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How does Iago convince Othello to kill Cassio and Desdemona by the end of Act Three? Act Three of Othello begins with Othello having no doubts at all concerning his wife's fidelity and the happiness of their marriage, and ends with him almost totally convinced of her false guilt of being in an affair despite having very little evidence to prove it and no reason to want it to be true. His complete certainty comes rather from the manipulative skill of his ensign Iago who uses three principal broad categories of tactics to convince Othello of Desdemona's culpability.

Iago's first and favoured tactic at the beginning of Act Three, Scene Three (the pivotal scene in which he brainwashes Othello) is that of subtly delivering half-completed ideas and ambiguous statements to reel Othello into this body of lies and entice him into questioning Desdemona's fidelity. This begins when Cassio, whom Iago is trying to frame as Desdemona's lover, takes his leave from the scene. Desdemona says to Cassio 'Well, do your discretion', to which Iago replies 'Ha, I like not that' (3. 3. 34).

By saying that he does not like the idea of Cassio being free to do as he pleases, Iago implies that Cassio is doing something wrong and going unnoticed, thus sowing the initial seeds of doubt in Othello's mind. When Othello begins to question him as to what he's seemingly keeping secret, Iago masterfully uses hesitation to convey half-completed ideas and further snare Othello. For instance, when asked what he is saying by Othello, he answers 'Nothing, my lord; or if- I know not what.' (3. 3. 36) The pause after 'if' conveys the idea that there is more to the story and, also, that Othello doesn't want to hear it.

This supposedly evasive answer intrigues Othello and allows Iago to proceed later on with bolder persuasion. Iago exercises other methods to communicate supposed unsettled, half-formed ideas, such as in his monologue in Act Three Scene Three lines 147-157, which is a vague, tangled, and convoluted expression of the horribleness of his thoughts, containing sudden pauses and spoken in the more awkward and disorganised prose form. This all serves to give the impression that Iago is hiding something and to frustrate Othello, which works, since when Iago is done Othello exclaims 'Zounds! What dost thou mean? '.

It is clear that early on Iago's rhetorical tactics successfully lure Othello into doubt and lay the foundations for Iago's forthcoming more concrete convincing of Othello. In addition to these rhetorical tactics is Iago's use of subliminal influence to win Othello over to his side. Iago makes remarks that, on the surface, are positive, but are actually meant to convince Othello of Cassio and Desdemona's guilt. For example, when Othello asks Iago why he asked him whether Cassio knew about Othello and Desdemona's love from the beginning of their relationship, Iago replies 'But for the satisfaction of my thought,/ No further harm' (3. 3. 97-8).

Ostensibly this seems like a good thing for Othello, but Iago is implying two things that would indicate harm: first, that Iago has a curious thought about Cassio and Desdemona that needs to be satisfied and, second, that harm has already been done. Later on in the scene, when Othello claims that he does not believe that Desdemona is cheating on him, Iago says 'Long live she [as loyal]; and long live you to think so' (3. 3. 230). Once again Iago is outwardly

looking at the situation in a good light, but beneath the surface he is suggesting that Othello is being naive.

This obviously works, because on the next line Othello has begun to worry once again. Iago uses another aporia to sway Othello when he says ' For Michael Cassio, I dare be sworn, I think, that he is honest' (3. 3. 127-8). The two caesurae in this line emphasise the daring and the thinking, both expressions of doubt. Therefore, Iago weakens his own point so that Cassio's honesty is subject to much doubt in Othello's mind. Furthermore, line 128 has eleven syllables, by contrast to the rest of the passage's lines which, written in iambic pentameter, have ten syllables.

This extra syllable does not fit in with the meter, and so implies that Iago's claim that Cassio is honest is not quite correct: the word doesn't quite hold. Once more Iago is knowingly undermining his statements to inflate Othello's doubt that they are true. Moreover, in this line Iago says that he ' dare be sworn' that Cassio is not cheating with Desdemona. Using the word ' dare' insinuates a risk in doing so and, what's more, this phrase uses vocabulary often used in law courts, which entails a crime.

