InScriptum: A Journal of Language and Literary Studies
ISSN 2719-4418, 2020, No 1 (1), s. 7–27

ANGELA LOCATELLI
University of Bergamo

"They [...] Who, moving others, are themselves as stone": Instances of moving and being unmoved in English Renaissance rhetoric and Shakespeare

Abstract

This paper wishes to focus on the literary construction of characters who exert a powerful influence on others, but remain cold and aloof *vis à vis* the controversial situations in which they push their interlocutors.

With reference to influential Renaissance rhetorical views of "*movere*": i.e., those expressed in Thomas Wilson's *Arte of Rhetorique*, and in Sir Philip Sydney's *Apologie*, the dynamics of moving and remaining unmoved will be discussed starting from Shakespeare's Sonnet 94. Princes, whose commands are not susceptible to being questioned or disregarded, are here depicted as examples of characters who move others but remain unmoved, and who ambiguously make others do what they are not willing to do themselves.

This dispassionate quality seems to belong to some of Shakespeare's most compelling villains (Iago and Richard III) whose lucid machinations drive their naive victims to disastrous action. Not being moved can take on ambivalent connotations: on the one hand, it is the equivalent of balanced emotion and sound judgment but, on the other hand it indicates callousness, cynicism and lack of pity.

Keywords: Renaissance rhetoric, Shakespeare, *movere*, verbal manipulation, power strategies.

1. The goal of Tudor humanist education: *Movere* to civic virtue

In Tudor England a humanist education was essentially oriented towards the promotion of civic virtues: order and social cohesion were primary goals *vis à vis* the many coeval centrifugal forces in politics, religion and the family. Rhetoricians, poets, and schoolmasters were fully aware of the threats posed to traditional views of kingship, and to traditional authority in matters of religion (before,

during and after the Reformation), and they strove to offer a kind of practical learning oriented towards the containment of dissent and the preservation of hierarchies of rank and gender (Locatelli 2013).

Therefore, in early-modernity, literature and rhetoric re-framed the traditional tasks of *docere, delectare, movere*, by vigorously prioritizing *movere* and making *docere* and *delectare* the ancillary means to this end. As Sir Philip Sidney famously asserts, invoking Aristotle's authority: "…it is not *Gnosis*, but *Praxis* must be the fruit" (Sidney 1595 [1970: 28]).

Delectare was assigned a complementary, but essentially instrumental role towards the final *movere*, in the context of the poets and rhetoricians' response to new social needs, and to the rise of new protagonists on the social scene. Not surprisingly Thomas Wilson's influential work *The Arte of Rhetorique*, (1560), is primarily addressed to lawyers and preachers. Likewise, George Puttenham, dedicates his *The Arte of English Poesie* (1589), not to an academic, but to Sir William Cecil, Lord Burghley, Lord High Treasurer of England.

Thomas Wilson's *The Arte of Rhetorique* (1560) was an influential textbook. It has at least a double purpose: on the one hand, it is a didactic tool that aims to teach pupils the skills of the discipline; on the other hand, it aims at restoring a supposedly Edenic prelapsarian order in both language and mores: "God …gaue his appointed ministers knowledge both to see the natures of men and also graunted the gift of utterance, *that they might with ease win folke at their will*, and frame them by reason to all good order" (1560 [1982: 18], [*emphasis mine*]). Wilson's belief in the reparative and regulative social role of rhetoric was a fairly common view among Elizabethan rhetoricians. The program of *movere* i.e., to "win folke at their will" is therefore of paramount importance in this context. Rhetoric was valued since it could promote social harmony, by persuading the most recalcitrant subjects to their duties. Thomas Wilson's provocative question is highly significant: "Would servauntes obey their masters, the sonne his father, the tenaunt his landlorde, the citizen his maiour, or Shirife: if orders were not set and just delaying appoincted for the state of men?" (1560 [1982: 72]). In Wilson's words: "Such force has the tongue, and such is the power of eloquence and reason that most *men are forced, even to yelde in that, whiche most standeth againste their will*" (1560 [1982:18-19], [*emphasis mine*]). It follows that the prince must use and employ poets rather than ban them from the kingdom (as Plato had suggested for the Republic) because they can *move others to acquiescence.*

And yet, the advice Wilson offers would not be complete had he not also suggested, in line with a strong Stoic tradition, re-interpreted in Christian terms,

that not being moved is also a personal moral virtue: "There is no greater victory, then for manne to rule his affections […] It is a greater matter to overcome anger than to winne a fortress or a tower. […] he that requiteth good for evill, is an aungell of God.[…] The requiting of injuries has no end" (1560: [1982: 245]). This harkens back to the Stoic philosopher's impassionate position towards Fortune, particularly if adverse, but one can easily notice that in Wilson the focus is once more on putting an end to "injuries", i.e., to the virtually forever escalating hostilities. The obvious advantage of *movere* is that eloquence can curb civil discord without bloodshed, and therefore the power of moving is a royal road to social harmony.

