

“He takes false shadows for true substances”:

Madness and Metadrama in *The Spanish Tragedy* and *Titus Andronicus*

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Abstract

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Although scholars have written extensively about madness and metadrama, they have rarely discussed the relationship between the two on the early modern stage. In many plays, however, mad characters become acutely metatheatrical, oftentimes putting on spectacles, consciously performing in front of others, and gaining various levels of dramatic awareness. In this thesis, I analyze the ways that two influential plays, *The Spanish Tragedy* and *Titus Andronicus*, present madness theatrically and suggest an association between lunacy and drama.

The Spanish Tragedy and *Titus Andronicus* offer a unique opportunity to study this issue. Not only are they relatively early plays, showing theatricalized madness at early stages in its development, but they were both added to later. These additions present more developed, explicit manifestations of the link between madness and metadrama. By viewing the original plays and the additions as four texts, we can trace the gradual establishment of the link in early modern drama, as lunacy and theater become united by their shared mistaking of “false shadows for true substances.” Through this connection, we can detect a simultaneous anxiety and fascination regarding the illusory nature of drama.

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Introduction: “This great stage of fools”

At the height of his madness, King Lear enters crowned in weeds and flowers. In disconnected, incoherent sentences, he says, “There’s your press-money. That fellow handles his bow like a crow-keeper: draw me a clothier’s yard. Look, look, a mouse” (4.6.86-8).¹ His thoughts move rapidly from the press-money to the bowman, then from the clothier’s yard to the mouse. He speaks in an almost stream-of-consciousness style, his disordered speech revealing his disordered mind. Soon, however, his nonsense turns to sense. Having given away his kingdom to ungrateful daughters, been cast out into a storm, and lost his wits, he contemplates power and authority. Imagining a dog chasing a beggar, he proposes the image as a representation of human power structures: “There thou mightst behold the great image of authority: a dog’s obeyed in office” (4.6.153-5). In this account, the authority of those in power is cruel and arbitrary, like the cur’s authority over a human. Remarking on Lear’s lunacy and insight, Edgar says, “O matter and impertinency mixed, / Reason in madness” (4.6.170-1). In these ravings, Lear seems wiser than before, more attuned to the realities of the world despite—or because of—his madness.

Toward the end of his appearance in this scene, he reaches his most cynical conclusion yet, exclaiming that “when we are born, we cry / That we art come to this great stage of fools” (4.6.178-9). He reconceives reality as a stage, metatheatrically commenting upon the world while drawing attention to the literal stage he stands on. In this moment, his ravings turn toward the theater itself, using the stage he stands on as metaphor for the outside reality.

¹ William Shakespeare, *King Lear*, ed. R. A. Foakes (London: Arden Shakespeare, 2007). Subsequent citations are to this edition.

Scholars have already written much about madness in *King Lear*. They have likewise examined the play's metatheatrical elements, which explore the nature of theater itself. Although these traits, madness and metatheatre, have generally been studied separately, I propose that studying them together helps illuminate each more clearly. We can see how madness makes Lear more conscious of the world/stage around him, and we can see how the theater is invoked to highlight his changed mental state. When Lear talks about the "great stage of fools," sense and nonsense intermingle. His description of reality as a play resonates as a strange truth when said onstage. Not only has he become wiser in his madness, his newfound understanding extends toward the theater itself, as he envisions the world as a stage.

An act earlier, we saw Lear sitting in a hovel, barely protected from the storm outside. With no legal jurisdiction any longer, he stages a pretend trial of his daughters. He casts those around him in legal roles and a footstool as Goneril, before pretending to pass judgment upon her. The mad Lear, incapable of any sort of revenge, imagines it instead. As Josephine Waters Bennett recognizes, this is essentially a "play-within-a-play" where "the Fool and Edgar humor Lear by acting the parts he assigns to them."² The same madness which later leads Lear to declare the world a stage now makes him put on a piece of theater. His later conclusion is no isolated incident of his madness turning toward drama; rather, his theatrical madness is an essential component of his psychological experience.

We can examine the overlap between madness and metadrama in other plays as well. Shakespeare's most famous tragic protagonist, Hamlet, makes the conscious decision "to put

² Josephine Waters Bennett, "The Storm Within: the Madness of Lear," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 13, no. 2 (1962): 143.

an antic disposition on” (1.5.170),³ feigning madness to the rest of Denmark. Like Edgar in *King Lear*, Hamlet pretends to be mad. In doing so, he plays a recognizable theatrical archetype, the madman, adopting the stage’s methods for performing insanity for his own ends. During his performance of lunacy, he stages a play with a group of travelling actors and dwells on the nature of theater. One of Shakespeare’s less popular plays, *Timon of Athens*, depicts the title character going mad, running off to live in a cave by himself, and setting aside his identity. In his madness, he assumes the role of Misanthropos, playing that part whenever visited by the people of Athens. These three characters, Lear, Hamlet, and Timon, are different in many ways, but all three of them are marked by madness coinciding with an interest in drama and role-playing. In them, we see lunacy rendering characters into more theatrical figures.

In this thesis, I examine this convergence in earlier two plays: *The Spanish Tragedy* and *Titus Andronicus*. In them, we can detect a building association between insanity and metatheatre. *The Spanish Tragedy*, written by Thomas Kyd, and *Titus Andronicus*, one of Shakespeare’s earliest plays, laid the foundation for early modern theatrical depictions of lunacy. They both present mad characters who become acutely theatrical in their lunacies, turning into playwright figures and creating illusions while their own senses of reality suffer. This connection is developed further in passages which were added to both *The Spanish Tragedy* and *Titus Andronicus*. These additions, meant to present more of the protagonists’ lunatic antics, further intertwine madness and the theater. Not only do the madmen become even more theatrical, their madnesses change. These scenes make Hieronimo and Titus obsess over spectacles, interested in the uneasy difference between reality and illusion.

³ William Shakespeare, *Hamlet* (London: The Arden Shakespeare, 2006). Subsequent citations are to this edition.

Madness

People in the Renaissance held paradoxical views of madness. As Michel Foucault explores in his famous history of mental illness, *Madness and Civilization*, madfolk were not yet viewed as wholly inferior to sane people. On the contrary, they were believed to possess a unique wisdom, one free from the constraints of reason. As Foucault writes, “If madness is the truth of knowledge, it is because knowledge is absurd.”⁴ The rational person can never truly understand the great truths, because the greatest truths are themselves irrational. According to Rosalie Colie, the paradox of reason in madness was so popular in the early modern period that it became one of “the most obvious, the most shop-worn articles in the paradoxist’s stock.”⁵ We can see this paradox at play in the relationship between lunacy and metatheatre—in madness, characters often become self-aware, gaining an understanding that extends beyond the reality of the play.

Other beliefs about the mind also affected early modern depictions of madness, such as humoral theory.⁶ The humoral system holds that our mental states and emotions are largely the products of the four humors which run through the body: blood, phlegm, yellow bile (or choler), and black bile (or melancholy). Madness often stems from an excess of melancholy. This excess could have many causes, one of the most important ones being grief. The ideas

⁴ Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Vintage Books, 1988), 25.

⁵ Rosalie Colie, *Paradoxia Epidemica: The Renaissance Tradition of Paradox* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967), 463.

⁶ For a more thorough examination of humoral theory, see Lawrence Babb, *The Elizabethan Malady: A Study of Melancholia in English Literature from 1580 to 1642* (East Lansing: Michigan State College Press, 1951).

about madness that become most clearly represented in drama revolve around its symptoms, the signs which can be conveyed to the audience. Robert Burton describes madness in *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, first published in 1621:

Madness is therefore defined to be a vehement dotage, or raving without a fever, far more violent than melancholy, full of anger and clamour, horrible looks, actions, gestures, troubling the patients with far greater vehemency both of body and mind, without all fear and sorrow, with such impetuous force and boldness that sometimes three or four men cannot hold them.⁷

Burton outlines many symptoms, but the main two which he discusses, and the ones which he focuses on here, are raving and violence (see Fig. 1 for a woodcut of a violent madman).

Raving is defined as “to speak or declaim wildly, irrationally, or incoherently.”⁸ Similarly, in *Mystical Bedlam*, a study of madness through the papers of the medical practitioner Richard Napier, Michael McDonald finds that Napier perceives two main types of madmen: violent ones and raving, incoherent ones.⁹

⁷ Robert Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy* (New York: New York Review Books, 2001), 140.

⁸ *OED*, “rave, v.^{1a}”

⁹ Michael McDonald, *Mystical Bedlam: Madness, Anxiety, and Healing in Seventeenth Century England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 122.



Fig. 1: Woodcut from “The Mad Man’s Morice”¹⁰

These expected symptoms, violence and raving, developed into a standard set of ways to represent madness onstage. Duncan Salkeld writes that playgoers do not see actual madness depicted in drama, but “what they witnessed was rather a particular ensemble of symbols which represented madness; a code, both historically specific and politically resonant, that signified unreason.”¹¹ This code developed from experiments in representing madness, most prominently experiments in verbal style. These changes in style try to replicate the ravings of madmen, simulating unreason through unpredictable sentence structures and nonsensical content. We can see an early stylistic experiment at play in the madness of Zabina, the empress of Turkey in Christopher Marlowe’s *Tamburlaine*, who loses her mind upon finding her

¹⁰ Humphrey Crouch, “A Mad Man’s Morice” (London: date unknown, 1684-1695). *English Broadside Ballad Archive*.

¹¹ Duncan Salkeld, *Madness and Drama in the Age of Shakespeare* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993), 3.

husband's corpse. As she speaks, she begins in the consistent blank verse which characterizes Marlowe's style: "What do mine eyes behold? My husband, dead? / His skull all riven in twain, his brains dashed out? / The brains of Bajazeth, my lord and sovereign" (5.2.241-3).¹² By the end of her speech, Marlowe's careful meter has been transformed into repetitive prose ravings as Zabina says, "Streamers white, red, black, here, here, here. Fling the meat in his face. Tamburlaine, Tamburlaine. Hell make ready my couch, my chair, my jewels. I come, I come" (5.2.251-4). In this speech, Zabina's madness manifests in the stream-of-consciousness of her language. As we shall see, *The Spanish Tragedy* and *Titus Andronicus* likewise use stylistic experiments as one of their primary methods to represent madness. While they show other signs, such as violence, changes in style are their most consistent indicators of lunacy.

Metadrama/metatheatre

Lionel Abel coined "metatheater" in 1960 to describe what he perceived as a distinct genre, invented by Shakespeare with *Hamlet* and continued by playwrights in the twentieth century. According to Abel, the metaplay is a product of self-consciousness, which makes tragedy impossible to write. He argues, "The Western playwright is unable to believe in the reality of a character who is lacking in self-consciousness. Lack of self-consciousness is as characteristic of Antigone, Oedipus, and Orestes, as self-consciousness is characteristic of Hamlet, that towering figure of Western metatheater."¹³ Abel says that having a self-conscious protagonist results in a fundamentally different sort of play, one that is self-aware.

¹² Christopher Marlowe, *Tamburlaine the Great* (Ontario: Broadview Editions, 2014). Subsequent citations are to this edition.

¹³ Lionel Abel, "Metatheater," *Partisan Review* 27, no. 2 (1960): 325.

Two years after Abel coined “metatheater” (and one year before his book *Metatheatre* further popularized the term and the now more common spelling “metatheatre”), Anne Barton explored Shakespeare’s self-conscious drama in her book *Shakespeare and the Idea of the Play*. Why was there a surge of interest in Shakespeare’s self-reflexivity in the 1960s? One reason lies in early twentieth century drama’s interrogation of itself. Playwrights like Bertolt Brecht and Samuel Beckett reacted against the realist theatre which preceded them by challenging and exploring contemporary dramatic conventions. Brecht, in particular, consciously built upon metadramatic techniques employed by Shakespeare and his contemporaries in the development of his idea of the “*verfremdungseffekt*,” or “alienation effect,” which prevents the viewers from ever being fully deceived by the play’s illusion.¹⁴ Scholars have often discussed the connection between Elizabethan metadrama and the “alienation effect,” some arguing that early modern metatheatre likewise causes estrangement with the audience, and some arguing that estrangement is particular to theater of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.¹⁵ Whether these types of dramatic self-reflexivity are similar or not, the twentieth century theater’s renewed attention to the nature of the medium provoked interest in the metadramatic elements which dominated the stage centuries earlier.

¹⁴ See Doc Rossi, “Brecht on Shakespeare: A Revaluation,” *Comparative Drama* 30, no. 2 (Summer 1996): 158-187.

