

## **The Role of 'Soliloquy' in Shakespeare's Macbeth in Revealing the real character of Macbeth**

**A research Paper**

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### **ملخص**

يستخدم اغلب الكتاب المسرحيين ادوات متنوعة في مؤلفاتهم. مناجاة النفس احدى هذه الادوات التي جرى استخدامها في العصر الاليزابيثي وما تبعه بغية التعبير عما يدور في خلجات النفس البشرية من مشاعر واحاسيس وتدبير لفعل معين وهذا بدور هسيوثر في القاري والجمهور. كان الكاتب العالمي الكبير شيكسبير احد أولئك الذين استخدموا هذه الاداة في اغلب مسرحياته وخاصة التراجيدية منها كعطيل وهاملت ومكبث. موضوع دراستنا هو عن دور هذه الاداة في كشف اسرار وخفايا ومؤامرات شخصية مكبث في مسرحية مكبث لشكسبير. نناقش فيها انواع هذه الاداة واغراضها وتأثيرها على الشخصية نفسها من جهة وعلى القاري والجمهور من جهة اخرى. اذ كشفت هذه الاداة عن مراحل تطور شخصية مكبث في المسرحية كما ازاحت الستار عن كثير من خفاياها.

### **Abstract**

Most of the playwrights used various devices in their literary works. Soliloquy was one of these devices which is believed that it belongs to the Elizabethan Times, in order to express; the thoughts of human beings, feelings, emotions and the expected plans, so this will affect on the reader and the audience. Shakespeare was the most popular dramatist who used the device of soliloquy in most of his plays especially the

tragedies like; Othello, Hamlet and Macbeth. This study deals the the role of such device to reveal the secrets, hidden plans and the conspiracies the character of Macbeth in Shakespeare's Macbeth. It also discusses the types, purposes and the effects of it on the character itself on one hand, and on the reader and the audience on the other hand. As it unveiled the stages of the progress of the character of Macbeth in the play as well as a lot of its mysteries.

## **Introduction**

Unlike the novel, in drama, the characters talk to one another and the dramatists use various devices to express the feelings or thoughts of those characters. Most of the playwrights use the device soliloquy in different types for some purposes.

It is believed that the term soliloquy belongs to the Elizabethan Times, in which Shakespeare was the most popular dramatist who used the device of soliloquy in most of his plays.

Shakespeare used the device soliloquy in most of his plays like Othello, Hamlet as well as Macbeth. In the tragedy of Macbeth, Shakespeare used this device for some purposes which participate in revealing the real character of in this play. There are seven soliloquies said by Macbeth in this play. He used all the types of soliloquies for the main purpose of revealing the real character of Macbeth.

### **1. The Origin of the Term Soliloquy**

The word soliloquy is derived from the Latin word "solo" Means "to himself" and "loquor" means "I speak" respectively. (Cuddon, 1999:838)

Long soliloquies were popular in the revenge tragedies of Elizabethan Times, Shakespeare was the most popular playwright who used this device in most of his plays. It is believed that he has used it in 12 of his plays.

(Skiffington, 1985: 86)

The word is believed to be coined and used by Augustine in his treatise "liber soliloquirom". The origin of the word can be traced back to 1595-1605. (Crystal & Crystal, 2004:106)

## **2. Definitions of "soliloquy"**

The term soliloquy has been defined by many scholars, critics and publishers. Below are some of them:

- ❖ It is a literary device through which the speaker speaks out his feelings, thought and intentions but in his mind or silently.
- ❖ Merriam-Webster Dictionary (1994:880) defines the word soliloquy as (a) "a dramatic monologue that represents a series of unspoken reflection".  
(b) "the act of talking to oneself".
- ❖ Hirsh (2003) defines the word soliloquy as a speech spoken by a single actor who does not intend the words to be heard by any other character.
- ❖ Longman dictionary (1994) defines soliloquy as a speech in a play in which a character usually alone on the stage, talks to himself or herself so the audience knows their thoughts.

