

Macbeth soliloquy

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Macbeth's Soliloquy In Macbeth's soliloquy Shakespeare uses many rhetorical devices to magnify Macbeth's change in attitude about killing Duncan. Two of the main rhetorical devices used in the soliloquy are rhetorical questions and allusions to Hecate and Tarquin. These two devices help Shakespeare depict the change in Macbeth's attitude about killing Duncan and also represent his decision to kill Duncan. Macbeth's rhetorical questions share his lack of clarity and conviction to kill Duncan while the allusions represent his decision forming and becoming clear to him.

At the beginning of Macbeth's soliloquy Shakespeare uses rhetorical questions to represent Macbeth's feelings about killing Duncan. In the first seven lines we see three rhetorical questions. These questions lead into the conversation Macbeth has with himself to decide if he will kill Duncan. At the beginning of the soliloquy he seems unsure if he actually wants to go through with the plan. This uncertainty is represented by his uncertainty of the dagger's existence. The first question he asks is whether or not he actually sees a dagger in front of him.

It is a simple question but leads us into the others. The second question he asks is if the dagger was sent by a "fatal vision" (II. i. 35). Here, the word fatal acts as a double entendre. Fatal can either mean someone's destiny or it can mean a deadly action and in this case it works with both definitions. Macbeth wonders if it is his fate to kill Duncan with the dagger and the dagger is the deadly weapon that will be used to kill Duncan later on in the play. The final question Macbeth asks himself is whether this dagger is real or not and if it is formed by his "heat-oppressed brain" (II. i. 38).

The fact that he does not even know if he really sees a dagger or not makes it clear to the audience that he is going crazy over the thought of killing Duncan. When Macbeth asks himself this question he is wondering whether he really wants to kill Duncan or if he is just caught in the moment. Later in the soliloquy he even says “[his] eyes are made...fools” (II. i. 43) and that it is “ the bloody business which informs/ [the dagger] to [his] eyes” (II. i. 47-48). Since the dagger is not real we know Shakespeare is telling us that Macbeth is thinking about killing Duncan but is still too scared to actually do it.

As the soliloquy progresses, and so does his idea of killing Duncan, he starts talking about more concrete ideas, such as witchcraft, and this represents his growing desire to kill Duncan. In the second half of the soliloquy Macbeth finally decides to kill Duncan. When Macbeth says “ now o’er the one half-world” (II. i. 48) he is talking about the time when people are asleep, or nighttime. While he does this he alludes to two famous and immoral people, the goddess Hecate and the Roman King Tarquin. At the time when Shakespeare was alive the audience knew who Shakespeare was referring when Macbeth said the names Tarquin and Hecate.

This simple connection would allow the audience to understand where Macbeth’s decision would go and why he finally came to that decision. Shakespeare draws many parallels between Macbeth and these two people. Shakespeare alludes to Hecate because she was the goddess of magic, witchcraft, the night, the moon, ghosts, and necromancy. All of these things are affiliated with evil and when Macbeth says that “ witchcraft celebrates/Pale Hecate’s offerings” (II. i. 50-51) he is trying to persuade

himself that even though she is the goddess of these evil things, people still celebrate her and something good may come from killing Duncan.

Shakespeare draws a parallel between Hecate and Macbeth because Macbeth finally decides he will kill Duncan after the bell rings in the same way Hecate's ritual sacrifices were summoned by the wolf's howl. Shakespeare also connects Macbeth to Tarquin in a similar way. Tarquin became the King of Rome by killing King Tullius. After Tarquin became the King of Rome he started a reign of terror. Besides killing King Tullius, Tarquin put many senators to death, his son raped a woman named Lucretia and eventually the Tarquin family was banished from Italy.

By connecting Tarquin to Macbeth Shakespeare wants to show that they both knew what they were doing before committing the crime and chose to do it anyway. Also, Shakespeare is showing Macbeth's change from an innocent man to a ruthless king whether Macbeth wants that or not and we see this later on in the play when Macbeth orders men to kill Banquo and his son, Fleance in fear that they may try to overthrow him. Shakespeare ends the soliloquy by saying that the " words to the heat of deeds too cold breath gives" (II. i. 60). By ending the soliloquy with this statement shows the change in Macbeth's decision to kill Duncan and become king.

The reason why Shakespeare included the soliloquy into the play is to show the audience how Macbeth finally comes to the decision to kill Duncan. Through the rhetorical devices used in the soliloquy Shakespeare is able to give the audience insight on how Macbeth goes from a guiltless man with no gall to a cold blood killer. We know by the end of it Macbeth has decided to kill Duncan and when the bell rings he goes to Duncan's room to complete

the job. We also know that later on he sends men to kill more people in order to keep his position as king and it is much easier for him to make that decision.