¹⁵ For criticism arguing that early modern metadrama creates estrangement with the audience, see Andrew Gurr, “Metatheatre and the Fear of Playing,” in *Neo-historicism: Studies in Renaissance Literature, History, and Politics*, edited by Robin Headlam Wells, Glenn Burgess, and Rowland Wymer (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2000), 103; and Jonathan Dollimore, *Radical Tragedy: Religion, Ideology and Power in the Drama of Shakespeare and his Contemporaries* (Brighton, UK: The Harvester Press, 1984), 63-69. For criticism arguing that Shakespearean metadrama provokes delight, not alienation, see Stephen Purcell, “Are Shakespeare’s Plays Always Metatheatrical?” *Shakespeare Bulletin* 36, no. 1 (2018): 21-2; and Anthony B. Dawson and Paul Yachnin, *The Culture of Playgoing in Shakespeare’s England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 101-5.

The Renaissance theater was deeply interested in itself. Shakespeare and his contemporaries, writing at the dawn of the English secular theater, reflect upon the nature of drama and illusion in their work. James Calderwood later used “metadrama” to describe the ways that “dramatic art itself—its materials, its media of language and theater, its generic forms and conventions, its relationship to truth and the social order—is a dominant Shakespearean theme, perhaps his most abiding subject.”¹⁶ Richard Hornby likewise uses the word “metadrama,” but he does not focus entirely on Shakespeare as Calderwood does. Instead, he looks at the history of theatrical self-consciousness, locating Shakespeare within its trends and developments. Because I do not make any effort to view metatheatre/metadrama as a genre, instead viewing it as the various methods with which plays comment on theater itself, my approach is closer to Calderwood’s and Hornby’s than Abel’s. As a result, I use their preferred word, metadrama, more often than metatheatre. However, I do use the terms interchangeably, ignoring Abel’s intention to define “metatheatre” as a genre. For the purposes of the current study, I will consider metadrama/metatheatre to be, as Hornby describes it, “drama about drama; it occurs whenever the subject of a play turns out to be, in some sense, drama itself.”¹⁷ There are many different forms that metadrama can take. These forms include, but are not limited to, inset plays, explicit mentions of the theater, and uses of theatrical language (play, act, plot, author, etc.).

In my first two chapters, as I look at whole texts, I generally focus on major metatheatrical structures, such as inset plays, spectacles-within-the-plays, and dramatic frames.

¹⁶ James Calderwood, *Shakespearean Metadrama* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1971), 5.

¹⁷ Richard Hornby, *Drama, Metadrama, and Perception* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1986), 31.

In *The Spanish Tragedy* and *Titus Andronicus* without their additions, metadrama largely manifests in these sorts of structures, with characters putting on plays-within-the-plays and playing with the subsequent dramatic layering. As a result, these chapters are largely concerned with large-scale metadramatic features and the relationships between theatrical layers. Then, in chapters three and four, as my focus narrows to the added scenes, my attention shifts to smaller metatheatrical elements, such as the use of theatrical language by the characters. In these additions, characters invoke particularly theatrical language and question reality and illusion. The metatheatrical techniques change across these texts, as the plays' self-consciousness seeps from their structures down into the words the characters use and the thoughts they have.

Madness and art

If we look at the ways that madness and metatheatre converge in early modern drama, we can detect a certain anxiety regarding theater itself, which rests upon the acceptance of illusion. Shakespeare explicitly addresses the relationship between madness and art in *A*

Midsummer Night's Dream:

Lovers and madmen have such seething brains,
Such shaping fantasies, that apprehend
More than cool reason ever comprehends.
The lunatic, the lover, and the poet
Are of imagination all compact. (5.1.4-8)¹⁸

In this speech, Duke Theseus connects the imaginations of poets and lovers to the imaginations of madmen. All three groups of people are similarly irrational, in that their fantasies extend

¹⁸ William Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (London: Arden Shakespeare, 2017). Subsequent citations are to this edition.

beyond reason. Hallucinations and poetry are both manifestations of the imagination, and are therefore deeply related. In this speech, the distinction between poet and madman is challenged, as they share vivid fantasies which make something out of nothing. The unspoken implication of Theseus's words is that the poet is part mad, and the madman is part poet.

Foucault describes a depiction of madness that emerged in the Renaissance, "madness by romantic identification,"¹⁹ wherein characters become so immersed in fiction that they cannot separate it from reality. This literary form of madness stems from "an enormous anxiety concerning the relationships, in a work of art, between the real and the imaginary, and perhaps also concerning the confused communication between fantastic invention and the fascinations of delirium."²⁰ He focuses on the importance of this anxiety to *Don Quixote*, which shows the overlap between lunacy and literature as the title character's madness is caused by his over-reading, until he no longer sees the difference between his world and that of his books. This anxiety about the relationship between art and madness is not limited to works like Cervantes's. It manifests in a great many plays of the Renaissance, eventually leading the mad Lear to call the world a stage and Hamlet to compare himself to an actor. This aspect of early modern drama developed over time, from the late 1580s/early 1590s when theatricalized madness was in its infancy, to the Jacobean theater, by which time it was long-established. *The Spanish Tragedy* and *Titus Andronicus* offer a unique opportunity to examine this relationship. They were written around the beginning of the association, but were both added to later. They

¹⁹ Foucault, 28.

²⁰ Ibid., 29.

therefore present both the earliest signs of metatheatrical madness in the original plays and later forms which can be found in their additions.²¹

I aim to trace the development of the madness/metadrama connection across these plays and additions, treating them as four texts in conversation with one another: *The Spanish Tragedy*, *Titus Andronicus*, the 1602 additions to *The Spanish Tragedy*, and the “fly-killing scene” in *Titus Andronicus*. Each of these texts presents a separate point in the development which builds upon the previous ones. In *The Spanish Tragedy*, the connection is relatively subtle, but still present, as Hieronimo gains access to information revealed only in the play’s frame and learns to manipulate the boundary between drama and reality in his madness. Meanwhile, Isabella’s lunacy calls attention to the physical theater itself, particularly to its wooden structure. Shakespeare pushes metatheatricalized madness further in *Titus Andronicus*, wherein the insane protagonist consciously performs his own lunacy. In doing so, he explores how madness itself can be a performance.

When the plays were added to, Shakespeare did not drastically alter the dramatic layers explored in the originals, but instead experimented further with the languages of theater and madness. In the additions to *The Spanish Tragedy*, Hieronimo explores artistic depictions of madness in his conversation with a painter and becomes more obsessed with spectacle. He also dwells upon illusions, sometimes blurring the line between his delusions and the sights presented by the play. Finally, *Titus Andronicus*’s “fly-killing” scene presents Titus staging a

²¹ This thesis proceeds chronologically, considering the plays and additions in the order that they were likely written. *The Spanish Tragedy* was written first, sometime in the 1580s, and Shakespeare wrote *Titus Andronicus* early in his career, in either the late 1580s or early 90s. The order of the additions, however, is murky. *The Spanish Tragedy*’s additions were published in 1602 and were referenced in *Antonio and Mellida* in 1599, so they were probably written in the mid-1590s. The fly-killing scene first appears in Shakespeare’s First Folio of 1623, but it was likely written around the same time that *The Spanish Tragedy*’s passages were.

miniature revenge play with a fly. After seeing his brother repeatedly stab at an insect that he pretends is Aaron, Marcus says, “Alas, poor man! Grief has so wrought on him / He takes false shadows for true substances” (3.2.80-1).²² With those lines, Marcus reflects explicitly upon his brother’s madness and implicitly upon theater, which both involve taking false shadows, whether they be hallucinations or the events of a play, for true substances.

Across these four texts, we see the relationship between madness and metadrama emerge. It begins with the plays’ major metatheatrical structures, which become associated with mad characters who create them and become able to navigate them. In the additions, self-reflexive madness permeates deeper into the text, becoming ingrained in the language. Shakespeare, in revising the earlier plays, uses them to explore not just the theatricality of madness, but also the similarity between the imaginations of madmen and poets. His interest is partially a product of the aforementioned anxiety which Foucault describes, concerned with the similarities between art and lunacy. Early modern playwrights, conscious of their craft, noticed the resemblance between themselves as creators of illusions and those suffering from delusions in their plays. This anxiety, however, is not the sole reason for this connection. Shakespeare and his contemporaries do not seem merely concerned; they also appear to be fascinated by what they do. When Theseus compares the imagination of lovers and poets to that of madness, he dismisses the fantastical story told by the lovers. In Hippolyta’s response, she validates their account, finding value in their “strange and admirable” (5.1.27) tale. Both perspectives on illusion are present in *The Spanish Tragedy* and *Titus Andronicus*. Even if the poetic imagination may look troublingly like madness, fantasy remains a source of delight.

²² William Shakespeare, *Titus Andronicus*, ed. Jonathan Bate (London: Arden Shakespeare, 1995). Subsequent citations are to this edition.

Chapter One: Theatrical Structures in *The Spanish Tragedy*

In 1633, the antitheatrical pamphleteer William Prynne recounted a story about a frequent playgoer on her deathbed. A minister, summoned by the woman's friends, asked her to repent for her sins. She, however, refused to do so. Instead, she spent her last moments pleading to see *The Spanish Tragedy* performed one last time, calling out "Hieronimo, Hieronimo! O let me see Hieronimo acted!"²³ This anecdote, appearing in *Histriomastix*, the infamously long book attacking the early modern theater, is meant to represent the danger that the stage poses to our souls. The story may be entirely false—Prynne's goal is to expose the evils of the theater, not to accurately document its reception—but either way it reflects *The Spanish Tragedy*'s important place in early modern England, popular enough to be used as an example of a play with power over a dying woman almost fifty years after it was written. Successful both in the theater and on the page, eleven editions of the tragedy were printed by the time Prynne condemned it.²⁴ As the first revenge tragedy in Renaissance England, it was repeatedly imitated and mocked, such as when Ben Jonson joked about a man "with more beard than brain" who declared, "The old Hieronimo, (as it was first acted) was the only best, and judiciously-penned play of Europe."²⁵ It has been called "the first early modern

²³ William Prynne, *Histriomastix* (London, 1633). *Early English Books Online*.

²⁴ Clara Calvo, "Thomas Kyd and the Elizabethan blockbuster: *The Spanish Tragedy*," in *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare and Contemporary Dramatists*, ed. Ton Hoenselaars (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 31-2. Copies from ten different printings have survived, but Calvo and others believe that the play was printed before 1592 as well, in an edition with no surviving copies.

²⁵ Ben Jonson, *The Fountaine of Selfe-Loue* (London, 1601). *Early English Books Online*. I have modernized the spelling in this quotation for clarity.

blockbuster,”²⁶ “a kind of prop-room for later Renaissance tragedy,”²⁷ and “perhaps the single most *influential* play from the golden age of English theatre.”²⁸

What made *The Spanish Tragedy* so successful? Why did audiences continue to flock to it for decades? We can get a sense of its particular appeal when we examine its influence on later plays, as well as the ways that it was later altered. The tragedy was published with five additions in 1602, each one elaborating upon Hieronimo’s madness. Presumably, these passages were meant to encourage playgoers to return to new productions by giving them more of what they enjoyed: the main character’s insanity. Although present in the original play, Hieronimo’s madness was further developed with these additions, which foregrounded his psychological experience. Then, beginning with the 1615 printing, *The Spanish Tragedy* gained a subtitle: *Hieronimo is Mad Again*, as well as a woodcut showing Hieronimo bewailing his son’s murder (see Fig. 2).

²⁶ Calvo, 19.

²⁷ Robert N. Watson, *The Rest is Silence: Death as Annihilation in the English Renaissance* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 56.

²⁸ Gregory M. Colón Semenza, “*The Spanish Tragedy* and Metatheatre,” in *The Cambridge Companion to English Renaissance Tragedy*, eds. Emma Smith and Garrett A. Sullivan Jr. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 153.



Fig. 2: The 1615 frontispiece²⁹

Hieronimo stands in the center of the woodcut, sword and torch in hand, looking upon Horatio's hanged body. This image, with Hieronimo exclaiming "alas it is my son Horatio" upon finding his son's corpse, is taken from act 2, scene 5. In the previous scene, Lorenzo and Balthazar kill Horatio in the midst of his romantic rendezvous with Lorenzo's sister, Bel-imperia. The right side of the engraving presents the end of that scene, with Lorenzo carrying off the screaming Bel-imperia. This action is pushed to the side in this engraving, while Hieronimo's grief and subsequent madness take the center. His psychological experience is the focus of this frontispiece, similar to how it becomes the focus of the tragedy. As the new subtitle suggests, the play is now largely about Hieronimo's madness, which becomes a

²⁹ Thomas Kyd, *The Spanish Tragedie* (London: 1615). *Early English Books Online*.

dramatic spectacle through his wild ravings. The play's depiction of lunacy was imitated by later playwrights, and, as Carol Thomas Neely asserts, Hieronimo's "isolated outbursts lay the groundwork for representing tragic madness onstage."³⁰ On the early modern stage, madness becomes overtly and uniquely theatrical, turning into a spectacle of unreason as characters rave and suddenly commit violence. We can see the influence of Hieronimo's madness in later revenge tragedies, such as *Hamlet* and *Antonio's Revenge*, other tragedies, such as *King Lear* and *Macbeth*, and even comedies, where characters are rarely mad, but are often mistaken for lunatics, such as *Twelfth Night* and *The Comedy of Errors*.

