# S Y M P O S I U M

**Great Books Curriculum of Wright College**

**A J O U R N A L O F R E S E A R C H A N D I N Q U I R Y**

symposiumjournal.org

***Volume 5*** ***Spring 2018***

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ΣΥΜΠΟΣΙΟΝ

# SYMPOSIUM

***Great Books Curriculum of Wright College***

A JOURNAL OF RESEARCH AND INQUIRY

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AMANDA JIANG

*Layout design by*

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ZOE BOTH

*Wilbur Wright College*

*Chicago, Illinois*

Published by Wilbur Wright College
4300 N. Narragansett
Chicago, IL 60634



Manufactured in the United States of America

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**VOLUME 5** **SPRING 2018**

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# INTRODUCTION

Dear Wright College Community,

The purpose of the *Great Books Symposium Journal* is to provide a platform for community college students to publish and share their analyses of great literature. These are the words that come to my mind when I reflect on the progress of the journal: hard work, diversity, and legacy.

The journal is the result of countless, and often unseen, hours of hard work, dedication, and diligence.

When you read the research papers, I want you to think of the students who produced such excellent, high-quality works. This year, the *Great Books Symposium Journal* recognizes six students. Their manuscripts offer a taste of dystopia, provide insights into the mind of Shakespeare's tragedian, Hamlet, and allow us to explore the concept of metatheatre. These works showcase thoughtful examinations of timeless literature, and I urge you to read them all.

In addition to our student contributors, I want to recognize those who are often working behind-the-scenes but are still significant members of the journal: the editorial board, the faculty editorial board, Director of IT, Anthony Gamboa, and the faculty advisor and editor, Dr. Michael Petersen. I would also like to thank President David Potash and Vice President James Howley for supporting and encouraging the growth of the Symposium journal.

This year, the committee reached out not only to students and faculty at Wright College but also those who reside outside of Chicago. Faculty members from Oakton Community College, University of Louisiana at Lafayette, Austin (TX) Community College, and University of California San Diego have read and constructed critiques for research papers produced by students.

The power of literature lies, truly, in the ability to bring together individuals from diverse backgrounds. The journal is a reflection of our goal to strive for diversity and inclusion.

When I speak of legacy, I think of friends who have graduated from Wright College—those who are succeeding at a four-year institution because they have been a part of the Great Books culture at Wright.

Edgar Esparza, who was a student editor and a contributor for the 2017 edition of the journal, is currently attending Columbia University in New York. He told me, "There is a lot of reading and work here at Columbia that I think I would be less prepared for if I hadn't take courses that were a part of the Great Books curriculum. Also, I am extremely grateful that I had the opportunity to publish my work in the Symposium

journal. I connect with individuals at Columbia University through my Great Books experiences at Wright College."

The journal is a legacy of great ideas and a gift that keeps great literature alive. Let us share this gift with the greater community and the world.

Thank you. Xie Xie.

Amanda Jiang
Spring 2018 Editor-in-Chief, *The Great Books Symposium Journal*

# *Hamlet's* Ghost as Demonic Predator: The Reformist Paradigm

IZAKI METROPOULOS

**Elizabethan Pneumatology and King Hamlet's Specter**

The character of the Ghost in William Shakespeare's *Hamlet* is undoubtedly a reflection of Elizabethan superstition; shrouded in ambiguity, the nature of the Ghost obscurely amalgamates with both Catholic and Protestant archetypal representations. In the Elizabethan era, the existence of apparitions was as sparingly disputed as the nature of God, and many axioms of Pagan superstition remained part of the collective consciousness. Rationalizing these pagan beliefs, the Catholic Church asserted that ghosts were manifestations of lost souls who had to repent by means of Purgatory for earthly sins. Reformist eschatology was drastically different: it instead condemned the dead strictly to either Heaven or Hell (Agboigba 26-7). Hamlet mirrors this sentiment when he awaits his initial confrontation with the Ghost: "Be thou a spirit of health or a goblin damned" (1.4.40).

At first glance, it appears plausible that Shakespeare purposely presented the Ghost in ambiguity. In Brett E. Murphy's perspective, the textual details of the Ghost do not particularly support any category of belief: "Shakespeare strategically weaves ambiguous religious references into the Ghost's lines and into the lines about him" (122). As Murphy posits, scholars of Shakespeare who debate the etiology of the Ghost frequently fall into two camps; they either observe *Hamlet* through a Catholic viewpoint or, less frequently, a Protestant viewpoint (117). For example, numerous references in the text alluding to the afterlife are primary points of controversy. The root of the argument that the Ghost is condemned to Catholic Purgatory partially stems from the Ghost's insistence that he is "doomed for a certain term to walk the night" (1.5.10). However, contemporary Protestant theologians, such as Ludwig Lavater, rejected the concept of Purgatory and insisted that demonic spirits can leave Hell to visit and tempt the living (Murphy 119). Accordingly, cognizant of these balkanized Elizabethan beliefs, scholars have debated the nature of the ambiguous specter in three distinct ways: the ghostly appearance is Prince Hamlet's father manifest, a demonic entity, or a product of Hamlet's insanity. However, Shakespeare's "Ghost" is best interpreted through the Reformist paradigm, as an evil spirit luring Hamlet into mortal sin. Due to the striking number of similarities between the Ghost and Protestant perceptions of ghosts in the Elizabethan Era, many in Shakespeare's time would have sufficient justification in perceiving the Ghost as a devil in human form. Hence, *Hamlet's* Ghost is the deliberate and demonic antagonist behind the play's tragic bloodbath. The Ghost's apparent intentions, its obscurantism through double-entendres, and its association with contemporary superstition surrounding demons imply a hellish origin.

**Of "Ghostes" and Temptations**

In the Elizabethan era, Swiss-Reformed theologian Ludwig Lavater authored a myriad of publications that were reprinted and translated across Europe. In his popular text on demonology, *Of Ghostes and Spirites Walking by Nyght,* he asserts that demons were more likely to visit from Hell, driven by the intention of luring humans to Hell by encouraging murder or suicide ("Ghosts"). Likewise, the Ghost's repeated and urgent wishes for revenge coincide with Lavater's conceptualizations of demonic entities.

Additionally, the Ghost also serves as a force to imply the pernicious demonic influence of supernatural intervention; a pertinent example lies in Act 1, Scene 5. According to Ann Thompson and Neil Taylor, "the space underneath the stage was associated with Hell" (223). The *Arden Shakespeare* also references a notable parallel in the dumb-show within Thomas Sackville and Thomas Norton's 1561 play, Gorboduc: "There came from under the stage, as through out of Hell, three furies" (223). Similarly, the Ghost, speaking from Hell, repeatedly urges Horatio and Marcellus to swear to keep Hamlet's secret (1.5.149-179). As the Ghost encourages Horatio and Marcellus to "swear by [Hamlet's] sword," Hamlet recognizes the demonic utterances and subtly offers the Ghost words of praise: "Well said, old mole, canst work i'th'earth so fast? A worthy pioner!" (1.5.161-162). Hamlet's particular use of "mole" and "pioner" easily may be overlooked as a possibly subliminal message. András G. Bernáth mentions that "[a]part from some experts, few are now aware that 'olde Mole' (1.5.161) and 'Pioner' (1.5.162) may be functioning here as popular nicknames for the devil" (83). To further illustrate religious imagery, Horatio and Marcellus swear on Hamlet's sword, which was commonly used in place of a crucifix to swear an oath during the Elizabethan Era (Thompson and Taylor 223). As Hamlet proposes the oath, he inquires *"Hic et ubique?*" a Latin phrase meaning, "here and everywhere" (1.5.156). Traditionally, the notion of ubiquity was solely associated with either God or the devil (Thompson and Taylor 224). Therefore, within *Hamlet's* historical context, this act implies an unshakeable contract to either a divine or satanic entity.

Furthermore, Hamlet's inner dialogue mirrors Protestant presuppositions, as he considers the notion of the Ghost as a demonic spirit: "The spirit that I have seen / May be a de'il, and the de'il hath power / T'assume a pleasing shape (2.2.533-535). Hamlet heeds the Apostle Paul's warnings in 2 Corinthians 11:13-14: "For such false apostles are deceitful workers and transform themselves into the Apostles of Christ… for Satan himself is transformed into an Angel of light." As construed in the New Testament, Satan and his army of demons are capable of masquerading themselves as any figures, preying upon weakness and appealing to the credulous. Indeed, Hamlet hypothesizes that the Ghost may similarly intend to take on a familiar appearance in order to conquer Hamlet's soul.

Initially, the Ghost appears to be the manifestation of Hamlet's dead father, condemned to Catholic Purgatory. However, the apparent malicious qualities of his

ghost are not consistent with a soul seeking redemption. To demonstrate, the qualities that distinguish the ghost of Hamlet's father from other spirits in Elizabethan dramas are his starkly vindictive motivations and behaviors. Robert H. West notes, "I know of no Elizabethan ghost, in drama or out, that comes from Purgatory and yet makes this blood demand" (1107). The closest example is in *The Golden Legend* (c.1260), a popular collection of medieval ecclesiastical texts, where one ghost's role is not solely as a "punitive agent," but rather a messenger "to warn the offender that he will… be taken by Hell" (Semper qtd. in West 1107). Conversely, the Ghost is explicitly provocative: "Revenge his foul and most unnatural murder!" (1.5.25). The burdening obligations of his father's ghost force the already grieving Hamlet into a significant moral dilemma, between apathy and potentially committing a grave sin in murder. The grieving Hamlet is readily susceptible to demonic influence; he harbors a brewing resentment against the world around him. Consumed by his unbound grief, he defies God and wishes that, "The Everlasting had not fixed his canon 'gainst self-slaughter" (1.2.131-132). He no longer wants to participate in the sinful world around him and is repeatedly lost in his brooding. In Act 3, the Ghost returns to sharpen his dull appetite for revenge, to "whet" Prince Hamlet's "almost blunted purpose" (3.4.108). In both appearances, he manifests as a tyrannical father who attempts to manipulate Hamlet into the role of a dutiful son. Eventually, the exploited Hamlet fulfills the blood demands of the Ghost. Then, Hamlet, under the influence of the Ghost, follows a timeline of moral deprivation; as a result, his inherited revenge scheme leads to the death of almost every major character. He later sacrifices his childhood friends Rosencrantz and Guildenstern in a perfunctory manner merely to tie up loose ends. The outcome of the revenge scheme is a reflection of the catalyst behind it: a pernicious entity harboring the intention to bring more souls down to Hell.

