

SCENE VI. Before Macbeth's castle.

Hautboys and torches. Enter DUNCAN, MALCOLM, DONALBAIN, BANQUO, LENNOX, MACDUFF, ROSS, ANGUS, and Attendants

DUNCAN

This castle hath a pleasant seat; the air  
Nimbly and sweetly recommends itself  
Unto our gentle senses.

There's a great sense of irony in Duncan's peace/happiness at the first sight of Macbeth's castle, seeing as its masters are planning his murder.

BANQUO

This guest of summer,

The temple-haunting martlet, does approve,  
By his loved mansionry, that the heaven's breath  
Smells wooingly here: no jutty, frieze,  
Buttress, nor coign of vantage, but this bird  
Hath made his pendent bed and procreant cradle:  
Where they most breed and haunt, I have observed,

A martlet is a bird similar to a swallow. They generally symbolise restlessness as they rarely land because they have no feet. This reflects the restless atmosphere created by the previous scene (the discussion of Duncan's murder).

The image of a cradle has connotations of innocence and motherhood. This is deeply ironic due to Lady Macbeth's previous soliloquy in which she declared that she wished to relinquish her womanhood.

The air is delicate.

Enter LADY MACBETH

DUNCAN

See, see, our honour'd hostess!

Another example of dramatic irony. Duncan greets Lady Macbeth pleasantly, unaware of her regicidal plans.

The love that follows us sometime is our trouble,  
Which still we thank as love. Herein I teach you  
How you shall bid God 'ild us for your pains,  
And thank us for your trouble.

LADY MACBETH

All our service

In every point twice done and then done double  
Were poor and single business to contend  
Against those honours deep and broad wherewith  
Your majesty loads our house: for those of old,  
And the late dignities heap'd up to them,  
We rest your hermits.

Lady Macbeth is excessively servile and sweet towards Duncan, who is genuinely pleased and grateful. This reinforces her cunning and duplicitous nature and links to the theme of appearances v reality.

'Macbeth' is play full of doubles, paradoxes and contradictions. The references to 'double' is echoed by both the Witches and Macbeth, often used to symbolise their duplicitous nature.

DUNCAN

Where's the thane of Cawdor?

It is interesting that Lady Macbeth, rather than her husband, arrives to greet Duncan. This is yet another example of the uncommon power that Lady Macbeth wields within her relationship.

Duncan describes how Macbeth goes out ahead of the rest of the pack on his horse ride to Inverness. The ride is very much a metaphor for how Lady Macbeth gets ahead of herself, seeing the future in the present in earlier passages. More literally, Macbeth's haste highlights his excitement and enthusiasm at the prophesies of the Witches.

We coursed him at the heels, and had a purpose

To be his purveyor: but he rides well;

And his great love, sharp as his spur, hath holp him

To his home before us. Fair and noble hostess,

We are your guest to-night.

LADY MACBETH

Your servants ever

Have theirs, themselves and what is theirs, in compt,

To make their audit at your highness' pleasure,

Still to return your own.

DUNCAN

Give me your hand;

Conduct me to mine host: we love him highly,

And shall continue our graces towards him.

By your leave, hostess.

Exeunt

He refers to her as "fair", echoing the words of the Witches in Act 1, Scene 1: "Fair is foul, and foul is fair".