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Iago: "Favoritism" and Social Climbing in *Othello*

Maijan H. Al-Ruwaili
Assistant Professor, Department of English, College of Arts, King Saud University, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia

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Abstract. Criticism of Shakespeare's *Othello* has neglected the play's dramatization of the pursuit of wealth which was a socio-political practice rampant in Elizabethan England. During that age, accruing wealth involved social and political activities such as "favoritism," social climbing, and military position hunting. The play dramatizes these activities through the image of money with which the play opens and closes, and through the competition for the "lieutenancy." Wealth and military positions were attractive to the Elizabethan man because they most often led to political power and social prestige. The competition to achieve these objectives runs counter to codes of morality. These activities motivate the play's main action, and relate the play to its historical background, especially the hatred invoked by the practices of climbers.

Shakespeare's Iago (his motivations, personality, theology, philosophy, etc.) has attracted most *Othello* criticism to the point where the criticism itself has become a sub-genre, meriting study on its own. Iago is generically the stage villain; historically, the Machiavellian; theologically "satan" and psychologically, the "homosexual."(1) Hyman's categories represent the continuing trends in the criticism of Iago and of the play.(2) The character, however, will remain controversial, and his "resourceful rich-

(1) Stanley Edgar Hyman, *Iago: Some Approaches to the Illusion of His Motivation* (New York: Atheneum, 1970).

(2) For the perpetuation of these trends, see the following representative citations. For Iago's Villainy, see Earl L. Daschslager, "The Villainy of Iago: 'What You Know, You Know'" *CEA Critic*, 3(March 1976), 4-10; for the history of ideas, see Jared R. Curtis, "The Speculative and Offic'd Instrument; Reason and Love in *Othello*," *SQ*, 24(1973), 188-97; Ruth M. Levitsky, "Prudence versus Wisdom in *Othello*," *Dalhousie Review*, 54(1974), 281-88. For the relevance of psychology, see Leslie Y. Rabkin and Jeffrey Brown, "Some Monster in His Thought: Sadism and Tragedy in *Othello*," *Literature and Psychology*, 23(1973), 59-67. For a comprehensive view of how tragedy dramatized a subversive ideology in Renaissance, see Jonathan Dollimore, *Radical Tragedy: Religion, Ideology, and* =

ness" will always exceed the purview of any particular approach.(3) To account for part of the controversy, the delineation of the Elizabethan frame of reference within which Iago operates is long overdue.(4) I believe that the frame of the play should be seen as socio-political, and Elizabethan in particular, and we can better understand not only Iago but also the play by specific reference to the "spirit" of the Elizabethan age, whose ambivalent richness is succinctly summed by Karl J. Holzknecht: "It is possible to paint a brutal picture of Renaissance England by telling nothing that is not true. And by the same selective method it is just as possible to idealize that period as possessing all human virtues."(5)

Iago is perhaps the best representative of such an age, and although *Othello* is set in Venice and Cyprus, the locale of the play and the social context are unmistakably Elizabethan England.(6) In this unique environment and age, Iago is not only the "social climber" or the "improvisor,"(7) but also the reification of socio-political

Power in the Drama of Shakespeare and his Contemporaries (1984; rpt. Brighton, Sussex: The Harvester Press, 1986); James L. Calderwood, *Shakespeare and the Denial of Death* (Amherst, Massachusetts: University of Massachusetts Press, 1987).

(3) Ralph Berry, "Pattern in *Othello*," *SQ*, 23(1972), 3-19, tried, within an impressive structural analysis, to synthesize all Iago's motivations as revolving around his "jealousy." But, like any other attempt at comprehensiveness, it tried to explain all controversial issues on the basis of its own structural thrust.

(4) Existing Elizabethan historical approaches to the play focus on Othello, his race and the response of Elizabethan audience; see M.J.C. Echerue, "The Context of Othello's Tragedy," *Southern Review*, 2(1967), 299-318, and Eldred Jones, *Othello's Countrymen: The African in English Renaissance Drama* (London: Oxford University Press, 1965). New historicism has recently oriented critical efforts to see Shakespeare's plays from a historically cultural point of view: see Stephen J. Greenblatt, "Improvisation and Power," in *Literature and Society, Selected Papers from the English Institute: 1978*, ed. Edward W. Said (Baltimore, Maryland: Johns Hopkins University, 1980), 57-99, also reprinted in slightly modified form in Greenblatt's *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1980).

(5) Karl J. Holzknecht, *The Backgrounds of Shakespeare's Plays* (New York: American Book Co., 1950), p. 33.

(6) Holzknecht points out: "To be sure, Shakespeare's plays are set in ancient Rome, Medieval Britain, and the cities of Italy, but they were written for a popular audience ... The social order, the manners and customs, the human realities that Shakespeare knew intimately were Elizabethan" (p. 52). G.K. Hunter has written that "Italy became important to the English dramatists only when 'Italy' was revealed as an aspect of England," in "English Folly and Italian Vice: The Moral Landscape of John Marston," in *Jacobean Theatre*, ed. John Russel Brown and Bernard Harris, Stratford-upon-Avon Studies, No. 1 (London: Edward Arnold, 1960), p. 95. On the relation of Elizabethan literature in general and drama in particular to the socio-political culture, see *The Forms of Power and the Power of Forms in the Renaissance*, ed. Stephen Greenblatt (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1982); Allardyce Nicoll, ed., *Shakespeare in His Own Age* (1964; rpt. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976).

(7) Auden surprisingly applied the term to Othello, and overlooking it in the case of Iago; "improvisor" is Greenblatt's term, and I find his discussion very instructive. See W.H. Auden, "The Joker in the Pack," in his *The Dyer's Hand and Other Essays* (1963; rpt. London: Faber and Faber, 1975), pp. 247-72, and Greenblatt's "Improvisation and Power" cited above.

"favoritism." This assertion hinges on the image of "money" with which the play opens and closes, and on Iago's ambitious pursuit of the "lieutenancy." Shakespeare's *Othello* weaves these two themes around Iago not only to present him as a prototype of evil, but also to comment on socio-political practices that motivate and legitimate Iago's actions. These socio-political interests augment the credibility of Iago and shed light on the controversy surrounding his motivations.

