

William Shakespeare, *Othello. Englisch-deutsche Studienausgabe*. Deutsche Prosafassung, Anmerkungen, Einleitung und Kommentar von Balz Engler. Munich: Francke, 1976; Tübingen

This edition offers a critical English text, accompanied by a prose translation, which attempts to render Shakespearean meanings as closely as possible; it does not try to reproduce the stylistic qualities of the original. The translation forces the editors in this series to reconsider many innocuous-looking passages, often with surprising results. The translation is complemented by notes of the following types: semantic (where the prose version cannot adequately render the meanings of words and phrases), stylistic and structural (sound effects, rhetorical figures, puns, etc.), theatrical and historical.

The discussion of the text argues, on the basis mainly of a close study of the longer "Folio only" passages and their relation to the play's sources, that the play was revised during rehearsals and that the actors may have had a hand in this. See also Engler, Balz, "How Shakespeare Revised *Othello*", *English Studies* 57 (1976), 515-21.

In two areas, in particular, the edition offers material not to be found elsewhere: semantics and theatrical notation. Among other things, the edition points out that two stage directions important for the interpretation of figures cannot easily be justified on the basis of Shakespeare's text: Iago snatching the handkerchief from Emilia in 3.3.316, and Iago wounding Cassio in 5.1.26.

New readings on the basis of historical semantics are suggested for the following passages:

- 1.2.13 *in his effect a voice potential*
- 2.1.64 *essential vesture*
- 2.1.110 *Wildcats*
- 2.1.154 *to change the cod's head for the salmon's tail* See on this Engler, Balz, "*Othello* II.i.155: 'To change the cod's head for the salmon's tail,'" *Shakespeare Quarterly* 35 (1984), 202-203.
- 2.1.297 *Trash*
- 2.3.196 *passion, having my best judgment collied*
- 3.3.166 *the green-eyed monster*
- 3.3.250 *Entertainment*
- 3.3.365 *hinge nor loop*
- 3.4.47 *our new heraldry is hands not hearts*
- 5.2.361 *for he was great of heart*. See Engler, Balz, "*Othello's Great Heart*," *English Studies* 68 (1987), 129-36.

These semantic findings have been worked into the interpretation of the play. The following points are stressed: the strengthening of comic elements against the source, and their reversal; the mythical, heroic quality of Othello, which contrasts, in his attitude to time and reality, with that of the Venetians, who stand in the Christian tradition; and the elements beyond the decision of characters, as they appear, for example, in Desdemona's use of language and in dramatic irony.