The full program of *docere, delectare, movere* is clear also in Sidney's *Apologie* and it is given as the primary reason for his sophisticated defense of poetry.[1] He explains that: "Poets[…] doo merely make to imitate: and imitate both to delight and teach: and *delight to move men to take that goodnes in hande, which without delight they would flye as from a stranger*" (1595 [1970: 17]; "For he [the poet] dooth not only show the way, but giveth so sweete a prospect into the way, as will intice any man to enter into it" (1595 [1970: 29]). The verb "intice" is relevant here: it recurs in both Sidney's *Apologie* and in George Puttenham's *The Arte of English Poesie* (1589) to prove that rhetoric and poetry are the most powerful forces towards *movere*. Sidney affirms that the poet is the master of *moving* others through eliciting positive emotions and towards acting out these noble emotions, "he [the Poet] doth intende *the winning of the mind* from wickedness to vertue" (1590 [1970: 29], [*emphasis mine*]). The close connection between rhetoric and the emotions is also clear in Puttenham's observation that the use of rhetorical figures serves to "*inueigle and appassionate the mind*" (1589 [1988: 166]) [*emphasis mine*]). However, Puttenham also suggests that there is a radical duplicity in the use of eloquence: he speaks extensively of the "doubleness" of rhetorical figures (Locatelli 1994) and among the tropes endowed with an ambiguous power "to inueigle and appassionate the mind" he includes the most familiar and important ones: metaphor, allegory, enigma, paremia, ironia, sarcasmus, hyperbole.[2]

1 Sidney writes: "…the ending of all earthly learning, being vertuous action, those skilles that most serve to bring forth that, have a most just title to be Princes over all the rest: wherein if wee can shewe the Poets nobleness, by setting him before his other competitors, among whom as principal challengers step forth the moral Philosophers" (1595 [1970: 19]).

2 Puttenham: "for what else is your Metaphor but an inuersion of sense by transport; your allegorie by a duplicity of meaning or dissimulation under couert and darke intendments: one while speaking obscurely and in riddle called Aenigma: another while by common

If, as we have seen, Wilson's practical view of rhetoric is based on his belief that it is instrumental to move towards the reduction (virtually the avoidance) of civil conflicts, and Sidney's view of the purpose of poetry is to move the emotions towards virtue, Shakespeare is far less optimistic. He often shows that rhetoric can be put to ill uses, and move to calamitous consequences, as I will argue in the following pages with reference to Iago and Richard III.

Before I do that, I wish to start by examining "Sonnet 94", and by arguing that it is an amazing meditation on *the duplicity of movere.*

2. The ambiguity of power: Moving others and remaining unmoved in Sonnet 94

(1) 1 They that have pow'r to hurt, and will do none,
2 That do not do the thing they most do show,
3 Who moving others are themselves as stone,
4 Unmovèd, cold, and to temptation slow –

5 They rightly do inherit heaven's graces,
6 And husband nature's riches from expense;
7 They are the lords and owners of their faces,
8 Others but stewards of their excellence.

9 The summer's flow'r is to the summer sweet,
10 Though to itself it only live and die;
11 But if that flow'r with base infection meet,
12 The basest weed outbraves his dignity.
13 For sweetest things turn sourest by their deeds;
14 Lilies that fester smell far worse than weeds.

(Shakespeare, Sonnet 94:
"They that have pow'r to hurt, and will do none")

Sonnet 94[3] is a meditation on the ambiguous power of aristocratic privilege, which consists in the capacity of moving others, while remaining unmoved. "They [...] Who, moving others, are themselves as stone" are not, however, an example

prouerbe or Adage called Paremia: then by periphrase or circumlocution when all might be said in a word or two: then by incredible comparison giuing credit as by your Hyperbole, and many other waies seeking to inueigle and appassionate the mind" (1589 [1988: 166]).

3 This Sonnet has been discussed very frequently, and by eminent critics, among whom I wish to recall: L.C. Knights (1946: 40-65), H. Smith (1952: 188-191), J.W. Lever (1956: 216-221), M.M. Mahood (1957: 98-100), H. Landry (1963: 7-27), S. Booth (1969: 152-167), G. Melchiori (1973: 43-79) and A. Serpieri (1991: 628-635).

of impassioned virtue in a Stoic sense, but quite the opposite: they represent a lucid and even cynical strategy of *movere* where being "impassible" does not mean "impassionate".

Princes, whose commands are not susceptible to being questioned or disregarded, obviously have impulses, and even whims, but, since they "*can* do" what they "*want* to do", they do not need to admit to others their desires and secret motives. This is a prerogative that is clearly denied to their attendants who are "... but stewards of their excellence". The roles of power are strict, and the use of modals in this sonnet is there to show it: those in command *can* give orders, the "stewards" *must* obey them, the formers' greatness is in their power of imposing their will, the latters' greatness is a reflection of their masters' "excellence", which they amplify by being subordinate. In fact, aristocrats and kings are here depicted as "those who" can afford to make others do what they are not willing to do themselves.

The subtle distinction between "impassible" and "impassionate" is at the root of the aristocrats' ambiguity, which is illustrated throughout the poem and is implicit in their being "the lords and owners of their faces" (line 7). This line represents a climax in the series of equivocations that accompany rule and rank: in fact, the control over one's own image makes powerful men the "lords and owners of their faces". Behind the poker-like expression of the rulers, their motivating passions often remain carefully hidden to external eyes, at least as long as these passions become visible in their effects. The seemingly emotionless attitude of the aristocratic protagonists who are defined as "unmovèd, cold, and to temptation slow", is therefore more a matter of appearance than an actual mastering of the passions on their part. Moreover, their supposed virtue is a mere posture of moral superiority, since they can "move others" to hurtful action, in order to achieve their own ends, while seeming above guilt or blame.

