

Tragedizing the Villain: Shakespearean Perspective on Iago as a Tragic Character

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Abstract

Through a critical analysis of Shakespeare's Othello, this study reveals how certain dramatic techniques contribute to the creation of tragic characters, particularly in the case of Iago as a villain. An examination of these techniques shows how Shakespeare blurred the distinction between hero and villain, not only in characters such as Macbeth and Richard III, but also in Iago. The critical analysis demonstrates how Shakespeare affected a moral ambiguity in creating Iago and crafted him as a tragic villain, calling for a sympathetic understanding of his motives and thereby evoking sympathy. Based on the findings, this research supports the use of the term “tragic” for a criminal character like Iago. The study allows for the discussion of the complex relevance of justice to tragedy and tragic characters, as well as its implications for contemporary culture and pedagogy, in which popular culture figures, such as the Joker of Marvel Comics, are discussed as tragic only because they are given sad backstories.

Keywords: Elizabethan tragedy, Iago, Othello, tragic villain, Shakespearean tragedy, Shakespearean villain.