feeling" for Desdemona. She, as the "person who is the object of such feeling", thereby *is* his passion, while she at the same time also freely voices her own passion for Othello. Although displaying less verbal passion in "emotional speech" than the tragic hero, the character pursuing his "aim or object with strong enthusiasm", the one who performs not only masterly, but also most passionately on the keyboard of patriarchal ideology, however, is yet another white man. My paper shall thus concentrate on the representation of seemingly dispassionate Iago's passion.

In a first step, I would like to demonstrate that the world opened up by Shakespeare's text and Oliver Parker's visualisation[11] of it is a paradigmatic 'world between men'. Borrowing my vocabulary from queer studies theorist Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, I would like to show that the concept she names 'homosocial continuum' determines how a patriarchal society deals out positions to every major character in the play. My second step will be to show how relationships of male friendship, mentorship, military entitlement, and rivalry are being triangulated by Shakespeare's text and Parker's film. Thirdly, I would like to focus on one of the several triangles defined by the relationship of male-male rivalry and show how Iago manages to manipulate it by smuggling himself into an already established structure. In conclusion to my argument, I shall attempt to demonstrate that Iago's success as well as his final failure are both being determined by the unspoken rules of patriarchal society. While the passionate wish for Cassio's position in relation to Othello is still compatible with the ideological structures of patriarchy, Iago's desire for Desdemona's position disrupts them in a way that must result in failure, death, and self-destruction.

In her influential book *Between Men* Eve Sedgwick demonstrates, by way of literary analysis, the circulation of an affective energy which she terms 'male homosocial desire'. By creating this seemingly oxymoronic neologism she tries to suggest that –

[9] Arthur Kirsch, *The Passions of Shakespeare's Tragic Heroes* (Charlottesville and London: University Press of Virginia, 1990), p. 2.

[10] Ibid., p. 54.

[11] Oliver Parker, *Othello* (USA 1995). When this text was being presented as a talk at the *Shakespeare-Tage* 2003 in Bochum three short filmclips were shown which can not be fully represented here. However, there will be precise indications of the scenes used.

contrary to an ideology promoted to stabilize patriarchy – there is no fixed boundary between the accepted "social bonds between persons of the same sex"[12] and the repressed, denied and condemned erotic or sexual relations between men. Patriarchy's ideology or – to borrow Andreas Mahler's term – its "meaning with an interest"[13] insists on the categorical as well as essential differentiation of non-sexualised homosocial bonds on one hand and homosexual bonds on the other. In contrast to this, Sedgwick stresses "the potential unbrokenness of a continuum"[14]. According to her, the boundary between "men promoting the interests of men" and "men loving men"[15] is fluent. It is exactly this scandalous proximity between the two that brings about patriarchy's command that affective relations between men may not be expressed directly, since – if it were otherwise – this could threaten the stability of the prescribed categorical difference. Instead, Sedgwick argues by turning the screw of René Girard's theory of triangulation, these affective – or even passionate – relations have to take an indirect route. In other words, they have to take a detour and express themselves through heterosexual relationships. Paradigmatic for this movement is the structure of male erotic rivalry: The homosocial desire between male X and male Y that may not be directly expressed is re-directed towards the common-to-both object of erotic desire, female Z. Ironically, this has the effect of an indirect sexualisation of the homosocial relationship, since "the bond that links the two rivals is as intense and potent as the bond that links either of the rivals to the beloved"[16].

The main forms of male homosocial bonding named by Sedgwick all feature in Shakespeare's *Othello*. Indeed, they might be called the key structures of passion in the play. 'Male friendship' might seem an exception to this since it does not exist in *Othello* beyond its idea or ideal. It is, however, decidedly present, although it remains but a gap, or a promise that is never fulfilled by the text. There is a double reason why 'male friendship' is not able to fully materialise in *Othello*: Either there is no social equality between the potential partners – as in the relationship between Cassio and his general – with the consequence that in times of crisis, friendship has to give way before other social obligations, as is the case when Othello has to degrade Cassio for the sake of military order. Or, when there is no disturbing hierarchy – as in the relationship between Cassio and Iago – the friendship displayed is dishonest from at least one side. Despite its virtuality, the concept of 'male friendship' features prominently in *Othello*. Without it, none of Iago's manipulations could ever work. Always hinted at, often attributed, evoked or promised, 'male friendship' might never be attained, but it cer-

[12] Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Between Men. English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (New York: Columbia University Press, [2]1992), p. 1.

[13] Andreas Mahler, "Das ideologische Profil", in Ina Schabert ed., *Shakespeare-Handbuch* (Stuttgart: Alfred Kröner Verlag, 2000), p. 299–223, 299. My translation of the German original which reads: "In allgemeinster Form ist Ideologie interessierter Sinn."

[14] Sedgwick, p.1.

[15] Ibid., p. 4.

[16] Ibid., p. 21.

tainly functions throughout as a site of collective phantasma, and thus enables the plot – in its double meaning – to unfold.

'Mentorship', the second of Sedgwick's categories, could be given as a label to two male-male relationships in the play. While Brabantio's mentoring position towards Othello is only hinted at by Shakespeare's text in Othello's story of his wooing, Parker's film actually stages a flash-back scene that shows Brabantio who – just as much as his daughter – "with a greedy ear/devour[s] up [Othello's] discourse"[17]. Before Desdemona herself seems to be interested in Othello, her father is shown to be. One could argue that she can only cultivate an (erotic) interest in the "internalized outsider [who] becomes the symbol of the repressed desire of Venetian society"[18], because her father keeps inviting him, shows continued interest in his biography and 'loves'[19] him. The other, more prominent relationship between a mentor and a protegé is the one between Othello and Cassio. This is, of course, also a relationship of entitlement – Sedgwick's third category of 'male homosocial bonding' – since Othello, who himself has been made general, i.e. entitled, by the Serenissima, in his turn makes Cassio his lieutenant.

The fourth type of male bonding, 'rivalry', again comes in a double version. Othello and Roderigo, on the one hand, used to be rivals for Desdemona's hand before the play's point of attack. Although neither would have been acceptable to Brabantio, Othello triumphs over the rejected Roderigo by winning Desdemona's heart. Iago and Cassio, on the other hand, are competing for Othello's favour and trust which are signified by the lieutenantry that is first given to one and then to the other.

I would now like to discuss some examples of triangulation based on these forms of male bonding. Three of them are, in accordance with Sedgwick's model, indeed triangulated over the 'female' position: 'Mentorship triangulated' can be illustrated between Cassio, Othello and Desdemona. The positions in this triangle may be rotated, so this particular structure comes in three variations in the play, placing either Cassio, or Othello, or Desdemona in the top vertex. Variation one, in which Cassio acting as messenger between Othello and his bride, as confidant to both and 'good spirit' of their love, again takes place before the play's point of attack.[20] The trust Othello puts in Cassio concerning these private matters is repaid by the Florentine's loyalty, and thus Othello wins the wife he, without the assistance of a third, might not have been able to gain.

From the moment of Cassio's degradation – the moment in which Othello's mentorship is suspended – variation two of this triangle becomes visible: Desdemona, now taking Cassio's former post as go-between, tries – with less success than her predecessor in this position – to reconcile Othello to his disgraced protégé.

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[17] *Oth* 1.3.150–151.

[18] Robert Samuels, "Homophobia and the Cycle of Prejudices in *Othello*", *Journal for the Psychoanalysis of Culture and Society* 2.1 (1997), 23–39, 29. For a psychoanalytic reading of "Othello's desire for Desdemona as a displacement of the desire between Othello and Brabantio", see p. 30f.

[19] *Oth* 1.3.129–134.

[20] It is explicitly mentioned however: *Oth* 3.3.94–100.

Variation three is beautifully displayed by Parker's film in a sequence at the beginning, which I shall from now on refer to as 'the wedding-scene'. It is the moment when the very first words in the film – which are also the opening lines of Shakespeare's text – are being exchanged between Iago and Roderigo. The two are placed outside the chapel's window, watching the ceremony.[21] As the camera zooms in on Othello in front of the altar, the priest has just declared him Desdemona's husband. He is standing between Desdemona on his left, and Cassio, apparently his best man, on his right. Having put the wedding ring on his bride's finger he kisses her and thereby accepts her as his lawful wife. Then he turns to Cassio to hand him a dagger – sign of his future rank under Othello's command – and they embrace in joy and mutual congratulation. Thus, Parker's film visually parallelises two bonds – one heterosexual and the other homosocial – interconnecting them temporally. The erotic bond between husband and wife (the ring symbolises the union, the kiss is a sign of its bodily investment) and the military bond between general and lieutenant (the dagger symbolises the loyalty, the embrace lays open its corporeal dimension in battle) are staged at the same time. This moment visually exhibits both Desdemona and Cassio as objects of Othello's desire, or, the other way round, Othello as object of both of their desires, and is marked as particularly significant by the simultaneous entry of the spoken Shakespearean text.

The second triangle I would like to comment on, structurally represents Othello's social 'entitlement' and is characterised by its implicit hierarchy. Within Venetian society, black Othello, the foreigner, the mercenary, is initially socially inferior to the white noblewoman and senator's daughter Desdemona. Both of them are, in their turn, subjects to the State of Venice, and thus 'subjected' to the Duke as its representative. Since he is the incarnation of the Law of the Father's absolute sovereignty within the symbolic order of patriarchy, the Duke's sentence even outweighs the word of the actual father figure, Brabantio. By officially accepting the union Brabantio had attempted to contest, the State entitles Othello to a higher social status, since patriarchy grants and guarantees the husband's superiority over his wife.

'Rivalry', the fourth of Sedgwick's categories which has already been briefly commented on, materialises in two triangles. The first one, a classical example of heterosexual erotic rivalry, represents Roderigo in competition with Othello for Desdemona's hand[22] and – that is at least what Iago makes Roderigo believe – for her sexual possession during the play. The second one links Iago and Cassio over the shared rivalry for Othello's favour. It differs from the other triangulations discussed up to this point, since all three corners are occupied by men. Whether either of the positions attributed to him – one as heterosexual rival, one as homosocial object of desire – are clear to Othello, is of little consequence. What becomes clear, however, is that through his intrigue, Iago manages to interlock the two: the triangles characterised by the positions of R-O-D (erotic rivalry) and of I-C-O (military rivalry) are combined to form the new triangle I-D-O, which reveals, I would like to argue, Iago's secret, yet passionate desire.

