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“ALL IS TRUE THAT IS MISTRUSTED”:
A PRAGMATIC STUDY OF JEALOUSY IN WILLIAM
SHAKESPEARE’S *OTHELLO* AND *THE WINTER’S TALE*

False or “mad” jealousy is the central theme in William Shakespeare’s *Othello* and *The Winter’s Tale*. Both Othello and Leontes, the protagonists of the plays, seem to have great difficulties distinguishing between the surface of things (or what they see) and the truth. Both can be classified as tragic figures as they both commit an error of judgment – due to a flaw in their nature (be it self-love or suspiciousness) they misjudge a key situation and are easily led astray. In fact, dramatic irony, which is evidently present in the plays, can be exemplified by a pragmatic analysis of these two texts. It is interesting to observe that both characters are focused on saving face in front of others, not only to avoid criticism by the society (Leontes) but also to be each able to cope with their wife’s supposed betrayal (Othello). Pragmatics helps establish the causes of the characters’ tragedy: Othello’s false jealousy is conceived by Iago’s infelicitous speech acts and develops only because Othello is unable to grasp Iago’s real intention in communication. On the other hand, Leontes in his obsession is looking for hidden meanings in things just to prove that he is right; his verbal behaviour abounds in examples of self-deceit. The aim of this article is to define jealousy in pragmatic terms, using the speech act theory, felicity conditions, conceptual metaphor, and face.

1. Linguistic manipulation and false narration

“It is not words that / shakes me thus” (*Othello*, 4.1.35-36) says Othello in reaction to Iago’s inventive lie about Cassio and Desdemona kissing in private. In fact, however, it is precisely Iago’s words that cause Othello’s rage and trance, as we can learn from stage directions [*He falls in a trance*]. The play is based on “the speaking and hearing of words” (Wall 1979: 360). Iago’s verbal insincerity is understood and interpreted as truth, which is the cause of Othello’s dramatic transformation and his sudden change of heart from a dotting lover to a “green-eyed monster” (*Othello*, 3.3.168). It seems justified to speak of a pragmatic study

of jealousy in *Othello*, since jealousy in the play is shown as a linguistic process based on the manipulating of words and creating of visual images in the mind of the interlocutor, who takes what he hears at face value. Leontes in *The Winter's Tale* represents mad jealousy caused by the character's own self-deceit; his jealousy is more automatic, and it is conceived as a result of a self-perpetuating belief in his own suspicions and his seeing things which simply are not there. It is interesting to investigate jealousy from a pragmatic perspective, as a process where both truth and falseness enter into an ambiguous verbal and visual interplay.

2. Speech act theory and felicity conditions

Theatrical communication is based on action and performance, that is, "it always tends toward doing, acting on the receiver, as well as saying ... to do things" (de Marinis 1993: 152). Its strong performative nature is reflected in dramatic discourse, in particular in dialogues. Dramatic dialogue can be compared to "spoken action" and every time a character produces an utterance, s/he performs a certain activity or stimulates another figure to do some ensuing action (Pfister 1991: 6). John Austin's *speech act theory* is often applied to dramatic discourse because it views language as action. Austin (1962: 121) concentrates on everyday language and postulates that natural language is composed of *constatives* (true-false statements) and *performatives* (utterances with action embedded in them). Austin believes that in using language we perform three different speech acts: the *locutionary act*, the *illocutionary act* and the *perlocutionary act*. The *locutionary act* is generating a meaningful and grammatically correct sentence, which can be broken down to the *phonetic*, *phatic* and the *rhetic acts*. The *illocutionary act* is the act already performed while being said, as in marrying, baptizing, pleading, etc. Austin claims that there is always "a certain force in saying something", which functions as the *illocutionary force* or the force accompanying the performance of a given act. Finally, the *perlocutionary act* is when by saying something we bring about a certain effect upon the hearer, for example alarm, anger, or relief. Since the language of drama is action-oriented, to follow Keir Elam (1980: 159), it needs to be noted that the dominant types of speech acts in dialogic communication are *illocutions* and *perlocutions*.

