OTHELLO OR JEALOUS FURY

CAMILLE DUMOULIÉ
Université de Paris Ouest Nanterre

> How I have loved. And now, I'm dying, I must admit suffocated by my desire for a Great Negro who kills me. Black nudity, you have vanquished me.
>
> Jean Genet, The Blacks[1]

1. As highlighted in the preface to this issue of *L'Atelier*, one of the major questions raised by the power of affect and the emotional force of literature is "the relationship of a subject — individual or collective — to an experience that both surpasses and subjugates the self." A major question indeed, as it engages the very essence of literature as a practice and as a discursive form, but it also, in a certain way, engages the essence of the subject revealed through literature and in this excessive experience. As a counterpoint to the history of the subject-as-substance developed by philosophy, literature relates the history of a subject that exists outside of itself and that finds in this "extimity", to use Lacan's term, the source of the furious energy which animates it and fuels its passions, be they heroic or destructive, sublime or abject[2]. Though this be the case from Homer through to Melville or Faulkner, a major illustration of this phenomenon may be found in Shakespearean heroes, when considered not so much as living characters on the stage whose emotions are translated by actors, but rather as literary beings who, dispensing with this presence and this performance, exist on the mode of specific affects and emotions that run much deeper and which characterise literary beings.

2. In this vein, Mallarmé writes: "Lear, Hamlet himself and Cordelia, Ophelia, I'm citing remote heroes well advanced in legend or in their peculiar distance, act in full life, tangible, intense: when

1 « *Comme j'ai aimé. Et maintenant, je meurs, faut-il l'avouer, étouffée par mon désir d'un Grand Nègre qui me tue. Nudité noire, tu m'as vaincue.* » J. Genet, *Les Nègres*, 121, trans. N.T.

2 At least, this is the thesis I attempted to defend in *Fureurs. De la fureur du sujet aux fureurs de l'histoire*, Paris: Anthropos-Economica, 2012. The following article is taken from this book.

read, they crumple the page, to leave, embodied.[3]" These heroes allow us to experience, through literature (which, thereby, "supplements all theatre"), "this spiritually and magnificently illuminated core of ecstasy" which is "our pure self that we carry, always, ready to spring up at the moment which in existence or outside of art is always lacking."[4] And so, to return to this issue's preface, could we not say that this "core of ecstasy" fuels "the affective power of the work of literary or visual art"?

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3. Jealousy is perhaps the least heroic form of fury, however, with the character of Othello, Shakespeare gave it unequalled tragic grandeur. Getting to the essence of this passion's structure and dynamics, he made Othello into the mythical incarnation of jealous fury. What transforms jealousy into fury? In *On Love*, Stendhal describes the paradox of jealous love and its consequences thus: "In this state, fury easily arises: one forgets that when it comes to love, *possession is nothing, pleasure [jouir] is everything*.[5]" The jealous are, it follows, confused: they want possession instead of pleasure; they are also mistaken: they believe pleasure may be derived from possession, whereas pleasure and possession are mutually exclusive. While Stendhal's analysis may account for the psychological mechanisms of ordinary jealousy, it falls short of explaining jealous fury, which is the morbid attachment to jealousy itself, to the vile *jouissance* it procures, one that the furiously jealous cannot let go of. Proust, in *A Love of Swann's*, compares jealously to an octopus fastening itself onto its rock[6]. The Lacanian portmanteau word *"jalouissance"* sheds light on what is at stake in this fury. Not only can jealousy be *jouissance,* it is also jealousy of the Other's *jouissance,* of an-Other *jouissance* that is simultaneously sublime and abject, divine and diabolical, heady and monstrous. The furiously jealous are less mistaken than Stendhal might think. Indeed, they are the first to declare that, when it comes to love, "*pleasure* [jouir] *is everything*". But, because they also know that *Jouissance* is not of this world, they set up a perverse strategy in order to deny this knowledge and create the illusion that such *Jouissance* does indeed exist and that they would be able to experience it themselves if only they were not cuckolded. The frenzy of jealous fury thereby

3 « *Lear, Hamlet lui-même et Cordélie, Ophélie, je cite des héros reculés très avant dans la légende ou leur lointain spécial, agissent en toute vie, tangibles, intenses : lus, ils froissent la page, pour sortir, corporels*. » S. Mallarmé, *Œuvres complètes*, 329, trans. N.T.

4 « s*upplée à tous les théâtres* » ; « *ce spirituellement et magnifiquement illuminé fond d'extase* » ; « *le pur nous-mêmes par nous porté, toujours, prêt à jaillir à l'occasion qui dans l'existence ou hors de l'art fait toujours défaut* », *ibid.*, 334, trans. N.T.

5 « *Dans cet état, la fureur naît facilement ; l'on ne se rappelle plus qu'en amour, posséder n'est rien, c'est jouir qui fait tout* ». Stendhal, *De l'amour,* 199, trans. N.T.

6 M. Proust, *In Search of Lost Time. Vol I: The Way by Swann's,* 286.

doubles over the *Jouissance* that is lacking. It thus becomes a *jouissance* in and of itself: it might be an inverted *jouissance,* but it's the only real *jouissance* there is here.

4. The furiously jealous must persuade themselves that the thing they love — "the thing he loves" — to quote Othello, is The Thing [*La Chose*]— the incarnation of absolute *jouissance* which, though it can exist as a fantasy, is absolutely forbidden, excluded from the realms of possession, mastery, or usufruct[7]. To be sure, as Stendhal says, the emergence of jealous passion depends on a paradox that produces a painful division in the subject, throwing him into a rage. But the paradox is not the one Stendhal describes. It is often said that the jealous want to possess the loved one entirely. That is false. The unconscious truth is precisely the contrary: Stendhal's paradox must therefore be reversed in order to seize the fact that the furiously jealous subject is he who does everything to ensure that the woman he loves is possessed by others and to persuade himself that he is cuckolded. In his fantasy, the object of his love must give herself up to all men and all men must desire her, or, even better, possess her. This way, he can convince himself that she is The Woman, the one who holds the key to absolute *jouissance:* in short, that she is The Thing. A woman can only be a treasure trove of *jouissance* if she is unfaithful, if the jealous man's access to this treasure is thwarted. Therefore, for him, this *jouissance* is, in reality, forbidden. However because this ontological ban takes on the appearance of accidental contingency, the jealous man can continue to believe that, if only she didn't cuckold him, this absolute *jouissance* would be known to him. That which we have been prevented from obtaining is the only thing that could satisfy us, the only thing whose loss we cannot mourn. All that we possess quickly becomes tiresome and flavourless. Above all, if we've been prevented from obtaining something, it follows that that thing must exist. That explains why the jealous subject is so attached to his jealousy. Jealously allows the impossible *jouissance* to become so present in his fantasy, in his imagination, that this impossible *jouissance* becomes almost palpable. He lives in proximity, in negative intimacy with the Thing. At the peak of jealous passion, at the point of extreme division when the Thing is both so close and so evasive, fury puts him literally beside himself, in the absolute exteriority of the Thing. The throes of