[21] For readers interested in looking at the film-scene: the temporal signature is 0:02:36–0:03:30.

[22] *Oth* 1.1.95–97.

Iago uses Roderigo's wish to substitute Othello as Desdemona's lover in order to bring about and stabilize his own double substitution of Cassio as Othello's lieutenant and confidant.[23] But not only does he successfully substitute Cassio's position in relation to Othello, he also, in a second step, rivals Desdemona's. The drama and the film offer various moments to support this thesis, since Iago and Desdemona are shown to have a few crucial points in common. To begin with, they both act as mediators: when the inebriated Cassio loses his self-control and, in consequence, his lieutenantry and his reputation, Desdemona acts as mediator between him and Othello. In correspondence to this, Iago acts as mediator between her and her husband – just as, by the way, Cassio used to do during the wooing – when Desdemona loses Othello's trust and esteem. The fact that Iago's mediation in a crisis he has himself deliberately brought about is false, is of no consequence for the structural parallel. Secondly, Iago manœuvers himself into the position of an erotic stand-in for Desdemona in Othello's fantasy, when he makes up the story of Cassio's taking him for Desdemona in his sleep:

> *Iago:* [...] I lay with Cassio lately
> And being troubled by 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 grip and wring my hand,
> Cry, 'O sweet creature!' and then kiss me hard
> As if he plucked up kisses by the roots
> That grew upon my lips, lay his leg o'er my thigh,
> And sigh, and kiss, and then cry 'Cursed fate
> That gave thee to the Moor!'[24]

Rather than enjoying *Desdemona*, as David Pollard argues with regard to this scene, Iago here enjoys Desdemona's *position*. Rather than only producing "a curious mixture of projection and identification with Cassio"[25], as diagnosed by Pollard, Iago manages to impersonate *both* objects of Othello's desire and aims at simultaneously occupying both of their positions. This, if only in fantasy, is the first time that the triangular structure of desire (C-O-D) collapses and gives way to the 'scandal' of an imagined dyad of Othello and Iago, who has incorporated both Cassio and Desdemona.

The third moment of identification between Iago and Desdemona lies in their both being silenced. In the film, Othello tries to stop Iago's poisonous discourse by drowning him. In the end, of course, he smothers Desdemona with a pillow, while Iago, moreover, ultimately silences himself in an act of imaginary self-suffocation:

[23] Iago's wish for Cassio's position is made explicit early on in the play: *Iago:* "[...] Cassio's a proper man: let me see now, / To get his place, and to plume up my will / In double knavery." *Oth* 1.3.391–392

[24] *Oth* 3.3.416–428.

[25] David Pollard, "Iago's Wound" in: Virginia Mason Vaughan/Kent Cartwright eds., *Othello. New Perspectives* (London and Toronto: Associated University Presses, 1991), p. 89–96, 93.

Iago: Demand me nothing. What you know, you know.
From this time forth I never will speak word.[26]

The most successful and significant substitution of Desdemona by Iago, or in other words, the climax of identification between the two lies in the fact that both are 'married' to Othello. Parker's filmic staging[27] supports the interpretation of Act 3, Scene 3 as 'the other wedding-scene' in which Iago returns Othello's earlier 'oath':

Iago: I humbly do beseech you of your pardon
For too much loving you.
Othello: I am bound to thee for ever. [28]
[...]
Othello kneels
Iago kneels
Iago: [...] Witness, you ever-burning lights above,
You elements that clip us round about,
Witness that here Iago doth give up
The execution of his wit, hands, heart,
To wronged Othello's service. Let him command
And to obey shall be in me remorse
What bloody business ever.
Othello: I greet thy love [...]
Now art thou my lieutenant
Iago: I am your own for ever.[29]

Iago's substitution of Cassio is made explicit: "Now art though my lieutenant." In contrast, his substitution of Desdemona is implicit. In the film, Iago's double triumph – of supplanting both Cassio and Desdemona – is visualised by turning the dyad of Othello and Iago, from the mere imagination into an actual image: While the two men, alone on the citadel's rooftop, exchange these words – pledges of love and loyalty "for ever" – they both, following Shakespeare's stage direction, kneel. In addition to this, Parker has them both cut and, at the very moment of Othello's "I greet thy love", press their bleeding palms against each other to mingle their blood, and embrace. The parallels to the wedding ceremony are obvious: the extreme emotional involvement, the swearing of oaths until death, the embrace – which has already been introduced as the male-male version of the male-female kiss in the first wedding-scene –, this symbolic exchange of body fluids, which not only has clearly erotic, but, especially in times of AIDS, also undeniably homosexual overtones, and the signature of authenticity. While the camera shows Laurence Fishburne's back, the viewer can see Kenneth Branagh's face during the embrace. For once, his Iago does not coolly meet the viewers look in the visual equivalent to the verbal 'aside' on stage, but – having attempted this routine

[26] *Oth* 5.2.300–301.

[27] For readers interested in looking at the film-scene: the temporal signature is 1:11:22–1:13:35.

[28] *Oth* 3.3.215–217.

[29] *Oth* 3.3.465–482.

for a split-second and abandoned it – his eyes close and his face passionately distorts into a mix of agony and pleasure of absolute intimacy.

In this scene, Parker's Iago has finally arrived where he longed to be from the first moment we see him watching the first wedding scene: in Othello's arms. But not only does he, for a moment, supplant Cassio as well as Desdemona, he also manages to collapse the triangular structure which is imposed by patriarchal ideology in order to prevent the boundary between homosociality and homosexuality from dissolving. In contrast to the wedding scene, there is no third party present in this 'other wedding scene'. The dyadic fantasy is coming true for a moment, Iago has truly become a 'lieu-tenant', not only in the usual[30], but in the literal meaning of the word: he is keeping/holding/occupying the place (of Cassio and Desdemona) – the satisfaction of his passion seems possible. His failing effort to get Cassio killed by Roderigo and his successful attempt to erase Desdemona through Othello might be read as ultimately futile exertions to stabilise this position.

Just as we are unable to pinpoint 'the one' reason or motivating passion that would explain Iago's behaviour, we are also unable to limit him to one passion or position. Iago plays all the roles offered to him by the spectrum of homosociality: the man who (seemingly) promotes the interest of other men, the male friend, the protegé, the mentor, the rival. And it is precisely by playing these roles that he is able to manipulate the other figures caught in the same structure. But apart from playing these 'acceptable' roles, he also tries to assume the one position of the continuum that patriarchal ideology has to deny him. Parker's last image of Iago shows him trying again, but failing to occupy Desdemona's position permanently, that is in death and – this time – in bed.[31] I am referring here to one of the last images of the film: the marital bed as a veritable *tableau mort*. Othello, having wounded Iago and then stabbed himself – with the dagger he gave to Cassio in the wedding scene and received back from him in order to be able to commit suicide – lies and dies next to Desdemona. Emilia has already been lain at her other side. The bleeding Iago half climbs, half crawls onto the bed as well, trying to lie next to Othello. Indeed, as Pollard puts it, "[t]hroughout the play, Iago has ached to enter Desdemona's bedroom. In the end he succeeds and there receives from Othello the phallic wound [...] which completes the identification [with Desdemona]."[32] Although I agree in two crucial points – firstly, Iago's desire to enter Desdemona's bedroom or even bed, and, secondly, the identification of Iago and Desdemona – I differ from Pollard when it comes to the conclusion. In the context of his sadomasochistic reading of *Othello* this ending might appear as a success for Iago. In the context of my interpretation, it is an ultimate failure to occupy the very position that patriarchal ideology does not grant a man to occupy permanently in relation to another man. Parker's *tableau mort* supports this, both through its colour-coding and its positioning. Iago and Desdemona are, in opposition to Othello's black garments,

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[30] "Celui qui est directement sous l'ordre du chef et le remplace eventuellement." Paul Robert, *Le Petit Robert. Dictionnaire Alphabétique et Analogique de la Langue Française*, A. Rey/J. Rey-Debove, eds. (Paris: Le Robert, 1984).

[31] For readers interested in looking at the film-scene: the temporal signature is 1:52:34–1:53:05.

[32] Pollard, p. 94.

both clad in white, which signals their identification. But in contrast to Desdemona's spotless nightdress, which signifies her innocence, Iago's white shirt is soiled with blood that signals his guilt. The identification is exhibited as a broken one. It is as if by stabbing Iago, and thereby spilling his blood, Othello denies or undoes the bond that was sealed by the commingling of blood in the 'other wedding scene'. The boundary that had been momentarily dissolved between two male bodies, is reinstated again, by one male body wounding the other. The choreography of these bodies offers further support. Although Iago manages to haul himself onto the marital bed, and although he lies in the same *axis* as Desdemona, i.e. to Othello's right, he fails to actually lie *by his side*. This position is already occupied by Desdemona's dead body, and all that remains for Iago is to collapse onto her feet.

Zusammenfassung

Das fiktive Universum in Shakespeares *Othello* und Oliver Parkers Verfilmung von 1995 wird vor dem Hintergrund der Theorie des homosozialen Kontinuums von Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick als ‚world between men' beschrieben. Die Analyse verschiedener Formen des *male bonding* und der Triangulierung über die Position der Frau bilden die Basis der These, daß Iagos passioniertes Begehren sich auf genau jene Position richtet, die ihm von der patriarchalischen Ideologie verweigert werden muß, damit die für sie entscheidende kategoriale Differenz zwischen ‚homosozial' und ‚homosexuell' aufrecht erhalten werden kann. Obwohl es Iago gelingt, sowohl Cassio als auch Desdemona zeitweise erfolgreich zu verdrängen, erlaubt es die ideologische Unterfütterung des Textes nicht, daß er sich auf der Position Desdemonas dauerhaft etabliert.

