## Scene 13 (III i 1-14)

(III i 2) Enter Banquo. This scene exists only in a clumsily truncated form. It is not clear how much has been lost. The first 14 lines are all that survive -- and they survive through having been botched onto the beginning of a subsequent scene. But the botcher left us with a clue which leaves no doubt as to the original purpose of this scene: "Senit sounded. Enter Macbeth as King" (III i 13). This was supposed to be Macbeth's coronation.

I take it that we are at Scone, in front of the abbey church. Probably a day or two has passed since scene 12, so that Ross has had time to arrive. The ceremony is still in progress when the scene begins. Banquo appears, wearing his fanciest clothes, and speaks his soliloquy (III i 3-12). Then he hears some noise behind him and breaks off: "But hush, no more".

(III i 13) Sennet sounded. Enter ... A sennet was some sort of fanfare, grander than a flourish.* But I doubt whether anyone knows what exactly it ought to sound like.

* "A set of notes on the trumpet or cornet, ordered in the stage-directions of Elizabethan plays, apparently as a signal for the ceremonial entrance or exit of a body of players" (OED).

Macbeth and his wife make their entrance, wearing their crowns and their coronation robes. The entire Scottish peerage (except Macduff) appears on the stage, sumptuously clothed.* Trumpets sound. Bells ring. Fireworks explode overhead. The king and queen smile and wave. Crowds of people clap and cheer. Macbeth makes a speech. That is what ought to happen -- but the scene is cut short before there is time for most of it to happen.

* Capell (1768:34) thought that the lords should bring their ladies with them. Malone (1790) followed Capell, Steevens (1793) followed Malone, and nineteenth-century editors, up to and including Wright (1892), trailed along behind. (But the ladies were dropped from Delius's (1855) edition, and are absent from editions based on that one.) It does indeed seem right for the lords to be accompanied by their wives on such a festive occasion. If the ladies are present here, however, should they perhaps be present at the banquet too (scene 17)? The actors will probably want to consult their finances. Can they afford to employ half a dozen female extras and provide them all with suitably gorgeous costumes? Or would the money be better spent in some other way?

It is clear enough what the botcher was doing. By truncating the scene as he did, he aimed to deprive Macbeth

of his moment of triumph.  We are not allowed to see him being crowned.  We are being asked to think that he was never truly a king, just a usurper, and sure to get his comeuppance very soon.

The botcher did some serious damage -- and we have to be prepared to do something fairly drastic in response, to restore the balance of the play.  How are we going to end this scene with no one having anything to say?  It would do no harm to borrow two lines from scene 33:

> Hail, king of Scotland!
>  All.  Hail, king of Scotland!

But that is hardly enough.

One possibility would be to make a grand spectacle of it -- and then to close the curtain (if it is that type of stage) just before the audience starts to wonder why nobody is speaking.

There is only one other possibility that I can think of, and that is to borrow some lines of Macbeth's from scene 14. Specifically I think that this speech might be inserted here:

> We hear our bloody cousins are bestowed
> In England and in Ireland, not confessing
> Their cruel parricide, filling their hearers
> With strange invention.  But of that tomorrow,
> When therewithal we shall have cause of state
> Craving us jointly.  (III i 37-42)

I would go so far as to say that the speech fits better here than it does there.  In other words, I am inclined to think that it originally belonged in scene 13, and that the botcher, not wanting to discard it altogether, decided to transpose it.  On that view, the alteration which I am suggesting is simply the reverse of the alteration made by him.

To be clear -- I am not asking the actors to agree with me. The only question that they should ask themselves is whether this transposition would improve the end of this scene without damaging the next one.  If they think that it would, they should not feel inhibited from acting on that thought. This is, after all, just a play, and they get to make the decisions.

C.F. Aug 2025