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## A Philosophical Investigation of Sexual Jealousy and Jealousy in Shakespeare's Othello, Cymbeline, and The Winter's Tale

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**A Philosophical  
Investigation of  
Sexual Jealousy**

**and**

**Jealousy In  
Shakespeare's Othello,  
Cymbeline,  
and The Winter's Tale**

**by Greg P. Miner**

**Honors Senior Thesis  
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1993**

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Professor Roger Scruton (U. of London)**

Many poets, social scientists, and philosophers have tried to understand, explain, and define jealousy. The methods employed in their pursuits are as varied as the different conclusions they have given. Three of the difficulties involved in the pursuit of jealousy are: the complex nature of jealousy, the significant role jealousy plays in interpersonal relationships, and the labyrinth encountered when trying to distinguish between jealousy and envy. The most common questions asked about jealousy are: What is jealousy? and, How can jealousy be helped? This paper will focus on the question: What is jealousy? Specifically, the following questions will be answered. 1) What sets apart the different species of the genus, jealousy? 2) How can jealousy be approached? 3) How significant is the concept 'sense of self' to understanding jealousy?

\* \* \* \* \*

### **Important terms employed herein.**

**Subject:** The word *subject* will be used in this paper to denote the sufferer of jealousy. It is used in a non-gender specific way. When gender must be included to make the sentence stylistically correct, the masculine pronoun will be used to refer indifferently to men and women.

**Object of love:** The term *object of love* will always refer to the beloved of the subject, the individual with whom the subject has a bond sufficient enough to awaken jealousy if the bond is thought to be threatened by a rival. The terms *object of love* and *beloved* **are** used interchangeably. The terms *object of love* and *object* **are not** used interchangeably. When referring to the object of jealousy, what is under discussion is who the subject is jealous *of* or *about* . In the jealous situation the subject can be jealous *of* or *about* two objects, the object of love and the rival.

**Rival:** The *rival* is the third participant in the triangle of jealousy. The rival is the competitor of the subject for the object of love. The rival may be a real or an imagined competitor of the subject (the distinction will be made later on).

**Sense of Self:** This term is used to talk about the subject's perception of his self, the complexities of which are dealt with in the discussion of the importance of the concept 'sense of self' to understanding jealousy.



\* \* \* \* \*

## Jealousy: The Genus

Jealousy is a theme that reoccurs throughout the history of recorded human relationships. It appears to be as universal as its often-time companion love. According to White and Mullen's *Jealousy: Theory, Research, and Clinical Strategies*, "Jealousy ... appears to be universal. Although cultures differ in the frequency and forms of their jealousy, there are no reports of jealousy-free societies."<sup>1</sup> The jealous dilemma is one retold over and over in drama, legend, biography, comedy, song, and in literature. A glance at the daily paper will invariably offer another reportage of the jealousy found in daily life. Common wisdom is frequently offered about jealousy, "A jealous man's horns hang in his eyes," says an English proverb, while a maxim from the popular American press is that, "In jealousy there is more self-love than love," which actually dates back to La Rochefoucauld's *Reflections*.

For hundreds of years authors have been offering up aphorisms on jealousy. "Cruelty has a human heart, and jealousy a human face," writes William Blake, while St. Augustine proffers, "He that is not jealous, is not in love." Dryden's *Song of Jealousy* reads, "Thou Tyrant, tyrant jealousy, Thou tyrant of the mind!" And Proust's *Swann's Way* lets us inside a jealous man's mind and shows us what life is like for the man haunted by jealous suspicion. The Bible tells us, "Love is strong as death, jealousy as cruel as the grave." In *Othello* and *The Winter's Tale* Shakespeare gives us the finest example in English Literature of an author exploring the many faces of jealousy. Iago's words to Othello ring as veraciously today as they did then, "O, beware my Lord of Jealousy! It is the green eyed monster, which doth

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<sup>1</sup> White, Gregory L., and Mullen, Paul E., *Jealousy: Theory, Research, and Clinical Strategies*. New York: The Guilford Press, 1989; p. 1.

mock the meat it feeds on.”

A detailed account of jealousy will be taken before exploring the species of jealousy which concerns this exploration-- sexual jealousy. The following definitions provide the framework within which an understanding of the broad scope and complex nature of jealousy can be given. For *jealous* and *jealousy* *The Oxford English Dictionary* offers the following definitions.

**Jealous**... 1. Vehement in wrath, desire, or devotion...2. Ardently amorous; fond, lustful... 3. Vigilant in guarding; suspiciously careful or watchful... 4. Troubled by the belief, suspicion, or fear that the good which one desires to gain or keep for oneself has been or may be diverted to another; resentful towards another on account of known or suspected rivalry: a. in love or affection, esp. in sexual love... b. in respect of success or advantage... c. in biblical language, said of God: having a love which will tolerate no unfaithfulness in the beloved object... 5. Suspicious; apprehensive of evil, fearful...6. Suspiciously vigilant to prevent something....

**Jealousy**... 3. Solicitude or anxiety for the presentation or well-being of something... 4. The state of mind arising from the suspicion, apprehension, or knowledge of rivalry: a. in love... b. in respect of success or advantage....

Of the six definitions given for *jealous* it is number four that is of primary concern to the understanding of jealous behavior this paper aims at. The linguistic meaning of *jealous* and its everyday use are of only secondary importance. The aim here is to examine the psychological experiences one has when *jealous* and then, in regard to sexual jealousy, to further explain what is at the heart of the *jealous* experience and situation.

Jealousy has both a positive and negative side. *Jealous* and *zeal* both evolved from the Greek *zelos*, a word signifying emulation-- connoting intense high-wrought emotion that compels to action. Jealousy can be an appropriate reaction to

a threat upon a valued relationship. It can be a constructive emotion helping the subject both protect himself and fight for the beloved he does not want to lose. Obversely, jealousy has its destructive side. It unquestionably causes discomfort and often more unpleasant reactions. Even in its milder forms it can lead to nagging attempts to control others, or destructive efforts to monopolize another's attention and affection. This paper focuses on the negative and often catastrophic side of jealousy.

Jealousy is a complex phenomenon. In addition to having a positive and a negative side, there are many species of jealousy. It has an intricate relationship with envy; there are three divisions in the symptoms of jealousy, and the variety of explanations for jealousy and the methods used to derive them are manifold. The other important key to understanding jealousy-- the distinction between normal and pathological jealousy-- will be dealt with exclusively in the exploration of sexual jealousy.

### envy and jealousy

The part of the *OED* definition that is most troublesome are the words, "...fear that the good which one desires to gain or keep for oneself..." The problem arises from the question: Is it envy, and not jealousy, when the good is only desired and not already had? This question hints at the labyrinth encountered when trying to distinguish between jealousy and envy. The principle distinction made between the two is noted here in the words on Peter N. Stearns:

Jealousy is the emotion attached to holding onto something or someone, involving fear or loss and anger or grief at the prospect.... Envy is different: it involves coveting something or some attribute that someone else has....<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Stearns, Peter N., *Jealousy: The Evolution of an Emotion in American History*. New York: New York University Press, 1989; p. 12.

Aaron Ben-Ze'ev, in his article, 'Envy and Jealousy' phrases it this way:

Envy involves the wish to have something that someone else has; jealousy involves the wish not to lose something that the subject has and someone else does not.<sup>3</sup>

This distinction between the jealous subject already having, and the envious subject not having but desiring to gain, is the key to understanding the difference between jealousy and envy.

### symptoms of jealousy

The symptoms of jealousy can be categorized in three areas: the physical, the emotional, and the cognitive. Cognitive symptoms include: self-pity, self-blame, possessiveness, resentment, thoughts about inferiority, thoughts about being excluded, thoughts about revenge, and defeatist thoughts. Emotional symptoms include: grief, pain, aggression, rage, helplessness, envy, fear, and humiliation. Physical symptoms include: emptiness in stomach, trouble falling or staying asleep, nervousness and shakiness, heart beating fast, loss of appetite, hands sweaty or trembling, blood rushing to head, and feeling faint.<sup>4</sup>

### jealousy: the species of...

The main division in the *OED* definition of jealousy that concerns this exploration is between 4a, jealousy in sexual love, and 4b, jealousy with respect to success or advantage. Jealous feelings arise in a number of different situations. Take for example the common phenomena of sibling jealousy, professional jealousy, and sexual jealousy. The purpose of this paper is to explore sexual jealousy. In doing this, sexual jealousy is understood to be a species of the genus jealousy, distinct from other species of jealousy, (e.g., professional jealousy). Sexual jealousy is one

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<sup>3</sup> Ben-Ze'ev, Aaron, *Canadian Journal of Philosophy*, 'Envy and Jealousy'. V.20, #4, Dec. 90, p. 487.

<sup>4</sup> Pines, Ayala M., *Romantic Jealousy: Understanding and Conquering the Shadow of Love*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992. This list is adapted from p. 26.



common species of jealousy, this is a distinction of kind rather than degree. Jealousy is too complex a phenomenon to be understood with an explanation that tries to encompass all species of jealousy. It would be to work at cross-purposes to understand sexual jealousy and sibling jealousy, for example, as the same. They are not. It would be possible to extract from all the species of jealousy what common elements they share and to determine what is fundamental to the jealous situation, but this is not to explain any one species of jealousy. The characteristics of each species of jealousy are distinct enough to require their own separate definitions and understandings. Pertaining to the example of sibling jealousy and sexual jealousy, Peter Sterns points out in his book *Jealousy: The Evolution of an Emotion in American History*, "It is possible that little connection exists between childhood personality and some facets of adult emotional range."<sup>5</sup> This is a paper about sexual jealousy, its conclusions are meant to pertain only to this species of jealousy.