The performance of illocutionary acts has to be governed by certain rules that determine whether these acts are successful or not, or as Austin (1962: 136) calls it "happy" or "unhappy". John Searle establishes three main kinds of *felicity conditions* responsible for producing "non-defective" or successful speech acts. First, *preparatory conditions* require that the speaker is "authorized" to perform the act, that is, whether s/he is experienced or acclaimed by others to act, as in naming a ship by the English queen. Next, *sincerity conditions* want the speaker to "mean what s/he says" and "believe it to be true", so that when one congratulates the other person on his/her success, one should feel genuinely

happy for this person. Finally, *essential conditions* have a form of obligation and demand that a commitment once given should be affirmed in the future (Searle 1969: 60 and Elam 1980: 162-163). In everyday conversation speakers are focused on maintaining these conditions, but drama is often structured on the abuse and violation of *felicity conditions*. Much as infelicitous speech acts are perceived by the audience as precisely “unhappy” and defective, they work perfectly well on stage and are accepted as successful by dramatic interlocutors (Elam 1980: 163). This is how dramatic irony¹ is created during the performance. Also, Elam (1980: 163) notes that most acts of deception in drama depend on the abuse of *felicity conditions*.

Jealousy in *Othello* is conceived by distorting the truth and creating false stories. Iago functions as the main motivating factor behind Othello’s change – in his description of reality to Othello he concentrates on what “seems” to be rather than on what is and creates an illusion of reality. In Act 2 Scene 3, Iago instigates a brawl in which the drunken Cassio takes part; he straight away reports to Othello what he has seen (Cassio with his sword following a man crying out for help). The Moor, shocked at his lieutenant’s misconduct, strips him of his military rank. Cassio turns for help to Desdemona. Their exchanges are full of familiarity and friendship, Cassio pledges his loyalty: “Whatever shall become of Michael Cassio, / He’s never anything but your true servant” (*Othello*, 3.3.8-9), whereas Desdemona assures him of her unwavering support: “And be you well assured / He shall in strangeness stand no farther off / Than in a politic distance” (*Othello*, 3.3.11-13). The moment Emilia announces Othello’s and Iago’s arrival, however, Cassio withdraws from the scene, as he is still too ashamed to face his general. Iago immediately attracts Othello’s attention to the fact that Desdemona and Cassio were together, but he does not explain Cassio’s reasons:

Iago: Ha, I like not that.

Othello: What dost thou say?

Iago: Nothing, my lord; or if – I know not what.

Othello: Was not that Cassio parted from my wife? (*Othello*, 3.3.34-37)

Othello, as can be seen, reacts in exactly the way Iago expects, he is interested why Cassio was speaking with his wife. Iago evokes his interlocutor’s question, but he purposefully fails to give an answer: “Nothing ... I know not what”. Stefan Keller claims that Iago’s strategy is based on the manipulative use of language in the form of “cryptic and half-finished comments on the event”. The speaker’s utterances are being “deliberately obscure” and “incomplete” (Keller 2010: 401), in which Iago violates Grice’s *cooperative principle*: “Make your

¹ Dramatic irony is “[w]hen the audience understand the implication and meaning of a situation on stage, or what is being said, but the characters do not” (Cuddon 1998: 237). The audience seems the only party capable of judging the situation objectively from the outside and, usually, it is the audience who is in the know.

conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged” (Grice 1989: 13). Keller (2010: 401-402) believes that Iago’s informational deficit invites Othello to infer that Iago might not be telling him the whole truth, which arouses suspicion in the hearer: “Was not that Cassio parted from my wife?”.