In addition to affecting the depiction of insanity on the early modern stage, *The Spanish Tragedy* also influenced the ways that later plays examine the theater itself. The tragedy's metadrama, which occurs when drama explores its own medium, helped to initiate theatrical self-awareness as a fundamental aspect of early modern theater. Kyd's play contains a frame, consisting of Revenge and the ghost of Don Andrea, who watch the rest of the tragedy, and multiple inset plays. Harriett Hawkins writes that *The Spanish Tragedy*'s use of both a frame and plays-within-a-play "bequeathed to the English stage... the multiple levels of dramatic action, and the multiple perspectives on dramatic action, which Shakespeare explores throughout his career."³¹ Influenced by Kyd, Shakespeare adds a frame to *The Taming of the Shrew*, which directly parodies a line from *The Spanish Tragedy* when Christopher Sly says, "Go by, Saint Jeronimy!" (Induction.1.9).³² Shakespeare also uses inset plays in *A Midsummer*

³⁰ Carol Thomas Neely, *Distracted Subjects: Madness and Gender in Shakespeare and Early Modern Culture* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2004), 35.

³¹ Harriet Hawkins, "Fabulous Counterfeits: Dramatic Construction and Dramatic Perspectives in *The Spanish Tragedy*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and *The Tempest*," *Shakespeare Studies* 6 (1970): 52.

³² William Shakespeare, *The Taming of the Shrew*, in *The Riverside Shakespeare* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1974).

Night's Dream, *Love's Labour's Lost*, and *Hamlet*. Looking more broadly at Kyd's use of metadrama, Gregory M. Colón Semenza considers its theatrical language and questions about perception, saying that it "establishes its most basic tool—theatrical self-awareness and/or self-scrutiny—as the basis of the early modern, and perhaps the modern, theatrical experience."

³³ It was arguably these two traits, the presentation of madness and use of metadrama, that left the play's biggest marks upon early modern drama.

Numerous scholars have studied the play's uses of madness and metadrama separately, but few have examined the relationship between them. Neglecting the relationship between madness and metatheatre does a disservice to *The Spanish Tragedy*, which initiated an association between these elements that later plays (and the 1602 additions) build upon. The play's most prominent metatheatrical element, the multiple dramatic layers, is challenged by the protagonist's madness as he acquires unique access between these barriers. In his main bouts of insanity, Hieronimo gains unprecedented knowledge of the frame. Then, in the play's climax, he stages a play wherein he kills his enemies. By using the play-within-the-play to manipulate reality within the play, he blurs theatrical barriers in a way that he couldn't when sane. Furthermore, the play's other mad character, Isabella, calls attention to the theater's physical reality in her lunacy. Therefore, the madnesses of Hieronimo and Isabella hearken to the literal and metaphorical structures of the theater.

It is no coincidence that Hieronimo stands out as both the stage's first great madman and metadramatist. As Anthony Dawson has noted, Hieronimo's particularly theatrical lunacy "calls attention to itself, linking its adventurous questioning and its multiple perspectives with

³³ Semenza, 153.

madness.”³⁴ In his analysis of *The Spanish Tragedy*, Dawson builds upon Shoshana Felman’s study of the relationship between madness and literature. Felman says that madness functions as “a metaphor indeed—of the radical metaphoricity which corrodes concepts in their essence, a metaphor of literature.”³⁵ Applying this view to *The Spanish Tragedy*, Dawson reads Hieronimo’s madness as a metaphor of literature, as his insanity resembles a conscious break from reality, a product of his vigorous imagination. Charles and Elaine Hallett argue the reverse, that Hieronimo’s approach to literature is a function of his madness. They write that the mad revenger often uses a play-within-the-play because he “is symbolically confusing the real world with a world created out of his own psyche which he has projected upon it.”³⁶ According to the Halletts, the inset play serves as a symbol of the madman’s subjectivity. Here we have two competing models of literature and madness in *The Spanish Tragedy*, as the Halletts read literature as a metaphor for madness, as the symbol of Hieronimo’s irrational mind, while Dawson reads Hieronimo’s madness as a metaphor for literature, representing the play’s awareness of itself.

Neither of these explanations, however, fully captures the complex relationship between metadrama and madness found in *The Spanish Tragedy*. In the play, the characters of the frame, Don Andrea and Revenge, serve as onstage spectators, watching the events from the underworld. The theatrical layer between frame and play, however, becomes blurred by Hieronimo’s madness, in which he attempts to dig to the very location where Revenge and Don

³⁴ Anthony Dawson, “Madness and Meaning: *The Spanish Tragedy*,” *Journal of Dramatic Theory and Criticism* 2 (1987): 64.

³⁵ Shoshana Felman, “Madness and Philosophy or Literature’s Reason,” *Yale French Studies* 52 (1975): 227.

³⁶ Charles and Elaine Hallett, *The Revenger’s Madness: A Study of Revenge Tragedy Motifs* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1980), 10.

Andrea watch from. Furthermore, Hieronimo's approach to theater changes over the course of his insanity. He begins the play as an amateur dramatist who upholds a rigid distinction between drama and the real world. In his lunacy, however, he learns to muddle this distinction, using theater to break down the barrier between illusion and reality. Meanwhile, Isabella's madness calls attention to the physical nature of the theater, referencing the building's physical structure and drawing attention to its wooden materials. Through these two mad characters, Hieronimo and Isabella, *The Spanish Tragedy* initiates a connection between lunacy and theatrical structures, both the play's inner dramatic structure and the stage's physical structure.

To hell and back again: Theatrical layers

The Spanish Tragedy consists of a nearly overwhelming system of dramatic layers. It begins with the frame, wherein Don Andrea and Revenge watch the rest of the play. Then, within the spectacle that they witness, Hieronimo stages two plays. The first, a masque of English military triumphs, is largely irrelevant to the plot, while the second, "Soliman and Perseda," turns out to be Hieronimo's vehicle for revenge, the means whereby he and Bel-imperia kill Lorenzo and Balthazar. At one point between these two plays-within-the-play, Revenge shows Andrea another spectacle: a dumb show which abstractly represents the events to come. In sum, the play contains a frame, the main action (which includes a subplot set in Portugal), and three plays-within-the-play, leading to Richard Hornby's claim that the tragedy gets the "all-time metadramatic record."³⁷

³⁷ Hornby, 37.

The first scene establishes the frame: after the ghost of Don Andrea describes his death and subsequent journey through the underworld, Revenge assures him that they will see his killer, Balthazar, slain by his lover, Bel-imperia. Revenge explicitly compares this presentation to a performance, saying that they will “see the mystery, / And serve for chorus in this tragedy” (1.1.90-1).³⁸ Throughout the rest of *The Spanish Tragedy*, Andrea and Revenge serve as both onstage audience and occasional chorus.³⁹ They mark a liminal space between the audience and the play’s action, simultaneously as spectacle, watched by us, and spectator, watching the tragic tale of madness and revenge. Usually, a play’s frame does not seem like “a layer between us and the main action” because we “soon forget them.”⁴⁰ This is true of plays such as *The Taming of the Shrew*, whose frame disappears, allowing the play-within-the-play to become the play itself.⁴¹ Andrea and Revenge’s constant presence and periodic interruptions, however, do not let us forget about them, thereby making them indeed feel like such a layer. Whenever the offstage audience looks at the onstage audience, the viewers are reminded that they too are watching a play.

Allison Hobgood describes another effect of this presence, arguing that Andrea and Revenge act as onstage models for the audience’s emotional response. They “are essential meta-narrative markers of an audience’s emotional participation in the ensuing performance.”⁴²

³⁸ Thomas Kyd, *The Spanish Tragedy* (London: Arden Early Modern Drama, 2013). Subsequent citations are from this edition.

³⁹ For a discussion of where Andrea and Revenge were positioned in the original staging, see Richard C. Kohley, “Kyd’s Ordered Spectacle: ‘Behold . . . / What ‘tis to be subject to destiny,” *Medieval and Renaissance Drama in England* 3 (1986): 29-30. Kohley says that the two probably sat in the gallery, above the main action of the play.

⁴⁰ Hornby, 35.

⁴¹ However, a different version of the play titled *The Taming of a Shrew* returns to Christopher Sly at the end.

⁴² Allison P. Hobgood, *Passionate Playgoing in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 66.

In them, we see how the viewers are supposed to be affected by the play. Andrea responds to what he sees by expressing his feelings, saying, “Brought’st thou me hither to increase my pain?” (2.6.1), “Such fearful sights as poor Andrea sees!” (3.15.7), and “Ay, these were spectacles to please my soul” (4.5.12). We, as the audience, are meant to likewise feel sorrow, fear, and pleasure. In Andrea, we see ourselves, and therefore become more conscious of the emotions that we feel and he gives voice to.

For the most part, the frame’s residents model emotional response as Hobgood argues. About three-fourths of the way into the play, however, it breaks from its typical presentation of Andrea and Revenge responding emotionally to a tragedy. In order to pacify the impatient Andrea, Revenge shows him a dumb show, an abstract interlude wherein two torchbearers enter, and then Hymen “blows [the torches] out and quencheth them with blood” (3.15.33). Andrea, unable to comprehend the meaning, asks Revenge to “reveal this mystery” (3.15.28). He requires an explicit interpretation, one which Revenge supplies, saying that the torches represent a wedding, one which soon ends in death. Through this dumb show, *The Spanish Tragedy* shows an allegorical mode of performance, one which represents events metaphorically and requires an interpretation in order for sense to be made of it. By modelling this allegorical mode of presentation and interpretation, the play presents another way to consume narrative—not through emotional involvement like that which Andrea usually expresses, but by attempting to grasp a meaning hidden in the text. Unlike elsewhere, Andrea voices his understanding of the dumb show, not his feelings, telling Revenge, “Sufficeth me; thy meaning’s understood” (3.15.35). Here, the frame shows another way of engaging with drama, one emphasizing allegorical interpretation over emotional response.

In addition to Revenge and Andrea modelling various ideas of the audience's role, the characters within the main plot describe different conceptions of drama while preparing for the climactic play-within-the-play. Their thoughts on the medium bring out the play's own peculiarities. For instance, when asking Bel-imperia to play a part, Hieronimo says, "What's a play without a woman in it?" (4.1.94), a common enough thought nowadays. On the early modern English stage, however, none of the characters were played by women, who were legally forbidden from performing onstage.⁴³ Hieronimo's line implicitly criticizes this aspect of English drama and draws attention to the male actor playing Bel-imperia. Later in that scene, when Hieronimo defends his choice to put on a tragedy, he says, "To present a kingly troop withal, / Give me a stately-written tragedy. / *Tragedia cothurnata*, fitting kings, / Containing matter, and not common things" (4.1.151-4). *The Spanish Tragedy*, despite having the genre's name in the title, hardly matches this description of tragedy. On the contrary, Kyd's play contains "common things," such as the comic Pedringano. No pure tragedy, it instead belongs to the sort of play that Sir Philip Sidney bemoaned: "Neither right tragedies nor right comedies, mingling kings and clowns."⁴⁴ Hieronimo's description of tragedy therefore points out the differences between *The Spanish Tragedy* and classical notions of the genre. By explicitly discussing the medium itself, characters draw focus to the ways that the play deviates from their descriptions.

⁴³ Women were allowed to perform publicly in some other parts of Europe. In England, women could still perform in private plays and masques, and so Bel-Imperia's acting in the private "Soliman and Perseda" would not seem wholly unusual. Nevertheless, Hieronimo's comment about women in plays calls attention to the fact that Bel-Imperia was played by a boy.

⁴⁴ Sir Philip Sidney, *The Defence of Poesy*, in *Sidney's 'The Defence of Poesy' and Selected Renaissance Literary Criticism*, ed. Gavin Alexander (New York City: Penguin Books, 2004), 46.

Elsewhere in the play, characters use the language of theater, but they use it figuratively. They compare actions within the play to those of a play, suggesting that, as Jaques famously says in *As You Like It*, “All the world’s a stage, / And all the men and women merely players” (2.7.139).⁴⁵ This practice of comparing life to a play is widespread throughout the period, often referred to as the *theatrum mundi* topos (*theatrum mundi* is Latin for “theater of the world”). While this topos sometimes comes across as a shallow comparison, it is so ingrained in *The Spanish Tragedy* that it is raised, as Semenza says, “into the realms of cognition and epistemology.”⁴⁶ That is, the play’s investment in the topos is so potent that it is assimilated into the tragedy’s underlying philosophy.

