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English 1022E

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Representation of Possessive Fear: Destructive Jealousy in *Othello*

“all a green willow must be my garland”¹

Still the vain in that bitter bites of green in soul,
Though in darkness my fair heart dances.
Dare I construe, approve, find that jealousy console?

A guiltless crime I commit,² still in whole
Do I extol the accuser, in honest trance
I see the vain in that bitter bites of green in soul.

Honest fame in me profaned and stole
Stealthily away from fault of romance:
Dare I construe, approve, find that jealousy console?

Frail am I yet in glance to cajole
And prove – if it’s the fault of my own perchance?
Still the vain in that bitter bites of green in soul.

Bravery or knavery, I know but not a cause extolled,

¹ See 4.3.55. The poem is written from Desdemona’s perspective as she is the major victim of Othello’s jealousy. The decision to write the poem as a villanelle attempts to reflect her melancholy, fear, and inner turmoil when confronted by the accusation from her husband as seen through the refrains. Villanelle’s refrains also suggest a compulsive tension between her innocence and Othello’s unrelenting murderous rage.

² See 5.2.125

A fault in star or culprit circumstance;
Dare I construe, approve, find that jealousy console?

But you I love, and love I do in sole,
I regret not that brave new world expanse.³
Still the vain in that bitter bites of green in soul,
Dare I construe, approve, find that jealousy console?

³ The reference to *The Tempest* (1610) draws parallel between Miranda's fascination with novel foreigners and Desdemona's fascination with Othello's novel stories (1.3.131-154).

a daughter I love[d]

I do beseech a justice:

Her once-soft eyes that endure and abide.

Keep an eye out for poachers

Lest your chest be somber.

My jewel⁴ there is no more –

Gone, gone, out of the door!

My affection betrayed, a groundless ill

Abuse and beguile her away from my will.

A lost sense

But no defense thence.

⁴The use of the word “jewel” parallels Shylock from *Merchant of Venice* (1596) in his response to the stolen monetary value and treasures associated with his daughter Jessica’s elopement. Brabantio possesses “the irrational sense that Desdemona has betrayed his fatherly affection” (Wilson, 1987). He sees Desdemona as his possession that needs to be guarded from other people to the extent of “hang[ing] clogs” on his daughter (1.3.194-196).

jealousy⁵

Jealousy the green-eyed monster, nature's poison,
 Innocence's doubt turned into suspicion,
 Betrayed conscience, deceitful prison,
 Cleansing of sin in peaceful dormition,⁶
 The dual twin of envy, friends of many,
 (A return of sanity and dignity
 Till fatal malice grow and condemn me,
 Some called with sneer a dire and mighty,
 Venomous hyacinths in willful garden,⁷
 Green willow of garland⁸ choking virtue,
 (my double knavery,⁹ an impromptu,
 An irony transparent ends with confusion,
 Certainty beyond rage and madness,
 A seeming most false; bliss-born sadness.

⁵ Elements of antithesis is seen through the irony in jealousy's tragic repercussions and its prevalence in relationships.

⁶ See 4.2.79-90

⁷ Iago explains the analogy for wills as gardeners to the gardens of bodies, in which jealousy as an emotional response can be seen as a poisonous plant in the willful garden (1.3.319-320).

⁸ See 4.3.55

⁹ See 1.3.437

for the greater good

Her light¹⁰ is gone: a prayer without
 And a murder within,
 In her untainted shroud, on the
 Bed of false sin;
 Her blood was not shed, nor
 A scar on her white skin.

It needs must wither, but
 Her balmy breath lingers;
 Twice I saw her tears¹¹
 Searing the face at fate bitter,
 She appealed to mercy, and mercy
 I gave her with rage and murder.

I! It was I! Driven by jealousy,
 I turned mad,
 And smothered my girl
 with these guided hands;
 How could she sleep so sweet a sleep
 With my despaired soul such condemned?

With ego I thought myself faultless,
 Upright, without a need to suspect women,
 Where came that destructive force?
 It's that which is in everyman
 A tragic flaw like propane before the stark,
 Whose fault led me to approve the deeds of a villain?

¹⁰ See 5.2.7-9

¹¹ Desdemona's tears first appear when she hears of Othello's stories (1.3.173), her tears appear a second time when Othello accuses her of infidelity (5.2.95).

We are but men who with morality
 Fallible befriend the green-eyed monster;
So near is that cruel jest
 It mocks the hearts and infests beyond her,
And takes away my love, my life.
 I am my bitter hate, gone was her breath forever.

