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Symposium

Great Books Curriculum of Wright College
A Journal of Research and Inquiry
Dedicated To the Best That Has Been Thought and Said

VOLUME 4 REVENGE TRAGEDY SPECIAL EDITION SPRING 2017

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INTRODUCTION

The primary purpose of the *Great Books Symposium Journal* is to acknowledge and celebrate the exceptional analytical skills and critical research writing of students studying Great Books at Wilbur Wright, one of the City Colleges of Chicago. It is our hope that this journal inspires current and future students to take Great Books classes at Wright College and to submit their essays for future editions.

This journal is also a response to the misguided notion that students from two-year colleges are less capable of understanding and writing proficiently about complex ideas put forth in great works. In reality, as our journal demonstrates, two-year students possess profound insight and are clearly capable of intellectual excitement and originality.

The compilation of research within this journal is not only the result of students' hard work, but of the support of faculty, as well. Our teachers are the catalysts that have helped create and nurture students' desires to acquire knowledge and pursue further understanding of what Matthew Arnold called, "the best that has been thought and said." Therefore, this journal has a double purpose: to serve as a starting point for future students interested in honing their critical thinking and analytical skills while examining research topics inspired by the great works, and as a way to give back to the dedicated faculty at Wright College for providing students access to the Great Books Curriculum.

This journal is the product of many hours spent reading, writing, editing and collaborating by student contributors, the editorial board, faculty editorial panel and the faculty advisor, Dr. Michael Petersen. I am incredibly proud of being a part of such a team. I thank you all for your hard work, dedication and enthusiasm. I dedicate this journal to you.

This edition is also special because with its release we launched the *Great Books Symposium Journal* website, where all past and future editions will be stored and highlighted. Thank you to Kevin Rodgers and Dr. Laurie Alfaro for your web development expertise and for helping to make this ambition a reality.

In addition, we are happy to join our sister publications, *The Wright Times* and *The Wright Side Literary Magazine*, and we thank you for your support and partnership.

A final note to the Wright College administration: President David Potash, Vice President Nicole Reaves, and Dean of Instruction James Howley, who got this ball rolling. Thank you all for encouraging the resurrection of this journal, supporting our endeavors in creating the online and hard-copy versions of the journal, and for giving us the opportunity to carry this accomplishment with us into our futures.

Kind Regards,

Allen Loomis
Spring 2017 Student Editor-in-Chief, *Great Books Symposium Journal*

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THE HISTORICAL REVENGE TRAGEDY TRADITION

EDGAR ESPARZA

Within the Elizabethan and Jacobean revenge tragedy tradition, there is more than the narrative of a revenger forced to commit murder because of an absence of justice. The legal and historical parallels to this seemingly simple synopsis overturn all sorts of commonly held beliefs about English society during this time period. The relationship between people and their governments is one of the key factors in the revenge tragedies of authors such as Thomas Kyd, William Shakespeare, Thomas Middleton, and John Webster. Specifically, I will consider Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy* to uncover the "unexamined" aspects of these plays that Derek Dunne cites as being the "[l]egal innovations [that] had a profound effect on how citizens came to experience and interact with their legal system" (8). As this essay will demonstrate, much of what was seen on the Elizabethan and Jacobean public stage reproduced encounters with contemporary governments regarding the concepts of justice and revenge in early modern society. Furthermore, examining these plays in the context of their historical time periods reveals the conditions that justify and even legitimize the role of the revenger.

Self-government is a kind of political philosophy that requires the participation of the general public. During the Anglo-Saxon period, from the 5th century to the 10th century, the wergild system was the dominant form of governance in Britain. If a wrong was committed, the wronged party expected to receive a form of retribution they deemed equitable. In some form, Britain retained this system of governance. Then, in the 15th century, Britain experienced a plethora of wars between two families seeking the throne of England, the houses of Lancaster and York. After the War of the Roses (1455-85), the English monarchy realized that this form of self-governance needed to be curtailed for the nation to prosper. Under the Tudor monarchy, which began in 1485, England's government became more centralized and assumed greater authority over its people. However, the accession of Queen Elizabeth I in 1558, the last Tudor monarch, established a new order of self-governance. The role of the citizenry was suddenly an essential aspect of the inner workings of the English court system. The state embedded revenge into the justice system by using the courts to determine guilt and punishments. The public participated in this form of justice as jurors, litigants, and witnesses to public executions. The plays that arose from the Elizabethan and Jacobean eras contain covert and overt representations of the concept of participatory justice, demonstrating its importance in these respective eras.

Perhaps due to *The Spanish Tragedy* and other revenge tragedies, scholars have presupposed that revenge is distinct from the concept of justice. Gregory Semenza discusses the role of the revenger: "[N]o fact in *The Spanish Tragedy* so loudly proclaims the failure of the public justice system as the decision of Spain's

chief magistrate to pursue justice through self-governmental means" (58). This quotation indicates that revenge and justice are opposing concepts that do not overlap. An administrator of justice cannot engage in revenge unless he abandons his post. However, this modern analysis of the play is not in sync with the historical context of the play's composition. In fact, all of Hieronimo's actions have legal justification, and Hieronimo's revenge is deeply embedded with the concept of justice. As far as *The Spanish Tragedy* is concerned, the concepts of justice and revenge are inseparable—a depiction that is rooted in Elizabethan history.

Within the first scene of *The Spanish Tragedy*, the audience is introduced to the significance of both revenge and justice. The first ninety lines of the play set the stage for a plot that is intertwined with revenge (on Don Andrea's part) and justice (as Don Andrea has encountered three underworld judges, as well as Pluto and Proserpine, the sovereigns of the underworld). The first act foreshadows the idea that revenge is fulfilled through judicial means. Proserpine's judgement in Don Andrea's case allows him to be vindicated in the final scene of the play. Because *The Spanish Tragedy* is the first Elizabethan revenge tragedy, it introduces certain elements to the overall genre that are later imitated by Shakespeare in *Hamlet*, by Middleton in *The Revenger's Tragedy*, and by Webster in *The Duchess of Malfi*. The prevailing notion of Hieronimo is that he, according to Peter Mercer, "change[s] from his normal social self to a monster of avenging fury" (2). As Knight Marshall, Hieronimo uses his vindictive nature to seek justice for his murdered son. The words "vindictive" and "justice" may not be synonymous, but they are not both mutually exclusive. The Oxford English Dictionary defines *revenge* by the vindictive impulse that overwhelms people to avenge, an idea similar to Emily Wilson's assertion that emotions rule, dominate, and win out in the revenge tragedy (vii). Therefore, it is fitting that OED defines vindictive as "giv[ing] to revenge" or as "having a revengeful disposition."[1] Furthermore, the historical lineage of the word "vindictive" demonstrates that the word had a synonymous relationship with a (now rare) definition of justice. Throughout *The Spanish Tragedy*, there are both subtle and obvious references to the thesis that Hieronimo uses justice (or legal means) to get revenge. In the beginning of Act 3, Scene 13, Hieronimo exclaims, "*Vindicta mihi*. / Ay, heaven will be revenged of every ill," (3.13.1-2). Here, Hieronimo makes a subtle reference to "vindictive justice."[2]

Derek Dunne explains that *The Spanish Tragedy* was a "public play" in the sense that it was not written for the elites but for the general public (8). Therefore, it is not surprising that the play became widely popular in England. The play clearly had some connection to Elizabethan audiences. *The Spanish Tragedy* places on the stage many historically accurate relations between Elizabethan society and the state. Many important topics of this era of history are relevant to the play's plot, such as

[1] *The Oxford English Dictionary*, "vindictive" 1. a.

[2] *The Oxford English Dictionary*, "vindictive" 2. a. "As an epithet of justice."

class tension. For example,

> Linda Woodbridge notes the significance of social class in the play and acknowledges [James R.] Siemon's work on Kyd's own social background when she draws attention to the way in which social status not only inflects the Spanish king's nepotism (favouring his own nephew over Horatio), and Bel-imperia's relationships, but also determines the protagonist's vengeful course: "Hieronimo turns to revenge because his low status blocks access to justice." (Simkin 98)

Class tension is ubiquitous in *The Spanish Tragedy*, as there are utterances of class difference. The Arden edition of *The Spanish Tragedy* has a historical notation that references Horatio's hanging: "Hanging was regarded as a 'humiliating' form of execution suitable for lower-class criminals" (Calvo 175, n. 53). Lorenzo makes this point obvious when he claims in reference to Horatio that "[a]lthough his life were still ambitious-proud, / Yet is he at the highest now he is dead" (2.4.59-60).

In Elizabethan society, Hieronimo's social status would have been close to what modern standards would describe as upper-middle class. However, there was no distinction between classes in those terms. William Harrison gives a first-person account of Elizabethan society, writing that, "[w]e in England divide our people commonly into four sorts, as gentlemen, citizens or burgesses, yeomen, and artificers or labourers" (94). Gentlemen were the highest group of the Elizabethan societal order, and they were mainly the king's second-in-command or confidents such as earls, dukes, barons, noblemen and princes. Citizens were people living in urbanized communities or citizens that could hold some sort of public office. Yeomen were "freemen born English," meaning that they could own land and profit from revenues generated from it. The artificers and laborers were the poorest of the employed society and included day workers, "poor husbandmen," tailors, carpenters, masons, and shoemakers.

As a Knight Marshall, it is obvious that Hieronimo and his family were of the "middling sort" […], "a category roughly tantamount to the middle class" (Dunne 184). The "middling sort" consisted of citizens and yeomen. Woodbridge alleges that Hieronimo's revenge was a practical response for men of his status and disposition in the Elizabethan era—in terms of murder. However, C. W. Brook's research reveals that by 1640 "one in every eighty Englishmen was using the king's courts." Furthermore, it was ordinary citizens who "characteristically served as jurors, constables, tithingmen and churchwardens" (Dunne 26). The justice system of the Elizabethan era was dependent on ordinary citizens, in the form of both jurors and litigants. Dunne cites statistics that demonstrate this very fact: "Cases at advanced stages of the King's Bench and the Court of Common Pleas combined had risen from 2,100 in 1490 to 13,300 in 1580 and 23,453 by 1606" (25). This raises some serious points running counter to conventional histories of the era that portray the period as one of chaos and anarchy. Semenza formulates much of his theory about the era on the fact that "England lacked an efficient police system, [and that therefore] it would have been difficult to detect crimes while they were unfolding, which would have led,

in turn, to a number of legal cases whose outcomes hinged upon largely unverifiable accusations" (54). This environment would have resulted in "lawlessness," "the threat of self-government," and a "myriad" of other problems. Dunne believes that Semenza, along with Fredson Bowers, a source of Semenza's along with Fredson Bowers, a source of Semenza's supporting thesis, cite "an older native tradition of private justice (revenge)" that leads them to believe, as Bowers does, that there was "a general disrespect for law" (Dunne 21). These accusations would be well-founded in the times of the wergild system, during the War of the Roses, and even up to the reign of King Henry VIII. Dunne succinctly explains the competing synopsis of the era: "Revenge was not an imminent threat to the status quo, nor were the majority of Elizabethan citizens likely to disrespect such an important social tool as the law. In short, the typical theatre-going Elizabethan was more likely to have a case in the courts for the suing of a neighbour then" (28).

If self-government was not a typical reaction from the people of the Elizabethan era, then there must be a rationalization for Hieronimo's actions that do not conflict with Elizabethan justice and legalisms. Specifically, Hieronimo's murder of Balthazar and Lorenzo requires an explanation that is appropriate for a "middling" Elizabethan. In two instances, Hieronimo refers to the deaths of Balthazar and Lorenzo as a "spectacle": "See here my show; look on this spectacle!" (4.4.88) and "And griev'd I, think you, at this spectacle?" (4.4.112). In today's terms, the word "spectacle" would mean, as the modern definition of OED defines it, "forming an impressive or interesting show or entertainment for those viewing it."[3] However, the word had a (now obscure) definition that translated into a form of public punishment, i.e. that one would be made an example of a crime and thus act as a deterrent for others.[4] In other words, the deaths of Balthazar and Lorenzo in the final act of the play are in many ways like the execution of Pedringano in Act 3. Hieronimo, who assumes Pedringano to be responsible for Horatio's death, exclaims that "For blood with blood shall, while I sit as judge, / Be satisfied, and the law discharged" (3.6.35-36). Similarly, a few scenes later Hieronimo utters a familiar feeling of content that justice was done per capital punishment with the killing of Balthazar and Lorenzo: "Soliciting remembrance of my vow / With these, oh, these accursed murderers; Which now performed, my heart is satisfied" (4.4.126-128). In both cases, Hieronimo claims that he is "satisfied" with the result as if the latter scene was another execution. Yet, one of the important aspects of this scene is Hieronimo's need to have the audience, both in the play and in the theater, view the deaths of Balthazar and Lorenzo as if they were executions. This sort of participatory justice was common in Elizabethan society in terms of citizens being jurors, litigants, and witnesses. Also, as Dunne points out, "the spectacle of public execution" was common among Elizabethans (40).

