

Example of the villain archetype as portrayed through othello and hannibal lecter...

[War](#), [Intelligence](#)



Many stories revolve around the conflict between the hero and the villain - the good guy and the bad guy, both working against each other to achieve their own goals. While most media portrays the hero as the person with whom we are meant to identify, there are many aspects of the villain that are actually indicative of the human condition as well. The best villains show us the darker examples of the human psyche - what we could be capable of doing, and what others could do to us, if we were not stopped by social niceties and our own sense of morality. Two examples of these types of villains include Iago in Shakespeare's Othello, and Hannibal Lecter in the titular movie by Ridley Scott - these villains have very understandable motivations that speak to our darker selves.

In Shakespeare's Othello, Iago is one of the most compelling villains in English literature. Iago's intelligence and wit allows him to make good sport of the protagonists of the play, sending Othello to his doom and that of his family. Iago has the power to manipulate random circumstances to fit his agenda; in the play, he is resentful of Othello for becoming a lieutenant over him. However, his motivations seem to change from scene to scene, constantly manipulating people just so - this is done to a level where one cannot honestly get a bead on what actually drives Iago: "I will wear my heart upon my sleeve for daws to peck at. I am not what I am" (I. 1. 64-65). To that end, Iago's unpredictability, and his complete and utter command of people's emotions, that makes him such a fearful villain. Audiences seeing Iago fear him because he reveals one of our biggest weaknesses: our ability to be duped. We fear the capacity to be wrong, and to make horrible mistakes; Iago represents the capacity to be subjected to false pretences, to

be tricked.

On the opposite end of the spectrum, there is Hannibal Lecter - unlike Iago, he is not necessarily a trickster, but an intellectual. He is a celebrated psychiatrist in his field, and he always has the upper hand in a situation, even when he is behind bars. Hannibal's primary motivation is his psychotic desire to kill and eat human flesh; his intelligence places him on a higher level than most people around him, so he holds those people in contempt. It is only when he meets someone of comparable intelligence, like FBI Agent Clarice Starling, that he truly enjoys the chase, manipulating and taunting them in order to facilitate their pursuit of him: "Your job is to craft my doom. So I am not sure how well I should wish you but I'm sure we'll have a lot of fun. Tata, H" (Scott, 2001).

While Hannibal is a monster, he is a compelling one; he appeals to us because we can witness him do all the things that we cannot even think of doing. His intelligence and demeanor, his confidence draws us in, and his danger makes us fearful. While Iago makes us scared because he can turn us against each other, Hannibal scares us because he will come after us ourselves. No matter what we do to keep ourselves safe, he will think a way around it. Like Iago, Hannibal is also not afraid to get his hands dirty - both have murdered, but Hannibal's love of cannibalism also makes us fear that he will be eaten. In the scene where Hannibal feeds Paul Krendler his own brain, we see the complete power he has over minds, and he disgusts us with the concept of us ingesting the very thing that keeps us alive.

Iago and Hannibal alike are very similar, quite compelling villains. Viewing their mercurial personalities and unclear motivations, our inability to

understand them makes us fearful for the unknown. They also show us our own desire for manipulation and control at times; as they take control of situations, they demonstrate our need to do that as well. The best kinds of villains are the ones that show us the darker sides of ourselves - these infamous villains absolutely qualify for that criteria.