

Soliciting Audience's Ovation: The Antagonist's Artifices and Acting Ingenuity in Shakespeare's *Othello*

Mohammad Wajih J. Alyo*

Department of English Language and Literature, College of Arts, King Saud University, PO box: 2456, Riyadh 11451, Saudi Arabia

Corresponding Author: Mohammad Wajih J. Alyo, E-mail: malyo@ksu.edu.sa

ARTICLE INFO

Article history

Received: January 12, 2020

Accepted: March 18, 2020

Published: March 31, 2020

Volume: 9 Issue: 2

Advance access: March 2020

Conflicts of interest: None

Funding: None

ABSTRACT

Rarely does Shakespeare assign the antagonists in his plays such dominant and pivotal roles as he does in *Othello*. Seldom, either, does a Shakespearean character exhibit such an obsession with playacting and theatricals as Iago does. The paper at hand explores the consequences of Shakespeare's unusual decision to tip the traditional balance between protagonist and antagonist in favour of the latter in this great tragedy. The paper argues that *Othello* is more a play about the splendour of playacting and the charm of actors than it is about evil and evil-doing. Arguably devised as suffering from 'histrionic and narcissistic personality disorders,' Iago is self-urged, by his latent desire for attention and approval, to parade his histrionic flairs and procure audience's admiration and commendation. The paper, therefore, assesses the acting and theatrical potentials that Shakespeare invested in the character of Iago, with special attention given to the queer antagonist-audience rapport in the play. The paper concludes that the character of the antagonist is the central attraction in *Othello* and a major factor in its popular reception. Shakespeare makes Iago 'the acting dramatist,' who combines the roles of playwright, actor, stage-manager, and director, to extol the acting profession and emphasise the power of great actors in his day. The paper invites readers of *Othello* to view Iago not merely as a malefactor but also as a deft actor.

Key words: Acting, audience, Cinthio, Histrionic, Iago, *Othello*, Performance, Soliloquies

INTRODUCTION

Few characters in Shakespearean tragedy afford as much scope for the display of their imposing theatrical potentials and for their abilities to engage and entertain audiences, on both stage and the page, as the antagonist in *Othello* does. Most of Shakespeare's dramatic characters indeed tend to associate themselves with acting and theatrical activities and to consider themselves performing their preordained roles on the fictional stage of life. Jacques of *As You Like It*, as one example, famously opines "All the world's a stage / And all the men and women merely players (II.7.139-140). Likewise, Antonio, the merchant of Venice, deems the world "A stage where every man must play a part" (I.1.78). Hamlet, impressively acquainted with acting and actors since the famous Roman actor Roscius, whom he cites when Polonius announces the arrival of the players to court (II.2.370 ff.), purposely puts on "an antic disposition" (I.5.172) and assumes the role of a mad man - a role he masters and enjoys acting until the play comes to its conclusion. However, few of Shakespearean stage characters display the manic obsession with actual theatricals and performance or acquire the versatile acting aptitudes that the flamboyant antagonist in *Othello* does. Throughout this tragedy, Iago is the architect of all the intensely dramatic intrigues, often playing the

central role of the witty, droll rogue. He manipulates almost all the characters, improvises scenarios, contrives playlets, stage-manages scenes, or prompts those characters to act as he dictates. Revealingly, after every scene he creates to manipulate his victims into playing self-disgracing roles, Iago turns to the forestage and engages gleefully with the audience. Like any fervent actor, Iago craves after an attentive and appreciative audience who would esteem his exquisite performance, admire his histrionic talents, and give credit to his virtuosity. One of the intriguing questions in *Othello* is the reason behind Iago's obsession with acting, and, even more, with courting the audience's attention and acclaim.

Role-playing, as a form of deception, is something of which Iago is a master. Acting is an artistic and creative activity that encompasses both inborn talent and training-acquired experience. As an innate talent, stage acting combines a wide variety of skills, including charisma and articulation, intelligence and vivid imagination, confidence and passion control, energy and commitment, as well as understanding human personalities and modes of behaviour (AMP Talent Group, 2016). The unique and complex role of the antagonist in *Othello* incorporates all such potential traits and thus makes great demands on a gifted actor that can live up to such a versatile and vibrant role and demonstrate his acting skills. When Shakespeare usually devised principal and

challenging roles in his plays, he had in mind particularly deft actors in the King's Men to play such roles. It is natural, then, for Shakespeare to think so prudently about which of his fellow actors would play that role in the debut of *Othello*. It must be stressed, however, that Iago is not to be regarded as an actor *per se*, that is, as a professional, whose aim is merely to entertain or instruct people through the mimetic quality of dramatic art. The antagonist's real motive to 'act' in the unreal world of *Othello* is 'deceit' or 'hypocrisy.' Indeed, the Greek word "ὑπόκρισις" (*hypokrisis*) has, among its various denotations, "deceit, dissimulation, hypocrisy," as well as "playacting" (Blue Letter Bible). In addition, in psychological terms, Iago may represent a category of people who suffer from one or another of a group of personality illnesses, known as Cluster B personality disorders. Individuals of such category, which includes 'anti-social,' 'borderline,' 'histrionic,' and 'narcissistic' personality disorders, "are characterized by dramatic, overly emotional or unpredictable thinking or behaviour" (Mayo Clinic.org).

The antagonist in *Othello* is expressly a multifaceted and versatile dramatic *persona*. Shakespeare, in his portrayal of this principal character, highlights the two most prominent aspects of his personality. The first is his enigmatic malevolence and motives for revenge - which arguably proves a false motivation. The second is his virtuosity as a real-life actor, which arguably proves one of the central issues posed in the play. The former aspect of Iago has long intrigued the readers and critics of the play; the latter aspect has always entertained audiences, heightened their pleasurable suspense, and added a unique touch of black comedy and sarcasm to the play. However, scholarship on this dominant character in *Othello* has concerned itself more with identifying Iago's secretive motives than with analysing the possible forces that drive Iago to be obsessed with acting and dissimulation. The present paper, therefore, will endeavour to address this intriguing duality and attempt to explicate the peculiar link between Iago's alleged "honesty," on the one hand, and the infamous plans he contrives and his great inclination towards acting, on the other. It will also seek to explain the psychological factors that motivate the antagonist in *Othello* to turn the world he inhabits into a stage on which he designs roles for his puppet-victims and controls them into making their dullness throw his superior wit into sharp relief. The central aim of the paper will be to explore the intricacies of Iago's role and its effect on the reputation the play enjoys among the Shakespeare canon.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Despite the topic's centrality in *Othello*, Iago's theatrical aptitudes and acting exploits have received sporadic critical attention. A host of scholars have briefly underscored the character's skill as a unique stage performer. According to W. Hazlitt (1817), (as cited by Bratchell, 1990, p. 107), Iago is a skilled "amateur of tragedy," who enjoys enacting his dramas in real life and on real characters, "cast[ing] the principal parts among his nearest friends and connexions, and rehears[ing] it in downright earnest, with steady nerves and unabated resolution". Besides, in his illuminating analysis

of Shakespearean tragedy, A. C. Bradley (1905) sees Iago as "an artist [whose] action is a plot, the intricate plot of a drama, and in the conception and execution of it he experiences the tension and the joy of artistic creation" (p. 88). Further, in his introduction to the Longman edition of *Othello*, G. Salgado (1976) esteems Iago as both a "superb actor" and "skilled director of little plays." His "fascinating" character, adds Salgado, compels audiences to admire his histrionic talents, despite his gross villainy (p. xxxv).