❖ Abrams (1999:289) also defines "soliloquy" as "is the act of talking to oneself, whether silently or aloud. In drama it denotes the convention by which a character, alone on the stage, utters his or her thoughts aloud.

It is a popular literary device often used in a drama to reveal the inner thoughts of character. It is the most important device used in the play as it is revealing either the past or present or the future deeds or intentions of the character.

It is also a monologue spoken by an actor at a point in the play when the character believes himself to be alone.

### **3. The purposes of using soliloquy**

#### **3-1- Telling truth or facts**

Any soliloquy is spoken by a character to himself and to the reader or the audience, so it carries information either about other characters or an event, an action that will happen. This information must be true. The fourth soliloquy in Macbeth, for example is telling truth or facts about Macbeth, his throne, Banquo and his future. ([www.web.cn.edu/kwheeler/lit-term-s](http://www.web.cn.edu/kwheeler/lit-term-s))

#### **Macbeth act III, scene I**

To be thus is nothing;  
But to be safely thus.—Our fears in Banquo  
Stick deep; and in his royalty of nature  
Reigns that which would be fear'd: 'tis much he dares;  
And, to that dauntless temper of his mind,  
He hath a wisdom that doth guide his valour  
To act in safety. There is none but he  
Whose being I do fear: and, under him,

My Genius is rebuked; as, it is said,  
Mark Antony's was by Caesar. He chid the sisters  
When first they put the name of king upon me,  
And bade them speak to him: then prophet-like  
They hail'd him father to a line of kings:  
Upon my head they placed a fruitless crown,  
And put a barren sceptre in my gripe,  
Thence to be wrench'd with an unlineal hand,  
No son of mine succeeding. If 't be so,  
For Banquo's issue have I filed my mind;  
For them the gracious Duncan have I murder'd;  
Put rancours in the vessel of my peace  
Only for them; and mine eternal jewel  
Given to the common enemy of man,  
To make them kings, the seed of Banquo kings!  
Rather than so, come fate into the list.  
And champion me to the utterance! Who's there!

### **3-2- Telling intentions or thoughts**

The most important purpose of soliloquy is the telling of intentions and the inner thoughts or plans he wants to do in the upcoming days. This purpose supports the plot of the play and helps to get the attentions of the reader or audience. The fifth soliloquy in Macbeth, for example, reveals the intentions and plans of Macbeth as he mentioned that he will kill Macduff and his wife and children. ([www.leavingcertenglish.net/essay](http://www.leavingcertenglish.net/essay))

#### **Macbeth Act IV, Scene I**

Time, thou anticipatest my dread exploits:  
The flighty purpose never is o'ertook  
Unless the deed go with it; from this moment  
The very firstlings of my heart shall be  
The firstlings of my hand. And even now,  
To crown my thoughts with acts, be it thought and done:  
The castle of Macduff I will surprise;

Seize upon Fife; give to the edge o' the sword  
His wife, his babes, and all unfortunate souls  
That trace him in his line. No boasting like a fool;  
This deed I'll do before this purpose cool.  
But no more sights!—Where are these gentlemen?  
Come, bring me where they are.

### **3-3- Telling past, present, future actions**

As it deals with telling plans of the future or upcoming days, soliloquy also tells about the past and what has been done yesterday, but still secrets for other characters, the become clear or revealed for the reader or audience only. Macbeth in his last soliloquy tells; the past, the present and the future as he talks about the previous day and his present days and also about tomorrow.

#### **Macbeth Act V, Scene V**

She should have died hereafter;  
There would have been a time for such a word.  
To-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow,  
Creeps in this petty pace from day to day  
To the last syllable of recorded time,  
And all our yesterdays have lighted fools  
The way to dusty death. Out, out, brief candle!  
Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player  
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage  
And then is heard no more: it is a tale  
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,  
Signifying nothing.

