

**BANQUO'S GHOST**  
**2017**

notes taken from *MACBETH LANGUAGE AND WRITING*: ARDEN SHAKESPEARE

**Table of Contents**

<b>THE SCENE .....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>OVERVIEW .....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>FORM: ACT 3 SCENE 4 STAGE DIRECTIONS.....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>STRUCTURE: HOW BANQUO'S GHOST IS CALLED INTO PRESENCE.....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>STRUCTURE: SCHIZOPHRENIA AND DIVIDED MOTIVATION .....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>STRUCTURE AND LANGUAGE: THE ENTRANCE OF THE FIRST MURDERER: BLOOD-STAINED WORLD.....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>STRUCTURE: TRAGIC EMBARRASSMENT.....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>LANGUAGE: THE GHOST'S RETURN AND DEPARTURE .....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>AUDIENCE: PERSPECTIVE .....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>LANGUAGE: THE USUAL AND THE EXTRAORDINARY .....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>STRUCTURE &amp; THEME: THE CONSEQUENCES OF CRIME IN THE HOUSEHOLD.....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>LANGUAGE: STOOLS VS THRONES.....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>STRUCTURE: JUXTAPOSITION BETWEEN THE BANAL AND THE MOMENTOUS .....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>STRUCTURE: THE MACBETH'S FINAL SCENE TOGETHER .....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>LANGUAGE: JUMPINESS AND BLACK HUMOUR .....</b>	<b>11</b>

---

THE SCENE

---

**ACT III SCENE IV**      *The same. A hall in the palace.*

[ *A banquet prepared. Enter MACBETH, LADY MACBETH, ROSS, LENNOX, Lords, and Attendants* ]

MACBETH                      You know your own degrees; sit down: at first  
And last the hearty welcome.

Lords                              Thanks to your majesty.

MACBETH                      Ourself will mingle with society,  
And play the humble host.  
Our hostess keeps her state, but in best time  
We will require her welcome.

LADY MACBETH              Pronounce it for me, sir, to all our friends;  
For my heart speaks they are welcome.

[*First Murderer appears at the door*]

MACBETH                      See, they encounter thee with their hearts' thanks.  
Both sides are even: here I'll sit i' the midst:  
Be large in mirth; anon we'll drink a measure  
The table round.

[*Approaching the door*]

There's blood on thy face.

First Murderer              'Tis Banquo's then.

MACBETH                      'Tis better thee without than he within.  
Is he dispatch'd?

First Murderer              My lord, his throat is cut; that I did for him.

MACBETH                      Thou art the best o' the cut-throats: yet he's good  
That did the like for Fleance: if thou didst it,  
Thou art the nonpareil.

First Murderer	Most royal sir,  Fleance is 'scaped.	20
MACBETH	Then comes my fit again: I had else been perfect,  Whole as the marble, founded as the rock,  As broad and general as the casing air:  But now I am cabin'd, cribb'd, confined, bound in  To saucy doubts and fears. But Banquo's safe?	
First Murderer	Ay, my good lord: safe in a ditch he bides,  With twenty trenched gashes on his head;  The least a death to nature.	
MACBETH	Thanks for that:  There the grown serpent lies; the worm that's fled  Hath nature that in time will venom breed,  No teeth for the present. Get thee gone: to-morrow  We'll hear, ourselves, again.	30
[Exit Murderer]		
LADY MACBETH	My royal lord,  You do not give the cheer: the feast is sold  That is not often vouch'd, while 'tis a-making,  'Tis given with welcome: to feed were best at home;  From thence the sauce to meat is ceremony;  Meeting were bare without it.	
MACBETH	Sweet remembrancer!  Now, good digestion wait on appetite,  And health on both!	
LENNOX	May't please your highness sit.	
[ The GHOST OF BANQUO enters, and sits in MACBETH's place ]		
MACBETH	Here had we now our country's honour roof'd,	40

	Were the graced person of our Banquo present; Who may I rather challenge for unkindness Than pity for mischance!	
ROSS	His absence, sir,  Lays blame upon his promise. Please't your highness To grace us with your royal company.	
MACBETH	The table's full.	
LENNOX	Here is a place reserved, sir.	
MACBETH	Where?	
LENNOX	Here, my good lord. What is't that moves your highness?	
MACBETH	Which of you have done this?	
Lords	What, my good lord?	
MACBETH	Thou canst not say I did it: never shake  Thy gory locks at me.	50
ROSS	Gentlemen, rise: his highness is not well.	
LADY MACBETH	Sit, worthy friends: my lord is often thus,  And hath been from his youth: pray you, keep seat;  The fit is momentary; upon a thought  He will again be well: if much you note him,  You shall offend him and extend his passion:  Feed, and regard him not. Are you a man?	
MACBETH	Ay, and a bold one, that dare look on that  Which might appal the devil.	
LADY MACBETH	O proper stuff!  This is the very painting of your fear:  This is the air-drawn dagger which, you said,  Led you to Duncan. O, these flaws and starts,  Impostors to true fear, would well become	60