**Devil's Origins and Obfuscation**

Although the ambiguity surrounding the Ghost's origins engenders conflicting perspectives, closer inspection of the dialogue and context points to an underlying Protestant purview. When the Ghost initially manifests itself and proclaims, "I am thy father's spirit, / Doomed for a certain term to walk the night" (1.5.9-10), at first, his message potentially implies a condemnation to Catholic purgatory. However, Lavater's eschatology enables another interpretation of the origins of *Hamlet's* Ghost. Contrary to Catholic presuppositions, Lavater contends that "spirits are able to leave Hell for a short term to come and visit the living" (Murphy 120). Therefore, within Lavater's perspective, *Hamlet's* Ghost is not doomed but rather permitted to "walk the night" in order to tempt the living. There are multiple instances in which Hamlet alludes to contemporary Protestant eschatology. Before his encounter with the Ghost, he prepares himself to face a spirit from either heaven or hell, ultimately excluding Purgatory: "Be thou a spirit of health or a goblin damned, / Bring with thee airs from heaven or blasts from hell, / Be thy intents wicked or charitable" (1.4.40-43).

In Act 2, he proclaims that he is obligated to "revenge by *heaven* and *hell*[1]" (2.2.521). Similar to Hamlet's dichotomy of "heaven and hell," the word "purgatory" is not mentioned once in the play; it is merely implied when the Ghost states "for a term." Conversely, the dead's condemnation to Hell is also temporary, for in the Final Judgment, "death and hell delivered up the dead… and they were judged every man according to their works" (Revelations 20:13). Furthermore, the vengeful utterances of the Ghost are not consistent with either a good entity or a soul seeking purification through Catholic purgatory. To Lavater, one of the primary reasons for ghosts returning is "for the comfort and warning of the living, and partly to pray aide of them" (Murphy 118). However, in *Hamlet*, although the Ghost only provides a "warning of the living," or a revelation of Claudius' murderous act, the "comfort" that Lavater describes is completely lacking. The Ghost's closing lines in Act 1, "Adieu, adieu, adieu, remember me," complete his initial order: "So art thou to revenge when thou shalt hear" (1.5.8). Rather than Hamlet receiving comforting words to reduce his grief, he is instead burdened with images of his father's condemnation to "sulphurous and tormenting flames" and the injunction to "revenge his foul and most unnatural murder" (1.5.25).

The Ghost's unclear accounts of its origins point to deliberate obfuscation. The frightening depiction of the "eternal blazon" from which he arrived (1.5.21) is often interpreted as a condemnation to an "eternity" in the "blaze." However, in Shakespeare's time, the word "blazon" primarily meant a coat of arms. When preceded by the word "eternal," Shakespeare allows the Ghost to proclaim his eternal royalty (Murphy 121). The word "eternal" evokes images of the divine right of kings and therefore enables the Ghost to appeal to Prince Hamlet's idealism: to Hamlet, his father exists as an archetype, a ruler divinely appointed with an "eye like Mars to threaten and command" (3.4.53). Thus, Shakespeare portrays the specter's "eternal blazon" as a multi-dimensional allusion—a subtle nod to a devil that exploits through wit and wordplay. The Ghost usurps Hamlet's intellectual hegemony; he exploits Hamlet's idealism while transforming him into an agent of revenge.

Further obscurity lies in the manner in which the Ghost speaks of Gertrude. His contradictory advice appears to prey upon Hamlet's fractured state of mind. The specter primarily instills two notions within Hamlet. First, in his initial dialogue with Hamlet, he mockingly describes his "seeming-virtuous Queen" that lustfully succumbed to the "incestuous, adulterous beast" (1.5.42). Although the unjust usurpation of the throne should be Hamlet's primary concern, he is instead more infuriated by the corruption of his mother (Javed 328). Even if Elsinore lies in the hands of a corrupt king, the words of the Ghost fuel the fires of Hamlet's preexisting resentment against his mother; he views her as a foul opportunist and adulteress, leaping "with such dexterity to incestuous sheets!" (1.2.158). Conversely, despite the palpable resentment, the Ghost nonetheless portrays Gertrude as both victim and

[1] My emphasis.

perpetrator and antithetically instructs Hamlet to spare her life: "[T]aint not thy mind, nor let thy soul contrive against thy mother aught" (1.5.84-85). Likewise, after the murder of Polonius in Act 3, in a sympathetic manner the Ghost subsequently instructs Prince Hamlet to "step between her and her fighting soul" (3.4.109). Indeed, the Ghost imposes a labyrinth of contradictions by appealing to Hamlet's patriarchal ideal of how Gertrude should act, depriving Hamlet of his "sovereignty of reason" and drawing him, as Horatio foreshadows, "into madness" (1.4.73-74).

**Time, Environment and Religious Symbolism**

The moments in which the Ghost appears are exclusively during times traditionally associated with supernatural and demonic activity. Both appearances in Act 1 follow after the clock "lacks of twelve" (1.4.5). Furthermore, as Amanda Jane McKeever notes, "Protestant ghosts were trapped in a cyclical loop of time, in the sense that they reappeared at exactly the same time every day" (252). Additionally, in the Elizabethan Era, midnight hours were typically associated with witches and other evil entities. Henry Thew Stephenson notes that midnight hours were associated with "charmes often composed of a nonsensical succession of syllables, sentences, foul images… the magic numbers three, and three times three" (331-2). Hamlet is cognizant of Elizabethan superstition, describing midnight as "the very witching time of night / When…hell itself breathes out / Contagion to this world" (3.2.378-80). Similar to how *Hamlet's* Ghost is only seen walking at night, Lavater insists that evil spirits typically associated themselves with darkness (Murphy 119).
Furthermore, a point of emphasis is the precise number of the Ghost's appearances: *three*, twice in Act 1 and once in Act 3. Evidently, a mystery of King Hamlet's ghost is his recurring use of triplets:

> "List, list, O list," (1.5.22)

The use of the word "foul" occurs thrice:

> "Revenge his foul… murder most foul… but this most foul…" (1.5.25-28)
> O horrible, O Horrible, most horrible!" (1.5.80)
> "Adieu, adieu, adieu…" (1.5.91)

Similarly, in *The Tragedy of Macbeth* the number is prevalent: the three witches appear three times and also frequently reference the number three, reinforcing demonic imagery and exploiting Elizabethan superstition. For example, in Act 1 of *Macbeth*, the witches chant, "Thrice to thine and thrice to mine / And thrice again, to make up nine" (3.36-37). In Act 4, they repeat the famous "double, double toil and trouble" incantation *three* times (4.1.10). Acknowledging that both *Hamlet* and *Macbeth* are predominantly supernatural plays with demonic underpinnings, the Ghost's recurring association with multiples of three has a hellish implication.

**The Question of Hamlet's Sanity**

To contrast, within Lavater's perspective it is possible that the presence of ghosts is a

product of a melancholic or insane mind. Lavater acknowledges that, “Melancholike perfons, and mad men, imagine many things which in verie deed are not,” and “moreover [they] mistake things which procede of natural causes, to be… spirites” (9). Hamlet’s first soliloquy displays the symptomology of a melancholic mind: “O that this too too sallied flesh would melt, / Thaw and resolve itself into a dew, / …How weary, stale, and unprofitable / Seem to me all the uses of this world!” (1.2.129-134). However, although Hamlet could imagine his father due to his melancholy, Shakespeare’s inclusion of several other characters as witnesses solidifies the existence of the Ghost. For example, the level-headed Horatio, although initially skeptical, declares that “I heard and do in part believe it” (1.1.164). In Act 1, Marcellus questions whether the apparition has “appear’d again,” nullifying the possibility of a single, anomalous appearance. As mentioned before, Horatio initially dismisses the Ghost as an illusion and is subsequently proven wrong. His later depiction of an armor-clad king is unchallenged. Therefore, the protagonist’s alleged insanity and the presence of apparitions are mutually exclusive. Similarities again can be found in *The Tragedy of Macbeth* because, although Banquo and Macbeth both encounter the weird sisters, Macbeth is the only one arguably mad.

Fundamentally, debating the existence of the Ghost is an etiological debate that acknowledges that Shakespeare created a universe in which the supernatural reigns and demons and ghosts exist outside of a man’s psyche. As François P. Agboigba proclaims, Shakespeare “embodies his century. He does nothing but exploit the cultural patrimony of his country about beliefs and superstitions” (26). In *Hamlet*, God has authority over even the most trivial matters, and he has “special providence in the fall of a sparrow” (5.2.197-198). Therefore, the supernatural exists insofar as the characters shape their realities.

**Conclusion**

A common theme in plays involving demonic influence is inevitable self-alienation and detachment; these notions mentioned are apparent in *Hamlet, Macbeth*, and Christopher Marlowe’s *Dr. Faustus*. For example, before his death, Hamlet parrots the Calvinist dogma regarding a declaration of “Providence,” or divine intervention (5.2.197-198). Prince Hamlet, in some respect, absolves himself by believing he is merely a pawn of the supernatural. Macbeth is eventually consumed by intense cynicism and self-alienation, viewing himself as a “walking shadow” or “a poor player / That struts and frets his hour upon the stage…signifying nothing” (5.5.23-27). Dr. Faustus has the opportunity to repent in his final moments-- but refuses it when he proclaims “for nothing can rescue me” (5.1.81). Parallels can be drawn between the protagonists of these tragic plays, such as encounters with pernicious and demonic entities; intense, brief bouts of control or illusions of power; and the realization of damnation preceded by debilitating cynicism.

Prince Hamlet is a character dominated by demonic influence. The devil assumes the form of his father, preys upon his melancholy and consuming idealism, and uses Hamlet to spur a bloodbath that envelopes every character-- even the

innocent-- into sin. Given the nature of the tragedy and moral degeneracy, *Hamlet's* Ghost is best interpreted through the Reformist paradigm because of its malevolent intent, association with darkness, and unmatched manipulative skill.

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# Oblivion: Othello's Devalued Identity

ALISA SCOTT

Discrimination and a fear of the unknown have led to the unique, disturbing phenomenon of feeling hatred for one's own ethnicity. A conditioned perception of oneself can potentially distort reasoning and cause destruction. In the Shakespearean tragedy, *Othello*, the protagonist's insecurity transcends his feelings for Desdemona. Iago encourages conflict, but he is not the sole perpetrator. Othello is his own worst enemy, desperately attempting to establish himself as an ideal individual in a foreign land, and Desdemona is a mere catalyst for advancing the plot. It is vital that an individual embodies his or her place of origin, regardless of how others react. In *The Tragedy of Othello*, William Shakespeare demonstrates the danger of self-hatred by detailing the drastic effects of judgement about Othello's identity and marriage.