The Sonnet has a sententious and meditative tone, starting from the first lines and reaching down into the final ones: "They that have power to hurt, and will do none,/ That do not do the thing they most do show,/ Who moving others are themselves as stone,/ Unmovèd, cold, and to temptation slow – " (lines 1-4). The sententiousness is kept throughout the first two quatrains, and is taken up again, epigrammatically, in the two closing lines: "For sweetest things turn sourest by their deeds; / Lilies that fester smell far worse than weeds" (lines 13-14).

The debate on the legitimacy of authority was pervasive in Shakespeare's times and society, and the view that moral righteousness was a necessary condition of political authority was upheld by many. This sonnet offers one of the drama-

tist's most interesting assessments on the nature of political power and its contradictions. Shakespeare's contributions to the debate are indeed numerous in his Tragedies, Histories, and Roman Plays, as well as in this poem, the first part of which (the first two quatrains), explores the paradoxical "deeds" of "They […] that do not do", while the second part, with the extended metaphor of the flower's "base infection", represents the indignity of powerful men, when their splendour is tainted by corruption.

The contrast between appearance and reality is deeply engrained in the behaviour of those in power, and, not surprisingly, the protagonists of this sonnet have been associated (Knight 1946: 40-65) with the character of Angelo in *Measure for Measure*, the corrupt moralist who requires from others the virtue that he fails to practice himself.

A convincing parallel has also been drawn between Sonnet 94 and *Edward III*, (Platt 1911: 511-513), a lesser-known play, now included in Shakespeare's *Apocripha* (1908)*;* not only is the line "Lilies that fester, smell far worse than weeds" found *verbatim* in II.i.451 in the play, but the plot fully illustrates a situation in which the king can move others, having submitted them to an oath of allegiance, and can thereby ask them to perform, in Thomas Wilson's words quoted above, that "whiche most standeth againste their will". The King's passion for Warwick's daughter in *Edward III* leads him to order her father to persuade / force her to comply with the King's desires. Warwick's position is emblematic of the double bind in which submission and greatness are closely interdependent for the steward, whose 'honor' depends on being a faithful servant of the King's greatness, at all costs. His role is unquestionably subordinate: in this sense the "but" in line 8 ("Others *but* stewards of their excellence" [*emphasis mine*]) cannot be underestimated.

I believe that under the appearance of encomiastic praise, Shakespeare is here very critical of aristocratic privilege and its power of moving others. The tone of the Sonnet is essentially ironical. Giorgio Melchiori has pointed out that Sonnet 94 is different from others because it does not contain first- or second-person pronouns, but several third-person expressions ("they", "others"). I would add that the use of pronouns such as "they" and "those who" creates a deliberate distance between the lyrical voice and the protagonists of the sonnet. Moreover, the reiterated expression "those who" seems itself derogatory, and the adverb "rightly" in line 5 is probably cleverly sarcastic, under the pretense of obsequiousness. The lyrical voice is questioning, rather than subscribing to, the idea that those in power deserve "heaven's graces". This allusion to prosperity and to the noblemen's thrifty

management of their possessions (line 6: "And husband nature's riches from expense") belongs to the Puritan idea of "riches" as a sign of God's favour on the active and just ruler, as opposed to the failure of the corrupt, but here the mainstream Puritan view becomes itself the object of questioning, if not of scorn.

Shakespeare's meditations on power (particularly in the History Plays, and the Tragedies) are among the most complex in literature and yet, even in the plays that have been read as supportive of the Tudor Myth and of authority in general, far from idealizing power, he ultimately probes into its multifaceted contradictions, and never subscribes to a single, specific ideology. Shakespeare provokes an often unsettling debate on the nature and implications of power, and Sonnet 94 is no exception. His works are meta-political in this sense; they have been used both to support emancipative political agendas and to support historical tyrants or certain regimes (Pujante and Hoenselaars 2003). In this sonnet the lyrical voice is making general statements on the behaviour of kings and tyrants, and the power of *movere* they have; the argument is that, even if they abstain from hurtful action, they do so because they can compel others to perpetrate sinful deeds on their behalf. Shakespeare seems to subscribe to Sydney's chivalric view of the ruler in *Arcadia* (II.xv.6) who is noble because he does not hurt "*posse et nolle, nobile*" [emphasis mine], but instead he reverses Sidney's view, and argues that power intrinsically entails, not only the capacity to hurt, but its translation into action, under the pretence of refraining from action.

3. Moving to destruction: Iago's verbal strategies of manipulation

Othello is a tragedy in which moving others reaches an unprecedented and uniquely destructive level. Iago's rhetoric has often been commented upon in connection with his supposedly imperscrutable motives and in the following pages I will explore it closely, in order to probe into Iago's apparent lack of passion and his successful manipulation of others.

W. H. Auden has suggested that if in tragedies, generally speaking: "The fall of the hero from glory to misery and death is the work, either of the gods, or of his own freely chosen acts, or, more commonly, a mixture of both" in *Othello* the fall is "the work of another human being; nothing he says or does originates within himself. In consequence we feel pity for him but no respect; our aesthetic respect is reserved for Iago" (1962 [1971: 199]). I believe that this respect for Iago, which does not prevent our moral condemnation, is grounded in Iago's extraordinary

verbal ability. He is, like the most proficient orator, one that can persuade and 'move' his audience. Not only is Iago's rhetoric superb, he 'moves' his principal interlocutor to the extent of setting up for him a fatal trap. And yet, "…since the ultimate goal of Iago is nothingness, he must not only destroy others, but himself as well. Once Othello and Desdemona are dead, his 'occupation's gone'" (Auden 1962 [1971: 210]).