#### how jealousy is explained

Literature has its limits as a source of proof, but it can serve as a valuable guide in helping to understand jealousy. Take the following passage from John Fowles' *The Magus* :

December came, and we were still writing letters. I knew she was hiding things from me. Her life, as she described it, was too simple and manless to be true. What I hadn't expected was how bitter I should feel, and how betrayed. It was less a sexual jealousy of the man, than an envy of Alison; moments of tenderness and togetherness, moments when the otherness of the other disappeared, flooded back through my mind....I wrote a letter in reply to say that I had been expecting her letter, that she was perfectly free. But I tore it up. If anything might hurt her, silence would; and I wanted to hurt her.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Stearns, Peter N., *Jealousy: The Evolution of an Emotion in American History*. New York: New York University Press, 1989; p. 11.

<sup>6</sup> Fowles, John, *The Magus*. Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1970; pp. 54-5.

These words illuminate many of the central elements that lead to a better understanding of jealousy. The accusation that she is hiding things, how much jealous pain can hurt, the intricate relationship between sexual jealousy and envy, and the common desire for revenge, to name just a few. The efforts made in literature to explain jealousy can be used to elucidate certain points of the jealous situation.

If literature presents jealous images to reflect upon, it is the many fields of the social sciences, including philosophical psychology, that contain the necessary analytical vocabulary and framework to penetrate deeper into the mysteries of jealousy. The psychologist Ayala M. Pines outlines the five prevalent social scientific approaches applied to jealousy as: psycho-dynamic, systems, behavioral, social-psychological, and sociobiological.

The sociobiological (ethological) approach tries to explain jealousy by carefully studying biological behavior. By understanding what specific behavioral pattern functions are for gives the scientist a way to distinguish between different types of behavior-- for example, the difference between jealous and grievous behavioral patterns.

The sociobiological approach asks, How have evolutionary forces of natural selection shaped men's and women's innate predisposition to jealousy? It assumes that the answer can be found in universal sex differences that exist in most human societies as well as in the animal world.<sup>7</sup>

Sociobiology uses physiological data to explain the subject's general readiness to avoid pain as "natural". Jealousy is understood to be instinctive only so far as the reaction of self-protection in humans, as in other animals, appears to be instinctive. Furthermore, the instinctive impulse of jealousy does not determine *how* the

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<sup>7</sup> Pines, Ayala M., *Romantic Jealousy: Understanding and Conquering the Shadow of Love*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992; p. 8.



subject should protect itself, only that it should.

*How* a subject reacts to jealousy is explained by appealing to the particular psychological make-up of the subject, the social definitions that surround the subject, and the developmental experience the subject had as an infant.

The developmental (or psychodynamic) explanation is the least appealed to and most problematic of the explanations of jealousy. The developmental element resides in both the biological and social nature of each human. It is part of the social realm because it is not inborn, but it is *necessary* because of the nature of the human organism. It claims that as infants all humans are dependent upon the mother and had to learn to modify that dependency. Therefore, the infantile experiences of learning to cope with being dependent upon the mother are part of all humans.

The psychodynamic approach focuses on the question, Why do certain people have an unusually high or low predisposition to jealousy? It assumes that the answer can be found in people's childhood experiences.<sup>8</sup>

This paper does not use psychodynamic explanations to explain jealousy as it is concerned with the responses of mature individuals in the jealous situation and not the infantile experience on the mature individual.

The social element does play an important role in this explanation of jealousy. What most concerns this exploration is why a subject behaves as he does, as an adult, in a sexually jealous situation. According to Clanton and Smith, the editors of *Jealousy*, the key distinction between the developmental and social elements is this:

The developmental element is what is common to us all-- especially the dependency of infancy and the gradual accommodation to the loss of the mother. Even as the infant passes through the stages of this

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<sup>8</sup> Pines, p. 8.

universal process, s/he is already beginning to *learn* about jealousy. This social learning is variable from culture to culture and from family to family. In childhood, the developmental and social elements are *both* being acquired. The two overlap and intertwine, but they are conceptually distinct.<sup>9</sup>

The social context the subject is jealous within contributes to how he evaluates his jealousy and, to some degree, how he is jealous.

The socio-psychological approach asks, What effects does the culture have on people's predisposition to jealousy? It assumes that the answer can be found in cultural norms, which define what people perceive as threatening and what responses are considered appropriate.<sup>10</sup>

This exploration treats the social context of the jealousy as one of the four principal factors in the jealous situation, after the subject, object of love, and rival. The social factor, however, is understood to be more important for understanding envy.

Jealousy cannot be understood without an explanation of how the jealous subject understands his situation through his perceived perspective of the object of love, the rival, and society as well. The method of this paper heeds White and Mullen's warning that:

...if we forget the convenience and localize jealousy within the person, we may lose the richer understanding of the ways in which the person, situation, relationship, and culture combine to produce jealousy.<sup>11</sup>

The psychological explanation for what causes jealousy appeals to the subject's awareness that it is in danger and had better find relief. Psychologically, jealousy is a painful emotion, but like physical pain it is not "bad", but a normal

<sup>9</sup> Clanton, Gordon, and Smith, Lynn G., (eds.), *Jealousy*. New York: University of America Press, 1977; p. 215.

<sup>10</sup> Pines, p. 8.

<sup>11</sup> White, Gregory L., and Mullen, Paul E., *Jealousy: Theory, Research, and Clinical Strategies*. New York: The Guilford Press, 1989; p. 6.

reaction to a real threat. Clanton and Smith elaborate:

Psychological pain (such as jealousy) warns us that our psychic security requires attention. We ignore physical pain at our own peril; the same is true of psychological pain. The pain of jealousy is a herald; it comes to us to warn us that greater pain may be in store unless we attend to the relationship.<sup>12</sup>

Jerome Neu points out that jealousy is more than just "pain" however; he remarks, "Jealousy is not a sensation or headache, it is in its essence a set of thoughts and questions, doubts and fears."<sup>13</sup>

There are two sides to the psychological explanation as Pines points out. One is centered on the subject (behavioral) and the other is centered on the relationship between the subject and the object of love (systems).

The systems approach asks, What is it about certain relationships that increase or decrease couples' predisposition to jealousy? It assumes that the answer can be found in the repeated patterns in these couples' interactions.

The behavioral approach asks, What increases the individual's predisposition to behave in a jealous way? It assumes that the answer can be found in learned behaviors.<sup>14</sup>

### the method employed herein

The perspective used to comprehend the psychological experiences the subject has when jealous is "third-personal"; that is, jealousy is explored by examining its publicly recognizable expressions. The tactical choice of using the third-person perspective is the common choice in the English-speaking world of analytic philosophy. The most notable voice speaking against this choice is Thomas Nagel.

In *The View From Nowhere* he writes:

<sup>12</sup> Clanton, Gordon, and Smith, Lynn G., (eds.), *Jealousy*. New York: University of America Press, 1977; p. 212.

<sup>13</sup> Rorty, Amelie, (ed.), *Explaining Emotions*, Berkley: Univ. of California Press, 1980. 'Jealous Thoughts,' by Jerome Neu; p. 432.

<sup>14</sup> Pines, p. 8.

...there are things about the world and life and ourselves that cannot be adequately understood from a maximally objective standpoint, however much it may extend our understanding beyond the point from which we started. A great deal is essentially connected to a particular point of view, and the attempt to give a complete account of the world in objective terms detached from these perspectives invariably leads to false reductions or to outright denial that certain patently real phenomena exist at all.<sup>15</sup>

Is jealousy one of these things that cannot be understood "from a maximally objective standpoint"? This question will be answered by appealing to the problem from which the question springs-- the relation between subject and object. An emotion like jealousy, in all its complexity, is a bridge between subject and object. Jealousy exists because the subject can switch between an 'inner' and 'outer' perspective.

Therefore, what can be understood using the third-person perspective to look at jealousy is the nature of the jealousy as it is directed from the subject towards his object. The third-person perspective can also illuminate what the psychological experience of the subject is by detailing how much of the subject's dependency on the object is conceptual and how much is empirical. For example, the jealousy a wife has towards her husband could be illuminated by probing the empirical fact that her psychological dependency springs primarily from an economic dependency she has on him.

The most important methodological question concerning jealousy is this: Does the mental state we call *jealousy* have common scientific essences, or must jealousy be explained case by case? This exploration makes the assumption that the answer to this question is that *something* about the real essence of jealousy can be said, something over and above the analysis of the concepts used to classify it.

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<sup>15</sup> Nagel, Thomas, *The View From Nowhere*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1986; p. 7.



The systems and socio-psychological approaches have been relied upon most heavily in this exploration of jealousy. An approach similar to the systems approach has been used to investigate just how the relationship between subject and object of love can evolve into a sexually jealous situation. The method used herein differs from the system approach, in that the conclusions of the systems approach are particular to specific couples, whereas, the conclusions made in this paper concern common patterns applicable to a wide range of sexually jealous responses. The socio-psychological approach has been utilized to understand just how important a role society plays in the mind of the sexually jealous individual. And, more importantly, it demonstrates the role society contributes to the envy contained within jealous behavior.