Othello is introduced to the audience through the eyes of high-ranked, Venetian men troubled by a Moor's place in Desdemona's heart. Rudolph Shaw says, "Eurocentric views that African men are barbaric, illiterate, promiscuous studs have been perpetuated through time and space" (83). Negative perceptions of those who are physically different from the norm often extend to individuals' romantic relationships within the society, especially if their partners look different from them. For example, interracial relationships are not always seen as genuinely loving because, in some people's minds, such relationships suggest a desire for the forbidden. Shaw continues, "names are often attached to interracial couples—in Spain it is *'leche y chocolate*'...and in the United States of America it is '*Jungle Fever*'" (83). Prejudiced terms meant to degrade a relationship may negatively affect a couple's view of their relationship and, possibly, themselves. Though ideas about black men and interracial affairs in the Elizabethan era and Shakespeare's text are eerily similar to terminology utilized in modern society, it is important to note societal differences in these time periods.

The Royal Shakespeare Company in Stratford-upon-Avon, England shares discussions on literary and historical topics regarding Shakespeare's texts and their impact on contemporary society. In one discussion, Hugh Quarshie, an actor playing the part of Othello, and historian Onyeka Nubia debate if Shakespeare's *Othello* is a racist play. Quarshie states that he once resisted playing Othello's part because he initially felt Shakespeare bases Othello's behavior on his color and, thus, falsely represents all black people. Nubia asserts that early English societies did not have a term for racism, and that we "then overlay our twenty-first century ideas of everything that's gone before... including the Transatlantic slave trade, and then we place it back on the fifteenth and sixteenth century where it shouldn't necessarily be." During the Elizabethan era, physical appearance led to a distaste for certain people not necessarily the underlying perceptions tied to that appearance.

However, just because a blatant, suitable term is not yet assigned to an authentic dislike for the exotic, its absence does not indicate a lack of such feelings. "Othello is black, and his blackness connotes ugliness, treachery, lust, bestiality, and the demonic" (Berry 68). In addition to these extreme indications, Iago presents a stereotype: "These Moors / are changeable in their wills / The food that to him now is as luscious as locusts / shall be to him ... as bitter as coloquintida" (1.3.343-346). Instead of criticizing an individual he undoubtedly despises, Iago slanders a specific group of people. Also, referencing Quarshie's complaint about Shakespeare's inclusion of stereotypes, it can be inferred that Shakespeare is foreshadowing the play's major conflict. If Moors are likely to become quickly dissatisfied with food, Othello is likely to become dissatisfied with his wife. In the play's opening, Roderigo says, "What a full fortune does the thick-lips owe / If he can carry't thus!" (1.1.62-63). Again, instead of simply insulting Othello, Roderigo derogatorily emphasizes a physical trait associated with people of African descent and emotes discriminatory feelings.

The thought of this black male copulating with a Venetian woman disturbs other characters. When Iago informs Brabantio of his virtuous daughter having relations with Othello, he exaggerates the situation: "Your heart is burst, you have lost your very soul / [...] an old black ram / Is tupping your white ewe" (1.1.84-85). Iago's descriptions are not only meant to disgust Brabantio, they are meant to imply that Desdemona and Othello are not a believable couple. The term *tupping* is specific to intercourse between non-human animals. "Othello and Desdemona become not nameless or blank but all too clear: copulating animals whose relationship violates... race, age, and even species" (Leggatt 115). In response, Brabantio thinks witchcraft must be the source of such madness: "thou hast practiced on her with foul charms, / Abused her delicate youth with drugs or minerals" (1.2.73-74). He even asks why Desdemona would "fall in love with what she feared to look on" (1.3.98). Negative descriptions of Moors, including Othello's childhood experience of being sold into slavery (1.3.137), and views of interracial relationships provide insight into Othello's own perception of his identity.

Though Othello and Desdemona's marriage is exemplary for defying others' judgement, one spouse eventually becomes the other's downfall. If a romantic relationship has an insecure participant dependent on superficial validation, the relationship is bound to end. Othello and Desdemona's marriage is not meaningful enough to survive conflict because it is based on tangible qualities meant to guard Othello from his insecurities. The emotional connection between Othello and Desdemona is clear. Their first informal encounter results in instant attraction: "She loved me for the dangers I had past, / And I loved her that she did pity them" (1.3.166-167). The love expressed by both spouses surpasses admiration for physical attributes, and this open affection leads to Othello's covetous behavior throughout the play. "I do love thee! and when I love thee not, / Chaos is come again" (3.3.91-92). Despite claiming genuine love, Othello's marriage enhances his internal conflict.

Clinical psychologist and civil rights leader Dr. Umar Johnson states the following: "A black man marries a white woman, not because he is necessarily in love with the white woman. He is in love with what she represents... [I]t helps him deal with his insecurity complex." Marriage can be considered an escape from oneself, especially if the favorable traits of one spouse are meant to overshadow the other spouse's appearance. Iago makes the strategic decision to turn Othello against his beloved because Iago is not physically capable of destroying him, and Desdemona's romantic bond with the protagonist encourages conflict. Aside from possible underlying issues keeping their marriage intact, both spouses have ideal traits that satisfy their public images and personal needs.

For example, Othello states, "my wife is fair, feeds well, loves company / ...Where virtue is, these are more virtuous" (3.3.186-188). Just as Othello is reliant on his wife's image, Desdemona is financially dependent on her husband after Brabantio disowns her. Since there is an exchange of spousal duties, the husband can easily discard the wife if that exchange is somehow violated by rumored infidelity: "O curse of marriage! / That we can call these delicate creatures ours / And not their appetites!" (3.3.270-272). Othello is hesitant to acknowledge the possibility of adultery, but he relies on Desdemona's desirable qualities to determine her worth. Emilia accurately describes Desdemona's predicament: "Hath she forsook... / Her father and her country and her friends, / To be called whore?" (4.2.127-128). Despite sacrificing her own reputation, Desdemona is treated poorly because Othello becomes overly critical.

Losing the handkerchief is a genuine mistake presented as a transgression: "That handkerchief which I so lov'd, and gave thee, / Thou gav'st to Cassio," to which Desdemona responds, "No, by my life and soul! / Send for the man / And ask him" (5.2.47-50). Othello's decision to blindly accuse Desdemona of cheating without requesting to hear her side of the story is expressive of his consuming insecurity. However, some may argue that there is a lack of race-related evidence involved with the handkerchief dilemma. John Hodgson says Desdemona is a bit careless about guarding the handkerchief "because she is preoccupied by her loving concern for Othello; her care... makes her careless of a mere token" (313). Desdemona is simply unaware of the rich, cultural history behind this "mere token." Othello's dying mother gives it to him on her deathbed: "To lose't or give't away were such perdition / As nothing else could match" (3.4.65-66). The handkerchief serves the purpose of providing insight into Othello's cultural background, but it also reveals another aspect of Desdemona's relationship to the protagonist.

Robert Rogers believes Desdemona has a maternal role in Othello's life. "Othello appears to equate the integrity of his faith in Desdemona with the place of his earliest origin, the person/breast/womb... he refers to as the 'fountain' (4.2.59) from which his current runs" (169). Despite Othello's feeling insecure about characters' responses to his physical appearance, audiences could argue that the conflict in Othello's marriage has nothing to do with race and more to do with femininity, a surface-level aspect of the conflict. Iago is unaware of the handkerchief's history, but he knows a display of carelessness will infuriate Othello.

Whether Othello's anger with Desdemona is fueled by her disregard for his identity or her failure to be a maternal figure, he epitomizes self-destruction. Othello questions Iago's claims and physically assaults him in Desdemona's defense: "Villain, be sure thou prove / my love a whore!" (3.3.359-360). Unfortunately, Othello still dramatizes the situation.

David Scott Kastan suggests, "If [Othello] believes Iago rather than Desdemona, it is because at some deep level he is incapable of believing that she could love him" (122). Desdemona's affiliation with the handkerchief, a remnant from Othello's parents, and knowledge of her husband's past are relevant to his identity. Losing the handkerchief is insulting. Though their initial encounter is exemplary, Othello and Desdemona's relationship ends in a drastic manner. Their love is reliant on external factors meant to eliminate Othello's insecurities. Before committing suicide, he requests that the witnesses of the murder describe him as "Like the base Judean, [who] threw a pearl away / Richer than all his tribe" (5.2.53-54). He recognizes the value of his most prized possession, a loving wife. Othello might not have allowed an outsider to influence his decisions if his insecurities and selfish need to remain acceptable in Venetian society did not reemerge while badgering Desdemona.

The surface-level conflict of *Othello* does not reflect the protagonist's history; it mainly involves his feelings about killing his wife after facing a culmination of prejudice. "It would be reductive to read Shakespeare's tragic protagonists merely in terms of a struggle between reason and madness" (Paster 160). *Othello* is not a simple good-versus-evil scenario detailed in some other Shakespearean tragedies. *Othello* is unique because this tragedy involves an inevitable eruption of extreme emotions and an innocent character who suffers the protagonist's inner wrath; if anything, the blatant good-versus-evil scenario is internalized in Othello's character. "With his dagger poised to strike himself, Othello drags into the play a memory buried deep in his pre-play past" (Cohen 10). The final monologue contains admiration for Desdemona, the very reason this suicide is occurring, as well as interesting information that does not involve his wife.

Mark Rose says, "This speech is a clue to Othello's romanticizing imagination," as he recounts tales of warfare and violence (62). Eric Illif adds that Othello excuses his transgression because he feels justified in killing Desdemona, but "he is completely ignorant of his tendency towards self-deception" (2). There is no mention of the effect prejudice has had on Othello's predicament, but it can be inferred that societal judgement is a contributing factor. Othello compares Desdemona to one of his military missions because he is a prominent war general for the Venetian army, an impressive position. It seems as though he is going off on a tangent: "Where a malignant and a turbaned Turk / Beat a Venetian / ... I took by th' throat the circumcised dog, / And smote him-thus!" (5.2.358-361). Illif continues, "Othello is… a man driven by pride and a need to maintain his own reputation" (2). It seems that Othello prioritizes his rank and assimilated identity over Desdemona and disregards past judgements about him because he thinks he has successfully assimilated during

his final moment. A desire to assimilate can be indicative of self-hatred because assimilation requires the abandonment of oneself.

Othello's words seem to defy any theories about this play involving race, but his actions supplement the argument that self-hatred leads to both self-harm and the harming of others. Perhaps, the possibility of prejudice surpassing physical appearance never occurs to Othello because, once again, he believes that he has assimilated into Venetian society. It is possible that *Othello* is not about race, after all. However, some people, including fictional characters meant to represent living people, are not able to admit that they dislike themselves because of judgement from others. Othello's dilemma is relevant to current society, and it can enrich an audience's understanding of certain issues. Othello's suicide is a disturbing part of the tragedy, and it sends an important, often understated, message about violence resulting from suppressed anger. To draw a parallel to modern society, Dr. Umar Johnson notes that when black males commit homicidal acts, they are given plenty of media attention, whereas the issue of black male suicide is not discussed nearly as often (Johnson). Iago is a disturbing antagonist because his psychological manipulation and blatant lies are direct causes of suicide and murder; he never utilizes blunt, physical force.