Iago's quest is one for power. Contrary to A.C. Bradley's assertion that Iago is motivated by "unconscious" forces and an obsession for power,(8) Iago is not only "conscious" of his aims and ends, but is also after socio-political power and prestige which were both current values and were "the" aspiration of any Elizabethan "cogging villain" with the qualifications of Iago. Critics who have called Iago a "social outcast" or "diseased activity" usually overlook the fact that he acquires the widest social and political success in the course of the play. And those claiming that his Machiavellian philosphy rests upon a continuing denial of the reality he perceives,(9) forget that Iago's power derives not so much from the "denial" but from the "recognition" and acceptance of what he realizes to be the practice of the successful members of his time and community.(10) Historical records have painted the strikingly common "Iago" figure within Elizabethan society;(11) a society for which "Shakespeare's versatility and breadth of interest were but the full expression."(12)

Two closely interrelated elements are important for the "social climber" during that age: wealth and social status. The first entails the second, and is in turn reinforced by the former; perhaps it is still the case even today. However, never in history was this social phenomenon more pronounced than in the Elizabethan period. Indeed, the dismissal of "birth" as the only right to "social prestige" not only underwrites one's movement into a higher class, but is also responsible for the aura of "hypocrisy" characteristic of the "climber" elites among the "by-birth" noble society. Historical events and social activities of the period attest not only to means of acquiring power, but also to ways of retaining it. Court positions, and their con-

(8) A.C. Bradley, *Shakespearean Tragedy* (1904; rpt. New York: Macmillan, 1970), Chapters 5 and 6.

(9) Robert Ornstein, *the Moral Vision of Jacobean Drama* (Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1960), pp. 227-34.

(10) R.A. Yoder, "The Two Worlds of *Othello*," *South Atlantic Quarterly*, 72(1973), 213-25, points out the hypocritical and opportunistic characteristics of the State of Venice.For admirable accounts of opportunistic practices, see "Dissent and Satire" in Nicoll, and Greenblatt, eds., *Forms of Power*.

(11) On the historical background of the Iago type in Elizabethan society, and the practices such figures engage in, see Paul A. Jorgensen, "Honest in Othello," *Studies in Philology*, 47(1950), 557-67; *Shakespeare In His Own Age*, ed. Nicoll; and Hardin Craig, *The Enchanted Glass: The Elizabethan Mind in Literature* (1952; rpt. Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1975).

(12) Holzknecht, p. 34.

sequent privileges, not only motivated social "hypocrisy," but also incited literary figures (poets mainly) to utilize literary forms which further their pursuits to become adroit courtiers. Literary forms such as *ironia, allegoria,* and *sprezzatura* were actually counterparts in literature to social "hypocrisy," and were used as means to show one's skill in dissembling, deception, and cunning, qualities that were deemed essential strategies of survival at court. A poet who competently exploits these means, according to Puttenham's *Arte of English Poesie* (1589), will be wise enough "to behave himself as he may worthily retaine the credit and profession of a very Courtier, which is, in plain terms, cunningly to dissemble."(13)

Deception, dissembling, and cunning promote personal gains which, in turn, exonerate one's amoral activities. In his remarkably thorough book, the social historian Lawrence Stone cites incidents which show self-interest overriding basic human decency.(14) Elsewhere, Stone documents the importance of wealth and property, and how they lead to power. He makes it clear that, among other factors, political and social prestige was only attached to the wealthy "landed gentlemen,"(15) and that "money was the means of acquiring and retaining status."(16) For this objective, morality was relegated to a secondary place, and the pursuit of wealth cut sharply across all socio-political activities and codes. The amassing of wealth seemed to be the only aim guiding life activities: "the [merchant] spent his life in cut-throat competition, squeezing the last penny out of every one with whom he came in contact,"(17) and was the most important factor in "marriages." Stone has wealth as second only to "royal favor"(18) in climbing the social ladder. He further asserts that "there is a clear dichotomy between marriage for interest, meaning money, status or power, and marriage for affect, meaning love, friendship, or sexual attraction."(19) According to Richard L. Greaves, wealth even overrode the religious sanctions against intermar-

(13) See Daniel Javitch's sensitive study "The Impure Motives of Elizabethan Poetry," in *Forms of Power*, pp. 225-38. Quotation on p. 227.

(14) In his *The Family, Sex, and Marriage in England: 1500-1800* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1977), p. 182, Lawrence Stone writes:

> When high politics were at stake, extreme measures were sometimes resorted to. It alleged that in the early seventeenth century, Sir Edward Coke, the ex-Chief Justice, not only abducted his daughter by force from her mother— which was true— but also had her "tied to a bed-post and severely whipped," in order to force her consent to marriage with a mentally unstable brother of the Duke of Buckingham, a manoeuvre that was designed to restore her father's lost favour at Court.The marriage duly took place, soon followed by the wife's desertion of her husband for a more congenial lover.

(15) Lawrence Stone, *The Crisis of the Aristocracy: 1558-1641* (London: Oxford University Press, 1965), 42.

(16) Stone, *Crisis*, p. 50.

(17) Stone, *Crisis*, p. 47; in the play, the Iago-Roderigo relation is a perfect illustration of this practice.

(18) Stone, *Crisis*, p. 191.

(19) Stone, *Family*, p. 86.

riage between Catholic and Protestant. Ministers, he writes, "were less successful, particularly in their attempt to play down financial considerations."(20)

Intermarriages occurred for illuminating reasons: "physical attraction and wealth," "social mobility," and "to women of gentry status largely because of their better financial prospects." "Wealth" consequently "triumphed over social equality as peers sought to wed their daughters to lawyers or London merchants."(21) The pursuit of wealth and political prestige was so powerful a drive that it became part of the Elizabethan discourse. Climbers gained ground through wealth, intermarriages, and literary employment. Sensing this power, believers in the "natural order" had to appeal to morality and religion to stop the surge which tended to collapse class distinctions. It was claimed that "marriage for money" caused "jealously" and, consequently, "unhappy" marital relationships. Louis B. Wright maintains that these cautions were meant to keep the classes distinctly separate for social and religious reasons.(22) According to Wright, it was Rich (a telling name) who denounced the common practice loudly in his *Faultes Faultes, and Nothing Else But Faultes* (1606).(23)

Historians of the period never doubted the importance of wealth and favoritism (translated into patronage) on the ladder of society and politics: "Not only was this network of patronage the cement that held sixteenth-century society together; it also determined the life-chances of every individual in it."(24) However, along with it "went a continued respect for medieval aristocratic ideals," especially the "hypersensitive insistence upon the overriding importance of reputation."(25) In turn, reputation depended on other variables of which "royal favor" was the most important. Accordingly, while the restrictions Queen Elizabeth imposed on Knighthood and peerage limited the number of titles, her act fired the spirit of competition for "royal favor" which was the source for political and military "office" holding.(26) Such positions were important: "Professionals were raised to the peerage for the military services" while others based their success on their "reputation as military experts."(27)

(20) Richard L. Greaves, *Society and Religion in Elizabethan England* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1981), p. 115.
(21) Greaves, pp. 130-34; cf. Stone, *Crisis*, p. 192.
(22) Louis B. Wright, *Middle-Class Culture in Elizabethan England* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 1935), p. 210.
(23) Wright, pp. 480-82.
(24) Stone, *Family*, p. 90.
(25) Stone, *Crisis*, p. 42.
(26) Stone, *Crisis*, p. 191; see also Greenblatt, ed. *Forms of Power*, pp. 41-48.
(27) Stone, *Crisis*, p. 458.