By making use of indicators from literature, narrowing the broad scope of jealous expressions with investigations made by the social sciences, and relying on philosophy for its precise use of terms, a method has evolved that allows an exploration of sexual jealousy which does not rely on any one discipline's framework or theories. Neither the social, physiological, psychological, nor developmental explanations alone can explain jealousy. "Jealousy is a natural, original, instinctive, sexual relation which nevertheless is capable simultaneously of adapting itself to a large extent to the needs of society and of changing with them."<sup>16</sup> Jealousy can only be explained by appealing to each of these different areas and then going deeper into the fundamental conclusions drawn by each. The aim here is to examine the psychological experiences one has when jealous and then, in regard to sexual jealousy, to further explain what is at the heart of the jealous experience and situation.

The complex nature of jealousy has been set out by outlining the symptoms

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<sup>16</sup> Clanton, Gordon, and Smith, Lynn G., (eds.), *Jealousy*. New York: University of America Press, 1977; p. 215, quoting Gottschalk.

of jealousy, distinguishing one of its principal species, overviewing the methods used to explain it, and elaborating on its broad scope in this section. The next section is devoted to exploring sexual jealousy, where a distinction between pathological and normal jealousy will be made. Particular attention will be paid to the significant role jealousy plays in interpersonal relationships.

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### Ontological Dependence

Before beginning the discussion of sexual jealousy it is necessary to elaborate on the term *ontological dependence*. The ontological dependence of concern here is the one the subject has on the object of love. The term *object of love* is being used, precisely, to speak of the object who the subject is ontologically dependent upon. There are two perspectives at work for the subject who is ontologically dependent, the 'inner' and 'outer' perspectives. The 'inner' is the first-person point of view, the *cogito* of Descartes. With regard to the *cogito* being the key to understanding jealousy, it is comprehended as Roger Scruton outlines it here:

The *cogito* attributes self-evidence neither to a mathematical proof, nor to a law of logic, nor to any other kind of 'external truth', but to a concrete, empirical and contingent fact-- the fact of consciousness. It therefore provides the key, whereby philosophy can move out of the realm of necessities, into the world of concretely existing things. Starting from this premise, we can hardly avoid the conclusion that consciousness and its intentionality are the basic objects of knowledge, and that nothing about the world can be more certain to us than the truths that are presented in our own mental life.<sup>17</sup>

That the truths presented to the subject in his mental life are the most certain things knowable explains why the subject's relationships with others, especially the object of love, are of primary importance to why the subject believes there is reason

<sup>17</sup> Scruton, Roger, *The Philosopher on Dover Beach*, 'Masaryk, Patocka and the care of the soul'. Manchester: Carcanet, 1990; p. 76.



to be jealous. The subject cannot separate himself from being jealous and the conception of himself being jealous. Furthermore, the subject can 'shift' from the first-person point of view, to the second-person point of view-- the one he believes his object of love has of him, and the third-person point of view-- the one he believes others have of him and of the relationship he is in. The first-person point of view is the 'inner' perspective. The 'outer' perspective includes both the second and third-person points of view.

The subject can only achieve self-consciousness by going through the process of building the self and then by impressing his self upon others in the world. The subject comes to see himself reflected in the world when interacting with others. Paraphrasing Hegel, Roger Scruton says it this way, "...only in becoming a publicly recognizable object (an object for others) does a man become an object of knowledge for himself."<sup>18</sup> The subject is both an object for himself and for another. Subject and object share a dependence in a real and objective world, and therefore, the relationship between them can be viewed using the third-person perspective.

An ontological dependence implies that the subject and object exist in mutual interdependence, and that each is, to some degree, diminished without the other. It is possible the dependency could be strong enough that either subject or object could believe that they are nothing without the other. Included within the idea of an ontological dependence are the assumptions that both subject and object have a conscious self and that their senses of each other's self are crucial to what constitutes their ontological dependence. It will be explained that when the object no longer desires to share the ontological dependence it not only can lead to the subject becoming jealous but also behaving catastrophically. Roger Scruton explains the ontological dependence subject and object share by describing the desire they have

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<sup>18</sup> Scruton, Roger, *The Philosopher on Dover Beach*, 'Hegel as a conservative thinker'. Manchester: Carcanet, 1990; p. 46.

for one another:

My desire is for another person, seen as a person, but at the same time identified in thought with his body. In seeing the other as an incarnate self, so too do I see myself: and this experience of mutual incarnation determines the conceptual structure that lies at the heart of desire.<sup>19</sup>

The experience of mutual incarnation also determines the conceptual structure that lies at the heart of jealousy.

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### Sexual Jealousy

The following is a list of what is fundamental to the phenomenon, sexual jealousy: 1) It occurs in different forms. 2) It exists in varying degrees of intensity. 3) It results from a certain predisposition and a particular triggering event.<sup>20</sup> 4)

The relationship that triggers the jealous response must be of *value* to the subject that is dependent on the love object. The reason the subject values the relationship could be any one of the following or any combination of the following: a) economic reasons, b) sexual reasons, c) social reasons, d) love of the object, e) fear of abandonment/separation, f) competitiveness, g) envy *of* or *about* the object, h) fear of betrayal, i) object is pivotal to the subject's sense of self, and j) self-humiliation.

Sexual jealousy is impossible to describe or understand in isolation from its object. The conception the subject has of the object he is sexually jealous *of* or *about* is at the essence of the emotion. The nature of sexual jealousy can be discerned by exploring the nature of the characteristic object. The sexually jealous subject is jealous *of* or *about* something. The jealousy is directed at an object. To describe jealousy is to describe the conception the subject has of the object it is

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<sup>19</sup> Scruton, Roger, *The Philosopher on Dover Beach*, 'Analytical philosophy and emotion'. Manchester: Carcanet, 1990; p. 96.

<sup>20</sup> Pines, Ayala M., *Romantic Jealousy: Understanding and Conquering the Shadow of Love*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992; p. 7.

jealous *of* or *about* . The conception can be either of the object of love or the rival, depending on which one the subject is directing his jealousy toward, possibly both. The idea that jealousy has an object is referred to as the *intentionality* of the jealousy. The object the subject directs his jealousy towards is referred to as the *intentional object* . The nature of the intentional object depends not on the world but upon how the world is seen by the subject. Because the nature of the intentional object depends only on how the world is seen by the subject, it is possible for the subject to direct jealousy upon an imaginary or unreal rival. Sexual jealousy *aims outwards* from subject to object and is therefore bound up, and explainable, with understanding the intentions of the subject.<sup>21</sup>

It is assumed that the subject's desire for the object of love is mutually intertwined with and existentially dependent upon certain beliefs about the object of love. Sexual jealousy involves a *causal relation* between that belief and the desire which springs from it. More precisely, sexual jealousy is a complex emotion that stems from the relationship desire and belief have with one another in the mind of the subject. If the subject desires the object of love then the subject has certain beliefs about the object of love. The nature of the beliefs the subject has about the object of love require close analysis.

The beliefs the subject has do not depend upon the world but upon how the subject sees the world. For example: if the subject believes the object is faithful, then it is plausible that the subject will desire the object of love. However, it is also plausible that even if the subject knows the object of love is unfaithful, he will still desire the object. He believes what he wants. Shakespeare aptly makes this point in the *The Sonnets* :

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<sup>21</sup> Scruton, Roger, *The Aesthetics of Architecture*. London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1979. The framework for this paragraph is adapted from p. 3.

When my love swears that she is made of truth,  
 I do believe her, though I know she lies,  
 That she might think me some untutor'd youth,  
 Unlearned in the world's false subtleties.  
 Thus vainly thinking that she thinks me young,  
 Although she knows my days are past the best,  
 Simply I credit her false-speaking tongue:  
 On both sides thus is simple truth suppress'd.  
 But wherefore says she not she is unjust?  
 And wherefore say not I that I am old?  
 O, love's best habit is in seeming trust,  
 And age in love loves not to have years told:  
     Therefore I lie with her and she with me,  
     And in our faults by lies we flatter'd be.<sup>22</sup>

Desires are not made *true* or *false* by their object, desires are made true or false by the subject's belief in the object. The man of Shakespeare's sonnet can still desire his beloved even though he knows she is unfaithful, because his belief in her is strong enough.

Therefore, in the strain of sexual jealousy where the jealousy is created, it matters not that the subject has evidence to prove that his jealousy is *grounded* or *ungrounded* but that he believes his jealousy to be grounded or ungrounded. The desire on behalf of the subject to change the situation enters the jealous situation when the subject believes there is cause for change.

