

ACT III SCENE VI. Forres. The palace.

Enter LENNOX and another Lord

LENNOX

My former speeches have but hit your thoughts,

Which can interpret further: only, I say,

Things have been strangely borne. The

gracious Duncan

Was pitied of Macbeth: marry, he was dead:

And the right-valiant Banquo walk'd too late;

Whom, you may say, if't please you, Fleance kill'd,

For Fleance fled: men must not walk too late.

Who cannot want the thought how monstrous

It was for Malcolm and for Donalbain

To kill their gracious father? damned fact!

How it did grieve Macbeth! did he not straight

In pious rage the two delinquents tear,

That were the slaves of drink and thralls of sleep?

Was not that nobly done? Ay, and wisely too;

For 'twould have anger'd any heart alive

To hear the men deny't. So that, I say,

He has borne all things well: and I do think

That had he Duncan's sons under his key--

As, an't please heaven, he shall not--they

should find

What 'twere to kill a father; so should Fleance.

But, peace! for from broad words and 'cause he fail'd

His presence at the tyrant's feast, I hear

Macduff lives in disgrace: sir, can you tell

Where he bestows himself?

Lord

The son of Duncan,

From whom this tyrant holds the due of birth

Lives in the English court, and is received

Of the most pious Edward with such grace

Throughout the play, Duncan is always referred to positively. He acts as a symbol of good kingship, a stark contrast to the behaviour and attitudes of Macbeth since taking the throne.

Banquo is also shown to be the antithesis of Macbeth – as although he was equally tempted by the prophecies of The Witches, he did not act upon his ambitions and remained loyal.

Duncan's murder is described as "monstrous" as regicide was seen as one of the greatest sins against God.

These words are deeply ironic – he has not only handled situations badly but made some extremely selfish and sinful decisions.

Lennox's continued double-speak gives the Lord an opportunity to show his assessment of the situation, and as Lennox learns that the Lord agrees with him, they free up their conversation to talk of the popular opinion held in the country.

This tells us that this is not the first time the Lennox has spoken about this topic, and therefore that political unrest has been brewing for some time.

Lennox comments upon the strange events that have been happening, referring to the suspicious deaths of both Duncan and Banquo, along with the unusual events that have been happening in the natural world. This links to the idea of the Divine Right of Kings – Macbeth has subverted the natural order and has therefore thrown the natural world into disarray.

The words "pious" and "nobly" here seem loaded with dramatic irony. Lennox doesn't know that Macbeth was covering his own crimes by killing the two guards out of supposed anger and grief at the king's death. Perhaps Lennox does know but can't say this openly for fear that his words would return to Macbeth and implicate him in his own treason.

This is another epithet for Macbeth, however, in comparison to Act 1 when Macbeth was described as "brave" or a "worthy gentlemen" he is now viewed as a tyrant.

Macduff is compared with Macbeth – Macduff will do anything to help his country (righteous ambition) whereas Macbeth will do anything for his personal power (dogged ambition).

The Lord feels that God will help them in their mission to overthrow Macbeth as it is the righteous and moral course of action.

The Lord references the lack of sleep that Macbeth's reign has caused, as well as his strange behaviour at the banquet. It is clear that Macbeth has lost of faith and trust of his people.

That the malevolence of fortune nothing
Takes from his high respect: thither Macduff
Is gone to pray the holy king, upon his aid
To wake Northumberland and warlike Siward:
That, by the help of these--with Him above
To ratify the work--we may again
Give to our tables meat, sleep to our nights,
Free from our feasts and banquets bloody knives,
Do faithful homage and receive free honours:
All which we pine for now: and this report
Hath so exasperate the king that he
Prepares for some attempt of war.

Edward the Confessor. This also brings to mind the Divine Right of Kings. Macbeth is clearly ungodly so we can safely assume that God will dethrone him and place the rightful monarch on the throne. This reference to Edward as a 'holy king' suggests this also as Edward (England) is the one helping dethrone Macbeth the tyrant. God is acting through Edward (who was known to be a pious king). One might also go as far to say that the general cooperation between the English the 'good' Scots was purposefully included by Shakespeare to please James I (the Scottish king of England at the time).

LENNOX

Sent he to Macduff?

Lord

Macduff openly refused to obey the orders of Macbeth to go to Scotland. Unlike Macbeth, he does not hide what he truly feels or act in secrecy. This links to the theme of appearances V Reality.

He did: and with an absolute 'Sir, not I,'
The cloudy messenger turns me his back,
And hums, as who should say 'You'll rue the time
That clogs me with this answer.'

Another hint at Macduff's fate – foreshadowing his eventual death on the orders of Macbeth.

LENNOX

And that well might

Advise him to a caution, to hold what distance
His wisdom can provide. Some holy angel
Fly to the court of England and unfold
His message ere he come, that a swift blessing
May soon return to this our suffering country

Lennox uses personification to describe the effects that Macbeth's rule has had, not just upon them individually but on the country as a whole.

Under a hand accursed!

Lord

I'll send my prayers with him.

Exeunt