Historically, the interest in the military was highly motivated; many newly ennobled peers "were substantially, and in some cases almost entirely, the product of the great share-out among officials, soldiers, and courtiers of the property seized from the church."(28) Military men gained wealth not only from the church but also from privateering: "All of the famous sea-dogs from Drake down played the dangerous game of 'singing the King of Spain's beard' by preying upon Spanish treasureships coming from the new World, and the queen gladly took a share of the booty."(29) (Perhaps the reference to the Spanish treasure ship ["land carrack"] in the play is not a mere slip of the pen.) Material gain was not limited to senior professionals; "Junior military captains and gentlemen volunteers" also "did well out of the wars." However, accruing wealth always led to corruption: "That they were unscrupulous in cheating their men of their wages, that they manipulated dead pays and muster-rolls to their own advantages, is now proved beyond all question of doubt."(30)

One immediately would deem Iago capable of all these tricks, but he came out of previous wars empty-handed. Yet, having lost hope in the justice of the service, Iago only lately seemed to discover the benefits of "war"; he started fighting his own personal war against his community. Iago's attitudes toward the service and his appeal to his participation in previous wars are strategies meant to draw attention to the way Cassio has acquired his position, to justify Iago's forthcoming actions and plots, and to reassert his worthiness in the eyes of Roderigo, who has the "purse."

A close examination of the play shows that Shakespeare's *Othello* not only manifests the foregoing characteristics of the age, especially in regard to wealth and "favoritism," but also shows how Shakespeare dramatized a common political practice of his time. The importance of money (wealth) and the characters' interest in "lieutenancy" and "generalship" not only dramatize historical practices of Elizabethan society, but also explain the Renaissance sentiment against the ways of the "social climber"— the sentiment whose ugly but full reification is Iago.

I. Wealth, Money, and Fortune

It has long been recognized that "Shakespeare never trifled with the audience... instead, every character in a Shakespearean play is engaged in saying exactly what Shakespeare wanted the audience to know and in saying it over and over again."(31)

(28) Stone, *Crisis*, p. 192.
(29) Holzknecht, p. 40.
(30) Stone, *Crisis*, p. 457.
(31) Lily B. Campbell, *Shakespeare's Tragic Heroes: Slaves of Passion* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1966), p. 112.

Lynda Boose has maintained that Shakespeare emphasizes an image or word by having it reverberate throughout the play.(32) In *Othello,* "thrift," "fortune," and "money" span the entire drama. The play opens with "money" and closes with "property." In the opening speech, Roderigo protests against Iago's concealment of Desdemona's elopement:

> **I take it much unkindly**
> **That thou, Iago, who hast had my** *purse*
> As if the strings were thine, shouldst know this. (I,i,1-3)(33)

This speech introduces the importance of money in the play, and Iago's particulr interest in acquiring wealth. The image of money/wealth keeps recurring until it culminates in the final speech of Lodovico at the end of the play. Just after the bloody scene (Cassio is maimed, Roderigo and Emilia are dead, Iago and Montano seriously injured, and, most of all, Desdemona and Othello are still on their bed dead) Lodovico's only worry is:

> Gratiano, keep the *house,*
> And seize upon the *fortunes* of the Moor,
> For they succeed on you. (V,ii,363-65)

Gratiano has also inherited the property of Brabantio who died as a result of Desdemona's elopement, and now he has a new substantial one. Ross has indeed missed the major point when he refers to these lines as a "reminder that the tragedy has struck down a great and wealthy noble public figure" (p. 250). It is the image of wealth and money that these lines invoke, especially since they close the curtain on the tragedy. These lines not only reiterate Desdemona's speech at the Senate— in which she has consecrated her "fortunes"— but point to the irony latent in the term "fortune" as fate, chance, good luck, and wealth.(34) "Fortune" is not only important to Gratiano; it serves the aims of all other characters.

Throughout, almost every character evokes the image of money and fortune, and the marriage of Othello becomes pivotal to the point where "fortune's" different

(32) Lynda E. Boose, "Othello's Handkerchief: The Recognizance Pledge of Love," *English Literary Renaissance,* 5(1975), 360-74; see also John Shaw, "'What is the Matter?' in *Othello," SQ,* 17(1966), 157-61; Doris Adler, "The Rhetoric of *Black* and *White* in *Othello," SQ,* 25(1974), 248-57; Walter Nash, "Paired Words in *Othello:* Shakespeare's Use of a Stylistic Device," *English Studies,* 39 (April, 1958), 62-67; Karina Williamson, "'Honest' and 'False' in *Othello," Studia Neophilologica,* 35(1963), 211-20; Julian Willis Abernethy, "Honest Iago," *Sewanee Review,* 30(1922), 337.

(33) William Shakespeare, *The Tragedy of Othello: The Moor of Venice,* Lawrence J. Ross, ed. (Indianapolis and New York: Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1974); all emphases added are mine throughout.

(34) The ambiguity of "fortune," outside the purview of this paper, is the topic of a forthcoming paper.

meanings collapse into each other.The movement of the image of "fortune" in the play proceeds from unambiguous money/wealth references to the ambiguity of the term where its meanings could be exchanged. Thus, Roderigo's first reference to Desdemona's marriage illuminates both the quality of his love and motivation to regain her:

> What a full *fortune* does the thick-lips owe
> If he can carry't thus! (I, i, 67-68)

Conveying the same news to Montano, Cassio asserts that Othello is "most fortunately wiv'd" (II,i, 60-61); Desdemona herself is "The riches of the ship come ashore" (II, i,83), and, in her father's ironic terms, the "jewel" (I,iii,193). The dramatized theme of marriage has its historical roots in the social practices of the period; these references well explain Roderigo's quest for which he later sells his "land." "Rich wives" and "rich heiresses" in Renaissance England, Stone reminds us, were "prizes to be fought for,"(35) because "Many of the older peers owed their position very largely to their prudence in choosing and their skill in capturing rich brides," especially "heiresses."(36) Desdemona qualifies as one: her father is a rich statesman, who has no male heir. That is why W.H. Auden has accused Othello of "social climbing"; indeed, his accusation seems to inform Othello's defense at the Senate (I,ii,22-28).

Throughout, "money/fortune" underscores the action. At Brabantio's window, Iago's first warning is "thieves." It is not the "house" or "daughter" that matters most; the emphasis falls on "bags," for Brabantio is "robbed" (I,i,80-88).(37) Theft, robbery, and cheating are recurrent motifs in the play, and they all relate to fortune.Roderigo disturbs Brabantio's peace because he sees Desdemona's elopement as a theft of property. Thus, while Iago emphasizes the robbery of "bags," Roderigo gives the "bags" their ultimate value. Desdemona has tied "her duty, beauty, wit, and *fortunes/* In an extravagant and wheeling stranger/ of here and every where" (I,i,134-36). The concordance between "fortunes" and "wheeling" ultimtely brings to mind the "wheel of fortune" associated with the goddess Fortuna, and with the image of "gambling," which also, like theft and robbery, permeates the play.

