

HOW DOES SHAKESPEARE PRESENT MACBETH'S FEELINGS ABOUT GAINING POWER?

The first soliloquy in Macbeth, in Act 1 Scene 3, is a powerful piece of dialogue which not only foreshadows future events, but also clearly conveys how Macbeth feels about gaining power.

Firstly, the stage directions show how Macbeth keeps his dark desires secret via Shakespeare's constant use of "(aside)". This means that Macbeth is talking to himself or thinking aloud, which the other characters in the scene cannot hear. This allows the audience to know more than the other characters, creating suspense as it does hint or suggest what Macbeth is going to do later in the play and the other characters are completely oblivious to it. This introduces the theme of duplicity, as Macbeth, in this scene, is being two-faced. On one side of the coin, Macbeth is thinking about his newfound power and deciding on what to accomplish with it, in this time he is thinking about the worst he can do with this power, which we can tell through the quotations "Whose horrid image doth unfix my hair And make my seated heart knock at my ribs". The fact that Macbeth's heart is knocking at his ribs suggests that his blood pressure is rising, which typically happens when one is nervous or scared, we can infer from this that in fact Macbeth is terrified about the power he has gained. To reinforce this idea, later in the play Macbeth murders Duncan, the king. After the murder of Duncan, Macbeth is extremely remorseful, so much that he feels that Duncan's blood will never be washed off his hands, we can tell this when Macbeth says "Will all great Neptune's ocean wash this blood Clean from my hand? No- ". This shows that Macbeth's power had overcome him due to his vital flaw of ambition and he is afraid of what he has done to Duncan. The theme of "blood" in the play is echoed to remind the reader that murder spurs on more murder, and later connects to Lady Macbeth's "spot of blood" section.

Alternatively, later in the play, Macbeth seems to abuse his power and slaughter Macduff's kin. The cold and harsh language used, for example "The castle of Macduff I will surprise [...] give to the edge o' the sword His wife, his babes, and all unfortunate souls". The noun "babes" suggests innocence as children are seen as pure since they are not old enough yet to be corrupted, and the fact Macbeth wants to kill them exposes the cruelty of him and how fearlessly he uses his power. In this speech, Macbeth seems to have no hesitation, reinforcing how tyrannical Macbeth is.

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