(Jealous souls weigh trifles so,¹²
 Perilous doubt, a taste not foul but that which bites,
They say there is truth in every tale
 But still! But still! He sees that which is not, and burns, and takes flight,
Every false is truth in disguise,
 A flame within, it burns, alight

My great tragedy! I applaud that which
 Springs from jealousy – nature’s bitter thorn
That drove him to kill whom he loved,
 And murdered in her bed, a will easily borne
That each man kills the thing he loves,¹³ truth scorned
 where love is worn.)

¹² See 3.3.323-329

¹³ The paraphrase is from “The Ballad of Reading Gaol” (1989).

As he sat quietly with all the mad men gone still tracing after justice and just and sense after the villain the devil the folly without sorrow without grief for that poor dead woman with the former husband in that curved cover under the weight of the cold hard corpse folding into the contours for him at this moment surprising himself at the murder known but yet unknown at the center of the bed and shroud thinking of the unseen blood did the tragedy of his hands and heart cross the tragedy of the heaven's sorrow without Jove's thunder¹⁴ as he noticed the irretrievable light?

As the villain entered the scene noticing perjury and human vanity and madness seeing the full fruit brought forth in the willful garden shrouding everyone overgrowing the walls and fences of trees and thorns and roses as the man kills the thing he loves¹⁵ surprising the mistress he loves like puppet through the strings and talks and kisses while standing and bleeding but withstanding like devil¹⁶ did the tragedy of his motiveless malignity with mastermind cross the tragedy of his rise and fall without give at honor and reputation as he silenced the irretrievable light?¹⁷

¹⁴ See 3.3.356-357

¹⁵ The paraphrase is from "The Ballad of Reading Gaol" (1989).

¹⁶ See 5.2.292-295

¹⁷ The form is inspired by Claudia Rankine in *Citizen: An American Lyric* (2014). The decision to write prose poetry without punctuation aims at mimicking a free speech that is unrestrained by the convention of form to reflect Othello's confused sentiment at the realization of the absurd atrocity he has committed under the influence of unchecked rage from jealousy.

green

The soft smooth green
Before the catastrophe
Tells the tales of the changes of the moon,
Finding traces of suspicions.
Jealousy shapes faults that are not;
It's the innate fear of insecurity.¹⁸

Inherent jealousy prone to insecurity
Draws contrasts in a world of green.
What is never and is not.
Envy leads to raging catastrophe.
Ideal virtues are corrupted by suspicion.
Hearts flutter under the watchful moon.

Starry tears drop from the moon.
Sexual triumph is undermined by thriving after equality.
He finds in ideal insecurity.
Lurking is the snake in tree, green.
Naive questions bring doubt of catastrophe.
He calls, but calls not:

*I believe you are chaste, but not
When sure proof came from the moon.
I did not see myself capable of catastrophe,
I only wanted to abridge between us that insecurity.
I watched out, but could not shake off that leaves' blinding green.*

¹⁸ When Olson defines jealousy to be the fear of “losing possession,” the emotion itself reflects the person’s insecurity at the incapability to dominate and control the possession (2015). Othello initially trusts Desdemona with no suspicion of her infidelity. However, his insecurity grows as he becomes suspicious, leading him to forcibly assert dominance over her, thereby murdering her.

What remains in my trust became suspicions.

He guards his love with suspicion
Fearing cuckold when in honesty there is not.
With tinted glasses he secretly paints the world green.
*I see it all, says the moon,
It's honest Iago that exposed his insecurities,
Devising this catastrophe.*

The valiant could not save himself from his own catastrophe
Once the seeds grow suspicions
Rooted in his insecurity,
Giving in to jealousy, believing what is not.
Blame it on the moon,
Who radiates a glow of green.

Could he prevent the catastrophe, if he chooses to rage not,
And leaves the suspicion unbothered to the moon?
But his insecurity could not appease the hue green.

Roderigo to his love

I finished waiting and you did not
wait for me.
I thought we were destined for each other, I thought
You could be mine forever.
I don't mind the little delays
And absence of your not-looking-not-knowing. It's
That you do not belong to
me.
I had doubts,¹⁹ but
Doubts won't do for my like for
you, as I wait for you
To return from my rival, the general.

Away, away from
That boisterous play, we could escape when you
Will be my love.
I do see you as mine,
eventually,
After my rival's gone, and you will be my
Precious stock.

In dreams, your visage haunts my every whim,
But I
Don't believe you would abandon
My love. I will wait for your grace, and find solace.

¹⁹ See 1.3.344-345

My love I will wait, but
I believe you
Never would abandon a steadfast love so
Endless.²⁰

Can't you see that my love is genuine?
I can withstand your constant running
Away from me, now into that black blossom,
Now into that one Michael Cassio,
And always provoking jealousy and envy.
To be sure this is your own fault, for
Being high-born and
Christian and
Venetian.

²⁰ The acrostic spells out mine.

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