

Scene Analysis: *Macbeth*

Read the brief analysis below of *Macbeth*, I. vi. 1-31. You are to write a similar analysis of 25-50 lines. Follow this example. Cite the exact passage being analyzed at the head of your analysis.

Then be sure to include:

- (1) a brief description of the passage,
- (2) the dominant emotional effect on the reader,
- (3) elements of setting: action, language, and character that achieve this effect, and
- (4) the significance within the immediate context and within the whole play.

Macbeth, I. vi. 1-31

The setting is Inverness, before Macbeth's castle. Duncan and Banquo appear discussing the pleasant atmosphere of the place. Their hostess, Lady Macbeth, enters, gives Duncan her hand, and pledges twice double service to him who has so honored her house. The effect is one of heavy dramatic irony accomplished by the emphasis of Banquo on the delicate air of Inverness encouraging swallows to nest in every "jutty: frieze,/Buttress, . . . coign of vantage" (6-7), by the graceful apology of Duncan for the trouble Lady Macbeth's love for him is putting her to (11-14), by his stating that he had hoped to precede Macbeth as "purveyor" for his worthy Thane but that Macbeth's love "holp" him home before (21-22), and by Lady Macbeth's pledge that she and her husband will become "hermits" for Duncan's sake (18). The "heaven's breath" that "smells woingly here" (5-6), the excessively gracious obeisance of Lady Macbeth to her king as she bows and is lifted by him, the stated purpose of Duncan to continue graces towards Macbeth, all, when recalled in the next scene, heighten the horror of Macbeth's being incited by this perfect hostess to murder her honored guest in his sleep.

Immediately preceding (I. v.) Lady Macbeth has said "He that's coming/must be provided for" (67-68). The significance to the whole play of this scene is evident in the dual personality of Lady Macbeth, the unsuspecting trust of Duncan, Banquo's reserved suspicion (suggested by his silence) of Macbeth's ambition, and the unwitting prophecy of Lady Macbeth that isolation ("hermits") will be the ultimate reward she and her husband will reap from Duncan's favor of making himself accessible for murder in their house.