Iago makes his hatred for the Moor very clear and wishes "to abuse Othello's ear" (2.1.386), but he is also able to emotionally manipulate him. Johnson continues, "When a black man takes his own life, it benefits the system" (Johnson). Of course, in the context of the play, Othello's suicide directly benefits Iago's mission and restores the normality of Venetian society. Shakespeare's choice to have the protagonist end his own life sends a message, not only about the dangers of feeling consuming self-hatred, but also how self-hatred is exclusively relevant to the individual emoting its effects. Iago confesses, "Though I hate him as I do hell pains, / Yet, for necessity of present life, / I must show out a flag and sign of love" (1.1.151-153). By genuinely believing that he has assimilated and responding to Iago's false acceptance, Othello fails to realize Iago's insincere admiration. As the play progresses, Othello becomes a disappointing character because he is easily influenced and duped. However, it is still important to note the effects prejudice has had on Othello as a character with realistic, unique traits and a result of unfortunate circumstances.

The concept of feeling or expressing hatred for one's own race is especially relevant in many contemporary societies with a better understanding of prejudice. "Genetic differences among humans have always been a source of prejudice, discontent, and other social evils" (Shaw 83). William Shakespeare, an innovative playwright known for utilizing complex ideas, does not necessarily detail this concept in an explicit manner. Instead, he creates Iago, an antagonist who never struggles to pursue his mission because Othello is easily led astray by his claims. Some audiences may be oblivious to the underlying issues contributing to Othello's fall, and some may only see his identity as a fascinating accessory to the historical setting. However, the Moor's identity is much more valuable. William Shakespeare attempts to depict the disastrous results of self-hatred by emphasizing Othello's uncertainty regarding judgements about his identity and marriage.

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# Hamlet's Existential Philosophy

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Several arguments made by critics of William Shakespeare's *Hamlet* explain Hamlet's hesitation to avenge his father, and one is his madness. Although there is textual evidence to support the madness argument, the preeminent reason for Hamlet's hesitation is his belief in an existential philosophy. *The Oxford English Dictionary* defines existentialism as "[a] philosophical movement or approach which focuses on the analysis of human existence and on the individual human beings as agents freely determining by their choice what they will become." To existentialists, recognizing freedom of choice and the ability to develop oneself leads to an existential attitude or internal anguish because one struggles with the idea that we are solely responsible for determining our own identities and reasons for existence. Proof of Hamlet's existential philosophy is validated by his melancholic disposition (which is an existential attitude) and autonomy, or free agency, when determining the guilt of Claudius.

Existentialism became a defined philosophy during the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries and gained popularity following World War II. The founding philosophers, Soren Kierkegaard, Friedrich Nietzsche, and Jean-Paul Sartre, presented self-authenticity and human freedom as pillars of the philosophy. Many of their beliefs are rooted in the principle argument that existence precedes essence. Thus, existentialists believe that there is no predestined or godly plan for man. Instead, humans simply exist, and it is up to individuals to define their essences or meanings for existence. Existentialists believe that finding one's meaning for one's existence can be accomplished through experience and self-reflection. According to Sartre, "Man first of all exists, encounters himself, surges up in the world – and defines himself afterwards... Man is nothing else but that which he makes of himself" (28). Sartre's outline of man's existential development is present in Hamlet's character progression, starting with his first soliloquy, wherein Hamlet acknowledges his existence, "O that this too too solid flesh would melt" (1.2.129), and then he subsequently struggles to find a purpose for his existence, "How weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable / Seem to me all the uses of this world" (1.2.133-34). Hamlet's melancholic disposition continues throughout much of the play and is reflective of an existential attitude. However, by the end of the play, Hamlet completes Sartre's aforementioned timeline by defining himself as "Hamlet the Dane" (5.1.236), achieving revenge, and coming to terms with his self-imposed fate.

Several triggers bring about Hamlet's existential attitude. His father dies while he is away at Wittenberg, his mother marries his uncle, and he meets his father's Ghost and learns that his uncle murdered his father. These tragic events cause Hamlet to enter a melancholic state in which he contemplates suicide and questions the meaning of his existence. He poetically conveys this attitude to Rosencrantz and

Guildenstern: “What a piece of work is a man – how noble in reason; how infinite in faculties, in form and moving; how express and admirable in action; how like an angel in apprehension; how like a god; the beauty of the world; the paragon of animals. And yet to me what is this quintessence of dust?” (2.2.269-274). Hamlet’s disposition here represents a developing existential attitude. He grapples with the fact that he is alone in determining his future and struggles to find a reason to exist in a world that appears meaningless. Hamlet’s existential attitude and his desire to retain self-authenticity cause delays in his mission.

A lack of authenticity is a major, observable character flaw throughout *Hamlet* and starts with Bernardo’s question, “Who’s there” (1.1.1), which “never becomes a simple question [...]. [I]dentity from the first line is problematic” (Lee 6). Hamlet recognizes the issue of authenticity within the royal court of Elsinore. For example, Claudius has deceptively murdered Hamlet’s father, Polonius constantly schemes for the King, and Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are sent to spy on Hamlet. As a result, to gain time and to hide his ambitions, Hamlet shields himself behind a guise of madness in order to remain autonomous in his decisions; his hesitation to murder Claudius is proof of this. Instead of simply believing in the Ghost, Hamlet tests the conscience of Claudius so he can come to his own conclusion, as he attempts to do through the staging of “The Mousetrap.” Hamlet’s decision to identify any signs of guilt from Claudius is an authentic action because he does not merely accept what has been forced upon him by the Ghost. Instead, he decides to test the conscience of Claudius and come to a determination on his own. By doing so, Hamlet shows that he understands his ability to independently make decisions, and as such, he understands that he is free to determine his own actions.

Existentialists claim that “there is no reality except in action” (Sartre 85). This idea implies that people are nothing more than an accumulation of behaviors and actions. Thus, because humans are free in choosing their actions, they are ultimately responsible for what they become. Hamlet spends an abundance of time contemplating what he should or should not do, which contributes to his hesitation. However, Hamlet eventually experiences a turning point in his philosophy and sets his hesitation aside. When on his way to England with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, Hamlet witnesses Fortinbras leading an army through Denmark towards Poland to wage war over what appears to be a worthless piece of land. Reflecting on Fortinbras and his soldiers and comparing their actions to his own, Hamlet decides that he will no longer delay his revenge and that he has decided his purpose “[s]ith I have cause and will and strength and means / To do’t. Examples gross as earth exhort me” (4.4.44-5). Harold Bloom explains that within this soliloquy, “Hamlet’s consciousness and the soul have become one” (71). Therefore, Hamlet decides to disregard his anguish and accept that his act of revenge can no longer be avoided. He ends the soliloquy and his internal debate with, “O, from this time forth / My thoughts be bloody or be nothing worth” (4.4.65-6). In this last soliloquy, the audience witnesses the existential evolution of Hamlet come to a close.

A contrasting argument commonly used to explain Hamlet's hesitation is that he is mad due to melancholy, and, thus, he can no longer effectively manage his emotions, which impacts his ability to act. This view does have merit. Examples include his mistreatment of Ophelia, the random killing of Polonius, and his ability to see and hear the ghost in his mother's bedchamber. However, these actions are a result of his existential attitude, anguish, and confusion resulting from coping with an absurd and seemingly meaningless world. Although he may have been melancholic, Hamlet never relinquishes control of his faculties. His constant self-questioning is proof of this. For example, "One might argue that Hamlet does not completely and unequivocally trust the Ghost until after the mousetrap" (Kerrigan 94). Claudius also admits that he believes Hamlet is faking his madness:

> Love! His affections do not that way tend;
> Nor what he spake, though it lack'd for a little,
> Was not like madness. There's something in his soul
> O'er which his melancholy sits on brood;
> And I do doubt the hatch and the disclose
> Will be some danger (3.1.161-66).

One final point against the idea that Hamlet is mad concerns the contrasting depiction of Ophelia's madness and suicide. She is unable to manage herself after being left alone by Laertes and Hamlet while grieving the death of her father. In this way, Ophelia's disposition is significantly different when compared to Hamlet. Although Hamlet struggles with an existential attitude, he is capable of managing himself, and he triumphs in his task of revenge.

In conclusion, Hamlet avenges his father's murder and simultaneously heals the rotten state of Denmark, and his adherence to an existential philosophy enables him to remain autonomous throughout his plot of revenge. Paul A. Jorgensen describes Hamlet's death as "religiously serene" (258). Hamlet sheds his melancholy and anger and dies seemingly at peace, despite the carnage surrounding him. For the self-defined "Hamlet the Dane" (5.1.236), in death "the rest is silence" (5.2.333). He accepts who he was, where he was, what he had to do, and why he had to do it. Hamlet does not shirk his self-directed fate and, in the end, decides to "let it be" (5.2.323). He fulfills his purpose of vengeance and, with his death, the slate is wiped clean for Denmark. The cycle of revenge ends when he dies. Hamlet, Laertes, and Fortinbras have all avenged their fathers, and a strong and promising leader has taken the throne in Elsinore. Hamlet succeeds as a revenger and dies an existential hero.

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# Exploration of Power in George Orwell's *1984*

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Power can be defined as the ability to influence, and often it is connected with wealth, opulence, and fame.[1] One might suggest that in order for power to exist, an individual must acquire these elements, often associated with positions of authority, in order to have an influence on other people. The Ingsoc Party in George Orwell's *1984* wants a power that is beyond these tangible qualities. It is not a matter of acquiring anything physical within the realm of current human understanding, but rather seizing the unique, mental experiences of human beings and molding them into tools for complete submission to the Party. There is no need for wealth, opulence, or fame when the Brotherhood is top priority. But why is it necessary for the Party to have power for its own sake? The Party's desire for clean-cut power is a way to be immortal by being attached to a concept rather than just one's own contrived individual identity.

Uncovering the path the Party is willing to take to acquire this type of power is just as important as analyzing its motive. For the Party to exist as the absolute authority, it must first dismantle the creations of each individual identity. Every individual has personal opinions, thoughts, experiences, and memories. These are essentially what make a person different from others, for these factors are created only through personal, human experience. The Party knows that there can be no place for individuality if it wants to exist as a collective being solely capable of defining everything and everyone. For this reason, the Ingsoc Party wants to excavate the identities of Oceania's citizens and embed the concept of Big Brother within their daily lives.

