Passionate Writing

The Rhythms of Jealousy in Early Modern English Texts and Drama

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The aim of this contribution is to discuss a notion of "passionate writing" in relation to the rhetorical strategies employed by early modern English authors to write jealousy.[1] Early modern texts can be understood as potentially inscribed with emotional content since they were designed to evoke and stimulate the transaction of passions between author, text and reader, as entailed in the phenomenological discourses of humoralism. While paying particular attention to drama (and especially to Shakespeare's *Othello* and *The Winter's Tale*), this contribution will also use, as case studies, passages from poems and both fictional and non-fictional prose texts, in keeping with the early modern conception of literature, which comprised poetry as well as sermons and treatises. It will be demonstrated that, when reading or listening to these texts, form should not be disjoined from content, since they are both implicated in an inscribed ecology of emotion. Moreover, it is important to historicize the emotional transaction produced, since the literary evocation of jealousy would notably resonate in a culture that was constructed on and was heavily marked by male jealousy and what Breitenberg calls "anxious masculinity".[2]

1 For a general study on "writing jealousy", see Monneyron 1997.

2 Cf. Breitenberg 1996.

INTRODUCTION: DANCING JEALOUSY AND JEALOUS CHEMICALS

The year 2014 saw the debut of a much acclaimed ballet adaptation of Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale*, a co-production of The Royal Ballet and the National Ballet of Canada. The Royal Opera House has uploaded a video on Youtube of Edward Watson playing Leontes, the king of Sicily who becomes monstrously jealous of his wife, Hermione. The dancer's expressions, his frenzied movements and the harrowing music have led a Youtube user, "Steemdup", to comment: "is Leontes a tortured character? Ed is magnificent and a joy to watch. so [sic] passionate".[3] Obviously, "Steemdup" is not familiar with the story of *The Winter's Tale*; but what is striking is that s/he says that the dancer is "passionate". This response shows that the ballet has achieved to convey the king's emotion through movement only. This may indicate that those scholars who have recently focused on the role of the actor's body to express emotions rather than the language used have a point. The last two decades have produced a spate of studies related to what Keir Elam has called "the corporeal turn".[4] With the decline of New Critical taboos on "affective fallacy", as well as of Structuralism's logocentrism, the discourses of corporeality and its connections with emotion have become one of the most active and fascinating hermeneutic movements in studies of early modern drama and literature.[5] This shift has many positive assets. For instance, it foregrounds the multiplicity of media and of the sensorial channels making up theatre: theatre is not only made of words, but also of bodies, music, lighting, costumes etc.

The dancer has then been able to express jealousy without verbal aid. This is what had preoccupied Joby Talbot, the composer, who recalls his reaction on first hearing that he should compose a score for a ballet adaptation of *The Winter's Tale*: "My first thought was, 'how do you tell the story through music and dance of a jealousy?' Jealousy being the least kinetic, the least active, the least constructive emotion that kind of is."[6] We could compare Talbot's statement and

3 The Royal Opera House 2015b.

4 Elam 1996: 143.

5 Just a sample: Roach 1985; Hillman/Mazzio 1997; Paster/Rowe/Floyd-Wilson 2004; Paster 2004; Smith 2009; id. 2010; Cummings/Sierhuis 2013; Craik/Pollard 2013; Hobgood 2014; Johnson/Sutton/Tribble 2014. For a concise discussion of what can be gained from a study of emotions and passions in literature and linguistics, see Elam 1993.