7 Lacan develops the notion of the "Thing" [*la Chose*] in his seminar on the ethics of psychoanalysis, where he states: "And what is nearer to me than this heart within me, that of my jouissance which I don't dare approach? For as soon as I approach it — and this is the meaning of Civilisation and its discontents —this unfathomable aggression appears, before which I retreat, which I turn against myself, and which, in place of the Law that has vanished, lends its weight to that which prevents me from crossing a certain frontier at the limit of the Thing." / « *Et qu'est-ce qui m'est plus prochain que ce cœur en moi-même qui est celui de ma jouissance, dont je n'ose approcher? Car dès que j'en approche — c'est là le sens du* Malaise dans la civilisation *— surgit cette insondable agressivité devant quoi je recule, que je retourne contre moi, et qui vient à la place même de la Loi évanouie, donner son poids à ce qui m'empêche de franchir une certaine frontière à la limite de la Chose.* » J. Lacan, *Le Séminaire, livre VII, L'Éthique de la psychanalyse,* 219, trans. N.T.

jealousy thereby become a kind of *jouissance,* the stigmata of a passion which has transformed its subject into a martyr for the Thing.

5. This strategy is reminiscent of courtly love, in which the goal is to take pleasure [*jouir*] through inversion, on the level of the signifier, in the forbidden *jouissance* of the Lady. Desdemona, as it happens, has a number of the Lady's characteristics and in particular that demonic feature, which is inscribed in her very name, just as, according to Lacan, this feature is inscribed in the word "Dame", which one may associate with "dam", that is, damage. Logically, the strategy of the jealous also resembles that of Don Juan. Like Don Juan, the jealous do everything to ensure that the site of *jouissance* is left empty: they transform the loved one into the "One less" [*l'Une-en-moins*][8], the one whose *jouissance* would fulfil him if it wasn't unjustly withheld. The jealous subject thereby maintains an impassioned relationship to his rival, the seducer who, in his eyes and in his stead, plays at Don Juan. But the jealous are often themselves failed Don Juans[9].

6. Jealously is readily thought of as a feminine passion. And famous furiously jealous women, such as Juno, Medea or Deianira, are staged in tragedies. However, in each of these cases, their jealousy is justified. Feminine jealousy with paranoid tendencies has, of course, been extensively analysed and its characteristics identified[10], however the great figures of jealousy in literature are masculine and their *"jalouissance"* is expressed through their jealousy of the woman's *jouissance,* in both senses of the term: of the *jouissance* she gives to other men, that is, as an object, and also of the *jouissance* she experiences as a subject, thanks to other men. Proust, the great novelist of jealousy, shows this admirably in a short story entitled "The End of Jealousy". The hero, mortally wounded in an accident, agonises in great pain, but the worst of his suffering is caused by an all-consuming, obsessive, jealousy experienced at the idea that after his death, his mistress will meet another man and will love him. He is jealous of that love to come. However, in the midst of his cruel imaginings of this idyll, the real cause of his jealousy is suddenly revealed in a moment of illumination: "I am jealous of the other's pleasure and of her own pleasure. I will not be jealous of their love."[11]

8 This expression is taken from Lacan, according to whom Don Juan takes possession of women "one by one" / « *une par une* » in that each individual woman appears "from this angle, as One less" / « *sous l'angle de l'Une-en-moins* ». J. Lacan, *Le Séminaire, livre XX, Encore*, 116, trans. N.T.

9 This is the case in a number of novels on jealousy, like Tolstoy's *Kreutzer Sonata*, Proust's *A Love of Swann's*, or Svevo's *Senilità.*

10 See Daniel Lagache, *La Jalousie amoureuse*.

11 « *Je suis jaloux du plaisir de l'autre, de son plaisir à elle. Je ne serai pas jaloux de leur amour. »* M. Proust, *«* La fin de la jalousie », *Jean Santeuil* précédé de *Les Plaisirs et les jours,* 161, trans. N.T.

He is what He is

Three variations on the name of God

7. The tragic grandeur of Othello lies in the scale of the catastrophe that brings him down from a heroic, quasi-divine position, entirely exempt of jealousy, to suffer the fate this all too human desire reserves for him. Shakespeare gives Othello's fall the metaphysical dimensions of gnostic drama, in which God, having been divided from himself at the moment of creation, has handed the world over to Desire. In his initial, essential unity, God wouldn't have been jealous. But he became jealous with the diabolical division he himself instigated. In the same way, the three principal protagonists of the play, Othello, Iago and Desdemona, are all characterised by a phrase that is in each case a variation on the biblical verse in which God designates himself: "I am that I am". In reversing this wording, Iago takes on a diabolical role right from the first scene of the play: "I am not what I am" (1.1.64)[12]. He then defines Othello in the following terms: "He's that he is" (4.1.270)[13]. We see here that Othello doesn't define himself. Iago speaks in his name, as if he inhabited Othello's subjectivity. For indeed, he that says of himself: "I am that I am", the words Yahweh uses in reply to Moses, cannot be a subject, but the pure substance of *jouissance.* And if he isn't God, then he is nothing. In taking himself for an angel, he who defines himself in this way thereby plays the role of the beast. But isn't that precisely Othello's destiny, that of a dark angel who ends up in the role of the beast? As for the Beauty, Desdemona, she speaks from the position of the object, if not the Thing; she can only signify that she is not what one says she is and that only lies or slander can be said about her. "I am sure I am none such" (4.2.125) she affirms in a statement which takes up an earlier rejoinder: "Such as she said my lord did say I was" (4.2.121)[14]. To understand this rejoinder, the context must be taken into account: Othello has just called Desdemona a whore and has left her on her own. Enter Iago and his wife, Emilia. Iago asks Desdemona why she is upset, and Emilia replies "Alas! Iago, my Lord hath so bewhored her" (4.2.118). "Am I that name, Iago?" (4.2.119) Desdemona then asks. And Iago replies by returning her question: "What name, fair lady?" (4.2.120)[15]. To which she replies: "Such as she said my lord did say I was" (4.2.121)[16]. This very round-about formulation shows how difficult it is for Desdemona to designate herself without employing the slander others use to bad-mouth her, as she seems to exist in total exteriority in relation to the symbolic order. The irony of this situation is that she is thereby obliged to ask Iago