PASSION AND POLITICS IN *OTHELLO*

BY

ANDREW JAMES JOHNSTON

Shakespeare's plays betray an almost Bourdieuian awareness of the political nature of society and the social nature of politics as well as of the differences in individual habitus this entails. The characters' emotions and, especially, their passions, are thus always linked to the rapidly shifting power structures of the plays, on the one hand, and the socio-psychological make-up the figures are shown to be equipped with, on the other. Often, much of the tension derives from a hiatus between an individual character's socially conditioned expectations and the requirements of a particular political situation. While it is indisputable that the language of hierarchy and degree, established order and traditional legitimacy features prominently in Elizabethan and Jacobean drama – and is, as E. M. W. Tillyard would have us believe, strongly reinforced by contemporary concepts of nature and the universe – Shakespeare, nevertheless, repeatedly stages political communities which, without being even remotely democratic, do present forms of political association markedly different from the feudal courts that dominate the political landscapes of so many of his plays. The Roman tragedies such as *Coriolanus*, *Julius Caesar* and, to a certain extent, *Anthony and Cleopatra*, provide ample proof of this tendency, as does *Othello*. Shakespeare's Venice is as republican as his Rome and the dramatist stresses the fact by turning Venetian councillors into *Senators* (They were mere *magnificoes* in the *Merchant of Venice*)[1]. The imperial city and the maritime signory thus demand a type of character who is not a simple courtier or vassal – though, admittedly, neither role deserves the epithet simple – but a *statesman*, that is the term Brabanzio uses when referring to himself and his fellow-councillors. And, indeed, the term *state* denoting that abstract and yet very concrete political entity reverberates throughout the play.

Yet for all its republicanism, Venice remains a singularly aristocratic society as Brabanzio makes clear in the same line in which he refers to *statesmen*. Though the Duke of Venice, as Shakespeare calls the *Doge*, possesses none of the monarchical absolutism so confidently exercised by Theseus of Athens, for instance, his title in and of itself may render ambiguous the republicanism of the city, if not for modern audiences, then perhaps for the play's eponymous hero. As Mark Matheson has pointed out, Othello tends to speak of the signory as though it were his feudal liege lord:[2] "My services which I have done the signory"[3] (1.2.18).

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[1] Mark Matheson, "Venetian Culture and the Politics of *Othello*", *Shakespeare Survey* 48 (1995), p. 124.

[2] Ibid., p. 127.

[3] William Shakespeare, *The Norton Shakespeare: Based on the Oxford Edition*, ed. by S. Greenblatt. *Tragedies* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1997).

But the language of feudal relationships jars grammatically with that of the state, as becomes especially visible at the end in the final act: “I have done the state some service and they know’t” (5.2.235). Time and again the Moor seeks to overcome the barriers of his ethnic and racial otherness by invoking values typical of the chivalric world of the Middle Ages: martial prowess, loyal service and royal descent:

> I fetch my life and being
> From men of royal siege (1.2.21–2)

Yet none of these values particularly impresses the signory whose representatives treat him like the mercenary he is.

> *Duke:* Valiant Othello, we must straight employ you
> Against the general enemy Ottoman. (1.3.48–9)

If they are quick to forgive him his secret wooing of Desdemona, they are equally quick to recall him and substitute him with another foreigner, the Florentine Cassio, when the Turkish danger appears to have sufficiently diminished (4.1.227–29). The state’s dealings with its servant reflect the complex and distrustful relationships between the *Serenissima* and the commanders of its armies during the Renaissance. One of the most famous and least trusted, Bartolomeo Colleoni (1400–75), was kept under a form of strict supervision verging on luxurious imprisonment whenever his military talents were not needed. It seems, therefore, as though Othello, by transferring not only his political but also his emotional allegiance to the signory, were getting his cultural bearings wrong. Similarly, Othello takes Cyprus – that colonial outpost and grim garrison town[4] – for something akin to a feudal fief. (In this Desdemona seems, however, to out-do him, since it is she who insists on accompanying her husband to Cyprus after he has already decreed that she is to stay home.)

Othello’s bombast and rhetorical excess have been read as linguistic signs of his social insecurity,[5] and though I find that interpretation persuasive, I feel that it fails to capture either the specifically histrionic aspect of Othello’s speeches or the particular political culture they express. Much as Othello’s words bespeak a desire to establish a verbal equality with the ruling class of Venice so do they imply an act of self-fashioning, but an act of self-fashioning decidedly more fundamental and performative than the mere projection of an image or a simple means of self-advertisement. What Othello does through his language is to enact the role of a feudal fossil. His words, his deeds and even his emotions serve the purpose of creating a self that must needs be in conflict with the mercantile and rational mentalities of the men he serves. His hyper-sensitivity, his generosity, his excessive jealousy and, finally, the violence of his passion are all meant to substantiate the nostalgic concept of self so at odds with the Venetian world that surrounds him. As Othello says to Desdemona: “The hearts of old gave hands, / But our new heraldry is hands, not hearts” (3.4.44–45). A term like “new her-

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[4] Michael Neill, “Changing Places in ‘Othello’”, *Shakespeare Survey* 37 (1987), p. 115.

[5] Lynne Magnusson, “‘Voice Potential’: Language and Symbolic Capital in *Othello*”, *Shakespeare Survey* 50 (1997), pp. 95–6.

aldry" must sound oxymoronic to those who consider it their duty to uphold the ancient and venerable forms of chivalry.

Othello's all-too-apparent need to affirm his traditionalistic identity may also help to explain his curious detachment right before murdering Desdemona that Michael Neill has drawn our attention to[6]:

> This sorrow's heavenly
> It strikes where it doth love (5.2.21–2)

This distance from one's own emotions resembles that of an actor distancing himself from his role and it seems only appropriate that this detachment comes when Othello's final attempt to validate his self-created identity culminates in the destruction of Desdemona and then of himself. Likewise, the hero's relationship to Iago follows a pattern prescribed by this role. In order to be that larger-than-life representative of an older, finer age Othello must fall victim to manipulation and betrayal, and it is Iago, himself continually deploying the language of vassalage when talking to Othello, who is only too happy to oblige. There is an unacknowledged collusion between the two actors, a collusion rendered all the more suspicious since Iago exhibits an uncanny distance from his own roles that permits him to see through not only his own disguises but also those of his master, whose rhetorical excess he criticizes: "[…] bombast circumstance / Horribly stuffed with epithets of war," (1.1.13–4).

When Iago's seduction of his master reaches its climax, the arch-trickster kneels before Othello, who is kneeling, too, and appropriates and mixes the language of love and the gestures of vassalage. This homoerotic parody of a wedding also contains elements of a feudal ceremony of investiture and homage, the religious elements of which are reminiscent of the rituals of the medieval chivalric orders as is Othello's mixture of Christian and martial verbiage.

> Witness you ever-burning lights above,
> You elements that clip us round about,
> Witness that here Iago doth give up
> The execution of his wit, hands, heart
> To wronged Othello's service. Let him command,
> And to obey shall be in me remorse,
> What bloody business ever.
> *They rise* (3.4.66–72)

A distant, feudal past is cast in the mould of specific emotions – emotions simultaneously signifying that past – which, I need hardly say, is no more than a nostalgic other to the play's present. To love and to feel is then to live or relive that past. To feel excessively, to plunge into passion, is to substantiate the culture of that past in an inimical present. Yet the logic of this retrograde utopianism necessarily leads into self-destruction, a self-destruction that hinges on betrayal. Iago assumes, therefore, the role of an all-powerful stage manager and director, since he is purveyor both of the passion that gives access to the feudal identity Othello craves and of the treachery underpinning that passion's tragic out-datedness. But even as Iago plays his role with unsur-

[6] Neill, p. 128.

passed perfection he permits the audience to glimpse the element of collaboration inherent in his role. And, this, I would argue, constitutes his most subtle and devastating act of betrayal, namely the manner in which he lays bare the self-engrossed, nostalgic histrionics of Othello's supposedly overmastering passion. Iago's ultimate triumph lies in his deconstruction of Othello's master narrative of the decline of feudal culture.

Zusammenfassung

Shakespeare's *Othello* ist eine Analyse nostalgischer Identitätskonstruktion. Othello, der Söldner im Dienst einer merkantilen Republik, inszeniert sein Selbstbild auf der Basis eines mittelalterlich inspirierten, feudalen Diskurses. Anachronistisch entwirft er sich als persönlicher Vasall des venezianischen Staates, dessen institutionelle Abstraktheit das Stück durch die Wiederholung des Begriffs *state* unterstreicht. Othello's Leidenschaft, wie auch sein mörderisches Scheitern sind in diesem Diskurs angelegt: Seine Rolle des edlen Ritters in einer modernen Welt erfordert geradezu den Konflikt, der zu seinem Untergang führt. Iago durchschaut die Konstruiertheit von Othellos Selbstbild und übernimmt die Verräterrolle, deren Othello um der Bestätigung seiner Identität willen bedarf. Doch der Verrat Iagos geht tiefer, denn er legt bloß, wie sehr es sich bei Othellos scheinbar wahrhaftiger Leidenschaft um das Produkt einer nostalgischen Selbstinszenierung handelt.

"MAKE PASSIONATE MY SENSE OF HEARING": TEACHING AND LEARNING IN *OTHELLO*

BY

ANGELA STOCK

Othello – the tragedy "[o]f one that lov'd not wisely but too well" (5.2.344)[1] is the dramatised unravelling of Renaissance ideologies of personhood, of self-fashioning. It shows a man who is striving to make himself, and it shows how he is unmade by a malevolent external influence. Iago's destruction of Othello's integrity, I would suggest, can be read and understood as a sort of inverted schooling, or a perverted process of socialisation – perverted, because it unleashes precisely those forces of passion that education properly sought to bridle.