Despite being a fundamental aspect of the tragedy, this topos is far from evenly distributed. Comparisons between life and theater cluster in moments where characters suffer extreme distress, such as when Horatio’s parents describe his murder. Soon after Isabella finds Horatio’s corpse, she asks, “Where’s the author of this endless woe?” (2.5.39). Hieronimo continues using the language of authorship to describe the murder, saying, “To know the author were some ease of grief, / For in revenge my heart would find relief” (2.5.40-1). Hieronimo later compares the murder of his son to a work of theater, calling Lorenzo and Balthazar “actors in th’accursed tragedy” (3.7.41). In these instances, the effect is twofold: first, Isabella and Hieronimo distance themselves from the reality of the situation, separating themselves from the murder. Struggling to cope with their loss, they conceptualize the world as a stage. The second effect is to remind the audience that the event was literally part of a tragedy: *The Spanish Tragedy*.

⁴⁵ William Shakespeare, *As You Like It*. In *The Riverside Shakespeare* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1974). Subsequent citations are to this edition.

⁴⁶ Semenza, 154.

Hieronimo's Madness

The most characteristic feature of Kyd's metadrama, the complex system of dramatic layers, becomes challenged by the play's use of madness.⁴⁷ As Neely observes, without the 1602 additions to the play, Hieronimo's madness manifests itself in three main episodes wherein he describes the sights of hell.⁴⁸ The first scene wherein Hieronimo goes mad is act three, scene eleven, where he launches into a manic explanation of where Lorenzo can be found:

There is a path upon your left-hand side
 That leadeth from a guilty conscience
 Unto a forest of distrust and fear,
 A darksome place and dangerous to pass;
 There shall you meet with melancholy thoughts,
 Whose baleful humours if you but uphold,
 It will conduct you to Despair and Death;
 Whose rocky cliffs when you have once beheld
 Within a hugy dale of lasting night
 That, kindled with the world's iniquities,
 Doth cast up filthy and detested fumes,
 Not far from thence, where murderers have built
 A habitation for their cursed souls,
 There, in a brazen cauldron fixed by Jove
 In his fell wrath upon a sulphur flame,
 Yourselves shall find Lorenzo bathing him
 In boiling lead and blood of innocents. (3.11.13-29)

⁴⁷ Some scholars, such as Jonathan Bate, insist that Hieronimo is not actually mad, but, like Hamlet, feigns madness in order to accomplish his revenge. These scholars do not provide textual evidence for this claim, as Neely notes. Instead, they read these plays backwards from *Hamlet*, projecting the melancholy Dane's assumed antic disposition upon his predecessors. However, the text of *The Spanish Tragedy* gives no evidence that Hieronimo feigns madness, but actually asserts the opposite, that Hieronimo consciously tries to make himself seem more sane. He says that he will try "dissembling quiet in unquietness" (3.13.30), hiding his wild passion from the world. He is somewhat aware of his madness—or at least of his wild passion—at this point, which marks one of his most lucid episodes at this part of the play.

⁴⁸ Neely, 36.

Here, the first time that we see Hieronimo mad, his language takes a sharp turn from the earlier structured rhetoric. Previously, he spoke in balanced rhetorical questions and parallel constructions, but that careful rhetorical structure has vanished. Traces of his earlier style remain, mostly through his continued alliteration, although even that has changed. Instead of repeating “w” sounds, his “woes whose weight hath wearied” (3.7.2)—mimicking the whistling of the wind which he describes carrying away his words—or soft “m” sounds, “made mountains marsh” (3.7.8), his alliteration has harshened, crowded with “d”, “b”, and “f” sounds (“a forest of distrust and fear,” “a darksome place and dangerous to pass,” “filthy and detested fumes,” and “bathing him / In boiling lead and blood of innocents”). The texture of this speech marks a drastic departure from earlier, his style changing to indicate his changed mental state.

Although the feel of these words breaks from earlier, the content is familiar to the audience; Andrea describes this very location in his opening monologue, when detailing the paths he encountered in the underworld, saying, “The left-hand path, declining fearfully, / Was ready downfall to the deepest hell” (1.1.63-4). Hieronimo’s version of the underworld matches Andrea’s, who likewise mentions (among other punishments) “perjured wights scalded in boiling lead” (1.1.70). Hieronimo, unable to get revenge, places Lorenzo in the hell of his imagination, a strikingly accurate hell according to the description at the beginning of the play. In doing so, he begins a narration which parallels Andrea’s, bringing him closer to the frame which separates him from the audience. The Portingales, naturally oblivious to the truth of his words, readily interpret Hieronimo’s behavior as madness, with one of them saying, “Doubtless this man is passing lunatic” (3.11.33).

Hieronimo, having already described the underworld, literally attempts (unsuccessfully) to dig toward it. He frantically threatens the Spanish court, alternating quickly between commands (away, hinder, give, stand) and his future actions (ripping, ferrying, bringing, marshalling, avenging). He no longer speaks with a clear logical order underlying his words, but manically switches between disconnected thoughts, his declaration to “rip the bowels of the earth” occurring suddenly without an apparent cause. In these moments, Hieronimo’s organized, rational language has broken down, replaced by distracted speech.

Hieronimo’s tracing of Andrea’s journey culminates in act three, scene thirteen, when he describes pleading for revenge in the underworld:

Though on this earth justice will not be found,
 I’ll down to hell, and in this passion
 Knock at the dismal gates of Pluto’s court,
 Getting by force, as once Alcides did,
 A troop of Furies and tormenting hags
 To torture Don Lorenzo and the rest.
 Yet lest the triple-headed porter should
 Deny my passage to the slimy strand,
 The Thracian poet thou shalt counterfeit.
 Come on, old father, be my Orpheus,
 And if thou canst no notes upon the harp,
 Then sound the burden of thy sore heart’s grief
 Till we do gain that Proserpine may grant:
 Revenge on them that murdered my son. (3.13.107-20)

Because he cannot access wordly justice, Hieronimo says that he must go down to hell and, like Andrea, plead for revenge. His tactic is different—the ghost needed no dreadful forces to persuade Pluto and Proserpine to grant vengeance—but according to Hieronimo it is Proserpine who can grant him revenge, like she grants Andrea. The two even use the same phrase, “slimy strand” (1.1.28; 3.13.14) when discussing hell, making Andrea’s words echo

through Hieronimo's. In his bouts of madness, Hieronimo seems to have gained the knowledge of the frame. Until now, the frame has behaved like a one-way mirror: Andrea and Revenge can watch the main plot, but those within it have no access to their onstage spectators.

Hieronimo's madness, however, challenges this limitation, as he understands that which is only revealed to us by Andrea.

During the speech where he describes knocking at Pluto's gates, Hieronimo speaks to Bazulto, another old father of a murdered son, who has come to the knight marshall seeking justice. Hieronimo, struggling to get justice himself, knows the futility of that search, and his mad episode is triggered by Bazulto's suit to get justice for his son. At that moment, he fails to interpret the words he has read, "The humble supplication / Of Don Bazulto for his murdered son" (3.13.77-8), about anyone other than Horatio, and he exclaims that it was *his* murdered son, not Bazulto's. Here Hieronimo's passions take over, interfering with his normal faculties of interpretation. He even diminishes Bazulto to a mere picture of his own emotions, as both a "lively portrait of my dying self" (3.13.84) and "the lively image of my grief" (3.13.159). Hieronimo explicitly compares the old man to a work of art, a "portrait" or "image" whereupon he projects his internal state. And yet, Bazulto is no static presentation of sorrow, but "lively," as Hieronimo specifies both times. In this process, the play gestures toward what will be further explored in the additions: the representation of passion and madness in art.

At the end of the scene, Hieronimo realizes that Bazulto is a separate person with emotions that need remedying like his own. He proposes a cathartic experience for them both, as well as Isabel, where they "will sing a song, / Three parts in one, but all of discords framed" (3.13.169-70). Here, madness creates art, channeling the discords of the three bereaved parents

into song, a sort of creation that was hinted at earlier when Hieronimo told Bazulto to “sound the burden of thy sore heart’s grief” (3.13.118). Donna Hamilton says that, in these lines, the old men express their intentions to use the song “to formalize their chaos and thereby control the impulse to madness that grows stronger as the realization of life’s pain and injustice grows clearer.”⁴⁹ Not only does lunacy create art, the subsequent song may bring relief.

This attempt to control madness, however, lasts only briefly. The mention of discord reminds Hieronimo of his son, “for with a cord Horatio was slain” (3.13.172). This darkly comic pun, referring to the rope used to hang Horatio, shows Hieronimo’s intensified sensitivity toward language, particularly toward its sounds. There is no semantic connection between the words “cord” and “discord,” only an auditory one. And yet, “discord” nevertheless calls to his mind the item used to kill Horatio. Hieronimo’s madness has made him acutely aware of the ways that words sound, so that now an arbitrary similarity between two words distresses him. Consequently, he abandons his attempt to remedy his mind with art. Later we shall see how in one of the additions, the painter scene, he seizes upon painting as another potential source of relief.

Isabella’s madness

As famous as Hieronimo’s madness is, he is not the play’s only mad character. His wife, Isabella, likewise becomes distract following the death of Horatio. Her madness, however, is dissimilar from Hieronimo’s in many ways. As Neely explores, madness became

⁴⁹ Donna Hamilton, “*The Spanish Tragedy*: A Speaking Picture,” *English Literary Renaissance* 4, no. 2 (1974): 213.

gendered in early modern minds. *The Spanish Tragedy* contributed to this gendering, as “Isabella’s madness, in its rootedness in the body, detachment from the plot, and concluding suicide, introduces gender associations in the representation of madness that would be influential.”⁵⁰ Hieronimo and Isabella’s madnenses contain one vital similarity: they both become obsessed with place and location. But while Hieronimo focuses on the underworld, Isabella looks toward heaven, calling attention to the “heaven” of the theater, the area above the stage from which people and items could be lowered. She also fixates upon the arbor where Horatio was slain, and her description of the place draws focus to the physical location of the stage and its wooden properties. Her madness is therefore tied to the literal stage, both to its structure and material.

As discussed before, Hieronimo repeatedly describes descending to Pluto’s realm to find Horatio. When Isabella first goes mad, however, she imagines him in heaven, even after her maid assures her that he “sleeps in quiet in the Elysian fields” (3.8.9). Like her husband, she thinks about going to Horatio, but for her the journey leads upward, “up unto the highest heavens” (3.8.16) where her son sits singing. From Andrea’s account of the underworld the audience knows that Isabella is mistaken, for the characters are destined for the realm of Pluto, not heaven. The play’s frame vindicates the maid’s and Hieronimo’s version of the afterlife, confirming that Horatio will lie in Elysium. Isabella is therefore denied the knowledge that her husband gains in his madness, just as she is denied his opportunity for revenge. Instead of killing the murderers, she destroys the arbor where the murder occurred, deciding to “revenge [her]self upon this place / Where thus they murdered [her] beloved son” (4.2.4-5). In doing so,

⁵⁰ Neely, 39.

she commits senseless violence in her madness, similarly to how Hieronimo tears up the citizens' documents, imagining that the papers are the bodies of the murderers. Unlike Hieronimo, Isabella acts privately, and her attack on the arbor is seen by no living humans within the play.

Both places referenced by Isabella, heaven and the arbor, resonate with the physical theater building. As Tiffany Stern explains, mentions of heaven and hell simultaneously refer to the "structure of the universe, with heaven above, earth in the middle, and hell below" and "to the structure of the theatres in which they perform."⁵¹ When Isabella talks about heaven, she calls attention to the physicality of the theater, which included a "heaven" above the stage. Of course, earlier mentions of hell also had the dual effect of gesturing to both the supernatural location and the area beneath the stage, but it is with Isabella that the three-part structure, heaven, hell, and stage, becomes fully acknowledged.⁵² Later, when avenging her son upon the place that he died instead of the murderers, she brings attention to the physical space where the murder occurred: simultaneously the arbor and the stage.

Isabella's gesturing toward the physical reality of the theater is increased by her focus on the tree upon which Horatio was hanged. As Vin Nardizzi argues, "The tree stage prop can articulate a relation to the wooden walls of the theatre in which it was mounted."⁵³ Isabella's destruction of the "unfortunate and fatal pine" (4.2.7), wherein she emphasizes its physical properties with her description of the "branches and these loathsome boughs" (4.2.6) and "the

⁵¹ Tiffany Stern, "'This Wide and Universal Theatre': The Theatre as Prop in Shakespeare's Metadrama," in *Shakespeare's Theatres and the Effects of Performance*, eds. Farah Karim-Cooper and Tiffany Stern (London: Arden Shakespeare, 2013), 17.

⁵² The play does mention the heavens earlier, but as an entity, not as a location. These moments therefore do not physically refer to the stage in the same way.

⁵³ Vin Nardizzi, *Wooden Os: Shakespeare's Theatres and England's Trees* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013), 106.

roots from whence the rest is sprung” (4.2.9), calls attention to the wooden building, especially its tree-like columns. Although both Isabella and Hieronimo highlight aspects of the drama when insane, he emphasizes elements of the play, she the theater itself.

