

Shakespeare's the tragedy of othello: the words and actions of iago essay

[Literature](#), [Russian Literature](#)



The works, created by William Shakespeare, always amaze the reader and open a new world, full of dreams, devotion, love, and betrayal to them. Each character, introduced in Shakespeare's plays, is unique indeed: one character may be rich, another can be poor; one of the characters is smart, another is full; some of them are quite happy for a certain period of time, and some of them cannot find their love and happiness during all their fictional lives.

To my mind, one of the most complex, captivating, and, at the same time, the most evil characters in Shakespeare's plays is Iago from *The Tragedy of Othello*. Nowadays, the screenwriters try to present the best villains ever, however only few fictional characters may be compared to Iago.

One of such fictional characters, who may be compared to Iago, is the Joker from *The Dark Knight*. Each action and each word by Iago or Joker has its own sense and reason. In order to achieve the desirable purpose, they try to weight every detail and control the lives and actions of people around.

Shakespeare made his character an absolutely amoral person, who can steal, lie, or even kill to achieve the goal. Iago's amorality, his desire to have more power, and his tricks have much in common with the Joker's actions and turn out to be the best examples of pure evil people from fictions.

Shakespeare's *Othello* is one of the most powerful pieces of writing, where the author concentrates more on people, their desires, and qualities than on the historical facts and political affairs; characters' sexual anxiety is far from any political aspiration (Corns, 53).

Without any doubts, the character of Iago is one of the most crucial one in the Shakespeare's play. When someone wants to know how evil looks like, it is better to think about Iago, remember his "honest" actions, and get a clear understanding that evil may be somewhere near. "I follow him to serve my turn upon him." (Shakespeare, 1, 1, 42). These Iago's words take place almost at the beginning of the play during the conversation between Iago and Roderigo about Othello, the Moorish general.

In spite of the fact that Iago is one of the soldiers under Othello's command, Iago has rather evil intentions and the desire to take up Othello's position and does not afraid to share them with another person. From these words, it becomes clear that Iago is upset with unfair promotion; he cannot agree to the idea that now, he is under command of a person, he does not respect at all. Now, he wants to revenge, he wants to be promoted, and he is going to find some people to assist him.

Iago's actions are smart enough: first, he should be sure that the person, he shares his goals, feels the same antipathy to Othello; second, he does not share all his secrets, just those, he finds not too much harmful; and, finally, he chooses only those people, he is able to control and even blackmail.

It is necessary to admit that Iago's amorality and evil do not prevent the reader to be amazed with Iago's intelligence and abilities to control situation. For example, Iago is aware of Roderigo's feelings to Desdemona and is sure that Roderigo will do anything to win this lady. This is why Iago finds it rather

helpful to use Roderigo's money and jewels for own goals - " thus do I ever make my fool my purse" (Shakespeare, 1, 3, 383).

Of course, such actions cannot be regarded as good ones, but still, Iago demonstrates the best qualities of a really good businessman. The end of the play is rather tragic, and all actions by Iago were exposed. The reader does not have an opportunity to find out what the Iago's end is, but still, his end is almost obvious - evil actions should be punished properly. To my mind, such concepts like bribes and corruptions, which are so popular nowadays, are grounded a bit from this very work by Shakespeare.

Of course, Shakespeare is not the only one, who is able to create really evil characters. Lots of writers present a huge number of antagonists, who prevent the success of the main characters, who add a bit of intrigue, and who try to achieve own goals by means of lies, murders, blackmails, etc.

Unfortunately, not each evil character may be compared and be equal to the one, created by Shakespeare. But still, even our modern cinema and literature can amaze readers and viewers. One of such antagonists, who are famous by his bad actions and intentions, is the Joker from The Dark Knight.

This character is interesting from many perspectives and causes numerous contradictions at the same time: first, he is too evil and always eager to break some rules and harm society as well as Iago, however, his attitude to some situations makes the viewer smile; secondly, his hate towards Batman makes him the main antagonist, however, some of his actions are rather smart and cause certain respect.

His horrific appearance and constant laughter do not cause positive emotions, but still, some of his words and actions should be taken into consideration as they have certain sense and even can teach something.

So, the peculiar feature that is inherent to both the Joker from The Dark Knight and Iago from Othello is their desire to break the rules, make someone's life unbearable, and get unbelievable pleasure from doing all those bad things.

Someone may think that it is not reasonable to compare these two antagonists, as they existed during different periods of time, and their goals had rather different nature. However, to my mind, their unreasonable actions are worthy of attention. First of all, these two characters have one concrete enemy and tried to use other people to take revenge and kill their opponents.

For Iago, it was Othello, for the Joker, it was Batman. The Joker decides to use the mob, who hates Batman as well, in order to intimidate society, attract Batman's attention, and have enough power and money to resist everybody's favorite. Iago uses Roderigo, who also wants to take revenge upon Othello for Desdemona, Roderigo's money, and Roderigo's support.

However, the Joker and Iago never use money, they got from their accomplices; this is why these characters are similar to their desire to manipulate people just in order to manipulate. The Joker admits one time: "It's not about money... it's about sending a message. Everything burns!"

(The Dark Knight) The same idea is characterized Iago's intentions and actions.

Another point that unites the Joker and Iago in their words and actions is their abilities to lie, not think about the consequence, and not consider their consciousness.

At the beginning, Iago tells that he hates Othello because the latter did not promote him but promoted Cassio; however, with some time, he admits that Othello slept with Emilia, Iago's wife, and this is the major reason why Iago wants to revenge. Almost the same picture is observed in the Joker's actions: first, he admits that it was his father, who "put a smile on that face" (The Dark Knight); later, he presents absolutely another story that it is his wife, "who tells me I ought to smile more" (The Dark Knight).

The reader of Othello and the viewer of The Dark Knight can easily concede that any of their words are false. As we can observe, the actions of these two characters do not have any reason, they do not care about the rules, their society live in; these people are so evil that they have satisfaction only in case someone is suffering, however, it is even hard to imagine if these people can be aware of what satisfaction really means.

In general, the analysis of words and actions by Iago and its comparison to the Joker's actions lead to unpredictable results. These two evil characters were created in different epochs, cultures, and conditions, however, at the same time, their dreams, goals, words, and actions are so similar to each other.

It is impossible to support any of these characters, but still, it is possible to learn something from their actions, analyze their mistakes, and comprehend that evil may exist in different forms. Very often, it is very hard to find out where the true evil can be, but such great works like Othello or The Dark Knight provide us with a chance to evaluate possible examples and be careful with such "Iagos" or "the Jokers" in real life.

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