Act III Scene III: Banquo's Murder

Unlike the murder of Duncan, the assassination of Banquo takes place on stage. Why the difference?

Some ideas:

- To suggest how it will soon be very obvious to everyone that Macbeth was behind all the murders
- To symbolise Macbeth's growing ease at ordering murder
ACT III SCENE III. A park near the palace.

Enter three Murderers

First Murderer
But who did bid thee join with us?

Third Murderer
Macbeth.

Second Murderer
He needs not our mistrust, since he delivers
Our offices and what we have to do
To the direction just.

First Murderer
Then stand with us.

The west yet glisters with some streaks of day:
Now spurs the lated traveller apace
To gain the timely inn; and near approaches
The subject of our watch.

Third Murderer
Hark! I hear horses.

BANQUO

[Within] Give us a light there, ho!

Second Murderer
Then 'tis he: the rest
That are within the note of expectation
Already are i'the court.

First Murderer
His horses go about.

Third Murderer
Almost a mile: but he does usually,
So all men do, from hence to the palace gate
Make it their walk.

Second Murderer
A light, a light!

Enter BANQUO, and FLEANCE with a torch

BANQUO

[Within] Give us a light there, ho!

Second Murderer
Then 'tis he: the rest
That are within the note of expectation
Already are i'the court.

First Murderer
His horses go about.

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Almost a mile: but he does usually,
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Second Murderer
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Enter BANQUO, and FLEANCE with a torch
Casual remark shows how completely unprepared he is for the attack.

Fleance's escape - is this the turning point of the play? Symbolised by striking out of the light - M is now on a downward fall? 1st moment of misfortune for M.

Recalls Ross's words 'dark night strangles the travelling lamp' - symbol of battle between dark and light.

Dies hero by thinking only of helping his son escape - final difference between him and M.

Extinguishing of light with B's death symbolises how the last tiny bit of goodness in Macbeth is now completely gone.

In terms of Greek tragedy conventions, what makes Fleance's escape so significant?

**Hint: Peripeteia**