The failure of the state to remedy the mistakes within society does not lead

[3] *The Oxford English Dictionary*, "spectacle" 1. a.

[4] *The Oxford English Dictionary*, "spectacle" 5. c. "An illustrative instance or example."

Hieronimo to change his character as a judicial figure. Dunne explains that "even in the midst of his delusions, Hieronimo still envisages the world in judicial terms" (48). Although Hieronimo's attempts to achieve justice from the King for his son's death are for naught, he resorts to other forms of justice: "I will go plain me to my lord the King, / And cry aloud for justice through the court" (3.7.69-70). Hieronimo also pleads to the heavens: "And all the saints do sit soliciting / For vengeance on those cursed murderers" (4.1.33-34). After all else has failed, Hieronimo makes his final plea: "Though on this earth justice will not be found, / I'll down to hell, and in tis passion / Knock at the dismal gates of Pluto's court" (3.13.107-109). Whether the justice is earthly, heavenly, or of the underworld, Hieronimo does not leave the path of justice. Hieronimo, like Elizabethan society, "for euery toy and trifle…goe to law," as Robert Burton stated in *The Anatomy of Melancholy* (Dunne 26).

Historian Laura Stevenson states that "Elizabethan authors … had only one set of values at their disposal—aristocratic values. To them, the idea that two social groups might conflict with each other on ideological grounds was unthinkable" (qtd. in Jardine 293). Clearly, Kyd's play is an outlier in this respect because there is a clash of ideologies between Bel-imperia and Lorenzo. Bel-imperia, the daughter of the king of Spain, has a personal connection and attraction to those of lower-classes. She treats Hieronimo and Horatio better than she does Lorenzo and Balthazar, who are princes. There is not necessarily any historical precedent for Bel-imperia's actions in this regard, but this observation furthers the thesis that *The Spanish Tragedy* is a play with historical, non-historical, and ahistorical references.

The participatory nature of the Elizabethan justice system was something Hieronimo greatly utilized, but, in contrast with *The Spanish Tragedy*, it is a concept that is absent in Middleton's *The Revenger's Tragedy*. Vindice, in his quest for revenge, is so secretive and private about his revenge that he keeps his plans from his own accomplice, his brother Hippolito, who in turn scolds Vindice: "Prithee tell me, / Why may not I partake with you? You vowed once / To give me share to every tragic thought" (3.5.4-6). What Vindice hopes to achieve is the complete opposite of Hieronimo's execution. Vindice's plan is simple torture and murder because the Duke he lambasts in the opening lines of the play is a sovereign. Because sovereigns are the supreme rulers, to kill a sovereign is treason—a fate that Vindice later meets in the closing lines of the play. Therefore, no matter how the Duke has offended him, Vindice cannot publicly execute the Duke in the same manner that Hieronimo kills Balthazar and Lorenzo. As a result, Vindice must plan accordingly and murder the Duke "[i]n some fit place veiled from the eyes o' th' court, / Some darkened, blushless angle, that is guilty / Of his forefathers' lusts and great folks' riots;" (3.5.13-15). Yet, again this runs contrary to the historical period under Queen Elizabeth I and and King James I. Subha Mukherji states that, "[t]he notion of the audience as an equitable jury that underlies so much of Renaissance drama … [provides] a provocative basis for alternative criteria of adjudication" (qtd. in Dunne 14). Shakespeare's *Hamlet* utilizes this literary device to justify Hamlet's actions in the same manner as Kyd does with Hieronimo. To wit, in Act 3, Scene 2, Hamlet's advice

for the Players includes his warning to be aware of the "judicious" in the audience. However, it is Hamlet who must take note of the audience as he references the entire court and the audience as "auditors," according to the Arden edition of the play in the final scene of the play (5.2.319, n.). In terms of context, the OED defines an "auditor" as "[o]ne who listens in a judicial capacity."[5] *Hamlet* continues a trend that preceded it. Hieronimo is a judicial officer that demonstrates both in word and in action his legal mindedness and, therefore, his lack of abandonment for justice. Because of his occupation, Hieronimo cannot abandon completely his standing with justice. Therefore, he stages a play as a public execution. Although Hamlet is not a judge, and although he does not plan it this way, he follows in Hieronimo's footsteps by killing Claudius and Laertes in front of the entire court. Both characters require public participation in their murders to justify their actions and to possibly deter future crimes of the similar nature—a reflection of the Elizabethan justice system. Yet, this literary trend would vanish from the revenge tragedy tradition as the English justice system became less participatory.

Walter Mildmay, a courtier of Queen Elizabeth I, advised his son about the English Court: "Know the Court but spend not thy life there, for Court is a very chargeable place. I would rather wish thee to spend the greatest part of thy life in the country than to live in this glittering misery" (qtd. in Hurstfield and Smith 163). To Vindice, a "glittering misery" is an understatement compared to his opinions of court in the opening of the play. Vindice is aware of the ill-natured Duke and his family. The lust of the Duke and his family resulted in the death of Vindice's lover and the breakdown of his family. Vindice's revenge clouds the actual significance of the play. His revenge demonstrates a new shift in justice that differs from *The Spanish Tragedy* and *Hamlet*.

The disturbing aspect of the play is the abrupt interference with the administration of justice. Joel Hurstfield notes that the last years of the Tudor monarchy are often misconstrued as an era of "despotism" because "[t]he kind of despotism which historians discovered in the sixteenth century varied according to their knowledge of the period and their sensibility to the colour and texture of Tudor English" (*Freedom* 26). The sources of commonly cited corruption were favoritism and patronage that had existed within the English court for years. The fact remains that "the first half of the fifteenth century saw an extraordinary exercise in self-government[.] [As a response,] the usurping Henry IV, anxious to make his government acceptable, made a bid for middle-class support as represented in the House of Commons" (25). This caused a struggle for power that stained his administration as weak and that continued into the years of Henry VI. This perception of weakness inevitably led to a struggle christened the "Wars of the Roses," a civil war between "England's two most powerful families," the Yorkists and the Lancastrians (Semenza 52). By the end of the fifteenth century, the Yorkists and ultimately the Tudors began to work towards a "strong, centralized government." This

[5] *The Oxford English Dictionary*, "auditor" 4. a.

new form of government would later be called "the Tudor despotism" because of modern historians' subjective interpretations about what is considered despotism (Hurstfield, *Freedom* 25). However, the late Tudor years were not despotic because "[t]he power of the crown rested not on force but on popular support" (30). The Elizabethan era was built on a strong court system that had popular support, which Dunne calls participatory justice. Furthermore, *The Revenger's Tragedy* centered on private revenge and not public vengeance—an antiquated practice. Dunne is blunt in his analysis of *The Revenger's Tragedy*:

> Structurally, Middleton's revenge play may be comparable to what has gone before; socio-politically, it is not. [I make] very little reference to the wider social milieu of this play, and that is because so little of what is contained within the play seems to engage directly with real world politics or society; in [Scott] McMillin's words, "[t]his is a court not much given to history." The exception here is the infamous clash between King James and his Chief Justice Sir Edward Coke, and even this has been shown to be as much generic convention as social commentary. Vindice is no people's champion, nor does he decry the justice system that has failed him (164).

The Revenger's Tragedy was written around 1606–within the Jacobean era. The Jacobean conflict between Sir Edward Coke and King James I would be years into the future of the play, but the "topicality" of this conflict is closely related to the Duke's utterance of "Hold, hold, my lord!" (1.2.81), which is viewed as a disruption of justice, and the Duke's command to "defer the judgment till next sitting" (1.2.84), which is a matter of "a monarch's prerogative powers" (Dunne 144).

In the first instance, the play's disruption of justice in the courtroom scene and trial of Junior Brother is a prime example of a sovereign's ability to halt or hurry justice in the Jacobean and not Elizabethan era. In 1621, the venerated Francis Bacon, Lord Chancellor of England, was accused of impropriety. Bacon, who claimed in his essay *Of Judicature* that "the virtue of a judge seen, to make inequality equal that he may plant his judgment as upon an even ground," was accused of re-opening a case after being written a letter that eluded to some sort of gift if the case was re-opened (Dunne 42). Bacon pleaded guilty to the charges of corruption. As a punishment, Bacon was fined and sentenced to some imprisonment, but because of his close connection to King James I, Bacon escaped both the fine and the imprisonment (Hurstfield, *Freedom* 147). The correlation between the treatment of Junior Brother and Francis Bacon is astounding. However, *The Revenger's Tragedy* was written and performed many years prior to Bacon's indictment. These examples demonstrate the abuse of authority from which many of the revenge tragedies ostensibly arise. Although Lussurioso's imprisonment leads to the execution of Junior Brother by mistake, the fact from this scene is that judges, and, indeed, all judicial officers, are subordinate to a sovereign. Historically, this play foreshadows the forthcoming ruling of King James I. In addition, the revenge tragedy tradition continues to develop with

the changes in society—adding new elements to the genre that incorporate its respective time periods.

King James I made the personal assessment that judges were mere "delegates of the king" and, therefore, as king, he "could elect to act as judge himself in 'what causes he shall please to determine'" (Dunne 149). Sir Edward Coke retorted that although the king was a brilliant man "endowed" by God with certain abilities, he could not "adjudge any case" because to do so would require "long study and experience" of the law (149). Then, as a final point Coke cited God as the supreme ruler of all mankind in an attempt to reach some common ground with the king. The manner in which King James I believed he could interfere, and did interfere to an extent with public justice, draws strong parallels to the attitude and demeanor of the Duke, who holds in his hands the fates of his sons—not the judge of Act 1, Scene 2. All in all, *The Revenger's Tragedy* is perhaps coincidentally a portrayal of the monarchy that was to come, and even more so because the lack of participatory justice within the play is also in agreement with Thomas Green's analysis that the "age of nearly unlimited jury control was passing; the age of the law and of the bench was commencing" with King James I (144).

The corrupt society represented in the plays of Kyd and Middleton is either decades in the past or predictive of the future. In Act I of John Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi*, the stage is set by a description of the French court that is juxtaposed with the Malfi court by the biographies of some of the members of the court provided by Antonio and Delio. The Arden edition of the play makes a biographical notation: "In Jacobean England, the references to court degeneracy that follow would have resonated with criticisms of the corrupt court of James I" (1.1.7, n.). *The Duchess of Malfi* was written nearly ten years into King James I's reign, and, consequently, it can be said to reflect more completely the political corruption of the Jacobean era. However, it is still an interesting conclusion to find that Middleton's play somewhat foreshadows the succeeding years under King James I with the fading of participatory justice. The vestiges of the Elizabethan era were either fading or being modified, as the centralization of power continued alongside the advancement of the justice system. Elizabethan society saw revenge and justice in different ways than people might see them today. *The Spanish Tragedy* set the foundation of the revenge tragedy, and it demonstrated more than just the common conventions of the revenge tragedy tradition, but also firmly placed those conventions within the history of early modern English society.

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HAMLET – PRISONER OF HIS OWN KINGDOM

RICKY ABARCA

In William Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, one finds Polonius chastising Ophelia, pointing out that "with a larger tether may [Hamlet] walk, than may be given you" (1.3.134-135). Polonius's wisdom lies not in identifying the length of Hamlet's tether, but rather that he's tethered at all. As such, Hamlet's revenge is delayed not as a result of his own hesitations, but because of his obligations to his audience as an Everyman. Arguably his most redeeming quality, Hamlet's consciousness, proves more a curse, as it subjects him to the wills of his fellow actors, and moreover, the will of the world.

Hamlet's delayed revenge is brought about by two components of his personality. The first component is his inclination for acting, for performing for others. It is important to recognize that this inclination begins as empathy. Harold Bloom suggests that Hamlet is a neglected child, and as such "the prince [finds] a father and mother in Yorick, the royal jester" (4-5). The nature of a jester, of course, is to provide comedic relief and entertainment, not unusually when melancholy is the mood of the room. Hamlet himself points out how critically important Yorick is to him: "He hath bore me on his back a thousand times / … / Here hung those lips that I kissed I know not how oft" (5.1.185-189). As Hamlet is raised by a jester, he is naturally in tune with the emotions of those around him and, perhaps more importantly, more inclined to do something about them.