In his book, *Shakespeare's Dramatic Structures*, A. Brennan (1986) dedicates a separate chapter titled "Iago, the strategist of separation," in which he emphasizes the unique role the antagonist plays in this Shakespearean tragedy. Brennan sees Iago not only as a deft actor, a creative scenario-writer, and a gifted director, but also as a wily tactician: "The degree of control he maintains over the characters allows him to induce a psychological alienation and separation between some of them. This produces a physical separation which is registered by the finely judged proportions in the character interactions" (p. 143). Besides, in a study of a number of Shakespearean characters as actors, T. Curtright (2017) devotes one chapter on "Iago's Acting Style" to demonstrate "how rhetorical and natural acting styles occasionally overlap in their recommendation of characterological traits" (p. 7). Further, J. H. Astington (2010), in his informative book on actors and the acting style in Shakespeare's time, makes a few, but illuminating references to Iago's role in Shakespeare's tragedy.

However, the topic of Iago's thespian qualities and their effect on the popularity of Shakespeare's tragedy has not been researched as sufficiently as that of Iago's motives has. Critics refer to Iago's predilection to, and mastery in, role-playing briefly and insufficiently. They do not address, for example, the real motives that make Iago exult in playing roles. Iago is a character that has not arguably received the scholarly attention it merits, especially as an archetype of accomplished actors whose brilliance contributes directly to the great audience reception of stage performance like that of *Othello*.

DISCUSSION

Cinthio's Ensign vs. Shakespeare's Iago

A close review of Shakespeare's source story for *Othello*, the Italian *novella* 'Un Capitano Moro,' in Giovanni Giraldi Cinthio's *Gli Hecathomithi*, reveals that the credit for Shakespeare's creativity lies mainly in his modification of the pedestrian character of the antagonist in the original story. In the source tale, Cinthio refers to the nameless antagonist simply as an 'Ensign,' a person "of fine presence, but with the wickedest nature of any man alive" (Ridley, 1965, p. 239).¹ Throughout the tale, Cinthio underscores the Ensign's villainy and dissimulation, repeatedly referring to him as a "dastardly," "deceitful," and "wicked," "scoundrel," whose "wicked mind" is never short of "evil." Notably, Cinthio focuses in his tale on the Ensign's evil "thought" to tempt Disdemona (Cinthio's spelling) and, later on, to draw his plans to destroy the Moor, the Corporal (i.e., Cassio), and

Disdemona. The Ensign's inherent "wickedness" is repeatedly emphasized throughout the tale. Besides, the antithesis between the Ensign's good looks and his moral ugliness is also stressed in Cinthio: "[The Ensign] hid with *fine, proud words*, and his presence, the *wickedness* that was in his heart and displayed outwardly the bearing of a Hector or an Achilles" (Ridley, 1965, p. 329; emphasis added). Cinthio's association of the Ensign with the two mythological figures is also revealing. Significantly, Hector was the Trojan prince and the greatest fighter for Troy, and Achilles was the Greek hero known to have lived for some time disguised as a maiden to avoid being disturbed while he was with his love (Freeburg, 1915). Both legendary figures fought valiantly in the Trojan War and, hence, both can be taken as examples of people who had great pride and highly valued their self-esteem; moreover, Achilles was a master of dissimulation. It is little surprise, then, that Shakespeare did not miss Cinthio's vital indications to the Ensign as an arrogant and egoistic person who also had a knack to disguise his true self under a semblance of 'honesty' and false friendliness.

Shakespeare expertly transformed the Ensign in Cinthio's prose tale from a merely traditional, functional antagonist into a unique almost-hero-villain. The dramatist adeptly gave the antagonist the name 'Iago,' to underscore his 'Egoism,' and endowed him with exceptional qualities, traditionally reserved for hero-protagonists. Consequently, Shakespeare's Ancient is a person of highly effective rhetorical, intellectual and analytical aptitudes harbouring unique wit and will power, as well as an exclusive sense of humour and an engaging type of imagination. Besides those qualities, Shakespeare instilled into the antagonist's exclusive personality an obsessive desire to perform roles on the stage of daily life and endowed him with the exquisite gifts of an accomplished actor. This makes the antagonist play an extraordinarily substantial role in *Othello*.

Centrality of the Antagonist's Role in *Othello*

Iago dominates the action in *Othello* like a colossus. The lavish theatrical privileges Shakespeare grants him are evidence of the dramatist's intent to make him play a role that exceeds that of a conventional antagonist. Indeed, Iago's role vies with and, arguably, surpasses that of the protagonist. He is assigned one thousand and thirty-two lines that make up two hundred and seventy-two speeches, compared with Othello's eight hundred and eleven lines that make up two hundred and seventy-four speeches (Wills, 2011). Besides, Iago remarkably dominates the soliloquies, which are traditionally a privilege granted to the play's protagonist. Further, out of the nearly twelve soliloquies and asides, the antagonist seizes nine (totalling a hundred and forty-four lines), leaving only two for the eponymous character and one for Emilia. This unusual, and seemingly unbalanced, distribution of lines between protagonist and antagonist in this great tragedy has bemused readers and critics alike. As R. Raatzsch, among other scholars, (2009) has justifiably suggested, "Perhaps the play should have been called *Iago* rather than *Othello*. After all, it is probably Iago who leaves the sharpest, strongest, most lasting impression of all the characters"

(p. 3). Shakespeare introduces his exclusive antagonist as the dynamo that sets off the conflict, and who generates, shapes and sustains the action. Iago's ingenious plans against his victims develop the plot, give force to the dialogue, keep the reader and spectator alike in constant bewilderment and anticipation, and make the whole action tantalizing, interesting and memorable.