### **3-4- Revealing the real personality of the character**

This purpose comprises all the former purposes because we as readers or audience know the real character by knowing; the truth of his actions, his intentions or plans, what was done in the past and what

he is going to do. All the above information helps us to know the real personality of Macbeth.

### **Macbeth Act I, Scene III**

His supernatural soliciting

Cannot be ill, cannot be good: if ill,

Why hath it given me earnest of success,

Commencing in a truth? I amthane of Cawdor:

If good, why do I yield to that suggestion

Whose horrid image doth unfix my hair

And make my seated heart knock at my ribs,

Against the use of nature? Present fears

Are less than horrible imaginings:

My thought, whose murder yet is but fantastical,

Shakes so my single state of man that function

Is smother'd in surmise, and nothing is

But what is not.

## **4. Types of "Soliloquy"**

There are four types of soliloquy. The type of each soliloquy depends on the character and the situation for which the soliloquy has been said.

### **4-1- Plain Soliloquy**

It is the most popular type. In this type, the character or the speaker talks to himself\herself alone without any other character on the stage.

This kind of soliloquy is the one by which the character talks to himself\herself as well as to the audience. sees that Shakespeare regarded audience

address in the midst of action as a ridiculous device.(Hirsh, 2003:199)

**Macbeth Act III, Scene I**

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But to be safely thus.—Our fears in Banquo  
Stick deep; and in his royalty of nature  
Reigns that which would be fear'd: 'tis much he dares;  
And, to that dauntless temper of his mind,  
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#### **4-2- Attended Soliloquy**

It is also called "aside" by which the character is not alone on the stage but he\she is in accompany with one or more characters. In this case, the character by some motions and gestures talks to himself\herself and tells the audience something.(Hirsh, 2003:126-127)

#### **Macbeth Act IV, Scene I**

Time, thou anticipatest my dread exploits:  
The flighty purpose never is o'ertook  
Unless the deed go with it; from this moment  
The very firstlings of my heart shall be  
The firstlings of my hand. And even now,  
To crown my thoughts with acts, be it thought and done:  
The castle of Macduff I will surprise;  
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#### **4-3- Soliloquy with props**

In this type, the soliloquy is used with prop or props whether there is a character on the stage or not and regardless of the number characters who may be there on the stage. (Tucker, 1997: 149)

#### **Macbeth Act V, Scene III**

Seyton!—I am sick at heart,  
When I behold—Seyton, I say!—This push  
Will cheer me ever, or disseat me now.  
I have lived long enough: my way of life

Is fall'n into the sear, the yellow leaf;  
And that which should accompany old age,  
As honour, love, obedience, troops of friends,  
I must not look to have; but, in their stead,  
Curses, not loud but deep, mouth-honour, breath,  
Which the poor heart would fain deny, and dare not.  
Seyton!

#### **4-4- Soliloquy as Dialogue**

The name of this type tells us that it is a kind of dialogue, but, in fact is not a dialogue between two characters, it is between the reader of a speech and the writer of the speech delivered to the audience. (Tucker, 1997: 165)

#### **Macbeth Act I, Scene V**

They met me in the day of success: and I have  
learned by the perfectest report, they have more in  
them than mortal knowledge. When I burned in desire  
to question them further, they made themselves air,  
into which they vanished. Whiles I stood rapt in  
the wonder of it, came missives from the king, who  
all-hailed me 'Thane of Cawdor;' by which title,  
before, these weird sisters saluted me, and referred  
me to the coming on of time, with 'Hail, king that  
shalt be!' This have I thought good to deliver  
thee, my dearest partner of greatness, that thou  
mightst not lose the dues of rejoicing, by being  
ignorant of what greatness is promised thee. Lay it  
to thy heart, and farewell.'