One way to complete this excavation is by not granting privacy to any of its citizens. Constant government surveillance does not allow one to ponder deeply about oneself; thus, the individual feels as though "nothing was one's own except the few cubic centimeters inside one's skull" (Orwell 27). Winston experiences these restrictions while observing how Big Brother is everywhere he turns, even when he takes out a 25-cent piece with Big Brother's face on one side and the party's slogans on the other. The perpetual absence of privacy affects individuals and their ability to claim their beings as their own. Michael Carter notes that the consequence of being "incessantly observed is that the observed loses possession of himself" and that in *1984* the "relative dynamics of the self and the Other are decisively of the type revealed by the Sartrean Analysis" This concept determines that one who is constantly observed will eventually have the following thought: "I merely become part of the Other's world, and as the Other's world is something I cannot know, I am aware of having a dimension that is not understood by me" (Carter 180). When

1 The Oxford English Dictionary, "power" 1. a. "Ability to act or affect something strongly; physical or mental strength; might; vigour, energy; effectiveness."

someone is constantly monitored, there exists an incessant self-critique to satisfy the watcher, and in the process, there is only a focus on the "proper" way to act. As Winston goes through his days, he is reminded that he is always being watched, and with every reminder, there is also a discontinuity in the path of creating a personal identity.

The dissipation of the citizen's identity allows the citizen to remain unquestioned and without suspicion in the eye of the Watcher. While having lunch with Syme, Winston notices that although Syme followed the principles of the Ingsoc and "venerated Big Brother and rejoiced over victories" with sincerity and "restless zeal," there was still a "disreputability that always clung to him." Winston senses an aura that represents him once reading too many books and spending a lot of time in the Chestnut Tree Café, a cafe that was filled with the presence of painters and musicians before the revolution (Orwell 55). Syme is a product of the watchful eye of Ingsoc and Big Brother. Yet Winston observes that the natural, unique identity, which the party did not create, is still buried inside Syme and has been stifled and replaced with complete devotion to Ingsoc. This is a conscious yet subconscious decision for protection. Syme, like many of the citizens of Oceania, internally understands that the Party's beliefs should be the only foundation of one's identity.

Although the Party has tried diligently to use its authority to overshadow aspects of individuality, for a period of time there still exists a residue of who the individual once was and what they could have been. Nevertheless, this residue is merely a shadow of an aspect of individuality, since the Party's authority is strong enough to weaken this residue and slowly allow it to disappear. Mitzi M. Brunsdale notes that Orwell himself specified that "Goldstein's Book was what Winston would have written if he could … put his thoughts in order" (147). This realization exposes how "fatally his own freedom as a creative individual has been perverted." In the natural course of a person's life, one explores ways to best express oneself, and perhaps if Winston had had the opportunity to build the strength of his critical thinking, he could have written as eloquently as Goldstein. But the Party has made it nearly impossible for Winston or any member of the society to grasp and enhance their abilities of expression. Keeping the mind, a tool for expression, dull is essential for keeping the Party the only entity being listened to.

Another way that the Party attempts to dismantle the self-contrived identity is by using torture and relief to impose new beliefs and ideas. When O'Brien asks Winston if he wishes for him to "persuade him to see five fingers" while he is holding four "or to really see them," Winston truthfully says he wants to see them. This response immediately drives O'Brien to inflict more pain from the needle, as if he is punishing Winston for holding on to his previous knowledge of numbers. The exposure of personal opinions and prior knowledge is followed by pain in order for the conscious mind to reject the thoughts preceding torture. For the Party, punishment for introspective truth is ideal since it involves the abandonment of past and its outdated ideas and an understanding of new ideas the Party has created. While the body feels more pain, the mind commands itself to attach itself only to the concepts

that relief will grant. When Winston looks at the fingers, he remembers beliefs and learned lessons he acquired prior to the party's rise; however, he is not on the correct path to persuasion if he needs to actually see the fingers. The numbers must lose their significance in order for Winston to be persuaded that what he sees is five and not four. The only time O'Brien grants Winston the relief of the morphine shot is when Winston is unable to find his answer because of the overwhelming pain. Winston is "weaving in and out" of consciousness, making it "impossible to count the fingers" (Orwell 251). Not being able to determine whether there are four or five fingers gives room for O'Brien to teach the individual a new idea: To be cleaned of all prior ideas and have a steady hold on doublethink is the goal. For the citizen, the relief from the needle reinforces that, although there was previous knowledge of the numbers' identity, this understanding must be muted, and the numbers must lose their meaning. Abbot Gleason makes the clear distinction that although the Party encourages its members to make their own judgements, they are never to "think and judge in a manner that conflicts with what the Party wants them to think and judge" (74). It is a matter of looking at the world through a lens the Party has created. There is no more room for past knowledge, independent thought, or personal beliefs. The citizens of Oceania will be punished until their natural beliefs are abandoned.

Every method to destroy the individual and replace it with the concept of the Party will persist and continue forever, thus making the Party everlasting. The discourse between O'Brien and Winston reveals the Party's aims for the future. O'Brien shares that they are "already breaking down the habits of thought" and will destroy "all competing pleasures," such as natural procreation, children, science, literature, art, and love. "There will be no love except the love of Big Brother," and the only image that could possibly represent the future would be a giant boot stamping on a human face forever (Orwell 267). All of these "pleasures" themselves can place markers of remembrance on history, forever creating a legacy for generations to look at. But they all compete with the idea of the Party since some will paint their reality with one pleasure more than another will. The Party wants absolute attention and legacy; the idea is to remove all other distractions and focus entirely on Big Brother. John Atkins observes that it is "perfection of power" that the Party desires and that there would be "no victory to martyrise men who maintained their defiance to the end" (251). The citizens of Oceania must be "squeezed empty and filled with the Party's essence." Removing certain aspects of human nature that arise with the power of one's own mind, such as contemplation and reason, gives the opportunity for the Party to be the only existing entity. No individual's death matters; there is technically no death, for the Party lives on. In order for Ingsoc to infiltrate the rules and beliefs of all citizens of Oceania, the Party has created a power that is "neither universal nor exercised as a productive system" to help categorize where the authority lies. Instead, "Power becomes the State; the State is power" (Tyner 141). For the State to have complete power over its citizens, everything and everyone must be "squeezed empty."

In *1984*, George Orwell shows that the basis of any living species is survival.

It is a fight to be able to live longer, and for humans especially, to be remembered. The Party's goals and actions exemplify the value of basic survival. J. R. Hammond notes that every detail in Orwell's vision of the world "ministers to the terrible logic in the police state," "a world in which the individual has no place, a society where every aspect of life is subordinated to the state" (170). It is institutionally created for the permanent survival of Big Brother and the Party. Furthermore, the Party understands that death is inescapable but that the idea of survival is greater than death. Is there a way for survival to overcome physical death or, even in some cases, coexist?

Indeed, a man can die today but live on for a hundred more years in the memories and beliefs of those in future generations. O'Brien justifies the Party to Winston by explaining it has established a mindset that challenges the idea that human nature is fixed, and if it is ever summoned, Human Nature will be "outraged by what we do and turn against us" (Orwell 269). Instead the Party itself creates human nature because "men are infinitely malleable." They can be deterred from the idea that the Party is only a part of humanity and be moved towards the idea that "Humanity is the Party." Others that are outside of the Ingsoc are helpless, irrelevant and like the animals. By creating this alternate course of the human experience, the Party is able to secure its existence and survival.

Looking at *1984* through a narrow lens disconnected from the essence of fantasy and reality is almost impossible; Orwell has created a book that "once read, becomes a part of the mental furniture of the reader" (Hammond 183). On some level, one can incorporate the ideas of *1984* into contemporary societies. Orwell's book becomes more relatable as time passes, and many today reference the book to correlate the world of 1984 with our present reality. For example, as the telescreens always watching the citizens of Oceania are similar to our technology today being notorious for its watchful eye, the misuse of technology in Orwell's novel and modern-day society are clear. Orwell's novel is not only a warning, but it also represents the world we live in. Although Winston ultimately loves Big Brother, the novel demonstrates the power a certain group can have on an individual and society. Overall, the story of *1984* requires us to reflect upon our complacency with that which forcefully demands our attention and to understand the importance of creating our own thoughts and individuality. More importantly, we must also recognize the potential loss of our identities in the face of these powerful external forces.

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# The Shared Fates of Central Europe, Eastern Europe, and the Balkans

SHAUN SUNKARA

There are two opposing ideas concerning a person's fate or destiny. One is that humans have complete control of their own destinies and that there is no such thing as an irreversible fate. The other is that everything happens as a result of a destiny established before an individual is ever born. In his lecture, *Existentialism is a Humanism*, Jean-Paul Sartre showcases an existentialist view of human destiny: "If, however, it is true that existence is prior to essence, man is responsible for what he is. Thus, the first effect of existentialism is that it puts every man in possession of himself as he is and places the entire responsibility for his existence squarely upon his own shoulders" (4). While some may share Sartre's existentialist view, several European authors contend that people are unable to control their own destinies. Czechoslovakian Milan Kundera, Yugoslavian Ivo Andrić, and Russian Vladimir Makanin have all authored stories of people living out their lives within a cycle of inescapable fate. Despite their differing geographical origins, these authors from the Balkans, Central Europe, and Eastern Europe each have written works about cultural identity and the inevitable fate of their region's people.

Czech writer Milan Kundera has long written about connections found amongst culture, identity, and fate. In his essay "The Tragedy of Central Europe," Milan Kundera writes: "The identity of a people and of a civilization is reflected and concentrated in what has been created by the mind--in what is known as 'culture.' If this identity is threatened with extinction, cultural life grows correspondingly more intense, more important, until culture itself becomes the living value around which all people rally" (33). Kundera's proposal of culture being such an important value may be attributed to his political beliefs; in his essay, he is critical of Communist Russia and its attempts to assimilate Central Europe into the East. He points out how our relationships with others and the locations we are accustomed to shape our unique identities. In addition, we draw upon our past memories and relationships to create our sense of self.

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our sense of self.

This would not be the last time that Kundera writes on the subject of cultural and personal identity and the idea of the self. In his novel *Identity*, the audience follows a young, French couple who appear to be in love and, later, who begin to question one another's identities. At the beginning of the novel, the two main characters, Chantal and Jean-Marc, both define themselves through their relationship, but by the end of the novel, Chantal and Jean-Marc's relationship is not as durable as it initially appears.