Possessed by Revenge or Obsessed with Acting

The issue of Iago's evil motives, on the one hand, and his great predilection towards acting, on the other, are inseparably intertwined in the play. There is a common critical tendency to view Iago as a villain motivated by a resolute urge to seek revenge for some harm done him by prejudiced individuals. Iago, it must be noted, is different from his other 'evil' counterparts populating Shakespearean plays in that his malevolence does not spring from a clear source, as his declared grudges are not compatible with his wicked deeds against his victims. In a recent study on Iago's motives (Alyo, 2019), I have argued that the antagonist's behaviour in *Othello* reveals salient symptoms of two related, Cluster-B personality disorders, Histrionic and Narcissistic Personality disorders (HPD & NPD). In the play, Iago has a fragile self-esteem, which he feels Othello unduly slighted because the latter discounted him for promotion in favour of the less-deserving Cassio. Histrionic and Narcissistic personality disordered individuals are attention-seekers and crave for outside approval. They would do anything and resort to any type of behaviour, no matter how risky, to be the centre of attention. Histrionic individuals are dramatic, often referred to as "drama kings." The present argument, therefore, will draw on this suggestion that Iago is an HPD individual, as a prologue to demonstrating how Iago's obsession with acting and theatrical practices is perhaps employed by his designer to make him one of the most artistically sketched stage characters. Shakespeare, it can be argued, does not introduce his antagonist as the utterly 'evil' character he is commonly deemed. The playwright's ingenious purpose was perhaps to create an unorthodox antagonist, a versatile, witty, super-subtle, and charismatic real-life actor, who would make the play a great 'box office' in the short run, and popularize drama and stagecraft in the Globe theatre in the long run. Iago's masterful handling of action, characters, and situations perhaps presents him as 'the acting playwright,' who, on behalf of Shakespeare, extols the professions of playwriting and acting.

If Iago is truly modelled as an HPD and NPD sufferer, as I have recently proposed, then the deft actor and dramatist, Shakespeare, made two *coups de maître* in the portrayal of Othello's Ancient. First, the character is psychologically intricate, and has engaged and puzzled generations of readers and theatregoers, who were keen to find out his real motives. Second, Shakespeare was able to create in Iago one of his best theatre-inclined and most virtuoso theatrical role-players. The first move (i.e., Iago being an HPD person) would naturally lead to and justify the second (i.e., Iago being obsessed with acting). Histrionic personality disordered individuals "have an overwhelming desire to be

noticed, and often behave dramatically or inappropriately to get attention” (WebMd.com). They tend to “[a]ct very dramatically—as though performing before an audience—with exaggerated emotions and expressions, yet appear to lack sincerity” (Cleveland Clinic.org).

The process of Iago’s transformation from a malcontent seeking revenge into an amateur performer seeking attention and commendation must be, albeit briefly, explained. Having been snubbed in the issue of the lieutenantcy, Iago finds himself losing the attention and the approval he innately and, though unconsciously, obsessively desires. In his diagnosis and suggested treatment of Cluster ‘B’ personality disorder patients, D. J. Fox (2015) illuminates the development of the personality of a histrionic through *three* phases in ‘the histrionic spectrum’: ‘Mild and Moody,’ ‘Moderate and Theatrical,’ and ‘Severe and Disordered (HPD).’ Fox remarks that the histrionic of the first phase “tends to be friendly and generally social, emotionally expressive, and socially gregarious, with a twinge of suspiciousness, superficiality, and lacking in substance” (p. 100). During the first phase, adds Fox, when an HPD person reports issues and incidents to his acquaintances, he /she sounds fake as if they were lying “due to the lack of information or substance included.” If the individual’s environment does not change this behaviour, the histrionic individual, then, “moves further along the continuum to more moderate and theatrical beliefs and behaviours” and “begins to persistently seek the attention of others as a source of validation of self” (p. 100). In the last phase, the individual, due to the lack of sense of self, “develops a level of shallowness and flightiness [... and] tends to be seen as annoying, which causes the withdrawal of others or in some cases, complete and social rejection” (p. 100). As a result, the individual’s response is excessively intense and they seek to make up for that rejection with some kind of attention to repair their self-esteem.

The first phase Fox refers to perhaps applies to Iago’s personality in the antecedent action of the play; this could help to explain how ‘honest’ and friendly Iago truly was before the issue of the promotion came up. This may also explain why none of the other characters in the play had suspected Iago of deception and double-dealing: the Iago of the past was arguably a genuinely ‘honest’ person compared with the malevolent malcontent of the play, as Othello’s underrating his ‘worth’ sparked the potential evil in him. This casts much doubt on the prevalent views that consider Iago intrinsically or decidedly evil. Perhaps an attempt to look at this topic from a different perspective seems crucial at this point. To consider what crimes Iago plots, or threatens to execute, against his victims, one needs to look at his speeches in general, but particularly at his utterances when he is arguably the most honest –i.e., his exchanges with Roderigo and his revealing soliloquies. First, Iago’s allusion to Janus (I.2.32)², generally taken as evidence of Iago’s duplicity and deception, could be explained in terms of Iago’s reference to the two identities he assumes, “I am not what I am” (I.1.62). As Iago is not happy with the true ‘honest’ self of the past, he decides to use the other ‘fake’ self which he believes will help him with advancement in a

prejudiced environment, where “Preferment goes by letter and affection,” (I.1.34), as he remarks to Roderigo. He also feels bitter and is hence cynical about his ‘honesty’: “O monstrous world! Take note, O world, /To be direct and honest is not safe” (III.3.375-76).