The Renaissance humanists' optimistic views on man's perfectibility influenced their views on the importance of education. The humanist teacher hoped to realise and shape the natural potential for virtue that every child was proclaimed to have. Without art – call it 'discipline' or 'schooling' – nature would be wild, shapeless and incoherent. But in the young child it is not inherently wicked or sinful (except in the remoter sense of Original Sin). Roger Ascham demands in *The Schoolmaster* (1570) that "to the goodness of nature be joined the wisdom of the teacher". Erasmus of Rotterdam's educational work was based on the conviction, stated in *De pueris instituendis* (1529), that *homines non nascuntur sed finguntur* – men are not born but made.[2] The child's character was seen as a soft but hardening substance (Erasmus uses the image of clay) that is moulded and fashioned by its environment, for better or worse. The more susceptible the pupil, the more benevolent the teaching ought to be. Erasmus thus implicitly acknowledges that the child can be moulded into an inadequate or even harmful shape by bad or wicked teachers. 'Fingere' can imply double-dealing or deceit, pretence or lies: men, we might also say, are not born, but shaped through manipulation by the art of the teacher who works on and with the pupil's natural gifts.

In the term *finguntur* we also hear the root of the word 'fiction'. This is a hint at the close relation between public rhetoric (which aimed to engage the emotions of an audience of citizens to incite them to opportune action) and private tutoring (which aimed to engage the imagination and the mind of a pupil in order to incite him to virtuous action). So while the well-taught student could be thought of as a 'fiction' of his teacher in the sense that his teacher created him and made him, it was also often ob-

[1] All quotations from the play are taken from *The Riverside Shakespeare*, ed. G. Blakemore Evans and J. J. Tobin (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1997).

[2] See G. H. Bantock, *Studies in the History of Educational Theory*, vol. 1, *Artifice and Nature, 1350–1765* (London: George Allen & Unwin), 1980), p. 37 *et passim* chap. 1: "'A Chattering Flock': The Humanist Experience", pp. 11–52.

served that students could very effectively be taught *by way of* fictions, or rather by way of stories: narratives illustrate a *course of action* and are thus a much better guide than precepts, advice, or commonplaces. (Children will almost invaribly do as their parents do, not as their parents say.) Teaching – call it making or manipulating – by narrative is certainly prominent in *Othello*.

The first and immediately impressive instance in the play is the re-presentation before Father and Senate of Othello’s wooing of Desdemona. Brabantio at once produces ‘common knowledge’ (‘popular prejudice’ by any other name) to explain what perplexes him: “’tis probable and palpable to thinking” that this foreigner, this “thing”, has used magic to persuade his daughter (1.3.76 and 71). In fact, however, if Othello deliberately and consciously set about winning Desdemona at all, he did it in the best rhetorical manner, by vivid and colourful narrative. Othello makes passionate Desdemona’s sense of hearing by telling her (teaching her?) of the warrior’s *vita activa*. He specifies that she became very interested by the bits and pieces he related, and then asked for a full and complete narration. This full story of his life – presumably properly structured, with a beginning, a middle and end, with climaxes and catastrophes and denouements – has on his audience/pupil exactly the effect desired by teachers who told stories of the lives of classical heroes: it makes Desdemona want to imitate him, to model herself on him. “She wished that heaven had made her such a man” (1.3.162–3). Unable to emulate her hero, she does the next best – and the only possible – thing: she decides to marry him. “My heart’s subdu’d / Even to the very quality of my lord” (1.3.250–1): she strives to become one with him – in nature at least, if not in action.

Now, ideally, the *e-ducator* brings forth the youngster’s inherent capacity for virtuous action, and the pupil acquires *virtus* – the will and the capacity to be of use to the commonweal, from which will result honour and good reputation for the individual. Government of self and of others was the objective, not the contemplation of transcendental Truth. Reasonable conduct, refined behaviour were to be achieved; not simply the suppression of irrational impulses and passions, but the harnessing of one’s vital powers to the interests of the state. Apart from self-control and rationality, the principal acquirements of the nobleman in public office were communicative skills – that is, the ability to speak well, to persuade others, and in turn to decode their speech and behaviour in order to be able to rule them.

Iago destroys in Othello both the capacity to govern himself and others and the capacity to communicate. He reduces him to an incoherent wreck, anti-social as well as a-social, isolated in his fantasies and his tortured mutterings. He becomes a spectacle and an affront to his society – to the very men who used to esteem him for his contributions to the state’s welfare, and who used to succumb to his eloquence – and he ceases absolutely to communicate properly with his wife, whom he wooed by telling her stories of his life. Othello himself analyses his downfall as the result of a malevolent outside influence: he was “one not easily jealous, but being wrought, / Perplexed in the extreme” (5.2.345–6). Here it is again, the image of a malleable substance worked upon, fashioned into an allegory of Jealousy.

A stranger in Venetian society, Othello has relied on being taught by Venetians and on imitating their behaviour. At the end of the play he claims that he has been badly

taught, and that he was corrupted by one who had the ‘art’ to distort him. The striking thing is that at the beginning of the play, Othello possesses many of the virtues of the Renaissance nobleman, the responsible soldier and the self-effacing citizen. And yet at the same time he also, paradoxically, seems to possess the innocence of unformed youth.

When we first meet him – but for the detail of the colour of his skin and his non-Christian upbringing – Othello is a fine example of the Renaissance ‘governor’. He is no theorist, like Cassio, but has gained his experience out there in the world, developing from an apprentice warrior into a seasoned, skilled, respected general. Experience shaped by principle maketh the leader of men. Neither his military skills nor his principled character seem to be the result of a formal education, certainly not of a European Christian education, although it is unclear whether he acquired his principles in Venice or before. His public behaviour is beyond question refined and calmly self-assured, and he knows how to bridle his will and his impulses of passion by applying reason. After the noise and bustle of the first scene, Othello’s voice rings with quiet authority: “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” (1.2.80–3). Confident of his deserts and his social standing, he is ready like a good citizen to obey the regulations of official authority: “Wither will you that I go / To answer this your charge?” (1.2.83–4). This appears again later on when he quells the drunken brawl. Not only is he determined to keep order within the citadel, but he also feels very much responsible for the civilians’ welfare: “in a town of war / Yet wild, the people’s hearts brimful of fear, / To manage private and domestic quarrel?” (2.3.213–5). He is a complete Governor indeed – it is not that he does not have passions, it is that he is determined and able to harness them to reason: “passion, having my best judgement collied [darkened], / Assays to lead the way. ‘Zounds, *if* I stir …” (2.3.206–7, italics added). That is a controlled threat. And even later: “I’ll see before I doubt; when I doubt, prove” (3.3.190). These are sound precepts, guidelines to a good life.

So although in one sense, Othello seems to personify the perfect Renaissance officer and gentleman (stressing the ideal of self-fashioning in that he was ‘not to the manner born’), in another sense, he is yet uneducated, unguided, unshaped. For all his experience and his apparent strength of character, Iago recognises in Othello an innocence that resembles the blank sheet of the child’s mind that must be inscribed by the art of the teacher: “The Moor is of a free and open nature [and] will as tenderly be led by th’nose / As asses are” (1.3.399–401). The lever for Iago’s scheme to destroy Othello by making him jealous is precisely Othello’s childlike state of malleability. Other tragic protagonists are tempted by their desires (Faustus desires knowledge, Macbeth the Scottish crown, Marc Antony Egypt), or they have a very evident fault (Hamlet’s posturing, Lear’s emotional ruthlessness). In contrast, Othello’s vulnerability results from a combination of a very high degree of self-management and an extreme susceptibility to suggestion – which is not entirely different from the fundamental eagerness to *learn* that was attributed to human nature by Renaissance educators.

Because teaching is much more than just the passing on of knowledge, it should be attuned to the pupil’s aptitude and interests, hence the importance of individual teaching. The humanist educators agreed that it was vital to recognise the child’s inborn tal-

ents and specific potential in order to shape him most efficiently and effectively. The project of teaching a pupil was very much like the project of persuading an audience; rhetoric was both the means and the content of education. The teacher/orator had to find not only the images and phrases that most fittingly expressed his subject, he also had to take into consideration the predilections and prejudices of his pupil/audience. To stick with the image of 'moulding' a pupil: what stuff is the pupil made of? How is this stuff best worked upon?

The challenge that Iago poses to himself is to see whether he can persuade Othello – "the nature / Whom passion could not shake" – from his "solid virtue" (4.1.265–6). (This, by the way, a poignant variation on the dozens of Jacobean plays in which paranoid men set out to test a woman's virtue.) This challenge is necessarily both a rhetorical and a psychological feat requiring an intense and detailed focus on his pupil/victim, and can therefore also be describes as a kind of inverted teaching – a kind of tutorial from hell.

In advanced moral education, teachers applied more sophisticated methods than rote-learning, not the least of which were irony and the mannerist knack of leaving a gap or working a twist into the picture, which the beholder had to fill or disentangle. *The Praise of Folly* (1511) was, of course, a prime example of this kind of (ironic) self-effacement of the teacher: the best, most effective teacher is he who does not seem to be teaching at all, but who manages to make the student believe that his efforts are all his own initiative. Iago is not consciously modelling himself on the examples of Socrates or Erasmus, but he adopts the same technique. Successful instruction was further supposed to combine three essential elements: nature, training, and practice:

> By Nature I mean partly innate capacity for being trained, partly native bent towards excellence. By Training, I mean the skilled application of instruction and guidance. By Practice, the free exercise on our own part of that activity which has been implanted by Nature and is furthered by Training.[3]

This is how Iago proceeds. Othello has learnt to keep his own passions in firm check, but this means that the precarious balance of reason and desire is already familiar to him when Iago starts insinuating that Desdemona's "will" may recoil from "her better judgement" (3.3.236) and fix itself on Cassio. Othello has, as it were, a predisposition to engage with reflections on the force of passion. By foregrounding his and their common cultural background, Iago installs himself as an authority on Venetian women that gives credit to his 'instruction' on their wanton behaviour: "I know our country disposition well: / In Venice they do let God see the pranks / They dare not show their husbands" (3.3.201–3). Iago 'trains' Othello to read Desdemona's behaviour against the misogynist prejudices that he presents to Othello as valuable cultural knowledge. Thus instructed and 'trained' to see betrayal and wantonness in Desdemona's every word and action, Iago leaves Othello to get on with it and 'practice'. In Act 3, Scene 3, when he first begins to home in on Othello, Iago is practically breathing down his neck, carefully timing his exits and his entrances so that Othello feels that he is developing

[3] Erasmus of Rotterdam, Desiderius, *De Ratione Studii*, in *Literary and Educational Writings*, ed. Craig R. Thompson, 2 vols, vol. 2 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1978).

his own train of thought, yet never letting him off the hook. After the one-to-one tutorial in the schoolroom comes the carefully stage-managed contact with the outside world – as when the children of the family are allowed downstairs into the drawing room for half an hour when there are only friends and relatives present, in order to practice their curtsies and conversational skills. Act 4, Scene 1, in which Iago positions Othello to watch the encounter between himself, Bianca and Cassio, is equivalent to this. He leaves Othello alone in his corner, but afterwards alerts him to salient details ("Did you perceive how he laugh'd at his vice?" "And did you see the handkerchief?", 171 and 173), guides his interpretation ("Cuckold me!" – "O, 'tis foul in her!", 200–1), and his further action ("Do it not with poison; strangle her in her bed", 207).