12 W. Shakespeare, *Othello,* 120.
13 *Ibid.,* p. 271.
14 *Ibid.,* p. 281.
15 *Ibid.*
16 *Ibid.*

who she is, placing him, once again, in the position of the subject. Iago doesn't reply, but is delighted to see her occupying the position that is also his own: that of the unnameable. Thus defining herself negatively — "I am sure I am none such" — she comes very close to Iago's diabolical self-definition: "I am not what I am". In spite of herself, Desdemona is on the side of those excluded from the symbolical order, that is, on the side of the diabolical. Moreover, the truth of her being is, from the outset, inscribed in the signifier that is her name: her name is legion, demonic legion: Des-demon-a[17]. As always in tragedy, we see the fatal incarnation of the signifier played out. But we're getting ahead of ourselves. Let's go back to the beginning.

The catastrophe of desire

8. *Othello's* action begins with the curse of a scorned father, the father of Desdemona whom the Moor has just abducted, and it closes with the realisation of the curse cast on their love, which has proved fatal, both for the lovers and for the father, as the pain caused "shore his old thread in twain" (5.2.204)[18]. However, Brabantio's anger seems ridiculous when compared with the sincere love between his daughter and Othello, all the more so once the Doge and Venetian senate have blessed the union and placed, once again, Venice's fate in the hands of the Moor. Apart from the fury of this now comic father, all seems to auger well. Othello's own father, although absent from the narrative and, doubtless, dead, legitimizes the marriage by way of the handkerchief. Indeed, Othello presents the handkerchief as "an antique token / my father gave my mother" (5.2.214-215)[19]. Possession of this handkerchief, inherited from the father and transmitted by the mother, is the sign of eternal love. By giving it to Desdemona, Othello reproduces his father's gesture and places himself in his lineage. Except that this version of the handkerchief's origin is what could be called a reconstruction after the fact, one that denies the validity of the first, much more detailed version of events he had previously related.

9. This, then, is the situation at the beginning of the play: Othello holds the position of the son at the centre of a solid but permissive paternal structure. The Doge and the senators play the role of the symbolical father, giving Othello military power and Desdemona's hand. Brabantio is a real father, hostile but powerless. Othello's own father occupies the role of the ideal, benevolent father who has allowed the transmission, to his son, of the handkerchief, which is both a phallic symbol permitting possession of the woman-mother and the apotropaic feminine veil/hymen. At the heart of

17 In French: « *Des Démones* », that is, "the" (in the plural form of the definite article) "demons".
18 W. Shakespeare, *Othello,* 230.
19 *Ibid.,* 321.

this ideal structure, Othello is Unique. He is one, identical to himself and at peace with others. He is jealous of no one, and, perhaps because of his unique colour, does not yet make anyone jealous.

10. But this clear sky becomes overcast, and all these fathers' are going to take umbrage: storms are brewing. The first storm, the one that disperses the Turkish fleet at Cyprus and grants victory to Venice, seems to prove the gods' continued benevolence. However, this storm also signifies a change in fortune, because the Heavens thereby deprive Othello of glorious victory in combat. Something is waiting to happen, something that Brabantio's impotent rage tragi-comically presaged. The paternal curse had already been cast over Othello and contained in the very charm that is supposed to protect him from it. The handkerchief, once it becomes Iago's instrument, once it is in the devil's hands, precipitates Desdemona's fall and projects Othello into a murderous, then suicidal fury. Yet this diabolical reversal was in fact inscribed in the very nature of this strange *pharmakon.* Indeed, here is the first story Othello tells about this handkerchief:

> 'Tis true, there's magic in the web of it.
>
> A sibyl that had numbered in the world
>
> The sun to course two hundred compasses,
>
> In her prophetic fury sewed the work;
>
> The worms were hallowed that did breed the silk,
>
> And it was dyed in mummy, which the skilful
>
> Conserved of maiden's hearts. (3.4.71-77)[20]

11. This cruel use of virgin hearts, this sacrifice of femininity transformed into a totem by mummification, allows the handkerchief's magical, alchemy-like transubstantiation to take place, an operation in which it becomes the site of the phallus's real presence, the object of desire that a woman adorns herself with in order to secure male desire. Indeed, possession of the handkerchief was Othello's mother's the sole guarantee of her husband's love, securing even his entire submission to her love ("and subdue my father / Entirely to her love" 3.4.61-62). But should she have lost the handkerchief or given it away, she would have become, in the eyes of Othello's father, an object of disgust and horror ("my father's eye / Should hold her loathed" 3.4.63-64, and he would have gone in search of "new fancies" 3.4.65). In the same manner, this charm protects

20 *Ibid.,* 245.

Desdemona as long as she has it in her possession, but as soon as she loses it, she becomes the object of disgust. A portentous tale is repeated, transmitted from father to son, from man to man. What does the handkerchief guarantee? The love of the mother, or of the woman as mother. However, in this case, for the son, it certainly doesn't guarantee the woman's desire. As long as the handkerchief is in its place, it performs its role as a veil and nourishes love, that is, an undivided sentiment, a mirage created under the spell of a tyrannical charm. What emerges when the handkerchief is stolen and the veil falls is the horror of the woman marked by castration, the object of transgressive desire. The catastrophe brewing for Othello is indeed the fall of the loved one to the status of an object of forbidden desire, a diabolical desire which Desdemona, who bears its name, ends up embodying. This triggers the fury of the ideal father and reveals his true nature, which proves to be as dual and as dangerous as that of the handkerchief. The imaginary father[21], like the devil, plays this double role: on the one hand he encourages *jouissance* (he is *said* to have given his son the handkerchief, the instrument that allows possession of women) while on the other he is the one who forbids *jouissance* and will punish the guilty son.