Coleridge famously defined Iago as a "passionless character […] all will and intellect" (1819 [2016: 164]). We can take this as an affirmation of the mastering of his own passions, at least for as long as it is necessary to the working out of his destructive plot. On the other hand, Iago is not really "passionless": he openly declares his *hatred* for the Moor of Venice. All kinds of interpretations, from political to psychoanalytical, have been provided for Iago's motives. The most obvious surfaces in his own words in the *incipit*; it is his desire of revenge against Othello's preferment of Cassio as his lieutenant. He also seems to "envy" Othello for his marital bliss, as suggested in the following lines:

(2) OTHELLO: […] If it were now to die,
'Twere now to be most happy, for I fear
My soul hath her content so absolute
That not another comfort like to this
Succeeds in unknown fate.
[…]
IAGO, *aside:* O, you are well tuned now,
But I'll set down the pegs that make this music,
As honest as I am.

(*Othello*, I.iii.192-203)

Iago is a "malcontent": he seems to hate happiness in others, and he is set on destroying it in the life of Othello, Desdemona and Cassio. His scheming recalls those "Who moving others are themselves as stone", and probably from this attitude comes Coleridge's view of him as "passionless". However, Iago's intentions and manipulative powers are evident from the start: he deems Othello's good nature a naive error on which to work his malevolent manipulation: "The Moor is of a free and open nature/ That thinks men honest that but seem to be so,/ And will as tenderly be led by th' nose/ As asses are" (I.iii.405-408). It is important to notice that even before his "moving" of Othello, the audiences are given another sample of Iago's mystifying strategies. In Act II.i., Iago's effective manipulation of Roderigo is an eloquent anticipation of his techniques against Othello in Act III. He will also *move* Emilia into getting and copying

the handkerchief that Othello had given Desdemona as a love token, and that he will use as "ocular proof" of her betrayal. In the first scene of Act II, Iago explicitly reminds Roderigo that he has brought him from Venice in order to be served: "But, sir, *be you ruled by me***.** I have brought you from Venice (II.i.72-73 [*emphasis mine*]). Roderigo is his steward in the sense that the term has in Sonnet 94 and, as such he is forced by Iago to provoke Cassio into a brawl in order to disgrace him in the eyes of Venetian society. Moreover, Iago's exchange with Roderigo is grounded in the strategies of insinuation and slander, which will become of paramount importance in all future exchanges with the Moor. He attributes vile motives to Cassio's courteous gestures towards Desdemona, and insinuates that they are motivated by lust.

(3) IAGO: …Didst thou not see her paddle with the palm of his hand? Didst not mark that?
RODERIGO: Yes, that I did. But that was but courtesy.
IAGO: Lechery, by this hand! An index and obscure
prologue to the history of lust and foul thoughts
(*Othello*, II.i.262-67).

This first scene in Act II is a grim anticipation of what will follow. If Roderigo is *moved* to provoke Cassio and thus ruin his good reputation, Othello will be *moved* to kill Desdemona, once he believes her reputation stained. Iago's obscene and often perverse fantasies on sexual matters fill his "sticky" rhetoric towards Othello. Alessandro Serpieri has convincingly explored these fantasies in his *Otello: L'eros negato* (2003), and has proposed that Iago exploits Othello's cultural and sexual anxieties for his own purposes. André Green's psychoanalytical reading has suggested that Iago represses a homoerotic desire towards Cassio (which would, of course, increase his hate for him, given Cassio's unresponsive distance, and his affectionate and honourable relationship with Desdemona). This also clearly collides with Iago's picture as an impassionate villain. His passions are strong: i.e., ambition, hate, sexual frustration, but he hides them carefully under a patina of devotion and submission to his General.

Act III.iii is a long and crucial scene, the climax of Iago's strategy of moving others and seeming "honest" (Empson 1951). In fact, he proclaims himself faithful to Othello, whom he pretends to love and dutifully serve, in the very moment in which he undermines his serenity and steals his peace of mind. Some interpreters have pronounced this scene the one that "rises *Othello* above all other tragedies" (Rymer, quoted in Wain 1971:149). We can admire, as W. H. Auden did, Iago's

full rhetorical powers; we may also notice that his influence over Othello extends even over ourselves, the spectators, who are forced to see how Iago's eloquence works and how it is successful, against our own deepest wishes.

His verbal competence is based on different mechanisms, the most frequent of which is insinuation. Alessandro Serpieri has rightly indicated that Iago's insinuations are based on the rhetorical strategy of leaving his sentences semantically void (Serpieri 2003); I will further suggest that Othello is *moved* to providing a meaning (a meaning that entails suspicion), when he gives voice to what Iago does not, formally pronounce:

(4) 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?
IAGO: Cassio, my lord? No, sure, I cannot think it
That he would steal away so guilty-like,
Seeing your coming.
OTHELLO: I do believe 'twas he.

(*Othello*, III.3.35-40)

Iago is careful and does not specify what exactly he "likes not". Iago's vagueness paves the way for Othello's curiosity; his curiosity will inevitably lead to his own formulation of the suspicion, despite Iago's crafty negations (OTHELLO: "What dost thou say?" IAGO: "Nothing, my lord; or if—I know not what"). Iago does not openly say anything slanderous, his discursive suspensions prevent a full and clear meaning, which moves Othello into finding the words of the worst, and mistaken, suspicion that will be fatal for the Moor and his wife.

