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Ms. Raymond

Advance English IV

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EPISODE 13: “SOLILOQUIES”

AMON: Welcome to episode 13 of Salem’s Shakespearian Society, where we look at some of Shakespeare’s stuff and speak about it. This episode is sponsored by Sonar Sights Security Systems! More on that later.

For our returning listeners, if you recall in the last episode we talked about Hamlet. He’s going to be coming around in this episode again, too.

This episode of Salem’s Shakespearian Society is “Soliloquies.” What are soliloquies, Sam?

SAM: A soliloquy is when a character talks to themselves, revealing their thoughts to the audience. Shakespeare didn’t invent them, but he probably adapted them first. He wrote some of the most famous soliloquies like the “To be or not to be” speech in Hamlet, or Juliet’s “Farewell” speech.

AMON: Shakespeare LOVED soliloquies. He used them in Hamlet to display major mentality changes going on in Hamlet’s little head. For example, in the “To be or not to be” soliloquy, he is deciding whether he should keep facing his troubles or take his own life. He says, “To be or not to be – that is the question: / Whether ‘tis nobler in the mind to suffer / The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune, / Or to take arms against a sea of troubles / And, by opposing, end them. To die, to sleep-” (3.1.64-68).

SAM: I guess this is why you don’t talk to ghosts…

AMON: Maybe Shakespeare was just taking out his morbid fear of ghosts through this play.

SAM: #StopAntiGhostPropaganda

AMON: Comparing this soliloquy to a later soliloquy really proves that Shakespeare used these in Hamlet to show Hamlets changes in mentality. Here he’s depressed and contemplating even going on. But this is part of the last soliloquy in Hamlet, which is from Act 4 after Hamlet sees Fortinbras leading an army to conquer a part of Poland that the captain says “hath in it no profit but the name.” Hamlet’s soliloquy says, “How all occasions do inform against me / And spur my dull revenge. What is a man / If his chief good and market of his time / Be but to sleep and feed? A beast, no more. / Sure He that made us with such large discourse, / Looking before and after, gave us not / That capability and godlike reason / To fust in us unused. Now whether it be / Bestial oblivion or some craven scruple / Of thinking too precisely on th’ event / (A thought which, quartered, hath but one part wisdom / And ever three parts coward), I do not know / Why I live to say “This thing’s to do,” / Sith I have cause, and will, and strength, and means / To do’t” (4.4.31-49).

Incase any of that went over anyone’s head, basically Hamlet is questioning his ability to carry out the revenge on his uncle. He knows he can, but why hasn’t he yet? This is a very clear change in mentality from the last soliloquy, where he was depressed, now he seems enraged or eager to carry out the revenge, or more accurately, insane. He has killed other people, such as Polonius without much of a second thought. He is no longer questioning if he should do it, he is wondering why he hasn’t.

SAM: It’s sort of funny that he mentioned God while contemplating killing his Uncle.

AMON: Yeah that was… interesting. I think it may show that killing is so normalized in his mind that he forgot God stands against that. But hopefully he didn’t forget that God can see all, and so can you with today’s sponsor!

SAM: Sonar Sights Security Systems provides millions of Shakespearians with security around their homes. With their new Salem Shakespearian Surveillance package, you can have cameras installed all over your castle, with early access to their all-new mobile app that allows your royal family to view each camera installed. Make sure none of your kids are giving mysterious and threatening soliloquies in their bedroom! Use our code ‘STOP-ANTI-GHOST-PROPAGANDA’ for 30% off your Salem Shakespearian Security package, or 10% off of any other package. Yes, we are biased.

AMON: Thank you, Sam! Now let’s switch cameras away from hamlet. Those were just two of seven soliloquies in Hamlet, but he didn’t only use them in Hamlet. Like we mentioned before, another famous one is in Romeo and Juliet. Juliet secretly married Romeo, but was arranged a marriage with Paris. To avoid this arranged marriage, she fakes her death by taking a substance from a vial. She wanted to wake up after everyone thought she was dead and run away with Romeo, but instead Romeo took his own life after thinking she took hers. This soliloquy is right before she fakes her death. She says, “Farewell.—God knows when we shall meet again. / I have a faint cold fear thrills through my veins / That almost freezes up the heat of life. / I’ll call them back again to comfort me.— / Nurse!—What should she do here? / My dismal scene I needs must act alone. / Come, vial. / What if this mixture do not work at all? / Shall I be married then tomorrow morning? / What if it be a poison which the Friar / Subtly hath ministered to have me dead, / Lest in this marriage he should be dishonored / Because he married me before to Romeo? / I fear it is. And yet methinks it should not, / For he hath still been tried a holy man” (4.3.15-30).

SAM: That was a mouth full.

AMON: Yeah but this may be one of the best examples of a soliloquy- even better than “To be or not to be.” In this one, you can really see how much conflict is going on in Juliet’s mind, so much that she even doubts the friar who married her and Romeo. She both simultaneously thinks he may have poisoned her knockout drink and that he didn’t. She can’t make up her mind on anything. She begins to call the nurse but immediately changes her mind, showing her impulse on anything that comes to her mind; acting on things before thinking about it, like calling the nurse before thinking about what the nurse can even do for her. This soliloquy does a beyond amazing job at showing the conflict in Juliet’s mind.

SAM: Just like Hamlet, Soliloquies are still relevant today in plenty of ways, but they may be easy to miss. Big names like Disney has relied on them since the early 2000s. In shows like *Liv & Maddie*, *Dog with a Blog*, and literally like all of the Disney Channel shows were structured on soliloquies. You and I have been listening to soliloquies our whole childhood and we didn’t even notice.

AMON: They should’ve put Shakespeare in the credits then!

SAM: Anyways, it’s about time for me to go.

AMON: Awh, well thanks for coming on today, Sam.

SAM: Bye Amon!

AMON: Bye Sam!

\*Sam logs off\*

AMON: Now I’m alone… to buy… or not to buy… that is the question: Whether ‘tis nobler in the mind to be blind and not know what is going on within the confines of my walls, or to take my wallet and throw it at Sonar Sights Security Systems, and by using our code, save 30% on the Salem Shakespearian Surveillance package.

\*Sam joins back\*

SAM: I noticed you didn’t leave the call… are you okay?
AMON: Oh, yeah I’m fine.

SAM: Alright!
\*Sam leaves call\*

AMON: Thank you all for listening, coming next episode: why is Shakespeare so afraid of ghosts?