(35) Stone, *Family,* p. 89.

(36) Stone, *Crisis,* p. 192 ff.

(37) Lynda E. Boose, "The Father and the Bride in Shakespeare," *PMLA*, 97(1983), 325-47, treats the relation between the father and bride in certain Shakespearean plays as a variation of an economical possession, especially in *Othello* and *The Merchant of Venice;* see also Marc Shell, *Money, Language, and Thought: Literary, Philosophical Economies from the Medieval to the Modern Era* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), pp. 50, 58, 60. See Also Kenneth Burke, *"Othello:* An Essay to Illustrate a Method," *Hudson Review,* 4:2(1951), 165-203.

An attentive scrutiny of the image of "money" and "wealth" reveals a peculiar pattern. To put it simply: except for Iago, virtually every character invokes the image, and always sacrifices it for some other cause. For characters other than Iago, money or power is exchanged for other, often more important, interests. Iago systematically invokes it for its own worth, be it to others or to himself. From the beginning, he has the "strings" of the same "purse," which he convinces Roderigo to fill and follow the "wars" at the closing of Act One: "put money in thy purse... fill thy purse with money ... therefore make money...go, make money.... Traverse, go, provide thy money!" Roderigo's only remaining resource (for Iago has "bobbed" all his money) is "I'll sell all my land," so that Iago can "ever make my fool my purse ... for my sport and profit" (I,iii,330-70). Accordingly, Iago should indeed protest against Roderigo's contemplation of suicide (the sarcasm needs no comment) on the ground of love: "If thou dost, I shall never *love* thee after" (I,iii,303). Shakespeare is well known for the importance he accords the first act in all his plays; and opening and closing *Othello*'s first act with Iago's extreme interest in money, he is foreshadowing not only the importance of wealth in the play, but is revealing how, for Iago, it delimits social/moral codes. Early in the play, Iago reduces the marriage to money: Othello "tonight hath boarded a land carrack [treasure ship]; If it prove lawful *prize*, he's made for ever" (I,ii,50-51).

Money informs all Iago's activities. Whereas other characters in the play give money or entertain people, Iago never does, neither literally nor figuratively. In the first speech, Roderigo opens his purse to Iago and sends Desdemona jewels and diamonds, which Iago keeps for himself. Brabantio, despite the seriousness of the situation, never forgets to promise to "deserve" Roderigo's "pains." The Clown, like Cassio, contents the musicians' "pains" by giving them money: "Masters, here's money for you," and later the clown himself gets "a poor piece of gold" from Cassio (III,i, 1,11,22). Othello also tells Emilia, referring to Desdemona, that "We have done our course; there's money for your pains" (IV,ii,94). However, Othello asserts first his honor, and then his "fortune." He says:

> I fetch my life and being
> From men of royal siege; and my merits
> May speak unbonetted to as proud a fortune
> As this that I have reached. (I,ii,22-28)

Here, as Ross points out, "Othello appears to say his deservings may speak on equal terms even with so honorable a fortune as his alliance with Brabantio's family" (Ross, 16). Although this explanation could very well be true, it does not negate the fact that Othello is aware of the benefits of such a marriage. In fact, Othello's statement is more a defense against the idea of social climbing than a justification of any-

thing else. He is in fact answering the social practice that in marriage "Past lineage associations, political patronage, extension of lineage-connections, and property preservation and accumulation were the principle considerations. Property and power were predominant issues which governed negotiations for marriage, while the greatest fear in a society so acutely conscious of status and hierarchy was of social derogation in marriage of alliance with a family of lower estate or degree than one's own."(38) Gratiano's inheritance of the Moor's "fortunes" represents the rightful restoration of property; a fact that stresses Othello's strangeness even though he was able to marry and be accepted by the democratic society of Venice.

In fact, Othello's marriage should not blind us to the importance of money for him. Like Iago, Othello himself is interested in wealth and money. Iago and Othello seem to differ in degree not in kind. The play shows that Othello has grounded his conception of love in terms of a material value,money. Thus, while the final words of his defense at the Senate appeal to "royal worthiness" and fortune, Othello "would not" "Put into circumscription and confine" his love even "for the sea worth" (I,ii, 26-28), having in mind that "The sea traditionally was regarded as a hoard of wealth" (Ross, 16). At the outset, Othello's love is "priceless." His choice of the terms to which he compares Desdemona and his love are telling: the sea worth is a language the members of the Senate understand well. However, Othello's continuous reiteration of the same image at crucial moments of the play collapses the difference he is trying to maintain. Thus, having murdered Desdemona, Othello can only speak of "selling" and "chrysolite" (the largest of precious stones):

> Nay, had she been true,
> If heaven would make me such another world
> of the entire and perfect *chrysolite,*
> I'd not have *sold* her for it. (V,ii,140-43)

A close reading of the speech shows that only a superhuman "truth" (had she been true) is priceless. The irony, of course, is that Desdemona has "been true," but still she has been sold for less. Othello's inability to transcend material values is also reiterated when he could not compare Desdemona to anything beyond a "pearl" he threw away, even when he realizes that she has been "true." Therefore, when he realizes his crime, the only image he invokes is the "pearl.../ Richer than all his tribe" he threw away (V,ii, 342-44).

Similarly, Desdemona herself "shunned/ The *wealthy* curled darlings of our nation" (I,ii, 64-68), and "did [her] soul and *fortunes* consecrate" (I,iii,250) for the

(38) Stone, *Family,* p. 87.

sake of love. Just before her murder, Desdemona also shuns "the whole world" which, in Emilia's ambiguous terms, is "a great price/ For a small vice" (IV,iii,67-68). Like Othello, Desdemona finds no better image to express the importance of her lost handkerchief (the token of her love) except the "Portuguese gold coins at the value of three shillings": "I had rather lose my purse/ Full of crusadoes" (III,iv, 20).