As the scene progresses, Iago witnesses Desdemona pleading with Othello for the disgraced lieutenant. Desdemona is very persuasive and, using her feminine charm, she insists that Othello forgive Cassio and accept him as a friend again: “I prithee, call him back ... But shall it be shortly?” (*Othello*, 3.3.51, 56). Iago takes this opportunity to dwell on Desdemona’s excessive interest in Cassio:

Iago: My noble Lord –

Othello: What dost thou say, Iago?

Iago: Did Michael Cassio, when you wooed my lady,
Know of your love?

Othello: He did, from first to last: why dost thou ask?

Iago: But for a satisfaction of my thought;
No further harm.

Othello: Why of thy thought, Iago?

Iago: I did not think he had been acquainted with her.

Othello: O, yes; and went between us very oft.

Iago: Indeed!

Othello: Indeed! ay, indeed: discern’st thou aught in that?

Is he not honest?

Iago: Honest, my lord!

Othello: Honest! ay, honest.

Iago: My lord, for aught I know.

Othello: What dost thou think?

Iago: Think, my lord!

Othello: Think, my lord!

By heaven, he echoes me,

As if there were some monster in his thought

Too hideous to be shown. Thou dost mean something:

I heard thee say even now, thou likedst not that,

When Cassio left my wife: what didst not like? (*Othello*, 3.3.91-113)

The dialogue is composed of a limited range of illocutionary types: questions and answers. Suspicion is introduced by Iago in his rhetorical question to his hearer: “Did Michael Cassio, when you wooed my lady / Know of your love?”. Searle (1969: 66-67) makes a distinction between two types of questions: *real* questions and *exam* questions. In *real* questions the speaker genuinely wants to find out the answer, but in *exam* questions the speaker wants to know if the hearer knows the answer. Lawrence Guntner (2002: 295) adds one more type

of illocutionary questions, the *rhetorical* question, which is not “a *real* query” because the speaker is not intent on discovering the information needed to answer the question or “fulfil the proposition embodied in the question”; the *rhetorical* question, as seen by Guntner, is most of all a violation of the *sincerity condition*. Iago’s question is classified here as a *rhetorical* question, since it is insincere – Iago’s aim is not to learn about what he is asking but it is rather to make Othello think that Cassio has long been in love with Desdemona, which is, of course, untrue. On the other hand, Othello’s questions are *real* (information-seeking) questions – he is surprised by his interlocutor’s surmises about Cassio and Desdemona and he really wants to know the truth: “Why of thy thought, Iago?” or “What dost thou think?”. Othello is never in charge of the conversation – for even when it is he who asks the questions, it is still Iago who takes over and manipulates the dialogue. Once again, evasiveness or linguistic obscurity on the part of Iago make his interlocutor wonder and linger on the subject. In the above mentioned exchange, Othello’s repetitions of Iago’s words: “Indeed!”, “Honest?” and “Think, my Lord?” invite even more suspicion and inference by the hearer.

Iago’s *speech acts* have a great performative effect on his interlocutor. According to Searle (Levinson 1983: 240) there are five kinds of action that are performed in speech: a) *representatives*, which commit the speaker to the truth of the expressed proposition, b) *directives*, attempts by the speaker to get the addressee to do something, c) *commissives*, which commit the speaker to some future course of action, d) *expressives*, which express a psychological state of the speaker, e) *declarations*, which effect immediate changes in the institutional state of affairs and tend to rely on extra-linguistic institutions. The most common types of *illocutions* produced by Iago to deceive Othello are *representatives*, such as his false assertions, for example: “My lord, you know I love you” (*Othello*, 3.3.119) and *directives*, for example advice and warnings. In the temptation scene (Act 3 Scene 3) Othello is frequently advised by his ensign to watch Desdemona:

Iago: Look to your wife; observe her well with Cassio;
 Wear your eye thus, not jealous nor secure:
 I would not have your free and noble nature,
 Out of self-bounty, be abused; look to't:
 I know our country disposition well;
 In Venice they do let heaven see the pranks
 They dare not show their husbands; their best conscience
 Is not to leave't undone, but keep't unknown.
 Othello: Dost thou say so?
 Iago: She did deceive her father, marrying you;
 And when she seem'd to shake and fear your looks,
 She loved them most.
 Othello: And so she did (*Othello*, 3.3.200-212)

