

ACT V SCENE II. The country near Dunsinane.

Drum and colours. Enter MENTEITH, CAITHNESS, ANGUS, LENNOX, and Soldiers

This metaphor is used to express the feelings of fury felt by the men and how Macbeth's own actions have instigated their desire for "revenge" against him. It is made to clear to the Jacobean audience that Macbeth's misdeeds are the root cause of his own eventual downfall.

MENTEITH
The English power is near, led on by Malcolm,
His uncle Siward and the good Macduff:
Revenge burn in them; for their dear causes
Would to the bleeding and the grim alarm
Excite the mortified man.

Macduff continues to be described positively. He is shown to be the antithesis of Macbeth, his loyalty and bravery in direct opposition to Macbeth's greed and treachery.

Use of hyperbole - their grievous ills would rouse the dead to answer the battle cry with their blood as Macbeth is so widely despised.

The mention of "Birnam Wood" would excite the Jacobean audience and increase the atmosphere of anticipation. It is a hint that the Witches' prophecies are unfolding – and yet Shakespeare does not give the audience any further information in order to heighten the tension. This scene forms part of the rising action of the play and the audience would be aware that the action on the stage is building up to the ultimate climax.

ANGUS
Near Birnam wood
Shall we well meet them; that way are they coming.

Macbeth is so loathed by the people and the effects of his cruel and tyrannical rule have been so widely felt that even the youths of the Scotland are standing up to fight against him. This would illustrate to the Jacobean audience that all of Scotland has become united against Macbeth and highlight the increasing instability of his rule.

CAITHNESS
Who knows if Donalbain be with his brother?

LENNOX
For certain, sir, he is not: I have a file
Of all the gentry: there is Siward's son,
And many unrough youths that even now
Protest their first of manhood.

MENTEITH
What does the tyrant?

The oxymoron 'valiant fury' is a direct link to A1S2 in which Macbeth is praised for his bravery and bloody battle prowess. Now, however, he's yet described again as a 'valiant', but is instead presented as mad with power.

CAITHNESS
Great Dunsinane he strongly fortifies:
Some say he's mad; others that lesser hate him
Do call it valiant fury: but, for certain,
He cannot buckle his distemper'd cause
Within the belt of rule.

The secret murders he had committed are sticking to his hands like blood. Angus is stating that at this point, Macbeth must be feeling the consequences and guilt resulting from such terrible actions. The lords of his kingdom are rebelling against him, planning to overthrow him. This also recalls Macbeth's struggle to believe his hands could be cleansed after killing King Duncan. Macbeth had been right all along; nothing could cleanse him of his evil deeds.

It is clear that his soldiers only follow him out of duty rather than out of love. This is in contrast with King Duncan, who was both loved and respected by his people.

ANGUS
Now does he feel
His secret murders sticking on his hands;
Now minutely revolts upbraids his faith-breach;
Those he commands move only in command,
Nothing in love: now does he feel his title
Hang loose about him, like a giant's robe
Upon a dwarfish thief.

Shakespeare continues the motif of 'borrowed robes' and 'strange garments' from A1S3. Here, Angus' simile imagines Macbeth realising the full consequence of his regicide as his day of reckoning approaches. The robe belongs to the righteous kin of Duncan, fulfilling the foreshadowing of the robe as only 'borrowed' and not held.

MENTEITH
Who then shall blame
His pester'd senses to recoil and start,
When all that is within him does condemn
Itself for being there?

The men believe Macbeth's strange behaviour is due to the unnatural deed he has committed. This links to the idea of the Divine Right of Kings. The Jacobean audience would believe that Macbeth's rule is now under threat due to his actions against God and the natural order.

CAITHNESS
Well, march we on,
To give obedience where 'tis truly owed:
Meet we the medicine of the sickly weal,
And with him pour we in our country's purge
Each drop of us.

The contrasting natural imagery here links to the natural order which has been disrupted by Macbeth. Malcolm's forces seek to "weed" out the disorder of Macbeth's rule in order to restore the rightful king.

LENNOX
Or so much as it needs,
To dew the sovereign flower and drown the weeds.
Make we our march towards Birnam.

They see Malcolm as a doctor and a healer for his country. The King of England and Malcolm have been referred to as healers of their sick countries. Macbeth is seen as an insane tyrant – the source of the disease. Thus, the call for the country's cleansing 'purge'.

Exeunt, marching