The dramatic ‘problem’ in *Othello* – Iago’s loss of promotion – triggers the action and awakens the otherwise dormant personality disorder symptoms of which Iago is essentially unaware. Feeling disparaged by his superior, Iago sets out to exact revenge against Othello by punishing him *mentally* rather than *physically*. Not knowing exactly why he is acting the way he is, Iago is immersed in a passion, inexplicable to him, to create little plays in which he amuses himself by torturing his close acquaintances. His major, but hidden, motivation is his urgent need for attention and approval. Iago is not a ‘psychopath’ in the strict sense. Psychopaths are glib and only superficially charming, whereas Iago is genuinely charming, charismatic, and endowed with exceptional oratorical talents. Psychopaths may also be serial killers. Iago, conversely, does not initially intend to have any of his victims killed, except Desdemona, and that is only as a necessary step towards destroying Othello, his major offender. As for the murder of Roderigo and the attempted one of Cassio, both are sudden necessities for Iago to hide his evil plots (“Now whether he kill Cassio ...” [V.1.12-22]). It is tempting, therefore, to defend Iago against the stigma attached to him of being inherently evil. The word ‘honest,’ employed over fifty times in the play, cannot be readily brushed aside as a kind of misunderstanding of Iago by all the *personae* of the play; ‘honesty’ was perhaps the true nature of Iago before the ‘problem’ of the promotion set off the conflict in the play. Drama is essentially about how people change and develop due to certain forces and under certain conditions. This is true of tragic heroes and main characters; in *Othello*, it seems to be one of Shakespeare’s intended objectives. Bradley (1905) convincingly suggests, “Iago, though thoroughly selfish and unfeeling, was not by nature malignant nor even morose.” On the contrary, adds Bradley, Iago had “the kind of good-nature that wins popularity and is often taken as the sign, not of a good digestion, but of a good heart” (p. 177). It is not against common sense to agree with Bradley’s view that Iago perhaps neither committed nor contemplated a crime in his life prior to the beginning of the dramatic action; nor is it unusual to agree with Bradley that “the tragedy of *Othello* is [...] [Iago’s] tragedy too” (p. 178).

Not only does Iago’s behaviour reflect symptoms of Histrionic Personality Disorder; he also displays clear symptoms of the related Narcissistic Personality Disorder. The Mayo Clinic research group gives the following definition of the disorder, which may diagnose Iago’s ‘problem’ and help to pinpoint his ‘motives:

Narcissistic Personality Disorder is a mental disorder in which people have an inflated sense of their own importance and a deep need for admiration. Those with narcissistic personality disorder believe that they are superior to others and have little regard for other people’s feelings. But behind this mask of ultra-confidence lies a

fragile self-esteem, vulnerable to the slightest criticism. (MayoClinic.org)

Pathological narcissists tend to boast about themselves in a grandiose and exaggerated manner. They aim to boost their ego, not as much by positively asserting themselves as by negatively letting others feel inferior to them. (Psychology Today). Further, their rhetoric is employed to make others look up to them and elevate them so their self-esteem is boosted.

The assumption that Iago is an HPD /NPD person may explain most of his puzzling sly behaviours and clarify the confusion surrounding his motives. The quest to explicate problematic issues and to psychoanalyse intricate characters may well be an engaging task for modern scholarship, but for Shakespeare's original audience, mainly the 'groundlings,' the focus was certainly different. In his book, *Shakespeare's Imagined Persons* (1996), P. B. Murray maintains that he holds the view it "is not that Shakespeare designed his characters to be subjected to psychological analysis, but that the intelligibility of their psychology was implicitly important to him as part of the basis for the audience's responses to his plays" (p. 1). He adds, "My analysis is thus intended to help us respond to the plays, not to make psychology appear to be the subject of the plays for its own sake" (p. 1). Arguably, uppermost in Shakespeare's and his contemporary playwrights' minds was the urgency to produce popular plays that would draw more spectators to the competing theatres of the time. Shakespeare, professional actor, playwright of the King's Men, and entrepreneur and shareholder of the prestigious Globe Theatre, must have essentially thought practically and commercially about the playwriting business. By the time *Othello* was written, as Bloom (2010) observes, "the theatre was burgeoning in London; the public took an avid interest in drama, the audiences were large, the plays demonstrated an enormous range of subjects, and playwrights competed for approval" (p. 2). Shakespeare, as G. Taylor points out, "was writing not only for himself but for a particular acting company, and against their chief commercial rivals" and adds, "In writing plays Shakespeare was deeply invested, emotionally and financially, in the success of that company." (Wells and Stanton, 2002, p.2). It must be pointed out that the theatre in England in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was not as sophisticated, or as highly regarded, as the theatre in the present day is. Theatre companies, doing their very best to survive in a highly competitive commercial environment, had to attract audiences, not only from rival theatre companies but also from other venues of entertainment, such as cockfighting pits, bearbaiting arenas, brothels, and taverns (Charleston Stage.com). Rivalry, especially between the two major theatres on the Bankside, the Lord Chamberlain's Men (later King's Men) and the Admiral's Men necessitated that theatre companies looked seriously for plays that proved to be successes in order to run for a few performances. Moreover, Elizabethan and Jacobean theatregoers went to "hear a play" rather than "to see a play." Therefore, Renaissance playwrights focused more on language and acting than on scenic devices, as theatre props were minimal (Charleston Stage.com).

Critical interpretation and psychoanalysis of Shakespearean drama, then, may well be a privilege for the learned scholars and sophisticated readers of the highly advanced modern time. For the average Elizabethan playgoer, however, theatregoing was determined by the criteria of how much fun and entertainment a theatrical performance could yield via its colourful plot, vivacious action, and accomplished actors. Shakespeare's *Othello* was no exception to those rules. Of the first performance of *Othello*, M. Rosenberg (1992) remarks, "The time was ripe for the play when it was first performed in 1604. Not by accident was it a leading tragedy [...] of the early 1600s" (p. 1). He adds,

[S]ince a company like Shakespeare's had often to provide entertainment that could please the court as well as the playgoing public – which was itself growing more sophisticated – the Globe's hit too would include beside its sunnier plays, sharp satires, cynical treatment of sexuality, and dark tragedy. (p. 2)

"A Well-graced Actor"³ for a Great Role

Shakespeare makes the role of antagonist so complex and multidimensional that it demands much more than a mere competent actor to bring out its hidden complexities and embody its subtleties on stage faithfully and expertly. One of the inherent intricacies of the role is that it combines components of both tragedy and comedy. The Iago-actor would have to represent a serious personality that is also cynical and comical. The role also demands an actor who could inhabit the performance space confidently and move within it with great buoyancy and agility, especially when it comes to soliloquising before an audience. The Iago-actor would also be a master of physical dexterity; he should be able to dance and sing. Twice does Iago try his voice and singing talent in Act II, scene 3 ("And let me the canakin clink, clink" [ll. 60 ff.] and "King Stephen was and a worthy peer" [ll. 88 ff.]). He should also be able to make an illustrative use of gestures, to manipulate his limbs, hands and his eyes and control his facial muscles and vocal cords.