Money not only delimits love, but also defines one's "good name." Despite the sarcasm, Iago's explanation of one's "good name" has Othello's consent; Iago's claim, in fact, is an exteriorization of Othello's thinking, and at this point— coming from Iago— the statement becomes sardonically sarcastic:

> Good name in a man and woman, dear my lord,
> Is the immediate *jewel* of our souls.
> Who steals my purse, steals trash, 'tis something, nothing,
> 'Twas mine, 'tis his, and has been slave to thousands;
> But he that filches from me my good name
> Robs me of that which not enriches him and makes me poor indeed. (III,iii,153-59)

We already know that Iago is the "slave" of the purse, and know also that, to Iago, the "good name" is a "jewel," the very jewels he "bobs" from Roderigo. Here Iago is "selling" the medieval "aristocratic ideals" and codes of morality to Othello. And the dominant image in his speech involves robbery, theft, and stealing: it forms an actual comment on his relation with Roderigo and on what he is in the act of "robbing" from Desdemona. The audience already knows that Iago understands honor and "good name" in terms of money (trash), and thus the statement tends to widen the gap between material and social values.

The image of money not only functions locally in relationships among the play's characters, but also reintegrates these individual instances into the thematic moral (theological) level of the play. Wealth in *Othello* derives its roots from the Elizabethan theological concept of "richness." While wealth is ascribed to godly favor, the true wealthy gentleman ought not to seek wealth for its own intrinsic values, but for use in relieving the poor, and to show God's favor by living extravagantly. This is how socio-historians explain the wide-spread phenomenon of hospitality and lavish living characteristic of Renaissance nobility. However, the theological basis behind the "divine right of wealth," against which Iago seems to be revolting, entailed various cautions from thinkers of the period who pointed out the dangers "richness" may create. Wealth is devilishly tempting.(39) This point explains

(39) See Stone, *Crisis*, pp. 387-92, 505-08; and Greaves, pp. 547-94.

Spurgeon's assertion that, in Shakespeare, images of money are always associated with and valued by characters who worship "dirty" gods.[40] Iago, of course, has his own "dirty" gods; he has chosen the divinity of Hell (I,iii,387) because his ambition and interest in materialism override the accepted codes of spiritualism. Theological ethics of the period prescribed that "One could be either ambitious or obedient to Christ, a choice designed to encourage the godly to remain content with their estate."[41] "Of riches," Greaves quotes one of his sources as saying, come "wicked things; and of ambition, foolish things."[42] As Perkins states, both Catholic and Protestant agreed that "it is difficult to acquire wealth without committing injustice or without improperly valuing riches. Prosperity is conducive of covetousness, the source of heresy and poverty."[43]

This idea perpetuates Martin Luther's dictum: "Money is the word of the devil, through which he creates everything, just as God creates through the word."[44] Historically, theological ethics and social values are set over against the rise of "capitalism" and self-interest as an outgrowth of "individualism." In this tenuous structure, "loyalties" are yoked to personal "interest." Franco Moretti sees this structure as a result of the separation between "person" and "function," which politically means a separation of the political praxis from the moral evaluation. With this situation, he notes, "it would be necessary to abandon the ideal of 'fidelity' for that of "interest" and to transform the social bond from a feudal "oath" to the 'contract' of natural right philosophy: a cultural shift that overturned the relation between facts and values (and the realm of literary history replaced tragedy with the novel)."[45]

The main characters (Othello, Cassio, and Iago) play on this fact; Othello often appeals to his fidelity to Brabantio, to the State, and to Christian faith. Iago and Cassio compete for Othello's favor. Even Roderigo proves his fidelity to Brabantio on the occasion of Desdemona's elopement. Only in this context, when singled out as questing for power and wealth, Iago is "Satan" or the immoral character who bears the "shameful" brand of Machiavellianism. But when the image of wealth is examined within the larger socio-political context, the defining traits of Iago become the salient characteristics of everyone else. And indeed the issue becomes thematic

(40) Caroline Spurgeon, *Shakespeare's Imagery and What It Tells Us* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1965), pp. 242; 299-300. Spurgeon never touches on the image of money in *Othello*.
(41) Greaves, p. 395.
(42) Greaves, p. 396.
(43) Greaves, p. 553.
(44) Quoted in Shell, p. 84, n. 1.
(45) "Tragic Form," in *Forms of Power*, p. 30. See also Robert Weimann, "'Appropriation' and Modern History in Renaissance Prose Narrative," *NLH*, 14:3 (1983), 459-95.

when the "lieutanancy" and "generalship"— as means for wealth, social prestige, and political power— are fed back into Iago's quest for wealth. Surprisingly, however, all other characters of the play have escaped Iago's defaming Machiavellianism. To single out Iago is perhaps to miss an important point of the play. As I shall try to show, in their race for the "fortune" of lieutenancy and "generalship," all characters, in varying degrees, are in fact "Iagos."

II. Lieutenancy, Generalship, and Fortune

Wealth and military positions in the play are closely related; lieutenancy and generalship are not only perceived as consequences of "fortune," but actually shape and motivate the bilateral relationships between Othello-Brabantio, Othello-Cassio, and Othello-Iago, on the one hand, and, on the other, Iago-Roderigo, Roderigo-Brabantio, and Iago-Cassio. The nefarious relation that binds Othello and Iago not only ties all others together, but exemplifies the idea of "favoritism" and self-interest; the theme of "love" and "preferment" betrays these relationships and sets in motion the play's main action. Indeed, the theme of love among the characters of the play reflects accurately the play's main tragic love theme.

Although military experience is important for Othello's official position, the play contains evidence that it was not the only reason, and perhaps not even the most important one for his promotion; it seems to have depended on his relationship with Brabantio and his influential place in the Senate. The key passage here is Desdemona's suspicion that Othello's change is due to news from "Venice." When Othello is ordered back and has to depute Cassio as general, she voices the most telling protest:

> If haply you my father do suspect
> An instrument of this your calling back
> Lay not your blame on me; if you *lost* him,
> Why I have lost him too. (IV,ii,45-48)

This comment reminds us of Othello's first reference to Brabantio at the Senate "trial" scene. "Her father *loved* me, "Othello explains, "oft invited me" (I,iii,127). As the play gives no reason for the state's speedy relief of Othello, it is probable that Brabantio, influential in the matters of state, whose "cause" received attention equal to that accorded the war, can in fact call back or relieve Othello of his position, especially now that the wars are "done." As her protest implies, Brabantio might have had a hand in imploring the Senate to have trust in Othello before the event of elope-

ment. Most importantly, however, is that the elopement was well-planned to escape Brabantio's power. The play shows that Othello has carefully chosen the moment because he knows well that Brabantio would prevent the marriage if circumstances were not ripe. His marriage could only succeed in the shadow of his high office, and by taking advantage of the circumstances; the war usually necessitates speedy decisions. As Iago tells Othello of Brabantio's power, Othello's excuse is poignant: "Let him do his spite./My services which I have done the signiory/ Shall out-tongue his complaints" (I,ii,17-19). In fact, Iago, speaking to Roderigo earlier, anticipated how necessary Othello is to Venice:

> for he's embarked
> With such loud reason to the Cyprus wars,
> Which even now stands in act, that for their souls
> Another of his fathom they have none
> To lead their business... (I,i,148-52)