Glamis thou art, and Cawdor; and shalt be  
What thou art promised: yet do I fear thy nature;  
It is too full o' the milk of human kindness  
To catch the nearest way: thou wouldst be great;  
Art not without ambition, but without

The illness should attend it: what thou wouldst highly,  
That wouldst thou holily; wouldst not play false,  
And yet wouldst wrongly win: thou'ldst have, great  
Glamis,  
That which cries 'Thus thou must do, if thou have it;  
And that which rather thou dost fear to do  
Than wishest should be undone.' Hie thee hither,  
That I may pour my spirits in thine ear;  
And chastise with the valour of my tongue  
All that impedes thee from the golden round,  
Which fate and metaphysical aid doth seem  
To have thee crown'd withal.

## **5. The effect of each soliloquy on; Macbeth, the reader, or audience**

### **5-1- Act I, Scene III**

**5-1-1- Analysis:** in this soliloquy, Macbeth discusses the prophecy of the witches as it has come true and he becomes the thane of Cawdor. Then starts to ask himself "why do I have to submit to the temptation" and tells himself that he has much evils in his mind and he is not ready to receive more.

**5-1-2- Effect on Macbeth:** it seems that Macbeth is completely confused between believing what the witches has said and the impossibility of achieving the prophecy of the witches. He also tells himself that the first prophecy has come true without killing or taking the position of anyone by force, but by struggle and victories. Simultaneously, he gives himself a hope of the next prophecy that may come true in the future.

**5-1-3- Effect on the reader or the audience:** For the audience, it reveals and ensures that; Macbeth is the

main character in the play and supports the aspects of Macbeth's character.

The reader knows that all the prophecies of the witches will come true, but how will it be done. So this soliloquy reveals for the reader that Macbeth will be the king without giving the method by which he will be. (Clemen, 1987:78)

### **5-2- Act I, Scene VII**

**5-2-1- Analysis:** in this soliloquy, Macbeth seems not to be fully convinced of killing Duncan. But at the same time he wants and wishes to finish this case regardless of the method.

**5-2-2- Effect on Macbeth:** He wishes to finish the matter soon without leaving any evidence as he talks about the ability of doing it fast and returns to blame himself for doing such a thing with this person as he was one of his soldiers and fellows and he is his guest and must offer him his service and to kill him. But again he at last has to do it.

**5-2-3- Effect on the reader or the audience:** the reader or the audience sees that Macbeth will commit the crime regardless of the method by which he will kill him. The reader knows that Macbeth is a good man by nature, but the conditions or situations lead him to commit such a crime such as; the meeting between Macbeth and the witches, the prophecy of becoming the king of Scotland, and the encouragement of his wife to commit it. (Turcker, 1997:69)

### **5-3- Act II, Scene I**

**5-3-1- Analysis:** This soliloquy carries a message of insurance that Macbeth will commit his crime. The conversation between him and the dagger means

that he is going to commit it and the dagger is the tool of the crime.

**5-3-2- Effect on Macbeth:**The effect of this soliloquy on Macbeth seems to be that he is fully submitted to the calls of his wife who is considered the most evil woman in English literature, so he decided to commit the crime regardless of the consequences.

**5-3-3- Effect on the reader or the audience:** This soliloquy has changed the opinion of the reader and the audience about Macbeth as he was a nobleman and a brave soldier. The soldier who got the trust of the king and got the honour of being the thane of Cawdor. So this soliloquy can be considered as the point of change from nobleness into villainy. It was also a great disappointment for reader who admired of the character of Macbeth the brave soldier.  
(Brdley, 1957:89)

#### **5-4- Act III, Scene I**

**5-4-1- Analysis:** In this soliloquy, Macbeth seems to be afraid about his throne. He is afraid of Banquo, his friend, who according to Macbeth has a strong personality, and is a brave and wise man. Besides all these merits, he has been told by the witches that he will be the father of kings.

This soliloquy also means that Macbeth has committed this crime for the sake of Banquo and his sons.

**5-4-2- Effect on Macbeth:** it is one of the most important soliloquy in the play as it reveals that Macbeth starts to regret his crime and he has committed the crime for the sake of others. He realized the danger of Banquo, and he has to kill him as he has been told by the witches that he will be the father of kings.