After this scene, Othello has completed his course of instruction and can now reproduce the violent commonplaces on woman's fickleness without prompting and does not waver from his *idée fixe* any more. Even when we think that Desdemona may be getting through to him after all and denies the charge of infidelity, he turns from her again with acid sarcasm: "I cry you mercy then. / I took you for that cunning whore of Venice / That married with Othello" (4.2.88–90).

After verbal practice comes the conscientious application of acquired principles in everyday life. The result of humanist education – virtuous action in the public sphere – is realised in an inverted, a perverted form as irrational, obsessive action in the private bedroom, as the murder of an innocent woman. Iago has demonstrated to the audience how to unravel the Renaissance ideals about personhood and self-fashioning by disintegrating the mind of a Renaissance nobleman – albeit a black one.

Zusammenfassung

Iagos Zersetzung von Othellos persönlicher Integrität und seiner Wahrnehmungs- und Urteilsfähigkeit entspringt nicht dem ‚Genie des Bösen', von dem Iago geleitet scheint, sondern kann in zeitgenössische humanistische Theorien des Lehrens und Lernens eingeordnet werden. Iago setzt in Othello einen invertierten Prozeß der Sozialisation in Gang, dessen Ziele nicht die Selbstbeherrschung und die Förderung des Gemeinwohls sind, sondern die Überwältigung des ‚Schülers' durch seine kindlich-naturhaften Impulse und die niederen Vorurteile, die ihm sein ‚Lehrer' einpflanzt.

The Theatricality of the Emotions, the Deceived Eye, and the Emergence of Modern Love

BY

Irmgard Maassen

Prologue

At parting in Venice, Desdemona's father issues an ominous warning to his unwelcome son-in-law: "Look to her, Moor, if thou hast eyes to see: / She has deceived her father, and may thee."[1]

I

Connecting *eyes* and the activity of *looking* with the latent deceptiveness of shows of love, Brabantio's lines point to a complex interrelation of manifestations of feeling with conventions of seeing, an interrelation that informs not just *Othello* but also *The Two Noble Kinsmen*. This is my subject today. By contrast to the other papers, I particularly focus on the first term in our workshop's topic, namely on the 'performance' of the passions, on their theatricality. I am adopting a historicising approach to look at the function of emotions, or passions, in the context of a culture where identity and authority were intricately bound up with public visibility and ritualised spectacle.

My argument is based on the assumption that the popular theatre of Shakespeare's time did not just passively reflect the early modern culture of feeling. Rather, by deploying the affective, and affecting, power of theatrical performance, it actively participated in the formation of emotional codes and economies. As Thomas Heywood wrote in his *Apology for Actors* (*c*.1608), "lively and well spirited action [...] hath power to new mold the hearts of the spectators and fashion them to the shape of any noble and notable attempt."[2] Theatrical representation, with its mutually reinforcing interplay of a highly literary rhetoric with embodied performance, served both to display, instigate, and literally infect with emotions, as well as to discursively shape

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[1] William Shakespeare, *Othello*, ed. by E. A. J. Honigmann. The Arden Shakespeare 3rd Series (Walton-on-Thames: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1997), 1.3.293–4. All subsequent references are to this edition.

[2] Thomas Heywood, *An Apologie for Actors* (1608?), B4r. Quoted from Katharine Eisaman Maus, "Horns of Dilemma: Jealousy, Gender, And Spectatorship in English Renaissance Drama", *English Literary History* 54 (1987), 561–583, here 566. Note that in Heywood's view theatrical representation stimulates emulation of an ideal, which highlights the theatre's affinity to public spectacles such as tournaments and other feats of competitive emulation characteristic of the homosocial court culture.

them.[3] Simultaneously, it self-reflexively drew attention to the inevitable artificiality of its own emotional performances. The theatre thus played a central part in modelling the emerging early modern subjectivity, to the extent that this subjectivity, with its new licence to individual self-fashioning but also its heightened awareness of the political dangers inherent in the new individualism, was constructed around the tension between interiority and appearance. This dichotomy between what an older criticism liked to refer to, unhistorically, as the universal human conflict between 'being' and 'seeming' emerges as the organising structural and thematic principle in genres as diverse as the revenge tragedy, the comedy of manners, moral satire, and especially in courtesy and conduct literature where it manifests itself in the friction between an inward morality and external manners.[4] It is in the specific representational mode of the theatre itself, however, that the contradiction, but also the close interdependency, of 'genuine' and 'staged' feeling becomes embodied and self-reflexively performed. The representation of emotions in Shakespeare's theatre, I contend, collapses our neat late modern distinction between authenticity, on the one hand side, and performance, on the other, in favour of a historically more appropriate concept of the 'performativity of emotion'.[5]

II

Both plays, I would argue, are centrally concerned with the potential deceptiveness, or inadequacy, of performed feeling, but both significantly fail to envisage a viable alternative to the need to perform "that within which passeth show".[6] The pervasive suspicion that a display of emotion may be feigned manifests itself in a preoccupation with 'seeing' and the relation of the visual sense to truth and dissimulation. Each play ad-

[3] See Steven Mullaney, "Mourning and Misogyny: *Hamlet*, *The Revenger's Tragedy*, and the Final Progress of Elizabeth I, 1600–1607", *Shakespeare Quarterly* 45,2 (1994), pp. 139–162, here 144: "As a forum for the representation, solicitation, shaping, and enacting of affect in various forms, for both the reflection and [...] the reformation of emotions and their economies, the popular stage of early modern England was a unique contemporaneous force. [I]t certainly served as a prominent affective arena in which significant cultural traumas and highly ambivalent events [...] could be directly or indirectly addressed, symbolically enacted, and brought to partial and imaginary resolution."

[4] For the ideology of female conduct as predicated on the opposition of external manners and internal morals, see the "General Introduction" to William St Clair and Irmgard Maassen eds., *Conduct Literature for Women 1500–1640* (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2000), vol. 1, pp. ix–xli.

[5] See Irmgard Maassen, "Formal Ostentation, Maimed Rites, and Madness: The Theatrical Spectacle of Mourning in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*", in Stephen C. Jaeger and Ingrid Kasten eds., *Codierungen von Emotionen im Mittelalter / Emotions and Sensibilities in the Middle Ages* (de Gruyter: Berlin and New York, 2003), forthcoming.

[6] William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*. ed. by G. R. Hibbard. The Oxford Shakespeare (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1998, [1]1987), 1.2.85. – See the predominance of scenes of observation, spying and eavesdropping in Shakespeare's plays.

dresses, and critiques, a specific order of seeing that entails a different conceptualisation of the nature and the function of passionate love.[7]

Take *The Two Noble Kinsmen*. The reason, I believe, for which it appears such an alien and uncomfortable play today lies in its exploration of a world utterly ruled by formal ceremony and highly ritualised communication, a world which strikes us today as pre-modern. The play presents us with a superabundance of processions staging weddings, funerals, or military victories, of folk dance and ballads, hunting, games and ritual combat, of rigidly choreographed supplications and prayers in temples. The fact that it is Theseus, above all, who keeps insisting on the necessity to perform rites properly down to the minutest detail – "omit not anything / In the pretended celebrations" he repeatedly urges (1.1.209–10)[8] – highlights the function of ceremony: princely power, noble honour, and courtly hierarchy are all invested in spectacle and ritual.

Identity, in this world, is constituted by the public display of noble qualities to an expert audience, whose appreciation or disparagement can make or unmake the performer. Thus Arcite, released by a princely pardon from prison but unwilling to comply with the condition of his banishment, acquires a place of service which affords him a new identity – conferred on him by the exterior markers of a livery and a horse – by performing, incognito, in a running and wrestling competition. He gains recognition by exhibiting himself to the view of courtly spectators, who frankly discuss the virtues of this unknown performer, going over his abilities, his face, his body, his garments, and his speech in a formal catalogue of praise reminiscent of the literary blazon of female beauty. (2.5.10–29)

We encounter here an order of seeing which derives, theoretically, from platonic philosophy, and was shaped socially by the courtly culture of the late Middle Ages and the Renaissance.[9] Seeing here is still 'allegorical', in the sense that it is bound up in the traditional analogy between macrocosm and microcosm and confirms the homology between physical and spiritual beauty. External appearance, in this view, is indicative of internal truth – the body, like a heraldic shield or coat of arms, bears the infallible signs of someone's true being. Bembo in Castiglione's *Cortegiano* expresses the classical neoplatonic view of the convergence of external beauty and inner goodness thus: "[...] outward beauty is a true sign of inner goodness. This loveliness, indeed, is impressed upon the body in varying degrees as a token by which the soul can be recog-

[7] I'm not concerned here with the theorisation of the 'gaze' as done by Laura Mulvey. As Mulvey herself has warned, see discussion in fn. 31 in Edward Pechter, "'Have you not read of some such thing?' Sex and sexual stories in Othello", *Shakespeare Survey* 49 (1996), pp. 201–216, the notion of a masculine, reifying and colonialising gaze is an anachronism in the period under discussion. Looking and being looked at, under conditions of a courtly culture where identity and status were dependent on public display and visibility, were enabling as much as repressive activities. The division between subject and object of the gaze with its modern, scientific and centrally perspectived regime of seeing was at that time still competing with alternative orders and theories of seeing.