Desdemona's benevolent rhetoric to defend Cassio is by comparison to Iago's much more naïve: she wishes to persuade Othello into reconciling with his lieutenant and calling him back, but she obviously fails. Her sentence "If I have any grace or power to *move* you" (III.3.46 [*emphasis mine*]) has a tragic, ironical tone, but only the spectators have a full knowledge of the fact that Othello has already been *moved* in the opposite direction, while Iago is able to remove himself from the tensions he creates. Indeed, Iago moves others and remains "as stone". Therefore, the most effective rhetoric is firmly his, he escalates the level of insinuation and slander, once he acquires the information that Cassio had helped Othello in his suit of Desdemona:

(5) 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, *thou echo'st me*
As if there were some monster in thy thought
Too hideous to be shown. *Thou dost mean something.*

(*Othello*, III.3. 93-108 [*emphasis mine*])

After this exchange, in which Iago's repeats Othello's words *verbatim* (a strategy of which the Moor is ironically well aware, but which he does not suspect), we know that Othello is captured by Iago's reticent, and yet insinuating words. Iago's strategy will proceed towards its perverse goal of "moving" Othello, not only towards his demoting of Cassio, but to the murder of innocent Desdemona. Iago insinuates that if Desdemona "betrayed" her father by marrying Othello, she may very well betray him with Cassio:

(6) IAGO: She did deceive her father, marrying you,
[…]
She that, so young, could give out such a seeming,
To seel her father's eyes up close as oak,
He thought 'twas witchcraft! But I am much to blame.
I humbly do beseech you of your pardon
For too much loving you.
OTHELLO: *I am bound to thee forever.*

(*Othello*, III.iii. 206-214 [*emphasis mine*])

This line ("I am bound to thee forever") underlines the fact that Othello is now a pawn in Iago's game. Not surprisingly, in the lines that follow Iago is even proudly meta-commenting on his own power of "moving others" and remaining aloof, and he even dares to suggest to Othello that he should take his words with some caution:

(7) IAGO: I see this hath a little dashed your spirits.
OTHELLO: Not a jot, not a jot.
IAGO: I' faith, I fear it has.
I hope you will consider what is spoke

> Comes from my love. *But I do see you're moved.*
> I am to pray you not to strain my speech
> To grosser issues nor to larger reach
> Than to suspicion.
> OTHELLO: I will not.
> IAGO Should you do so, my lord,
> My speech should fall into such vile success
> As my thoughts aim not at. Cassio's my worthy
> friend.
> My lord, *I see you're moved.*
> OTHELLO: No, *not much moved.*
> I do not think but Desdemona's honest.
> IAGO: Long live she so! And long live you to think so!
>
> (*Othello*, III.iii.215-226 [*emphasis mine*])

Once he knows that he has secured his goal, Iago openly describes his own manipulative rhetorical strategy to Othello ("I am to pray you not to strain my speech / To grosser issues nor to larger reach/ Than to suspicion"). Othello's double negation to affirm Desdemona's innocence ("I *do not* think *but* Desdemona's honest" [*emphasis mine*]), however, signals that his suspicion is already deeply rooted. This figure of speech, litotes, had been one of the pillars of Iago's rhetoric (Serpieri 2003), and this verbal style seems to have "infected" Othello's own speech. Iago reinforces Othello's line by retorting that he may be a happy cuckhold ("And long live you to think so!").

Iago is certainly the seemingly passionless (*sensu* Coleridge) master that moves passions in others. Albeit ruled by envy, hate, and probably also frustrated (homo) erotic desire, he remains cold and lucid throughout his plotting. If *Othello* is generally seen as a tragedy of jealousy, one should never forget the verbal force that provokes its outcome, a force that leads the "Noble Moor" to self-destruction. I would therefore suggest that, even before being a tragedy of jealousy, as many commentators have decided, this is a tragedy of emotional doubt (different from, but comparable to Hamlet's intellectual doubt). Othello is moved, first to doubt, and then to kill. In fact, when Iago had hypocritically warned Othello against jealousy ("Beware of jealousy; / It is the green eyed monster which doth mock/ The meat it feeds on" III.3.165-168) Othello had said ""to be once in doubt/ Is once to be resolved" (III.iii.179-80). In *Othello* jealousy is fed by the doubt that words can instill, and suspicion moves the eponymous hero to murder and destruction, once the verbal poisoning of the mutual trust on which his marital happiness was grounded takes a full and fatal effect.

4. Moving to possess: The seduction of power in Richard III

Traits similar to the ones we have highlighted in Iago's rhetoric can be found in the words of another superb and cynical rhetorician: Richard of Gloucester, the future King Richard III. His two dominant passions are compensation for his physical deformity and unbridled political ambition. It is as if he wished to wreak revenge upon the world, as much as Iago had wished to wreak revenge against Cassio's preferment and Othello's happiness. Their revenge is never straightforward: Richard, like Iago, manipulates others in his project to curb whoever may interfere with his intention to achieve the throne. Moreover, the tragedy of *Richard III* confirms Shakespeare's critical view of power in Sonnet 94. Richard's scheming to have his opponents killed, if they do not comply with his desire for the throne, i.e., if they do not behave like the obedient stewards mentioned in the Sonnet, is revealed in his relationship to Lord Hastings and the Duke of Buckingham. Both of them advance Richard's progress, but, up to a point, and when they do not extend his 'excellence' they are executed.