This phrase which seems to intend to comfort Othello is actually a threatening accusation against Cassio (and hence Desdemona). Later on, once Othello seems completely certain of his wife and Cassio's guilt, Iago uses similar subliminal influencing to beguile Othello into killing the two. He says, as the two are kneeling and promising that they will unite to achieve revenge, Iago says: '... Iago doth give up The execution of his wit, hands, heart, To wronged Othello's service' (3. 3. 468-70).

Using the word 'execution' with its double meaning while talking about revenge implants the idea into Othello's mind that his revenge should take the form of murder. Iago reinforces this shortly afterwards by accepting Othello's order to kill Cassio, and then saying 'But let her live' (3. 3. 477). In this way Iago is influencing Othello to do the exact opposite of the words' surface meaning by reminding him of how he hasn't ordered anything to be done about her and, since Othello's hatred for Desdemona is currently at its peak, it is the perfect time to induce an order for murder out of him.

Iago's subliminal influences also come in the form of getting into Othello's head in order that he may be more subject to passion than any rationality and therefore believe more of what he is told and leap to more rash conclusions and decisions. For instance, Iago gives supposed evidence of Desdemona's affair by talking about seeing Cassio using a handkerchief of Desdemona: 'I know not that, but such a handkerchief, I am sure it was your wife's, did I today See Cassio wipe his beard with'. (3. 3. 440-2)

This powerful visual image of Cassio using a handkerchief, which Othello so cherishes and which represents his love for Desdemona, in such a base and unrefined way is likely to cloud Othello's good judgement and have his impulses lead him to accept what Iago says as the truth. Iago also tries to get into Othello's head by bringing up past words when he says 'She did deceive her father, marrying you' (3. 3. 209), which calls back to the powerfully resonant lines of Brabantio in Act One 'Look to her, Moor, if thou hast eyes to see:/ She has deceived her father, and may thee'.

Iago's paraphrasing of these lines serves to convince him of Desdemona's deception by convincing him that it was fated, and these lines which are haunting for Othello do this successfully. The final factors that render Iago so effective at convincing Othello are his flexibility and competence at tailoring his persuasive tactics to Othello's emotions and vulnerability at any time, and his brilliant sense of timing.

Iago seems to know exactly when his intervention is or is not required; for instance when Desdemona starts talking about how much she likes Cassio and how she sometimes talks badly about Othello behind his back, Iago stays silent for minutes despite being in the scene, because his plan is going well as Desdemona damages her relationship with Othello on her own, Iago's plan having previously been set, and the current dialogue does not need to be intervened with or adjusted for the plan to work. This is testament to Iago's flexibility, which is also demonstrated when Othello demands ocular proof of Desdemona's infidelity.

To deal with this, Iago uses Desdemona's handkerchief which he has just been given to quickly devise a plot which later serves as ocular proof for Othello. Iago here knew that Othello needed to see the 'ocular' proof quickly while he was still vulnerable, and Iago's thinking on his feet led to Othello being even further convinced by his supposed theory. Iago also displays an excellent ability to assess how vulnerable Othello is at any point, and hence how bold he can be.

For example, only once Othello is vulnerable enough and he knows that he is safe does Iago first explicitly suggest adultery: he says 'That cuckold lives in

bliss/ Who, certain of his fate, loves not his wronger'. By claiming that confusion is worse than both ignorance and certainty, Iago is both sympathising with Othello and implying that he now may as well know, thus explicitly suggesting Desdemona's infidelity in the safest possible way. Furthermore, when a depressed Othello says ' And yet how nature, erring from itself-' (3. 3. 230), Iago senses the weakness and cuts Othello off, then delivers a long speech about the absurdity of Othello's marriage and convinces him of this fabricated affair.

In conclusion, Iago draws Othello in and then skilfully persuades him that Cassio and Desdemona should die by using an array of linguistic and rhetorical tricks and by paying close attention to Othello's sentiments and desires so that he is transformed from not suspecting anything to wanting to kill his wife and her alleged lover within three days. Iago uses his own skill and his knowledge of Othello's jealous nature to achieve his sinister ambitions.