The relationship between these women intensifies as *Othello* progresses. Their mutual affection and dependence on one another grows into a deep love and eventually becomes a moral force in itself. Emilia develops a strong, wise voice in her final scene with Desdemona and later, when she discovers that Desdemona has died at Othello's hand. Desdemona, Emilia and even the love-lorn prostitute, Bianca, are all cast aside by their men, and yet all are more devoted in their affection, more generous in their love than the men. Like Juliet in "Romeo and Juliet", those women on Cyprus are more discerning and far-sighted in their love than the men are. Shakespeare wrote strong women characters throughout, but in the period he wrote "Othello" he also penned two of the strongest, smartest, and fully developed women: Viola and Rosalind.

How does Emilia become a moral force? She is fiercely loyal and proclaims Desdemona's innocence in Iago's presence. Despite her husband's bullying nature, Emilia rants at him in her lady's defense!

"Hath she not forsook so many noble matches/ Her father, her country and her friends/ To be called a whore? "

" I'll be hanged if some eternal villain .... have not devised this slander, I'll be hanged else!"

" ,,, hell gnaw his bones! Why should he call her a whore?"

In the women's final scene, Emilia helps ready Desdemona for bed while attempting to calm the younger woman's prescient fears. In this scene, there is such sweet tenderness between the women that it provides a heartfelt relief from all the sadistic scenes of Iago's "poisoning" of the Moor. Emilia is like a mother protecting Desdemona, even as she, Emilia, delivers her famous speech on the
emotional brutality and shortsightedness of men. This is not just a sentimental scene; it has force and wisdom as is shown by Emilia's observations on how men's behavior can inform that of women's.

"Let husbands know/Their wives have sense like them: they see, and smell, /And have their palates both for sweet and sour/As husbands have.

"..... Then let them use us well: else let them know, / The ills we do, their ills instruct us so."

As Desdemona lays dying, she refuses to accuse her husband of her death. To Emilia's question as to who has done this deed, Desdemona answers, "Nobody. I myself. Farewell." Desdemona realizes that Othello is out of his mind and her dying words must protect his loving, innocent heart, still beating beneath the madness.

In the play's final moments, Emilia is the heroine. She rails against Othello and proclaims Desdemona's innocence over and over. To Othello she shouts:

"Now lay thee down and roar/ For thou hast killed the sweetest innocent/That e'er did lift up eye."

Emilia then does the unthinkable and turns on Iago, declaring him the villain, the architect of the whole tragedy. Even as Iago tried to shut her up, she defies him and continues to have the moral courage to accuse him. After Iago stabs her, Emilia asks to die by Desdemona's side - the women's love eternally sealed.