



## "Structure--Desdemona"

---

No Known Copyright

Princeton University Library reasonably believes that the Item is not restricted by copyright or related rights, but a conclusive determination could not be made.

You are free to use this Item in any way that is permitted by the copyright and related rights legislation that applies to your use.

## Princeton University Library Disclaimer

---

Princeton University Library claims no copyright governing this digital resource. It is provided for free, on a non-commercial, open-access basis, for fair-use academic and research purposes only. Anyone who claims copyright over any part of these resources and feels that they should not be presented in this manner is invited to contact Princeton University Library, who will in turn consider such concerns and make every effort to respond appropriately. We request that users reproducing this resource cite it according the guidelines described at <http://rbcs.princeton.edu/policies/forms-citation>.

## Citation Information

---

Morrison, Toni. 1931-  
"Structure--Desdemona"

1 folder

## Contact Information

---

## Download Information

---

Date Rendered: 2019-09-05 01:27:00 PM UTC

Available Online at: <http://arks.princeton.edu/ark:/88435/w3763c36s>

# Structure - Desdemona

1. Entrance: betweenness - time - space -  
water women + earth/tree  
*"Let me tell you what it is like."*
2. Early life: mother, Barbary, suitors, Obedience  
↓  
stately deferential      ↓  
lively caring  
sorrow at her death  
i.e. father →
3. Meeting Othello  
- father's objection anticipated, hesitant until she heard his stories.
- ✓ 4. Othello's Stories
- ✓ 5. Conversation with Barbary
6. Conversation with Emilia.
- ✓ 7. Reflections on Iago & Othello  
male bonding
- ✓ 8. Future



~~I am called~~  
~~I am Desdemona~~, meaning misery

My name is D. <sup>D.</sup> means misery. ~~D.~~ means ill fated. ~~D.~~ means doomed.

~~I did not choose~~ <sup>imagined</sup>  
Perhaps they believed or  ~~hoped~~ or knew  
my fortune at <sup>the moment of</sup> my birth. But they  
did not know me. I am not the  
meaning of ~~my~~ <sup>a</sup> name. I did not choose.

It is true my earth life held X

Yet none of it, not one moment was  
"misery". Difficulty yes. Death, yes  
Error, is just

But it was  
shaped by my own  
full of choices

Desdemona

MS.

Confusion, yes  
<sup>right or wrong</sup>

And my life WAS  
mine.

Let me  
Let me speak, and tell you

→ where I am <sup>live</sup> ~~am~~ in between now.

Between life on earth and spirit life.

Between being killed and being undead

Between <sup>all</sup> time, which has no beginning

And no end <sup>is a variable time</sup> and space which is both

a bud <sup>as well as</sup> and the sun it yearns for.

I join the underwater women, stroll  
with them in the dark light, listen to their



music in the spangled deep.

I live in the heads and roots of trees.

2.

My mother was a lady of virtue <sup>whose</sup> ~~and~~ <sup>practice and</sup> flawless observations of ~~the~~ manners. <sup>were flawless.</sup>

She taught me how to handle myself at table, ... etc. when and how to drop my eyes, smile, curtsy.

As was the custom, she did not ~~involve~~ <sup>involve</sup> here tolerate dispute from a child, nor involve herself in what ~~is~~ could be called my <sup>interior</sup> emotional life. There were rules of deportment, solutions for every problem a female could have. And sensible punishment designed for each impropriety.

Duty sums up the overweening theme of behavior.

I remember splashing ~~in~~ barefoot in our fish pond. \* My slippers were tossed ~~in the~~ away \* The unleashed hem of my dress met. My <sup>daughter</sup> ~~loud~~ <sup>loud</sup> ~~was~~ <sup>was</sup> the unseemliness of such behavior in a girl one decade old brought my mother's attention. Too old for such carelessness, she scolded. And to emphasize the point my ~~shoes~~ slippers were taken away and I played barefoot



for 10 days. A small thing, <sup>embarrassing</sup> ~~inconvenient~~ ~~minor~~ but clarifying. It meant my thoughts ~~my~~ dreams must remain hidden from view. Yet the drawing of that curtain <sup>over</sup> my willfulness served merely to strengthen it.