Iago, once again, leads Othello astray, this time with his false advice. In fact, he violates all *felicity conditions* at once: the *preparatory conditions* as he has no evidence for what he surmises; the *sincerity conditions* because he knows that his piece of advice is untrue, and finally, the *essential conditions* since he is not committed to the fact that his advice: “Look to your wife; observe her well with Cassio” is of any benefit to the interlocutor (Elam 1980: 163). In order to sound more convincing, he claims that Desdemona has already deceived her father, when she decided to marry Othello against Brabantio’s will. Moreover, he implies that Desdemona is going to betray him sooner or later, judging by the loose reputation of Venetian women, saying: “In Venice they do let heaven see the pranks / They dare not show their husbands”. Othello’s self-pride and his values are put to the test – he is rooted in the patriarchal culture in which a betrayal of trust to the father is the worst of all sins. Shakespeare’s play also touches upon the subject of adultery, which, according to the late mediaeval confessional manuals was treated as a mortal sin. In fact, Iago adopts the most extreme version which views adultery as more hateful “than homicide or plunder” and hence punishable by death (Greenblatt 1980: 84). Iago implies that a seemingly innocent conversation with another man may lead the young Desdemona to commit the sin of adultery. What I want to highlight at this point is that although “unhappy”, the *directive* addressed to Othello by Iago is, actually, very successful and Iago gets his message across, because their exchange ends with Othello’s confirmation of Iago’s words: “And so she did”.

2.1. Iago’s imperatives and metaphors

Joseph A. Porter (1991: 79) says that Othello is exposed to his interlocutor’s imperatives. Iago employs different kinds of imperative statements, beginning with the imperatives in the form of “general advice”, such as his addresses to Roderigo, for example: “Put money in thy purse” (*Othello*, 1.3.339), or “specific instructions” – for example: “Here stand. ... Wear thy rapier bare and put it home” (*Othello*, 5.1.1-5). With Othello, Iago uses what Porter (1991: 80) calls “a courtly solicitousness” which is materialized in “a would-be imperative” as in: “Would take no notice, nor build yourself a trouble” (*Othello*, 3.3.150) as well as “the too-much-protesting performatives” of the kind: “I do beseech you” or “As I confess it is my nature’s plague” (*Othello*, 3.3.144-146). The idea behind this stratagem is to suggest some action to be taken by the hearer but still remain distanced from it as the speaker; this is how Iago escapes responsibility for the effects of his insinuations. It is interesting to observe that Iago begins with very general imperatives that do not impose any particular action to be taken by Othello, for example “be advised” (*Othello*, 1.2.55), “be assured” (*Othello*, 1.2.11). However, as the play progresses Iago’s instructions become more concrete, and having the form of friendly advice they cast suspicion on Desdemona. In Act 3 Iago urges Othello to spy on her, as in: “Look to your wife, observe her well with Cassio” (*Othello*, 3.3.200). In Act 4 Iago’s imperatives take the form of very

clear-cut instructions for Othello. In fact, it is Iago who decides how Desdemona will die. Othello plans to poison her but Iago advises differently: “Do it not with poison, strangle her in her bed” (*Othello*, 4.1.204). Iago’s skilful manipulation of language turns friendly advice into quite explicit orders with tragic consequences for Desdemona.