Sexual jealousy brings into the foreground two considerations for the subject, the ultimate and individualized qualities of the relationship. For the subject the relationship can be an ultimate end in itself. This helps explain the often catastrophic nature of sexual jealousy-- that is, when the subject is understood to see the affection of the beloved as the supreme value in life, the absoluteness of many crimes of passion is conceivable. That the subject has individualized his love in the beloved's 'person', so that he can conceive of no substitute for his "one and only" is of primary importance. Jealousy compels its subjects to action (the root *zelos* ) and if

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<sup>22</sup> Shakespeare, William, *The Sonnets*. London: Everyman, 1976, p. 71, Sonnet 138.



the jealousy is intense enough it can compel the subject to remove either the beloved, the rival, or both-- even himself-- from time, (i.e., kill them or commit suicide). If the beloved or rival were removed, then the whole jealous situation, in the case of the beloved-- the whole relationship-- and its accompanying emotion of jealousy would disappear. Roger Scruton says this another way:

The rival is the mere replaceable instrument of a sacrilege which takes place within the body of the beloved.... It is to the beloved that the lover looks for the confirmation of his existence, as the unique representative of the object of desire. In abolishing the beloved, he abolishes the disproof of himself. He removes from the world the secret disproof of his unreality.<sup>23</sup>

It may be true that jealousy may then be replaced by grief, but for the subject suffering from intense sexual jealousy grief may be more acceptable than the pain of the continuing jealous situation. Again, Roger Scruton: "It is as though, in the torment of utter insecurity, the jealous lover would prefer the finality of grief to the constant fluctuating terrors of a jealous love."<sup>24</sup>

When it is said that the subject sees his individualized relationship with his beloved as an ultimate relationship in itself, this is what is meant: The subject's sense of self has become so strongly intertwined with his beloved's sense of him that he *believes* there could be no existence without his beloved. Kierkegaard drew this same conclusion:

Despair is never ultimately over the external object but always over ourselves. A girl loses her sweetheart and she despairs. It is not over the lost sweetheart, but over herself-without-the-sweetheart, and so it is with all cases of loss.... The unbearable loss is not really itself unbearable. What we cannot bear is in being stripped of the external object, we stand denuded and see the intolerable abyss of ourselves.

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<sup>23</sup> Scruton, Roger, *Sexual Desire*. New York: The Free Press, 1986; p. 166.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 167.

What Kierkegaard calls, "the intolerable abyss of ourselves" is the exact description of the subject who believes that they cannot exist without their object of love.

That the subject often chooses grief over the beloved's death (by his own hands), to being abandoned by the beloved for the rival seems to follow from the fact that for the subject he must either exist with his beloved or abolish any chance of the beloved existing with another. If the object of love were dead then he could not alter the ontological dependence he shares with the subject. If the object of love abandoned the subject, the subject would have his existence denied. For the subject of catastrophic sexual jealousy this cannot be tolerated; it is not even a possibility in their mind.

Why does the jealous subject believe this? There are possibly an infinite number of answers (as many as there are situations), but three elements for explaining this type of jealous behavior will be introduced: idealization, projection, and how the subject perceives time.

The present is given its meaning and depth by the past, as well as being given potential and tension by the future. To be denied by the object of love for the subject is to be denied his sense of self. It is by looking at the concept 'next' that enables an understanding of the subject that is coherent enough to explain why the subject would be driven to behave catastrophically. The sense of 'next' as it is being used here implies eager and anxious anticipation, of intention, that drives people through life. For the sexually jealous subject the anxious tension of what may come 'next' is unbearable. They believe they cannot live through what will come 'next' and the only way to not live through the unpredictable jealous situation is to terminate the situation. The subject is unable to step back and see that the 'self' could go on, that the end of the ontological dependence is not an end to his existence. The catastrophically sexual jealous subject cannot separate his 'self' from



the situation, he is too dependent. Therefore, the subject desires to 'break' the chain of events he is caught in, a desire that can bring on catastrophic behavior.

### created and real sexual jealousy (pathological and normal)

Each sexually jealous subject can be seen as suffering from one of two distinct strains of sexual jealousy. These strains are *real sexual jealousy* and *created sexual jealousy*. Real sexual jealousy corresponds with normal jealousy, while created sexual jealousy corresponds with pathological jealousy. Modern-day therapists who subscribe to the psychodynamic approach differentiate real sexual jealousy as "normal" from created sexual jealousy which they call "delusional." Normal sexual jealousy has its basis in a real threat to a relationship, while delusional jealousy, obversely, persists despite the absence of any real or even probable threat. According to Pines, "While normal jealousy is a protective response that can save a marriage, abnormal jealousy is a destructive obsession that hurts people and relationships."<sup>25</sup>

Real sexual jealousy is suffered when the love object stops loving the subject or is actually unfaithful. It is an emotion of reaction. The subject that suffers from real sexual jealousy has not previously been greatly affected by his jealousy, but is now forced to react (not reacting could be a reaction) to a situation he has been placed in by the object of love. Real sexual jealousy is completely rational. It is derived from the actual situation; it is proportionate to the real circumstances, and is under the complete control of the subject. The individual that suffers from real sexual jealousy feels grief over the situation he finds himself in but will cope with the pain of the possibility of losing the love object.

What sets real sexual jealousy apart from created sexual jealousy are the following characteristics: very little envy; a minimum amount of desire for justice, which could cause the subject to want to destroy the love object, the rival, or himself

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<sup>25</sup> Pines, p. 15.

(or any combination); a sense of self that is strong enough to see that life will go on even without the love object; and enough love to realize that the love object has chosen another partner and may be happier because of it. The sufferer of real sexual jealousy will mourn the loss of his beloved, but will not want to continue possessing the object and will eventually forgive the object and rival and move on in life without the dependence he once relied upon.

Whereas, created sexual jealousy stems from no real threatening circumstance. The roots of this jealousy are located in the mind of the subject. Actual situations may only play a minor role for the individual who suffers from created sexual jealousy. This is the strain of sexual jealousy that is suffered by those individuals who try to have complete possession of their love object. The sufferer can create up images of his beloved's infidelities from her simply talking for a second too long to another man at a gathering. The created sexually jealous subject has no real reason to be jealous. Created sexual jealousy is not in reaction to specific circumstances but is created in the mind of the subject. Created sexual jealousy can be rational or irrational. The sufferer that spends a great deal of time imagining if it were possible for his beloved to betray him is clearly using a rational thinking processes. It is what the thinking is about that is often irrational. The irrationality of created sexual jealousy is that there is little or no real evidence to base the jealous feeling on. Created sexual jealousy is unproportionate to the real circumstances and not under the control of the subject. The individual that suffers from created sexual jealousy cannot cope with the pain of the possibility of losing the love object.

The following characteristics set created sexual jealousy apart from real sexual jealousy: no real threat to the valued relationship, a high level of envy, a desire for justice and revenge that could lead to violent behavior, a sense of self that is too dependent on the love object to imagine going on without them, and the denial that

the love object is free to choose someone else that they may be happier with. The sufferer of created sexual jealousy wants to continue possessing the love object and cannot move on in life without maintaining the dependence they have on the love object.

It is possible that the sexually jealous subject could be classified as either suffering wholly from real sexual jealousy or created sexual jealousy, but it is also possible that the sexually jealous subject could be suffering from symptoms of both strains of sexual jealousy. Whether the subject suffers from real sexual jealousy or created sexual jealousy is a matter of degree and not kind. Both strains of sexual jealousy can be severe enough to drive those who suffer from them to commit crimes of passion. Each strain can precipitate ultimate tragedy and invoke the irrevocable. However, the aim is to clarify the complex emotion, created sexual jealousy, knowing that each jealous situation will vary.

#### sense of self: the subject of created sexual jealousy

A precondition of sexual jealousy is that the subject has a dependence upon the love object. 'Dependence' is used here without connoting either a positive or a negative meaning. All that is implicit in the use of 'dependence' is that the subject relies on the object to a degree sufficient enough to affect his sense of self. The subject is ontologically dependent upon the object of love.

In this third-person exploration of sexual jealousy there exist four principal factors in every jealous situation. The subject, the object of love, the rival, and the influence of society on all three. Kingsley Davis writes:

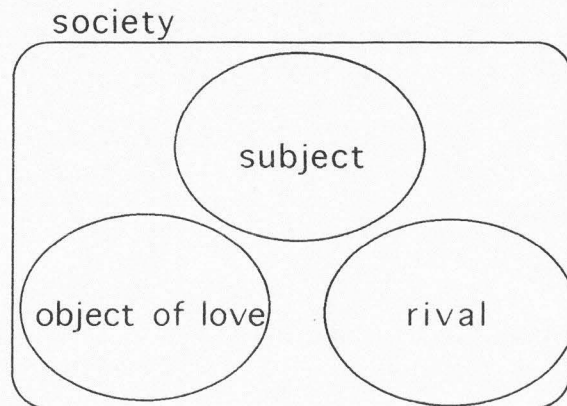
A popular fallacy has been to conceive the jealous situation as a triangle. Actually it is a quadrangle, and the failure to include the public or community element has led to a failure to grasp the social character of jealousy.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Davis, Kingsley, *Social Forces*, 'Jealousy and Sexual Property'. V. 14, 1936, p. 395.



The societal factor does not play an individual's role like the other three elements, rather it affects all three differently and takes the part of stage on which the three participants play out their jealous situation. However, the importance of the societal factor must not be underestimated; it is necessarily present and influential in every jealous situation. The structure of the relationship these four elements play together can be conceptualized in the following way:



Even in its mildest forms created sexual jealousy is catastrophic. There is an imbalance in the mind of the subject. This imbalance stems from the fact that the subject has the advantage (has the object of love) but is either indifferent to this or has a sense of himself that will not allow him to enjoy his position when nothing 'externally' is amiss. What is important to explaining *why* the subject acts as he does is to understand that the subject *believes* he must act. But with no real rival to go up against, what can the subject do? He must abolish the jealousy in his life, but

how? With no real rival to direct his emotion *towards*, the subject is left to do battle against himself or his object of love. Even if the subject sees himself going up against an imagined rival, the rival is no more than a projection in his mind. Often this projected rival is the man the rival wished himself to be, or the 'idealized' mate he *believes* his object of love desires.