Iago, Othello's subject

12. The first, great figure of jealousy is God. In the gnostic universe, God is even cruel and nasty. However, from the outset of this drama, the evil power of the imaginary father who reigns from the sky of bad ideas seems to have descended and taken on bodily form in the figure of Iago. The role of the devil is indeed to reproduce on earth the actions of the evil demiurge, to act against the upright, against those who are unique and who seem to reflect the primary unity the real God lost before immediately withdrawing from the universe, but not before having delegated the world's creation to this demiurge. In the Gnostic universe, where everything is inverted and where, for example, Yahweh, the God of the Old Testament, is considered not as the real God but as the evil demiurge, it is quite logical that the real Messiah, the pure representative of the first, good God, have a black face. Blackness is the sign of purity in a world where whiteness hides the worst infamies. Therefore Iago will perform, on this Saviour – of the Republic of Venice, at least – his work of diabolical conversion.

13. Iago possesses the dual qualities of the imagined father, that of encouraging *jouissance* and simultaneously requiring that all *jouissance* belong to him. That explains why he is always on the

21 In a Lacanian schema, the "imaginary father" figure intervenes in the Œdipus fantasy, the mythical model of this father being the primitive hoard described by Freud in *Totem and Taboo*. This "imaginary father" is distinguished from the "real father" and the "symbolical father", that is, the father figure of the law who sanctions the resolution of the Œdipus complex.

alert for *jouissance.* As the jealous god's emissary, he is the ultimate jealous subject, out to collect the ransom of men's *jouissance.* In a devil's accomplice's mind, the idea of *jouissance* takes on the trivial form of an obsession with sexual relations. As his power is "dia-bolical", Iago is divisive, in that he splits open the Unique being along the fracture of desire. In instructing Othello in jealousy, he instructs him in desire, but by the same token, he unveils Othello's own Otherness to him. From this point on, Othello's self is divided. Or rather, this original, entire subject who couldn't even say of himself "I am that I am", is divided into an ideal self — Cassio, the loved rival — and an Other self who will prove to be a monster. This monstrous Other is the one Othello kills when he commits suicide. He represents this Other — therefore, he represents himself — as having the features of the Turks he has ceaselessly combatted in Venice's defence, exactly like the Turk he had killed to protect a Venetian who, even then, must have looked like Cassio:

> And say beside that in Aleppo once,
>
> Where a malignant and a turbaned Turk
>
> Beat a Venetian and traduced the state,
>
> I took by th' throat the circumcised dog
>
> And smote him — thus! *He stabs himself.* (5.2.350-354)[22]

14. The best representative of this catastrophic subject that Othello has become is indeed Iago, his double and his creator. Iago is the one who reveals to the Unique being his true nature. Fracturing the undifferentiated individual that Othello had been until then, he transforms Othello into a real, desiring subject. Freud has indeed observed that, in Shakespeare's work, the hero's antagonist is actually his double, embodying the repressed truth of his desire. Iago, the bearer of Othello's desire, is his subject, in all senses of the word. In Giraldi Cinthio's *Hectatommithi*, one of Shakespeare's sources of inspiration for *Othello*, this sub-lieutenant has no name. It is Shakespeare who gave him one. How did he come up with it? Whatever the answer to that question may be, one cannot help but hear in *I/ago*, "I", the subject, the one that acts, the good subject of his master Othello, the one who will guide Othello towards the recognition of his true self.

I am that which I am not

22 W. Shakespeare, *Othello*, 331.

The *jouissance* of the Other

15. Iago has no charm, but he wields the charms of others, or for others, as he has the handkerchief pass from hand to hand. In the same way, witches, mistresses of charms, are known to be singularly lacking in charm. Iago's sole strategy, his sole obsession, is to display the *jouissance* of the Other. Himself jealous of all the prerogatives and honours others enjoy, he spreads jealousy about him by making the splendours of an exceptional *jouissance* sparkle before their eyes, a *jouissance* that exceeds the bounds of the normal or the legitimate, a *jouissance* that is beyond their reach. The Moor plays a crucial role in this strategy as he is used to excite the jealousy of others via the exhibition of his supposed *jouissance.* And at the same time, Iago persuades him that he is being deprived of this very same *jouissance.* Othello is thus given over to the fury of jealous *jouissance.* The dramatic action of the play is thus set in motion by Iago, who wakes Brabantio in the middle of the night to inform him of his daughter's absence and the reason for this absence. His smutty triviality gets to the heart of the matter: this African's virile attributes have conquered, along with her body, Desdemona's heart:

> Even now, now, very now, an old black ram
>
> Is tupping your white ewe! […] (1.1.87-88)[23]
>
> […] you'll have your daughter covered with a Barbary horse; you'll have your nephews neigh to you, you'll have coursers for cousins and jennets for germans! (1.1. 109-112)[24]

16. Yet this tactical description of the state of affairs is a complete fabrication. And in fact, herein lies the problem: Othello has still not enjoyed Desdemona's body, which he admires and respects a little too much. The act itself, their bodily union, takes place rather tardily as an off-beat narrative counterpoint, in a context that is both belligerent and lacking in glory. At this point, we're in the Cypriote castle where Othello is resting from the battle he did not end up waging, the enemy fleet having been vanquished either by chance winds or by the demiurge, jealous of Othello's victory. The lacklustre nature of this wartime backdrop is accentuated by events at the very moment the two are set to consummate their union. On stage, as a counterpoint to the supposed *jouissance* experienced by Othello and Desdemona's intertwined bodies, spectators witness a scene of military debauchery, orchestrated by Iago to inebriate Cassio so that he might implicate the latter in a drunken brawl. The couple's supposed union is also out of time — off beat — as the departure for Cyprus delays the young newlywed's amorous act. But, above all, the alarm raised by the brawl, in

23 *Ibid.*, 121.
24 *Ibid.*, 124.

which the drunken Cassio kills a soldier, interrupts their first night together, as if Cassio is already intervening in the intimacy of their nuptial embrace. We can even question whether or not anything was actually interrupted, for when Desdemona appears, as Othello notes, "[his] gentle love [is] […] raised up" (2.3.246)[25]. Either their embrace was short or it was still to come. At the tragedy's end, might we not detect resentment in the words Othello pronounces over the dead body of Desdemona, who he has just killed: "cold, cold, my girl / Even like thy chastity" (5.2.273-274)?