6 The Royal Opera House 2015a.

predicament with the performances of *commedia dell'arte* players who would travel across Europe, occasionally not speaking the local language, and whose plots often revolved around jealousy. This could be explained considering that the experience of jealousy seems to have some universal, cross-cultural qualities which can be perceived by anyone. Indeed, although the majority of scientists argue that jealousy is a secondary, non-basic emotion[7] involving blends of other emotions, "anthropologists have so far failed to uncover a single culture that is free of this affliction".[8]

Yet, when reading the aforementioned comment of the Youtube user or listening to the interviews with the producers of the ballet, something very interesting can be noticed. Christopher Wheeldon, the choreographer, recalls having said to the Leontes dancer: "perhaps that movement looks like it might start to suggest a slow flushing through of the body of […] all these dreadful jealous chemicals we all have the ability to release".[9] The dancer is thus "passionate" and releases "jealous chemicals". It can be argued that these pronouncements are vestigial tokens of a now obsolete medical discourse, humoralism, or humorism.[10] According to humoralism, all human beings are characterized by their "temperament", a unique mixture of bodily fluids, called humors (blood, phlegm, black bile and yellow bile). The humors course through and across bodies which were believed to be highly porous; Helkiah Crooke famously described the human body as "*Transpirable* and *Trans-fluxible*".[11] Humors could be easily excited or perturbed (for instance, by change of climate, diet, age etc.), and could in turn alter the temperament. What is important to understand is that pre-Cartesian passions crossed physiology and psychology: they were not internal objects but were thought to "comprise […] an ecology or a transaction".[12] Indeed, early moderns would not have found our views on embodiedness as alien as we may first suppose. As Bruce R. Smith puts it:

7 Cf. Salovey 1991. For a very good introduction to "emotion studies" relating to jealousy, see Sanders 2014:13-31.

8 Nordlund 2002: 148.

9 The Royal Opera House 2015a.

10 It must be said that to talk of "humoralism" is to commit a broad, though necessary, generalization: there were various strands of medical, theological and philosophical discourses that relied on Galenian and Aristotelian writings on the workings of the soul and of the humors. However, they were often interrelated in significant ways. See Park 2009 and Kessler/id. 2009.

11 Crooke 1615: 175.

12 Paster/Rowe/Floyd-Wilson 2004: 18.

Instructed by Freud, we think of emotion as an energy that acts *on* the material body; for Donne and his contemporaries, passion was a biochemical state that arises *from* the material body. An emotion is, for us, a *response* to an act of cognition; for Donne and his contemporaries passion was the *impetus* for an act of cognition.[13]

Humors were refined as "spirits" and, as such, mediated between different individuals: Giorgio Agamben has coined the expression "pneumatic culture".[14] For instance, one did not fall in love by directly perceiving an external, attractive body: instead, "an internal image, that is, the phantasm impressed on the phantastic spirits by the gaze, [was] the origin and the object of falling in love".[15]

One of the most frequent views of playgoing as an activity was that seeing and hearing a play could literally transform the spectator. Playwrights inherited and explored the classical teachings of Cicero, Horace and Quintilian, for whom an actor, just like an orator, needs to be "passionate", that is, imbued with and dominated by an emotion, to move the spectator accordingly. By making himself angry, sad, jealous or amorous, he would transmit these angry, sad, jealous or amorous humors to the spectator, who would undergo a constitutive change, since these humors would alter his or her internal balance. We can apply to playacting what Thomas Wright in 1604 wrote of the amazing skills of orators in altering their audiences' passions:

> The Christian Orator […] perfectly vnderstanding the natures and properties of mens passions, questionlesse may effectuate strange matters in the mindes of his Auditors. I remember a Preacher in *Italy*, who had such power ouer his Auditors affections, that whẽ it pleased him he could cause them shedd abundance of teares, yea and with teares dropping downe his cheekes, presently turne their sorrow into laughter: *and the reason was, because hee himselfe being extremely passionate*, knowing moreouer the Art of mouing the affections of those auditors […] The same commoditie may be gathered by all other Orators, as Ambassadors, Lawyers, Magistrates, Captaines, and whomsoeuer wold perswade a multitude, because if they one can stirre a Passion or Affection in their Hearers, then they haue almost halfe perswaded them […].[16]

Nothing could terrify the antitheatricalists more than such powers of transformative persuasion. However, it was not only theatrical or oratorical performances

13 Smith 2009: 4.

14 Agamben 1993: 99.

15 Ibid.: 23.

16 Wright 1971: 3-4 (second emphasis E.S.).

that were believed to work such perturbations: written texts were thought to do the same.