Iago’s language is so very persuasive because it thrives on metaphors. Metaphor, as George Lakoff and Mark Johnson (2003: 4) note, is not just a matter of words, but it is part of human action and thought. Our conceptual system, in terms of which we act and think, relies heavily on metaphor and is metaphorical in nature. Every word or utterance generates some frame in the hearer’s mind, for example the word “elephant” (evokes an image of a large animal with floppy ears and a trunk). “The word is defined relative to that frame” (Lakoff 2004: 3). Another thing is that every attempt at negating the frame actually causes our mind to evoke it, as in “Don’t think of an elephant!”, where the hearer is told not to think of the frame (here an elephant) but s/he will naturally think of it and picture it in their mind. In the same way Iago evokes such a frame by negating the frame when he advises Othello: “O beware, my lord, of jealousy! / It is the green-eyed monster, which doth mock / The meat it feeds on” (*Othello*, 3.3.167-169). Iago seemingly warns Othello against jealousy, but his words work as triggers which activate Othello’s mind towards a belief that his wife is being disloyal and that he should feel jealous. Othello’s “green-eyed jealousy” is put in metaphorical terms, the emotion (jealousy) is externalized when Iago associates it with monstrosity. He suggests that Othello should not be jealous because he will be like a monster in his jealousy. Iago says that jealousy is a self-devouring monster that “mocks” its own “meat”, hinting that Othello might become a victim of his own suspicions, that his suspicions are the food his jealousy will feed on.² It is interesting to observe how the sincerity condition is violated here: Iago’s advice does bear some life-like truth in itself, but it is clearly not spoken in the hearer’s interest, Iago does not mean what he says and he certainly does not believe that the outcome will be beneficial to his friend. Iago’s advice will ruin Othello’s future – instead of preventing Othello from being jealous it will only incite his jealousy.

The illusion of reality in which Othello believes is created through the “ocularisation” (Calderwood 1987: 297) of language and building of false narratives by Iago. Othello’s need for the “ocular proof” of Desdemona’s guilt is easily satisfied by his interlocutor, who uses far-fetched visual imagery. Iago’s choice of the topic this time is especially well-chosen: Desdemona and Cassio in bed. Othello is undaunted as a soldier, but his weak point is his wife, and he is particularly sensitive about their relationship. Iago introduces into the conversation his voyeuristic fantasy about Desdemona and Cassio together; his story is a false report full of vivid sexual, animalistic imagery:

² Notes 168 and 169 by the Editor (Honigmann 2006: 218-219).

Iago: It is impossible you should see this,
 Were they as prime as goats, as hot as monkeys,
 As salt as wolves in pride, and fools as gross
 As ignorance made drunk. But yet, I say,
 If imputation and strong circumstances
 Which lead directly to the door of truth
 Will give you satisfaction, you may have't.
 Othello: Give me a living reason she's disloyal (*Othello*, 3.3.405-412)

The erotic intensity of Iago's utterances is to put Othello into a state of unrest, to make him imagine this unreal situation: "prime as goats", "hot as monkeys", "salt as wolves" is the picture of the two lovers, who are portrayed as lascivious in their sexual act and ignorant of its consequences. Othello, to follow Steven Greenblatt (1980: 72), can be characterized by his "submission to narrativity" – he believes in stories. The story told by Iago he treats as an axiomatic truth. In the same conversation Iago reports to have overheard Cassio talking in his sleep about his secret affection for Desdemona, his mumblings in his sleep accompanied by embraces and kisses:

Iago: I lay with Cassio lately
 And being troubled with a raging tooth
 I could not sleep. There are a kind of men
 So loose of soul that in their sleeps will mutter
 Their affairs – one of this kind is Cassio.
 In sleep I heard him say 'Sweet Desdemona,
 Let us be wary, let us hide our loves,'
 And then, sir, would he gripe and wring my hand,
 Cry 'O sweet creature!' and then kiss me hard
 As if he plucked up kisses by the roots
 That grew upon my lips, lay his leg o'er my thigh,
 And sigh, and kiss, and then cry 'Cursed fate
 That gave thee to the Moor!' (*Othello*, 3.3.415-427)