Hamlet is further tossed into the world of acting as a consequence of his education. As Neil Rhodes points out, during Hamlet's time at Wittenberg, students were exposed to drama, for there is a firm belief that the school play is essential in achieving eloquence (123). Despite this, the significance lies more in that classic literature is taught to be assimilated rather than merely imitated (123). Given this, acting becomes second nature to Hamlet, allowing him to don disguises with ease: "How strange or odd some'er I bear myself / To put an antic disposition on" (1.5.170; 172). However, it is this ease of transition that causes dissonance in Hamlet, as he begins to lose not only a sense of himself, but also responsibility for his actions. For example, when apologizing to Laertes, Hamlet states, "Was't Hamlet wronged Laertes? Never Hamlet / If Hamlet from himself be ta'en away / And when he's not himself does wrong Laertes, / Then Hamlet does it not; Hamlet denies it" (5.2.247-249). Here, Hamlet finds there are at least two versions of himself (one who has wronged Laertes and one who has not), and it is this separation of identities that feeds into the delaying of his revenge – he cannot come to terms with who he is committing revenge as.

In *Hamlet*, Shakespeare's language places considerable emphasis on the idea of roles and a character's ability to maintain them, primarily as achieved through Hamlet. To expand, it can be argued that the entire play is borne out of Hamlet's

frustrations with those around him acting out of character – namely his mother: "why, she would hang on him / Yet within a month… / Married my uncle, my father's brother" (1.2.150; 152; 159-160), and his uncle: "a little more than kin and less than kind" (1.2.67). However, Hamlet is not alone in suggesting that people are acting uncharacteristically, as Claudius believes Hamlet's grief is excessive: "How is it that the clouds still hang on you? […] But to persevere / In obstinate condolement is a course / Of impious stubbornness" (1.2.68; 96-97). It is this very emphasis of roles that causes Hamlet such distress for, as Alexander Legatt points out, "he is the center of scrutiny, everyone has a reading of him" (63). Throughout the course of the play, Hamlet finds himself clashing with the expectations of those around him, for as an actor he must play the roles of prince, son, lover, and revenger. Revenge is delayed because it is never the crux of the play, for *Hamlet* is a "play about playing, about acting out rather than revenging" (Bloom 11). And yet, the roles that the characters of the play expect Hamlet to perform pale in comparison to the role the audience may come to expect him to play, that of the Everyman.

Now that it has been established that Hamlet sees himself as an actor, the question naturally arises: what is Hamlet acting out? The answer lies in the second component of his personality. Hamlet is overtly conscious and therefore lends himself to becoming an Everyman for the audience. In his book *Hamlet vs Lear*, R. A. Foakes outlines the notion of Hamletism, which in short suggests that Hamlet is transformed by his many-sidedness such that each reader and play-goer may see themselves in Hamlet. "Above all, [one feels] the universal validity, the typicalness of Hamlet…As he thought or felt, [one] has also thought and felt" (13). Hamlet's contemplation of his own situation instead becomes generalized into "everyman confronting how to act" (14). Furthermore, E. A. G. Honigmann contends that Shakespeare gives Hamlet a "priceless gift" in the form of the "common touch" (55), an essentially human quality that causes Hamlet to become constrained by his own kingdom. As Claudius acknowledges, "He's loved of the distracted multitude" (4.3.4). Hamlet is prevented from carrying out his revenge, or perhaps even more simply prevented from acting, because he finds himself having to resolve each role thrust upon him by those in his audience.

However, simply having the audience thrust their lives unto Hamlet is not enough to affect him; as it stands they are still very much of two separate worlds. Despite this, one still observes the clear effect Hamlet's burden has on him; thus the fourth wall must be broken. This is accomplished in two ways. As previously mentioned, Hamlet is conscious to the point that he recognizes himself as a character, in a play, upon a stage. The second way is through direct conversations with the audience. To prove the former, one need only look to the three of Hamlet's confessions. The first, "O, what a rogue and peasant slave am I!" (2.2.279), suggests Hamlet's realization that he is at the mercy of everyone around him, while "To be or not to be […] tis 'nobler in the mind to suffer […] or to take arms against a sea of troubles" (3.1.65-66; 68) can be interpreted as his recognition of the inherent futility of his situation. Regarding Hamlet's circumstances, Catherine Belsey contends that

the central problem of the play is not Hamlet's situation but rather his character (being susceptible to portrayal as an Everyman) (129). These tendencies of speculation are what repeatedly give Hamlet pretexts for inaction. However, Hamlet's third confession proves to be the only one necessary to reaffirm his consciousness as an actor, for he openly states in a conversation with his father's ghost: "Remember thee? / Ay, thou poor ghost, whiles memory holds a seat / in this distracted globe" (1.5.95-97). It is in this instance that Hamlet breaks the fourth wall explicitly, reminding the audience (of the Globe Theater) that he is (perhaps unfortunately) just one of them in the grand scheme of things (Bloom 10).

In addition to seeing himself as an actor in the play, Hamlet must also communicate with the audience, and he accomplishes this through several soliloquies and asides. Rhodes notes that there are two distinct kinds of soliloquies. The first is "more of a self-absorbed speech," such as that of Atreus in Seneca's *Thyestes*; the second, the kind of which Hamlet is prone to, is a "highly theatrical speech in which a character almost steps out of [their selves] to address the audience" (127). Scholars often remark on the radical difference of Hamlet's soliloquies, as he seems to change in maturity and philosophy with each subsequent speech. The nature of these changes lies in Hamletism, as he is a reflection of modern consciousness. According to Foakes, Hamlet's contemplations make him "well-intentioned, but ineffectual, full of talk, but unable to achieve anything" (20). It is clear that Hamlet often resents this, as he expresses to Guildenstern, "you would play upon me, you would seem to know my stops, you would pluck out the heart of my mystery" (3.2.355). Despite this, the position and function of the audience is clear, as the nature of the play proliferates the idea of spying; Polonius spies on Laertes, Claudius on Hamlet, and so on. From the audience's vantage point, Hamlet judges the characters, and the audience judges Hamlet's judgement, causing him to spend much of his time observing, weighing, and thinking, as opposed to being driven to action by action (Honigmann 56).

Many scholars have offered a number of explanations for Hamlet's inability to bring about his father's swift revenge. For example, Michael Goldman propositions that Hamlet is incapable of the act due to the potential involvement of Gertrude in his father's murder (213). Ultimately these explanations suffer from a narrow viewpoint, as they fail to consider the relationship Hamlet shares with the audience. At each point in which the young prince is able to act, he finds himself interrupted by the audience in the form of his own thoughts. As Bloom proposes, Hamlet is our collective consciousness (13); while things "seem" one way or another, he "hath that within which passeth show / these but the trappings and the suits of woe" (1.2.85). As such, Hamlet remains constrained until he comes to terms with the nature of this relationship: "When our deep plots do pall; and that should learn us / There's a divinity that shapes our ends" (5.2.9-10). Hamlet is impeded when there is a presumption of control, a "defiance of augury," and only upon removal of that presumption is he allowed to move forward.

Thus, we come full circle to Hamlet's tether. In his pursuit of revenge for his murdered father, Hamlet's specific purpose is distorted into the "greater purpose of

life" (Bloom 17). In turn, Hamlet himself is transformed from a man into an idea, which arguably allows him to transcend the trappings of the world Shakespeare lays out for him. As Samuel Coleridge famously noted, everyone may say "I have a smack of Hamlet in me" (140).

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AN ANALYSIS OF THE ROLES OF THE SUPERNATURAL IN *MACBETH* AND *HAMLET*

LUKASZ KORNAS

The supernatural is a prominent theme in William Shakespeare's *Macbeth* and *Hamlet*. This form of spiritualism adds an important degree of depth to Shakespeare's works. Depending on the play, the supernatural can either be a force for retribution or a force of retribution. This is an important distinction because Macbeth and Hamlet do not share similar goals. While Macbeth lusts for power, Hamlet demands justice. Therefore, while Macbeth is haunted by spirits, Hamlet is aided by them. Furthermore, because the spirits are adopted uniquely for their intended role in each respective play, the temperament of the spirits varies between *Macbeth* and *Hamlet*. Finally, the supernatural in *Macbeth* and *Hamlet* is intended to personify the internal struggles of the plays' protagonists.

The supernatural as a cultural phenomenon influenced literature in early modern England. Sixteenth and seventeenth century England was not governed by the belief in the supernatural. Ghosts in the late sixteenth-century England were viewed very much like they are in the modern United States. Some believed they exist, but belief in them was hardly a social norm. Voltaire commented on the belief in ghosts in English society by claiming, "The English have certainly no more belief in spirits than the Romans had, and yet they see every day with pleasure in the tragedy of Hamlet" (236). Many Romans, especially the Patricians, did not believe in ghosts and oftentimes not even in the gods. As Pamela Marin states, "…most educated Romans appeared to pay only lip-service to religion" (15). Instead, religion was seen as a political and social tool. Similarly, religion played a ceremonial function in Elizabethan England and was more popular in some circles than in others. John Dover Wilson observed that, "Spiritualism…formed one of the major interests of the [early modern] period" (65). Therefore, it is natural that spiritualism is present in many aspects of English society at the time. It is to be expected that Shakespeare used ghosts or other supernatural forms in his plays to express the conflicts his protagonists face.

Shakespearean England was very much a monarchy, and the pleasure of the royal family was important for the social well-being of prominent citizens. Shakespeare lived under the reigns of Queen Elizabeth I and King James I, and their reigns were distinct in many ways. Queen Elizabeth did not take a very active role in managing every aspect of her Kingdom. She allowed a level of leniency and believed "a sense of performance was crucial to…success" (McDonald 313). Elizabeth I was concerned with how she was perceived by the public, and as a result, she manipulated her advisors to make decisions without her expressed consent. On the other hand, James I had a very "authoritarian style" of ruling his kingdom (McDonald 303). Also, James I primarily was very much interested in the arts and religion. When James became king, Shakespeare's company was renamed the King's Men because James I

sponsored the troupe. King James was also very spiritual. He was known for prosecuting people who refused to believe in the mystical. For instance, "King James felt the need to rebut [Reginald] Scot, and […] Scot's books were publicly burned by the hangman at the king's order" (Wilson 64). The king sometimes censored what people read and, by extension, believed. Consequently, Shakespeare had to write his works according to what his audiences desired, and an important member of Shakespeare's audience was James I.

In addition to pleasing his audience, Shakespeare's use of spirits in *Macbeth* and *Hamlet* serves a psychological purpose throughout both plays. In the plays, the supernatural spurs both the protagonists to action. Shakespeare probably used Reginald Scot's *Discovery of Witchcraft* as a source for both *Macbeth* and *Hamlet*. Reginald Scot considered the ghosts, "the illusion of melancholic minds or flat knavery on the part of some rogue" (Wilson 64). Simply put, Scot believed that the supernatural indicates the troubled mind of a character. Macbeth and Hamlet both are faced with very real and troubling conflicts. Thus, the supernatural seems to externalize the mental state of both characters.

For example, the witches are an early indicator of what Macbeth will become. The witches in the beginning of the play are surrounded by an aura of uncertainty. During the first meeting of the witches, the three sisters chant the paradoxical statement, "Fair is foul, and foul is fair" (1.1.11). If something is foul, it is not fair, and vice versa. This paradox puts the audience in a state of doubt in the play's very first scene. This ambiguity is also representative of what Macbeth feels in the first few scenes of the play. Rajiva Verna believes, "*Macbeth* is a story of ambition and murder" (838), as well as of a man struggling to come to terms with his own desires. After Duncan has supper, Macbeth demands of his wife that, "We…proceed no further in this business" (1.7.31). Macbeth continually hesitates to finalize his plans to kill Duncan. Here, the witches and Macbeth are both creatures of doubt, and therefore, it stands to reason that the two share a connection in some capacity. In this way, Shakespeare seems to use the supernatural to project Macbeth's emotions.