Othello knew about the wars in advance and was already general before the elopement (I,i,148-49). The play shows that Othello chose the very night the war became urgent. When the wars were "done" Othello, without explanation, was immediately relieved, a fact that may well explain why he won at the Senate. Moreover, Lodovico's symbolic restoration of the Moor's fortunes is evidence enough that Othello's marriage was an unfortunate incident. It is, then, quite probable that Othello has taken advantage of Branbantio's preferment and of the circumstances.(46)

If the issue of "favoritism" is somewhat murky in the Othello-Brabantio relationship, the Cassio-Othello one embodies it perfectly. Why has Cassio become Othello's "Lieutenant"? According to Iago's poignant but accurate assessment, Cassio is one of the "duteous and knee-crooking knaves," "a great arithmetician,"

> That never set a squadron in the field
> Nor the division of a battle knows
> More than a spinster— unless the bookish theoric,
> Wherein the toged consuls can propose
> As masterly as he. Mere prattle without practice
> Is all his soldiership. (I,i,19-27)

To give truth to Iago's claim, Shakespeare has emphasized the commonplace fact that "office holding" has nothing to do with military experience, but is due to socio-political "favoritism." While Cassio's position is due in part to his "bookish nature,"

(46) Donald C. Miller, ["Iago and the Problem of Time," *English Studies*, 22 (1940), 97-115] even suggests that Othello not only took advantage of the circumstances, he actually was arranging for Desdemona to leave with him to Cyprus before she was discovered, p. 106.

it is mostly due to Othello's choice: "But he, sir, hath the election" (I,i,27). To undermine the credibility of this "election" and to expose the issue of "favoritism," the play provides three potent instances relating to Cassio's military background: Iago's description of Cassio to Montano, the "brawl scene," and (tellingly) Desdemona.

Just before the "brawl scene," Iago tells Montano that Othello's lieutenant, Cassio, "this fellow that is gone before,/ He is a soldier fit to stand by Caesar/ *and give direction* [bookish]." Oddly enough, a military and public figure such as Montano, who himself had served with Othello, does *not* know Othello's lieutenant. The brawl scene immediately brings out the irony of Iago's testimony when we see that Cassio, under the circumstances of war, acts very stupidly. Even Othello rebukes him in terms unfit for an experienced soldier. In theatrical terms, the incident has enough weight on the stage not only to convince the audience and show Othello's quick response to urgent matters, but to undermine the credibility of Cassio's soldiership and at the same time to expose the issue of "favoritism."

The explanation of Cassio's "lieutenancy" as the outcome of "favoritism" is reinforced by Desdemona's relentless attempts to have Othello reinstate him. From Othello, we know that Cassio has done the lovers valuable services, thereby fulfilling the marriage mediator's function common in Renaissance England. Not only has Cassio assumed this office for them, he probably helped them plot their elopement. Thus Desdemona, desperate to help him, at a crucial moment in the plot (the lost handkerchief), clearly voices the reason for Cassio's position; he is

> — A man that all his time
> Hath founded his *good fortunes on your love,*
> *Shared dangers* with you— (III,iv,84-86)

One would want to know: What dangers? and what "good fortunes"? The play provides nothing except Cassio's ease in the company of women. Cassio's "good fortunes" (the lieutenancy), it seems, are "founded" on Othello's love as a reward for his "pains" in going between the lovers. Iago has earlier pointed out that Othello, "as loving his pride and purpose," has indeed rejected "Three great ones of the city" soliciting favor for Iago. The dangers that Cassio seems to have shared with Othello are those entailed by his mediation between the lovers, for had Brabantio known of Cassio's role, Cassio would have lost his "fortunes" and social status. Cassio owes his military position to Othello who rewarded him for the favors he rendered the lovers, presumably, having in mind that the reward will outweigh the dangers (he is an arithmetician, after all). In fact, his "theoric" skill explains his show of ignorance of the elopement and of Othello's marriage (I,ii,52).

In his dismissal scene, Cassio is very worried about his "reputation," the product of his "lieutenancy." Iago is quick to remind him and the audience, that reputation "is an *idle* and *false imposition.*" However, Cassio's perception of "reputation" reiterates Desdemona's point, where fortune (social and financial) becomes the pivotal point: "I am desperate of my *fortunes* if they check me here" (II,iii,300-301). Interestingly, he accepts Iago's proposal to ask Desdemona to sue on his behalf only when Iago, convincingly and to the point, lays his "fortunes against any lay worth naming" that here suit will succeed (II,iii,295). Consequently, before we can even forget the superior attitude he holds toward the "ancient," Iago suddenly becomes "A Florentine more kind and honest" (III,i,38). Yet, though Iago is employing his proposal to fit his own "peculiar end," he makes it clear that it is a quest for "fortune": "For while this honest fool/ Plies Desdemona to *repair* his *fortunes,*" Iago will twist the matter to his own advantage (II,iii,322-23). Therefore, just as Othello has established good grounds with Brabantio to serve his own ends, and just as Cassio helped Othello, Iago achieves the trust of Cassio only to use it for his own interest.

The same pattern appears in the Brabantio-Roderigo relationship. Roderigo, noble by birth, is attracted to Desdemona's physical beauty, prestige, and wealth. He is unsuccessful at first. But, laying in wait, when circumstances need action, he is the first to be under Brabantio's window to receive Brabantio's "favor" and some kind of promise: "O would you had had her," and "On, Roderigo; I'll *deserve your pains*" (I,i,174-82). Having established a favorable prospect with Brabantio, Roderigo is ready to "sell" his land and follow the "wars." While he is serving his own "end," in following the war, Roderigo is ironically acting according to the Elizabethan code of nobility, which, in such times, necessitates that noble peers pay troops themselves. He participates personally in the war probably to assert his worthiness; the peerage, Stone tells us, thought itself morally obligated to fulfill such expectations, even to the point of bankruptcy. Auden misses this point when he writes: "Presumably, [Roderigo] has some official position in the army, but we are never told what it is."(47) Roderigo is after "government favors," and he establishes strong grounds through his relation with Brabantio. But the ironic comment the play promotes is that, while Roderigo hides his intentions under the code of nobility, he, like Iago, is waging a personal war, and the troops he has recruited are confined to "honest Iago." Only material benefits tie Iago to Roderigo. Iago knows that Cassio's mediation between the lovers has earned him the lieutenancy. Here, Iago assumes the same office for Roderigo, and for this mediation he keeps his purse open for Iago.

(47) See Stone, pp. 454-55, and "Office Holding"; and Auden, "The Joker in the Pack," p. 251.