17. We can see that Iago would not have found it difficult to pour jealousy's poison into this fracture, and to depict, or, better still, mime, before Othello's eyes, the *jouissance* Desdemona is said to have enjoyed with Cassio, a more real and legitimate *jouissance* according to the norms at sway. By displaying the Other's *jouissance*, Iago finally opens Othello's eyes and teaches him the meanings of words, and along with the word, the Thing. Not only did the Moor respect Desdemona's virginity until their arrival at Cyprus, but, also, contrary to Iago's fantasies, he also intended to take his pleasure within the limits prescribed by the law. Such are the terms in which he announces to the castle's inhabitants his intention to consummate his marriage:

> Good Michael, look you to the guard tonight.
>
> Let's teach ourselves that honourable stop
>
> Not to outsport discretion. (2.3.1-3)

And, to Desdemona:

> […] Come, my dear love,
>
> The purchase made, the fruits are to ensue:
>
> The profit's yet to come 'tween me and you. (2.3.9-11)[26]

18. This is a far cry from the bestial mating Iago had suggested, as well as from any Dionysiac effusion. And the legal terms in which Othello understands the idea of *jouissance*, as the enjoyment of a purchased good, aren't particularly well-adapted to the kind of gallant speech that might ignite Desdemona's desires. But jealous fury will take root precisely at the intersection between the conviction that he has a legitimate right to *jouissance* and the fantasy of an infinitely Other *jouissance*, by definition unattainable.

25 *Ibid.,* 197.
26 *Ibid.,* 183-184.

19. Iago detects the seeds of this monstrous, abject *jouissance* in the heart of every human being, even that of the purest of women: his crude fantasies may not, in fact, be entirely unfounded. This cynical moralist always goes straight to the heart of things: the depths of man, his basest instincts, his furious passions and bloody debauchery, to use Iago's own words. The only bond love could tie here is that of corporal *jouissance.* An axiom of this sort doesn't require proof. Deft insinuation and some brazen flourishes are all that are necessary to win over the interlocutor's belief. After having applied his method on Desdemona's father, he repeats it on Roderigo. Great seducers such as Don Juan — and Iago is a great seducer, even if he lacks charm — constantly use the same tried and tested strategies and don't bother with originality. Therefore, to render Roderigo jealous, all Iago needs to do is represent Desdemona's obscene *jouissance*, make it into a merchandise, and propose a bargain in which Roderigo is placed in the role of the fool.

> When the blood is made dull with the act of sport, there should be, again to inflame it, and to give satiety a fresh appetite, loveliness in favour, sympathy in years, manners and beauties, all which the Moor is defective in. (2.1.224-228)[27]

To convince Roderigo, Iago seeks to persuade him that Desdemona is already in love with Cassio. But it's not so much a question of love as of lust: "Lechery, by this hand: an index and obscure prologue to the history of lust and foul thoughts" (2.1.255-256)[28]. Desdemona is therefore ready to give herself to the first man who knows how to take her when she has grown tired of the Moor: "when she is sated with his body she will find the error of her choice […] thou shalt enjoy her" (1.3. 351-358)[29].

Passion for the rival

20. Having ensnared Roderigo, Iago reiterates his strategy of seduction on Othello. Once again, Desdemona and Cassio's *jouissance* is to be displayed. In keeping with the logic of jealous projection (as Freud has shown, one of the fundamental characteristics of jealousy is that the jealous subject projects his own desires onto others[30]), Iago describes Cassio to Rodrigo in terms of his own image:

> a knave very voluble, no further conscionable than in putting on the mere form of civil and humane

27 *Ibid.,* 177-178.
28 *Ibid.,* 179.
29 *Ibid.,* 158.
30 S. Freud, *Névrose, psychose et perversion,* 271 : « *Sur quelques mécanismes névrotiques dans la jalousie, la paranoïa et l'homosexualité* ».

> seeming for the better passing of his salt and most hidden and loose affection. (2.1.235-239)[31]

Everything seems to give the lie to Iago's slandering of the gallant Cassio. And yet, he might just be right. Cassio and Desdemona are made for each other, and the courteous words they exchange are the prelude to the revelation of their love. Iago detects this immediately, and Desdemona herself, while protesting against Othello's incriminations when he accuses her of being a whore, makes the following statement, which, under the guise of antiphrasis, seems like a confession of guilty desire:

> 'Tis meet I should be used so, very meet.
>
> How have I been behaved that he might stick
>
> The small'st opinion on my greatest misuse? (4.2.109-111)[32]

21. The bone of contention between Othello and Iago is a certain quantity of *jouissance*, of which Iago feels he has been doubly deprived. Firstly, by the Moor's choice of Cassio over Iago for the position of Captain; secondly, because he is convinced that "the lusty Moor / hath leaped into [his] seat" (2.1.293-294), that is, that Othello has ravished his own wife, Emilia. Hidden beneath these explicit reasons lies Iago's unconscious motivation: his homosexual desire for Othello (and for Cassio), which is what makes him so susceptible when it comes to the *jouissance* Othello might experience and the *jouissance* he can procure for others. The avowed motive of his hatred for the two men — that Othello and Cassio are said to have "leaped into his seat", his wife —, is the expression of this repressed homosexual desire, which Freud places at the heart of pathological jealousy. The jealous subject projects his own desire for his rival onto his wife. Here, once again, Iago's monstrosity is an accurate reflection of the human condition. The jealous fury Iago incites in Othello feeds on this same hidden desire, revealing, in the Moor, this model of virility, the homosexual nature of his desire for Cassio. Iago's real resentment derives from Othello's preference for Cassio. Emblematic of this is the fact that the tragedy opens with Iago's description of Cassio:

> One Michael Cassio, a Florentine,
>
> A fellow almost damned in a fair wife
>
> That never set a squadron in the field
>
> Nor the division of a battle knows

31 W. Shakespeare, *Othello*, 178.
32 *Ibid.,* 280.

More than a spinster […] (1.1.19-23)[33]

22. Note that the ambiguity of the second line here could be read either as "a fellow prepared to damn himself for a pretty wife" or "a fellow almost condemned to the life of a pretty wife". All these desires come together in the two scenes Iago performs in order to trap Othello in his own fantasy, displaying scenarios of homosexual *jouissance.* The first scene is Iago's account of a night during which he claims to have heard words of love which Cassio, sleep-talking, supposedly addressed to Desdemona in his dreams. But this tale serves as a pretext for Iago to describe to Othello nothing less than an erotic embrace between himself and Cassio:

> […] I lay with Cassio lately
>
> […]
>
> In sleep I heard him say 'Sweet Desdemona,
>
> Let us be wary, let us hide our loves,'
>
> And then, sir, would he gripe and wring my hand,
>
> Cry 'O sweet creature!' and then kiss me hard
>
> As if he 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!' (3.3.416-428)[34]

