

In words are
influenced by his
newly-risen

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In the soliloquy, “ ‘Tis now the very witching time of night,” Hamlet reveals the underlying tension caused by the discord between his duty and his true feelings. Externally, he professes the desire to avenge his father’s murder, but his words are contradicted by his inability to take action due to his love for his mother. Prior to the soliloquy, Hamlet’s suspicions of the ghost have been allayed, as he has perceived Polonius’s reaction to the scene imitating his father’s death. Polonius’s sudden exit from the play proves his guilt, thereby necessitating that Hamlet obey the ghost and avenge his father’s murder, as his duty as a son requires him to do. At the beginning of his soliloquy, Hamlet prepares himself to take revenge, claiming, “ ‘Tis now the very witching time of night, When churchyards yawn, and hell itself breathes out” (3.

2. 360-362). Hamlet’s words “ witching,” “ churchyards yawning,” and “ hell... breathing out” refer to the dead rising, as witches raise corpses from their graves, churchyards contain cemeteries filled with dead bodies, and ghosts rise from hell.

His descriptions reveal that his words are influenced by his newly-risen dead father, or more specifically, the duty to avenge his father. Hamlet claims to be capable of this vengeance: “ Now could I drink hot blood, And do such business as the bitter day Would quake to look on” (3. 2.

362-364). Hamlet claims that he is capable of “ drinking hot blood,” ingesting the foulness of “ witching” and doing whatever is necessary to avenge his father. He also claims that the “ day,” associated with light and purity, “ would quake,” or tremble with fear, if it observed Hamlet’s deeds.

Hamlet's words align with his perceived duty, as he professes his willingness to commit even the foulest of deeds in order to avenge his father's death. His words therefore reflect how he thinks he should act after discovering his father's murder. However, when Hamlet next thinks of his mother, he reveals an inner conflict between the duty to avenge his father and his inability to fully act on this perceived duty due to his love for his mother. As he contemplates his plan to confront his mother, Hamlet develops a conflicted tone: "O heart, lose not thy nature!" (3.

2. 365-367). Immediately after proclaiming the foul endeavors he is capable and willing to complete, Hamlet exclaims that he does not want to "lose" the true "nature" of his "heart," implying that his professed intentions for revenge are at odds with his true feelings. Consequently, Hamlet resolves to carry out vengeance by "speaking daggers" to his mother, but he refuses to physically "use" the daggers (3. 2. 368).

This decision contradicts Hamlet's previous claim that he is capable of murderous "business" that would make the "day" "quake" in order to avenge his father; he cannot bring himself to physically hurt his mother. He acknowledges this inner conflict, claiming, "My tongue and soul in this be hypocrites" (3. 2. 369). By stating that his "tongue," or his words, and his "soul," or his true feelings, contradict, Hamlet implies that he truly does not hate his mother, but must be "cruel" in order to fulfill his duty (3.

2. 367). He concludes his soliloquy saying, "How in my words soever she be shent, To give them seals never my soul consent" (3. 2. 370-371).

In this final statement, Hamlet claims that his “soul” will never allow him to act on the harsh “words” that “shent,” or berate, his mother, revealing a discord between his true feelings and the role of a son dutifully committing even the foulest of deeds to avenge his father’s murder.