

STUDY MANUAL FOR SEM2, ENGLISH HONOURS

First Soliloquy, *MACBETH* [Act1, scene3]

- “Two truths are told.....” [l 129- 1144]
- Macbeth’s soliloquies are journey into his innermost mind, which is the seat of his primaeval fears, desires and feelings which he hides from the rest of the world.
- The soliloquies therefore, echo Macbeth’s inner REALITY as against the formal public speeches which represent his APPEARANCE.
- He makes it clear that the “imperial theme” – ascension to the throne of Scotland – is the crescendo of his achievement . This is the inner desire that he has carefully hidden from the world.
- Macbeth represents the Renaissance man of intellect and obviously uses analytical reasoning to start his argument .
- The encounter with the witches cannot be evil or else it would not have started with an intimation of truth – he is indeed the Thane of Cawdor as had been predicted by the witches. Macbeth chooses to ignore his FOIL Banquo’s logical warning that the “instruments of darkness” begin with “honest trifles” to win our trust, paving the way for the final downfall.
- But then he questions the “horrid image” [murder of Duncan by him] that has been created in his imagination which makes him act “against the use of nature” .
- The use of the SPLIT HUMAN BODY image indicates the inner chaos in Macbeth. Just as a State loses its unity due to civil war, so also the ORGANIC UNITY of the human body is disrupted by unnatural impulses.
- Macbeth’s vivid imagination is stirred and his language becomes poetic. He has a strong awareness about the unnaturalness of his desires, but is drawn to the intoxicating “image” created by his fancy. The most unique attribute of Macbeth’s character – his vivid imagination is highlighted by his soliloquies.
- The last line indicates a shift of paradigm from the realm of rationality to the sphere of irrationality. If Macbeth accepts the “unreal” as his reality, he will violate the Renaissance ideal and this will mark the beginning of his downfall.
- The soliloquy is structured as an argument beginning with the speculative “If” . It shows that the speaker is in a dilemma- he has not yet made up his mind . The “horrid image” that unsettles him , represents his “ID”- the primitive urge nurtured by his inner psyche. Evidently a moment of suspense is created- which way will the protagonist go?
- A few lines later Macbeth decide s to leave it all to Destiny, like the typical protagonist of a classical tragedy: “If chance will have me king, why chance may crown me, / Without my stir” . The word “may” is a dead giveaway – it indicates his inner doubts. But for the present at least Macbeth has decided to leave it to “Time, and the hour” .

Prepared by

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