My Solace in those early days ~~we~~ lay <sup>with</sup> ~~my~~ nurse, Barbary. She alone encouraged a slit in that curtain. ~~She~~ <sup>Barbary</sup> alone conspired with me to ~~give~~ <sup>let</sup> ~~a person~~ let my imagination run free. \* Her heart, so wide it seemed to hold ~~the~~ the entire world in awe and to savor its delight.

\* She tended me as though she were my <sup>birth</sup> mother: ~~dressed~~ <sup>braided</sup> my hair, dressed me, comforted me <sup>when I was ill</sup> and danced with me when I recovered

Yet that same heart - wide as it was, was vulnerable. When I needed her most she <sup>stumbled</sup> ~~fell~~ under the spell of ~~her~~ lover. He forsake her and ~~she~~ <sup>her</sup> ~~seeing~~ <sup>losing</sup> her loss of him, <sup>long ago</sup> ~~life~~, she died.

[Song]

It trembled me. <sup>Why</sup> Were we so frail in the wake of men who swore they loved us? Choosing to leave this world for another.

I determined to be otherwise. To



~~Examine~~ search most carefully <sup>for</sup> the truth  
of a lover before committing my  
own fidelity.

That commitment ~~from~~ was a blow  
to my father. His sole interest in me  
as I grew ~~to~~ was making certain I was  
transferred, ~~profitably~~ profitably and securely, into  
the ~~no~~ hands of another man. So I was  
counted ...



~~He was~~  
Who could have thought a <sup>military</sup> commander  
trained to let blood,

would be more, could be more than a  
brutal <sup>arm</sup> slaughter ~~or~~ <sup>educated solely</sup> paid to kill.

How did I know?

He came to a banquet my father (and  
brothers) held. Music, elaborate food  
ladies

---

Emelia, dear Emelia - silence is

mother to <sup>seeds</sup> our degradation. } forbearance  
waters it

X } What is beyond the sea that  
stretches and surrounds this city, that  
also encloses ~~our~~ women's mind

Not to  
be  
in  
the  
mind  
of  
the  
woman



Did you think I was a misp of a girl?

A Coddled wisp who fell in love with  
a handsome warrior - who rode off  
with her under his arm

Yes, well. A wisp, indeed.

have been courted by  
I know other men. They came into

my father's house with <sup>empty</sup> ornate boxes of  
designed ~~to hold coins~~ gold. They glanced at  
me and locked their glistening eyes <sup>toward</sup>

my father's. One by one they came  
<sup>prettier</sup> hats

(in velvet and silk trimmed in fur)

their shoes soft and stitched with <sup>silver</sup> thread.  
They ~~slid~~ in soft shoes on <sup>our</sup> ~~the~~ marble floor.  
(showing their teeth in <sup>adoring</sup> smiles)

Each one - whether a stuttering boy  
or an aged widow - <sup>eager</sup> ~~begging~~ for dowry  
and a Chatelain's.

My Father <sup>instructed me on</sup> ~~taught~~ the virtues of each <sup>house</sup> ~~one~~ offer  
~~and state~~ and when I first refused he  
thought me fastidious, Next stubborn.  
Finally <sup>an embarrassed</sup> ~~on his~~. A single woman  
of a certain age married - sitting at a table  
instead of fasting in a convent.



I am thought beautiful - but ~~even if~~ I  
were not, even if I was a ~~phantom~~ <sup>phantom</sup> or  
a miniature - ~~phantoms~~ <sup>phantoms</sup> in need would have  
sought my hand ~~any way~~ <sup>in any case</sup>. Those already  
wealthy ranked me with other virgins on their list.

