

Steevens noted, "*Frons causae non satis honesta est,*" is a phrase used by Quintilian.⁹ The context, however, is much more significant than the mere parallel in phraseology. Quintilian is discussing the *exordium*, and after his usual discursive preliminaries finally comes to grips with his subject by making his fundamental division of the five "*Genera . . . caussarum*" in the *exordium*, and then discussing the first of them thus,

Nam Honestum quidem ad conciliationem satis per se valet: in Admirabili & Turpi, remediis opus est. Et eò quidam exordium in duas diuidunt partes, principium, & insinuationem: vt sit principiis recta benevolentiae & attentionis postulatio: quae quia esse in turpi genere caussae non possit, insinuatō surrepat animis, maximè vbi frons caussae non satis honesta est, vel quia res sit improba, vel quia hominibus parum probetur.¹⁰

Othello has been accused of turpitude. So in his *exordium* he says "The very head and front of my offending"—"in turpi . . . vbi frons¹¹ caussae non satis honesta est"—is that he has married Desdemona. He denies that he is guilty of any turpitude. It follows, therefore, that he does not need to use an insinuating *exordium*. Instead, he can proceed boldly with "a round unvarnished tale" as where the case is honest, "Nam Honestum quidem ad conciliationem satis per se valet." This is the point to his further speech.

Rude am I in my speech,
And little bless'd with the soft phrase of peace.
For since these arms of mine had seven years' pith,
Till now some nine moons wasted, they have used
Their dearest action in the tented field,
And little of this great world can I speak,
More than pertains to feats of broil and battle,
And therefore little shall I grace my cause
In speaking for myself. Yet, by your gracious patience,
I will a round unvarnish'd tale deliver

⁹ Malone, *Variorum* (1821), Vol. IX, p. 256. In his commentary, Raphael Regius notes "Maxime vbi fors causae. Frons vt legatur sensus exposcit." Thus some editions presumably read "*fors causae*," but I have not happened upon any such. Shakspeare's edition was not one of these.

¹⁰ Quintilian (1538), p. 53r; (1580), p. 208. "As regards the *honourable* the very nature of the case is sufficient to win the approval of the judge; in the *scandalous* and *extraordinary* some kind of palliation is required.

"Some therefore divide the *exordium* into two parts, the *introduction* and the *insinuation*, making the former contain a direct appeal to the good-will and attention of the judge. But as this is impossible in scandalous cases, they would have the orator on such occasions insinuate himself little by little into the minds of his judges, especially when the features of the case which meet the eye are discreditable, or because the subject is disgraceful or such as to meet with popular disapproval" (Butler, *Quintilian*, Vol. II, p. 29).

¹¹ Cooper defines "*frons*" as "*The forehead,*" which becomes Shakspeare's "head and front."