Macbeth is a dynamic character with an extraordinary sense of self-awareness. As the play progresses, the reader will notice that Macbeth's attitude changes, as he becomes far more invested in his cause. Macbeth goes from fearing murder to fully embracing it. In addition to murdering Banquo, he attempts to murder Banquo's son, Fleance, and he murders the family of Macduff. Similarly, the witches also seem to experience a change in attitude. During Macbeth's second visit to the witches, the witches seem to deny and contradict Macbeth at every turn. The three sisters demand that Macbeth, "Seek to know no more" (4.1.103). This is a major shift for the witches and is uncharacteristic of how they treat Macbeth in the play's beginning. In the first act, the witches, while still enigmatic, are far more forthcoming than they appear to be in the Act 4. When they meet him the second time, everything seems to be falling apart in Macbeth's life. His wife has lost her reason. His enemies are rallying their forces, and his greatest allies, the witches, have become an obstacle to Macbeth and have seemingly abandoned him. However, as Stacey Hibbs and Thomas Hibbs note,

"Macbeth's imperfect virtue renders him vulnerable to temptation" (274). Macbeth is flawed, and he chooses to conform to his worst qualities. His uncontrolled ambition, lust for power, and bloodthirst conflict with Macbeth's virtuous side. Ultimately, these internal struggles explain the uncertainty of the latter half of the play.

Macbeth is a story of contradictions and paradoxes. The first feature most readers will notice about the play is its inherently paradoxical nature. Rajiva Verma suggests that, "Paradoxes are also used in *Macbeth*, but like so much else in the play, they are only seeming paradoxes that are resolved by time. They express contingent facts rather than the true nature of reality" (851). Therefore, the paradoxes may not be as paradoxical as they first appear. The witches create doubt in the mind of the reader or viewer. However, if viewed as an externalization of Macbeth's thoughts, the witches seem to suggest the struggle Macbeth faces between what is moral and what he desires. In this case, paradoxes are simply the complicated thought process of Macbeth. The witches are an extension of his soliloquies and the role they perform in the play. Henry Levin comments on the importance of soliloquies: "[Macbeth's] soliloquizing is central to the play, as he considers intentions, casts suspicions, registers hallucinations, coerces his conscience, balances hope against fear, and gives thought to the unspeakable" (238). Macbeth's soliloquies and the witches serve the same purpose, which is to expand our understanding of Macbeth's character. The difference is that the soliloquies deal with the conscious, deliberate thoughts of Macbeth, while the witches are a representation of the more subtle, undesirable thoughts of Macbeth.

This distinction between the supernatural and soliloquies is also apparent in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. The ghost of King Hamlet seems to represent Prince Hamlet's grief and desire for revenge. The ghost is an elusive force in the play. Hamlet is the only person who has consistent contact with the ghost, and during the first scenes of the play, Hamlet is the only one who speaks with the ghost. The exception is that Horatio and Marcellus can hear the Ghost demand that they "swear" to keep Hamlet's plot secret (1.5.188). Horatio is the best friend of Hamlet, and they seem to be aware of each other's thoughts. Therefore, the ghost being a part of Hamlet's mind would demand that his best friend and Marcellus, who also likely deduced some of Hamlet's intentions, swear to keep his secret.

Hamlet's conversations with the Ghost can be viewed as an internal dialogue. Richard Burton claims, "Hamlet who could not only make up his mind, but who knew very well what he was about. Hamlet vows vengeance in the presence of the Ghost" (175). However, Hamlet is, perhaps, not vowing vengeance to a literal ghost but to himself. Also, the ghost portrays the uncertainty Hamlet faces not only regarding the act of revenge but the justness of the act. Throughout the play, Hamlet struggles to come to terms with his actions. He only accepts his fate by the end of the play, at which point, the ghost has ceased to appear.

The ghost and Hamlet share remarkable similarities in the way they think and believe problems should be resolved. Hamlet's comments regarding his mother include, "She married. Oh, most wicked speed, to post / With such incestuous sheets!"

(1.2 156-157). Similarly, the Ghost of King Hamlet angrily spat, "Ay, that incestuous, that adulterate beast, / With witchcraft of his wit, with traitorous gifts […] won to his shameful lust / The will of my most seeming-virtuous Queen" (1.5.42-43; 45-46). Both the ghost and Hamlet seem to share their disdain for the marriage between Gertrude and Claudius. However, Hamlet apparently conceals his sentiments about the marriage before he meets the ghost. Stephen Orgel believes that supernatural figures, "Like [King Hamlet's] Ghost…are quintessential theatrical devices; they dance and sing, perform wonders, appear and disappear, fly, produce visions, do in short, all the things that, historically we have gone to the theatre to see" (259). Thus, the Ghost is a prop. Hamlet's complexity is viewed through several mediums in the play, and the Ghost is just one representation of Hamlet's struggle to come to terms with the death of his father.

Despite the role of the supernatural, *Macbeth* and *Hamlet* both act upon their own free will. Macbeth is ambitious before the witches appear. The witches, however, spur Macbeth into action. It is likely that the witches are Macbeth's own inner demons, spurring him onto the path of regicide. Likewise, the ghost of Hamlet embodies Hamlet's grief. It is evident that Hamlet is grieving for his father and angered by his mother's quick marriage before Hamlet meets the ghost. The ghost's suspicions are those of Hamlet. The ghost also helps Hamlet cope with the horror of killing another human. Shortly after Hamlet kills Polonius, the ghost appears and speaks with a rational voice. After the murder, Hamlet is likely in a disorganized mental state. However, the rational part of Hamlet presents itself in the form of the ghost. The ghost tells Hamlet, "This visitation / Is but to whet thy almost blunted purpose" (3.4.111-112). The Ghost acknowledges that Hamlet's current course of action is "blunted" or misdirected. Here the ghost also may represent Hamlet's feelings for his mother. In his anger in this scene, Hamlet may have struck his mother. However, Hamlet believes that his mother is being manipulated; the ghost has told Hamlet, "Taint not thy mind, nor let thy soul contrive / Against thy mother aught. Leave her to heaven" (1.5.85-86), suggesting that Hamlet has no hostile feelings towards his mother. Despite his feelings, Hamlet has no desire to punish her. His goals are aimed towards Claudius, as he is the main catalyst for his misfortune.

Spiritualism plays an important role in *Macbeth* and *Hamlet*. The spirits that visit both Macbeth and Hamlet are mediums for these characters' own internal struggles. Although both protagonists commit actions that go against their very beliefs, they eventually overcome their struggles and accomplish their goals, for better or worse. The supernatural, then, is a literary device to demonstrate the struggles of Macbeth and Hamlet and the complexity of the human mind. They embody desires that most people experience at least once in their lives. These spirits serve to embody the intricate desires of Macbeth's and Hamlet's characters.

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HAMLET'S DISTORTED GRIEF

KIMBERLY BARRIOS

William Shakespeare's *Hamlet* is a classical revenge tragedy that encompasses the murder of a king, a treacherous queen, and their son's desire for vengeance. Throughout the play, Hamlet not only grieves for his father's death but also must manage his emotions regarding his mother's hasty marriage to his uncle. In 1969, Swiss psychiatrist Elisabeth Kübler-Ross introduced a model of five stages of grief: denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance. Given Kübler-Ross' model, one can understand that Hamlet's actions are not solely based on strong negative emotions but founded on the difficult process of grief. In addition, Hamlet is deeply perturbed by the apparition of his father's ghost, which only adds more confusion to his already debilitated state of mind. His mother, Gertrude, with her improper actions, also furthers Hamlet's inner turmoil and does not allow him to process his grief in a timely manner, although Gertrude's ultimate repentance helps to allow him to recover from his grief. Although Hamlet's actions and reactions can resemble those of an indecisive, insane, and somber man, he endures an acute grieving process brought upon by the contradicting messages from the Ghost and Gertrude; eventually, Hamlet is able to reach acceptance of his reality.

In the Elizabethan period, because the cause, effect, and prevention of grief were not well understood, people were accustomed to reject the notion of grief. Furthermore, Richard Corum states that anyone experiencing grief in the Elizabethan era was viewed as feminine and was subjected to powerlessness, rage, and marginality, traits associated with women (97-98). On the other hand, the concept of melancholy was better accepted because it was perceived as a possible personality defect and not as an illness. Corum explains melancholy as, "one of the four cardinal humours recognized by ancient and medieval physiologists" (100). Melancholy was approved of more since it was common and it was not considered as an abasement of men. Furthermore, Shakespeare's depiction of Hamlet as a melancholic man can be juxtaposed with the modern understanding of grief as a way to explain his behavior.

Since there is no "typical" loss of a loved one nor a "typical" response to this loss, each person experiences his or her own distinct combination of feelings. Elisabeth Kübler-Ross presents five specific stages that provide tools to understand the complex feelings of grief and to learn to survive a loved one's death. However, Kübler-Ross notes that the five stages are just a general guide since it is possible to experience the stages in any order or not to live through all of them while coping with grief (7). Denial, the first stage, occurs when a person perceives life as meaningless, overwhelming, and questionable. Nonetheless, denial contributes to a person's healing process and thus leads to a more optimistic future by enabling one to endure the conclusiveness of death. Secondly, anger is a necessary stage because underneath it one will find the pain that accompanies a loss. While grieving, feelings of

emptiness and being lost are constant; however, anger anchors the mind to a temporary structure that directs a person towards a recovery path.

The third stage, bargaining, concerns itself with the anguish of causal statements like "what if" and "if only." Sadly, these questions always lead to the reality that the loved one is gone. Depression, the fourth stage, is crucial in the grieving process because it requires people to slow the speed of their thoughts and actions, in order to analyze themselves based on the loss experienced. Ultimately, depression slowly encourages one to reassemble one's life. Furthermore, Kübler-Ross makes a distinction between clinical depression and depression as a part of grieving: "When depression follows loss, there are specific sorrows that can be identified. In more serious and long-lasting depressions, it is difficult to receive support" (23). Although both sub-classes of depression have differences, grieving depression, if not treated accordingly, might lead to clinical depression. Lastly, the final stage in the grieving process is acceptance, which helps a person to acknowledge all that has been lost and to learn to live with that loss. Completing the healing process allows a person to remember and establish a new relationship with the lost loved one.

The Kübler-Ross model has helped many people understand the mourning process that follows a great loss. In Shakespeare's time, the Kübler-Ross model was not available; however, the depiction of Hamlet's actions and reactions after the loss of his father can be explained as his path through the stages of grief. The first signs of denial can be perceived when Hamlet states: "oh God, God, / How weary, stale, flat and unprofitable / Seem to me all the uses of this world!" (1.2. 132-134). Hamlet has lost interest in daily activities because the death of his beloved father has disturbed the perception of his surroundings. Hamlet's path through anger occurs after the Ghost shares that his own brother murdered him. Hamlet states, "That one may smile and smile and be a villain – / At least I am sure it may be so in Denmark. / So, uncle, there you are" (1.5.108-110). Hamlet's display of anger helps him to have a purpose that moves him beyond the initial stage of denial.

Hamlet does not experience bargaining with a higher power for a different outcome of his father's death. Although the death of his father is devastating for Hamlet, his royal status might have made him immune to negotiations. Hamlet's depression is easily recognizable when he states: "'Tis not alone my inky cloak, cold mother, / Nor customary suits of solemn black, / Nor windy suspiration of forced breath, / No, nor the fruitful river in the eye" (1.2. 77-81). Hamlet describes how black clothes and tears cannot fully depict his true feelings. By the end of the play, Hamlet accepts the changes that followed his father's death because he attributes them to a higher power. Hamlet's comments to Horatio: "Our indiscretion sometimes serves us well / When our deep plots do fall – and that should learn us / There's a divinity that shapes our ends, / Rough –hew them how we will" (5.2.8-10). With those words, Hamlet announces that he has reached the final stage of grief and thus is able to accept life and death as part of his reality. Despite Hamlet's inability to mourn through the stage of anger, because he is drawn-out by those close to him, his experience through the remaining stages guide him to accept the complexity of life

and death.

Gertrude plays an important role in Hamlet's distorted grief, as her mixed messages further anger him and hinder him from passing to the next stage of mourning. It is not known what motivates Gertrude to marry Claudius, but both Hamlet and the Ghost are troubled by what they believe to be her adulterous lust. The Ghost in his interaction with Hamlet states: "Oh wicked wit and gifts that have the power / So to seduce – won to his shameful lust / The will of my most seeming-virtuous Queen" (1.5.44-46). One interpretation of these lines is that Gertrude has been seduced even before King Hamlet is murdered, thus implying that she possesses a healthy amount of sexual desire. Hamlet believes that his mother is also a wanton woman who puts her appetite first. Moreover, Gertrude marries the person who has seduced her, Claudius, less than two months after her late husband is laid to rest (1.2.138). Gertrude's apparently quick acceptance of death prolongs Hamlet's ongoing anger in the grieving process.