Richard uses both words and deeds, and even if he is more explicit (especially in his soliloquies) than the corrupt, impassible and crafty aristocrats of Sonnet 94, he is equally manipulative, as can be seen from the very first scene, where he plans to persuade the King, Edward IV, to imprison his brother Clarence, with what we would today call "fake news", i.e. with "inductions dangerous, and drunken prophecies", "With lies well steeled with weighty arguments":

(8) RICHARD: Plots have I laid, *inductions dangerous*,
By drunken prophecies, libels, and dreams,
To set my brother Clarence and the King
In deadly hate, the one against the other;
And if King Edward be as true and just
As I am subtle, false, and treacherous,
This day should Clarence closely be mewed up
About a prophecy which says that "G"
Of Edward's heirs the murderer shall be.
Dive, thoughts, down to my soul. Here Clarence comes.

(*Richard III*, I.i.32-41 [emphasis mine])

Richard of Gloucester starts his murderous way to the throne by setting his two brothers, i.e., the King and the Duke of Clarence, one against the other with false omens. It is significant that Richard uses a verbal trick, i.e. the allusion to the letter G to conspire against "simple, plain Clarence" (I.i.118), whose name is George. But, of course, Richard himself is Duke of Gloucester and readers and audiences

should notice that he has the letter G in his own name. G has therefore a double reference, but Richard is determined to manipulate the king, and even the victim, into believing that G unequivocally refers to Clarence. When Richard learns that the King is seriously ill, he pretends to visit him out of compassion, but he discloses the scenario of his future machinations and defines his own crafty rhetoric ("I'll in to urge his hatred more to Clarence / With lies well steeled with weighty arguments", I.i.146-47). Both Clarence and Othello share a naiveté that their exploiters work upon: their innocent simplicity will prove fatal for both; Iago and Gloucester are, on the contrary, the successful masters of a rhetoric that moves their unsuspecting victims to destruction. Appearance versus reality is, just like in Sonnet 94, the radical ambiguity of powerful men whose true motives are never disclosed to others except through the deeds committed by others on their behalf. The villain's motives in the tragedy are, however, as suggested above, disclosed to the spectators through his soliloquies.

After moving the king to have his brother killed, Richard's plan is the nearly unimaginable goal of marrying Lady Anne, whose husband and father he had killed:

(9) RICHARD: For then I'll marry Warwick's youngest daughter.
What though I killed her husband and her father?
The readiest way to make the wench amends
Is to become her husband and her father;
The which will I, not all so much for love
As for another secret close intent
By marrying her which I must reach unto.

(*Richard III*, I.i.152-158)

These words are a warning to the audiences as to what to expect from Richard's strategy. He is set on both murder and seduction. The latter however is clearly, as he himself declares, not motivated by a genuine erotic passion, but by Richard's narcissistic desire of omnipotence. The goal he sets himself, to conquer Lady Anne, takes the stakes to an unprecedented level of manipulation and falsification. In Act I.ii. Richard enumerates the elements that make his seduction of Lady Ann an almost impossible task, a strong reminder of Thomas Wilson's notion that: "Such force has the tongue, and such is the power of eloquence and reason that most men are forced, even to yelde in that, whiche most standeth againste their will" (1560 [1982:18-19]).

Richard's powerful rhetoric of psychological pressure will, in fact, thwart Anne's deepest feelings and collect its reward.

Anne is moved from resentment and scorn to submission to the man she hates and despises. Moving another against his/her deepest will is, as we have seen in Thomas Wilson's words**,** the most successful effect of *movere*. In Anne's capitulation there may, of course, be reasons that are not merely the effects of persuasion. Anne knows that a widowed Queen is a destitute Queen. The examples of Elizabeth (Queen of King Edward IV) Margaret (widow of Henry VI), the Duchess of York (mother of King Edward IV, Clarence and Gloucester) eloquently speak of the fall of powerful women when lacking male support. But what is important in the long and famous second scene of the first act is the verbal artistry and the rhetorical and histrionic ability displayed by Richard and the gradual shift from hate to acceptance in Anne's speech. In front of the murdered Henry's corpse, Anne expresses a strong desire for revenge against Richard, "the butcher" ("If thou delight to view thy heinous deeds,/ Behold this pattern of thy butcheries", I.ii.53-54).

What follows is a quick repartee between Anne and Richard, based on a series of rhetorical reversals of what one of them has just uttered. The tight and strong rhythm of their verbal exchange shows that both of them are excellent rhetoricians. Actually, in their repartees, she seems more skilled than he in conducting the argument, but he reverses her very words, and seems to collect precious advice from her ability, and put her rhetoric to ill uses by extending the range of his rhetorical moves:

(10) RICHARD: Lady, you know no rules of charity,
Which renders good for bad, blessings for curses.
ANNE: Villain, thou know'st nor law of God nor man.
No beast so fierce but knows some touch of pity.
RICHARD: But I know none, and therefore am no beast.
ANNE: O, wonderful, when devils tell the truth!
RICHARD: More wonderful, when angels are so angry.
Vouchsafe, divine perfection of a woman,
Of these supposèd crimes to give me leave
By circumstance but to acquit myself.
ANNE: Vouchsafe, defused infection of a man,
Of these known evils but to give me leave
By circumstance to curse thy cursèd self.