Iago's improvised speech is obviously insincere, but, at the same time, it is so full of details of Cassio's behaviour that it bears a resemblance to truth. At the end of his story, Iago playfully concludes that "this was but his [Cassio's] dream" (*Othello*, 3.3.429), but for Othello it is now a "foregone conclusion" (*Othello*, 3.3.430), a dream that represents the truth. Othello falls into a rage, which is usually characterized by *commissives*: "I'll tear her all to pieces!" (*Othello*, 3.3.434). Iago's fiction about Cassio's dream ends in a tone of mockery and false complaint: "Yet we see nothing done, / She may be honest yet" (*Othello*, 3.3.435-436). Iago's next step is to show the actual "ocular proof", the handkerchief "spotted with strawberries" (*Othello*, 3.3.438), which, supposedly, Cassio used to wipe his beard with. Next, ensue only Othello's *commissives* in

the form of accusations and declarations of revenge, for example: "... my bloody thoughts with violent pace / Shall ne'er look back ... / Till that a capable and wide revenge / Swallow them up" (*Othello*, 3.3.460-463).

Othello is totally at the mercy of Iago's ambiguous *representatives*. His ensign's words always carry double meaning, which clashes with Othello's "verbal idealism" (Calderwood 1987: 301), his belief that all meaning, which is at the same time true meaning, is located in words. Iago, for example, plays on the meaning of the verb "to lie". He reports having heard that Cassio did "lie", but he does not specify in what sense, hence Othello's immediate inference and the question: "With her?" (*Othello*, 4.1.33). Iago, instead of putting matters straight goes on in the very same, ambiguous manner: "With her, on her, what you will" (*Othello*, 4.1.34). Iago strategically hints at "lie on" somebody, suggesting sexual intercourse, rather than "lie about" somebody, which means to belie the person³. The former meaning is then suggested to Othello, who, once again, turns fiction into reality. He, now, understands "believe" as "have sex with", and he comments on Desdemona's behaviour: "that's fulsome [obscene]" (*Othello*, 4.1.36). Iago's linguistic behaviour throughout the temptation scene and after is based on insincerity and ambiguity. Thanks to his pretended subordination to his hearer and the seeming non-concern about the information that he conveys, he is able to hide his power over Othello, and in this way "prolong his improvisation" (Greenblatt 1980: 69). Iago's strategy in speech was labelled as a "macro-speech act" (Van Dijk 1977: 238), composed of a series of individual *illocutions* which can be interpreted as "a single overall act" aimed at accusing Desdemona. As a result, his linguistic victim is devoid of any right to defend herself before her husband in the final act of the play – Othello remains insensitive to her words and he literally stops her voice: "Peace, and be still!" (*Othello*, 5.2.46).

3. Conspiracy theory, word play and context

The question of jealousy in *The Winter's Tale* concerns the figure of Leontes, the King of Sicilia, who falsely accuses his wife of having a sexual affair with his friend Polixenes, the King of Bohemia. Leontes is, however, unlike Othello in the sense that his jealousy is automatic and "unmotivated" (Goddard 1960: 264). Leontes, in fact, is his own Iago. He does not need a motivating force, an instigator for revenge, because he manages to persuade himself to believe in things he imagines. As Harold C. Goddard (1960: 264) rightly notes, his change of heart is instantaneous and stems from a very trivial matter: his childhood friend Polixenes refuses to prolong his stay in Sicilia at Leontes' request, but he easily changes his mind when Hermione begs him to stay. Leontes falls

³ The meanings of the verb "to lie" according to the *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*: I. have sexual intercourse *with*, III. make an intentionally false statement, tell a lie or lies (to a person) (*OED*, 1594).

prey to “insane” jealousy to such a dramatic extent that he suspects that his son Mamillius is not his offspring, and the child Hermione carries in her bosom he calls a “bastard” (*The Winter’s Tale*, 3.2.83). It is very interesting to observe how Leontes’ fantasies are projected as the truth in his mind when he sees Hermione and Polixenes talking. In an aside he shares his view with the audience: “How she holds up the neb, the bill to him! / And arms her with the boldness of a wife / To her allowing husband!” (*The Winter’s Tale*, 1.2.182-184). Leontes hints at their intimacy and suggests that his wife holds up her mouth as if she craved a kiss, thus indicating her sexual looseness with Polixenes.