When Shakespeare was in the process of writing *Othello*, he must have conceived the role of Iago for one of the most accomplished players in the King's Men. As G. Wills (2011) remarks, in Elizabethan drama characters' roles were fitted to the players, not the other way around. Shakespeare must have thought of a good name to have the privilege of playing the challenging role of Iago. Great actors of the King's Men, like Richard Burbage, William Kemp, Robert Armin, Joseph Taylor and John Lowin were great star names that attracted theatregoers to watch a play. Details of the first performance of *Othello* by the King's Men in 1604 are scanty. Though it is almost certain that the super actor Richard Burbage was the first to play the Moor (cited by Grote, 2002, p. 134), it is not clear who played Iago in the initial performance. It is commonly presumed it must have been one of the comic actors. Critics like L. Hotson (1952) and G. Schmidgall (1990), presume that the gifted comic actor of the King's Men Robert Armin (c. 1563–1615) was chosen for the role. David Grote (2002), in contrast, names the actor Augustine Phillips (date of birth unknown- died May 1605), as the possible actor

whom Shakespeare had in mind to play the role of Iago, but Phillips probably had retired before the play was completed (p. 18; p. 134). The accomplished actor of both tragic and comic roles Joseph Taylor is eliminated, as he was only eighteen when the play was first performed. He is known to have played the role in later years (Astington, p. 155).

The actor most likely to have played Iago in 1604 at the Globe is John Lowin (1576-1653?). He was a former member of the Earl of Worcester's Men and joined Shakespeare's company in 1603, the year when the great comedian of the company William Kemp died. (Grote, 2002, p.131). Lowin was an accomplished and versatile actor, and in 1603 he was, together with Shakespeare, in the cast of actors who performed in Jonson's *Sejanus*, in which Shakespeare is known to have played the role of Emperor Tiberius. In addition, Lowin "is known to have specialized in playing the roles of comic soldiers and downright villains" (Encyclopaedia Britannica). The detail that gives much weight in favour of Lowin as the possible actor who played Iago is his age of twenty-eight at the time the play was first performed. Age is a crucial detail here since Iago points out to Roderigo clearly that the former is "four times seven years" (I. iii. 307). "The fact that Iago specifies his age as 'four times seven years,'" presume the editors of *Shakespeare and Character* (Yachnin & Slights, 2009) "suggests that Shakespeare rejuvenated his character to fit the twenty-eight-year-old Lowin" (69). Lowin is also known to have played the titular role in Jonson's *Volpone* in 1606 (Astington, 2010, p. 155). The similarity between the role of Iago and that of Volpone makes it most likely that Lowin was the actor who played Iago in 1604. Another likely King's Men actor who fits Iago's age of twenty-eight is Henry Condell (1576-1627), a close friend of Shakespeare. Like Lowin, Condell was twenty-eight years old in 1604. He is also known to have played in *The Malcontent* (1604) and played Mosca, also a first-rate impersonator and artist-performer in Jonson's comedy (Astington, 220). Whoever it was, the actor who played Iago must have well absorbed the role, as was expected of star actors in the King's Men. He must have come closer towards understanding Iago's psychological make-up, aided by the maker of the character.

If Iago is truly modelled a histrionic, acting is the quintessence of his personality. The Ancient sets the plot of the play in action by revealing his theatrical nature to Roderigo in the opening scene. "I follow him to serve my turn upon him," he admits, referring to Othello (I.1.39). The antagonist utilizes acting as a kind of *metamorphosis* from reality, in which he is overlooked or undervalued, into a make-believe world, in which he is the centre of attention and admiration. Iago does not follow Othello, he asserts, "for love and duty / But seeming so," that is, as a kind of dissembling or acting a role (I.1.41; 59-60) Iago justifies to himself the adoption of another 'self' he is about to project to the world to serve his "peculiar end":

For when my outward action doth demonstrate
The native act, and figure of my heart,
In complement extern, 'tis not long after,
But I will wear my heart upon my sleeve,

For doves to peck at: *I am not what I am.* (I.1.58-62; emphasis added)

From the outset of the action, Iago confides his secret in both Roderigo and the audience; the former is too much in need of him to speak out, the latter are too judicious to shout out in the theatre. From both, Iago requires attention and approval but also complete silence. As the action develops, it becomes progressively evident that Iago is a drama artist who fiddles with potential adversaries as long as that grants him profit and joy and boosts his low self-esteem. He artfully tells Roderigo that their hatred of the Moor intersects; he prompts his 'dupe' to humiliate Othello: "If thou canst cuckold him, thou dost *thyself a pleasure*, and *me a sport*." (I.3.358-59; emphasis added). Minutes later, when alone on stage, Iago defines the real relationship that binds him to Roderigo as purely utilitarian: "For I mine own gained knowledge should profane, / If I would time expend with such a snipe, / But for my *sport* and *profit*" (370-371; emphasis added). Wit is Iago's prime force that gives him the upper hand in his dealings with those he considers his foes; "Thou know'st," he boasts to Roderigo, "we work by wit, and not by witchcraft" (II.3.350). Iago is self-aware and proud of his theatrical talents, and he does his best to impress his theatre audience with his acting brilliance: "And what's hen then that says I play the villain ..." (II.3.315) "Ay, that is the way!" (I.365) is certainly uttered with a wily smile on the face and a guileful tone in the voice as Iago concludes his lines, thinking of a wicked plot that, again, will prove Iago's exceptional wit and, consequently, his vanity and love for outside approval and acknowledgment.

Impressively, Iago succeeds in toying with his victims Roderigo, Cassio, and Othello as a ventriloquist's dummies, directing them to play the roles he has in mind for them. He introduces the first instance of his great histrionic talent at about sixty-five lines of Act I. He stages the opening scene in front of Brabantio's house to scandalise Desdemona's elopement with Othello and prompts Roderigo to play the inciter -- "Call up her father, / Rouse him, make after him, poison his delight ..." and "with like timorous accent and dire yell" to disturb his peace of mind (I.1.64-65; 72). Again, when he meets Othello in Act II, Scene 2, Iago devises a dramatic scene surrounding a blatant lie that someone has spoken insultingly about Othello and that he (Iago) did his best to maintain his patience not to attack the villain. The Ancient expresses himself in an exaggerated state with a high level of theatrics and self-dramatization in this and other interactions with other characters. By so doing, Iago succeeds in making himself the centre of attention, winning Othello's trust, an important step in the execution of the fiendish plot that will later hatch in Iago's mind. One such moment is Iago's great performance of the role of an honest friend when Othello asks him how the brawl started and who began it (II.3.130ff.). Not only is Iago brilliant at staging such an event into this desired climactic point; he is so proficient at manipulating his facial muscles and looking "dead with grieving" (l. 163) that Othello notices that, while the audience is certainly awestruck.