PASSIONATE WRITING

The most recent studies on early modern playacting primarily focus on the ways emotions were expressed through and across the bodies of actors and spectators. As Anthony Dawson puts it: "the body of the actor both represents and is what it impersonates, since it is that body, as identified with the character's, that generates emotions."[17] In these studies, after years of meticulous close readings of the texts, less marked attention is paid to the words uttered by the characters. This is detrimental since theatrical performances were certainly seen, but also, and for some scholars,[18] especially, heard, during the Elizabethan age. Moreover, plays were read: since the 1590s, the market for playbooks burgeoned substantially.[19]

As John Milton put it, books in general "do contain a potency of life in them".[20] The contents of such texts were inscribed with emotions, which were designed to impress themselves onto the reader. Thus, to quote Thomas Wright again,[21] "corrupted Bookes […] insinuate their matter vnto the chiefe affection and highest part of the Soule".[22] Wright lists among such books the texts produced by "light and wanton Poets", comparing them to "Machiauellian policies".[23] The threat of similar books equals that of "many shewes, stage-plaies, and such impure exercises, which tend to the manifest overthrow of tender Soules".[24] The only cure Wright can think of is to imbibe different humors, those

17 Dawson/Yachnin 2001: 33.

18 Cf. Gurr 2004: 102-115.

19 Cf. Berek 2012; Erne 2013.

20 *Areopagitica* (1644), quoted in Craik 2007: ix.

21 I am aware that scholars have relied far too heavily on Thomas Wright, whose text *The Passions of the Minde in Generall* (1601; 1604) presents many peculiarities that should not be generalized for the overarching paradigms of humoralism: he was a Jesuit and he often delves into moral and theological discussions (see Sullivan 2015). Still, the importance of that treatise cannot be overestimated, also because of the influence it had in his own time: see Wright 1986: 3-16.

22 Wright 1971: 333-334.

23 Ibid.: 333.

24 Ibid.: 333-334.

instilled by a different kind of literature: "thousands of spirituall Volumes, the holy Scriptures, sermons, exhortations, homilies, meditations, prayer-bookes".[25]

In a recent article, Claire Labarbe suggestively uses the expression "the dark ink of melancholy",[26] and discusses how character-books perpetuated traditional beliefs in the symptoms of black bile, but also portrayed a different type of this disease. She terms it "poetical melancholy", a manifestation of inspiration that could "be sought after as a remedy against physical or circumstantial melancholy".[27] This stance can be strengthened by drawing from the perspectives of historical phenomenology: it can be shown that early modern texts were actually believed to be "passionate", imbued with humors that could affect the reader, as it were, "biochemically".

Words written on the page and/or heard in the theatre do shape cognitive and emotional experience. However, the ways in which these processes are conceptualized provide important insights into one's aesthetical appreciation of literature and drama. In the writing process, early modern authors were deeply aware of the phenomenological processes related to humoralism and tried to influence and stimulate them. It was even necessary to coin a particular verb: "to passionate", that is, "to excite or imbue with passion, or with a particular emotion, as love, fear, anger, etc." (*OED* 1). Thus, according to Thomas Pastell, "Beaumont and Fletcher coyn'd a golden way / T'expresse, suspend, and passionate a Play".[28] Moreover, this power on the part of authors was perceived as so strong that:

> It was even claimed, extravagantly enough, that a playwright's ability to handle the passions well brought him near to God; he alone could turn his own "quicke passions, and witty humors […] into matter and forme as infinite, as Gods pleasure to diversifie mankinde" [...] passions were not simply what playwrights depicted; they were what motivated the writing in the first place. "Passion" was inceptive.[29]

In addition to this, the nature/nurture divide in relation to issues of mimetic representation of emotions was quite ambiguous. Angela Locatelli has investigated how the English Ramist Abraham Fraunce (1558?-1593?) dealt with the manifestation of emotions in rhetoric. Fraunce's writings on the concept of "utterance" reveal "a paradox inherent in the early modern conception of mimesis:

25 Ibid.: 334.

26 Labarbe 2015.

27 Ibid.

28 Pastell 1652: B6r.

29 Palfrey/Stern 2007: 316.

one prescribes the symptom as gesture in order to effectively represent an emotion".[30] In other words, what is cultural (a symbol) is made to fold itself onto what is physiological through prescription: a particular gesture, a particular tone of voice are given an appearance of spontaneity when, in fact, their meaning is supposed to be recognized by a certain community familiar with these conventions. For instance, to show pity, "the voyce must be full, sobbing, flexible, interrupted".[31]

The contemporary spectator or reader may not understand how these emotional patterns were articulated because they speak a different code. Martha Nussbaum succinctly explains that: "A person who does not know the emotional 'grammar' of his or her society cannot be assumed to have the same emotional life as one who does know this 'grammar'".[32] It is well known that, in the early modern period, the study of rhetoric was not simply the object of antiquarian education or the source of flowery embellishments, but the very groundwork for social interaction and self-fashioning. Rhetoric structured and shaped the "emotional grammar" of the Renaissance *sensu* Nussbaum.

Most noteworthy in this context are the considerations of Bruce R. Smith: we may not be able to stand at the centre of the early modern "intersubjective 'field of perception'", in Edmund Husserl's terms, but this "should not stop us, however, from projecting ourselves into the historically reconstructed field of perception as far as we are able".[33] This attempt opens up new perspectives in judging and enjoying early modern texts.

We have seen that texts were considered very potent instruments to move and change the reader's beliefs, whether to good or to evil. This was so because of the perceived permeability of the human body. The spirits that enabled the humoral mediation between the author, the text and the reader, as well as between the actor and the spectator, were part and parcel of Agamben's "pneumatic culture". Of course, this ecosystem of intersubjective fields of perception was ideologically inflected: women, for instance, were believed to be much more vulnerable to humoral perturbations, and melancholy in men was often perceived as having an emasculating force.

This contribution discusses passionate writing in relation to one particular emotion: early modern jealousy. Renaissance England seems to have been obsessed with male jealousy: "Extraliterary evidence certainly reinforces the view that anxiety about female sexual fidelity ran high in English Renaissance cul-

30 Locatelli 1993: 162 (translation E.S.).

31 Ibid.

32 Nussbaum 2001: 149.

33 Smith 2010: 28.

ture".[34] Women's jealousy was more rarely thematized for various reasons, but to put it in one word – patriarchalism. Excerpts from different texts will be used as examples, paying particular attention to Shakespeare's *Othello* and *The Winter's Tale*. In this attempt, Allison P. Hobgood's pioneering study is very useful: in her book, she sets out to examine "feeling early modern bodies to uncover the ways they forced drama to reckon with and acknowledge their significant role in making sixteenth- and seventeenth-century English theater emotionally meaningful".[35]

LINES OF JEALOUSY

Jealousy was almost always associated with the melancholy temperament, the one dominated by black bile, the cold and dry humor.[36] However, the most dangerous type was "melancholy adust". Choleric men, that is, those whose temperament was dominated by yellow bile, were said to be very easily irritated and incensed. When subjected to the great humoral perturbation of jealousy, their temperature would increase so much that the yellow bile would burn (it would become "adust") and turn into a form of black bile worse than simple melancholy. This dreadful perturbation would not allow them to reason any more.

The dramatist Philip Massinger visually showed these humoral alterations in a tragicomedy, *The Picture* (1629-30). In the play, a jealous husband is given a magic picture which will turn yellow if his bride should be tempted to adultery and which will turn black should she yield completely. These changes of colour are revealing. The picture may reflect the state of his wife's chastity given the early modern humoral permeability, but it also signals the jealousy in the husband himself, whose passion literally turns from irascible to melancholic.

How can these changes be expressed through words? How do you write jealousy?[37] Has jealousy a particular sound or noise? In one of his elegies, John Donne says that a jealous man "snorts"[38] – is this universal? Early seventeenth-

34 Maus 1987: 561. Maus's article has deservedly become a classic for studies on early modern jealousy. Concerning *Othello*, see the concise Allan 2010.