Neely argues that Hieronimo and Isabella set the stage for later depictions of madness, especially for how the lunacies of men and women would differ.⁵⁴ One essential part of Isabella’s distress, one which would affect later theatrical madwomen, is her suicide. She kills herself immediately after destroying the arbor, her final words tying her death to her body and role as a mother: “And with this weapon will I wound the breast, / The hapless breast that gave Horatio suck” (4.2.37-8). Later characters, most famously Ophelia, would also bear the effects of her madness’s conclusion.⁵⁵ As we shall see in the next chapter, another such victim is Lavinia. Although she displays none of Isabella’s symptoms of madness, those signs are nevertheless projected upon her.

“This will be mere confusion”: Between the play and the play-within-the-play

Early in the play, Hieronimo puts on a masque for the Spanish court and the Portuguese ambassador. For that spectacle, Hieronimo provided an interpretation of the events. He narrated precisely what it means, describing every character in the masque, each English soldier and his military exploits. The knights in the performance do not speak themselves,

⁵⁴ Neely, 39.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 38: “[Isabella’s madness’s] two manifestations, isolated from the main action of the play, frame the climax of Hieronimo’s madness and contrast with his recovery from it (as Ophelia’s movement into madness will be concomitant with Hamlet’s recovery from it).”

instead leaving the creator to narrate everything. There was no ambiguity in those explanations, and Hieronimo prevented any confusion by giving clear, thorough interpretations of each part of the masque. *The Spanish Tragedy* culminates in a vastly different sort of performance, one that provokes confusion rather than carefully avoiding it. In order to get revenge, Hieronimo puts on a play for Balthazar and Bel-Imperia's wedding, casting himself, Bel-Imperia, and Horatio's murderers, Lorenzo and Balthazar. In this play-within-the-play, "Soliman and Perseda," Hieronimo's character kills Lorenzo's, and then Bel-Imperia's stabs Balthazar's before turning the knife against herself. Then Hieronimo reveals to the audience that Balthazar, Lorenzo, and Bel-Imperia have all actually died. The line between reality and illusion, the play and the play-within-the-play, breaks down as actors die with their characters.

This inset play is a notoriously bewildering piece of theater. In addition to the breakdown of the barrier between art and reality, Hieronimo specifies that each actor "must act his part in unknown languages" (4.1.165). Balthazar speaks in Latin, Hieronimo in Greek, Lorenzo in Italian, and Bel-imperia in French.⁵⁶ Upon hearing this, Balthazar rightfully points out that "this will be a mere confusion,/ And hardly shall we all be understood" (4.1.172-3). The result is a play that eludes easy interpretation, leaving both the audiences within and outside the play unsure of how to understand it. Hieronimo tries to recreate "the fall of Babylon, / Wrought by the heavens in this confusion" (4.1.186-7), finally achieving revenge through a confounding spectacle. Critics are divided about the value of the consequent confusion, with some considering it a failure, and others an accomplishment. Judging the

⁵⁶ While there is some debate about whether or not the play-within-the-play was originally acted in these languages, many critics accept that it was indeed performed as Hieronimo says. Personally, I side with those who believe that multiple languages were used, and that the offstage audience suffered the same confusion as those onstage.

playlet by its inability to create “a speaking picture,” Donna Hamilton concludes that we see Hieronimo “sadly fall short” of imitating nature.⁵⁷ Other critics have been more generous to Hieronimo, recognizing that his (and Kyd’s) ambitions extend beyond mimesis (the representation of reality through art). Indeed, the general consensus is that the *The Spanish Tragedy* purposefully generates confusion through its presentation of a play that cannot be understood by its audience. Looking at how “Soliman and Perseda” confuses both characters within and audiences without, William West says, “Hieronimo’s strategy for revenge is to maximize drama’s inherent confusion, multiplying its interpretable sounds and senses until meaning is overwhelmed,”⁵⁸ allowing for a “new dramaturgy of action.”⁵⁹ Alexandra Ferretti agrees with West that “Soliman and Perseda” deliberately creates confusion, but believes that it is part of the “disintegration of language and action in the playlet” wherein “language is no longer united with action, and action itself loses its typical meaning.”⁶⁰ Rather than show the coming together of word and action, as Hamilton says is the greatest strength of drama, the play-within-the-play shows a disconnect between them.

Hieronimo has clearly grown as a dramatist since his earlier masque. With “Soliman and Perseda,” he has learned to manipulate and challenge the barrier between reality and illusion. Charles and Elaine Hallett argue that the typical revenge tragedy’s play-within-the-play functions as a symbol of the mad revenger’s subjective world.⁶¹ In *The Spanish Tragedy*, the inset play is indeed a product of Hieronimo’s madness, but not because it

⁵⁷ Hamilton, 209.

⁵⁸ William West, “‘But this will be mere confusion’: Real and Represented Confusions on the Elizabethan Stage,” *Theatre Journal* 60 (2008): 227.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 228.

⁶⁰ Alexandra Ferretti, “‘This place was made for pleasure not for death’: Performativity, Language, and Action in *The Spanish Tragedy*,” *Early Theatre* 16, no. 1 (2013): 32.

⁶¹ Charles and Elaine Hallett, 10.

is a symbol of subjectivity. If it were one, then Hieronimo should not be able to manipulate the boundary between “Soliman and Perseda” and the play around it so easily. The inset play is not a *symbol* for Hieronimo’s madness, although it is a product of it. Having temporarily lost his ability to distinguish his imagination from reality, he learns to use his fantasy to affect reality itself, turning the fiction of a play into a grisly truth.

Throughout most of the play, madness and theater have had a complicated, tumultuous relationship. Earlier, the protagonist’s madness allowed him unique access between dramatic layers as he gains knowledge of the frame. Meanwhile, his wife’s lunacy became tied to physical stage. At the end, Hieronimo’s theater has gone mad itself. Or, as may be more accurate, reality has gone mad, and now becomes intermixed with illusion. In my introduction, I discussed Theseus’s speech from *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* which associates madmen and poets, who have “such shaping fantasies, that apprehend / More than cool reason ever comprehends” (5.1.5-6). As a madman, Hieronimo indeed possessed such an imagination, which conjured sights before his eyes. As dramatist, he understands how to convert his visions into theater to be watched by others. At the end of the play, his lunacy and poetry converge, allowing him to turn illusion into reality.

Chapter Two: Performing Madness in *Titus Andronicus*

Near the end of *Titus Andronicus*, Aaron the Moor promises to tell Lucius of dreadful actions:

’Twill vex thy soul to hear what I shall speak:
For I must talk of murders, rapes and massacres,
Acts of black night, abominable deeds,
Complots of mischief, treasons, villainies,
Ruthful to hear yet piteously performed. (5.1.62-6)

In this passage, Aaron offers a catalogue of the play’s horrors, including murder, rape, and diabolical treasons. And yet, even his extensive list does not encompass all of the tragedy’s violence, as *Titus* contains fourteen deaths, filicide, regicide, rape, cannibalism, and the severing of three hands, two heads, and one tongue. The audience witnesses all these acts “performed,” just as Aaron says. And like Aaron, who refuses to “repent the evils I have done” (5.3.185), *Titus Andronicus* makes no apology for its violence.

In addition to listing terrible acts, Aaron emphasizes the effect of hearing these deeds. He says that his descriptions will vex Lucius’s soul when he listens, as they are “ruthful to hear.”⁶² Many readers and viewers have, like Lucius, been vexed by *Titus*’s narrative of violence and terrors, believing the play to be senseless barbarism. According to Frederick Boas, the play is “a tissue of horrors, and they are accentuated unsparingly throughout.”⁶³ T.S. Eliot was dismissive of Shakespeare’s earliest tragedy, calling it “one of the stupidest and most uninspired plays ever written, a play in which it is incredible that Shakespeare had any hand at

⁶² *OED*, “ruthful, adj.²”: “That excites compassion or pity; lamentable, piteous.”

⁶³ Frederick S. Boas, *Shakspeare and his Predecessors* (New York City: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1896), 138. Boas’s idiosyncratic spelling of the playwright’s name, Shakspeare, is maintained throughout the book.

all.”⁶⁴ Despite the frequent disparagement of the play, audiences have often enjoyed it. *Titus Andronicus* was written around 1590, making it Shakespeare’s first tragedy and perhaps his first play, and it remained popular for decades. Its continued success led Ben Jonson to mock both *Titus* and *The Spanish Tragedy* in 1614, with a character declaring, “He that will swear *Jeronimo* or *Andronicus* are the best plays, yet shall pass unexcepted at here as a man whose judgement shows it is constant, and hath stood still these five and twenty, or thirty years.”⁶⁵ In this jibe, Jonson makes fun of people whose tastes had not changed in the years since those plays were first performed. This joke shows us that while *Titus* was already considered old-fashioned in 1614, it remained popular nevertheless. Now, the play’s success has far outlasted those twenty-five years. Even four centuries later, it continues to both delight and shock. Indeed, Shakespeare’s earliest tragedy is notoriously disturbing even today, with Lucy Bailey’s 2014 Globe production regularly making spectators faint.⁶⁶

Titus’s horrors, although exceeding those of *The Spanish Tragedy*, nevertheless find a precedent in the massacres and mutilations present in Kyd’s play. Boas says that “in *Titus Andronicus* the worst excesses of Kyd’s *Spanish Tragedy* are reproduced, combined with the most unnatural horrors of classic fable.”⁶⁷ Indeed, they both contain murderous schemes, hangings, severed tongues, and massacres. The similarities between the two revenge tragedies, however, extend further than this violence. Fredson Bowers describes the relationship between their plots, noting that *Titus*’s “outline conforms to that already given for Kyd’s tragedy.”⁶⁸

⁶⁴ T. S. Eliot, “Seneca in Elizabethan Translation,” in *Essays on Elizabethan Drama* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1956), 26.

⁶⁵ Ben Jonson, *Bartholomew Fair* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1963), Induction.95-9.

⁶⁶ Nick Clark, “Globe Theatre Takes Out 100 Audience Members with its Gory *Titus Andronicus*,” *The Independent* (London), July 22, 2014.

⁶⁷ Boas, 138.

⁶⁸ Fredson Bowers, *Elizabethan Revenge Tragedy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1940), 111.

Indeed, Shakespeare's play seems patterned upon Kyd's. Each one focuses on an old, respected man who attempts to avenge violence committed against his children. He faces Machiavellian enemies and despairs about his inability to get justice. After going mad, he stages a murderous spectacle which annihilates the royal family.

Despite the many similarities between the two, *Titus Andronicus* is no mere imitation of *The Spanish Tragedy*. Shakespeare's tragedy is, as Jonathan Bate says, "his answer to Kyd, his demonstration to the public that he can match, even outdo, the most successful play of the age."⁶⁹ Shakespeare responds to Kyd, oftentimes departing from his pattern or elaborating upon his ideas. It is easy to imagine, like Bate does, a young, arrogant Shakespeare eager to make his mark upon the stage. He therefore chooses to write a revenge tragedy loaded with even more murder, dark humor, and mad theatrics than its inspiration. He does not, however, simply rewrite it with more blood and a higher body count. He allows himself to drift from the formula, delving into the characters and themes which interest him.

In *Titus*, Shakespeare seems particularly interested in expanding upon the lunacy and theatricality of *The Spanish Tragedy*. Critics have often looked at the ways that Kyd influenced Shakespeare in these areas individually. If we examine the overlap, as we did the *The Spanish Tragedy*, we can see further evidence of Kyd's influence, as well as Shakespeare's reaction against his predecessor. As we shall see, Titus's metadrama coincides with his lunacy, like Hieronimo's, but *Titus* develops the connection between madness and metadrama further than it was presented in *The Spanish Tragedy*. Titus similarly gets revenge through a carefully staged spectacle, however he also intentionally turns his own madness into a spectacle as well.

⁶⁹ Jonathan Bate, "The Performance of Revenge: *Titus Andronicus* and *The Spanish Tragedy*," in *The Show Within: Dramatic and Other Insets. English Renaissance Drama (1550-1642)*, ed. François Laroque (Montpellier: Paul Valéry University Press, 1990), 268.

He both is mad and yet feigns madness, exaggerating it in front of his enemies. As a result, they misinterpret his lunacy, assuming that it makes him unable to distinguish between drama and reality. The opposite is true: Titus is more adept at understanding and manipulating illusion when mad. Meanwhile, Aaron's theatrical self-awareness offers another model of metatheatre, one tied to melancholy, not madness. Shakespeare builds upon both Kyd's depictions of madness and uses of metadrama, while also pushing theatricalized lunacy further by showing Titus consciously perform his madness.

“Unless the gods delight in tragedies”: Art, Artifice, and the Audience

Soon after Titus first finds his ravished daughter, he declares, “Let us that have our tongues / Plot some device of further misery / To make us wondered at in time to come” (3.1.134-6). His immediate ambition is not simply justice or revenge, but to be *wondered* at. In order to be wondered at, he must turn his private vengeance into a public spectacle. Killing Chiron and Demetrius does not suffice, he must do something that will affect others, performing his revenge for an audience. And he is not alone in his performative ambitions. Many of the characters in *Titus Andronicus* think about how they are viewed by the public, and they keep such audiences in mind when they scheme. They are conscious of the narrative being created and aware of their roles in the play.