[8] All quotations from John Fletcher and William Shakespeare, *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, ed. by Lois Potter. The Arden Shakespeare 3rd Series (London: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 2002).

[9] For an exploration of different orders of seeing in Shakespeare's sonnets, see Gisela Ecker, "Das Drama der Blicke und die Krise des Gesichtssinns in Shakespeares *Sonnets*", *Shakespeare-Jahrbuch* 131 (1995), pp. 140–153.

nized for what it is [...]"[10] In this context the appraising gaze functions as an instrument not only of aesthetic evaluation but of moral approval as well. Looking is a performative activity in that it re-enacts and confirms the normative and social order of courtly society; it not merely discovers but constructs and confers value and identity.

The performative power of looking is further underlined by its function in establishing legality. Palamon stakes his right to possession of Emilia on the fact that he saw her first, before Arcite did.[11] It is significant to find that the outcome of the play corroborates his claim, a 'right of first sight'. Similarly, the trial by combat depends for its legitimacy on the validating presence of eye witnesses, in particular of Emilia for whose favour the two men are fighting, as Theseus points out when he urges Emilia to attend the tournament: "The knights must kindle / Their valour at your eye." (5.3.29–30)[12]

Whether sending or receiving rays of light, the eye in this philosophy serves as the gateway to the heart. Looking and loving are closely intertwined activities, both playing their part in the construction of social value. Love, like other incorporated dispositions, to paraphrase Bourdieu, acts as a shortcut in the complex social negotiations of norms and ideals.[13] As Niklas Luhmann has pointed out, however, love in the early modern period does not yet underwrite the uniqueness of the individual person, as does modern love encoded as passion which evolved in the course of the 18th century.[14] Instead, love within the old allegorical order of seeing valorises generic qualities, seeking representational perfection rather than the singular qualities of an individual. As Bembo explains in the *Cortegiano*: "[...] from the particular beauty of a single body [love] guides the soul to the universal beauty of all bodies [...]".[15] Within the medieval code of love as idealisation that is explored in *The Two Noble Kinsmen* love derives its legitimation and irresistible force from the ideal perfection ascribed to, or perceived in, the beloved object.[16]

III

Historicising love in this manner, I'd like to argue, can help us clarify some of the critical cruxes of the play. First, it may serve to redeem Emilia from critical opprobrium. Her inability to choose between the two kinsmen has provoked the harsh, if

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[10] Baldesar Castiglione, *The Courtier*, transl. by George Bull (Harmondworth: Penguin 1976), p. 330.

[11] See Palamon: "I, that first saw her; I that took possession / First with mine eye of all those beauties in her / Reveal'd to mankind." (2.2.167–69) The pun on *I* and *eye* underlines the interdependency of being and looking.

[12] See also 3.6.134, where the kinsmen's offence is said to lie not so much in the fact of their duelling but in the secrecy of their duel, without witnesses and officers of arms.

[13] See Pierre Bourdieu, *Sozialer Sinn. Kritik der theoretischen Vernunft*, Stw 1066 (Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp 1993), chap. 1.4. "Glaube und Leib", pp. 122–147.

[14] Niklas Luhmann, *Liebe als Passion* (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 1984).

[15] Castiglione, p. 340.

[16] Luhmann, pp. 57ff. and passim.

utterly anachronistic, comment that in matters of love she behaves like a silly dithering shopgirl who does not know what she wants. But the normative framework of courtly culture makes it impossible for her to choose between two lovers who are presented as emblems of perfect equality in noble blood and chivalrous virtue. Emilia's perusal of her suitors' pictures in 4.3. may reveal to her differences of colour and character but can only confirm, as indeed it does, sameness of merit. A love that is governed by the order of allegorical seeing must necessarily fail to distinguish between two who are by definition equal in worth, no matter if one appears merry and the other sad. By contrast to modern love, courtly love as presented in the play is not a distinguishing faculty that appreciates individual singularity and validates the uniqueness of the beloved, but is a normative faculty that acknowledges ideal perfection, seeing the type of the honourable knight in the individual aspect of face and expression. This is why the two kinsmen are by necessity fully interchangeable in the eyes and the love of the lady. Conversely, one glimpse of the lady from the prison window is sufficient to inspire undying love in Palamon and Arcite, as her appearance does indeed convey all a lover will ever need to know about her.[17]

Secondly, historicising 'love' can shed a new light on the much discussed conflict between homo- and heterosexual passion in the play. The Amazon Emilia's reluctance to prefer one kinsman to the other, which smacks of a general indifference to men, has been greeted, citing her childhood love to Flavina, as a sign of an invincible homoerotic orientation. The unbreakable "knot of love" (1.3.41) between Theseus and Pirithous has been similarly interpreted, as has, of course, the love that unites Palamon and Arcite: two souls growing together so that they are each father, friend, acquaintance, family, and heir, and, most significantly, even "wife" to one another. (2.2.80–84) It makes sense to read the play as discussing the competing claims of homosexual, or rather homosocial, love and normative heterosexuality. It grows out of a historical moment when the blatant misogyny and homosocial court culture of James I clashed with the Protestant doctrine of holy marriage which had prevailed after the Reformation and was, as Catherine Belsey has argued, increasingly forcing unruly passions into the domestic mould of patriarchal marriage.[18]

However, I would like to complicate the smooth and, I believe, unhistorical conflation in these readings of homosexual and homosocial bonding.[19] To regard the desire,

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[17] See, for example, the anachronistic criticism of Madelon Lief and Nicholas F. Radel, "Linguistic Subversion and the Artifice of Rhetoric in *The Two Noble Kinsmen*", *Shakespeare Quarterly* 38 (1987), p. 412, that the knights do not know her at all when they profess their love.

[18] See Catherine Belsey, *Shakespeare and the Loss of Eden. The Construction of Family Values in Early Modern Culture* (London: Basingstoke 1999). – There is no doubt that in the overall conception of the play fruitful wedded love is supposed to triumph over sterile, 'narcissistic' (see 2.2., Emilia in the prison's garden) homoeroticism – but the dark mood of tragedy infusing the comedy and the disturbing lack of romantic idealisation of heterosexual love, usually a feature of comedy, point to a less than wholehearted rejoicing in this triumph.

[19] For a discussion of these terms see Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Between Men. English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985). I am indebted to Judith Klinger's revisionary reading of desire and sexuality in the Middle Ages, see her "Gender-Theorien: Ältere deutsche Literatur", in Claudia Benthien and Hans Rudolf Velten eds., *Germanistik als Kul-*

the 'love', which is fuelled by the courtly code of honour as primarily sexual is an anachronistic fallacy. Next to love as sexual passion, standing under the aegis of Venus, the play explores the power of a desire, also figured as 'love', which is directed at the gratification honour can provide. Instead of leading to conquest and possession, this love is enacted in competition and emulation.[20] Rather than be content to uncouple sexuality from gender difference, as is customarily done in those readings of early modern plays that tease out covert homosexual meanings, I suggest we need to uncouple desire itself from sexuality. This will enable us to acknowledge the presence in these plays of an attraction emanating not from difference of gender but from sameness of rank and honour. What draws Palamon and Arcite to each other can then be seen to be their outstanding knightly valour – each loves in the other the ideal type he himself represents. In the early modern period romantic love tends to confirm the naturalness of the aristocratic hierarchy of rank, manifest in the visibility, often through all disguises, of virtue and honour[21], rather than the naturalness of the heterosexual order as in today's Mills and Boone romance, which celebrates the triumph of eroticised gender difference over class difference. *The Two Noble Kinsmen* teaches us to be alert to the plural intersections and overwritings of sexual difference with rank difference in the early modern construction of desire.

IV

The subplot mirrors the Amazon Emilia's predicament in telling ways. Contrary to Emilia, the Jailer's Daughter initially has no difficulty distinguishing Palamon from Arcite. While this might be read as gesturing towards the more modern concept of love as a passion that individualises, the fate of her love contradicts this interpretation. By contrast to Ophelia, an analogy which is often drawn, her love sickness, which grows into melancholy, is not elevated into an ennobling passion. While in *Hamlet* madness and melancholy become the mood/mode in which an interiority asserts itself that exceeds the preordained forms of social ritual and convention, *The Two Noble Kinsmen* allows no space for such interiority to the Jailer's Daughter. Instead, she is recruited in to act the madwoman in the morris dance, a popular entertainment that neatly contains her excessive passion in the mould of an approved ritual, effectively de-individualizing the emotion. In making her perform what she is – mad – the morris dance precludes any opening of a gap between being and seeming.

turwissenschaft. Eine Einführung in neue Theoriekonzepte (Reinbek: Rowohlt, 2002), pp. 267–297, and to illuminating discussions with Jutta Eming and the gender workshop of the *Sfb Kulturen des Performativen* in Berlin.

[20] Imitation is the mode of Emilia's and Flavina's love, see 1.3.64–78. For masculine rivalry, see Donald K. Hedrick, "'Be Rough With Me': The Collaborative Arenas of *The Two Noble Kinsmen*", in Charles H. Fry ed., *Shakespeare, Fletcher and* The Two Noble Kinsmen (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1989), pp. 45–77.

[21] As when prince Florizel's love of the shepherdess Perdita in *The Winter's Tale* correctly signals that she is a lost princess.