There is a fascinating distortion of time and space throughout the plot of *Identity*; while there is a sense of events happening in chronological order, not many concrete dates are provided in each scene. Near the end of the book, in Chapter 50, we see Chantal and Jean-Marc wake up as though from a dream. The reader is not sure when the dream began, and Kundera does nothing to clarify the separation of dreams from reality. "And I ask myself: who was dreaming? Who dreamed this story? Who imagined it? She? He? Both of them? Each one for the other? And starting when did their real life change into this treacherous fantasy?" (167). Kundera shows us how the couple starts to lose their sense of identity as soon as they are put into an unfamiliar place, in this instance, a foreign country. Shortly after a tumultuous argument, Chantal and Jean-Marc end up leaving the comfort of their native France for the debauched city of London. First, Chantal departs on her own, and Jean-Marc follows her. While on the train with her coworkers, who also travel to London, Chantal wears her supposedly unnatural mask of the working, acquiescent Chantal. Eventually arriving in London and not knowing what to do, she ends up looking to participate in an orgy. Jean-Marc also undergoes a notable transformation from being a confident, intelligent man to a hysterical bum growing wild in his search for Chantal in England. Reflecting Kundera's view that Central Europe is experiencing a cultural identity crisis, *Identity* displays his connection of a change in identity to a change in one's surroundings: "At what exact moment did the real turn into the unreal, reality into reverie? Where was the border? Where is the border?" (167). This quote at the end of pivotal Chapter 50 not only can apply to Chantal and Jean-Marc's dream, but also to all of Central Europe during Kundera's lifetime, as borders were constantly being changed, new countries formed, old countries broken up, and entire cultures either being lost or blended with others. This passage is echoed in "The Tragedy of Central Europe":

> Or, to put it another way: does Central Europe constitute a true cultural configuration with its own history? And if such a configuration exists, can it be defined geographically? What are its borders? It would be senseless to try to draw its borders exactly. Central Europe is not a state: it is a culture or a fate. Its borders are imaginary and must be drawn and redrawn with each new historical situation. (35)

Here, we see Kundera again asking his readers about borders, as he does at the end of *Identity.* We can draw parallels to his work and Kundera's concern for on the lost

culture of Central Europe, how entire countries of people can lose their identities following events which are out of their control.

These events in Central Europe during the Cold War, spurred by Russian imperialism, can be compared to the history of the Balkans region and its occupation by the Ottoman Empire. There are similar sentiments on identity and fate written by authors from these regions who were raised during times of turmoil. Ivo Andrić is another European writer who has written works related to fate and cycles of destiny. Andrić's novella*, Anika's Times*, concerns a young woman who plunges her village into chaos when she becomes a prostitute. This novel is filled with characters unable to escape the shadows of the past because they find themselves repeating their own actions or the actions of their familial predecessors. As a historian and author, Andrić draws on the history of the Balkans and its cycle of warfare when creating parallels between the destinies of his suffering characters and the struggles of people living in the Balkan region (Todorovich). In *Anika's Times*, Andrić depicts his characters as being trapped in predetermined, self-repeating cycles. These depictions echo the ideas of human destiny he formulated throughout his experiences as a survivor of multiple wars and as a historian of Yugoslavia.

In his works, Andrić connects the concept of destiny with the family. There are multiple instances of family ancestry being the determinant in the characters' cyclical fates in *Anika's Time*. Male characters in the story are traditionally expected to carry on their family's lines of work. Anika's brother, Lale, is trained since birth at the family bakery (376) and, despite his feeble-mindedness, is expected to take over the business following his father's death: "That same winter Marinko died. His son, Lale, took over his father's business and continued working. Although young and feeble-minded, he proved himself a good baker and kept his father's customers" (379). Females of this era, such as Anika, were expected to be married off as soon as they were of suitable age: "And the more curious and mysterious she became, the more the kasaba talked about finding a husband for her" (380).

Then there is the Porubović family bloodline, whose male members were traditionally anointed the priests of the neighboring town of Dobrune. In addition to following in their father's footsteps in the priesthood, there is a history of shooting violence from the male members of the family. *Anika's Time* begins chronologically three generations after Anika's time, with one of these family members, the priest Father Vujadin, losing his mind and shooting at his neighbors: "Knocking against furniture as if unaware of its presence, Father Vujadin felt his way to the wall where his hunting rifle was hung, loaded at all times. Seizing it instantly, and without even placing it properly against his shoulder, he fired in the direction of the illuminated threshing floor" (370). This seemingly irrelevant story actually hints at the connection between Vujadin and his ancestors. Long before Father Vujadin grabbed his rifle and started shooting at his neighbors, his grandfather, Jakša, and great-grandfather, Melentje, had once seized a rifle with murderous intent. Melentje is enraged when Anika is at his town's fair and he witnesses her with his son Jakša.

> The priest pushed aside the people standing near him, and rushed up the half-dark stairs into his room... In the dark room they found the priest removing a long rifle from its place on the wall. They caught up with him by a window from which, in the middle of the swaying mob, Anika's fiery tent could be seen. Jakša was there, still bent, and Anika sat in the middle like a finished portrait. (422)

This outburst of insanity would have resulted in the shooting death of Anika had Melentje not been held back from the window overlooking Anika's tent. Shortly after this incident, Jakša attempts to shoot and kill Alibey, a rival client of Anika's. Alibey happens to be the *kajmakam* (mayor) of Visegrad: "The next evening, while the *kajmakam* was visiting Anika, someone took a shot at him from behind a fence overgrown with ivy. Alibey's right arm was slightly wounded; the same evening Jakša vanished from the *kasaba*" (425). Here we see that despite his described good-naturedness earlier in the story, Jakša's lust for Anika almost drives him to murder.

Despite their standing as members of the church and priesthood, Jakša and Meletje, much like their descendent Vujadin, are shown to be prone to fits of madness and violence. These patterns of violent human behavior that Andrić represents draw upon his experiences with Bosnia and the aftermath of the fall of the Ottoman Empire. Celia Hawkesworth remarks, "It was in the detail of these encounters that Andrić saw essential patterns of human experience: power and weakness, aggression and defense, and, above all, perhaps, the infinite potential for misunderstanding among people of all kinds at every level, compounded always and everywhere by cultural divisions" (204). This struggle of power and weakness is seen in *Anika's Time* with the depiction of Anika's power and the weakness of the townspeople.

Aside from family history repeating itself, there are other cycles of aggression and defense repeated throughout *Anika's Times*. For example, the backstory of Mihailo, Anika's first romantic interest, also demonstrates a recurring fate that Mihailo cannot escape. He first comes to Visegrad to escape from persecution after an affair with a married woman ended in a grisly murder (385). Later, after holding himself responsible for Anika's actions, Mihailo is again fated to repeat the flight that originally brought him to Visegrad. Also, the titular character of Anika is not the first woman to have turned the village upside down with some form of wickedness. Tijana, just like Anika, earlier brought chaos to the kasaba throughout her life: "Some seventy years earlier there was a shepherd's daughter, by the name of Tijana, who was well known for her beauty. Casting aside every scruple, she had played havoc with the kasaba. Such was the race and the fight to get her that during a great church fair all the *Čaršija* shops had remained closed, which had happened before only in time of plague or flood" (402). Tijana's story, reminiscent of Anika's, shows that Anika is not the first woman to use her body to turn the town against itself. Presumably, women like Anika and Tijana have been present throughout the town's existence, and there will be more women like them in the future.

However, despite the temporary turmoil these women cause, the village is shown to rapidly return to a state of normalcy. "Anika's death changed Visegrad, as it

had to. The speed with which everything was restored to the old rhythm was indeed almost hard to believe. No one was curious to know where the woman had come from, why she had lived, and what she had wanted. She was harmful and dangerous, and now she was dead, buried, and forgotten" (439). Anika's "reign of a year and a half in which [she] devoted herself to evil and disaster" ultimately has little lasting impact on the *kasaba*. Visegrad has seen the cycles of its inhabitants play out many times in the past, and it settles back into its normal rhythm after the conclusion of each of these cycles. Andrić would have known about Visegrad returning to a state of normalcy because he had been a resident of the town and attended elementary school there (Todorovich). Furthermore, Andrić's experiences while growing up in Bosnia undoubtedly affected his viewpoint of human destiny. In fact, he was awarded the Nobel Prize in 1961, "for the epic force with which he has traced themes and depicted human destinies drawn from the history of his country" ("Nobel").

Surprisingly, writers with a Russian perspective have offered similar views of the inevitability of fate. Russian writer Vladimir Makanin writes about a dystopian world where his protagonists initially appear to be in control of their futures. The main protagonist of Makanin's *Escape Hatch*, Klyucharyov, is a member of the intellectuals of his time. However, he is torn between the world of the intelligentsia and the world of the common man, wherein his family resides. This character is relatable through many different ideas and symbols. Some writers have compared Klyucharyev with various historical figures. Tatyana Novikov draws a parallel between a well-known Titan of Greek Mythology, Prometheus, and Klyucharyov. "I have argued that Klyucharev is a Promethean both because the radical values he represents have so much in common with Prometheus and because Klyucharev's story parallels that of Prometheus in the circumstances of his rebellion, suffering, and efforts on behalf of humans" (95). She further explains how Prometheus, who brought the gift of fire to man, suffers for his generosity; similarly, Klyucharyov also brings gifts of fire, such as the candles and flashlight batteries and who also suffers whenever he goes down the hatch to obtain these items. Similarly, in Plato's "Allegory of the Cave," men held captive in a cave underground are unable to perceive anything but shadows on the wall. One of the prisoners is set free, makes his way out of the cave, and attains enlightenment. Plato then argues that it is the responsibility of the free man to return to the cave, despite its darkness and ignorance, and lead the unenlightened masses towards a more desirous future for their commonwealth. Unlike most of the other members of the intelligentsia who have fled from responsibility for their fellow man, Klyucharyov chooses to spend his time in the darkness of the surface.

The surface world that Klyucharyov inhabits is a world of suffering, filled with roving bandits and abandoned buildings; food and water are scarce. Makanin wrote *Escape Hatch* during a time in which nuclear war between the United States and Russia seemed imminent. Novikov notes, "Prefiguring an inexorable catastrophe, Makanin in his novella demonstrates acute sensitivity to the political situation at the end of the Soviet period and skills in formulating the sense of historical crisis in his

narrative" (92). The dystopian world detailed in *Escape Hatch* could take place years after a nuclear war. Sally Dalton-Brown likens the chaotic society in the novel to modern day, war-torn Sarajevo: "Survival is also the theme of *[Escape Hatch*], in which Makanin describes a future world in which people struggle to survive; Moscow has become a city much like Sarajevo, a place of anarchy where bandits roam and few services work" (230). Novikov also describes the city in stark terms:

> Paradoxically, it is the earthly setting of *Escape Hatch* that is a virtual landscape of hell. The author portrays an apocalyptic picture of times that are out of joint and the horror of living in this Dantean Inferno. The novella's catalogue of stark and gruesome incidents includes rape, beatings, pogroms, random murders, riots, robberies, burglaries, people crushed by the mob, and, in Doestoevskian fashion, the enormous sufferings of innocent children. Makanin's is a vision of chaos, degradation, and universal misery. (90)

This unsettling imagery of the city, devoid of light and people, is Makanin's vision of hell coming to Russia. Every time Klyucharyov ventures out into the hellscape of this city, his wife worries that he may not return because death can come swiftly and unexpectedly to anyone caught in the dark of the abandoned city blocks. The seemingly perpetual darkness of the city accentuates these fears because structures and areas that look benign in the light of day take on a malevolence during the seemingly endless night.