Moreover, Gertrude demands that Hamlet welcome Claudius, her new husband, as his new father figure. However, she has not merely married a new man; she has married her deceased husband's brother, an action which was considered incest. Gertrude's hasty marriage is apparently motivated by her own welfare, satisfaction, and, ultimately, her sexual desires. Hamlet is confronted with having to both grieve for his deceased father and accept his uncle's mock attempts at fatherhood (1.2.64). What further angers Hamlet is his mother's inaction at Claudius' words, since they can be taken as a silent agreement with Claudius' paternal behavior. Finally, Gertrude's actions, and at times lack of action, prove to Hamlet that nobody in the court can empathize with his loss and grief.

Although Gertrude has imposed the effects of her lust and marriage on Hamlet, she also demands that he retains his love and respect for her as a mother figure. Although Hamlet apparently loves his mother, she constantly challenges those sentiments with her actions and abuse of motherly power. Gertrude's lack of support, comfort, and compassion encourages Hamlet to spend more time engulfed in the anger stage of grief, which also leads Hamlet to view his mother as an object of his rage.

While Hamlet's extended experience in the anger stage is caused by Gertrude, the Ghost plays an even more important part in the development of Hamlet's wrath and vengeful tendencies. Overall, the Ghost is an influential character in Hamlet's actions. Lily B. Campbell claims that Hamlet is quick to accept the apparition of the Ghost because it appears in a likeness of his father (126-127). The similarity between King Hamlet and the Ghost helps makes the demands of the Ghost more authoritative, which further draws Hamlet to rage. The Ghost's first demand is for Hamlet to avenge "his foul and most unnatural murder" (1.5.25). As the Ghost shares with Hamlet how he was poisoned by Claudius, he relies on Hamlet's ability and desire to revenge his murder. Discovering that his father was murdered furthers Hamlet's rage and fuels the desire for a vicious revenge against his uncle.

Although the Ghost reveals Gertrude's ambitions and deceit, he still orders

Hamlet to cause no harm to her in the process of seeking redress for the crime. As the Ghost instructs Hamlet: "But howsoever thou pursues this act / Taint not thy mind nor let thy soul contrive / Against thy mother aught; / leave her to heaven" (1.5.84-86). The Ghost is clear and specific regarding the burdening task he is imposing on Hamlet. Nevertheless, as Anna K. Nardo notes, in order for Hamlet to avenge his father, he must also punish Gertrude by revealing that she married her husband's murderer (187). The Ghost is able to awaken in Hamlet both a desire for action and inaction with respect to the revenge of his assassination. The Ghost helps to create a deep rage in Hamlet because Claudius is the embodiment of many negative emotions. Also, Hamlet is left in despair because while he secretly seeks to understand Gertrude, he must not allow any harm to come to his mother.

The Ghost causes further havoc for Hamlet by obliging him never to forget the murder of his father and to seek vengeance at the same time. The Ghost's parting words to Hamlet are: "Adieu, adieu, adieu, remember me" (1.5.91). Hamlet is left with a reason and a way to channel his anger to a murderous revenge, yet he is also powerless to act as he completely wishes. On the other hand, this statement also makes Hamlet's mourning brutally intense because it does not allow him to reach the last stages of Kübler-Ross' grieving model. As Arthur Kirsch comments, that part of mourning involves cutting ties with the one who has died, which the Ghost forbids (26). In addition, the Ghost's petition reinforces a lack of sympathy for Hamlet's grief, since it is selfish to demand so much from Hamlet, especially knowing he will comply with any request from his admired father.

Although Hamlet's grief is extended, especially in the stage of anger, his grief reaches by the end of the play the last stage of the mourning model, acceptance. Hamlet reaches a point in his grief where the accumulated anger consumes him, and he needs a way out of the chaos and sorrow. For Hamlet to heal, he needs to confront the person he loves and despises the most, his mother. Yet, he needs to remain in accordance with the Ghost's wish to not cause harm to Gertrude, which he achieves during a conversation in her private chamber. Scott Huelin highlights the fact that Hamlet "has an interest in serving as a sort of spiritual director for his own mother" (35). Hamlet is able to make his mother aware of her mistakes and thus repent for her wrong doings. Although Gertrude continues to be loyal to Claudius, Hamlet has advanced from anger to an attitude of acceptance.

Moreover, Hamlet canny interrogation of his mother forces her to acknowledge and regret her actions. After Hamlet presents Gertrude with a metaphorical mirror of her actions, she exclaims, "Thou turn'st my very eyes into my soul / And there I see such black and grieved spots / As will leave there their tinct" (3.4.88-90). In addition, their relationship benefits from the exchange because they feel free to show their care for one another. William Kerrigan states that: "The scene cannot end until 'Good night, mother' … no doubt, one of the deepest traces of filial tenderness" (58). As Hamlet departs, he allows himself the opportunity to reward his mother's declarations with a sentimental comment that reflects their relationship.

The difficult emotional and physical situations Hamlet experiences assist him

in his path towards acceptance. By banishing Hamlet to England after the murder of Polonius, Claudius indirectly frees Hamlet from prison and Denmark (Nardo 195-196). Although being forced to leave his native country is a harsh punishment, Hamlet obtains the freedom that he needs to get one-step closer to a complete acceptance of his loss. Furthermore, Hamlet's voyage to England exposes him to life-threating situations that make him value life. Horatio reads a letter from Hamlet, "Ere we were two days old at sea, a pirate of / very warlike appointment gave us chase" (4.6.15-16). With the letter, Hamlet describes himself as a lucky prisoner because the pirates are merciful, refusing to kill him. Troublesome aspects of life lead Hamlet toward acceptance of the people around him, his religious beliefs, and the concepts of life and death.

Although one can claim that because Hamlet experiences a difficult mourning process throughout the play, his actions and reactions can also be understood as being characteristics of his personality. For example, Hamlet displays features of an indecisive, somber, and mad person. A. B. Shaw states, "He is repeatedly violent, callous, and crude […]. [The play] is a study of a man unable to make himself do what he knows he must do" (93). Hamlet knows he needs to revenge his father and punish his mother, but his indecisive nature prevents him from acting. Also, it is possible that Hamlet is overall an unhappy person because he shows no interest for anything in the world. Thus, he is not interested in obtaining vengeance. Another popular theory is that Hamlet is partially insane. However, Shaw believes that if Hamlet was experiencing depression, it would be difficult to continue to pretend he is mad (93). In addition, Hamlet's madness allows him to counteract his antisocial ways brought upon by his natural unhappy state.

In conclusion, Hamlet's actions can be understood through the way he copes with a devastating grief, complicated by his mother and the Ghost's confusing demands. In the Elizabethan era, the concept of melancholy was better accepted than grief, which was attributed to a person of weak and feminine character. With psychological advances, one is now able to better understand Hamlet's behaviors using the Kübler-Ross grief model. Moreover, one can understand that Hamlet's difficulty in overcoming the anger stage is due to his loved ones making it harder for him. Gertrude's hasty actions were the first reason for Hamlet's extended and angered grief. The Ghost added to Hamlet's turmoil by demanding revenge yet mercy regarding his mother's deceit. Furthermore, Gertrude's repentance launches Hamlet on a recovery path that ultimately leads him to the final stage of the mourning process, acceptance. In addition, one can argue that Hamlet was not depressed because his actions can be explained as part of his indecisive, somber, and mad personality. Lastly, grief is an illness that can disturb a person's view of life and death; nonetheless, as Shakespeare's *Hamlet* shows, with the proper support the last stage of acceptance is reachable.

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THE DUCHESS OF MALFI AND THE HORSE-LEECH HERO

ALLEN LOOMIS

The Duchess of Malfi (1612-13), written by the Jacobean playwright John Webster, depicts a struggle between good and evil at an Italian court during the early 1500s. On one side, there is the noble Duchess and her stoic, lower-class lover and secret husband, Antonio. The offending side consists of her two brothers, the Machiavellian Cardinal and the mad Duke, Ferdinand, who harbors incestuous feelings towards the Duchess. Stuck in the middle of this struggle is the horse-leech of the court, the common man Bosola, whose role in this dichotomy shifts and evolves throughout the play. Scholars often argue that the noble Duchess is the play's protagonist; however, it is Bosola's initial moral ambiguity and eventual recognition of the enduring innocence and nobility of the Duchess that earns him the titles of tragic hero and the play's main protagonist.

Arguments that support the Duchess as the play's protagonist logically start with the obvious fact that Webster titles his play *The Duchess of Malfi*. Having the protagonist's name in the title of the play is a common characteristic for the revenge tragedy tradition, and examples include Thomas Kyd's full title *The Spanish Tragedy or Hieronimo is Mad Again*, William Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, and even Thomas Middleton's *The Revenger's Tragedy*, where the main character's name, Vindici, literally means "The Revenger." In these plays, there is little controversy regarding the title of the protagonist. However, despite this tradition, there are substantive aspects of the play that support Bosola as the protagonist, including literary cues, moral ambiguity, a transformative evolution of character, and the presence of tragic hero elements.

There are an abundance of literary cues established by Webster that suggest Bosola is the intended protagonist of *The Duchess of Malfi*. For example, in the first quarto of the play, Webster places him first on the cast list[1], he has the most lines, he is given substantial meta-theatrical soliloquies, and he is undoubtedly the most complex character of the play. In comparison to Bosola, the Duchess is a static character, and as such she maintains the same moral compass throughout the play. She refuses to waiver, even when confronted with the imminent murder of her two youngest children and herself in Act 4. Susan Baker agrees with this analysis, explaining that, "the Duchess does not develop, or grow, or learn anything significant from her experience" (343) and that, "a static protagonist begins his play with all the self-knowledge he will ever have. Whether profoundly heroic or neurotically obsessive, all static protagonists are chained to their initial perceptions of themselves" (344). This proves to be true for the Duchess, as she is, and in death continues to be,

[1] See Marcus 130, n. 5 for discussion.

the noble and pure "Duchess of Malfi still" (4.2.137). In contrast, Bosola's character is far from static, and in many ways he is the polar opposite of the Duchess. He is inherently flawed and ambiguous to other characters and the audience, and he experiences a multitude of profound changes in morality and philosophical approaches to life. Author C. G. Thayer considers Bosola's ambiguity an important and intentional aspect of the play. He explains that "Early in the play, then, Bosola is lecherous, covetous, proud, bloody, envious, a murderer, valiant— and with goodness to be pointed by melancholy" (164). Thayer is paraphrasing Antonio and Delio, who in Act 1 use these contradictory adjectives to describe Bosola. This perceived ambiguity is shared by the other characters as they attempt to define Bosola and his intentions. In effect, the audience is led to constantly question Bosola and contemplate his true intentions. The assumed answers to these questions are continuously challenged and result in confusion. Bosola becomes further ambiguous by defining and redefining himself multiple times throughout the play: "Me a villain" (1.1.266), "I am Bosola, your friend" (2.3.14), "A true servant" (4.2.317), and "lastly for myself, / That was an actor" (5.5.82-83). Also, Bosola's moral ambiguity and complexity are trademarks of a protagonist and tragic hero. For example, William Shakespeare's iconic character, Hamlet, to this day remains ambiguous, despite centuries of debate by scholars, performers, audience members and readers, all of whom interpret him differently. Although the character is less well-known than Hamlet, Bosola also deserves this honor of ambiguity.

Another detail that supports Bosola as the main protagonist and tragic hero is that the Duchess dies at the close of Act 4. A typical convention within revenge tragedy tradition is that Act 5 focuses around the main protagonist and his/her attempt to achieve revenge. In support of Bosola as the protagonist of *The Duchess of Malfi*, the entire fifth act concerns Bosola's plan to avenge the Duchess.