Furthermore, the madness of the Jailer's Daughter is cured by recourse to traditional Galenic medicine. She has the balance of her humours restored through coitus, in a plot that takes advantage of her mad delusions in which she confuses her real and her imagined lover – just like Emilia, she cannot, after all, differentiate between individuals. An excess of looking has created excessive passion: "That intemperate surfeit of her eye hath distempered the other senses," the Doctor notes. (4.3.69–70). In turn, excessive passion hampers vision: The cure thus works as a comic figuration of the old commonplace that love is blind – blind to individual difference, that is, which is, of course, the flip side of the ideology of love as idealisation.[22]

V

The deceptiveness of appearances plays a crucial part in *Othello* as well. Iago, famously, is not what he seems. On all levels the play is informed by a deep anxiety about the possible discontinuity between external manners and internal virtue, or between performed emotions and inner feelings. 'Ocular proof', knowing by looking, is in high demand, but fails; Othello cannot prove Desdemona's adultery by physical observation, so Iago has to create a vivid mental image of the act. When Othello does observe Iago interviewing Cassio, his eye is deceived: he mistakes banter about Bianca for boasting about Desdemona. In the mercantile world of Venice, the platonic bond between inner essence and outer appearance that propped up courtly love has been severed; the locus of truth has shifted into the realm of the unobservable interior.

This is most strikingly embodied by the paradox of Othello himself, whose black countenance is emphatically not indicative of his inner merit. When Desdemona claims that she "saw Othello's visage in his mind" (1.3.253) she inverts the allegorical order of seeing, and professes a love that has liberated itself from the compulsive equation of outer and inner. This love takes on the form of a 'passion' aspiring, in Luhmann's terms, to perfection of itself rather than to the perfection of its object, as is poignantly illustrated by Othello's declarations of love. But the modern affectionate marriage that is thus made possible produces its own tragic dilemma: "O curse of marriage! / That we can call these delicate creatures ours / And not their appetites!" (3.3.272–274) Othello exclaims, revealing the fear that arises from the ultimate invisibility of interior feelings, feelings that, as the contemporary conduct advice keeps warning, can so easily escape control and patriarchal government.

Othello's jealousy is thus a symptom of the derangement of feeling caused by the modern disjunction between seeing and knowing.[23] It grows to tragic dimensions as he

[22] This love, conceptualised as an imbalance of the body's humoral fluids, assumes the porous body of Galenic medicine, which intersects with the world in a constant exchange not just of fluids and vapours, but of looks as well. The closing-off of a an autonomous body that is required by the subject-object split which marks modern subjectivity, a split which brings forth interiority and enables individualisation, has not yet left a mark here.

[23] Katherine Eisaman Maus (1987) sees the jealous male in Renaissance drama as representative of the paying spectator in the theatre who is most agonizingly involved and at the same time most marginalised and out of control, thrown back on his powers of interpretation. See her "Horns of Dilemma", p. 578.

makes a last fatal mistake, mis-interpreting what he sees: When Desdemona is lying on her bed, "that whiter skin of hers than snow / And smooth as monumental alabaster" (5.2.4–5) should have told him that she is what she seems – an emblem of innocence. Instead, schooled by Iago in the deceptiveness of appearances, he takes her unspotted beauty for the epitome of her falsity, and kills her. In the depiction of Desdemona, as generally of female virtue in the comedies, Shakespeare falls back on the old platonic epistemology, holding out the promise that the confusion caused by the disassociation of seeing and loving is only temporary, the reversible effect of some evil interference. As we now know, reversible it wasn't – neither for Desdemona nor for modern love.

Zusammenfassung

Die frühneuzeitliche Subjektivität, mit ihrem hohen Bewußtsein für die individuellen Chancen, aber auch die politischen Risiken des *self-fashioning*, entfaltete sich im Spannungsfeld von Innerlichkeit und Performanz, von 'Sein' und 'Schein'. Das Theater der Shakespearezeit stellt diesen Konflikt zwischen Authentizität und Simulation nicht nur in der Thematik seiner Stücke, sondern auch durch selbstreflexive Verweise auf den eigenen performativen Repräsentationsmodus aus. Mein Beitrag liest *Othello* und *The Two Noble Kinsmen* in diesem Kontext als Auseinandersetzungen mit dem latenten Täuschungsverdacht, der der Vorführung von Gefühl anhaftete. In der Betonung der Bedeutung des Augensinns und der Ungewißheit, ob der Augenschein Wahrheit oder Täuschung vorspiegelt, verhandeln die Stücke eine sich wandelnde Ordnung des Sehens, die auf das engste mit der Emergenz einer neuen Ordnung des Fühlens, mit 'Liebe als Passion' (Luhmann), assoziiert ist.

In *The Two Noble Kinsmen* generiert die traditionelle neoplatonische Gleichsetzung von innerem Wesen und äußerer Erscheinung Gefühlsperformanzen, die heute ritualisiert und überaus artifiziell anmuten, die jedoch in der die öffentliche Tugendausstellung fordernden Kultur des Hofes verankert sind. *Othello* dagegen ist im kommerzialisierten Milieu Venedigs angesiedelt und verhandelt, indem es die Beweiskraft des Sehens – *ocular proof* – problematisiert, den neuzeitlichen Bruch zwischen innerer Tugend und äußeren Manieren, zwischen echtem und vorgespieltem Gefühl. Othellos Eifersucht ist als Reaktion auf die zunehmende Unmöglichkeit zu lesen, den Glauben an die Eindeutigkeit der die Gefühle signalisierenden Körperzeichen aufrechtzuhalten. Während Liebeswahnsinn und Eifersucht in *The Two Noble Kinsmen* in ritualisiertem Spiel und Duell aufgefangen und entschärft werden, brechen diese Leidenschaften in *Othello* alle zeremoniellen Ausdruckskonventionen und werden zum – tragisch besetzten – Modus, in dem das frühmoderne Subjekt sich individualisiert.

DISCUSSION STATEMENT
'THIS IS WHERE THE ACTION IS': PERFORMING EMOTIONS IN THE 'TWIN PLAYS ABOUT LOVE', *THE TWO NOBLE KINSMEN* AND *OTHELLO*

BY

KAY HIMBERG

[This is the written-out version, reconstructed from memory, of an unprepared response to the papers read at the "Wissenschaftliches Seminar". In accordance with the idea of rendering the performative spirit of a live seminar, the character of a spontaneous oral contribution has been kept, so that in style and formulation there are only minor changes and parenthetical extensions. The questions addressed to the presenters have been curtailed here in favour of a brief discussion of the responses given.]

We have heard (not read!) presentations which focussed on *Othello* largely as a play governed by a sense of sight, e.g. the "deceived eye" or the visual arrangement of the corpses at the end of its film adaptation, while *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, if discussed at all, was analysed mainly in such insinuously visual terms as that of "public spectacle", or the difference between its 'love at first sight' and its "homosocial desire". In response to this, and as a supplement, I'd like to add a reminder of the predominant role of speech or the aural channel of communication – not just on the Elizabethan stage and its conception of theatricality in general, but in these two plays, and their presentation of emotions, in particular.

I

Beginning with the secondary issue of homosocial desire, and the proposition that it should be analysed as quite distinct from love, and rather be placed on 'this side of love', the side of mere politeness, consideration, care for the other's interest etc., one could point out that these 'merely' courteous terms are also the terms of – courtship! As the case of Arcite and Palamon demonstrates, they extend seamlessly to tenderness and the emotional communication of 'soul-sharing' as well as to a frequent and intimate corporeal communication of embraces and 'contact sports' like armed combat, for which they dress and arm each other with the utmost – well, if not love, then care and kind words, tenderness and the promoting of the other's interest even at one's own expense – all of them elements, if not constituents, of love.

Furthermore, it is accepted that there is also a 'homosocial desire' with implications of sharing good and bad experiences, competing and otherwise interacting with each other emotionally and physically (being engaged in courtly activities, knightly games etc. ;-)) and that the intrusions of heterosexual episodes, on the other hand, do not end but rather re-inforce the homosocial bond according to E. K. Sedgwick, and to Shake-

speare/Fletcher: the two kinsmen laugh about past amours, and celebrate their jealousy of each other about a present one just as they celebrate their own unrivalled, 'eternal' love and marital relationship (2.2.80–117, with female homosexual implications). Though this is then ironised by the falling-out over a girl, it does hold until 'death does them part'.

If even the intrusion of conventional love (i.e. the falling for some heterosexual token, such as Tamina's picture) serves to rekindle a desire for each other, in addition to the affections and ties of friendship, soul-sharing, kinship, camaraderie in arms, in prison, and in amours – then does all this still not add up to a love, to something like *caritas* combined with *agape*, desire and jealousy combined with such behaviour of tender professions and delight in each other's presence and concern for the other's well-being? These would seem to be objective criteria for 'love' in most senses of the word short of overt sexual desire or the brute fact of physical sex (then a punishable offence), neither of which are necessarily present in, and so cannot be essential to, all heterosexual love. The strong presence of an additional element of jealousy (the loving desire turned into anxiety about another love-object, the *tertium homosocialis*, becoming disruptive) is supportive evidence for this; and so is the fact that *Othello* can be seen as presenting the sinister twin of *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, a pathological version of a homosocial love/hate-bonding in the extremes of male rivalry, envy, jealously, and battling to death: the 'homosociopathological' variant. (In both cases, to be sure, there is not actual homosexuality nor the homophobia that is also often associated with homosociality, but more or less homosocial desire, homosocial aggression, elements of love as well as of hate, of 'androphilia' and 'misanthropy' among particular men.)