Leontes has developed his own conspiracy theory about Hermione and Polixenes, the theory about his wife’s unfaithfulness. It is quite evident throughout the first two acts that the way he hears and interprets things must suit his theory and always confirm it. He dwells on the ambiguity of words and implicates a second meaning to the words that he hears. Such is his strategy when speaking with his lord Camillo – he is surprised to learn that Polixenes decides to prolong his visit to Sicilia, and his amazement is even greater when Camillo explains why: “To satisfy your highness, and the entreaties / Of our most gracious mistress” (*The Winter’s Tale*, 1.2.231-232). Leontes starts repeating the word “satisfy” and places it in a different context: “Satisfy? Th’ entreaties of your mistress? / Satisfy? Let that suffice” (*The Winter’s Tale*, 1.2.234-235). Eliane Cuvelier (1983: 42) believes that Leontes’ words have a “double implication” which he himself cannot perceive, and which contributes to building dramatic irony in this play. This is one possibility. Another way of explicating Leontes’ jealousy is by assuming his *purposeful* acts of doubt, since, according to his theory, doubt is an exponent of truth and so “all is true that is mistrusted” (*The Winter’s Tale*, 2.1.48). From his monologues we can learn how keen Leontes is on seeing what he wants to see. Further on in Act 1 he actually turns himself into a Iago, persuading Camillo that his fantasies are, in fact, real. He begins by: “Ha’ not you seen, Camillo?” (*The Winter’s Tale*, 1.2.267) and then continues with his story:

Leontes: Is whispering nothing?
 Is leaning cheek to cheek? is meeting noses?
 Kissing with inside lip? stopping the career
 of laughter with a sigh (a note infallible
 of breaking honesty)? ...
 Skulking in corners? Wishing clocks more swift?
 ... is this nothing? Why then the world,
 And all that’s in’t, is nothing, ... (*The Winter’s Tale*, 1.2.284-293)

Both Othello’s and Leontes’ jealousy is based on story-telling – the key difference between them is that Othello believes in the false narrative improvised by Iago, and Leontes makes his own story based on conjecture and the false narrative he imposes on others, for example on Camillo. What follows is that Leontes orders Camillo to kill Polixenes for “touch[ing] his queen forbiddenly”

(*The Winter's Tale*, 1.2.416). Hermione herself is publicly accused of adultery and sent to prison.

3.1. Leontes' face and royal status

Leontes is preoccupied with his positive public image, he wants to “keep face” at all cost. The pragmatic and sociological notion of face greatly helps characterize this figure. The concept of face was coined by Erving Goffman in his sociological study *Interaction Ritual*, in which face referred to the “image of self” (Goffman 2005: 5). Next, the concept of face was transferred into the realm of linguistics by Penelope Brown and Steven Levinson (1987: 61), who defined face as “the public self-image that every member wants to claim for himself”. Face is something that is “emotionally invested” – we are afraid of being embarrassed or humiliated (this is when we “lose face”), and we focus on “keeping face” in social interactions, because we assume and expect our interlocutors' cooperation in conversation (Brown and Levinson 1987: 61). Leontes is afraid of “losing face” in public, because the loss of face, understood to be a social value and norm, is connected with the loss of reputation, social prestige and respect (Kopytko 1993: 32).⁴ I can see that, first, the King is very concerned about his positive face, whose values are built upon suspicions and conjectures. While addressing Hermione at the trial, he emphasizes his honesty and integrity: “How blest am I / In my just censure! In my true opinion!” (*The Winter's Tale*, 2.1.37-38). Secondly, the king dreads being called a tyrant: “Out of the chamber with her! Were I a tyrant, / Where were her life?” (*The Winter's Tale*, 2.3.121). His decision to consult the Oracle about Hermione's guilt is not at all the effect of his remorse or the need to learn the truth. Leontes' main motivation behind it is rather to confirm his righteousness, as we can read in the play: “Yet, for a greater confirmation ... I have dispatch'd in post / To sacred Delphos, to Apollo's temple” (*The Winter's Tale*, 2.1.180, 182-183). He wants to remain unblemished in the public's opinion. Therefore, when Apollo's judgment is pronounced, he cannot believe that he is to blame and he ignores the prophesy: “There is no truth at all in th' Oracle: / The sessions shall proceed: this is mere falsehood” (*The Winter's Tale*, 3.2.140-141). In fact, it is sheer coincidence (Apollo's judgment and Mamillius' death) that convinces Leontes of his error of judgment (Goddard 1960: 266). This is when he will admit: “I have too much believ'd my own suspicion” (*The Winter's Tale*, 3.2.151).