	A woman's story at a winter's fire, Authorized by her grandam. Shame itself! Why do you make such faces? When all's done, You look but on a stool.	
MACBETH	Prithee, see there! behold! look! lo! how say you? Why, what care I? If thou canst nod, speak too. If charnel-houses and our graves must send Those that we bury back, our monuments Shall be the maws of kites.	70
	[ <i>GHOST OF BANQUO vanishes</i> ]	
LADY MACBETH	What, quite unmann'd in folly?	
MACBETH	If I stand here, I saw him.	
LADY MACBETH	Fie, for shame!	
MACBETH	Blood hath been shed ere now, i' the olden time, Ere humane statute purged the gentle weal; Ay, and since too, murders have been perform'd Too terrible for the ear: the times have been, That, when the brains were out, the man would die, And there an end; but now they rise again, With twenty mortal murders on their crowns, And push us from our stools: this is more strange Than such a murder is.	80
LADY MACBETH	My worthy lord, Your noble friends do lack you.	
MACBETH	I do forget. Do not muse at me, my most worthy friends, I have a strange infirmity, which is nothing	

To those that know me. Come, love and health to all;  
Then I'll sit down. Give me some wine; fill full.  
I drink to the general joy o' the whole table,  
And to our dear friend Banquo, whom we miss;  
Would he were here! to all, and him, we thirst,  
And all to all.

90

Lords                      Our duties, and the pledge.

[*Re-enter GHOST OF BANQUO*]

MACBETH                Avaunt! and quit my sight! let the earth hide thee!  
  
Thy bones are marrowless, thy blood is cold;  
Thou hast no speculation in those eyes  
Which thou dost glare with!

LADY MACBETH        Think of this, good peers,  
  
But as a thing of custom: 'tis no other;  
Only it spoils the pleasure of the time.

MACBETH                What man dare, I dare:  
  
Approach thou like the rugged Russian bear,  
  
The arm'd rhinoceros, or the Hyrcan tiger;  
Take any shape but that, and my firm nerves  
Shall never tremble: or be alive again,  
And dare me to the desert with thy sword;  
If trembling I inhabit then, protest me  
The baby of a girl. Hence, horrible shadow!  
Unreal mockery, hence!

100

[*GHOST OF BANQUO vanishes*]

Why, so: being gone,  
I am a man again. Pray you, sit still.

LADY MACBETH        You have displaced the mirth, broke the good meeting,

	With most admired disorder.	
MACBETH	Can such things be,  And overcome us like a summer's cloud,  Without our special wonder? You make me strange  Even to the disposition that I owe,  When now I think you can behold such sights,  And keep the natural ruby of your cheeks,  When mine is blanched with fear.	110
ROSS	What sights, my lord?	
LADY MACBETH	I pray you, speak not; he grows worse and worse;  Question enrages him. At once, good night:  Stand not upon the order of your going,  But go at once.	
LENNOX	Good night; and better health  Attend his majesty!	120
LADY MACBETH	A kind good night to all!	
	<i>[Exeunt all but MACBETH and LADY MACBETH]</i>	
MACBETH	It will have blood; they say, blood will have blood:  Stones have been known to move and trees to speak;  Augurs and understood relations have  By magot-pies and choughs and rooks brought forth  The secret'st man of blood. What is the night?	
LADY MACBETH	Almost at odds with morning, which is which.	
MACBETH	How say'st thou, that Macduff denies his person  At our great bidding?	
LADY MACBETH	Did you send to him, sir?	
MACBETH	I hear it by the way; but I will send:  There's not a one of them but in his house	130

I keep a servant fee'd. I will to-morrow,  
And betimes I will, to the weird sisters:  
More shall they speak; for now I am bent to know,  
By the worst means, the worst. For mine own good,  
All causes shall 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:  
Strange things I have in head, that will to hand;  
Which must be acted ere they may be scann'd.

140

LADY MACBETH      You lack the season of all natures, sleep.  
MACBETH            Come, we'll to sleep. My strange and self-abuse  
                         Is the initiate fear that wants hard use:  
                         We are yet but young in deed.

[*Exeunt*]

---

## OVERVIEW

---

This scene illustrates the nightmarish fantasies of the play's guilt-ridden Hero.

---

## FORM: ACT 3 SCENE 4 STAGE DIRECTIONS

---

3.4 opens with the stage direction 'Banquet prepar'd'

- Although the word 'banquet' is never spoken in the scene, its presence in the stage direction is a submerged echo or anticipation of Banquo's name - a pun anticipated by Duncan:
    - 'True, worthy Banquo: he (Macbeth) is full so caliant,/ And his commendations I am fed;. It is a *banquet* to me' (1.4.54 - 6)
- 

## STRUCTURE: HOW BANQUO'S GHOST IS CALLED INTO PRESENCE

---

Repeated mention of Banquo's name calls him into horrific presence

- 'were the grac'd person of our Banquo present' (3.4.40)
  - and even as he attempts to recover himself from the shock of the ghost's appearance, Macbeth seems unable to resist toasting to the murdered than once more
    - 'I drink [...] to our dear friend Banquo, whom we miss' (3.4.88-9)