In contrast, the underground occupied by the higher-class intelligentsia is filled with light and comfort. There are many references to the prevalence of the light underground and the lack of light on the surface. The people below ground have an abundance of essentials, such as food, tools, and medical supplies. They are able to enjoy a lifestyle that is normally associated with great wealth. As *Escape Hatch* progresses, however, it is revealed that the seemingly utopian underground society is not quite as ideal as it appears. Despite having access to advanced medical technology, people are still sick and dying; a young man dropping dead while watching a poetry performance is considered a commonplace enough sight: "A young man. People say that death is taken lightly here. Some people glance over, but because of the public's preoccupation with the reading, almost no one notices" (77). Later in the story, some residents of the underground are asked to participate in a simple survey where they indicate if they are hopeful for the future. The overwhelming majority of the participants are pessimistic in their views of the future, despite their efforts to survive below ground (85). This pessimism subtly hints at the failure of the intellectuals' self-imposed exile and indicates that regardless of location, the people's prospects for the future are grim. Just as on the surface world, the people of the underground are dying, and the exodus of the intellectuals underground is ultimately doomed.

Likewise, Klyucharyov, despite his efforts, also appears to be resigned to this doomed fate near the end of the novel. The cave that he has been preparing since the beginning of the story is ransacked and destroyed by bandits. However, surprisingly, Klyucharyov does not react to the destruction of the cave with any real, appropriate emotion. "It's a sad moment. 'But it doesn't matter,' Klyucharyov thinks. It's sad. But it doesn't matter. He hadn't believed in his idea very much" (89). Ultimately, we see that just like other members of the intelligentsia, despite his struggles and hard work, he is helpless in aiding his future. Although the circle of fate is more subtly introduced in *Escape Hatch*, by the end we can see that all the inhabitants of Klyucharyov's world are trapped in a pessimistic cycle that encompasses their existence. While *Escape Hatch* takes a very negative view of the future of mankind, it was written at a time when the future was all but certain. Furthermore, Makanin does display optimism for the future in the closing of the novel, after a mysterious, good man helps Klyucharyov when he falls asleep in the street. This man, like Klyucharyov, also tries to bring light to his fellow man trapped in the darkness of the cave. These are the people who give Makanin hope for the future, even among the darkness present in the modern world.

These authors from various parts of Central and Eastern Europe and the Balkans have demonstrated a common viewpoint shared amongst people of their regions, an inescapable fate, over which the participants have no control and which has functioned as a type of prison, influencing these countries throughout their histories and to the present day. Milan Kundera's position is an arching examination of identity and culture as seen in his novel *Identity* and his commentary on lost cultures and fate in his essay "The Tragedy of Central Europe." Ivo Andrić provides examples of cycles of destiny from his history-based writings of local families, events, and locales. Finally, *Escape Hatch* presents a warning by Vladimir Makanin of the consequences of indifference and the need to break the cycle of apathy. Examination of these works shows that regardless of the differences in each of these authors' respective regions, these areas of Europe have been tied together throughout history by similar threads of fate.

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# Metatheatre and Agency in *The Spanish Tragedy*

AMANDA JIANG

In 1963, Lionel Abel coined the term *metatheatre* in his work, *Metatheatre: A New View of Dramatic Form*. The term begins with *meta*, a prefix that denotes transcendence, and ends with *theatre*, a visual performance.[1] Metatheatricality offers players a heightened sense of awareness and, thereby, transforms theater into life and life into a theatricalized work of art (60). The metadramatic concept of "the world as a stage" can be traced back to *theatrum mundi*—the theater as a presentation of human life.[2] Although metatheatre and *theatrum mundi* both highlight an interconnection between the spectacle and spectators, performance and reality, *theatrum mundi* argues that divine power is the sole playwright of human fate, whereas Abel's metatheatre captures human agency (Erne 97). The *Spanish Tragedy*, an Elizabethan play written by Thomas Kyd, embraces deterministic *theatrum mundi* and free-willed metatheatre, a notion best illustrated by Hieronimo's dual roles as a playwright and actor. The *Spanish Tragedy* establishes the reconciliation of free will and determinism through a play-within-a-play where vengeance, the ultimate goal of revenge tragedy, is achieved.

The audience is first introduced to the concept of metatheatre when Don Andrea appears on stage. While asserting his position in the play, Don Andrea dramatizes himself: "To whom no sooner 'gan I make approach / To crave a passport for my wand'ring ghost" (1.1.34-35). According to Lionel Abel, in a metatheatrical play, characters were self-aware individuals before the playwright took note of them (60). Akin to Don Andrea, there are several other characters, such as Revenge, Lorenzo, and Hieronimo, who are equally aware of their motives and roles in the play. In this way, character awareness helps create different plays within the same play. Hell's court is the setting of the first play, and the setup of the introduction is unique in that it combines Senecan traits and Pagan mythological elements. In Seneca's *Thyestes*, the audience meets Tantalus, a character trapped in Hell lamenting the reenactment of evil deeds committed by his descendants. Hence, there is a presence of determinism. Likewise, in *The Spanish Tragedy*, Don Andrea is caught in a predetermined cycle; when he dies, he will vanish from the mundane world and live in Hell.

Although Don Andrea's fate—and his eventual destination—is determined by the Underworld, the judges do not know where he should go. Later, when he is

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[1] *The Oxford English Dictionary*, "meta-, prefix." "With sense 'beyond, above, at a higher level'"; and "theatre, n." "Dramatic performance as a branch of art."

[2] *The Oxford English Dictionary*, "theatrum mundi, n." "The theatre thought of as a presentation of all aspects of human life."

brought to Pluto's court, Pluto allows his wife, Proserpine, to decide where Don Andrea should proceed. Proserpine orders Don Andrea to enter the Gate of Horn with the spirit of Revenge to watch the inner play, a second scenario within *The Spanish Tragedy* (1.2.82). The 'Gate of Horn' alludes to Book VI of Virgil's *Aeneid*, where Aeneas dismisses the Gate of Horn and enters the ivory gate: "Two gates the silent house of Sleep adorn;/ Of polished ivory this, that of transparent horn: True visions through transparent horn arise; Through polished ivory pass deluding lies" (204). The fact that Revenge and Don Andrea are looking into "true visions" is essential to the development of the metadramatic plot. "True" opposes the fictional quality of the play. Thus, the dreams that the players and the audience witness are more than just a product of theatrical imagination; they are real-world experiences anyone can have at any time. The concept of dreaming is prominent in Elizabethan literature. Gregory Semenza posits:

> In Shakespeare's comedies—such as *The Tempest, The Taming of the Shrew,* and especially *A Midsummer Night's Dream,* such parallels between the semi-rational worlds of comedic festivity and dreams are commonplace. When Theseus, for example, extols the powers of the imagination in a play positing dreams as epitome of it, he highlights the shaping powers capable of molding meaning out of airy nothing. (156)

According to Semenza, the suggestion that Hieronimo's tale is really just Don Andrea's dream obscures the separation of reality and perception and, in turn, grants shaping powers to the mind of the observer. In *The Spanish Tragedy*, the audience witnesses the conflation, or more accurately, the reconciliation of playgoers, playwrights, and actors in the same scene, each possessing equal shaping power within the plot. Despite the limitations of the theatrical and mundane worlds, dramatic characters and non-dramatic characters have the power to shape plots, responses, and motives. The ability to manipulate provides proof of free will, through which characters possess the agency to modify the play.

> Prior to the development of Act 1 Scene 2, Revenge remarks: Then know, Andrea, that thou art arrived
> Where thou shalt see the author of thy death,
> Don Balthazar, the Prince of Portingale,
> Deprived of life by Bel-imperia.
> Here sit we down to see the mystery,
> And serve for Chorus in this tragedy. (1.2.86-91)

The metatheatrical quality of the play emerges again with Revenge's telling of Balthazar's murderer, Bel-imperia. How does Revenge know that she will kill Balthazar? Is this an unplanned prediction, response, or foreknowing? In the beginning of *The Spanish Tragedy*, all three of the concepts collide and are reconciled with one another. One could argue that the response of Don Andrea's death, which is caused by Balthazar, leads to a kind of foreknowing that is accurate enough to

become an absolute occurrence. Furthermore, when Revenge claims that it and Don Andrea will serve as Chorus for the play, the character is following the classical roots of the metatheatrical genre. For instance, in the Old Comedy of Aristophanes, the chorus self-consciously discusses the play with the audience. In *The Acharnians*, the leader of the chorus speaks in the playwright's voice, comments on the drama, and guides the audience's responses (Pollard 69). In the Elizabethan era, self-conscious attention to the nature of the theater reflects widespread fascination with the medium in which the audience finds realistic, worldly qualities projected through a theatrical lens (68). By positioning Don Andrea and Revenge as players who watch the internal play, *The Spanish Tragedy* transforms them into jurors who have the ability to judge and respond to Hieronimo's tale. The goal, Revenge professes, is to watch Bel-imperia kill Balthazar and avenge Don Andrea's death (1.2.87-89). Therefore, Don Andrea's vengeance is achieved through a metatheatrical lens.

To understand the state of the internal play, it is important to examine the various characters' renditions of Don Andrea's death. The spectators hear four versions of the battle in which Don Andrea was killed, and three of these are spoken by Horatio, the Spanish general, and Villuppo in the Portuguese court. The fourth version of the battle is Don Andrea's original account of his own demise. The multiple narratives of Don Andrea's death and the actual event resulting in his murder highlight the characters' self-awareness and motives to deceive one another. For instance, Villupo creates a "forged tale" to trick the Portuguese king into believing that Alexandro is at fault for Balthazar's "death" (1.4.93). Although the renditions of the battle seem like vocal narratives, one could argue that they are also 'vocal plays' that survive and reemerge in the spectators' minds. Such is the power of vocal art; it can delude and betray the audience.

*The Spanish Tragedy* is a revenge tragedy, yet vengeance is delayed in the play. One cause of the delay is the characters' heightened sense of awareness. Their knowledge and inquisitive minds control the movement of the play rather than the other way around. The control that the characters possess neutralizes the power of determinism. In Act 2, scene 4, vengeance is initiated when Balthazar and Lorenzo decide to murder Horatio. Prior to taking Horatio's life, Balthazar and Lorenzo are behind the scenes and hidden from other characters. Thus, in the process of planning to commit evil deeds, Lorenzo and Balthazar become playgoers. When they murder Horatio, they then become playwrights who dictate Horatio and Bel-imperia's fate but not their own. Lorenzo and Balthazar's transformations reveal the complicity of playgoers and the playwright of *The Spanish Tragedy*, Thomas Kyd himself.