35 Hobgood 2014: 4-5.

36 See Babb 1951; Klibansky/Panofsky/Saxl 1964; Trevor 2004.

37 Monneyron 1997 is an important reading but only concerns literature of the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and moves from mainly psychoanalytic and Marxist perspectives.

38 Cf. *Elegy 3: Jealousy* in Carey 1990: 14, l. 22.

century musicology saw the emergence of the *Affektenlehre*, a doctrine which aimed at representing human emotions through musical rhetoric, and scholars started to codify these emotions in music. So jealousy was alternatively associated with minor key music, or with discordance and even chromaticism.[39] This serves to show that the representation of emotions is heavily dependent on cultural bases. Humoralism was perhaps the most important of these cultural bases in the early modern period. It was thought that prosody and rhetorical devices could both elicit and reveal passions, because "[w]ords represent most exactly the very image of the minde and soule".[40] For instance, Wright pointed out how to identify a particular temperament: "if they rage with furious words, brawle or wrangle, such carie the conscience of cholericke."[41] Humoralism was a framework which enabled early modern individuals to present passions in the emotional and cultural ecology between text and world.[42]

Robert Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy* is one of the greatest works on melancholy ever written. Interestingly, he characterized his writing both as an encyclopedia on the effects produced by black bile and as a pre-Freudian talking/writing cure: "I write of melancholy, by being busy to avoid melancholy."[43] He portrays himself as a man afflicted by melancholy and he says that by writing of it he feels purged of this disease. He devotes a large section to jealousy, a malady he perceives as so strong that he denotes it as a separate type of melancholy. What is very interesting is *how* he writes of jealousy. Jealousy is "a fury, a continual fever, full of suspicion, fear and sorrow, a martyrdom, a mirth-marring monster" (vol. 3, 264). Note the alliterations. When in turn he portrays the behaviour of the jealous man, he regales us with a passage (vol. 3, 281) that cannot be described but as a dramatic piece:

> […] he gloats on him, on her, accurately observing on whom she looks, who looks at her, what she saith, doth, at dinner, at supper, sitting, walking, at home, abroad, he is the same, still inquiring, maundering, gazing, listening, affrighted with every small object; why did she smile, why did she pity him, commend him? why did she drink twice to such a man? why did she offer to kiss, to dance? &c., a whore, a whore, an arrant whore.

39 Cf. Anonymous 1975: 175.

40 Wright 1971: 105.

41 Ibid.: 106.

42 For a similar view, see the acute Oggiano 2012.

43 Burton 1977: vol. 1, 20. All subsequent references to this text will be cited parenthetically in the text.

The rhetoric of this quotation is exquisite. The repetitions are like bullets, and the asyndeton reflects the way this man cannot or refuses to reason. His style does not construct articulated independent and subordinate clauses; he proceeds in a fury. These sentences are dramatic in every sense of the adjective. One can surely compare Burton's quotation with Leontes's "affection speech" in *The Winter's Tale* (I.ii 139-148):[44]

Can thy dam?—may't be? –
Affection, thy intention stabs the centre.
Thou dost make possible things not so held,
Communicat'st with dreams – how can this be? –
With what's unreal thou co-active art,
And fellow'st nothing. Then 'tis very credent
Thou mayst co-join with something, and thou dost –
And that beyond commission; and I find it –
And that to the infection of my brains
And hard'ning of my brows.

This passage has been famously described as the most obscure lines in Shakespeare.[45] But as Alessandro Serpieri has poignantly shown,[46] these lines are not unintelligible: they manage to mirror exactly the delusional, tortured frenzy of Leontes's passion. Listening to or reading these words, with their pauses, elisions and rhythms which do not permit logical connections, makes us feel this passion. This also happens thanks to the various types of *repetitio*, since "rhetoric taught repetition: it provided schemes for organizing language in patterns of reiterative sound"[47].

