

Worksheet 19 – Act 5, Scene 1: Cassio Injured, Roderigo Killed

Review: Lecture 18

Last lecture, Prof. McRae explored the private scene between Desdemona and Emilia, as Desdemona prepares for bed.

- ✓ What is the name of the tree in the song Desdemona sings in Act 4, Scene 3? Why is this symbolic?

Recall: Lecture 19

Complete this section after watching the video lecture to check how much you remember.

1. Put the events from Act 5, Scene 1 in the correct order:
 - a) As Iago and Roderigo separately lie in wait for Cassio, Roderigo admits he'd rather not kill Cassio. Iago acknowledges that he can only prosper if both Cassio and Roderigo die.
 - b) Lights are called for and a chair for the wounded Cassio.
 - c) Lodovico and Gratiano hear the wounded men's cries, but can't see because of the dark.
 - d) When Cassio arrives, Roderigo ineffectually stabs at him, and is seriously stabbed in return, leaving Iago to try wounding Cassio from behind, hitting him in the leg.
 - e) Bianca arrives and is very upset at seeing the wounded Cassio, which Iago makes out is in fact evidence of her complicity in the crime. He feigns distress at the death of Roderigo and Cassio's injury.
 - f) Iago comes with a lantern, and, as if to help Cassio, kills Roderigo in supposed retribution.
 - g) Emilia and Iago set out to inform Othello what has happened.
 - h) Othello hears the commotion and, spurred on by his belief that Iago has killed Cassio, resolves to kill Desdemona.

Analysis

2. What reasons does Iago give to justify his desires for Cassio and/ or Roderigo to die?
3. Why does Othello ignore the cries for help? How does his attitude contrast with his character at the beginning of the play?

Evaluation

4. Act 5, Scene 1 once again features the character of Bianca, the courtesan:

Bianca

I am no strumpet; but of life as honest
As you that thus abuse me.

- a) Bianca's name means "white" in Italian. What is the symbolic significance of Bianca's name?
- b) How does Bianca's honesty contrast with that of other characters in the play?
- c) In Act 4, Scene 2, Othello calls Desdemona a 'strumpet'. How does that connect to Bianca in this scene?
- d) Why might Shakespeare have chosen to include the trope of the "honest whore" in *Othello*?

Glossary

- **Quat** – a pimple; an insulting term for a young person.
- **Melodramatic** – something performed in an over-the-top or unbelievable way.
- **Strumpet** – a female prostitute.