From the beginning, to Roderigo, Iago asserts reasons for his worthiness of the lieutenancy. He appeals to his military "professionalism" "At Rhodes, at Cyprus, and other grounds/ Christian and heathen" (I,i,29-30). He also makes it clear that, unlike "preferment" and "affection," experience, trust, honesty, and all ideals are not enough for "office holding," especially when "favoritism" is at issue:

> Why, there's no remedy; it's the *curse of service.*
> Preferment goes by *letter* and *affection.*
> Not by old gradation, where each second
> Stood heir to the first... (I,i,35-38)

Clearly, "letter" and "affection" thwart the accepted logic of cause and effect. Iago has come to this realization early in the play and late in his military career; accordingly, he stars revising hs strategies. The speech implies that Iago is soliciting any favor; he knows the historical fact that, as Stone puts it, "this was a society run by... 'patrimonial bureaucracy,' in which offices, favours and rewards were all distributed not according to merit or need, but according to partiality."(48)

Iago's new tactics exchange ideals for utility to fulfill his "peculiar end." Thus, throughout the play, he seeks to establish his trust-worthiness and to achieve good relations with all characters. Ironically, Othello is the first to support this "trust" at the Senate trial scene when he places Desdemona in the care of "honest Iago." Although honesty becomes his distinguishing trait, to achieve his end Iago allies himself with the "devil" because, as he puts it, "by the faith of man/ I know my price: I am worth no worse a place" (I,i,10-11). Iago thus wins Roderigo's trust by specifically assuming the same office Cassio has assumed for the lovers; and one may well imagine that had Roderigo any influence, Iago would have been a "lieutenant."

Having established his honesty, Iago uses it extensively as a cover and as a bait for others seeking favors from him, a dynamic task that eventually entails political power and social prestige. To be sure, that is exactly what happens in the cases of Roderigo, Cassio, Othello, and even Desdemona. Thus, when Roderigo protests against Iago's show of love for Othello, Iago asserts that the show is all important to serve one's "peculiar end." Unlike "knee-crooking knaves" Iago is one of those

> Who, trimmed in forms of visages of duty,
> Keep yet their hearts attending on themselves;
> And, throwing but shows of service on their lords,
> *Do well thrive* by 'em, and when they *have lined their coats*
> Do themselves homage... (I,ii,49-55)

(48) Stone, *Family*, p. 90.

Iago here uses a complex metaphor. Arithmeticians like Cassio, and theoretical writers on military affairs ("toged consuls" of Rome) only "show" military knowledge. Although they rarely participate in battles, and thus never in danger, they receive all benefits: wealth and prestige. Military arthmetical knowledge in relation to active army service is only a show similar to the show of honesty in a subtle knave. Like the "toged consuls," Iago wants to "line" his "coat." Iago's "malignity" starts just after his hopes have been betrayed; otherwise, all references to his past are laudatory. Iago in fact has accepted the reality around him: dangers performed or solved theoretically at home have earned Cassio the lieutenancy; his mediation between the lovers has proved more edifying than the wars in which Iago has participated, and Iago's services and aspirations have been frustrated. To Bacon, "preferment" is one essential reason for "sedition": "The Causes and Motives of seditions are, innovation in religion; taxes; alteration of laws and customs; advancement of unworthy persons; strangers...."(49)

Realizing the "opportunistic" dimensions of his society, Iago becomes the most "opportunist" of his time. Therefore, Iago not only knows where and when to start, but also how to manipulate and process the various resources he already has. An opportunist, Iago wants to "tie" together all the "strings." Othello proves to be a fertile start. But he still wants to keep Roderigo, who proves to be profitably handy for all matters: to give money, to carry out plots, and perhaps later to influence someone. He employs him efficiently:

> So shall you have a shorter journey [by uprooting Cassio] to your desires by the means I [Iago] shall then have to prefer them, and the impediment most profitably removed without which there were *no expectations of our prosperity* (II,i,262-65)

Here one may notice that the uprooting of Cassio will lead Iago to the lieutenancy, and Roderigo to Desdemona; both entail wealth and power.

Having convinced Roderigo, Iago in soliloquy reveals the true plan he has reserved for Othello and Cassio: "I'll have our Michael Cassio on the hip./ Abuse him to the Moor in the rank garb...." Iago's main motivation is not that he fears "Cassio with my night cap too," but:

> Make the Moor *thank* me, *love* me

(49) Quoted in Hardin Craig, *The Enchanted Glass*, p. 191. See also "Dissent and Satire" in *Shakespeare and his Own Age*, ed. Nicoll.

as he loved Cassio and as Brabantio "loved" Othello. Iago hopes that Othello (as he has already done Cassio) will eventually "*reward* me" (II,ii, 290-93). He proves right, for Othello asserts that "I greet thy [Iago's] *love*,/ Not with vain thanks, but with acceptance bounteous" (III,iii,466-67). In fact, this is what Iago has been striving for, and is precisely what Cassio fears most. As Cassio clearly puts it:

> ... being absent and my place supplied
> My general will forget my *love* and *service* (III,ii,17-18)

Cassio here cites a vivid reason: love and service. Iago, it should be emphasized, has appealed to battles and wars in both Christian and heathen lands. But now Iago seems to have found the missing link. Iago could not have dissolved the Othello-Cassio relation without appealing to the same cause of its existence, and in that he did remarkably well. He turns love into jealousy, and the mediator between the lovers into a adulterer. Iago's hopes and Cassio's fears materialize suddenly in Othello's "Now thou [Iago] art my lieutenant" (III,iii,475), for the same reason that motivated Othello's first choice of Cassio over Iago. Othello, it is noteworthy, has not given Iago the lieutenancy until Iago has promised to *serve* Othello's cause —kill Cassio.

This fact brings us to Emilia's precise diagnosis of the problem of Othello and the root of the tragedy in the play. She indeed sums up the whole matter efficiently:

> I'll be hanged if some eternal *villain*
> Some busy and insinuating *rogue*
> Some cogging, cozening *slave to get some office*
> Have not devised this slander. I'll be hanged. (IV,ii,130-33)

Emilia's statement accurately describes the *modus operandi* of the social climber, and she is indeed voicing a familiar sentiment against that kind of practice. Emilia's statement marks the actual dichotomy between "honest" and "villain" Iago, and his honesty starts giving way to his knavery.(50) This fact calls for and explains the "killings" he commits in order to regain the lost trust. In that pursuit Iago has no other means but to take desperate measures.

First of all, Iago sees that Cassio is standing between "fortune" (lieutenancy) and himself; he has to get rid of him once and for all. He knows that Othello loves Cassio, and that Othello only dismisses him for political reasons. Iago himself tells

(50) See Paul A. Jorgensen, "Honest in *Othello*," *Studies in Philology*, 47(1950), 557-67; Julia Willis Abernethy, "Honest Iago," *Sewanee Review*, 30(1922), 336-44, and "'Honest' and 'False' in *Othello*," *Studia Neophilologica*, 35(1963), 211-20.