To try and understand why the subject suffers from created sexual jealousy the concept a 'sense of self' will be employed. A sense of self is the perception an individual has of himself, the way he believes himself to be. It is much the same as self-esteem but with one notable difference. A sense of self goes beyond how he regards his self by reflecting upon himself, to emphasizing how he regards his self by reflecting upon how he believes others see him. The assumption is made that those who play a significant role in the subject's life (e.g., lover, best friend, boss, spouse, etc.), have everything to do with how the subject understands his sense of self. A further assumption is made that the closer the subject is to another the more influential the other is on the subject's sense of self.

Take a husband and wife for example. It would seem obvious that regardless of how positive or negative the relationship is, time and experience would bond the two individuals together, and their individual senses of self would be inextricably bound up with the other person's image of them. Even if the marriage were to end and the couple did not see each other for years, something would remain indelible to the subject about how his ex-spouse used to perceive him. This exploration does not assume that the subject's relationship with their beloved must be the primary relationship contributing to the subject's sense of self, but it does make the following assumptions. 1) That the nature of intimate and sexual bonds are such that they play a significant role in an individual's understanding of his self. 2) That the inextricable bond shared in intimate and sexual relationships is one of the

contributing factors in why fear of losing the love object can lead a subject to catastrophic behavior. 3) That the loss of an object of love can mean for the subject an unbearable loss to his sense of self. 4) That factors like a contractual relationship before society, friends, God, and family (marriage), children, cohabitation, etc., can contribute to the devastating nature of sexual jealousy. 5) That factors like vanity, pride, loss of comfort, or simply the removal of 'good' sex can further complicate the loss of self the subject experiences.

The desire to control and possess the object of love is one of the most destructive behaviors that can be exhibited by a jealous subject. The subject wants to control and dominate the life of the beloved because he fears the object of love is stronger than him and can live without him. The behavior in this case is pathological because the subject believes it should own 'all' that is the love object. It is pathological to confuse possessiveness with shared dependence, love, and caring.

The loss of the object of love is more than a loss of a possession. The object of love is not something the subject can own but something the subject is-- the object is *a part* of the subject. Part of what the subject experiences when jealous is the sense of being diminished, lessened as a person. When the loss is public, the subject's sense of self will be proportionally affected by how strong the third-person point of view contributes to his sense of self. The subject's jealousy will be all the more intense when the loss is public for he will experience loss compounded with humiliation.

Clanton and Smith agree that valued relationships are important to the subject's sense of self. They report that if a person experiences a reduction of happiness or loss of self-esteem in connection with the relationship, "jealousy may be reported even in the absence of a real threat to the continuation of the relationship," and therefore that, "concern about the subjectively experienced



quality of the relationship,"<sup>27</sup> should be taken into account. One possible explanation for why the subjectively experienced quality of the relationship can be so powerful is that the subject is projecting towards the object of love what he fears most in himself. The subject is afraid of his mate doing what he knows he is capable of. Take a situation that involves a third person-- the presumed rival. No matter how innocent the situation is the subject is able to create tremendous conclusions from what he has seen. Where does the created material come from? From the mind of the subject. Does the subject create these thoughts because he wants to or because he "cannot help it?" Where projection is involved the answer would be because he wants to-- or at least, because he lets himself. Say the beloved phones the subject and tells him that he will not be able to see him tonight. It does not just 'strike' the subject that his beloved may be sleeping with someone else; the subject projects this possible behavior towards the beloved. This is true pathological jealousy.

### object of love

Created sexual jealousy directed towards the object of love is potentially the most catastrophic of all types of jealousy. This is because with no rival to direct the jealous emotion towards the subject turns all of his attention on the beloved. Obversely, while this is potentially the most catastrophic of all types of jealousy it can also be the type most easily dealt with. The subject's jealousy compels him to abolish the object of his jealousy. If this is an imagined rival and there is no real threat of abandonment by the object of love, then, if faced together, the couple should be able to dispel the jealousy. However, this is only possible if the assurances of the object of love are able to correct the sense of self of the subject to such a degree that subject ceases to be plagued by the created jealous images.

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<sup>27</sup> Clanton, Gordon, and Smith, Lynn G., (eds.), *Jealousy*. New York: University of America Press, 1977; p. 239.

It cannot be denied that there is an element of insanity in this jealousy of phantoms. According to Roger Scruton:

The jealous lover sees constantly unveiled before his imagination the scene of a sexual fantasy, in which his beloved is wrapped in desire and then given to another. He prostitutes his beloved in his thoughts, which are invaded, like Othello's, by a sense of the obscene-- by the perception of the sexual act in its bodily terms, freed from the circumstance of love. The torment of jealousy is also an excitement. In order to heighten the fantasy, the jealous lover may become relentlessly curious. He may want to know every detail, even 'how it felt'.<sup>28</sup>

The "relentlessly curious" subject is the most catastrophic kind of jealous person. This is the subject that would allow himself to ask questions like 'would you like to sleep with him?' and 'do you think I'm more sexy than he is?', knowing that if he did not get just the answer he was looking for it would devastate him. The subject baits his beloved and is always trying to catch his beloved at something that will confirm his jealousy. Soon the subject begins to see confirming evidence where there is none. For example, when Othello is persuaded that the handkerchief is a sign of Desdemona's infidelity. This kind of jealous subject can always find evidence for his jealousy because he believes whatever will confirm his jealousy.

### rival

The rival in the jealous situation must be another person, real or imagined. When the rival is something other than a person-- for example, the occupation of the beloved, a group of friends, a musical instrument, money, etc.-- then the emotion is not jealousy, but envy.

The fact that the rival can be real or imagined is unquestionably a possibility in the jealous situation. Those who have written on jealousy unanimously agree

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<sup>28</sup> Scruton, Roger, *Sexual Desire: A Moral Philosophy of the Erotic*. New York: The Free Press, 1986; p. 165.

Jealousy In  
Shakespeare's Othello,  
Cymbeline,  
and The Winter's Tale

The following is an investigation into how jealousy appears in three of Shakespeare's plays: *Othello*, *Cymbeline*, and *The Winter's Tale*. It attempts to rationalize the jealousy in each play, but is jealousy an emotion that can be dealt with rationally? Certainly there are some arguments that can be put forward, even conclusions reached, in an effort to understand jealousy's deepest content without actually oversimplifying the subject, or, in the opposite extreme, creating a framework which is overtly fictional. This is not an effort to oversimplify jealousy, but rather to lay down some minimal framework within which a picture of jealousy can be constructed, no matter how complex or intricate. Part of this effort is to ascertain some of what is fundamental about jealousy by looking at how jealousy appears in English literature.

Initially it is important to establish a conceptual framework in which to consider jealousy as it appears in literature. Numbers 1-6 are the most basic and direct questions, 7-13 are questions that may be helpful to ask but belong to an infinite number of possible questions.

1-- What has the author to say about jealousy that is timeless, rather than ephemeral? Is the jealousy due to its specific cultural situation, or does it owe something to more enduring themes?

2-- What character(s) suffer from jealousy?

3-- What precisely is the character jealous of or about?

4-- In each case where jealousy occurs, is the jealousy felt by the questioning party towards their object of love or towards a perceived rival for their object of love, or both?



5-- What type of jealousy is the character suffering from, (e.g., sexual)?

6-- How does the jealousy affect the character's thoughts and actions?

7-- Is the existence of an actual rival necessary to provoke the feelings of sexual jealousy? [No, but it helps.]

8-- Is the jealousy that exists groundless or are there sufficient reasons for its manifestations? Depending on each scenario, why has the author chosen to ground the jealousy, or not to?

9-- What common characteristics can be discerned of each character that feels jealous? What kind of being feels jealousy? Does everybody feel jealous? What causes some beings to be affected by jealousy more acutely than others?

10-- What is the goal or intention of the character's jealousy?

11-- Is the jealousy contained in the work of catastrophic or tragic proportions, (e.g., Othello), or is it less severe? Why is it at the intensity level it is?

12-- Does the character in question overcome their jealousy? Was it difficult?

13-- Is the work written by a man or a woman? What constant factors must be kept in mind when reading about jealousy written by a man or by a woman?

Sexual jealousy belongs to what Roger Scruton has called the "mysterious realm." The questions he asks in the following passage are fundamentally what I am trying to answer.

There is also what might be called a 'realm of sexual experience': a realm of emotions and perceptions which are available to us, only because of our susceptibility to sexual desire. Much of this realm is mysterious to us. Consider, for example, sexual jealousy, to deny the catastrophic power of this emotion, which leads us into the most desperate behavior, and yet which starts up from the smallest circumstance. How do we explain this catastrophe? What is it in jealousy that proves so destructive to one who suffers from it, and why is jealousy so difficult to overcome? We shall find that the answer to those questions touches upon one of the deepest and most astonishing facts about our nature as rational agents.<sup>1</sup>

In the following section it will be shown how some of the possible forms of catastrophic sexual jealousy can be discerned by looking closely at four of Shakespeare's characters, Othello and Iago in *Othello*, Leontes in *The Winter's Tale*, and Posthumus in *Cymbeline*. It must be stressed that this is an exploration of the possible ways in which sexual jealousy can be manifested and not an effort to say it *will* manifest itself in this way. By looking closely at these plays, conclusions will be drawn about sexual jealousy by arguing from the particular to the general.