The dramatic action in *Othello* makes it almost clear that Iago's craving after the post of lieutenant is no more

than a metaphor for the assertion to his superiors (Othello and Cassio) of his importance in his domain; it would have drawn the attention he seeks and won him the acclamation that he obsessively desires. The reader/critic is tempted to believe that Iago is ultimately more interested in receiving the audiences' recognition of his acting talents than in having their empathy with him for not having gained the lieutenantcy. Acting, therefore, would place Iago back in the spotlight and prove to those around him that, in times of urgency, he is reliable and indispensable. According to Brennan (1986, p. 144), Iago manages to infiltrate and poison Othello's mind because the Ancient cleverly combines in himself two traditional roles popular on the Elizabethan stage. The first is the role of the 'honest' friend always available to help those who need him. The second is the 'rough diamond,' the blunt, cynical and critical figure who could freely express his honest, yet sharp comments on people and events unfavourable to him. In fact, Iago successfully employs those two roles, one may argue, in order to capture back his general's attention in the first place. Poisoning Othello's mind and ruining his marriage and, consequently, his entire life, is the ultimate ambition in Iago's endeavour, being the centre of attention in his own restricted circle and on stage; hence, the significance of the several soliloquies he is assigned and his obsession of extracting the audiences' ovation.

Iago's asides and soliloquies yield reasonable evidence that his alleged 'evil' against his adversaries is, at worst, either verbal or psychological and does not pose a bodily threat until late in the play when the Ancient is afraid of his schemes being uncovered. First, his 'game' with Brabantio at the outset of the action is aimed at "poison[ins] his delight" (I.1.65). Iago's bawdy language, with its characteristic vivid imagery, to Brabantio about Desdemona's elopement with the Moor embodies the wicked sense of humour of which the Ancient is very fond. Iago gleefully shouts, "Even now, now, very now, an old black ram / Is tupping your white ewe / [...] / Or else the devil will make a grandsire of you (I.1.85-86). He ignites Brabantio's passion with the metaphor of having his daughter "covered with a Barbary horse", and with that of having "coursers for cousins, and gennets for Germans" (I.1.107-110). In his first soliloquy (I.3.368-388), Iago states his hatred of Othello; his threat to take revenge turns out only "to abuse Othello's ears / That he [Cassio] is too familiar with his wife." (I.1. 380-381). Though he speaks of "double knavery," Iago's threat is only verbally dramatic and does entail physical harm. Again, when the idea of revenge recurs to him in (II.1.277-303), the worst that comes to his mind is to "put the Moor / At least into a jealousy so strong / That judgment cannot cure" (I.1. 291-293). As for Cassio, Iago will "Abuse him to the / Moor in the rank garb" (I.1. 297). What seems to satisfy Iago, in the end, is to "Make the Moor *thank* me, *love* me, and *reward* me / For making him egregiously an ass / And practicing upon his peace and quiet, / Even to madness." (I.1. 299-302; emphasis added). It is apparent that the notion of "sport and profit" is very dear to Iago and possesses his mind. When the Ancient finds the 'handkerchief,' Iago soliloquizes, threatening that he will deprive Othello of peaceful sleep (III. 3. 328-331).

The Ancient repeatedly demonstrates his mastery of stage-managing playlets within the play and impressively playing roles and manipulating his 'dupes' to play roles that undermine their stability. Iago's soliloquy in Act II, scene 1, after Roderigo has left, does not expose a soldier downcast over the loss of a post he covets. On the contrary, it reveals an HPD persona clearly obsessed with inventing scenarios that would grant him an opportunity of a performance that would simultaneously boost his own ego and procure for him both personal ecstasy and the audience's acclaim ("That Cassio loves her, I do well believe't ..." (II.1.276 ff.)) As the action progresses, Iago hardly misses a chance to emphasise his superior talents at staging little plays and playing roles that prove his unique intellect and keep him in the centre of attention.

Iago can also put his combined histrionic skills – the ability to improvise, chironomia, manipulation of voice, gestures, and facial expressions – all into their best effect in well-calculated steps when he makes up a story to the already suspicious Othello about Cassio allegedly speaking while asleep and revealing his burning desire for Desdemona. First, Iago improvises a scenario that seems to Othello apt and probable: "I lay with Cassio lately, / And being troubled with a raging tooth, / I could not sleep" (III.3.411-413). Next, he presents a general fact about humans: "There are a kind of men so loose of soul / That in their sleeps will mutter their affairs." (I.1. 414-415). Then, Iago goes to the specific: "One of this kind is Cassio" (I.1. 416). The climax of the story occurs with Iago graphically describing to his mesmerised victim the details of a vivid and sexually explicit engagement that allegedly joined Cassio with Desdemona in bed. The narration then turns into a full animated performance, the words into live bold images, and the skilled manipulation of voice pitch and chironomia serves to communicate the range of emotions he intends to convey to his rapt listener: "In sleep I heard him say, '*Sweet* Desdemona, / Let us be wary, let us hide our loves!" (I.1. 417-418). Finally, as an adept performer, Iago at this point would certainly bring his versatile voice into full use and employ all the vocal elements at his disposal, putting into full effect the techniques of word emphasis, intonation, and tone:

And then, sir, would he *gripe and wring my hand*,
Cry '*O sweet creature!*' Then kiss me hard,
As if he *plucked up kisses* by the roots
That grew upon my *lips*; laid his leg o'er my *thigh*,
And *sigh*, and *kiss*, and then cry, '*Cursèd fate*
That gave thee to the Moor!' (III.3.419-424; emphasis added)

That is one of the most critical moments in the play and demands accurate use of gestures and vocal qualities such as tone, pitch, resonance, articulation and intonation. The Iago-actor in the 1604 production (probably Lowin), as envisioned by his creator, obviously had excellent control and use of such qualities; the result is unmistakable on Othello – a shocking graphic incarnation of the most abominable thought for a jealous husband; of marital infidelity: "O monstrous! Monstrous!" (I. 424)

The playlet Iago stage-manages in Act 4, Scene 1 highlights again the Ancient's obsession with acting and drama

and his brilliance, not only as an actor but also as director and stage-manager. He masterfully manages space, positions the unwary players where they should be, and begins his performance that he directs to make Othello believe an illusion. The result on Othello is already secured since the Ancient has poisoned his General's mind and set it in the desired direction. In a low voice, Iago questions Cassio about Bianca, Cassio speaks loosely of her, and Othello is convinced that Desdemona is the subject of the conversation. This is a fine example of a play-within-the-play, about which the surrogate dramatist Iago can boast.