If, then, the relationship has nearly all the elements of loving behaviour plus stable bonding, plus a homosocial desire, plus a homoerotic subtext, yet if we were still to insist *a priori* that only the performance of sexual desire constitutes love, whereas the performance of social desire can be anything else but not that – then the rubber band could snap, and our overstretched categories come flying in our faces: a mere heterosexual fantasy and hyperbolical topos, a single sighting of a distant appearance, killing off all the other, infinitely more substantial claims (the mere name of love, a Dulcinea, being 'mis-taken' as more essential than actual performances of love). It might be more comfortable to speak of the former as the token of love, of the latter as an actual instance of it; we do not have to separate desire from the concept of love if we are willing to talk of a love relationship being possible without overt sexual practices. But whatever we call it, the kinsmen's relationship is a complex and quite exclusive emotional bonding, long before the homosocial desire finds a legitimate third party to legitimise its getting going and being performed again – bonding, competing, falling out and being reconciled and fighting again, willing to go so far as to have one die in the other's arms – traditionally the ultimate, *Tristan-and-Isolde* kind of love. While all this happens in the name of the third party, that party is of the remotest, nominal presence only, one mere glimpse without any actual influence (she is less of a presence even than that other famous third party, King Mark). And indeed, Arcite dies in Palamon's arms, while Emilia is merely disposed of between them like an inheritable piece. *The Two Noble Kinsmen* is a case study of how much there can be to the 'homosocial love' within an *affaire à trois*, and how little to the heterosexual, indeed 'heterosocial' one.

II

At the same time, and this gets us to the primary issue, this actual love (that now might dare to speak its name) is a very 'well-spoken' relationship, in opposition to the fantastical *fata morgana* of 'love at first sight'. It is conceived, developed and acted out in the medium of language. While they fall in love with the replaceable object of their discourse *at first sight*, apparently they never take *a second look*! The falling in love is instantaneous, by convention, and while this may be a marvel, it does not actually give it a claim superior to the existing relationship, as the opposition between 'love' and 'in love' ('Liebe' and 'Verliebtheit') confirms, for one thing. Moreover, it is ridiculed by the fact that Cupid's arrow is cleft, and the lightning penetration of the heart at the moment of visual contact is doubled (it might have been trebled if a 'third man' had been around ;-)) Thirdly, that comically superficial 'falling in love together' says more about the bond between the men, than about their affinity to the so-incidental object of their shared passion. That object becomes disposable as soon as it has done its work and incensed a desire that surprisingly does not live on what one should expect, namely more of the same visual or preferably closer-range sensuous input (which suggests that it is not the material cause, but rather the occasion for that love). Even when there is a closer look and a conversation, in the case of Arcite, that makes no difference and is not requisite, as shown by Palamon. Rather, it lives on the doubling of itself, on the friction between the two breasts in which it is homologously and homosocially raised – on a dialogical discourse. If 'love talk' is anything to go by, well, it is performed between the men – both before their heterosexual incandescence, and after. Each time, it is characterised by the same 'histrionic' exuberance as in *Othello* – but in both plays this exuberance is a rhetorical one. (The English acting tradition has carried that reliance on speech rather than mere mimics, on the capability for distinguished oral delivery, declamation and incantation up to today, as any comparison with American acting shows.)

The 'falling in love with lightning speed' depends on the visual channel, the slower channel of verbal communication is where the love is mainly 'performed' – worked out by the two who continue to explicitly be 'lovers' of each other, even in the very fact of sharing their visual infatuation. Partly due to the demands of the genre, but only partly so, they are constantly conversing, and even the 'falling in love at first sight' is presented to us verbally – it is not a secondary circumstance but a central fact that, as always, they present also this to each other, that they validate and upgrade their feelings, even mood swings, by exchanging them constantly in a closed circuit of mutually amplifying and counteracting interferences, that they are vying to add value to them, and that even when they are separated by a prison wall, they are unable to keep up that love without the other (that is to say, without the soul-mate, rival and dialogue partner – without the ostensible but insubstantial love-object, they keep it up very well ;-)).

So it is not just their previous amours that they go over and rehearse with each other (like Romeo and Mercutio), but nearly all of their present amour is acted out and performed between the two friends – without Emilia even knowing of their existence, for a time at least. And apart from the initial gazing, nearly all of this new emotion is performed verbally. Even when this rhetorical performance of an extremely unattainable

love fought out between two best friends and 'wives unto each other' turns into a physical battle between two jealous rivals, this is embedded in so much talk justifying, explaining, interrupting it, that even if their weapons had actually produced some result other than further talking, it would have been an offshoot of their rhetorical heat – of histrionics which are predominantly verbal. To end also this second discussion at the point of Arcite's death: again, it is the two males who do all the requisite talking, perform the emotional speeches that serve to embed and make meaningful also this final moment of a shared life – while Emilia is standing by without a say, and disposed of like a chattel, or let's say a pet, with a mere kiss, and a handing-over to the inheritor.

III

The case is similar in *Othello* (to extend the second point, and primary thesis). Here, there is not even a suspicion of 'love at first sight'. As literary scholars like to remind each other, here the love is inspired by a verbal, indeed poetical narrative performance (and in the time covered by the play, he continues to cultivate that love, and exhibit his emotionality, by means of his eloquence). There is no spectacle, and no spectatorship, and the resulting love is much more real. Othello, in his turn, falls in love with the 'audienceship' of Desdemona, which demonstrates her qualities of verbal, rather than mere visual reception: apart from imagination, responsiveness, curiosity and patience, most importantly there is compassion and other sympathetic identification. The whiteness of her skin is a symbol of this pure responsiveness and complete identification, but of as little consequence in its own right as any other visual attributes. Even the black-and-white contrast is not predominantly a visual one. (Here too we must beware of the prejudices imbibed by those weaned to an increasingly visualised media world, as compared to those practiced listeners to the plays and sermons of Elizabethan London, when there was less to see than to hear, and this not just due to the visual conditions of the English, as compared to the Southern Californian weather.) The objections, e.g. of the unwilling father-in-law, to Desdemona's marriage to Othello, seem not so much directed against his skin, as against the suspicion of a blackness of soul, of a dark and impure mind, of black arts and crafts – for he changes his mind quite easily when he learns that the magic was in the poetic art of narration: again, the visual is outdone by the verbal! The irony, of course, is that this suspected darkness of soul and mind, rather than body, is exhibited and performed by the play's other male protagonist, its 'Other' in the psychoanalytical sense as well as that of the play's genesis: the suppressed eponymous hero, Iago. The visible contrast is superseded by the contrast between words and deeds. And the blackest deeds are not the acts of killing, but what they are embedded in, the verbal contexts that make them betrayals – it is the circumstances that make a killing a murder, it is the context that makes the originator a murderer, the executioner a victim. Hence the darkest deeds, as the acts of purest love, are on the whole verbal performances. And so, of course, is the exceedingly 'dramatic' acting: Othello's much-noted histrionics do not, at least let's hope not, necessarily consist in wild gesticulating, rolling of the eyes etc., so much as in a continual richness and exuberance in his rhetorical outpourings.

But what about the deceiving of the eye: is that at least a central visual matter of 'ocular proof' – or is it ironised and deconstructed in the same manner? Visual appearences are unreliable, *quod est demonstrandum* by this tragedy, as by others where love is killed by looks, such as that of Romeo and Juliet (and we should remember this when comparing the heterosexual gaze in *Two Noble Kinsmen* to the homosocial desire, and performance, which is fed by that merely optical object shared between the two partners in war, prison, passion, and dialogue). Not even within the play is it surprising that visual appearances should be unreliable; the amazement rather comes from the persuasion that verbal performances should be so that Desdemona, who has been such an appreciative listener to Othello's 'histoires', and such a convincing speaker on behalf of her love, should prove false. True, ocular proof is on the surface taken to be decisive, while mere words do not count as conclusive – by an Othello already mad with jealousy. Yet as in the case of the visual contrast between the skin colours, the play shows this superficial appearance to be tragically mistaken, with a heavy irony: the ocular evidence would have been neither conclusive nor even existent if it had not been framed by the prior web, not of 'ocular proof' but of 'aural evidence', laid by Iago to seduce 'the Moor'. It is the aural deception that deceives the eye; poison in the ear, that disaffects the visual perception.

The final insult to the pretensions of ocular perception is that in considering the fact of white innocence slain by a black hand, or rather by the black heart behind it, linked to it through insinuous speech, it is no use viewing the corpses, however strikingly arranged – it is only the verbal evidence against Iago that clears matters up, and the refusal of Iago to speak any more, that leaves his blackness unilluminated. It is the speeches that make the tragedy and present a riddle – not the tableau of corpses heaped on one other – clips from films can again give a one-sided impression here. Not looks, but words are decisive, and serve as the main medium for the 'performance of emotions'.

Meeting Objections

The objection that no such revision is called for, since the verbal dimension is included in the concept of spectacle anyway, does not acknowledge the point in question: there is a real problem here about the emphasis we should attribute to each of the two main channels of communication involved, and my argument has been to show that this is not a mere technical question, but closely linked to the interpretation of a play; in particular, the claim that the 'performance of emotions' here proceeds by verbal rather than by visual means, in speech/dialogue rather than sight/show.

Likewise, it is somewhat beside – or beneath – the point either to cite in agreement that the battle in *Two Noble Kinsmen* is not shown but described off-stage – the argument is not primarily about minor technical aspects like word-scenery and staging conditions; or to cite against my argument the fact that rhetoric is criticised in the caricature of the schoolmaster – that is the usual occasion for a parody on learning, but there is of course a proper use of learning and of rhetorical skills, and the interest in satires on inept rhetoricians actually indicates the poet's concern for the proper art; anyway, my use of 'rhetorical performance' referred not to the scholarly systems of rhetoric but

to the effectiveness of verbal communication to engender, transmit, express and ‘act out’ emotions.

Zusammenfassung

Dies ist die schriftliche Ausfertigung eines unvorbereiteten Diskussionsbeitrages in Reaktion auf eine Reihe von Vorträgen im Wissenschaftichen Seminar. Im Interesse der Wiedergabe des ‚performativen Charakters‘ des Seminars sind die Attribute der spontanen mündlichen Äußerung weitgehend beibehalten worden, so dass nur wenige Änderungen bzw. zusätzliche Einlassungen hinzukommen. Die abschließenden Fragen an die Vortragenden habe ich zugunsten einer Zusammenfassung meiner Thesen und die Anführung sowie Kommentierung der als Antwort vorgebrachten Punkte ersetzt, deren unbefriedigend erscheinender Charakter zu dieser schriftlichen Ausfertigung führte.