Due to this awareness, they take great care in plotting their actions. Indeed, the words plot and complot (including the variations plots, plotted, and plotter) appear twelve times in the play, more than in any other work by Shakespeare. When, for instance, Tamora and Aaron plant a letter in order to frame Titus's sons Quintus and Martius for the murder of Bassianus,

Aaron calls it a “fatal-plotted scroll” (2.2.47). With that letter, Tamora and Aaron use the written word to write their narrative, plotting death and ruin for the Andronici. Later, when the trap is closing shut upon Titus’s sons, Tamora calls that same letter the “complot of this timeless tragedy” (2.2.265). In this line, complot, meaning “a design of a covert nature planned in concert; a conspiracy, a plot,”⁷⁰ refers to the paper itself, which frames Marcus and Quintus for murder. By tragedy, Tamora means the death of Bassianus. And yet, the word “tragedy” also calls attention to the play itself, and the word complot suggests the “plot” of the narrative as a whole.

In addition to referring to the narrative of *Titus* and to the conspiracies enacted within, the word “plot” has a third meaning: the “obscure plot” (2.2.77), the physical location where Chiron and Demetrius kill Bassianus and rape Lavinia. Indeed, that plot of land is the very setting for their plotting. Later, when the Andronici discuss that place, Marcus asks, “Why should nature build so foul a den / Unless the gods delight in tragedies?” (4.1.59-60). Aghast at the horror of the situation and the convenient locale for them, Marcus wonders if there is a design to these misfortunes. The audience knows full well that there is indeed such a design. Nature created no such place; the playwright did. And he did not design it because the gods delight in tragedies, but because the audience does. The entire reason for the play’s tragedies is the audience’s delight in them. Marcus wonders if the gods delight in tragedy, but we know that we are the ones whose enjoyment has wrought these events.

The violent acts of the play can all be traced back to a single act at the beginning. Newly arrived from wars against the Goths, Titus sacrifices Tamora’s son, Alarbus, whom

⁷⁰ *OED*, “complot, n.”

Titus's sons dismember and burn. This ritual sacrifice is a public affair, conducted in the streets. According to the protagonist, it is done "t'appease their groaning shadows that are gone" (1.1.129): his twenty sons who have been killed by Goths. However, this sacrifice is more for those watching than for the ghosts. As Molly Easo Smith writes, Alarbus's death and burning is "a public ritual of celebration to the Romans,"⁷¹ an expression of victory over Rome's enemies. The play therefore begins with a spectacle of mutilation and death before Rome, before continuing to present spectacles of mutilation and death to the audience.

Jonathan Bate argues that a critique of this sort of public, state-sanctioned violence is at the heart of *The Spanish Tragedy* and *Titus's* uses of meatheater. Both tragedies, according to Bate, estrange the audiences to make the them think about the content. He says, "The distancing effect achieved by references to and performances of plays within the plays means that the audience is encouraged to *think about* the substance of the play, retributive violence, and is not allowed merely to enjoy and/or be horrified by it."⁷² He views the plays as engaging first and foremost in a political conversation. They both critique state violence, and their aesthetic properties often work in service of this political argument. And yet, an important difference exists between the plays' depictions of state executions: Kyd makes the audience witness these deaths, presenting the hanging of Pedringano onstage, while Shakespeare does not directly dramatize state violence, reserving Alarbus's burning and the clown's hanging for offstage. Even when Aaron is put upon the scaffold, he is soon taken down, his death delayed until after the play ends. In *The Spanish Tragedy*, the audience stands in for the Spanish public watching Pedringano's execution, but *Titus Andronicus* often keeps its state violence offstage,

⁷¹ Molly Easo Smith, "Spectacles of Torment in *Titus Andronicus*," *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 36, no. 2 (1996): 318.

⁷² Bate, 268.

presenting mostly private vengeance, even when they are performed publicly. We do not see the state violence directly—instead we only see private vengeance which are turned into public spectacles by acutely theatrical characters. *The Spanish Tragedy* emphasizes the passive role of the spectator of state executions in the way described by Bate. *Titus Andronicus*, however, suggests the audience's part in the play's violence and implicates them in it. They are not passive witnesses to legal violence, but rather the gods taking delight in private vengeance made public. As a result, Shakespeare challenges the assumption that audiences are disconnected from the action of the play, not responsible for the events onstage.

“I understand her signs”: Acting Without Words or Gestures

Titus Andronicus draws heavily from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, especially the story of Philomela, Tereus, and Procne. Procne's husband, Tereus, rapes his sister-in-law, Philomela, and cuts out her tongue so that she cannot tell others. Philomela, deprived of speech, creates art to tell her sister what happened, and she, with “a loom to work with, and with purple / On a white background, wove her story in.”⁷³ After Procne sees the tapestry and decides to get revenge, she kills her and Tereus's son and feeds him to his father. Then, once Procne tells Tereus that he has eaten his own child, he pursues the sisters. In the midst of their flight, Procne and Philomela turn into birds. Tereus is likewise transformed, becoming “the hoopoe, / The bird who looks like war.”⁷⁴ In *Titus*, characters frequently reenact this story, consciously using it as a pattern for their own actions.

⁷³ Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, trans. Rolfe Humphries (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983), 148.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 151.

Shakespeare's most famous departure from the Philomela story is the additional mutilation. Only Philomela's tongue is severed, but Chiron and Demetrius do not stop there with Lavinia; they also cut off her hands. This mutilation has particular power upon the stage, due to what Lucy Munro describes as the "theatricality of the use of the bloodied and fragmented body."⁷⁵ Cutting out Lavinia's tongue would still have provided some spectacle—after all, that act was enough for Hieronimo's conclusion to his own play—but not as much as the extremities of her body. Hands make a larger visual impact onstage; they are more visible, being external features (unlike the tongue, which is usually hidden inside the mouth). Severed limbs call attention to an important aspect of drama, that "actors were both subjects and objects in the theatre: even as they represented people within the dramatic representation, their bodies operated as material signifiers onstage."⁷⁶ Lavinia becomes objectified—her mutilation calls attention to the materiality of her body (see Fig. 3 & 4). Lavinia's severed hands therefore have a visual impact that exceeds similar mutilations in print, which have no actual physicality to call attention to.

⁷⁵ Lucy Munro, "They eat each other's arms': Stage Blood and Body Parts," in *Shakespeare's Theatres and the Effects of Performance*, eds. Farah Karim-Cooper and Tiffany Stern (London: Arden Shakespeare, 2013), 74.

⁷⁶ Erika T. Lin, *Shakespeare and the Materiality of Performance* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 136.



Fig. 3 & 4. Lavinia mutilated⁷⁷

Later in the play, Marcus has an idea for how Lavinia can divulge the identities of her attackers. He has her hold a staff between her stumps and put the end of it in her mouth. With the staff controlled thus, she uses it to write the names of Chiron and Demetrius in the sand.⁷⁸ This moment resembles another episode from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*: the story of Io. After Zeus turns Io into a cow, she finds her father but is unable to speak to him. Io uses one of her legs to "furrow / The dust with one forefoot, and make an I, / And then an O beside it, spelling her name."⁷⁹ Her father then realizes who she is, and the two weep together. Lavinia could also have written the names with one of her feet. That, however, would have lacked the spectacle of Lavinia holding a staff between her stumps, the end in her mouth. Writing with her feet would have therefore seemed anticlimactic. In this moment, the medium intrudes upon the plot once more, requiring a more satisfying visual.

⁷⁷ *Titus Andronicus*, directed by Lucy Bailey (London: Shakespeare's Globe, 2014), globeplayer.tv; and *Titus*, directed by Julie Taymor (1999; Beverly Hills, CA: Twentieth Century Fox Home Video, 2000), DVD. In Taymor's version, the twigs stuck in Lavinia's stumps highlight the comparisons between her and Daphne, who was turned into a tree while running from Apollo.

⁷⁸ Or, as some productions choose, flour, thereby foreshadowing the fates of Chiron and Demetrius, soon to appear in flour themselves.

⁷⁹ Ovid, 23.

In this discussion of the tragedy's use of dramatic images, I do not assert that Shakespeare is merely creating spectacle for the sake of spectacle. Others have held such a view, such as Daniel Kane, who writes that "the violence in *Titus Andronicus* is so extreme that the play becomes a confrontation as opposed to an unfolding narrative."⁸⁰ Kane says that the play sacrifices its plot for a level of violence that confronts the audience with its brutality. He reads the play as a predecessor to Antonin Artaud's Theater of Cruelty, which purposely agitates the viewers. Kane is right to pay such attention to the bold spectacle of a work which still has the power to make spectators faint. And yet, the play's excess cannot be separated from its self-conscious theatricality or from its explorations of representation. In depicting a character unable to use speech or gestures to communicate, *Titus* dramatizes problems of theatrical representation—that is, how to represent things onstage. Actors necessarily convey information in two primary ways: speaking and imitating action. By rendering an actor unable to talk or use her hands, the play explores the implications of thus restricting the stage's primary means of communicating with the audience.

James Calderwood claims that Lavinia's mutilation reflects Shakespeare's belief that theater barbarizes poetry by making it "submit to the rude demands of the theater."⁸¹ He asserts that Lavinia represents poetry, brutally silenced by the theater. Calderwood sees Shakespeare as "unable to create an interplay of language and action,"⁸² and anxious about the theater's combination of the two. This anxiety becomes reflected in the play's presentation of the tension between word and deed, a presentation which accounts for the bulk of the metadrama

⁸⁰ Daniel Kane, "The Vertue of Spectacle in Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus*," *Connotations* 10, no. 1 (2000/2001): 3.

⁸¹ Calderwood, 29.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 34.

that Calderwood explores. Although I do not read Lavinia as a symbol like Calderwood does, she does dramatize issues of theatrical representation.

When Lavinia first appears after the attack, she has no way to represent her thoughts. Kim Solga writes about “rape’s metatheatrical return,” wherein a victim of rape reappears onstage in a “self-consciously histrionic return” where she uses a “standard symbolism and rhetoric.”⁸³ Solga argues that there is a formula for how female characters act after being raped and a set performance following their re-entries upon the stage. As Solga argues, Lavinia is denied this standard return. She cannot tell her family what has happened, nor can she answer the questions posed to her, like Lucius’s “who hath martyred thee?” (3.1.82). When she does make some sign, others puzzle over the meaning. As she cries, Marcus isn’t sure how to take her tears, saying, “Perchance she weeps because they killed her husband, / Perchance because she knows them innocent” (3.1.115-6). Lavinia’s crying could mean two opposite things, and he doesn’t know how to tell which. Titus asks Lavinia to “make some sign how I may do thee ease” (3.1.122), but she cannot. She cannot represent her thoughts with either words or gestures, two essential media of communication for the stage.

When her family finds her, they struggle to comprehend her. Titus claims that he can “understand her signs” (3.1.144), but he rarely does so successfully.⁸⁴ In fact, he (along with others) frequently *misinterprets* what she tries to say. When Lavinia sees her nephew, young Lucius, with a copy of Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, she tries to get the book so that she can use it to

⁸³ Kim Solga, “Rape’s Metatheatrical Return: Rehearsing Sexual Violence Among the Early Moderns,” *Theatre Journal* 58, no. 1 (March 2006): 55.

⁸⁴ The degree to which he succeeds can vary in performance. In Julie Taymor’s film *Titus*, Lavinia makes signs with her stumps which seem to vindicate her father’s interpretations. Lucy Bailey’s 2014 Globe production, however, shows Lavinia frustrated with her father’s assumptions about what she means. I believe that Bailey’s interpretation is, in this regard, more in line with the text, which does not indicate that Titus is correct in his readings of Lavinia’s signs.

let people know that she was raped and mutilated like Philomela was. Not realizing what she tries to do, Lucius runs away from her, and so she chases after him. Having heard that “extremity of griefs would make men mad” (4.1.19), Lucius assumes that “some fit or frenzy do[es] possess her” (4.1.17), leading her to try to attack her own family. Lavinia has not actually become violent, but her nephew believes that she has nevertheless.

In the last chapter, I discussed Isabella’s madness and its symptoms, which culminate in her suicide. As Carol Neely writes, she helped to establish the typical presentation of women’s madness on the early modern stage, paving the way for Ophelia and other madwomen. Lavinia displays none of Isabella’s symptoms, but nevertheless has them projected upon her. Although she does not chase her nephew for any irrationally aggressive reason, he thinks that she has become violent (like Isabella when she destroys the arbor). At this point in *Titus*, the Andronici project madness onto Lavinia, assuming that she behaves irrationally. She does not—she is simply trying to use a new way to communicate her experiences, now that she has access to a physical copy of the story which her rape was modeled upon. And yet, her nephew makes her out to be an Isabella, mad with grief. As we shall see in my fourth chapter, this is elaborated upon in the fly-killing scene, where Titus projects suicidal intents upon Lavinia as well.