A Grotesque Devil

23. When fantasy becomes this outrageous, as is often the case with Shakespeare, the grotesque vies with the terrible, and the devil takes on the appearance of a clown. The closer the protagonists come to the dark object of their unconscious desire, the more difficult it becomes to distinguish the poignant from the ridiculous. After such a scene, only so great a genius as Shakespeare would dare take the tragic situation into the register of the most pathetic kind of grotesque. As Othello's fury explodes, demanding blood and inconceivable revenge, he falls to his knees, that he might commit himself to action through the swearing of awful oaths. Iago stops him from getting up and kneels

33 *Ibid.,* 116-117.
34 *Ibid.,* 236.

beside him. We then observe one of the most astonishing things that can be seen in theatre: the marriage of Othello and Iago. The latter calls on the stars to bear witness to their vows. Both stand up again at the same time. Othello decides that Cassio and Desdemona must die. And to seal this new union, he says to Iago: "Now art thou my lieutenant", to which Iago replies, like a smitten lover, "I am your own for ever" (3.3.481-482)[35]. The second scene Iago performs for Othello also exploits the codes of pantomime, to the extent that it is a mimed scene: Othello, the hidden spectator, only sees the gestures. Once again, the two erotic planes are superposed. Iago, who convinces Othello he will be discussing Desdemona with Cassio, is in fact joking with Cassio about a prostitute, Bianca, who is in love with him. In this inverted universe where the pure woman is a Demon and the Black is the most upright of men, it is only logical that the prostitute's name be Bianca. Cassio, who is in high spirits, goes so far as to mime the embraces and caresses his lover assails him with, using Iago as a place-holder for Bianca.

24. The diabolically divisive Iago, like the witches in *Macbeth*, makes one see double: two scenes of *jouissance* at once. Iago depicts Cassio and Desdemona's love scene but also, and for the second time, he superimposes thereon an erotic scene between Cassio and himself. The devil's function is to encourage one to take pleasure in a transgressive *jouissance* that reveals a repressed desire. And Iago is the faithful servant of Othello's repressed desire. Indeed, at the end of the play, the cumbersome Desdemona is no more, and everything has been sacrificed to the glory of Cassio, to the ascension of the loved rival, who will take Othello's place as governor. Iago's function is therefore to show Othello this monstrous double *jouissance* that Desdemona is to have deprived him of: the *jouissance* of her own body given over to Cassio; the *jouissance* of Cassio's body stolen from him by Desdemona, whose role Iago grotesquely plays in his erotic mimes.

I am not what he says

Hallucinating the Thing

25. Othello's fury is made all the more monstrous by the incredible amount of jouissance he projects onto Desdemona. This allows him to nurture the dream, or the nightmare, that this Thing (as he himself designates it), is his by right, just as his own wife is:

> […] I had rather be a toad

35 *Ibid.,* 240.

> And live upon the vapour of a dungeon
>
> Than keep a corner in the thing I love
>
> For others' uses. […] (3.3. 274-277)[36]

26. Shakespeare hits the mark: not "the being" but "the thing I love". Othello's monstrous fury feeds on this monstrous fantasised jouissance. Therefore, swept up in a kind of auto-intoxication or auto-hallucination, he sketches out a fascinating image of a Desdemona entirely given over to jouissance:

> I had been happy if the general camp
>
> Pioneers and all, had tasted her sweet body,
>
> So I had nothing known. (3.3.348-350)[37]

27. What a prodigious demonstration of his unconscious desire, this desire that he wants to know nothing of, but that reveals itself through negation! In order to trigger and fuel his fury, Othello needs such a representation, such a vision of an unimaginable amount of jouissances, those of a whole army focused on one single, charming body. For it is indeed his desire that he is asking Iago to fulfil, when he rages against him:

> Villain, be sure thou prove my love a whore,
>
> Be sure of it, give me the ocular proof,
>
> Or by the worth of a man's eternal soul
>
> Thou hadst been better have been born a dog
>
> Than answer my naked wrath!
>
> […]
>
> Make me to see't, […] (3.3.361-368)[38]
>
> Arise, black vengeance, from the hollow hell,
>
> Yield up, O love, thy crown and hearted throne

36 *Ibid.,* 225-226.
37 *Ibid.,* 231.
38 *Ibid.,* 232.

To tyrannous hate! Swell, bosom, with they fraught,

For 'tis of aspics' tongues! (3.3.450-454)[39]

28. Having worked himself up to hallucinate all this delirious *jouissance*, it becomes quite a real thing, of which Othello can imagine he has been deprived. In the crazy expression of this fantasy, one wonders which *jouissance* is the object of his jealousy, which pleasure-taking body is the one he identifies with: that of the whole army or that of Desdemona? Who steals this *jouissance* from him? The faithful soldiers who honour his wife's body, or the unfaithful Desdemona who derives *jouissance* from all these men who belong to the Moor?

I swear it is better to be much abused

Than but to know't a little.

[…]

What sense had I of her stolen hours of lust? (3.3.338-341)[40]

29. Note once again the ambiguity of this last line, which could just as well be read to mean "What sense did I have of the hours she stole from me for lust?" as to mean "What feeling did I have of the hours of lust she stole from me?". Othello, whose past in no way predestined him to jealousy, has become Iago, the epitome of jealousy. This traitor's function was none other than to betray the secret desires of the Moor. And Iago is the one charged with expressing the fundamental fantasy of the jealous subject:

IAGO: I see, sir, you are eaten up with passion.

I do repent me that I put it to you.

You would be satisfied?

OTHELLO: Would? nay, and I will!

IAGO: And may — but how? how satisfied, my lord?

Would you, the supervisor, grossly gape on?

Behold her topped?

39 *Ibid.,* 238.
40 *Ibid.,* 230.

> […]
>
> What shall I say? where's satisfaction?
>
> It is impossible you should see this
>
> Were they as prime as goats, as hot as monkeys,
>
> As salt as wolves in pride, […] (3.3.394-407)[41]

30. Yet this is exactly what Iago has represented for Othello in his little mimed scenes. The jealous subject wants to surprise the Other's *jouissance*, he wants to persuade himself that this *jouissance* actually takes place, in order to break out into legitimate wrath when confronted with this kind of eternal repetition of the primitive scene of the parents' copulation. If he has been deprived of it, it follows that this *jouissance* does exist, that Desdemona's body, which seems to have procured him only the most ordinary of sexual pleasures — and perhaps not even those — contains unlimited treasures of *jouissance.* The pain associated with jealous frustration fuels the outburst of a fury that aims to attain the intensity, if not the image, of the stolen *jouissance.* Jealousy's fury is a means of participating in the *jouissance* of the Woman. It is a rather twisted, inverted way of doing so, as the jealous subject only experiences the torments of this *jouissance*, its torturous side. Nevertheless, this way he reaches the heights of *jouissance* and is plunged into the horror of a *jouissance* of an entirely Other nature. At the height of this vision of the impossible, when Iago reveals that Cassio is supposedly bragging about having slept "with" Desdemona, or "on her, what you will" (4.1.34)[42], Othello is seized by delirium, then an epileptic trance, something, according to Iago, he seems to have a propensity for. He collapses, and loses consciousness. Epilepsy, if that is in fact the case here, is the symptom of that other illness King Lear calls "*hysterica passio*" (2.2.247)[43], the ascent within him of female genitalia, such that the world is invaded by the power women derive from their underbellies.