Bosola also serves as the play's mediator through keeping the audience informed by explaining the action with metatheatrics and meaningful soliloquies. Therefore, without Bosola, the continuation of the plot and its connection to the audience would be lost. Interestingly, Bosola also recognizes his role as an actor, and before his death he summarizes for the audience,

> Revenge – for the Duchess of Malfi, murdered
> By th'Aragonian brethren; for Antonio,
> Slain by this hand; for lustful Julia,
> Poisoned by this man; and lastly for myself
> That was an actor in the main of all,
> Much 'gainst mine own good nature,
> yet I'th'end Neglected. (5.5.79-85)

Within these lines, Bosola refuses to take blame for the murders. He places the blame for the death of the Duchess on Ferdinand and the Cardinal. He blames his hand for the mistake that killed Antonio. He refers to himself as a mere "actor" in the

"main" of it all and despite his self-perceived good nature, he had remained a pawn of the Cardinal and Ferdinand up until the death of the Duchess. In his eyes, the Aragonian brothers "Neglected" him and used his lowly status to do what they themselves would not.

Before the murder of the Duchess, Bosola reluctantly goes against his inner morality and dutifully does the bidding of the aristocratic Cardinal and Duke. However, with Ferdinand's instruction, Bosola is directed to kill the Duchess and her two youngest children in Act 4. After completing this task, Bosola tearfully encounters the grave consequence of his actions as he witnesses the dying Duchess, and he solemnly shares with the audience, "Where were / These penitent fountains while she was living? / O, they were frozen up" (4.2.356). Brian Chalk, in interpreting these lines, explains that, "Bosola's former satirical lens allowed him to approach his role in the Duchess's death with ironic detachment, but the sight of her corpse bridges this divide and forces him to acknowledge that he too is guilty of the attempt to theatricalize death to advance his own designs" (397). At this moment, Bosola places blame for the death of the Duchess on Ferdinand, and he decides to follow his own conscience instead of continuing to do the bidding of the Duke and Cardinal. When this evolution occurs, Bosola resoundingly commits himself to avenging the Duchess and rectifying the crimes committed within the "rank pasture" (1.1.298) of the Italian court.

It takes the murder of the Duchess for Bosola to realize his own potential and strength to be free of the Aragonian brothers. Bosola is emboldened by the Duchess and her unwavering strength to stay true to herself and her refusal to bend to the will of the Cardinal and Ferdinand, even when she faces imminent death. In this moment, Bosola begins his transition from villain to tragic hero. It is fitting that Antonio lovingly describes the Duchess as, "All her particular worth grows to this sum: / She stains the time past, lights the time to come" (1.2.201-02), as this was also witnessed by Bosola. The death of the Duchess "stains the time past" for Bosola, and as a result he recognizes his error of blindly following the orders of those above him. At the same time, she "lights the time to come" by being the catalyst that transforms Bosola into the future hero of the play. This growth enables Bosola to follow his self-directed conscience and morality, which allows him to avenge the wrongs of the Duke, the Cardinal, and himself. Bosola's vengeance eventually rids the Malfi court of corruption and evil and, in turn, allows the surviving son of the Duchess and Antonio to become the next Duke.

Critics and readers of the play might at first resist the idea that Bosola is the protagonist and tragic hero of *The Duchess of Malfi*, mostly because Bosola starts as such an abhorrent villain. His greed can make him do anything when he is presented with an adequate amount of gold and the coercion of those of higher status. He commits the unforgivable acts of killing the benevolent Duchess, mistakenly stabbing Antonio, and murdering their two innocent children. As a result, readers struggle with the question of how someone so evil and corrupt can also be the hero of the play. Applying the ethical relativist approach to philosophy helps explain the malleability

of Bosola's morals in a somewhat sympathetic way and helps clarify Webster's role for Bosola. In other words, Bosola's morality is relative to the corrupt culture of which he is a reluctant participant. Proof of his reluctance can be seen in the lines, "Take your devils, / Which hell calls angels! These cursed gifts would make / You a corrupter, me an impudent traitor; / And should I take these, they'd take me to hell" (1.1.256-70). Then, shortly after he is forced to submit to the Ferdinand's will after the Duke refuses to take the gold back, Bosola replies, "Say then my corruption / Grew out of horse dung. I am your creature" (1.1.278-79). However, after murdering the Duchess, Bosola undergoes a transformation brought on by the strength and unwavering incorruptibility of the Duchess. For Bosola, the Duchess becomes a new model of morality to emulate, and he begins to redefine his environment, proclaiming,

> Oh turtles' feathers! Whilst a guilty conscience
> Is a black register wherein is writ
> All our good deeds and bad, a perspective
> That shows us hell. That we cannot be suffered
> To do good when we have a mind to it. (4.2.341-45)

This soliloquy highlights the crux of Bosola's character flaw and constitutes him as tragic hero. It is apparent that he has the yearning and capability to do good, but he has fallen victim to his surroundings, an environment imposed upon him by the corrupt Duke and Cardinal. Bosola shares his inner morality with the audience after he is denied payment by Ferdinand for killing the Duchess,

> Let me know
> Wherefore I should be thus neglected. Sir,
> I served your tyranny, and rather strove
> To satisfy yourself, than all the world; And though I loathed the evil, yet I loved
> You that did counsel it, and rather sought
> To appear a true servant than an honest man. (4.2.312-18)

Within these lines, Bosola expresses how he aimed to be a "true servant" to those above him instead of an "honest man." Thus, it can be discerned that he planned to be a "true servant" to gain favor and improve his life by moving above his lowly existence, and because he had believed it was the right thing for a man of his status to do. However, after Bosola is refused payment by Ferdinand, he realizes the futility of his servitude and begins to direct his own life instead of being a horse-leech and creature of those above him.

In addition to transforming his morality, Bosola experiences a shift in his world philosophy between the murder of the Duchess and the accidental stabbing of Antonio. When Bosola offers false assurances to the dying Duchess about Antonio, he says, "He's reconciled to your brothers. The Pope hath / wrought / The atonement"

(4.2.337-38). This is an obvious fabrication and his motives are not exactly known. However, Bosola offers hope for the Duchess, in a possible attempt to ease her pain or to give her a reason and strength to continue living. In contrast, this same type of kindness and hope is curiously not shown to Antonio after Bosola mistakenly stabs him. Instead, Bosola expresses an existential attitude about the meaning of life, which is said to occur when an individual recognizes that his or her life is not predestined by a virtuous God and that things do not happen for any particular reason. After mistakenly stabbing him, he decides to tell Antonio the truth, unlike the lie he told the Duchess. He tells Antonio that his wife and two sons were murdered to make his, "heart break quickly" (5.4.55). It can be assumed that Bosola does this because he no longer believes in a hopeful future and has given up any idea that he may have once had for meaning of life. Therefore, Bosola now views life as a series of random acts and cold, tragic consequences. As a result, Bosola attempts to hasten Antonio's death so he can escape the realistic pains of life, rather than promote its hopeful continuation. This philosophy is solidified and conveyed later in the play when Bosola says, "We are merely the stars' tennis balls, struck and banded / Which way please them" (5.4.53-54).

It is not until after the death of the Duchess that Bosola recognizes his own freewill and the existential possibilities to choose for himself. This occurs too late because Bosola's life will now end tragically because of his crimes. Leah S. Marcus describes Bosola as, "One day a Parasite and the next a Precisian. There could be no better capsule definition of the riven consciousness of Bosola, whose mercurial and self-conflicted perspective casts *Malfi* into a mode of intellectual complexity and self-interrogation that helps to account for its enormous power and fascination for readers and theatrical audiences" (42). However, instead of "parasite," a truer definition can be attributed to Bosola as "horse-leech," which he likens himself to within the first act: "He and his brother are like plum-trees that grow crooked over standing pools; they are rich, and o'erladen, stagnant with fruit, but none but crows, pies, and caterpillars feed on them. Could I be one of their flattering panders, I would hang on their ears like a horse-leech till I were full, and then drop off" (1.1.47-53). The horse-leech consumes blood for their own nourishment and survival, much in the same way Bosola is forced to accept gold from Ferdinand and complete the tasks presented to him by the upper class. However, and perhaps unknown to Bosola, leeches are, dating back to antiquity, well known for their use in blood purification. Just as a leech was thought to allow blood to be purified, Bosola ends the play by righting his wrongs and purifying the Italian court with the murder of Ferdinand and the Cardinal. One of Bosola's significant tragic flaws is that his greed was unquenched, that he held on like a horse-leech for too long. This characteristic reinforces the idea of Bosola as the play's tragic hero because after recognizing his sad role as a horse-leech, he takes action by listening to his own conscience instead of obeying the will of those above him. Consequently, although it is too late to save himself, Bosola solidifies his role as a tragic hero at the end of the play, as he is able to rectify all the wrongs done, including his own, within the "rank pasture" (1.1.298) of the Italian court.

John Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi* is Bosola's tragedy: a common man, attempting to rise in life by following the whims of those above him, realizes that, instead, he should have lived life according to his own morals. Bosola shares this premise with the Cardinal before they both die,

> Yes, I hold my weary soul in my teeth:
> Tis ready to part from me. I do glory
> That thou, which stood'st like a huge pyramid
> Begun upon a large and ample base,
> Shalt end in a little point – a kind of nothing. (5.5.73-77)

Readers may contemplate whether Bosola's attempt was enough. For example, D. C. Gunby articulates, "his role has been that of an agent of God as well as of the Devil, we may wonder whether he will escape damnation" (234). However, despite Bosola's flaws and fluctuations as an agent for both good and evil, he eventually personifies his previously dormant morality and attempts to right his wrongs. Because of this self-realization, Webster's Bosola equally joins the ranks of Hieronimo, Hamlet and Vindici as a tragic hero, a profound and unforgettable protagonist of the Elizabethan/Jacobean revenge tragedy genre.

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SHAKESPEARE'S TRAGIC WOMEN: MISOGYNY IN *OTHELLO* AND *HAMLET*

EDIPSON VINUEZA

Desdemona, Emilia, Gertrude, and Ophelia—these are just a few names of the many women who inhabit William Shakespeare's works. These characters represent womanhood both in the Shakespeare's plays and the society in which he lived during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.[1] Some of these characters possess power or authority, but they are all subject to strong prejudice and, sometimes, hatred from the male characters of their respective plays. The sexism towards women and the machismo presented in *Othello* and *Hamlet* highlight the hostile environment created by a culture of imposed male superiority, not only in the plays but also during the period in which Shakespeare lived.

Misogyny is "hatred or dislike of, or prejudice against women."[2] Although the term *misogyny* did not exist in the Renaissance, its practice did. However, misogyny was quite different than what we see today. During this period, women who did not conform to their roles were treated in hostile and sometimes humiliating ways, and often they were not allowed to voice their opinions. Neil Keeble writes, "Women of evident intelligence themselves accepted this divorce between the private (feminine) and public (masculine) spheres" (186). Women had to adapt themselves to a society in which they were considered less valuable beings who were only meant to stay home, attend their husbands, and watch over the children. Because this commonplace prejudice against women was the norm during England's Renaissance, when it was presented in Shakespeare's plays, it is unlikely that it would have shocked people in the audience.

Misogyny is far from new. The hatred towards and subjugation of women has existed since the earliest days of humankind. Perhaps it was women's "mysterious" power of bearing children and their menstruating capacities that created some innate fear among men. These fears, in turn, may have caused the introduction of many cultural and religious misconceptions about the entire feminine gender. Stephanie Du Barry explains that this fear also leads to a society in which men displayed an absolute authority over their women, including both verbal and physical violence, discrimination, and limitations to what women could say in public. In such conditions, fear, superstition and religious beliefs led men to punish those women who did not

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[1] Shakespeare did, in fact, create strong female characters, such as Rosalind, Beatrice, Juliet, and Lady Macbeth; however, these female figures would have been considered radical. As Juliet Dusinberre notes, "In the sixteenth century the idea that women had consciousness which might operate independently from men's, might even judge and oppose the male conscience, was revolutionary" (86). No doubt independent-minded women existed, but they clearly seem to have contradicted the prevailing social order.

[2] *The Oxford English Dictionary*, "misogyny."

cooperate with the patriarchal program. The fact that "misogyny took the particular form of witch-hunting during the 16th and 17th centuries" indicates the extremes to which this women-hating behavior could go. (Du Barry n.p.)

Objections might be made that Shakespeare's plays could not have been misogynistic because he knew that Queen Elizabeth might see them. However, Ziegler, Dolan and Roberts explain that this was not the case since, "the queen identifies with a male protagonist; she does not, for instance, ask for a play in which Mistress Quickly is the star." (95) The Queen would not have identified herself with the weaknesses of women in the plays. Women in this period, especially the Queen herself, apparently identified *against* gender in order to imagine themselves as powerful characters that had a wide range of options, could make choices, act decisively, and even be able to shape their own destinies (95).

