

Scene 1:

Opens with a dispute: foregrounds the sense of conflict throughout the novel (first against the Turks, then between characters.) There is an initial broken rhythm which emphasises the angry bursts of talk ('Tush, never tell me..') which underlines this sense of conflict.

Opening words: Iago begins with the blasphemous 's'blood' (which was interestingly cut from previous editions for being too profane, perhaps in response to the 'Acte to Restraine Abuses of Players' in 1606.) This contrasts with Roderigo's initial 'tush.' This sets up a juxtaposition between the weak fool (Roderigo) and the powerful antagonist (Iago.)

Powerful antagonist: offers bold assertions ('abhor me'; 'despise me if I do not'), which convey his confident character. In addition, the open invitation to judge contrasts with Roderigo's weak remonstrance (drawing the audience to Iago) and foreground the theme of appearance versus reality. This theme becomes explicit when Iago says directly 'be judge yourself.'

Iago's speech: gives the illusion of a factual report through the melodramatic pause ('and in conclusion...') and includes short phrases ('and what was he?'), perhaps conveying his anger. Moreover, there are a collection of words with the spitting force of expletives ('Off capped'; 'stuffed'; 'damned'.) Pace is created through the iambi meter ('that never set a squandron on the field.'). The pragmatic function of the speech is to allow the audience to see what the characters cannot, that Iago has false intentions (explicitly 'I follow him to serve my turn upon him.')

Roderigo's responses: do not add anything to Iago's speech, simply agree. This places Roderigo in a similar position to that of the audience, as a listener and perhaps even an accomplice, of Iago's evil thoughts.

There is an irony in Iago's argument: he had the support of 'three great ones', and yet he complains that 'preferment goes by letter and affection' (because of Iago's promotion.) This sets forward the transience of his morality and how his morals change to suit him best. A further irony lies in his rebuke of 'honest knaves' while being honest about himself. The function of these ironies is to convey the impossibility of absolutes, that it is not possible either to be good or bad alone.

Self defining villain: this is a trope inherited from Medieval drama, and which Iago adopts when he claims that 'were I the Moor, I would not be Iago.' Shakespeare provides the audience with a clear villain so that, when Iago puts up a show of morality, we can see that it is false; this dramatic irony will add to the tragedy as it unfolds.

Iago as false: famously misconstrues Exodus ('I am that I am') with the assertion that 'I am not what I am.' The circularity of the phrase adds to its simplicity, underlining the total truth of the statement.

Othello's name: not mentioned at all in the first scene. Referred to only in racist slurs such as 'thick lips' and 'lascivious moor.' This creates suspense and foregrounds the theme of appearance versus reality, as we are encouraged to form an impression of him that proves false when Othello actually appears.

The exclamation 'Zounds sir, you're robbed' begins with a blasphemous expletive and ends with the notion that Desdemona is Brabantio's stolen possession, creating an overall impression of the intensity of the crime. This is emphasised with the pace created through the repetition of 'now, now, very now' (which imbues imminency into the speech) and the list of emotive imperatives ('rouse', 'proclaim', 'plague.')

The animalistic imagery of 'an old black ram is tupping your white ewe' is juxtaposed with the colour imagery (black and white being stereotypically symbolic of good and bad) to underline the obscenity of