Horatio's murdered body echoes descriptions of Christ's betrayal in the Garden of Gethsemane and his eventual execution on the Cross—the holy tree.[3] The Garden of Gethsemane was where Jesus prayed alongside his disciples preceding his crucifixion. The allusion to the garden and Christ's brutal punishment is vital to the creation of the play. First, it highlights the presence and significance of betrayal.

[3] "Who his own self bare our sins in his body on the tree, that we being dead to sin, should live in righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed" (1 Peter 2:24).

Christ was betrayed by Judas prior to his crucifixion. Likewise, in *The Spanish Tragedy*, Horatio and Bel-imperia are betrayed by Pedringano. Second, the evil deeds committed in the garden are reminiscent of the sins initiated in the Garden of Eden where Adam and Eve consumed the fruits of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil and became the first sinners. The biblical references remind the audience that sins are prevalent in garden settings and that Horatio's death in Hieronimo's garden is inevitable. Horatio is not the creator of the sinful act, but he is an unwilling participant. His existence allows Pedringano to perpetuate sin, and, later, to be executed due to the betrayal. The fall of Pedringano--and others who commit murderous acts--underscores determinism. Humans are subject to death through the commission of original sin.

Although determinism is unavoidable, there are instances in which free will prevails. For instance, Lorenzo obtains agency by transforming into an artist. When Lorenzo leaves Horatio's hanging body on the arbor, he remarks, "Yet is [Horatio] at the highest now he is dead" (2.4.60). Here, the audience is forced to watch the hanging of Horatio's innocent body, as master playwright—or artist—Lorenzo showcases his work. The word "high" refers to Horatio's distance above the physical ground, but it also relates to the contradicting notion that Horatio is most unfortunate when he is at the highest part of Fortune's wheel. By leaving Horatio's body on display, Lorenzo creates a divide between himself—the artist and playgoer—and Horatio's crucified body, the actor in Lorenzo's work of art. The distancing also allows Revenge, Don Andrea, and the Elizabethan audience to enjoy the dead spectacle voyeuristically. Molly Smith contends, "the double framing of [Horatio's death]—the audience as spectators watching an already framed event—explicitly raises the questions about the value of death as entertainment" (224). Perhaps, when a character in a revenge play becomes both a playwright and a player, he or she has the potential to become a manipulative villain or, in Lorenzo's case, a ruthless killer who escapes the limitations of determinism through generating a macabre work of art.

In *The Spanish Tragedy*, Hieronimo is the primary figure that encapsulates determinism and free will; however, he does not serve this purpose in the first half of the play. Initially, Hieronimo believes it is up to God to exact vengeance. The audience witnesses his transformation through his soliloquies. After seeing Horatio's dead body, Hieronimo exclaims, "Eyes, life, world, heavens, hell, night, and day" (3.2.22). There is a unique order to Hieronimo's statement. "Eyes" could refer to the eyes of the audience and the characters, and "life" could stand for the overall quality of a theatrical work because the inner plays mirror a certain criticism of life (Bradbrook 6). The third word is "world," which connects to the essence of metatheatre and the notion that the theatre is a microcosm of a larger world. "Heavens," "hell," "night," and "day" are words that relate to the greater cosmos.

[4] "So the woman (seeing that the tree was good for meat, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired, to get knowledge) took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also her husband with her, and he did eat" (Genesis 3).

The reference to heavens proves that Hieronimo initially does believe in divine justice and heavenly intervention. In addition, the theme, with a range of significance —"eyes, life, world, heavens,"—which parallel organ, organism, social milieu, and cosmos, is "the progressive perversion of all order into disease through the murder of Horatio" (Barish 181). By gathering all the phenomena, Hieronimo is attempting to help the world regain justice. Yet, the heavens and hell do not listen or respond to him. The silence of the phenomena propels Hieronimo to take vengeance into his own hands.

One of the challenges that Hieronimo finds in living in a corrupt world is the validation of response: What is right? What is wrong? *The Spanish Tragedy* is not merely a revenge play where a hero or villain kills to seek justice. Rather, it is a play that explores different kinds of responses men can make to endure pain and suffering (Hamilton 190). In Act 3, scene 13, there is a shift from divine duty to private duty. Hieronimo moves in eighteen lines from "heaven will be reveng'd" (3.13.2) to "I will revenge" (3.13.20). Once Hieronimo recognizes that divine power does not exert absolute control over men in Act 3, "his search for meaningful response leads him to art, which by mirroring his experiences, also helps him learn their universal quality, a lesson which gives him some relief from his torment" (190). If Hieronimo did not react to the king's heedless behavior or the cosmos' neglectful response, then perhaps the play would truly be deterministic. But Hieronimo's defiance—his intervention—calls upon Lionel Abel's version of metatheatricality in which characters in the play have an awareness of what can be done to and for them.

With Hieronimo's change in perspective, the spectators also witness a shift in the meaning and overall purpose of this tragedy. Initially, tragedy consists of predestined events that cause great suffering, destruction, or distress, typically involving death.[5] With Hieronimo becoming a playwright, the word 'tragedy' becomes more of a dramatic, character-initiated performance that conveys pain and suffering.[6]Hieronimo's play, which takes place in Act 5, is a device for vengeance and justice. According to Clara Calvo, Hieronimo's play "questions the boundary between reality and representation, going beyond the *theatrum mundi* topos" (56). Indeed, the play is so realistic and out of the norm that Hieronimo seems to demand the spectators to not only treat his play as a fictional work but also as evidence for his vengeance against Lorenzo and Balthazar.

When Hieronimo describes himself as a playwright, he calls Balthazar and Lorenzo "actors of the accursed tragedy" (3.7.41-42). As Hieronimo dictates the actions and the foreign tongues that his players speak, he becomes a precursor to other tragedians—such as Shakespeare's protagonist, Hamlet, a character who takes control of fate by guiding external forces, despite his inability to escape his role as an actor in

5 *The Oxford English Dictionary,* "tragedy, n." "An event, series of events, or situation causing great suffering, destruction, or distress, and typically involving death."

6 *The Oxford English Dictionary,* "tragedy, n." "The genre of drama or literature which consists of tragedies; tragedies as a class; (also) the style or form of tragedies."

his own play. Hieronimo's ability to dictate Balthazar and Lorenzo's behaviors allows him to punish his enemies, a necessary course of action that restores the balance of justice. Lukas Erne draws a comparison between Hieronimo and God. In the Bible, God punishes the pride and ambition of the people of Babel by creating many new languages and speech barriers. This punishment causes confusion amongst the people of Babel and minimizes their ambition to build a tower that reaches Heaven.[7] Hieronimo, in a corresponding manner, facilitates the demolition of Lorenzo and Balthazar's pride when he takes control of their tongues and, thereby, becomes a commander of human actions.

Hieronimo's show does not end with Balthazaar and Lorenzo's death. More accurately, the purpose of his play is introduced when he pulls Horatio's dead body onto the stage. Hieronimo's actions are so strategic that the Portuguese and Spanish royalties do not initially comprehend the murder of Lorenzo and Balthazar. Before he runs to hang himself, Hieronimo cries,

> See here my show, look on this spectacle, […]
> With pitchy silence hushed these traitors' harms,
> And let them leave, for they had sorted leisure
> To take advantage in my garden plot
> Upon my son, my dear Horatio.
> There merciless they butchered up my boy,
> In black, dark night, to pale, dim, cruel death
> He shrieks, I heard—and yet, methinks, I hear—
> His dismal outcry echo in the air. (4.4.88-108)

Hieronimo's demand for spectators to look on his spectacle is a metatheatrical command. Here, Hieronimo is conscious of his play and is aware that he is being watched, not only by players, but the world outside the theatrical space, where Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy* takes place. Hieronimo's recollection of Horatio's death is accompanied by pain. The phrase "Black, dark night, to pale, dim, cruel death" counteracts Hieronimo's initial "Eyes, life, world, heavens, hell, night, and day" (3.2.22). Heavens—or divine intervention—no longer exist in Hieronimo's world, for darkness has obscured God's eyes. The employment of present tense in "shrieks," "hears," and "echo," which are also acoustic words, takes spectators back to the night when Horatio was murdered and his cries were ignored by the cosmos, the complicit audience, and other characters in the play. By narrating Horatio's death in a repetitive sequence, Hieronimo is emphasizing his view that it is justifiable for him to kill Balthazar and Lorenzo. Horatio's death may be predetermined, but through the constant recounting of his death, Hieronimo becomes a guardian of Horatio's premature death and a tragedian who transforms reality into a narrative. In retrospect, what is determined becomes an instrument of free will.

Furthermore, Hieronimo's attempt to hold up his son's body in the last act

7 "And the Lord said, Behold, the people is one, and they all have one language, and this they begin to do, neither can they now be stopped from whatsoever they have imagined to do" (Genesis 11: 1-9).

represents his persistence in defying the claim that justice is futile. Deep inside his heart, Hieronimo still believes in justice, even if it is not validated by divine power. When the dead Horatio becomes an actor on stage, life and death become one. Given the power of imagination, the dead can become undead, a source of vitality necessary for Hieronimo and the audience to experience catharsis. When Hieronimo recounts Horatio's death, the spectators may also feel pain and suffering. The ultimate goal of vengeance, which is achieved by Hieronimo, is not only to kill, but to justify his motive for killing and eventually achieve equilibrium. When Bel-imperia asks Hieronimo, "With what excuses canst thou show thyself," Bel-imperia is calling upon Hieronimo's duty to be a father, not a murderer (Semenza 157). In his closing lines, Hieronimo reminds the audience of his paternal connection with Horatio, his son and his boy (4.4.104-105). In doing so, Hieronimo supports and advances the flawed yet necessary system of justice despite being limited by a theatrical space.

Lionel Abel asserts, "Tragedy makes human existence more vivid by showing its vulnerability to fate. Metatheatre makes human existence more dreamlike by showing that fate can be overcome" (113). In *The Spanish Tragedy*, the audience witnesses characters' vulnerabilities and their triumph over deterministic fate. Kyd's tragedy, according to Semenza, is a microcosm in which the world of the play reflects the world inhabited by the Elizabethan [audience] (154). It is true that the play references real questions and embodies realistic conflicts relevant to what the Elizabethans experienced. However, instead of a microcosm that "reflects," I would argue that *The Spanish Tragedy* is a fundamental component of life, not just a mere reflection. When Don Andrea watches Hieronimo, the audience becomes him: curious, responsive, and alert. The moment Hieronimo pulls a deceased Horatio onto the stage, the complete shattering of the fourth wall allows the audience to experience Hieronimo's pain. While playwrights, players, and spectators all live in restricted space, free will—and the awareness of motives—allows them to enact their version of justice.

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