Othello and *Hamlet* are very different tragedies, but the misogyny in both plays renders comparably tragic effects as far as women are concerned. One thing both plays have in common is that two of their characters, Iago and Hamlet, are driven to view womankind in the same misogynistic ways (Brustein 42). Both characters believe that women are "shrewish, ignorant, willful, avaricious, vain and above all, lecherous and adulterous" (Sturrock 311). They share these thoughts as well as the practice of first denigrating one specific woman but then shifting these opinions against all females. Attacks on women in both plays are more complex than just negative thoughts against women. The accusations encompass manipulation, verbal attacks, and physical violence.

In Othello's case, his false suspicions about Desdemona are foreshadowed by a comment that she has been deceitful to her father. The implication is that all women are inclined to deception and therefore deserving of distrust. However, in early modern European marriage practices the cards were stacked against women. Based on property exchanges between males, in aristocratic arranged marriages the head of the woman's family would agree to give their daughter away for marriage, which was often done for the family's own benefit of wealth, honors, and/or social position. Marianne Novy explains, "because of fathers' control over their daughters, women can choose their husbands only through some deception—and that deception can forever after be held against them" (318). This so-called *deception* happens in *Othello* when Desdemona deceives her father by secretly marrying Othello, a moor. Brabantio tells Othello, "Look to her, Moor, if thou hast eyes to see: / She has deceived her father, and may thee" (1.3.290-291). The suggestion is that she is a manipulative and dishonest woman, a woman who will deceive anyone to get what she wants. Whereas Othello initially wanted Desdemona to disregard what her father's wishes might be, Brabantio's naming of this behavior as *deceptive* plays into the misogynistic ideas that all women are so, ideas that were compounded by the laws and practices of marriage at the time.

More evidence of misogyny in *Othello* includes Iago's slander against women linked to his anger caused by rumors that his wife has slept with Othello. Iago says "I hate the Moor, / And it is thought abroad that 'twixt my sheets / H'as done my office"

(1.3.377-379). Iago's rage at the notion of his wife's possible infidelity expands into a distrust and hatred of all women. During his talk with Desdemona, he says that women are, "Bells in your parlours; wildcats in your kitchens, / saints in your inquiries, devils being offended, / Players in your house wifery, and hussies in your beds" (2.1.110-112). For Iago, all women are manipulating scolds and lazy whores. Even when Desdemona asks him to describe her, he is not able to find any praise for her, even though she is the wife of his general, Othello. The simple task to praise women seems to be impossible for Iago, for it "requires labor and inspiration from a source beyond himself" (Wayne 163). Iago's hatred towards women is so intense that, even though he is such a good liar, he cannot manage to lie about his convictions about women's lack of virtue.

In the course of the play, Iago's clever manipulation and lies change Othello's views about his faithful and fair Desdemona. Robert Brustein says that, "once Othello accepts Iago's refusal of transcendence … he is quickly converted from a doting husband into a paranoid misogynist" (43). Othello is tormented by the thought of Desdemona cheating on him and making him a cuckold. Desdemona's presumed cheating transforms Othello from a loving husband into a hateful man who proclaims, without any evidence, that Desdemona is a lustful and unfaithful woman. Othello does not ask Desdemona if she is unfaithful to him until very late in the course of the play, after he has already made up his mind about her guilt and has decided to kill her (5.2). The misogyny of the culture in general, and of Iago specifically, has worked upon Othello to help drive him to murder his loving wife.

In *Hamlet*, the transference of misogyny towards all women is found in Hamlet's anger at his mother being transferred to his beloved, Ophelia. According to Peter Erickson, Hamlet's outrage begins because "his 'true mother' has made herself a 'harlot' through remarriage and made him a 'bastard' by dispossessing him of the maternal inheritance to which he feels entitled" (191). Robert Brustein concurs, "His mother's actions drive Hamlet to believe that all women share the same corrupt personalities, thus the same transgressions, and, so, these accusations against one woman become charges against the entire gender" (20). These accusations can be seen in Hamlet's cruel behavior towards Ophelia when she tries to return his letters (as she had been instructed to do by her father). Hamlet says to her "be thou as chaste as ice, as pure as / snow, thou shalt not escape calumny. Get thee to a / nunnery, go: farewell… / for wise men know well enough what monsters you make of them" (3.2.137-140). Hamlet's "nunnery" speech makes clear his belief that in order to stop committing dreadful sins and remain virtuous, women need to be confined. This belief is compounded by the common use of *nunnery* as a euphemism for a brothel, a misogynist slander appropriate here, as Hamlet sees all women as dishonest and foul.[3]

Both Ophelia and Gertrude are easily manipulated by the purposes of the male characters. Ophelia, for instance, obeys her father and brother about not responding to Hamlet's letters. She says to Polonius, "[M]y good lord […], as you did command, / I

[3] *The Oxford English Dictionary*, "nunnery," 1. b.

did repel his letters and denied / His access to me" (2.1.106-108). Ophelia does possess feelings of her own, of course, as she has developed a romantic relationship with Hamlet before the action of the play, but she is easily influenced by her father to act against those feelings. According to Juliet Dusinberre, the repercussion is that "being false to herself, allowing herself to acquiesce in the deception by which her father and the king overhear her conversation with Hamlet, she is inevitably false to Hamlet" (94). Ophelia cannot win. In being obedient to her father and the king, she gives Hamlet more fuel for his belief that all women are false. Because the patriarchal culture demands obedience from women, wives as well as daughters, Ophelia is complicit with Hamlet's enemies, but then Hamlet interprets her obedience as evidence that she, like all women, is evil and untrue.

Gendered language reflected anti-women thinking even more in the early modern period than it does now. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the term *woman* during Shakespeare's period, could not only refer to a specific gender, but it could also be linked with physical and emotional weaknesses.[4] So if a man showed some type of weakness, such as in action or the lack of physical power, he might be considered a *woman*. Juliet Dusinberre says, "If a man lacks physical power he becomes a woman, not respected because not feared, a contemptible onlooker on the world of action" (278). Shakespeare depicts this misogynistic ideal, reflected in language, in *Hamlet* when Hamlet is implicitly feminized by has inability to take action and avenge his father. To prove his masculinity and earn respect from fellow men, Hamlet would need to be decisive. In contrast, Laertes and Fortinbras demonstrate these masculine characteristics by taking action to avenge their fathers' death. Hamlet contemplates the murder, needlessly kills another man, and, throughout the entire play, questions his own existence, but he never really acts to avenge his father until the very last scene, when he himself is about to die.

Although misogyny goes beyond physical violence against women, the female characters in both plays are victims of physical violence as well as the verbal and emotional threats they endure. Four out of five female characters in *Othello* and *Hamlet* end up being murdered by their husbands or they are driven to commit suicide. In *Othello*, two out of the only three women in the play die brutally murdered by their husbands, while in *Hamlet*, the only two women in the play also perish due to men's actions. As Phyllis Rackin mentions, in both real and theatrical lives, "wife-beating was regarded as a perfectly acceptable means of resolving domestic disputes" (7). Othello does use physical violence against Desdemona and ultimately kills her because of her supposed adultery. The violence towards women in Shakespeare's works illustrates the violent ways in which women have been treated in this and other periods. If women did not follow their social norms, such as staying quiet and obeying their master-like husbands, violent acts against them could quickly follow. Verbal violence is also presented in both plays in form of insults and harsh comments about women. These verbal slanders against women occur without anyone on the play

[4] *The Oxford English Dictionary*, "woman," 3. b. and 5.

questioning the reason for the attacks, meaning that it was not regarded as something wrong, but something usual.

As is the case now, in the early modern period, women of higher social ranks had more privileges than their social inferiors, but women of all ranks still had many qualities in common. During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, higher-class women were able to have some education, but all women were prohibited from the universities, thus depriving them from obtaining higher professions (Rackin 7). If the family was wealthy enough, like the royal families or the upper class, they could pay for a tutor to teach their daughters at home, since there were no schools for girls either. Ophelia's situation of total reliance on her father and the royal family reflects this restriction on women's education. The young male characters are expected to go to university. Claudius suggests Hamlet, "For your intent / In going back to school in Wittenberg, / It is most retrograde to our desire (Hamlet 1.2.112-114). Even Ophelia's brother, Laertes, goes to study in France. The young men in *Hamlet* are encouraged to attend school and pursue higher education. Yet the play never mentions Ophelia pursuing any education. She is always around her father and following him everywhere he goes. Ophelia, like the women in the Renaissance period, does not need an education; she only needs to stay home, be quiet, and follow the commands of the male.

In contrast to the universally "bad" featured in misogynistic thinking, a "good" woman during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was one who was completely subject to the power of men. As Valerie Wayne says, "Only a woman who admits men's restrictions on her behavior deserves to be a person" (165). Women in this period were coerced to succumb completely to the authority of their male superiors so as to be the "excellent" women society expected them to be. Also, they were discouraged or forbidden to involve themselves in civic or financial business and instead to commit to their household work and taking care of the children. As Neil Keeble notes, "Woman's place was within doors, her business domestic" (186). The perfect woman is the one who happily and quietly complies without wondering why she should be put in such position.

In conclusion, careful readers of *Othello* and *Hamlet* will and should continue to ask, as Brustein does: "How do we explain those poisonous explosions of sex nausea and anger toward woman's unfaithfulness that often permeate the poems and saturate the plays? Reflections of contemporary attitudes? Examples of personal prejudice?" (23). The relentless hated towards women presented in *Hamlet* and *Othello* makes it difficult, if not impossible, to see these plays as reflecting a neutral position towards women. Shakespeare wrote his plays in a society governed by many different laws and customs than those we have today. In today's civilized society, most women have equal rights and opportunities as men, and violent acts towards them are against the law and punishable with prison time. Modern laws regarding women notwithstanding, however, the ideology of prejudice against women and misogynistic language continue to persist, even if they are often hidden. Consequently, one answer to the question of why we should continue to discuss

the hatred expressed in these plays is that by noticing the patterns of thought Shakespeare gives both his villains and his heroes, we may become increasingly more aware of our own.

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"The Skull Beneath The Skin": Death In *The Revenger's Tragedy* And *The Duchess Of Malfi*

Matthew Barge

Death is a constant companion in revenge tragedies. Skulls, graves, corpses, duels and murder abound. After all, there must be something that needs revenging. T.S. Eliot says of John Webster, in "Whispers of Immortality," "Webster was much possessed by death / And saw the skull beneath the skin." One might say the same thing about some of Thomas Middleton's plays, as well. With the constant onslaught of death, the authors of these plays are able to use a variety of imagery to connect their ideas with the audience. In Thomas Middleton's *The Revenger's Tragedy* and John Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi*, imagery of death and dying establishes a connection to the Anglican past of England while interjecting new Puritan opinions about the idea of death, creating a changing view of the time period. Traditional Anglican viewpoints are apparent throughout both plays. The plays reference classical ideas and works, such as *memento mori*, the *Danse Macabre*, and *ars morendi or The Art of Dying*. They then subvert these ideas to demonstrate newly established, Puritan ideas about death, including the finality of the body and the emergence of the study of the end times, including the judgement that accompanies the Apocalypse. This paper will look at the thoughts of death at the time, both Anglican and Puritan, and then consider their application to *The Revenger's Tragedy* and *The Duchess of Malfi*.

One area of growing conflict between Anglicans and their Puritan counterparts was the importance of the body. In the Anglican church (as in the Catholic church), the body took on an extra importance because of the soul that occupied it. Bodies of apostles and saints had added significance because of their holy status. The body was a relic to be worshipped in the Anglican church. Scott Dudley discusses how the bodies are considered vessels of the holy spirit because of their association with God. Bodies also have the capacity to facilitate miracles (282). The skull of Gloriana in *The Revengers Tragedy* can be seen as an example of this. At the opening of the play Vindici talks to the skull, "My study's ornament, thou shell of death / Once the bright face of my betrothed lady / When life and beauty naturally filled out" (1.1.15-17). Vindici worships this skull, keeping it on hand for nine years, talking to it, studying it and then using it to exact his revenge. The severed hand in *The Duchess of Malfi* can also be seen this way, as Ferdinand uses it as a relic of Antonio to scare the Duchess (4.1.42ff). The Church believed the dead, or specifically their bones, connected them to that which is holy, as well as to the history of their church.

