

Othello – iago, victim or villain

Literature, Russian Literature



When you study a play, you need to be able to see it from two different perspectives simultaneously. You need to be able to imagine and experience the text line by line, sharing the thoughts and feelings of the characters as they go through the events of the play, but at the same time you need to look down at the play as a whole and see the patterns of characters and relationships.

Iago is a fascinating and complex character whom is too complex to analyse in simple terms.

Villains in literature are always a source of scary fun. Shakespeare in Iago has created much more than a villain, Iago is an elaborate character who combines enormous intelligence with an intense impulse to observe others suffering.

As we learn of Iago's hatred for Othello, and see his ability to manipulate others. We see that it is his knowledge of others' characters that gives him his power and are drawn into his appalling plot:

" Hell and night

Must bring this monstrous birth to the world's light"

We see Iago go directly to work Othello, cleverly provoking and playing on his suspicions and making the most of his opportunities.

Iago is very strong and vivid with his imagery of Othello showing discrimination and racism, " An old black ram is tupping your white ewe", this image is very striking in itself ' black' and ' white' have the connotations

of evil and good as well as racial difference, and ‘tupping’ is a term usually applied in farming it implies that sex is something a male does to a female in lust not love. The idea that the ram is ‘old’ adds to the grotesqueness of the image.

Iago is extremely cunning character as he has successfully deceived many characters to make them believe he is loyal and honest, but as we know this isn’t true from having a look into his own egotistically driven philosophy, “I am not what I am” and “I will wear my heart upon my sleeve” these show he is only loyal to himself and will manipulate others to get what he wants. He no longer needs to say much directly though he does explain his plans in depth to us the audience in his soliloquies as shown here,” This may do something”, Iago knows he cannot actually control the other characters completely and his final words to Othello to end the scene are heavy with irony in our ears, “I am your own for ever”.

We perceive Iago to be a kind of ringmaster or puppeteer, Othello sees and hears, as Iago wants to see and hear. Iago has obligatory to address us at all his plot has gained a life of its own which is both unpredictable and dangerous. Iago is shown to be extremely determined and calculated in his as shown consistently throughout his many soliloquies, “This is the night that either makes me or fordoes me quite”. Iago warns us that the outcome of the brawl he is arranging should be beneficial to him whoever is killed. In fact, at last, events turn against him and both Cassio and Roderigo provide evidence against him.

When he is finally exposed, he is attacked with his own lethal weapon, words against him dishonest, villain, villainy, knave, Spartan dog, devil and gross he then decides to renounce the same weapon, in retaliation," What you know, you know from this time forth I never will speak word". It is important to remember that Iago is not, finally in control. Just as his plotting depends on his quick thinking and his skill with words, so, in the end, he is at the mercy of events.

Iago can also be as a victim, a victim of his own ego and his amoral attitude to life and the human race to whom he regards to as being very low and inferior to himself. Prior to the play there is no evidence to show that Iago wasn't honest.

Iago is a comparatively a lowly ranked citizen when compared to Othello and Cassio which is portrayed extremely effectively when his ego is enabled to control him and a uncontrollable force in his search for superior power. Iago is an egotist and a cynic, he is only loyal when it serves him and takes it as a personal insult when Cassio is promoted, and pledges his ego to an uncontrollable force to avenge the damage to his ego and superior belief in himself. Iago uses his strengths and his ability to gain peoples trust to exploit and play with their suspicions to achieve his goal.

In conclusion, Iago plots the destruction of Othello, Desdemona and Cassio; he takes the audience into his confidence within his soliloquies by discussing the demise and downfall of other characters. In a way we are all fellow conspirators, fascinated and repulsed as we observe the character struggle in a web of lies and deceit they don't know exist. In this way, Shakespeare

gives us a strong sense of fate, the characters believe they are acting from choice, but seem to us to be in the grip of a fatal momentum. A pattern emerges for Iago's general hatred for Othello and the entire human race wherein he changes the joy of many others into pain, misery and heartbreak. Iago is portrayed to be racist and discriminative towards Othello, and to believe in white supremacy. Many people watch Iago like a snake devouring a mouse, luring them into position and then going for the kill.

The character of Iago repulses many people and is the only Shakespearian villain not to doubt himself or his evil deeds. But some readers of Othello interpret it as the tragedy of Iago, a good man brought down by his egotistical nature. Other readers perceive a 'tragedy' to mean a waste, a waste of potential talent and intellectual understanding they see Iago as a man tormented by his soul and ego rather than a man whom tormented others.

I see Iago as an extremely clever man whom was brought down by his ego and amoral approach to life he also has hidden characteristics in his tormented and twisted brain these characteristics are enabled to thrive in Iago's egotistical and supremacy driven soul. He enjoys observing others suffer and to accomplish this desire he uses calculated-jealousy and acts of extreme premeditated attacks. One can see Iago is very determined and two-faced upon his deeds where he appears to be sly and destructive upon carrying the evil deeds out. So, I conclude to my essay that Iago and his evil deeds reign supreme among the numerous Shakespearian villains.