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AP Literature and Composition

564 Words

A Change of Heart

The third and fourth acts of William Shakespeare’s play *Othello* many events take place.

Although many events took place during these two acts, the events of act three held my attention. It was fascinating to see how Iago plays the roll of a spider, intricately weaving a delicate web between unstable objects. A single miscalculation, a gust of wind perhaps, could send one of the objects tumbling to the ground, taking Iago along with it. Iago plays with fire when he tells Cassio that he will “…devise a mean to draw the Moor/Out of the way…” and instead goes to Othello. (III.i.40-41) When he and Othello walk in on Cassio talking to Othello’s wife, Desdemona, the actions takeover the words. Cassio flees and Othello wonders why. This plants the seed of suspicion in Othello’s mind, ready to be nurtured and reaped by Iago. After Desdemona departs, Iago informs Othello that he suspects that Cassio might not be honorable. Othello denies these accusations, but not entirely.

Once Desdemona enters the room again, Othello speaks of a headache, which Desdemona offers to cure by wrapping a handkerchief, which was her first present she received from Othello, around his head to stop the pain. It is after this exchange that the greatest act of symbolism is placed. Othello tells her it “…is too little…” and the handkerchief falls to the floor unnoticed. (III.iii.300) This symbolizes the love that is falling swiftly out of their relationship. The handkerchief itself symbolizes how frail their love is. It is left on the ground, ready to be stolen on by passers-by. This is exactly what Iago, through his wife Emilia, did. He later planted the handkerchief in Cassio’s room as a way to prove to Othello that Cassio was having inappropriate relations with his wife, thus ending Othello and Dedemona’s relationship forever.

I found it interesting to see how fast Othello was to trust Iago. He completely threw away his life with a woman he loved based off of some accusations by a stranger. Maybe he should go into politics, seeing as how he can change his mind at the flick of a switch… He didn’t even have PROOF that his wife was cheating on him with Cassio. He was simply taking the word of Iago as if it were true. If I were in his place, I would have done my own investigating, without having anyone else involved.

Thoughts turn into actions in Act 4 Scene 2. Iago tells Roderigo that Desdemona will leave with Othello unless he can delay them. Iago suggests that the best way for Roderigo to delay them is by killing Cassio. This would be the perfect way to finish his little web. Roderigo would be happy because he could marry Desdemona, while Iago would get to be the lieutenant. Perfect for everyone right? The only problem is that Roderigo wants more justification to kill Cassio. Although the killing isn’t mentioned anymore in Act 4, it is likely the Roderigo will simply believe Iago, much like Othello, and will take his lies as if they were the truth. That seems to be the theme in this play: blindly follow a person no matter what crazy things they say.

I am interested to see how the rest of this play pans out. I think that Othello will end up killing Desdemona and that Roderigo will kill Cassio.

**Works Cited**

Shakespeare, William, and Barbara A. Mowat. *The Tragedy of Othello, the Moor of Venice*. New York: Washington Square, 2004. Print.