⁴ Brown and Levinson's face can be divided into *positive face* and *negative face*. *Positive face* is “the positive consistent self-image [of oneself] ... [and] the desire that this self-image be appreciated and approved of”. The *negative face* is “the basic claim to territories, personal preserves, rights to non-distraction”, or in other words it is “freedom of action and freedom from imposition”. Face can also be defined as two kinds of desires or face wants, such as the desire to be unimpeded in one's actions (*negative face*) and the desire to be approved of by others (*positive face*), see Brown and Levinson (1987: 61-62).

4. Conclusions

“Seeing and hearing is believing” in a literary context of *Othello* and *The Winter’s Tale*. Jealousy in both plays is caused by the protagonists’ confusing fiction with reality – Othello and Leontes weave their false stories relying on the distortion and misrecognition of truth. In the case of Othello the fiction is created and imposed on him by his ensign Iago, while for Leontes the story is self-made and is an effect of his obsession. Jealousy can also be represented through metaphor KNOWING IS SEEING and UNDERSTANDING IS SEEING, where the interlocutor understands and experiences one kind of thing in terms of another, and where a certain visible object is turned into an intelligible idea in the mind of the interlocutor (Lakoff and Johnson 2003: 6). Iago often reframes his utterances about Desdemona, the pragmatic effect being that the perceptual experience of seeing (and hearing) is indicative of Othello’s mental operations of understanding and knowing. For example, simple objects such as the handkerchief become the sign of betrayal for Othello, or Iago’s false account of Cassio’s dream is pictured and translated in Othello’s mind as a proof of Desdemona’s adultery. Similarly, Leontes judges Hermione’s “whispering”, “leaning cheek to cheek” or “laughing” with Polixenes to be proofs of her disloyalty in marriage.

The pragmatic analysis of jealousy shows that as a mental concept jealousy can be discussed in terms of *speech act theory* and *felicity conditions*, as it heavily relies on *illocutionary acts* with a strong performative effect. Othello is led to believe in his wife’s unfaithfulness simply because he is unable to recognize the lack of sincerity in his interlocutor’s warnings, pieces of advice or assertions. Moreover, jealousy can be conceived through a skilful manipulation of the topics introduced in the conversation by the speaker: it can be observed that Iago’s topics in his conversation are solely concerned with Desdemona. What fosters the development of jealousy in the plays is the fact that speakers play upon the meaning of words and present them in new contexts; it can also be seen that repetitions of words or phrases may strip them of their literal meaning, which allows for ambiguous interpretation. The notion of face as “the positive self image” is part of Leontes’s and Othello’s social self. The willingness to preserve *positive face* in the public eye hinders Leontes from trusting the judgment of Apollo, which eventually leads to Mamillius’s death and bereaves him of Hermione and his daughter Perdita for sixteen years. Othello’s *positive face* is also at stake when he hears the stories about his wife’s betrayal – in Othello’s view Desdemona, violating their marriage bed, also violates his good name as a husband and a soldier by showing him disrespect. This, actually, might be the explanation for Othello’s cruelty towards Desdemona in the final act of the tragedy.

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