As an example of how the six primary questions can lead to a fundamental aspect of jealousy being derived from literature, I would like to look closely at the story of Leontes, the King of Sicilia, Hermione, his wife, and Polixenes, the King of Bohemia, from Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale*. And then, to look at Posthumus' jealousy and finally Othello's.

Leontes is the jealous character in *The Winter's Tale*. Of who is he jealous, and why? The answer to this question is not so easily discerned. Leontes and Polixenes are very close friends;

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<sup>1</sup>Scruton, Sexual Desire, p. 15.

they grew up together, and they call one another brother. Polixenes in scene two of act I tells Leontes he plans to return to Bohemia shortly. Leontes tries to persuade him to stay but fails. He then turns to his wife and asks her to persuade Polixenes to stay. After some charged words, she succeeds. Leontes has stepped aside while the Queen has been persuading Polixenes. When he approaches and finds she has won he says that she:

*...never spok'st  
To better purpose,<sup>2</sup>*

and because of this he proclaims:

*'I am yours for ever.'*<sup>3</sup>

All would seem to be well, but listen to Leontes' next words in his aside:

*Too hot, too hot!  
To mingle friendship far is mingling bloods.  
I have tremor cordis on me: my heart dances,  
But not for joy, not joy. This entertainment  
May a free face put on, derive a liberty  
From heartiness, from bounty, fertile bosom,  
And well become agent-'t may, I grant.  
But to be paddling palms and pinching fingers,  
As now they are, and making practiced smiles  
As in a looking glass; and then to sigh, as 'twere  
The mort o'th'deer - O, that is entertainment  
My bosom likes not, nor my brows!*<sup>4</sup>

Leontes is jealous of both his wife and of Polixenes, but his desire is to have Polixenes killed and not his wife. He is

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<sup>2</sup>1.2.86-87.

<sup>3</sup>1.2.105.

<sup>4</sup>1.2.108-118.

jealous because he believes Polixenes and his wife are overly friendly, that they too eagerly want to slip away when he gives them the chance. In short, he is jealous because he sees in his lifelong friend a powerful rival for his wife. He also misunderstands their good-natured friendship as something too sexual for his liking.

The language, from Leontes' aside above, is certainly that of a jealous person. But from the evidence Leontes gives, does his jealousy appear to be believable or is it groundless and unbelievable? Polixenes has been at court for:

***Nine changes of the watery star***<sup>5</sup>

and Leontes never mentions any suspicions prior to this first instant. Based on this one incident the jealousy is unconvincing. Furthermore, as Leontes reveals his suspicion to others, one by one, they all vehemently stand behind the virtue of the Queen. Camillo, Leontes' most trusted Lord, is the first to deny any wrong-doing by the Queen:

***I would not be a stander-by to hear  
My sovereign mistress clouded so without  
My present vengeance taken.***<sup>6</sup>

The jealousy may not be comprehensible to the reader, nor the charge of infidelity credible to those that surround Leontes, but it is possible Shakespeare is trying to tell us something about the nature of jealousy by setting the scene in this way. By asking how jealousy affect Leontes' thoughts and actions, one begins to discover the answer to the most important principal question: What is Shakespeare saying about jealousy that is

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<sup>5</sup>1.2.1.

<sup>6</sup>1.2.279-281.



timeless? A common and devastating element of jealousy is that it does not matter that the jealousy seems irrational to lookers-on or to someone involved in the jealousy. A jealous person can be consumed by their jealousy and be unable to see facts and circumstances for what they are. This is the case with Leontes. Though he has almost nothing to base his jealousy on, we watch it grow from the smallest circumstances and consume him. The following exchange between him and Camillo is very revealing:  
Camillo

*Good my lord, be cured  
Of this diseased opinion, and betimes,  
For 'tis most dangerous.'*

Leontes

*Say it be, 'tis true.'*<sup>8</sup>

Camillo

*No, no, my lord!*<sup>9</sup>

Leontes

*It is. You lie, you lie!  
I say thou liest, Camillo, and I hate thee,  
Pronounce thee a gross lout, a mindless slave,  
Or else a hovering temORIZER, that  
Canst with thine eyes at once see a good and evil,  
Inclining to them both.*<sup>10</sup>

This exchange reveals Leontes' jealousy may be pathological. Here Leontes first accuses his wife Poloxenes and Camillo of all taking part in a conspiracy against him and this is why Camillo must not be able to see the evil in Hermione and Poloxenes' actions.

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<sup>7</sup>1.2.295-297.

<sup>8</sup>1.2.297.

<sup>9</sup>1.2.298.

<sup>10</sup>1.2.299-304.

Leontes is unable to control his thoughts. His sexually jealous language reveals this. He has lost control over his actions. His jealousy soon consumes him to the degree that he becomes totally irrational. First, he says he hates his most trusted Lord. Next, he will ask the same Lord to murder his greatest friend, the man he calls 'brother'. When he sees that Camillo has left and gone with Polixenes he misunderstands this entirely and throws his wife into prison, charging her with adultery and treason. Lastly, he proves how strong his desire for vengeance is by having his daughter taken by Antigonus to some remote land across the sea and deserted. It would be appropriate to call the way Leontes acts out his jealousy rash, impulsive, and foolhardy, but not irrational. Leontes' behavior has become dangerous because his mind is operating with the mad rationality that is common to those who suffer from jealousy. It is this mad rationality that drives (men) to put chastity belts on their objects of love, forbid their beloved to speak to others, and imagine the most elaborate *possible* ways in which their partner has been dishonorable. From the tiniest and most ordinary circumstances the jealous person can construct devious and treacherous intentions for their beloved. If Leontes' suspicions were true, we would still think his actions severe, given our age, but not wholly improper. For in each of us there exists the desire to see justice carried out, no matter how mad. Mix this with jealous rage and the outcome is often disastrous and catastrophic.

There is no question that the type of jealousy Leontes suffers from is sexual. The imagery he uses reveals this

immediately. Even before he has revealed to Camillo his suspicion, Leontes accuses him of having an:

**...eye-glass...**

**thicker than a cuckold's horn, <sup>11</sup>**

Cuckold is used to allude to Hermione's adultery, to give weight to the fact that she has dishonored her husband. The imagery of the 'eye-glass' being thicker 'than a cuckold's horn' is used to show us Leontes' growing rage as a cuckold is often made horn-mad, (i.e., ready to horn anyone, by being made a cuckold).

**My wife's a hobby-horse, deserves a name**

**As rank as any flax-wench that puts to**

**Before her troth-plight. <sup>12</sup>**

By using 'hobby-horse' Leontes is referring to his wife as a 'loose woman'. The term 'troth-plight' was used in Shakespeare's time to talk of couples wed not by the church but by the acceptance of each other as husband and wife. Thus, Leontes is saying his Queen is no better than a common country wench with whom 'troth-plight' marriages were common.

**Is whispering nothing?**

**Is leaning cheek to cheek? Is meeting noses?**

**Kissing with inside lip? <sup>13</sup>**

Leontes leads himself straight into the heart of jealousy by continuing with this train of thought, he becomes susceptible to jealousy's catastrophic nature:

**That would unseem be wicked - is this nothing?**

**Why, then the world and all that's in't is nothing;**

**The covering sky is nothing; Bohemia nothing;**

**My wife is nothing; nor nothing have these things,**

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<sup>11</sup>1.2.268-269.

<sup>12</sup>1.2.276-279.

<sup>13</sup>1.2.284-286.

*If this be nothing.*<sup>14</sup>

Leontes' case of jealousy is so strong that it can make him, who has so much, feel as if he had little or nothing left. (Similar reactions by Othello and Posthumus will be discussed further-on). It is this that Shakespeare is telling us about jealousy that is timeless. That 'catastrophic behavior' is fundamental to this degree of sexual jealousy. Catastrophic behavior grows out of an individual's fear of being abandoned and being left with nothing. They dread this abandonment so severely that they can see no life beyond the one they now share with their beloved. The result is often catastrophic because the sufferer makes sure that those he believes have betrayed him will have no life beyond the present circumstance as well.

Leontes is trying to make the audience feel that nothing is left if all his suspicions are true. This is the problem with Leontes' rationality; we can see he is making irreversible mistakes. We know that all of 'this' (i.e., his suspicions) are nothing. His wife is something, as is Bohemia, 'the covering sky', and 'the world and all that's in't'.

In looking at Posthumus' case of jealousy in *Cymbeline*, I wish to, one, show that he is sexually jealous of his wife Imogen, and two, that he suffers in a similar way to that of Othello and Leontes-- from the catastrophic nature of sexual jealousy.

Posthumus is a catastrophically sexual jealousy character. He, unlike Othello and Leontes, could be expected to suffer from sexual jealousy, however. Posthumus makes a wager with Iachimo centering on whether or not Iachimo can bodily seduce his wife, Imogen. When finalizing the wager Iachimo says:

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<sup>14</sup>1.2.292-296.



***If I bring you no sufficient  
testimony that I have enjoy'd the dearest bodily  
part of your mistress, my ten thousand ducats are  
yours, so is your diamond too.*** <sup>15</sup>

One would think this would be sufficient enough to make Posthumus jealous; it does not however. Posthumus deserves no pity when he believes himself a cuckold, for any man that could wager such a bet could have very little virtue.