Madness, Real and Feigned

Critics are divided about whether Titus is mad or just feigns insanity. In this way, he resembles Hamlet, who famously says that he will pretend to be mad, but has no apparent logical reason to do so. In his feigning, he seems to get carried away, becoming mad himself,

but it is never really clear to what degree he is pretending. Titus provides an earlier example of this blurring of sanity and insanity. Jonathan Bate and Fredson Bowers argue that he feigns lunacy, but Charles and Elaine Hallett, A.L. and M.K. Kistner, and Maurice Hunt argue that Titus's madness is genuine.⁸⁵ Bowers, for instance, claims, "The feigning of madness which was absent in *The Spanish Tragedy*... is here an essential part of the plot."⁸⁶ Despite the confidence with which Bowers declares pretend madness to be at play, others think it obvious that Titus is really insane. A.L. and M.K. Kistner, for instance, say that "the intention of portraying Titus mad is clear."⁸⁷ Critics often agree that Titus's madness or sanity is clear, they just can't agree on which one it is.

I propose that both sides are right, that Titus is mad and that he feigns madness. After his sons are killed and his daughter is ravished, Titus indeed loses his wits. Then, later in the play, his reason and unreason become muddled as he exaggerates his own instability before his enemies, wielding his own madness and turning it into a performance. For the first few scenes during which he appears insane, there is no reason for him to feign lunacy, and he has made no indication that he intends to. In fact, doing so now would just warn his enemies. Furthermore, he behaves most irrationally when with his allies. His family members, people whom he has no reason to deceive and who are joined with him in a quest for revenge, consistently interpret him as mad. Marcus, for instance, says he will "attend him in his ecstasy" (4.1.125). Titus has no reason to make his loyal brother, who likewise hopes for revenge, think that he has lost his

⁸⁵ Bate, "The Performance of Revenge"; Bowers, *Elizabethan Revenge Tragedy*; Hallett and Hallett, *The Revenger's Madness*; A.L. and M.K. Kistner, "The Senecan Background of Despair in *The Spanish Tragedy* and *Titus Andronicus*," *Shakespeare Studies* 7 (1974): 1-9; and Maurice Hunt, "Compelling Art in *Titus Andronicus*," *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 28, no. 2 (1988): 197-218.

⁸⁶ Bowers, 115.

⁸⁷ A.L. and M.K. Kistner, 7.

mind. Only Saturninus, one of Titus's enemies, suspects that he is presenting "feigned ecstasies" (4.4.21). If Titus really is feigning, he is doing a poor job of it, deceiving a host of allies but not the emperor, maybe the one person he most needs to fool.

Titus does pretend to be mad, but only in the fifth act, after Tamora and her sons visit him. Believing him insane, Tamora tries to manipulate him. When he realizes her plan, he pretends to be deceived. She was right to think him mad, but woefully misunderstands his sort of madness. She assumes that he will think that she really is Revenge, and will therefore trust her advice, such as her suggestion to call Lucius back from the Goths. Far from being more readily fooled by the sort of theatrical performance that she puts on, Titus has gained a greater sense of the dramatic in his madness. At the beginning of the play, the title character seemed a soldier through and through, having been one "forty years, / And led my country's strength successfully" (1.1.196-7). He gave no indication that he was capable of much other than the organized combat of war. By the end of the play, however, he has changed. He achieves revenge through violence, but he resorts to a sort of deception that he never attempted earlier. Furthermore, he stages his revenge as a performance, deciding to "play the cook" (5.2.204), complete with a chef's apparel. Like Hieronimo, Titus has been changed by his madness, becoming newly performative. When Titus pretends to be fooled by Tamora, he adopts the persona of a different sort of madman, one incapable of separating art from reality. He realizes that Tamora has mistaken his lunacy, believing that he will be deceived by her play-within-the-play. Rather than letting her know the error, he exaggerates his madness, pretending to believe that she really is Revenge. In doing so, he consciously plays a character: the lunatic who does not understand the difference between reality and illusion.

With this conscious performance of lunacy, Titus's madness is distinct from Hieronimo's. In one scene, however, Titus presents it the same way that his predecessor did. As I discussed in the last chapter, Hieronimo's madness repeatedly turns geographical, making him imagine the sights of a physical underworld that can be dug toward. In act four, scene three, Titus Andronicus behaves alarmingly like the mad Hieronimo. The main traits of the Spanish Knight Marshall's lunacy, which stretch over the course of three or four scenes in *The Spanish Tragedy*, are compressed into one scene. Near the beginning of the scene, Titus quotes Ovid, "Terras Astrea reliquit," (4.3.4) a sentence which is twice translated into English in *The Spanish Tragedy*, first as "on this earth justice will not be found" (3.13.107) and then as "justice is exiled from the earth" (3.13.137). Having declared that justice has left the earth, Titus proceeds to direct his kinsmen to search for her elsewhere, much as Hieronimo does:

You, cousins, shall go sound the ocean
 And cast your nets:
 Happily you may catch her in the sea;
 Yet there's as little justice as at land.
 No, Publius and Sempronius, you must do it,
 'Tis you must dig with mattock and with spade,
 And pierce the inmost centre of the earth.
 Then, when you come to Pluto's region,
 I pray you deliver him this petition.
 Tell him it is for justice and for aid,
 And that it comes from old Andronicus,
 Shaken with sorrows in ungrateful Rome. (4.3.6-17)

In this passage, Titus's search for justice becomes a quest across physical locations. First he suggests searching the oceans, but suddenly realizes the problem, that "there's as little justice as at land," and his mind shifts to the underworld. He describes digging to Pluto's realm to "deliver him this petition... for justice and for aid," just as Hieronimo tries to do. Titus's words

in this passage read much like Hieronimo's when he describes descending to hell and pleading for revenge. This passage paraphrases a train of thought which Hieronimo explores over multiple scenes, effectively replicating his madness and presenting it as one brief episode for Titus.

The presentation of madness as a search for justice in the underworld is not enough for *Titus Andronicus*. Because this play lacks any frame located in Pluto's realm, searching for justice there lacks the resonance that it held in *The Spanish Tragedy*, where Hieronimo's descriptions of the hell were vindicated by Andrea's earlier discussion of it. Moving on from his imagined quest to the underworld, Titus directs his thoughts upward, to the heavens. He distributes arrows among his kinsmen, arrows which come with messages addressed to the gods. Then, Titus and his family fire them toward the court (see Fig. 5).⁸⁸ Once he redirects his search toward the gods in the heavens, Titus has called attention to the three levels of the early modern theater: hell, stage, and heaven. In *The Spanish Tragedy*, Hieronimo and Isabella achieve this together. Titus rushes through it by himself over the course of a single scene.

⁸⁸ This act creates a good deal of difficulty on the stage, as firing arrows is nearly impossible to make safe. In the 2014 Globe production, the actors pointed their bows toward the audience, drew their arrows, and then cast them downwards, so they wouldn't harm anyone.



Fig. 5. Titus firing a bow with one hand⁸⁹

Titus's madness does not come upon him rapidly, forcing a sudden break from reality like Hieronimo's. Nor is Titus marked by alternating episodes of lunacy and lucidity. On the contrary, we see a gradual change—a metamorphosis, if you will. He first becomes unstable after Quintus and Martius are arrested for the murder of Bassianus, as he speaks and weeps into stones. Then, seeing his daughter deprived of hands and tongue, he says, “My grief was at the height before thou cam'st, / And now like Nilus it disdaineth bounds” (3.1.71-2). Even then, the play continues to pile further griefs upon him. Aaron tells him that his sons will be spared if he cuts off one of his hands. Titus complies, and gives Aaron a hand in exchange for Quintus and Martius. When he is given back their severed heads, he laughs. Over the course of this scene, his passions have been stretched. Now without “another tear to shed” (3.1.267), his griefs have consumed him, and all that is left is madness and revenge. And unlike Hieronimo's madness, which emerges in sudden episodes, separated by periods of lucidity, Titus's persists

⁸⁹ *Titus Andronicus*, dir. Lucy Bailey.

until his death. As a result, *Titus Andronicus* more clearly shows the protagonist being changed by madness, transformed into a newly dramatic figure.

“I am not mad, I know thee well enough”: Madness and Theatrical Awareness

Late in the play, Tamora, Chiron, and Demetrius come before Titus, disguised as Revenge, Rape, and Murder. Assuming that the protagonist’s madness will render him unable to see through their deception, they perform in front of him, hoping to win his trust and convince him to call Lucius back to Rome. They think that madness makes one unable to distinguish between theater and reality, and so Titus will not recognize them as his enemies. Titus, seeing through their disguises, seems to be under the same impression, saying, “I am not mad, I know thee well enough” (5.2.21). As I have argued earlier, Titus is indeed mad, but Tamora has misunderstood his sort of lunacy. Rather than impair his capacity for recognition, it has given him a newfound dramatic awareness. In addition to this awareness, he desires to create drama himself, presenting his vengeance to the world in the form of a grand spectacle.

In Tamora’s portrayal of Revenge, *Titus* turns the structure of *The Spanish Tragedy* inside out. Instead of sitting on the outside of the play, in the frame, Revenge is moved inside, inserted within a play-within-the-play. With her are her two sons: Chiron and Demetrius. But, before she has a chance to name the parts they play, Titus does so, saying, “Lo by thy side where Rape and Murder stands” (5.2.45). She soon confirms their identities as Rape and Murder, but through his initial casting of the sons, Titus begins to take control of her performance.

By performing the madness that Tamora and her sons expect, Titus is able to “o’erreach them in their own devices” (5.2.143). He skillfully deceives Tamora and her sons by playing along with them. Asking for aid like the ghost of Don Andrea, Titus tells them to search Rome for people who look very much like they do and kill them. Then he asks that Rape and Murder stay with him when she leaves. Believing that Titus has been deceived by her show, Tamora acquiesces to his request. She thinks that her sons are safe; they are not. Titus knows full well who they are, and he already has plans for them. But why does Titus send Tamora away? Instead, he could have called his kinsmen to capture her along with Chiron and Demetrius, and be revenged upon all three right then and there. Although this would have simplified his plan, he is already committed to following the pattern laid out by Ovid, which requires him to feed Chiron and Demetrius to Tamora. Furthermore, killing Tamora then would have prevented Titus from getting his public revenge at the banquet. His vengeance would not be seen by others, and he wants it to be *wondered* at.

When Tamora ends her show as Revenge, the performance is far from over. When Titus asks his kinsman, Publius, if he knows the two disguised men, Publius correctly names them as Chiron and Demetrius. Titus jokingly continues to call them by their assumed identities, saying, “Fie, Publius, fie, thou art too much deceived. The one is Murder and Rape is the other’s name” (5.2.155-6). Then, after Chiron and Demetrius are bound and gagged, he launches into one of his most dramatic and theatrical episodes yet, becoming particularly presentational. He performs an explanation of their own deaths before slitting their throats in a ritual-like manner. These killings are visually powerful enough to stand at the center of a woodcut showing the most memorable sights from the play (see Fig. 6).



Fig. 6. Woodcut from “Titus Andronicus” the ballad⁹⁰

In a lengthy monologue, he presents Lavinia to her attackers and tells them that she will hold a basin to catch their blood once he cuts their throats. He declares that he will “make two pasties of your shameful heads,” (5.2.189), baking them into pies. Making sure that they know the reason for the pies, Titus says that he will invite their mother to a banquet, “and bid that strumpet, your unhallowed dam, / Like to the earth swallow her own increase” (5.2.190-1). With the dramatic flair of a villain from a James Bond movie, he outlines his full plan for revenge while making a show of Chiron and Demetrius’s deaths.

Like Hieronimo, Titus finally gets revenge in an elaborate spectacle of violence. In the final scene, he resolves to “play the cook” (5.3.204), and appears at the bloody banquet dressed as one. In the scene that follows, Saturninus and Tamora feast upon pies made from the meat of

⁹⁰ Anonymous, “The Lamentable and Tragical History of Titus Andronicus” (London: date unknown, between 1674-9). *Early English Books Online*.

Chiron and Demetrius. Titus then gleefully reveals to Tamora that she has eaten her own children. He kills her and is then stabbed by Saturninus, whom Lucius murders. Titus does not literally put on a play, but his banquet shows all the signs of a public spectacle, presented before a large audience of Romans, Goths, and the offstage viewers watching. Titus has surely changed over the course of the play. At first, he appeared as a worthy soldier, one fiercely loyal to Rome but who, after losing twenty sons in war, would settle down with “a staff of honour for mine age, / But not a sceptre to control the world” (1.1.201-2). There was little trace of the theatrical in him—certainly not like there is now. He did not begin the play as a dramatist like Hieronimo does, putting together successful spectacles for visiting ambassadors. Titus had to gain this theatrical ability, as he does in his madness.