I had reached the cusp(?) of unmarriedity  
that lightens abyss into which a family can  
fall - merghed by an eating mouth, ~~disconnected by~~ <sup>disconnected by</sup>  
~~poor~~ <sup>poor</sup> unfertilized (unseeded) womb,  
by a ~~disconnected~~ <sup>disconnected</sup> from  
the chain that ~~appears~~ <sup>appears</sup> can  
pay out to increase ~~itself~~ <sup>its</sup> length

~~was~~  
~~disconnected~~  
~~from the~~

Yet <sup>serious</sup> My flaw was more than that.  
I yearned for talk, for meaning  
for winds from a wider world. Seas beyond  
canals; populations living otherwise. <sup>in</sup>  
speaking languages of music and roar, beasts  
and gods unimagined within these  
walls. I yearned / longed for adventure  
out there, yes, but in here as well.  
Adventure in my (God! forgive me) heart no less  
than <sup>in</sup> my mind. ~~Mind?~~ Don't laugh.  
Don't walk away, I said mind. In a  
woman. A woman's mind.



stable <sup>food or</sup> letting, 1 ago and 1  
a ~~man~~ <sup>looking for drink</sup>. What we found <sup>was</sup> ~~was~~ entered  
2 women <sup>covering</sup> They were old, so old, ~~hands~~ <sup>brutal</sup> fingers were  
gnarled with years of ~~starvation~~ <sup>softly</sup> work,  
random teeth and withering flesh.  
No matter ~~to~~ we took turns  
slaking the thirst of our loins rather  
than our throats.

After a first glance, <sup>never</sup> they did not look at us <sup>again</sup> - rather they lowered  
their eyes and whimpered.

I don't ~~remember~~ <sup>know</sup> how long we <sup>were there</sup> took  
Our groans and their soft crying  
# draped my memory. ~~It~~ <sup>peered</sup>  
Once sated, we heard a noise above  
us in a heap of hay. We turned  
to see a child, a boy, looking  
wild-eyed at a scene that ~~must have~~  
~~surely~~ <sup>must have</sup> seemed to him a grotesque  
dream. Except for the <sup>women's</sup> ~~whispering~~,  
silence fell.

1. Surely, surely you did not assault  
the boy. Surely not.

O. No. We ~~never~~ touched or threatened  
him.

12.



O. <sup>our</sup> Before ~~that~~ agreement <sup>to do no</sup> <sup>more</sup> <sup>harm</sup>  
However, there was a look, ~~between us.~~  
~~Wagon~~ ~~exchanged~~

Our eyes met, Iago's and mine  
~~in any~~ ~~exchange~~ of <sup>secret</sup> ~~understanding~~  
and complicity.

D. And of shame?

O. ~~Yes~~ Shame, yes.

D. Unspeakable then but no longer.  
Now you have <sup>prize loose</sup> ~~broken~~ ~~the chain~~  
~~the bond~~ ~~dark~~ ~~and~~ ~~binding~~ ~~cloak~~  
~~rope~~ ~~imprisoning~~ ~~nails~~ ~~twisting~~  
your tongue. The telling is  
itself courage.

O. You don't understand. Shame, yes.  
But worse, there was pleasure  
too. The look between us was <sup>not</sup> ~~less~~  
to ~~hide~~ <sup>acknowledge</sup> shame, but to hide ~~the~~  
mutual pleasure. Pleasure in the degradation;  
more pleasure in leaving a witness  
to it. Refusing to Kill. <sup>Not only</sup>  
our memory, but ~~marking~~ <sup>insisting</sup>  
on its life in another.



Group  
rape

Wider  
net

rape

Female rape

Sulacious quality  
of political  
hybrid

who are  
the rebels



D. That is obscene. Demonic.

O. (Without question). Yet there is another question.  
Can you forgive me?

D. No. I cannot. But I can love you.  
And I ~~am~~ <sup>am</sup> committed to you.

O. In spite of what I have confessed?

D. In addition to what you have  
confessed. Loving ~~is~~ another is  
not a <sup>profit-driven</sup> harvest - Choosing the ~~best~~ ripe  
and discarding the ~~worst~~ <sup>rot.</sup> house is  
~~indeed~~ ~~either~~ complete, ~~as~~ whole and  
fearless.