

## Violence

Whereas revenge is commonly directed at an individual, envisages a particular target, violence is typically much less directed than revenge. When a violent protest breaks out it is likely to move, like a crowd, this way and that, to gather power in this direction, then to back off over there. (Homer compares the violence of an army on the march to the movement of the waves of the ocean, which accumulate on one side, then break out on the other, in a seesaw motion that makes the earth shudder.) Violence can, of course, also target an individual, as when A tears B to pieces in a fit of anger. The assailant, in such a case, seems unable to block his own forward rush. But violence is on the whole less discriminating than that. Any old jury can speak to a case of violence. It takes sharper minds to catch a good case of revenge.

Violence and revenge are significantly different from one another. Violence may be generated by a long brewing hostility, say between two families, as in the background of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliette*, in which the Montagu and Capulet families have long, and for quite obscure reasons, hated one another. From the first lines of the play the audience know a fatal conflict is rising up between the two families, and that the conflict will not subside before it has unleashed its violence. Shakespeare unfolds the obverse of this situation in *Othello*, where the protagonist is eaten up by desire for revenge against the Moor, Iago. (He incorrectly, in fact naively, believes that Iago has been fooling with his, Othello's, wife. It takes Little prompting to make a jealous man doubt his wife.