In contrast, the Puritans believed that miracles associated with the body were either fabricated by the Anglicans or Catholics, or were of Satan and occurred in order to sway people away from God (Dudley 284). The holiness and miracles were stripped away from the body, and so the bodies lose their significance to the Puritans, replaced by the importance of the mind. Instead of proof in the physical body, the inward presence of God is important, and the physical body merely interferes with

that pursuit. Related is the emerging importance of science at the time, as knowledge of the inner workings of the body was growing at a rapid pace. Bosola, in *The Duchess of Malfi*, refers to this perspective of the body when he tells the Duchess, "Thou art a box of wormseed" (4.2.120), indicating that when dead, she is nothing more than food for worms. The body after her death has no significance; to Bosola the Duchess exists no longer, and so her corpse is nothing, as well. This attitude demonstrates the Puritans' focus on things upward, in heaven, instead of leaving their thoughts on that which is still earthly.

Another subject that separated these two groups was eschatology, the study of the end times and the final destiny of the soul. Earlier plays, such as William Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, spent a great deal of energy on this subject. The eventual destination of Hamlet's soul makes him question his revenge and is the subject of much of his famous soliloquies. There was a litany of theories on the subject, and one would be hard pressed to find two sides that agree on almost any aspect of it. The newest ideas, and ones that are shown by Webster in *The Duchess Of Malfi*, are of the inherent mystery of what will happen in the end times (Marche 86). The apocalyptic end times are clearly important and will contain a judgement of some kind, but it is impossible to predict the outcome. Webster ends his play with lines by Delio, "Integrity of life is fame's best friend, / Which nobly beyond death shall crown the end" (5.5.118-119). Webster writes that the integrity of life will be paid back, and exalted beyond death, in the final judgment; although no one can be sure how it will happen, it will happen. Earlier eschatological views also centered around the return of the dead, which can be seen in the double killing of the Duke in *The Revengers's Tragedy*, as well as the echo in *The Duchess of Malfi*. Stephen Marche notes the importance of the idea of bodies being remade during these final days, but also concludes that it is impossible to know what those bodies would be. This mystery shrouds the future, even though we know, or hope, that we will be remade in God's image (91). This mystery hangs over these plays, especially *The Duchess of Malfi*.

The Revenger's Tragedy centers entirely on death. It begins with Vindici focusing on the skull of his poisoned love, Gloriana, leads to the murder of the Duke in an act of revenge, and ends with the murders of Lussurioso, Supervacio, and Ambiosso. In each instance, there are examples of the Anglican ideas, as well as new Puritan ideas, woven into the scenes. First, in the skull of Gloriana, we see the classic example of the *memento mori*, an object for contemplating death and the afterlife. The scene mirrors the graveyard scene (5.1) in *Hamlet*, where Hamlet considers that everyone will end up just like Yorick, as a skull. The audience of *The Revenger's Tragedy* is invited to this image immediately, and it is an allusion they would recognize from Shakespeare's play. Vindici, however, does not really use the skull in the same way, even as he alludes to it. Andrew Sofer discusses how Vindici turns the skull into an object of sexual desire (63). He describes the skull, "When two heaven-pointed diamonds were set / In those unsightly rings – then twas a face" (1.1.19-20). In describing the skull, Vindici is not talking about a set of bones, but he is also not really talking about a person, either. He refers to the eyes as diamonds, something

much desired and hoped for, saying they are looking towards heaven. This imagery suggests a picture of a praying woman, someone gentle and in supplication, someone virginal. But then, he goes further, saying, "That the uprightest man (if such there be / That sin but seven times a day) broke custom / And made it eight with looking after her" (1.1.23-25). Vindici says that this skull is so arousing that it would make a man erect, even after he was already spent from intercourse. This turns Gloriana into an object of desire and also a prop (Sofer). Vindici gives great significance to the skull, indicative of the idea of the body's importance for Anglicans. However, the skull is only important to Vindice because it was that of Gloriana; it was part of a vessel that contained Gloriana's soul, and so when Vindici uses it to take her revenge, the skull gains even greater significance.

When Vindici dresses up Gloriana to take revenge on the Duke, he makes it known that it is not just any prop, "I have not fashioned this only for show / And useless property; not it shall bear a part / E'en in it own revenge" (3.5.99-101). It is important to Vindici that Gloriana plays this role in her own revenge. Sofer even postulates that it is Gloriana who is directing the revenge act, and that it is her own devices that she uses Vindice, that he is subject to her whims and her revenge (65). Once the Duke kisses the poisoned skull, Vindici cannot wait to tell him who it was, "Duke dost know / Yon dreadful vizard? View it well; Tis the skull / Of Gloriana, whom thou poisonedst last" (3.5.147-149). Vindici is almost giddy with this news of revenge, and he takes great joy in the demise of the Duke. It is a brutal death for the Duke, as his lips and teeth are eaten away by the poison, but Vindici wants to make sure he suffers even more, "and make his eyes like comets shine through blood / When the bad bleeds, then is the tragedy good" (3.5.198-199). Vindici wants his eyes to see a worse pain than his mouth, his own wife in her incest. He also ends with a metatheatrical line—the play is good when the bad, the villain, bleeds, but also when tragedy occurs in the play.

One last aspect of *The Revengers Tragedy* that subverts Anglican ideas about death comes during the final scene in the courtroom with the deaths of Piato, Lussurioso, and the other brothers. The stage directions in this scene indicate very specific movements. There are masked revengers, dancing through the court towards their final death. Their movements are reminiscent of the *Danse Macabre*, or the Dance of Death. The *Danse Macabre* is a theme that runs through many paintings and woodcuts of the time in which Death is portrayed as a caped skeleton that meets people to bring them to their deaths. It happens to all people of every class, as Death greets the rich and poor in the same way. This artwork, like the *memento mori*, is meant to induce contemplation on the passing of life and the meaningless of sustained wealth in this world. The *Danse* is mirrored in other areas of the play, including the final scene, especially when Vindici dresses up the body of the Duke to represent Piato, a character Vindici himself created earlier in the play as a disguise. In this scene, Vindici plays Death, as well as one of those being summoned, "That's a good lay, for I must kill myself. Brother that's I that sits for me, do you mark it? And I must stand here to make away myself yonder. I must sit to be killed and stand to kill

myself" (5.1.3-5). The corpse represents him, and so he takes both roles in the *Danse*, bringing himself to death, too. Michael Neill says that the last scene is a perfect reminder of the *Danse*, and for the two sets of revengers, one becomes Death for the other (172). The stage directions read, "*The revengers dance; at the end, steal out their swords and these kill the four at the table*" *(5.3.42 s.d.)* and then "*Enter the other masque of intended murderers*" *(5.3.49s.d.)*. Some productions of the play go so far as to dress the characters up as Death itself. This *Danse Macabre*, however, is not quite the traditional means for contemplation but is subverted by Middleton, similarly to his usage of the *memento mori*. Middleton's use of these touchpoints suggests he intends that the audience will recognize what they traditionally represent, but also that he demonstrates how the ideas are changing.

The Duchess of Malfi elicits other ideas while utilizing the imagery of the past. One such thing is the wax figures that Bosola and Ferdinand use to trick the Duchess into believing Antonio and the children are dead. David Bergeron claims that these wax figures most likely would be recognized as effigies by the audience of the time (335). Making an effigy was part of the funeral accommodations for well-known people so that people attending a parade or event would recognize the dead. In this case, the figures make the Duchess herself want to die: "There is not between heaven and earth one wish / I stay after this. It wastes me more / Than weren't my picture, fashioned out of wax" (4.1.60-62). The Duchess wishes that this were her own death instead. She then wishes to be tied with her husband to die with him, "bind me to this lifeless trunk / And let me freeze to death" (4.1.66-67). Ferdinand is later quite taken with her despair at the figures of wax, and even as Bosola starts to question what they are doing, Ferdinand takes joy in his revenge. Bergeron also goes on to show that Webster is not only concerned with death, but with its treatment, as well. He questions the use of funeral monuments within this scene, as well as deriding them elsewhere (337). Later in Act 4, the Duchess asks Cariola what she resembles, and she replies, "Or rather like some reverend monument / Whose ruins are even pitied" (4.2.32-33). This remark criticizes those who hold monuments in such high regard, even when they are destroyed, and recalls the idea of putting glory into objects that had been associated with saints. Webster uses that idea, including making fun of it a bit, and directs the audience to move past it, to something new.

The death scenes of the Duchess also contain symbols of death rituals. Bettie Ann Doebler argues that these scenes play out and mirror the *ars morendi*, or *The Art of Dying* (204). *The Art of Dying* concerns a deathbed ritual that allows for the devil to tempt the dying one last time, to make them succumb to their fears instead of clinging to the faith of their place in heaven. Bosola represents the tempter in Act 4, Scene 1, inviting the Duchess to kill herself, and then in Scene 2 transforming into the angel that comforts her. Bosola brings death to the Duchess, and looks to make sure she is ready for it, and at each juncture, she is indeed. When he asks if she is afraid of death, she says "Who would be afraid on't / Knowing to meet such excellent company / In th' other world" (4.2.202-204). Doebler notes all the imagery that should make the audience aware of the *ars morendi*: the deathbed, the crucifix, and, the bellman.

The Duchess continues to die well, assured of her place in heaven, and perishes with humility,

> Pull and pull strongly; for your able strength
> Must pull down heaven upon me.
> Yet stay - heaven gates are not so highly arched
> As princes' palaces; they that enter here
> Must go upon their knees. (4.2.222-226)

The Duchess knows that she will be in heaven and is consequently not worried about death, but knows she also must continue to die well, filled with humility, not proud or boasting of her great wealth or life. This Puritan idea of humility is incorporated in *The Duchess of Malfi* into the idea of the *ars morendi*, as well. Additionally, Robert Watson notes the importance of the *ars morendi* to both Anglicans and Puritans. He believes that traditions such as those are used to focus on the ritual of death, "the technique rather than the implications," of death (43). By focusing on the way in which they die, people are able to shift away their view of the total annihilation that death causes. The person is gone, and gone forever, and we are not sure to where. This nothingness is frightening and overwhelming and so these cultural constructions block out this nothingness, and instead put significance into what leads up to the death.

The Duchess of Malfi also gives some ideas about eschatology. Two specific scenes provide the audience with a reprieve from the idea that death is the final act for the body. Watson says that these two scenes with the Duchess allow the audience to deny the simple finality of death (39). The Duchess's final lines, "Antonio […]. Mercy" (4.2.339; 343), come after she has been strangled and left for dead. At this point, Bosola tells her that Antonio is okay, and only then can she die. This idea suggests that there is something hopeful beyond death. Another related aspect, demonstrated in the scene with Echo, is that beyond death one can still be useful. An echo of the Duchess's voice outside her grave talks to Antonio. Delio says, "Hark! The dead stones seem to have pity on you / And give you good counsel" (5.3.35-36). Antonio says he cannot talk with her because the spirit is, "a dead thing" (38). Antonio's viewpoint indicates the finality of death, as contrasted with the death scene of the Duchess, which shows that there is something beyond life. In these scenes, both the Anglican and Puritan point of views are displayed. These two differing ideas about eschatology perfectly encapsulate the transition towards new ideas happening at the time.

Thomas Middleton and John Webster wrote during a new era for religious ideas. The viewpoints surrounding death underwent a historical change during the a new era for religious ideas. The viewpoints surrounding death underwent a historical change during the writing and performances of *The Revengers Tragedy* and *The Duchess of Malfi*. Middleton and Webster insert both traditional and newly-formed ideas about death and its meaning into their plays, allowing the plays to serve as a

bridge for the thoughts of the time, without giving a final definitive answer about any one ideology. Eschatology, the *memento mori*, *Danse Macabre*, *The Art of Dying*, and ideas about the finality of the body all contribute to the meaning of the symbols and language of the plays, allowing the audience to connect to the plays, as well as to be challenged by these two insightful playwrights.

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Kimberly Barrios Through Kimberly Barrios's journey at Wright College and many Great Book classes, her love for books and reading has been greatly expanded, which have also helped her to improve her writing skills. The valuable knowledge and skills obtained have helped her to successfully reach her first goal of obtaining an associate degree. Now, her education will continue at Smith College where she will be pursuing a major in neuropsychology, her other passion.

Edgar Esparza graduated from Notre Dame College Prep in 2014. He began his studies at Wilbur Wright College with a passion for history, especially early American history. He also has an interest in Slavic studies, specifically Polish language, history and culture. In addition to the Great Books Society, Edgar serves as a senator in Wright's Student Government Association. He expects to graduate from Wright in the spring of 2017 with an Associate's in Liberal Arts.

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