One of the greatest dramatic moments in *Othello* that both proves Iago as a virtuoso theatrical person and exposes his need for public attention and approval occurs in Act III. Having craftily succeeded in his deftly devised stratagem to disgrace Cassio and deprive him of the lieutenantcy, and having inveigled him into seeking Desdemona's help to win back Othello's favour, Iago now impishly and exultantly turns to the passive and spellbound audience, demanding they acknowledge his unique intellectual superiority and great acting skills:

And what's he then that says I play the villain,
When this advice is free I give, and honest,
Probal to thinking, and indeed the course
To win the Moor again? (II.3.315-18)

This is truly one of the most remarkably memorable moments in the action. Intoxicated with his virtuosity and versatility as a seemingly honest, rightly cunning trickster, Iago has received the attention, and, as an actor, even won the admiration, of a large audience. Iago employs this soliloquy, as he does with the others, to emphasise his *tour de force* and to boost his self-esteem, an ultimate gain the antagonist continuously and tirelessly seeks. This is also a great theatrical stroke, highly remarkable for the emphasis it puts on Iago's resolute compulsion to prove his intellectual advantage over his unsuspecting victims; if Othello fails to mark Iago's pre-eminence and does not acknowledge his merits, the audience certainly will. If the audience had come to the theatre to watch a good entertaining performance, Iago certainly provided them with that. The Ancient, therefore, in his implicit words, deserved to get credit for the uniquely brilliant performance he has given.

Iago's creative imagination and skilled manipulation of events and characters –though invested for evil ends– place the audience in the embarrassment zone. On the one hand, the audience finds themselves obliged to applaud Iago's perspicacity, his unique power of improvisation and his impressive versatility. On the other, they feel they ethically have to condemn his exceptional, unjustified malevolence. Surprisingly, at certain junctures in the action, the audience's response to the unique performance of the play's super subtle schemer culminates in admiring the versatility and creative thinking of such a charming, conniving dissembler. Though spectators (and readers) of the play may unreservedly dread Iago's evil deeds and detach themselves from his malevolence, they still find themselves bemused by the hidden motives that initiate his horrific actions, still applaud his vicious acts and absurdly condone his sadistic delight. Spectators

also appreciate most of Iago's witty utterances for their profound insight into life and admire his cunning management of events and characters as the marks of a skilled strategist and an ingenious mind.

Acting such vindictive roles against his dupes enables Iago to indulge in his desire to prove his supremacy over men (particularly Othello), who have been blinded by their deficiencies to recognize and acknowledge his competence. It painfully annoys Iago that Othello, whose "eyes had seen the proof" (I.1.25) of his Ancient's aptness to the post, should have chosen instead of him "One [...] / That never set a squadron in the field." (I.1.16-17; 19) Iago's attempt to involve the audience in his web of villainy and satire would likely boost his ego and compensate for his loss, undeserved in his view, of the lieutenantcy. This moment of winning a round in the war of wits against his gulls is likely to give Iago the pleasure, the "sport" he says in his first soliloquy he is looking for (I.3.369; 371). Iago exults in conning his victims and the audience because of his immoderate egotism, his pride of being a good actor, of his great deftness at dissimulation.

Audiences often approve of Iago as the most engaging character in the play. That is so because Shakespeare perhaps wanted to portray Iago as a paradigm of the accomplished playwright, the celebrated actor, the inspired director of events, and the deft stage manager. Though Iago is praised, against one's better judgment, for his wily acumen, devious aptitude, and conniving suppleness, one has to face and give reasonable answers to many resolute questions that arise in the course of the action. What makes Othello overlook Iago for promotion in favour of Cassio, whom experience proves, was not perfectly fit for the post? What makes all characters in the play, not excluding Emilia, have what seems to be blind and complete trust and confidence in "honest Iago"? What makes Iago cite several false motives to justify his hatred of Othello (as of other characters as well) that all subsequently prove to be mere pretexts to enkindle and feed his hatred of his enemies? If Iago is enraged for the loss of the lieutenantcy, why does he focus primarily on destroying Othello rather than defacing Cassio, who is in practice his rival for the post? Furthermore, why should Iago feel jealous of Emilia and, in a soliloquy, suspect both Othello and Cassio of having cuckolded him, if he does not care about her, as his behaviour clearly shows? Finally, yet most importantly, what makes Iago seek the audience's commendation (in the soliloquies) almost every time he has dealt a blow against one of his dupes? Overall, could Shakespeare have meant *Othello* to be an exaltation of wickedness, a celebration of deviousness, embodied in Iago, or rather an exaltation of the power of the acting and the talents of a good actor like Iago? Success in providing plausible answers to such questions would be a good step towards unravelling the intricate topic of Iago's motives.

Despite his disturbing guiles, Shakespeare's Iago makes a brilliant stage performance that merits the audience's great commendation. Iago's murder of his wife Emilia, as the play concludes, is not a premeditated crime but a sudden decision, taken for convenience. Emilia is a threat that would

ruin the enjoyment of Iago's show. She would again reveal the weakness of Iago's self-esteem, the 'problem' that ignited the dramatic conflict. Further, with the destruction of his main adversary, histrionic Iago announces the completion of his theatrical shows. Iago does not die at the end of the play "I bleed, sir, but not killed" (V.2.285), probably because he must be seen as the 'acting dramatist' who ultimately survives, and according to whose will characters die or live, are made prosperous or miserable. Iago performs his role with great panache that thrills the audience to the extent they seem to forget his evil intentions, as Iago also seems to forget the issue of the promotion. As the play draws to its conclusion, Othello's plea to have Iago explain his malicious deeds reflects both spectators and readers' amazement at Iago's real motives behind such inexplicable desire for malice: "Will you, I pray, demand that demi-devil / *Why* he hath thus ensnar'd my soul and body?" (5. 2. 298-9). Speeches are what makes an actor survive on stage. Iago has no more speeches to make, no further lines to utter; Iago's acting is now complete:

Demand me nothing. What you know, you know,

From this time forth I never will speak word (ll. 300-101).

As the final curtain falls and actors ritually line up to bow to the theatre audience, one would imagine the comic Iago-actor would, in a humorous move, enthusiastically stand in the forestage to block the audience's view of all other actors so that he can hog the audience's standing ovation.

CONCLUSION

Shakespeare knew well that his audience, especially the 'groundlings,' came to see plays wishing primarily to be entertained. Although the audience longed to be diverted with love stories, intrigues and heroic adventures, their eyes were drawn and hearts won by a lively performance mastered by skilled actors. As an adept dramatist and experienced entrepreneur, Shakespeare catered for the disparate expectations of a large and demanding audience in plays like *Othello* by assigning unique roles to deft and nimble actors, who could also sing and dance. Around 1604, there was an increasing demand in London for plays especially after a year-interval of theatre-closure, which had begun by May 26, 1603, due to the infection of the plague. Further, in 1603 the King's Men lost one of their great players William Kemp, who died and was replaced by the young and talented John Lowin. Lowin had recently left Worcester's Men (later Queen Anne's) and joined Shakespeare's company (Grote, 2002, 124). It is very likely then that *Othello* was presented on the Globe with Lowin in the cast to play Iago to start a new season of theatrical activities with a play that proved a hit. Besides, the King's Men introduced this play at a time when they faced a major competitor, old Worcester Company, which had lost both Kemp and Lowin, and was left without a good clown-actor to compete with the clown actors in the King's Men.