After Iachimo presents his evidence and convinced Posthumus his wife has been unfaithful, Shakespeare, once again, uses the strong sexual imagery of the jealous character:

***She hath been colted by him*** <sup>16</sup>

The word 'colted' means that she has had sexual intercourse with Iachimo; its use opens the door to understanding the nature of Posthumus' jealousy. The obvious allusion to youth is brought out by the word 'colted', but not innocent and inexperienced youth, rather youth that is full of passion, vigour, and potency. Posthumus' jealousy is based on his fear of being outdone as a lover as much as the fact that he believes himself a cuckold.

***This yellow Iachimo, in an hour, was't not?  
Or less; at first? Perchance he spoke not, but  
Like a full-acorn'd boar, a German one,  
Cried "O!" and mounted.*** <sup>17</sup>

A 'full-acorn'd boar' is simply one that is fed full of acorns. When taken in context, however, the imagery of what a boar is bred for (i.e., producing offspring) is invoked. In addition the boar being full of acorns lends the image that it is well fed, well

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<sup>15</sup> I.5.145-148.

<sup>16</sup> II.4.133.

<sup>17</sup> II.4.166-171.

built, and more than able to fulfill its duties as a sire. Once again, Posthumus' jealousy boils down to his feeling outdone by a more sexually dynamic man.

Here, Posthumus first utters a fear that will appear later when talking about Othello; that one infidelity can indicate an infinite number of infidelities.

***Spare your arithmetic, never count the turns:***

***Once, and a million!*** <sup>18</sup>

This comment assures us that Posthumus is both disgusted by the act, and more-so, that he fears the potency of the seducer. The bond that is shared by two dependent lovers can be irredeemably tarnished by one infidelity, for the perfection of the union is now spoiled. This is the line of thought Posthumus argues. He insists on the highly improbable multiplicity of the act because, for him, what was pure is now no longer. Posthumus', like Othello's love, is dependent upon an ideal; that the love they share be based on a purely monogamous foundation. For both Posthumus and Othello, when this ideal has been shattered (as they think it has), nothing remains of their attachment; they desire to kill their objects of love.

Finally, and as can be expected, Posthumus' jealousy consumes him and he too becomes violent and madly rational:

***O, that I had her here, to tear her limb-meal!***

***I wil go there and do't, i'th'court, before***

***Her father.*** <sup>19</sup>

Posthumus believes his image as a man has been lowered in others' eyes, notably Philario's. Posthumus' speech is such that he wants to reassert his power and potency, hence the fantasy of public

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<sup>18</sup> II.4.142-143.

<sup>19</sup> II.4.147-149.

violence before her father. It should be noted that he becomes violent and begins a line of thought that will end with his ordering his servant to murder his wife, while speaking to Iachimo, the man who has made him a cuckold. Posthumus substitutes violent words for the degraded sense of potency Iachimo has inflicted upon him.

What is timeless about Posthumus' jealousy? That man can be so preoccupied with his own image as a potent lover, dominator of women, and unquestionably just, that he may allow himself to act out of jealous rage and commit irreversible actions without first doing something as simple as confronting his object of love before ordering her murder. That catastrophic sexual jealousy can drive an individual to take another, or themselves, out of time, indefinitely, is an idea that will be elaborated further-on.

Othello is the best example of a character that suffers from catastrophic sexual jealousy in English literature. Kenneth Muir in the "Introduction" to the Penguin *Othello*<sup>20</sup> outlines the jealousy in the play:

... in Othello we observe the operations of jealousy in several different characters-- in comic dupe, Roderigo, in Bianca, in Iago and in Othello himself. The main theme is the way in which a jealous villain-- whose villainy cannot be penetrated by anyone because of the impossibility of distinguishing between genuine and apparent honesty-- succeeds in infecting an essentially noble man, one who is 'not easily jealous', with his own jealousy, and in so doing, drags him down to his own level.<sup>21</sup>

This is a fair synopsis, save the assertion that Othello was one 'not easily jealous,' for he was easily jealous. The main

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<sup>20</sup> 1968

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p.21.

objectives in looking at the jealousy in *Othello* are to find what is timeless about Othello's jealousy, and Iago's.

When asking what drives Iago, the answer must go beyond his hate for Othello and his envy of Cassio. In his first soliloquy Iago reveals that he too suffers from sexual jealousy.

*Thus do I ever make my fool my purse:  
For I mine own gained knowledge should profane  
If I would time expend with such a snipe  
But for my sport and profit. I hate the Moor,  
And it is thought abroad that 'twixt my sheets  
He's done my office. I know not if't be true  
But I, for mere suspicion in that kind,  
Will do as if for surety.*<sup>22</sup>

Only after Iago has expressed his jealous fears in his second soliloquy can it be seen how central this obsession is, and that it, more than his envy, or his desire to continue making money off Roderigo, is what drives him to ruin the Moor. Iago's sexual jealousy is further revealed when he admits to loving Desdemona, compounded by the fact that he is jealous not only of the Moor and Desdemona, but of Cassio and Desdemona as well. Thus he says of Cassio's fingers

*Would that they were clyster-pipes for your sake.*<sup>23</sup>

'Clyster-pipes' being used to administer enemas.

The closest we come to seeing Iago's raw sexual jealousy is here:

*Now, I do love her too;  
Not out of absolute lust -- though peradventure  
I stand accountant for as great a sin -  
But partly led to diet my revenge*

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<sup>22</sup> I.3.377-382.

<sup>23</sup> II.1.173.



*For that I do suspect the lusty Moor  
 Hath leaped into my seat, the thought whereof  
 Doth, like a poisonous mineral, gnaw my inwards,  
 And nothing can, or shall, content my soul  
 Till I am evened with him, wife for wife;  
 Or failing so, yet that I put the Moor  
 At least into a jealousy so strong  
 That judgment cannot cure. Which thing to do  
 If this poor trash of Venice, whom I leash  
 For his quick hunting, stand the putting on,  
 I'll have our Michael Cassio on the hip,  
 Abuse him to the Moor in the rank garb - <sup>24</sup>*

In addition Iago suspects Cassio of cuckolding him; his sexual jealousy drives him to ruin Cassio as well:

*For I fear Cassio with my night-cap too - <sup>25</sup>*

Muir concludes of Iago that he...

...is not so much concerned with Emilia's unfaithfulness, as with the fact that he is despised or pitied, or an object of ridicule as a cuckold; and this is intolerable to his self-esteem. The fact that this motive is not mentioned until this point does not in itself prove that it is merely rationalization, for, of course, he would not mention it to Roderigo or to anyone else. It is considered respectable to act from feelings of injured merit: he could never admit that he feared he was an object of ridicule.<sup>26</sup>

Iago's jealousy goes well beyond professional jealousy of Cassio's lieutenantship and of Othello's respected position. The key to understanding Iago is to see his motive as vengeance and justice for the acts he believes committed against him. Iago is driven by his sexual jealousy, the imagery:

*Doth, like a poisonous mineral, gnaw my , inwards <sup>27</sup>*

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<sup>24</sup> II.1.282-297.

<sup>25</sup> II.1.298.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., p. 18.

<sup>27</sup> II.1.288.

reveals as much. Only someone driven by jealousy knows that:

*Dangerous conceits are in their natures poisons,  
Which at the first are scarce found to distaste,  
But, with a little act upon the blood,  
Burn like the mines of sulphur.* <sup>28</sup>

Prior to his marriage to Desdemona, Othello had proved himself a brave and valued soldier and was held in high esteem by the Venetian Senators. However, Shakespeare does not let us know the reason for Othello's desire to have Desdemona for his wife -- only that Othello needed Desdemona. Othello says things like:

*It gives me wonder great as my content  
To see you here before me. O, my soul's joy!* <sup>29</sup>

and

*I cannot speak enough of this content;  
It stops me here; it is too much of joy.* <sup>30</sup>

When it is so obvious that Othello depends on Desdemona for so much of his worth, and she the same in him, is it not fair to ask, what was the state of each before they met? If an individual can so readily give up so much of himself for a love based on need, does it not follow that the same individual will be unable to keep a clear head if he thinks that love is in any kind of jeopardy, founded or unfounded?

Othello, with or without Iago's treachery is a jealous character. Othello's love for Desdemona is too confused with his lust. It is this, as much as anything, that drives him into the jealous rage that is his own undoing, along with his wife's. It is Cassio who defines Othello's need for Desdemona the best. In

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<sup>28</sup> II.3.323-326.

<sup>29</sup> II.1.177-178.

<sup>30</sup> II.1.190-191.

his words we can see that for Othello she is just another emblem of his manhood. Cassio:

*That he may bless this bay with tall ship,  
Make love's quick pants in Desdemona's arms,  
Give renewed fire to our extincted spirits,  
And bring all Cyprus comfort.*<sup>31</sup>

Now, I would like to assert that Othello was easily jealous, and I believe Shakespeare was trying to tell us as much when he had Othello say to Desdemona:

*I will deny thee nothing.*<sup>32</sup>

and then to himself shortly after,

*But I do love thee! And when I love thee not,  
Chaos is come again.*<sup>33</sup>

For Othello denied her everything, he denied her her life. In the second two lines Othello contemplates not loving Desdemona. He is already hardening himself from her love and preparing himself to take his evil, jealous revenge.

Othello was easily jealous and he does severe damage to his own peace of mind by focusing on the imagery of sexual jealousy. In the following passage Othello speaks of Desdemona as his sexual property.

