

Iago's Use of Language and Villainous Behavior in Shakespeare's Othello

In Othello, Shakespeare forms the villainous character, Iago through his complex language. Iago shows his evil nature towards Roderigo through his use of demeaning animal imagery. Iago also uses an extended metaphor to try and trick the ignorant Roderigo and (unknowingly to Roderigo), insults him. Lastly, Iago uses repetition to beguile Roderigo to keep paying him. Iago's slyness is clearly seen through his deceiving language towards the end of Act I.

In Act I, scene iii, line 319, Iago addresses the issue of love and lust through an extended metaphor. In this speech, after Roderigo says he wants to kill himself, Iago tries to convince Roderigo not to end ...show more content...

Because nettles, hyssop, and thyme can all be referred to as weeds, Roderigo gives a negative tone. However, this is not the only place where it is seen that Iago uses negativity.

Iago also uses animal imagery to beguile the ignorant Roderigo. In Act I, scene iii, line 314, Iago uses degrading terms again in his dialogue; he states, "Ere I would say I would drown myself for the love of a guinea hen, I would change my humanity with a baboon." By expressing this, Iago is saying that he would rather be a baboon than kill himself for a woman. The terms guinea hen, being a negative term for a woman, and baboon, being a racial label, are both stated with the intent to insult Roderigo. Iago also states, "Come, be a man. Drown thyself? Drown cats and blind puppies!" (Act I, scene iii, line 334) which infers that Roderigo is weak and juvenile. Iago uses demeaning animal imagery to express his thoughts towards the end of Act I.

Lastly, Iago uses repetition in the plot against Othello. In lines 337- 355, Iago reiterates the statement, "put money in thy purse" to convince Iago not to give up on trying to pursue Desdemona. Iago wants Roderigo to keep his feelings for Desdemona so that he can be successful in his plot and plan accordingly. Iago also uses the statement "put money in thy purse" for Roderigo to pay him. Iago craftily uses his repetition to assure ignorant Roderigo's part.