(*Richard III*, I.ii.69-84)

The repartee continues with the repetition of the same words with an antithetical meaning, until Richard is able to meta-comment on their rhetorical strategy as "this keen encounter of our wits" (I.ii.116) and to give his very admission of

murder a double *excusatio:* first he paradoxically suggests that the dead should thank him for sending them to heaven, and then he provides a second excuse:

(11) ANNE: He is in heaven, where thou shalt never come.
RICHARD: Let him thank me, that holp to send him thither,
For he was fitter for that place than Earth.
ANNE: And thou unfit for any place but hell.
RICHARD: Yes, one place else, if you will hear me name it.
ANNE: Some dungeon.
RICHARD: Your bedchamber.

(*Richard III*, I.ii.106-112)

The twist from "dungeon" to "bedchamber" is as sharp as the contrast between heaven and hell. But Richard is ready with the second excuse for his admitted murder: it is based on a subtle distinction between the "causer" and the "executioner" of the murder. It is a shameless accusation against Lady Anne whose beauty allegedly caused Richard's impulse to assassinate her husband.

(12) RICHARD: But, gentle Lady Anne,
To leave this keen encounter of our wits
And fall something into a slower method:
Is not the *causer* of the timeless deaths
Of these Plantagenets, Henry and Edward,
As blameful as the *executioner*?
Thou wast the cause and most accursed effect.
Your beauty was the cause of that effect—
Your beauty, that did haunt me in my sleep
To undertake the death of all the world,
So I might live one hour in your sweet bosom.

(*Richard III*, I.ii.116-125 [*emphasis mine*])

Richard will repeat the same accusation and self-excuse in I.ii.180-181, but he will also change his manipulative strategy: he will start incensing Anne with talk of her beauty (RICHARD: Nay, do not pause, for I did kill King Henry—/But 'twas thy beauty that provokèd me", I.ii.180-81).

Richard starts adulating Anne, protesting his love for her, and even suggesting that he would be a better husband than Edward ever was (RICHARD: "He that bereft thee, lady, of thy husband/ Did it to help thee to a better husband", I.ii.134-140). Anne is outraged, she spits at Richard in disgust, and their quips are taken up again when he employs the most classical *topoi* of the lover in order to move her to accept him (the seductive eyes of the beloved, and the oxymoron of the 'living death'):

(13) RICHARD: Why dost thou spit at me?
(She looks scornfully at him.)
ANNE: Would it were mortal poison for thy sake.
RICHARD: Never came poison from so sweet a place.
ANNE: Never hung poison on a fouler toad.
ANNE: Out of my sight! Thou dost infect mine eyes.
RICHARD: *Thine eyes, sweet lady, have infected mine.*
ANNE: Would they were basilisks' to strike thee dead.
RICHARD: I would they were, that I might die at once,
For now they kill me with a living death.

(*Richard III*, I.ii.146-153 [*emphasis mine*])

Precisely in the moment in which he is doing it, Richard goes on to claim that he has never used mellifluous words to ingratiate someone, but he says that he is now prepared to sue in that guise the recalcitrant Anne, whose lips should not be used to curse but to kiss.

Moreover, he acts out an extreme histrionic gesture: he offers his sword to her, thereby putting himself at her mercy. Such gesture is shocking in its implications of humility on the part of the powerful Duke, who is, however, a consummate liar, and just pretends to hazard all he has. Anne rightly calls him a “dissembler”.

Richard escalates his proposal, by threatening to kill himself and Ann feels bewildered and confused at his words and gestures. Puttenham's comment on the doubleness of rhetorical figures inevitably comes to mind in this exchange:

(14) ANNE: I would I knew *thy heart*.
RICHARD: *'Tis figured in my tongue*
ANNE: I fear me *both are false*
RICHARD: Then never man was true.

(*Richard III*, I.ii.193-196 [*emphasis mine*])

When Anne wears the ring that Richard gives her, he feels that he has secured his prized conquest and openly congratulates himself, just like Iago, on his own moving rhetorical skills:

(15) RICHARD: Was ever woman in this humor won?
I'll have her, but I will not keep her long.
What, I that killed her husband and his father,
To take her in her heart's extremest hate,
With curses in her mouth, tears in her eyes, (etc.)

(*Richard III*, I.ii. 229-240)

The dissembling but powerful rhetoric of Richard III in Act I.ii of the Tragedy and Iago's utterances in Act III in *Othello* are eloquent instances of a perverse use of rhetorical skills.

5. Conclusion

The destructive strategies and the destructive ends in both *Othello* and *Richard III* seem to confirm Shakespeare's views in "Sonnet 94": those who have power to move others, do indeed have the power to hurt, both in words and deeds, while dissembling a good or impassionate nature. Thomas Wilson's statement that movere means "to win folke at their will" (1560 [1982:18]) is unequivocally demonstrated in Sonnet 94 and in the two tragedies discussed above.

In the Sonnet stewards are both the executioners and the victims of their masters' crafty deeds, and Shakespeare's sarcastic depiction of aristocratic privilege leaves no room for the moral approval and praise of those who "do inherit heaven's graces" (Sonnet 94, line 5). The "lords and owners of their faces" (Sonnet 94, line 7) are set on providing a positive public image of themselves and hide sinful passions that are made manifest only in their effects.