**5-4-3- Effect on the reader or the audience:** The reader has been directed to the point that Macbeth is going to kill his friend Banquo after he had killed the king Duncan, though he seems to regret his crime only because he has realized that he has committed the crime for the sake of Banquo and his sons. He has no comfort time, he cannot sleep and he has delivered his soul to the enemy of human beings (the Satan) forever. So he prays every time so that the prophecy of the witches about Banquo might not come true. (spencer, 1942:51)

**5-5- Act IV, Scene I**

**5-5-1- Analysis:** From this soliloquy, it seems that Macbeth starts to blame himself for not achieving his actions directly without thinking. He decided from now onward, he will not delay of achieving any deeds or action because it may affect the procedures of keeping his throne.

**5-5-2- Effect on Macbeth:** It becomes clear that Macbeth is going to commit more crimes and he blames himself for not achieving his thoughts or intentions. The decision of killing Macduff is a kind of such thoughts and intentions.

**5-5-3- Effect on the reader or the audience:** The reader, from this soliloquy, knows that Macbeth has become completely a murderer as he starts to think of committing the crimes directly even without thinking of the methods or the consequences. (Berry, 1985:57)

**5-6- Act V, Scene III**

**5-6-1- Analysis:** Every soliloquy has a message like other soliloquies, but this one has two, the first one is that Macbeth is no longer afraid of anything. Secondly, he has to commit another crime by

killing Malcolm and his family after the new prophecy of the witches that no man born of a woman on this earth can kill Macbeth.

**5-6-2- Effect on Macbeth:** this soliloquy gives Macbeth a satisfaction that nobody can kill him according to the prophecy of the witches "no man born of a woman can kill him", but at the same time he wants to kill Malcolm and his family as he may carry a danger against him.

**5-6-3- Effect on the reader or the audience:** At the time of being the reader wishes the death of Macbeth, the prophecy of the witches comes to tell that no man born of a woman can defeat him. This prophecy disappointed the reader as he\she believes in the prophecy of the witches.

#### **5-7-Act V, Scene V**

**5-7-1- Analysis:** This soliloquy carries the news of the death of the queen "the lady Macbeth". Macbeth seems to be careless about her death and does not accept the time of her death. Her death was an occasion of reminding him of death. He starts to talk about the meaninglessness of life and how much time he has to live in this world and the importance of his living. He sees that life like a story of a simple man, it seems long for him, but it is not more than one hour.

**5-7-2- Effect on Macbeth:** It has a great effect on Macbeth as he missed his beloved woman, his wife, for whom, he has committed many crimes. This accident changed his view about life and throne. Now, he sees that it is meaningless and it does not deserve to be lived. According to him, it is not longer than one hour.

**5-7-3- Effect on the reader or the audience:** It means for the reader that it represents beginning of the end of Macbeth. And his end has come as he starts to think about the meaningless of life. Here, Macbeth realized that he is going to be killed soon. It means much for the reader and the audience as it ensures the victory of good against evil

### **Conclusion**

This study ensures the importance of using this kind of devices by the playwrights to strengthen their literary works. The use of such kind reveals its effect not only on the character itself, but also on the audience or the reader.

Shakespeare used the device of soliloquy in most of his play especially the tragedies, he used it in Othello, Hamlet as well as Macbeth which is the material of the present study. We come to know that most of the soliloquies which have been used by Shakespeare were in his tragedies and most of them said by the villains, this fact leads us to say that soliloquy is said by villains in the tragedies to express or reveal their intentions and evil plans. On the contrary, the good characters needn't of such a device as they do not need of secret plans or bad thoughts about others.

This usage reveals the real character of the main character in Shakespeare's play Macbeth. All the soliloquies reveals the real or the evil side of the character of Macbeth. Each one reveals a part of his personality for the readers or the audience.

Finally, it becomes clear that Shakespeare succeeded in engaging the services of soliloquy to excite the readers or the audience and make them feel interested in the play on one hand and to the character of Macbeth on the other.

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