

Macbeth's White Knight Banquo

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Shakespeare's tragic drama Macbeth features a man who is a Christian fighter. His life stands in contrast with that of the Macbeths. It is this Banquo about whom this essay will revolve.

In *Fools of Time: Studies in Shakespearean Tragedy*, Northrop Frye explains the [rationale](#) behind Banquo's ghost in this play:

Except for the episode of Hercules leaving Antony, where mysterious music is heard again, there is nothing really supernatural in Shakespeare's tragedies that is not connected with the murder of the order-figures. In Macbeth we have Banquo's ghost instead of Duncan's, partly because of the emphasis on the repose that Duncan has gained by getting murdered, and partly because the line of the reigning monarch descends from Banquo. (24)

In his book, *On the Design of Shakespearean Tragedy*, H. S. Wilson says that the ghost of murdered Banquo has the greatest emotional impact on Macbeth of any adverse

experience:

He is confident enough, even after the commission of the crime, to put his faith in the Senecan maxim, *per scelera semper sceleribus tutum est iter*, "Things bad begun make strong themselves by ill." After he has been shaken by the appearance of the ghost of Banquo, he reflects,

For mine own good

All causes must give way. I am in blood

Stepp'd in so far that, should I wade no more,

Returning were as tedious as go o'er;

and this is as near as he ever comes to repentance. (71)

[Fanny](#) Kemble in "Lady Macbeth" contests the opinion that the ghost of Banquo is seen at the same time by Lady Macbeth:

Taking the view I do of Lay Macbeth's character, I cannot accept the idea (held, I believe, by her great representative, Mrs. Siddons) that in the [banquet](#) scene the ghost of Banquo, which appears to Macbeth, is seen at the same time by his wife, but that, in consequence of her greater command over herself, she not only exhibits no sign of perceiving the apparition, but can, with its hideous form and gesture within a few feet of her, rail at Macbeth in that language of scathing irony . . . (117)

Clark and Wright in their Introduction to The Complete Works of William Shakespeare comment that Banquo is a force of good in the play, set in opposition to Macbeth:

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