Thomas Wilson's *Rhetoric* suggests that the power of this art is not only to achieve indispensable public consensus (a mainstream argument in defending rhetoric in Shakespeare's time), but he suggests that rhetoric can even move against one's will (1560 [1982: 18-19]). This strong acceptation of movere is clear in Lady Anne's capitulation under Richard's rhetorical repertoire. Anne's vituperations against Richard have no power to move him, despite her own rhetorical skills. Richard's rhetoric is varied: it ranges from opposition to histrionics, from accusations to sweet adulation, and he achieves his goal to win her, not out of love, but just to have a narcissistic confirmation of his power. Moreover, Richard's shift from accusations to mellifluous words and his dissembling when he protests to love Lady Anne show the duplicity of "movere", a duplicity Puttenham had attributed to rhetorical figures *tout court*, when he declared that figures and tropes are intrinsically ambiguous in meaning creation and are most effective in promoting dissimulation. As both Sidney and Puttenham had pointed out, rhetoric can "intice" and "inveigle" the mind. This attitude is also a dominant purpose in 'honest' Iago's verbal behavior, who moves others while seeming impassionate (*sensu* Coleridge). However, in Iago's case impassible does not mean impassionate. He is ruled by ambition, hatred, envy and a desire to destroy the

happiness of others. His strategies of insinuation, suspension of meaning, and slander prove very effective in "moving others", i.e., in driving Othello to doubt Desdemona's faithfulness, and to the subsequent murder of his innocent wife. Iago is manipulative, subtle, and like the lords in Sonnet 94, he is able to detach himself from the deeds he pushes others to commit. Effects (Sidney's *praxis*) are what matters for "They […] that do not do" (Sonnet 94), as well as for crafty, false, and cruel Richard, and for manipulative and dishonest Iago. All of them display a sense of "impassionate" that is antithetical to the Stoic or Christian virtue of overcoming the passions, since all of them are "passionless" out of cynicism and not out of moral superiority.

Moving to submit, to hurt and to conquer is the dark driving force of Shakespeare's sense of aristocratic and royal power in the works here discussed. His idea of movere is clearly antithetical to Sidney's moral appreciation of movere as a means towards goodness and the public good. And yet, Shakespeare's complexity allows him to provoke audiences into asking questions that are deeply ethical, on political and personal *rapports de force*.

References

Sources

Sidney, Philip (Sir)
1595 "An Apologie for Poetrie". In Ed Rhys (ed.) *The Prelude to Poetry: English Poets in Defense and Praise of their Own Art* [Repr. 1970]. London: Dent, 1970), 9-60.

Puttenham, George
1589 *The Arte of English Poesie*. [Repr. 1988] Kent, Ohio: The Kent State University Press.

Shakespeare, William
1969 *The Oxford Shakespeare. Complete Works*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Shakespeare, William
1908 "Edward III". In Brooke, Tucker (ed.), *Shakespeare's Apocripha*. London: Oxford University Press.

Wilson, Thomas
1553-60 *The Arte of English Rhetorique*. [Repr. 1982] New York & London: Garland Publishing Inc.

Special studies

Auden, W. H.
1962 "The Joker in the Pack". In: *The Dyer's Hand and Other Essays*. New York: Random House.

Booth, Stephen
1969 *An Essay on Shakespeare's Sonnets*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
Coleridge, Samuel Taylor
1819 "A Portion of Lecture 5". In: Adam Roberts (ed.) *Lectures on Shakespeare (1811-19)*. [Repr. 2016] Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press
Empson, William
1951 *The Structure of Complex Words*. London: Chatto and Windus.
Knights, Lionel Charles
1946 *Explorations*. London: Chatto and Windus.
Landry, H.
1963 *Interpretations in Shakespeare's Sonnets*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
Lever, J. W.
1956 *The Elizabethan Love Sonnet*. London: Methuen.
Locatelli, Angela
2013 "Landscaping Literature in Early Modern England: Praxis, Gnosis and the Shifting Knowledge of Literature". In: Elisabeth Waghall Nivre et al. (eds.) *(Re)Contextualizing Literary and Cultural History*. Stockholm: US-AB, 81-92.
Locatelli, Angela
1994 "The 'Doublenesse' of Figures in Puttenham's *The Arte of English Poesie*", *Quaderni del Dipartimento di Linguistica e Lett. Comparate*, 10, 223-233.
Mahood, M. M.
1957 *Shakespeare's Wordplay*. London: Methuen.
Melchiori, Giorgio
1973 *L'uomo e il potere: indagine sulle strutture profonde dei Sonetti di Shakespeare*. Torino: Einaudi
Platt, A.
1911 "Edward III and Shakespeare's Sonnets", *The Modern Language Review* 4 (4), 511-13.
Pujante, Luis A. – Ton Hoenselaars
2003 *Four Hundred Years of Shakespeare in Europe*. Newark: University of Delaware Press.
Serpieri, Alessandro
2003 *Otello: L'eros negato*. Napoli: Liguori Editore.
Serpieri, Alessandro
1991 Shakespeare. Sonetti. Milano: Rizzoli.
Smith, Hallett Darius
1952 *Elizabethan Poetry. A Study in Conventions, Meaning and Expression*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.
Wain, John (ed.)
1971 *Othello. A Casebook*. London and Basingstoke: The Macmillan Press Ltd.

ANGELA LOCATELLI

Dipartimento di Lingue,
Letterature e Culture Straniere,
Università degli Studi di Bergamo,
Piazza Rosate 2, 24129 Bergamo, Italy.
ORCID code: orcid.org/0000-0003-4210-8397