Cassio that "there are ways to recover the general again" (II,iii,249), and is aware of Othello's love for Cassio (II,ii,228-29). Moreover, Emilia, in Iago's presence, has told Cassio that Othello

> protest he *loves* you,
> And needs no other suitor but his likings
> To take the safest occasion by the front
> To bring you in again (III,i,45-48)

On the other hand, Iago has gambled his life away to achieve Othello's love, has disconnected the Othello-Cassio relationship to earn the lieutenancy, and will even work harder not only to retain his status, but also not to be discovered. Iago, therefore, plots the death of both Cassio and Roderigo for a highly practical reason:

> Live Roderigo,
> He calls me to a restitution large
> Of *gold* and *jewels* that I bobbed from him
> As gifts to Desdemona:
> It must not be. (V,i,14-18)

For Iago, the death of both is most beneficial: "whether he kill Cassio,/ Or Cassio him, or each do kill the other,/ Every way makes my game" (V,i,12-14).

The desperation with which Iago carries out his plot against Cassio after he has known that Othello is going to Venice (or as he tells Roderigo, to (Muritania"), is explainable on practical grounds. In addition to covering his plots for good, Iago knows that Cassio will be governor, and he himself will remain lieutenant. In fact, Cassio "knows not yet of his honorable *fortunes*" (IV,ii,226). Iago, moreover, knows that Cassio will be the legitimate heir to rule in Cyprus, and he makes use of this knowledge. One may notice that Iago earlier chose Cassio as the secret lover of Desdemona, and described their imagined relation in the same terms: only "stands so eminent in the degree of this fortune" (II,i,227-28). Like Roderigo, Cassio must die:

> If Cassio do remain,
> He hath a daily beauty in his life
> That makes me ugly; and besides, the Moor
> May unfold me to him: there stands I in much peril.
> No, he must die. (V,i, 18-22)

In his quest, Iago succeeds in achieving the major part. However, he fails because his "fortunes" have enlarged beyond control. The "strings" have become not only those of Roderigo's "purse" but the whole state of Cyprus. He has become

so ambitious that, indeed, maimed Cassio "makes" him "ugly." To account for the tragic results of the play, critics often concentrate on the Othello-Desdemona relationship; when they look at Iago, they try to fit him into one or another kind of the satanic schemes. For me (and this does not have to be incompatible with thematic approaches), on the socio-political level, Iago's failure fits the morality behind Stone's assertion that "So many families had risen that way [preying on war spoils and military positions] in the 1530s and 1540s that the tradition of easy fortunes to be made in office lingered on long after much of the reality had fled."(51) In addition, the intensity with which courtiers competed for royal favors and political positions was sharpened by the Queen's decision to restrict opportunities for new knights and peers.

Throughout the reign of Queen Elizabeth, able people tried to achieve status legitimately and illegitimately. The popular poetry of satire records not only how rampant the practice of social climbing was, but also how most people felt about the climbers. In Brabantio's "Bondslaves and pagans shall our statesmen be" (I,iii,99), the play itself sets in motion some of the great hatred favoritism and "social climbing" invoked. In fact, political groups were formed against favoritism and preferment; the Essex circle, of which Francis Bacon was a member, is only a case in point. As F.J. Levy puts it, the group was responding to the 1590s crisis "in which the Queen, led astray (as they believed) by a group of self-interested courtiers, was taking the commonwealth down a road leading toward destruction and rejecting offers of service from those most capable..."(52)

In conclusion, against such a background, Iago is not only a character in a play, he is also an embodiment of the sentiment that such a person with these characteristics morally invokes. However, to describe the sentiment invoked by the likes of Iago, I think no statement fits the general feeling better than Ascham's translation of the Italian proverb: the "Englishman Italianate is a devil incarnate. That is to say," he explains, "for religion papistry or worse; for learning less commonly than they carried out with them; for policy a factious heart, a discoursing head, a mind to meddle in all men's matters; for experience plenty of new mischiefs never known in England before; for manners variety of vanities, and change of filthy living."(53) In 1594, Thomas Nashe reiterated the same sentiment when he wrote: "Italy, the paradise of

(51) Stone, *Crisis*, p. 466.

(52) "Francis Bacon and the Style of Politics," *English Literary Renaissance*, 16(1986), 106. These political activities appeared when Shakespeare was an established playwright, and lasted until the death of the Queen. Shakespeare also had the opportunity to read Bacon's *Essays* which constituted a manual for courtly duplicity and dissembling.

(53) Quoted in Holzknecht, p. 40.

the earth and the epicure's heaven, how doth it form our young master?... From thence he brings the art of atheism, the art of epicuring, the art of whoring, the art of poisoning, the art of sodomitry. The only probable good thing they have to keep us from utterly condemning it is that it maketh a man an excellent courtier, a curious carpet knight; which is, by interpetation, a fine close lecher, a glorious hypocrite."(54) One could substantiate each and every article in Ascham's or Nashe's list from the speeches, intentions, and plans of Iago himself. However, one illuminating moment stands out as Iago himself voluntarily subscribes to this description:

> As I confess it is my nature's plague
> To spy into abuses, and oft my jealousy
> shapes faults that are not... (III,iii,144-46)

(54) *The Unfortunate Traveller and Other Works*, ed. J.B. Steane (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972), p. 345 [quoted in Dollimore, p. 25].

أياجو: «المحسوبية» والتسلق الاجتماعي في مسرحية *عطيل*

ميجان بن حسين هويمل الرويلي

أستاذ مساعد، قسم اللغة الإنجليزية، كلية الآداب، جامعة الملك سعود، الرياض، المملكة العربية السعودية

ملخص البحث. لقد أهمل نقد مسرحية *عطيل* لشكسبير تركيز المسرحية على جمع الثروة الذي كان من الممارسات الاجتماعية السياسية السائدة في العصر الإليزابيثي في إنجلترا. ففي ذلك العصر كان جمع المال يعتمد على نشاطات سياسية واجتماعية كا «لمحسوبية» والتسلق الاجتماعي، وتصيد المناصب العسكرية، وتبرز المسرحية تلك الأنشطة من خلال صورة الثروة (التي بها تفتح المسرحية وعليها تسدل الستار)، وكذلك عبر التنافس الحاد على منصب «القيادة». وكانت الثروة والمناصب العسكرية من الأنشطة الجذابة للإنسان الإليزابيثي لأنها غالبًا ما تؤدي إلى السلطة السياسية والوجاهة الاجتماعية إلا أن التنافس لتحقيق هذه الأهداف يتناقض مع المفاهيم والأعراف الأخلاقية وهذه الأنشطة هي المحرك الفعلي للحدث المسرحي والتي ربطت المسرحية بخلفيتها التاريخية، وخاصة فيما يتعلق بالبغض الذي أثارته ممارسات المتسلقين.