The original performance of *Othello* at the Globe is known to have been well received. The audience, one would surmise, must have been more entertained with Iago's peculiar jokes and misogynistic views, salacious language, his brisk songs

and movements, and witty manipulation of his victims than it was with the issue of his enigmatic motives for revenge. Iago proves his control of the action in the play. His early irate announcement to Roderigo: "and by the faith of man, / I am worth no worse a place," (I.1.10) proves true, perhaps not for the 'lieutenancy' but definitely for being a brilliant performer capable of capturing the audience's attention and winning their acclaim. One of the titillating ironies in *Othello* is that, though Iago is denied the promotion, which he considers to have been 'stolen' from him, he competently manages to 'steal' the 'show' from both and enjoy the attention and consent he temperamentally desires. Given the privileges of soliloquies, Iago shrewdly manages to charm the audience and influence their response throughout the action. Although the play is Othello's tragedy and the protagonist wins the audiences' sympathy and arouses their pity, as long as the enjoyment of the performance is concerned, Iago takes all the plaudits. He remains truly one of the most exquisitely inspired creations of Shakespeare's imaginative mind. In the realm of drama and theatre, given the characteristics of an expert actor, who combines skill, charisma, intelligence, imagination, body control, genuine knowledge of human nature, and an adequate measure of cynicism and humour, Iago occupies a position hardly rivalled by a character of a kind. His influence was perhaps to appear about a year later. The triumph of the improviser, actor, and director Iago, as 'the acting dramatist' is, by extension, the glory of the actor, playwright, and director Shakespeare, as well as the deification and elevation of stagecraft and playwrighting.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The author extends his sincere thanks and appreciation to the Deanship of Scientific Research and Research Centre, College of Arts, King Saud University.

ENDNOTES

- 1 References to Cinthio's Tale (Modern) are from Appendix I: Cinthio's Narrative, M. R. Ridley. (Ed.). (rep. 1974). *Othello*. The Arden Shakespeare. Methuen, pp. 239-245, henceforward referred to as Ridley, followed by page number.
- 2 This and all subsequent references to *Othello* are to William Shakespeare. (1976). *Othello*. (Gãmini Salgãdo, Ed.). London: Longman. Quotations will follow the pattern "Act. Scene. Line(s)"
- 3 The phrase is Edmund of Langely's from Shakespeare's *Richard II*, V.2.2464.

REFERENCES

- AMP Talent Group (Actor and Model Agency). (June 22, 2016). 10 personality characteristics that make great actors. <https://www.amptalent.com/actor/10-personality-characteristics-make-great-actors/> Accessed (4/4/2020)
- Alyo, M. W. J. (2019). "And what's he then that says I play the villain": Understanding Iago as a histrionic. *Arab World English Journal for Translation & Literary Studies* 3(4).

- 139-154. <http://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awejtjls/vol3no4.12>
- Astington, J. H. (2010). *Actors and acting in Shakespeare's time: The art of stage playing*. Cambridge university press.
- Bloom, H. (Ed.). (2010). *Henry V*. Bloom's Shakespeare through the ages. Bloom's literary criticism.
- Blue Letter Bible. Lexicon: Strong's G5272 – *hypokrisis*. <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?t=kjv&strongs=g5272> Accessed (4 April, 2020).
- Bradley, A. C. (1905). *Shakespearean Tragedy: Lectures on Hamlet, Othello, King Lear, Macbeth*. (2nd ed.). Macmillan.
- Bratchell, D. F. (Ed.). (1990). *Shakespearean tragedy*. Routledge.
- Brennan, A. (1986). *Shakespeare's dramatic structures*. Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Cleveland Clinic, "Histrionic personality disorder." <https://my.clevelandclinic.org/health/diseases/9743-histrionic-personality-disorder>
- Cleveland Clinic. "Personality disorders overview" <https://my.clevelandclinic.org/health/diseases/9636-personality-disorders-overview>
- Curtright, T. (2017). *Shakespeare's dramatic persons*. Fairleigh Dickinson University press.
- Fox, D. J. (2015). *Antisocial, borderline, narcissistic, & histrionic workbook: Treatment strategies for cluster b personality disorders*. PESI publishing & Media.
- Freeburg, V. O (1915). *Disguise plots in Elizabethan drama: A study in stage tradition*. Columbia UP, *The internet archive*.
- Grote, D. (2002). *The best actors in the world: Shakespeare and his acting company*, Greenwood press.
- Hazlitt, W. (1817). *Characters of Shakespeare's plays*. Wiley and Putman.
- Hotson, L. (1952). *Shakespeare's motley*. Oxford university press.
- Mayo Clinic. Personality disorders. <https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/personality-disorders/symptoms-causes/syc-20354463> Accessed 04/04/2020.
- Murray, P. B. (1996). *Shakespeare's imagined persons: The psychology of role-playing and acting*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Raatzsch, R. (2009). *The apologetics of evil: the case of Iago*. (L. Löb, Trans.). Princeton university press.
- Ridley, M. R. (Ed.). (1965). *W. Shakespeare: Othello*. Methuen.
- Rosenberg, M. (1992). *The masks of Othello: The search for the identity of Othello, Iago and Desdemona by three centuries of actors and critics*. University of Delaware Press.
- Salgãdo, G. (Ed.). (1976). *W. Shakespeare: Othello*. New Swam Shakespeare. Longman.
- Schmidgall, G. (1990). *Shakespeare and the poet's life*. The university press of Kentucky.
- Taylor, G. (2002). Shakespeare plays on the Renaissance sage. In S. Wells & S. Stanton (Eds.). *The Cambridge companion to Shakespeare on stage* (pp. 1-20). Cambridge university press.
- Wells, Stanley. (2015). *Great Shakespeare actors: Burbage to Branagh*. Oxford university press.
- Wills, G. (2011). *Verdi's Shakespeare: Men of the theatre*. Viking.
- Yachnin, P. & Slights, J. (Eds.). (2009). *Shakespeare and character: Theory, history, performance, and theatrical persons*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- WebMD. What is histrionic personality disorder? <https://www.webmd.com/mental-health/qa/what-is-histrionic-personality-disorder>