The Soliloquies Of Richard In Richard Iii Essay, Research Paper

The Soliloquies of Richard in Richard III

Throughout the notable play of Richard III, soliloquies, speeches which Richard, The treacherous protagonist speaks to himself and to the audience, play very outstanding and significant roles. As through the villain hero’s soliloquies, we are presented the material that cannot be realistically delivered in dialogue. They enable our understanding of the unmasked Richard and enable our appreciation of the play, as they reveal Richard’s isolation, reveal the information on the plot which are the background and atmosphere of the story, and Richard’s treacherous plan, reveal Richard’s inner thoughts which appear clear to us the deformities of his mind and also reveal his self-knowledge.

The first scene of the play begins with a soliloquy which emphasizes Richard’s isolation as he appears alone and even bitterly depicts his deformity as “rudely stamp’d Deform’d, unfinish’d “. His deformity can indicate the disharmony from nature and viciousness of his spirit. Richard’s deformities both physical and mental exclude him from the world around him. He is separated even from his family as he says, “Dive, thought’s down to my soul”, when he sees his brother, the Duke of Clarence, coming. He is unable to share his thought with his own family as he is plotting against them. He has no true relationship with anyone because he only knows how to use and abuse or victimize people around him. He uses his superior wit and inferior deformity against others.

His isolation is obviously seen when he dreams as he is completely alone, unloved and loveless. He is too vicious and despiteful to even he himself can love his own self,

“There is no creature loves me;

And if I die, no soul shall pity me:

Nay, wherefore should they, since that I myself

Find in myself no pity to myself?”.

His deformity and isolation combining with the boundless ambition and egotism could possibly be the cause of his thirst for the throne that is not belonged to him.

Richard’s soliloquies play another role in providing the background and atmosphere of the play. As Richard’s first soliloquy introduces us the background of the story and the atmosphere of this scene that now the long years of the Lancastrian supremacy are over. The house of York is in its glorious ascendant leading by King Edward IV. Everyone is bliss with happiness and glory except Richard, Duke of Gloucester, who is isolated because of his own jealousy and deformity. The “weak piping time of peace” offers him no chance for the only kind of activity for which an ugly hunchbacked is fitted. Unable to caper nimbly in a lady’s chamber to the lustful tinkling of a lute, he is bored. Thus, to relieve the boredom and to serve his own ambition, he determines to prove a villain, “subtle, false and treacherous”.

Moreover, the soliloquies he has made throughout the play can clearly manifest his treacherous plan to seize the throne and can inform us the progression of his scheme. The first soliloquies and the next one reveal us his Machiavellian plan he has elaborately plotted against the first target, Clarence, his third brother. Richard craftily removes one obstacle in his path by turning the King’s hatred against Clarence. The soliloquy in I, ii, 228-264 reveals more about his plan that he will insure his position by marrying Lady Anne, widow of Prince Edward, son of the murdered Henry VI. He is heartless as he wants to win the lady’s hand for the sole purpose of his pursuit of the crown. His next step is to make Lord Hasting and Lord Buckingham believe that Queen Elizabeth and her allies cause the misfortune of Clarence. This evidence is in I, iii, 224-338.

Then we learn from his soliloquy, III, vi, 106-109, that his next move is to take some secret order to remove any threat from Clarence’s heirs by imprisoning his son and arranging poor marriage for his daughter whereby her social position is considerably lowered. Also, he plans to prevent others from contacting the princes who are locked up in the Tower. In the next soliloquies, he reveals his next step that he will marry young Elizabeth, King Edward IV’s daughter, in order to secure the safety of his position. Apparently, he has no mercy or sympathy even to his nieces and nephews.

Moreover, nevertheless, the soliloquy, IV, iv, 36-43, gives us the idea of how Richard is obsessed with his bloody plan. He reckons what he has accomplished so far. It seems like he takes pleasure from doing so.

However, as Richard’s soliloquies reveal more and more about his malicious scheme, they, meanwhile, reveal more and more about the deformity of his mind that it is full with sarcasm, egotism, deception, hypocrisy, villainy Machiavelli, cold-blooded cruelty and wicked pleasure. We know the unmasked Richard from his soliloquies as they are speeches made when he is alone – it is the only time that he can reveal his thoughts, his mind and his true self.

Fronting with his victims or his tools, he professionally uses the art of deception with histrionic ability to victimize or use them. With that art of him and his self-congratulating soliloquies spoken in the very moment and crisis of joyful exultation on the success of his deception, they reveal to us his hypocrisy, villainy Machivelli and wicked pleasure. For instance, in I, ii, 228-264, after he wins Lady Anne’s hand or in I, I, 117-120, after he, pretending sympathy, advises Clarence that the jealousy and hatred of the Queen are responsible for his imprisonment. Richard even gives false promise to help his victimized brother. In fact, we know all from his soliloquies that it is just a lie and all Clarence’s doom is one of Richard’s stratagems to make way to the throne. He is insincere, loveless and cruel even to his own brother who loves him and had fought side by side with him or even to the sad, vulnerable woman.

Moreover, almost all of his false qualities of hypocrisy, pretense, deception, egotism and Machiavelli are exposed in the soliloquies,

” Tell them that God bids us do good for evil:

And thus I clothe my naked villainy

With old odd ends stolen out of holy writ;

And seem a saint, when most I play the devil.”.

He deceives Lord Buckingham and Lord Hasting that the Queen and her kindred are the cause of Clarence’s imprisonment and that he is too virtuous to be an avenger. He is very proud and confident in his skill of pretense and deception.

The soliloquy, after he tries to win Queen Elizabeth’s consent in the marriage with young Elizabeth, proves to us again of his hypocrisy and egotism. He underestimates the Queen as the “Relenting fool and shallow, changing woman.”. He thinks that he is more superior and intelligent than others and that he can deceive or use them easily.

His soliloquies prove clear to us his perfect quality of Machiavellian hero.

Even though all of Richard’s wicked mind and false are exposed by his soliloquies, they also give us the sense that Richard, at least, is honest to himself. He has some degree of self-knowledge and feelings only for himself. He feels bitter with his deformity as he has used ugly and disgusting terms to describe himself. He knows that he himself is truly a villain, as he asserts that “And if King Edward be as true and just, As I am subtle, false and treacherous “, and that he is very malicious and treacherous so that no “creature” can love and have sympathy for him, even he himself cannot do, as he says in V, iii, 190-201, and, ” If I die, no soul shall pity me:

Nay, wherefore should they, since that I myself

Find in myself no pity to myself?”

Though we feel that he is bitter and has self-knowledge, it is not enough for us to wholeheartedly forgive and have sympathy for him. Our sympathy for him is limited as we have shared the knowledge of his wicked plot, his unbearable characteristics and his no repentance. We cannot forget his wrongs and wickedness therefore we cannot feel great loss or waste in his death. On the contrary, we feel that Richard, the murderer, deserves to be punished. Justly, he has to pay the price.

In summary, however, the soliloquies of Richard provide us the essential information on the play – the background and atmosphere of the story and Richard’s movement to accomplish his vicious plot. They, furthermore, reveal his isolation and demonstrate an introspective personality of Richard, the artful actor, and reveal his inner thoughts which he has hidden from other characters. Therefore the role of soliloquies has influences on us as they make us have more appreciation of the play because we know the real Richard and his scheme while other characters do not. We feel that we have participated in the story as we have been praying and wishing other characters could know what we do know. Thus, without the masterly use of soliloquies, Richard III and his story would not be this notable and memorable.