Before coming to *Othello*, it can be useful to refer to a passage from two poetical works which "dramatize", or "passionate", jealousy. In both cases, the authors employ alliteration and discordant prosody. Spenser, in *The Faerie Queene*, weaves an alliterative triumph (III.v 59) when relating the transformation of a man, Malbeco, into Jealousy itself:[48]

Ne euer is he wont on ought to feed,
But toades and frogs, his pasture poysonous,

44 All quotations from Shakespeare's plays refer to Taylor/Wells 2005.

45 Cf. Shakespeare 2010: 38-42.

46 Serpieri 2001.

47 De Grazia 2001: 62.

48 Spenser 1978.

Which in his cold complexion do breed
A filthy bloud, or humour rancorous,
Matter of doubt and dread suspitious,
That doth with curelesse care consume the hart,
Corrupts the stomacke with gall vitious,
Croscuts the liuer with internall smart,
And doth transfixe the soule with deathes eternall dart.

Normally, Nicholas Breton was a fine melodious lyricist, but when he writes of jealousy, he intentionally writes lines whose prosody is so impervious and hard that the reader is bound to be emotionally involved (and compare its similarities with the above-mentioned quotation from Burton):[49]

It workes, and watches, pries, and peeres about,
Takes counsell, staies; yet goes on with intent,
Bringes in one humour, puts another out,
And findes out nothing but all discontent.

How should we evaluate such rhetorical strategies? One could dismiss them as merely ornamental devices, but if this use of rhetoric becomes a pattern itself, then it is bound to have much more significance.

OTHELLO[50] AND DESTRUCTIVE RHYTHMS

G. Wilson Knight was the scholar who introduced a seminal idea for criticism on *Othello*: he was the first to speak of "*Othello* music".[51] There are lines in the play which achieve a mesmerizing sublimity, a jewel-like eloquence which is

49 Breton 1600: s.p. See it also discussed in Breitenberg 1996: 177-178.

50 It may be reasonable to warn in advance that for obvious reasons of space, I will not discuss at all the many, many *other* aspects of Othello's jealousy, first and foremost, the intricate issues of class, race and gender (the last two are of great importance in understanding how humoralism is deployed in the play). It is by the grossest and most simplifying of conventions that we say that *Othello* and *The Winter's Tale* are Shakespeare's "jealousy plays". For a recent reading of how *Othello* resonated with Jacobean culture and how the play has been infinitely reappropriated and changed over time, see the recent Marzola 2015.

51 Knight 1993.

juxtaposed with the evoked noises of the sea storm and with the rhythms of Iago's fiendish insinuations. Recently, while still very influential, this idea has been attacked from many points of view; for example, we evidently risk not differentiating between the play and the character. And furthermore, what about Desdemona's own music?[52] Still, Shakespeare's lines in this play have a peculiar quality. It cannot be a coincidence that *Othello* was the source of so many musical scores, first and foremost, Rossini's and Verdi's operas. This led G.B. Shaw to scathingly remark: "The truth is that instead of *Otello* being an Italian opera written in the style of Shakespeare, *Othello* is a play by Shakespeare in the style of Italian opera."[53]

Iago's famous lines in the temptation scene read thus:

O, beware, my lord, of jealousy.
It is the green-eyed monster which doth mock
The meat it feeds on. That cuckold lives in bliss
Who, certain of his fate, loves not his wronger.
But, O, what damnèd minutes tells he o'er
Who dotes, yet doubts, suspects, yet soundly[54] loves! (III.iii 168-73)

Othello will try to justify himself saying that "It is not words that shakes me thus" (IV.i 40), but actually it *is* Iago's verbal poison that triggers his furious jealousy.[55] Bruce R. Smith argues that "Iago's warning enkindles Othello's jealousy" precisely because he manages to divert Othello's and, it could be added, possibly *our* "sense of hearing from its rational work".[56] He comments:

The opening exclamation immediately wrests the imagination away from the regimen of words. […] The power of Iago's speech over Othello's passions is very much an effect of

52 See especially Hopkins 1994 and Hyde 1994. See also the acute reading in Locatelli 1988.

53 Quoted in Kimbell 1994: 607.

54 I prefer the Folio's "soundly" to Q's "strongly" and especially Knight's emendation "fondly" to strengthen the alliterative balance of the line.