*O, curse of marriage!  
That we can call these delicate creatures ours  
And not their appetites! I had rather be a toad  
And live upon the vapour of a dungeon  
Than keep a corner in the thing I love  
For others' uses.*<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> II.1.79-82.

<sup>32</sup> III.3.84.

<sup>33</sup> III.3.91-92.

<sup>34</sup> III.3.265-270.

This passage brings out the animal imagery that is used so often, first by Iago and then by Othello. Muir writes:

The fondness of both characters for mentioning repulsive animals and insects is one way by which Shakespeare shows the corruption of the Moor's mind by his subordinate.<sup>35</sup>

Othello vacillates, and it is hard not to believe he was easily jealous. When he says in his final apologia:

*Speak of me as I am: nothing extenuate,  
Nor set down aught in malice. Then must you speak  
Of one that loved not wisely, but too well;  
Of one, not easily jealous but, being wrought,  
Perplexed in the extreme; of one whose hand  
Like the base Indian threw a pearl away*<sup>36</sup>

He is disillusioned; he cannot keep his resolve. One minute he asserts,

*What sense had I of her stolen hours of lust?*<sup>37</sup>

And the next,

*By the world,  
I think my wife be honest, and think she is not;*<sup>38</sup>

and then back again,

*I'll tear her all to pieces!*<sup>39</sup>

This last line gives us true insight into Othello's character. The following passage leaves no doubt of Othello's ungovernable rage for Desdemona, and to his weak and jealous nature.

*All my fond love thus do I blow to heaven:  
"Tis gone.*

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid., p. 22.

<sup>36</sup> V.2.338-343.

<sup>37</sup> III.3. 335.

<sup>38</sup> III.3.380-381.

<sup>39</sup> III.3.428.



*Arise, black vengeance, from thy hollow cell!  
Yield up, O love, thy crown and hearted throne  
To tyrannous hate! Swell, bosom, with thy fraught,  
For 'tis of aspics' tongues!* <sup>40</sup>

The most remarkable element of Othello's character is his capacity to totally neglect his wife. Had he been closer to her and known her better, his jealousy could not have grown no matter how devious Iago was. He says in the middle of his torment:

*Would I were satisfied!* <sup>41</sup>

Yes! Would that you were satisfied and content to be with a wife that loves you instead of tearing yourself apart and worrying about being cuckolded. Here is but one example of Othello's ignorance of his wife. Cassio and Desdemona traveled to Cyprus on different boats, Shakespeare makes this clear:

Iago accuses Desdemona of adultery on the day following the consummation of her marriage...there was no possible occasion between her elopement and her reunion with Othello when she could have committed adultery with Cassio. <sup>42</sup>

To think of Othello's accusation that they committed:

*The act of shame  
A thousand times* <sup>43</sup>

seems ridiculous.

Othello's jealousy is groundless. In no way does Desdemona's behavior warrant the response she receives from Othello. When asked by Emilia if Othello is jealous, Desdemona replies with the cool assuredness that should be equal to that of her husband's,

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<sup>40</sup> III.3.442-447.

<sup>41</sup> III.3.387.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., p.26.

<sup>43</sup> V.2.210-11.

but which only she carries:

*Who? He? I think the sun where he was born  
Drew all such humours from him.* <sup>44</sup>

To conclude something about Othello's jealousy, the role that sacrilege played and what it is in jealousy that can drive a man to kill someone he loves will be elaborated upon. I have saved these two questions for last because I believe they are closely related. When Othello proclaims, as he does so often in Act IV, final wishes upon his wife, they always grow out of his incessant thoughts of her naked body lying intertwined with another man. So that words like these:

*Ay, let her rot and perish,* <sup>45</sup>

*Hang her!* <sup>46</sup>

*I will chop her into messes! Cuckold me!* <sup>47</sup>

Grow out of thoughts like these:

*Thy bed, lust-stained, shall with lust's blood be spotted.* <sup>48</sup>

*Lie with her? Lie on her? We say lie on her  
when they belie her. Lie with her! Zounds, that's ful-  
some!...*

*I tremble at it. Nature would not  
invest herself in such shadowing passion without some  
instruction. It is not words that shakes me thus! Pish!  
Noses, ears, and lips!* <sup>49</sup>

*Yet she must die, else she'll betray more men.* <sup>50</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> III.4.30-31.

<sup>45</sup> IV.1.180.

<sup>46</sup> IV.1.186.

<sup>47</sup> IV.1.199.

<sup>48</sup> V.1.36.

<sup>49</sup> IV.1.35-43

<sup>50</sup> V.2.6.

Othello is very sexually jealous of Desdemona. Jealousy can get its beginnings from many sources, flagrant infidelity, suspicion of the smallest circumstance, sexual possessiveness, etc.,

Othello is not jealous in the same pathological way as Leontes, who needs no proof of prompter to make him certain that Hermione has played him false with his best friend. But, all the same, as Stoll pointed out, Othello does display the very characteristics of jealousy mentioned by Coleridge in his attempt to show the Moor was not jealous: eagerness to snatch at proofs ..., a disposition to degrade the object of his passion be sensual fantasies and images ...[like the three quoted above], catching occasions to ease the mind by ambiguities, a dread of vulgar ridicule, and a spirit of selfish vindictiveness.<sup>51</sup>

In the scene where Othello is about to kill Desdemona he laments the loss of her physically and in no other way.

*Nor scar that whiter skin of hers than snow,  
And smooth as monumental alabaster:* <sup>52</sup>

It is only this and her...

*...balmy breath, that dost almost persuade  
Justice to break her sword!* <sup>53</sup>

The scene where Othello kills Desdemona is the key to understanding Othello's true jealous nature. Whether he was easily jealous or not can be debated, but in this scene he shows himself to be neither noble nor virtuous. It has been argued that Othello continued to love Desdemona throughout, but how can this be? How can a man accuse his object of love and then turn a deaf ear on her denial and pleas:

*Let me live tonight!*

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid., p.23.

<sup>52</sup> V.2.4-5.

<sup>53</sup> V.2.16-17

*But half an hour!* <sup>54</sup>

It is catastrophic sexual jealousy that can drive a man to call his beloved a 'strumpet', and ignore her words:

*O banish me, my lord, but kill me not!* <sup>55</sup>

and then smother her.

The element of jealousy that can lead one to murder a lover can grow out of a desire to keep the object of love from ever being shared by or sharing another sexually. This is precisely what drove Othello to madness. Not only did he have images of Desdemona already with Cassio, but he could not trust her words that no such such thing had occurred. Furthermore, he was tearing himself apart because he thought with his departure from Cyprus that his Desdemona would once again betray him. Sexual jealousy this severe can only come from a character that has committed the double crime of sexual jealousy: Othello treated Desdemona as an object and claimed private possession of her.

Furthermore, the state of mind Othello was in at this time makes him ripe for jealousy. The statement by Othello that he is 'not easily jealous' is simply unfounded. With or without Iago to prompt the thoughts Othello claims would not have entered his head, he is forgetting his own words with Desdemona about their future:

Othello

*If it were now to die,  
'Twere now to be most happy; for I fear  
My soul hath her content so absolute  
That not another comfort like to this  
Succeeds in unknown fate.*

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<sup>54</sup> V.2.81&83.

<sup>55</sup> V.2.79.



Desdemona

*The heavens forbid  
But that our loves and comforts should increase,  
Even as our days do grow.*<sup>56</sup>

Othello thinks that things are ideal now. His ego is totally satiated and he can see nothing better than the present situation. He could not be in any more susceptible frame of mind for jealousy. The slightest temperature change would be enough to douse Othello's euphoria, (the handkerchief, Cassio's dream, etc.). It is not Iago that leads Othello into jealousy, but Othello that is susceptible, and thus, easily jealous. No man could become as catastrophically jealous as Othello that they fall...

*...into a jealousy so strong  
That judgment cannot cure*<sup>57</sup>

without being easily jealous. Muir maintains that:

Othello kills what he loves, because he believes in his state of darkened reason that this is the only way to restore his lost honour.<sup>58</sup>

This is the case, this darkened reason springs from a jealousy based on pride and sexual possessiveness. However, regardless of the reason or its base, the justice done by Othello is in no way forgiven nor tolerated. What Shakespeare reveals about catastrophic sexual jealousy in *Othello* is its most profound and saddest fundamental element. It can be unendurable, without meaning, thoroughly depressing, and, as Coleridge has called it, a 'motiveless malignity.'

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<sup>56</sup> II.1.183-188.

<sup>57</sup> II.1.292-93.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, p.37.

Othello is a royal, noble, magnanimous, exotic, and egoistical man. He is the best example of a catastrophically jealous character in English literature because he took this emotion to its absolute tragic conclusion. He used his mad sense of justice to take his object of love out of time. Nothing is more severe.

Thomas Rymer's complaint about *Othello* sums the harrowing truth about this fundamental element of catastrophic sexual jealousy:

What instructions can we make out of this catastrophe?  
Or whither must our reflection lead us? Is not this to  
envenom and sour our spirits, to make us repine and  
grumble at Providence, and the government of the  
world? If this be our end, what boots it to be virtuous? <sup>59</sup>

Shakespeare certainly made his main point; we should not forget it:

*O, beware, my lord, of jealousy!*  
*It is the green-eyed monster, which doth mock*  
*The meat it feeds on.* <sup>60</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid., p. 13.

<sup>60</sup> III.3.164-165.