- Simon Forman said the ghost appears just as ‘he gain to speak of noble Banquo and to wish that he were there’

## STRUCTURE: SCHIZOPHRENIA AND DIVIDED MOTIVATION

Macbeth’s mental state appears to reflect the symptoms of schizophrenia

- It appears as though Macbeth sees Banquo’s ghost because of the internal conflict of his own genuine desire for Banquo to be present and his fear lest he should
  - This appears to be part of the divided motivation of the plot

## STRUCTURE AND LANGUAGE: THE ENTRANCE OF THE FIRST MURDERER: BLOOD-STAINED WORLD

~~For the first time, this stage direction marks Macbeth’s entrance as ‘King’~~

- Macbeth welcomes his guests and invites them to ‘**drink a measure**’ (3.4.10)
  - Into this scene of conviviality enters the murderer, with ‘**blood upon thy face**’ (3.4.13):
    - **Macbeth’s world, the position from which he greets the lords, is quite literally bloodstained.**
      - and there is more blood to come.
        - the next figure to enter is ‘**the ghost of Banquo, and sits in Macbeth’s place**’ (4.4.40SD).

## STRUCTURE: TRAGIC EMBARRASSMENT

Banquo’s ghost has ‘**gory locks**’ (3.4.50) and the air of the vacated ‘**charnel-house**’ (3.4.70).

- Lady Macbeth’s attempts to cover the confusion and embarrassment again try to belittle Macbeth with bathetic comparisons
  - ‘**These Flaws and starts,/ ( imposters to true fear), would well become/ A woman’s story at a winter’s fire,/ Authorised by her Grandam. shame itself!**’
    - and attempts again to resume the toast.
      - our feeling notes Emrys Jones in the finely appropriate paradox, is ‘tragic embarrassment’:
        - ‘tragedy’ and ‘embarrassment’ seem to be different orders of experience but they are juxtaposed.

## LANGUAGE: THE GHOST’S RETURN AND DEPARTURE

When the ghost Returns, Macbeth’s language is epic

- ‘**approach thou like the rugged Russian bear, the arm’d rhinoceros, or th’Hyrcan tiger; take any shape but that.**’ (3.4.99 - 101)

When the ghost departs his diction returns to something more everyday:

- ‘**why, so: - being gone, I am a man again**’ (3.4.106 - 7).
  - the juxtaposition of registers is stark
    - as is the deployment of perspective:

- the stage direction indicates that Banquo's ghost does indeed appear, and that he is unseen by everyone on stage but Macbeth.

---

### AUDIENCE: PERSPECTIVE

---

at this point in the play then our view of the world is precisely aligned with that of Macbeth himself

- and we are alienated from the other characters who do not see a figure who was plainly visible to us.

---

### LANGUAGE: THE USUAL AND THE EXTRAORDINARY

---

The language of the scene manipulates the extraordinary - the eruption of the Dead Man - With the usual - The scene of the banquet

---

### STRUCTURE & THEME: THE CONSEQUENCES OF CRIME IN THE HOUSEHOLD

---

the scene with Banquo's ghost stages the consequences of Macbeth's crimes in the heart of the household,

- at a banquet intended to unify the lords in celebration of the new king.
  - Macbeth's language elides Banquo and Duncan and his victims:
    - ‘the time has been,  
that, when the brain's were out, the man would die,  
and there an end; but now they rise again,  
with twenty mortal murders on their crowns  
and push us from our stools.’ (3.4.77 - 81)

---

### LANGUAGE: STOOLS vs THRONES

---

The ‘**stools**’ here are usually glossed by editors as ‘**thrones**’

- but it is in keeping with the scene’s flirtation with bathos that they are simple backless seats.
  - The ‘**crowns**’ here are both the crown of the head:
    - the murderer reports that Banquo has ‘**trenched gashes on his head**’ (3.4.26).
      - but they are also the Royal Crown:
        - Macbeth, in killing a king, has murders on his crown too, and even in death Banquo pushes him from his usurped throne,
          - which is only ever a stool.

---

### STRUCTURE: JUXTAPOSITION BETWEEN THE BANAL AND THE MOMENTOUS

---

the juxtaposition of banal and momentous continues to the end of the scene.

- while Macbeth vows
  - ‘to the weird sisters [...] for now I am bent to know,  
By the worst means, the worst’ (3.4.132 - 4)
    - Lady Macbeth urges sleep, ‘The season of all natures’ (3.4.140).

---

## STRUCTURE: THE MACBETH'S FINAL SCENE TOGETHER

---

This is the last flash of togetherness before Macbeth leaves the room to wade deeper into crime and to become better at it

- they would never meet on stage again.
- 

## LANGUAGE: JUMPINESS AND BLACK HUMOUR

---

the jumpiness of the scene comes close to a kind of black humour

- MACBETH (3.4.65 - 8)  
‘Prithee see there.  
Behold, look, lo, how say you?  
[to Ghost] Why, what care I? If you canst nod,  
speak too’