55 The counterpart of all this is of course the visual dimension, the search for the "ocular proof". As we can see in Robbe-Grillet's astounding novel *La Jalousie*, jealousy, like envy, is an emotion that seems to feed on the creation of visual scenarios and engages in perspectival distortion. The spectators of the play are involved in a voyeuristic frame while watching the spectacle of jealousy: we are called to collude in Iago's orchestration, and we want to see as much as Othello fatally does.

56 Smith 2009: 203.

assonance and alliteration. Sounds of /o/ insinuate surprise or moaning in 'l*o*rd', 'jeal*ou*sy', 'm*o*nster', 'd*o*th', 'm*o*ck', and '*o*n'. […] Stronger still is the keening intimated by the /i/ sounds in 'jealous*y*', 'gr*ee*n', 'm*ea*t', and 'f*ee*ds'. The ruminative [m] in '*m*onster', '*m*ock', and '*m*eat' completes the job of aural seduction. The stops in 'mo*ck*', 'mea*t*', 'i*t*', and 'fee*d*s' give the completed utterance a deadly inevitability.[57]

Is this an instance of impressionistic criticism? To a certain level, the answer could be "yes". In fact, we now know, for example, that some of the sounds italicized by Smith were pronounced differently in the early seventeenth century.[58] Nevertheless, Reuven Tsur, the prominent exponent of the "cognitive poetics" movement, has discussed in his numerous works how certain sounds seem to be better suited to express particular emotions. For instance, "periodic sounds are perceived as smooth, soft, tender, whereas a-periodic, abrupt sounds are perceived as hard, aggressive, clearly-articulated".[59] The contexts in which these sounds are situated realize different emotive potentials of sound symbolism and early modern playwrights were keen observers of this.

Iago may well say that it will be easy to taint Othello's mind because of his "unbookish jealousy" (IV.i 100) (the adjective is a Shakespearean coinage). From the previous textual examples, it is by now clear that Othello's jealousy is definitely not uncultured: it is deeply embedded in early modern world-making rhetoric. This is in perfect agreement with Frederick Turner: "Iago's rhythm destroys Othello's."[60] Othello's thoughts and words are overcome by Iago's eloquence, and Othello's own rhythms will, quite literally, be nullified by Iago: he is silenced through epileptic seizures.

CONCLUSION: "RAGE HAS ITS LAWS"?[61]

What this contribution has tried to show and discuss is the passionate inscribing of jealousy in early modern English texts. Now, jealousy has been described by

57 Ibid.

58 Cf. Crystal 2005.

59 Tsur 2012: 273.

60 Turner 1971: 116. See this argument beautifully developed by Wood 2016: 79 et passim.

61 Tolstoy 1890: 134. I would like to thank Ingeborg Jandl (University of Graz) for sharing with me her great knowledge of the autobiographical elements of Tolstoy's text and of its connections with modern and contemporary Russian culture.

cognitive scientists as well as by anthropologists as a "plastic phenomenon": "something that is universal but also individually, culturally, and situationally variable".[62] "Situationally variable": this is fortunate enough, otherwise anyone hearing Beethoven's *Kreutzer Sonata* would want to kill their partner as in Tolstoy's novella. Thus, it would be inane to say that the rhythms of Iago's eloquence correspond to the music of Beethoven that triggers the Tolstoyan character's jealousy. However, early modern authors tried to write so that their texts could draw the reader or spectator into somebody else's state of mind. The orchestration of the character's jealousy is rhetorically articulated in texts which were thought able to physically as well as psychologically alter the reader, the actor and the spectator. The emotional transaction produced would resonate even more in Renaissance England, where there was a widespread culture of male jealousy.

It may be objected that too much emphasis has been placed here on form and style instead of content. It must be stressed that, if writing was intended to stir somebody's passions, it is evident that form cannot be coarsely disjoined from content. Passionate writing could indeed make you "dote, yet doubt".

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62 Nordlund 2002: 149.

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