The love of the whore

31. After this episode, Othello sees Bianca give Cassio Desdemona's handkerchief, Iago having managed to have it circulate from hand to hand. Othello says: "She gave it him, and he hath given it his whore." (4.1.173-174)[44]. The handkerchief has finally ended up at its real destination and reveals

41 *Ibid.,* 234-235.
42 *Ibid.,* 256.
43 W. Shakespeare, *King Lear*, 241.
44 W. Shakespeare, *Othello*, 265.

the nature of every woman who possesses it: she is a whore. In this fantasized degradation of his wife, Othello fabricates his own Desdemona, one consonant with his desires: she has become a whore, or rather has revealed herself to be what she must already be. The best proof of her depravity is, as Iago tells Othello, that she has refused so many good offers in order to give herself to a Black. Iago always hits the mark when he identifies the sources of *jouissance* in others. Indeed, from the outset, the question is open as to what could have seduced Desdemona in Othello. What so bewitched her that Brabantio would accuse Othello of casting spells? She who had shunned better propositions threw herself, to her father's astonishment, onto this "sooty bosom" (1.2.70), disregarding the "general mock" thereby raised (1.2.69)[45]. Desdemona herself admits that the heroic tales of the Moor won her over. Brabantio denounces a charm that he believes Othello used to bewitch his daughter. But all the poison was in his words. Desdemona's admiration initially has us think that Othello embodies a kind of ideal, even an ideal self, as shown in the following two lines:

> She wished she had not heard it, yet she wished
>
> That heaven had made her such a man. […] (1.3.163-164)

She would have preferred to know nothing of it, for it is indeed a strange ideal: "'twas strange" and even "'twas passing strange", more than strange, as Desdemona herself notes. So strange that it's extremely pitiful: "t'was wondrous pitiful", so strange that she would rather have never heard these stories which bring tears to her eyes. In particular, the story of some catastrophe, "some distressful stroke" inflicted upon Othello's youth (1.3.161, 162, 158)[46]. But the most significant passage is the following one, taken from Othello's speech:

> Wherein I spoke of most disastrous chances,
>
> Of moving accidents by flood and field,
>
> Of hair-breadth scapes i'th' imminent deadly breach,
>
> Of being taken by the insolent foe
>
> And sold to slavery; of my redemption thence
>
> And portance in my travailous history;
>
> Wherein of antres vast and deserts idle,

45 *Ibid.,* 133
46 *Ibid.,* 145.

> Rough quarries, rocks and hills whose heads touch heaven
>
> It was my hint to speak — such was my process —
>
> And of the cannibals that each other eat,
>
> The Anthropophagi, and men whose heads
>
> Do grow beneath their shoulders. This to hear
>
> Would Desdemona seriously incline,
>
> But still the house affairs would draw her thence,
>
> Which ever as she could with haste dispatch
>
> She'd come again, and with a greedy ear
>
> Devour up my discourse […] (1.3.135-151)[47]

32. Here is an astonishing scene of cannibalism redoubled, of double devouring, which throws into relief the seductive power that the monstrosity Othello bears exercises on Desdemona. A spell wasn't needed to make her "fall in love with what she feared to look on" (1.3.99)[48], as her father believes. On the contrary, Othello's otherness, manifest in his appearance and in his tales, was the gage of a monstrous *jouissance* that ignited her desire. Having reminded Othello of the unnatural desire that attracted Desdemona to him, aroused by the details of a horrible story in which she took pleasure, Iago doesn't then find it difficult to convince him that she is a whore and to drag her through the mud. Indeed, Desdemona's desire is the cause of everything that happens. Flouting general opposition, she asserts her desire and imposes it on Othello, first and foremost. This is why she is a demon. Throughout the second scene of act IV, Othello insults her and repeats as often as he pleases, or derives *jouissance* from doing so, that she is nothing but a whore. By promising infinite *jouissance* while simultaneously preventing access to it, becoming thereby the Thing in its most diabolical form, Desdemona realises the promise inscribed in her name. Both literally and figuratively, Othello has *blackened* her:

> […] My name, that was as fresh
>
> As Dian's visage, is now begrimed and black

47 *Ibid.,* 141.
48 *Ibid.,* 141.

As mine own face. [….] (3.3.389-390)[49]

33. This paradoxical association between his name and the fair, feminine face of a Greek divinity suggests a strange identification between Desdemona and himself. This citation is taken from the 1623 *in-folio*. The 1630 *in quarto* version exacerbates the confusion by putting "her name" in place of "my name"[50]. This then confirms the importance of a game of doubles in determining their love: "she wished", she says, "that heaven had made her such a man." And he has loved her narcissistically, for the sympathy that she felt for the tale of his exploits. Othello's expression when welcoming her to Cyprus reveals this narcissistic dual identification: "O, my fair warrior!" (2.1.179)[51]. This is confirmed by Iago's rejoinder: "Our general's wife is now the general" (2.3.309-310).[52] Cassio had already called her "our great captain's captain" (2.1.74)[53].

34. At the beginning, in this narcissistic play of mirrors, desire was not yet part of their love. It took the appearance of the Other and the Other's desire, and, therefore of jealousy, for Othello to really desire Desdemona. So that she might fall from the heights of the ideal and become an object of sexual desire, Othello blackens Desdemona. From an Œdipean point of view, the object of desire must be removed as far as possible from the image of the mother, the object of pure love. Herein lies the paradox: to blacken Desdemona is to reveal, beneath her delicate snow-white hue, the features of the maternal face. This staging of Othello's unconscious desire, which draws Desdemona into a movement of becoming-Black-mother[54], is underscored by the willow's song that she sings, just after having brought up the possibility of her own premature death:

My mother had a maid called Barbary,

She was in love, and he she loved proved mad

And did forsake her. She had a song of 'willow',

An old thing 'twas, but it expressed her fortune

And she died singing it. That song tonight

Will not go from my mind. I have much to do

49 *Ibid.,* 234.
50 See the notes on the text, *ibid.,* 234.
51 *Ibid.,* 174.
52 *Ibid.,* 200.
53 *Ibid.,* 166.
54 Translator's note: the original text: « *un devenir-mère-noire* ».

> But to go hang my head all at one side
>
> And sing it like poor Barbary. […] (4.3.24-31)[55]

35. Desdemona becomes Barbary, the maternal black servant. In giving her the fetishized handkerchief that guaranteed the permanence of their love, Othello transfers onto Desdemona the desire and the love of the mother. The handkerchief lost, the veil fallen, she is nothing but a whore. But that's just what she had to be. Othello gave Iago the task of creating a Desdemona that would correspond to his desires. Once this traitor has reactivated the fantasy of stealing the mother from the enraged father who dies at this fatal blow ("She did deceive her father, marrying you" says Iago to Othello (3.3.209)[56]), the Moor gives him the task of realising his desire, that is, of proving that the mother is a whore ("Villain, be sure thou prove my love a whore" (3.3.361)). Yes, Desdemona was Bianca, the prostitute. Yes, the Mother was indeed a whore. Such is the foundational logic behind what Freud called "the most prevalent form of degradation in erotic life"[57]. "Love of the whore" is one of the most perverse expressions of the Œdipus complex. Freud uses this "love of the whore" to explain the behaviour of men whose love life is "divided", who attempt to resolve the conflict between love (whose first object is the mother, still worshipped), and desire (which is from the outset incestuous and therefore forbidden). Only a woman with a dubious reputation, on whom one or more other men may lay claim, will be loved. The more "fallen" she seems to be, the more the lover will become attached to her in the hope of "saving" her. How does this kind of love contribute to the effort to reduce the division in the subject? As paradoxical as it may seem, the "whore" in question is the mother's representative. Like the mother, she belongs to another man, the father, and her value is infinitely overestimated, such that she is worthy of being saved. Such degradation of the mother to the ranks of the whore is made possible by the disrepute she earns in the boy's eyes the day he discovers that his mother gives herself up to sexual acts which have always been represented to him as shameful. "With cynical logic" writes Freud, the child says to himself that "the difference between his mother and a whore is after all not so very great, since at bottom they both do the same thing."[58]

36. Here are the final words Othello pronounces over his wife's corpse:

55 W. Shakespeare, *Othello*, 290-291.
56 *Ibid.,* 221.
57 Cf. the title of Sigmund Freud's 1912 essay, *Über die allgemeine Ernidrigung des Liebeslebens*, often translated as "The Most Prevelant Form of Degradation of Erotic Life". Published in Sigmund Freud, *Sexuality and the Psychology of Love.* Trans. Joan Riviere.
58 "A Special Type of Object Choice Made by Men", published in *ibid*, p. 45, trans. Joan Riviere.

> Now, how dost thou look now? O ill starred wench,
>
> Pale as thy smock. When we shall meet at compt
>
> This look of thine will hurl my soul from heaven
>
> And fiends will snatch at it. Cold, cold, my girl,
>
> Even like thy chastity. O cursed, cursed slave!
>
> Whip me, ye devils
>
> From the possession of this heavenly sight! (5.2.270-276)[59]

37. Curiously, for Othello, the double barrier of cold chastity and death seem to awaken an irrepressible desire to finally possess Desdemona's body. Just prior to killing her, while she was sleeping and he was covering her with kisses, he murmured to her: "Be thus when thou art dead and I will kill thee / And love there after […] (5.2.18-19)[60].

At the limits of the Thing

38. It seems that both these conditions — the murder of the object of desire/disgust and necrophilia — needed to be met in order for Othello to finally perform the sexual act. Who could the object of this act be, if not the dead mother who comes to haunt Desdemona's corpse? Othello has sacrificed his wife at the maternal alter in order to obey the paternal injunction: *noli tangere matrem*. But the dual transgressions of the crime and necrophilia mask and, in a way, lift the taboo of incest. This ultimate act of fury — killing the white Desdemona to possess her in lieu of the Moorish mother — annihilates, through the black humoresque excess of its response, the forbidding fury of the ideal father. In this all-surpassing fury, all the devils in Hell would be required to stop Othello from committing the act.

39. The furiously jealous, swept up and projected beyond the pale of the human, don't stop at petty Œdipean perversions. Shakespeare's play shows something that exalts us even as it imprisons the characters in a psycho-tragic machine: the lines of flight into which they are drawn, in particular the furious hero. He is projected towards the limits of ordinary psychological structures by a desire that pulls him into a *becoming-Other* and leads him to betray all the commitments that constitute his being. If Iago, the traitor, is Othello's subject, if he betrays his desire, it is because Othello is

59 W. Shakespeare, *Othello*, 325.
60 *Ibid.,* 307.

destined to perpetual betrayal of his property. In this, he is like Œdipus, like all tragic heroes swept up in this becoming-Other that the Greeks called the *daimon* and which, here, is called the demonic. As André Green points out, Othello has betrayed the God of his ancestors[61]. In allying himself with Venice, he has betrayed his people, his religion, his race, his colour, and his father. Desdemona, the overly cumbersome and overly white figure of this betrayal, must herself be betrayed. She was the first to show that the path of desire is the path of betrayal. And she ends up drawing Othello into this other-worldly realm where desire leads those who — according to the norms of the white western man – belong to this same "dark continent"[62]: women and Blacks. A traitor to his people and his race, having lost his face in his new homeland, Othello is swept up in a multitude of *becomings*: becoming-Desdemona, becoming-Iago, becoming-Turk, becoming-Black and so on, each of which is a different form that furious desire takes when it approaches the Thing.

> May the Blacks blacken themselves. May they persist to the point of madness in being what one condemns them to be, in their ebony in their smell, in the yellow of their eyes, in their cannibalistic appetites.
>
> Jean Genet, The Blacks.[63]

ARTICLE TRANSLATED FROM THE ORIGINAL FRENCH BY NAOMI TOTH

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61 A. Green, *Un Œil en trop. Le Complexe d'Œdipe dans la tragédie.*

62 Freud famously described the "dark continent" of the sexual life of the adult woman in the 1926 text *Die Frage der Laienanalyse*, often translated as *The Question of Lay Analysis*. Published in Sigmund Freud, *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, 177-258.

63 J. Genet, *Les Nègres*, 60, trans. N.T.

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