Melancholy and the Moor

With Aaron, *Titus Andronicus* presents a metatheatrical figure whose self-awareness is associated not with madness, but with melancholy. Aaron is both the most self-aware character and the one who speaks most openly to the audience. At one point in the play, Chiron says to him, “Aaron, I see thou wilt not trust the air / With secrets” (4.2.171-2). This line hearkens to *The Spanish Tragedy*’s Lorenzo, who does “not trust the air / With utterance of our pretence therein” (3.4.78-9). Chiron, however, makes a joke here, playing on the sound “air,” which appears in “Aaron.” In addition to the “air” sound also resembling Aaron’s name, it suggests the homonym “heir.” Indeed, Chiron, as Tamora’s eldest son, may be the heir to the emperor. But while Aaron doesn’t trust the “heir,” he seems to trust the “air,” as well as the audience,

with his secrets, often speaking directly to the viewers about his schemes and intentions. He talks far more to them than anyone else in the tragedy, and he frequently uses the language of theater to describe his “plotting” and “performing.” In his first two appearances, he begins the scene by soliloquizing to the audience. In the second instance, he tells the viewers that he has devised “a stratagem / Which, cunningly effected, will beget / A very excellent piece of villainy” (2.2.5-7). By openly speaking to the spectators thus, he draws them into his plans, making them his confidants and entrusting them with his secrets.

Shakespeare’s villains generally tend toward metatheatre, as “the Shakespearian villain likes to see himself as an actor and he gloats over his own performance.”⁹¹ Aaron is characteristically conscious of his role, and uses the vocabulary of playing. He explicitly describes his villainy, outlining his role in the text as an antagonist. He also says that “Saturn is dominator over” (2.2.31) his disposition. Because Saturn was the planet associated with causing melancholy, this line asserts his melancholy nature.⁹² Furthermore, he lists his “cloudy melancholy” (2.2.33) as one of the traits which make up his villainous character. In this speech, his conscious role in the tragedy becomes associated with his humoral disposition, dominated by black bile. Melancholy, or black bile, was one of the four humors that were believed to course through the body, affecting our moods and health. When the humors are balanced, people are happy and healthy, while imbalances cause maladies of both body and mind. Of the humors, perhaps none was more important to the stage than melancholy. Black bile caused sadness and fear, and was associated with poets, lovers, madmen, and villains.

⁹¹ Victor Bourgy, “About The Inset Spectacle in Shakespeare (Stance, Distance, Substance),” in *The Show Within: Dramatic and Other Insets. English Renaissance Drama (1550-1642)*, ed. François Laroque (Montpellier: Paul Valéry University Press, 1990), 4.

⁹² Ironically, Saturninus lacks this melancholy element of villains. Instead, he seems quite sanguine.

Aaron's description of his melancholy disposition is just one instance in Shakespeare's oeuvre of a villainous statement of purpose, wherein an antagonist metatheatrically declares himself defined by his melancholy and villainy. Compare, for instance, Don John's speech wherein he says, "It must not be denied but I am a plain-dealing villain" (1.3.29-30),⁹³ Richard III's that says he is "determined to prove a villain" (1.1.30),⁹⁴ or Iago's where he ironically says, "What's he then that says I play the villain" (2.3.336)⁹⁵ In all of these examples, the villain reveals a self-awareness of his role. The connection between villainy and self-awareness did not begin with Shakespeare. On the contrary, it descends from the Vice character from medieval morality plays. As Anne Barton says, "It was with the brilliant, unscrupulous figure of the Vice that the age-old connection of the actor with the deceiver seems first to have entered English drama."⁹⁶ The Vice manipulates the narrative in whatever way he can, scheming and plotting. Barton describes Richard III as "a near relative of the morality Vice."⁹⁷ Like Richard, Aaron can be traced to this tradition as a self-conscious villain. These two early Shakespearean villains recast the Vice figure as a secular archetype for the new secular stage. Furthermore, their villainies are tied to their melancholy dispositions, and so they help to establish an association between that temperament and theatrical self-awareness.

With Aaron, we see a model of the metadramatic melancholic, as opposed to the metadramatic madmen Titus and Hieronimo. Although madness and melancholy are deeply related, theatrical melancholy develops a life of its own, as can be seen most acutely with

⁹³ Shakespeare, *Much Ado About Nothing* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

⁹⁴ Shakespeare, *Richard III*, in *The Riverside Shakespeare* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1974).

⁹⁵ Shakespeare, *Othello*, in *The Riverside Shakespeare* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1974).

⁹⁶ Anne Barton [Anne Richter], *Shakespeare and the Idea of the Play* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1962), 68.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 96.

Jacques from *As You Like It*. One of the most notable stage melancholics, he has the most famous metatheatrical speech in Shakespeare: “All the world’s a stage, / And all the men and women merely players” (2.7.139). Other characters, including Hamlet, Macbeth, and *The Merchant of Venice*’s Antonio, also deliver melancholy meditations on the likeness between life and theater. In them, we can see an association between metatheatre and melancholy which rivals, and perhaps eventually surpasses, that between metatheatre and madness.

Metatheatrical melancholy survives beyond *Titus Andronicus*; more surprisingly, so too does Aaron. As the chief antagonist and plotter of woes, he seems the most naturally destined for the grave. Lucius, however, refuses to grant him a quick death. He orders his men to “set him breast-deep in earth and famish him; / There let him stand and rave and cry for food” (5.3.178-9). Aaron’s punishment is to continue performing—to beg for food and describe his villainy until he starves. He readily accepts this doom: “Why should wrath be mute and fury dumb?” (5.3.183). He says that he will not “repent the evils I have done. / Ten thousand worse than ever yet I did / Would I perform if I might have my will” (5.3.185-7). Now he cannot perform any more heinous acts, but no doubt he will continue narrating them to whomever will listen.

Indeed, his performativity saved him from dying sooner. When he was captured earlier, Aaron described his evils until Lucius decides not to hang him yet, “for he must not die / So sweet a death as hanging presently” (5.1.145-6). He plays the villain thoroughly, declaring that he has “done a thousand dreadful things / As willingly as one would kill a fly” (5.1.141-2). When Shakespeare later adds a scene to the play, he seems to fixate on this line. Rather than add to the dreadful things the play presents, he shows just this: the killing of a fly.

Chapter Three: Doing Wonders in the 1602 Additions to *The Spanish Tragedy*

It is easy to understand the attraction of the name *The Spanish Tragedy* in the 1580s, the years leading up to and immediately following the attempted invasion by the Spanish Armada in 1588.⁹⁸ Before the destruction of the fleet, Spain's power endangered England, and so the thought of grave misfortune befalling the hostile nation appealed to audiences. As the threat of invasion and the memory of that Spanish tragedy on the seas lessened, however, English playgoers grew less concerned with that Catholic enemy. Presumably, audiences began to care less about the political aspects of the play, such as the diplomacy between Spain and Portugal. Even the masque of English victories over its Iberian rivals became less relevant as the triumph over the Spanish Armada moved further into the past. With the diminished importance of the play's international content, viewers focused more on the personal tale of vengeance and madness that the play tells.

The play adapted to suit the playgoers. Another playwright, likely Shakespeare,⁹⁹ wrote additional passages which focus the tragedy more tightly upon the protagonist. These additions have long interested critics, who have often believed "that they are the work of a better writer than Thomas Kyd."¹⁰⁰ Though sometimes inserted awkwardly into the text, the passages are consistent with one another. Each one focuses on Hieronimo's madness, pushing his psychological experience to the forefront. His lunacy, which in the original play manifested primarily in his descriptions of the underworld and attempts to reach Horatio there, becomes

⁹⁸ Most estimates place the writing of *The Spanish Tragedy* somewhere between 1582 and 1588.

⁹⁹ See Douglas Bruster, "Shakespearean Spellings and Handwriting in the Additional Passages Printed in the 1602 *Spanish Tragedy*," *Notes And Queries* 60 (258), no. 3 (2013): 420-424.

¹⁰⁰ Charles K. Cannon, "The Relation of the Additions of *The Spanish Tragedy* to the Original Play," *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 2, no. 2 (1962): 230.

more diverse with the additions, taking on new forms: Hieronimo denies his son's death, raves about the meaning of the murder, and beats a harmless old painter. These passages do not alter the plot, but they "rise above the the concrete dramatic situation with a tone that is more distant and impersonal."¹⁰¹ As Carol Neely asserts, "These 325 new lines are not add-ons but significant textual revisions that, by transforming Hieronimo's madness, make a new play."¹⁰² This new play is all the more about Hieronimo and his psychology. It is less *The Spanish Tragedy* and more *Hieronimo is Mad Again*, as the 1615 subtitle asserts.

The original play combined with the additions results in a text which is not entirely Kyd's, but nevertheless shows what *The Spanish Tragedy* became. Rather than presenting a wholly consistent text, it represents different points along the development of stage madness. As we shall see, these additions elaborate upon the association between madness and metadrama that was present in the original play. The connection becomes more explicit, producing a clearer relationship between them. In this chapter, I will look at the additions in order, considering how each one elaborates upon Hieronimo's lunacy, usually rendering it metadramatic. Much of this chapter will deal with the painter scene, which is by far the longest addition and the one which most clearly deals with the relationship between art and madness. Each one of these new passages is important, and no two are quite alike. Nor do any of them present quite the same sort of ravings as the original play. They do, however, alternate Hieronimo's verbal style, much as Kyd's original play did, to indicate Hieronimo's madness.¹⁰³ They also generally depict the mad Hieronimo's increased obsession with spectacle, whether

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 231.

¹⁰² Neely, 33.

¹⁰³ For another example of a mad character's particular verbal style persisting across multiple authors, see Douglas Bruster, "The Jailer's Daughter and the Politics of Madwomen's Language," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 46, no. 3 (1995): 277-300.

he's discussing art with a painter or comparing the sight of his murdered son to an illusory vision.

Addition One: "Great persuasions"

In the original play, Hieronimo does not go mad until over halfway through the third act. With the additions, however, his insanity spreads further throughout the tragedy. The first passage, inserted in the scene where Hieronimo and Isabella find Horatio's body, makes the protagonist rave soon after his son is murdered. Upon discovering the corpse, he quickly launches into a manic episode, denying that the body is his son's and insisting that Isabella and the servants are deluded to think that it is. The addition is not integrated particularly well into the text—the onset and recovery are both rapid, perhaps a bit too sudden to seem believable. Hieronimo himself acknowledges the bizarreness of this episode upon regaining his sanity, saying, "How strangely had I lost my way to grief" (2.5.45.54).¹⁰⁴

Along with the added raving, this passage also introduces two characters who were not in the original play, Pedro and Jaques, who only appear in this addition and in the painter scene. There is no immediately apparent reason for their inclusion—they merely have a few brief lines responding to Hieronimo. Isabella could speak their words without significantly changing the scene. They do, however, provide more of an onstage audience for the protagonist's madness. In both the original play and in the additions, Hieronimo is most mad

¹⁰⁴ Following Clara Calvo and Jesús Tronch's system for numbering lines of the additions, the first three numbers of these citations show the location of the line where the additions are inserted, and the fourth refers to the line within the addition.

when he is with others, most sane when alone.¹⁰⁵ In this scene, his madness becomes more of a spectacle as Jaques and Pedro are added as spectators.

When he raves, Hieronimo focuses on the sight of his son's hanging corpse, calling it an imitation and an illusion. He refers to the events of the scene as "strange dreams" (2.5.45.19). Upon hearing his wife insist that it is really Horatio's corpse, he asks Isabella, "Dost thou dream it is?" (2.5.45.33). The sight, like a dream, pretends at reality. He remarks upon the likeness of the body and garments to his son's, saying that he "would have sworn myself within this hour, / That this had been my son Horatio" (2.5.45.28-9). The clothes are "great persuasions" (2.5.45.31), but, he suggests, are merely that: persuasions, illusions. He describes his son's hanging body as a spectacle, something to be watched but not believed.

In this scene, Hieronimo is mad not to accept what he sees. And yet, as he suggests, it is also madness to be deluded by the sight. When he says that "this doth make me laugh, / That there are more deluded than myself" (2.5.45.25), a certain truth underlies his words. After all, to accept that Horatio is dead is to accept the illusion—or delusion?—of theater. While the other characters believe the reality before their eyes, Hieronimo hints at the basic falseness of that vision. Within the tragedy he is wrong, of course. His words, however, suggest the truth beyond the play, hinting at its fundamental illusion. As Theseus says about plays in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, "The best in this kind are but shadows" (5.2.210). The shadows may be great persuasions, like Horatio's hanged body, but no more.

¹⁰⁵ Perhaps that is why some scholars believe that his lunacy is feigned. I take this theatricality not as evidence that Hieronimo pretends to be mad for others, but rather that the play highlights his insanity as a spectacle watched by others.

Addition Two: “A thing of nothing”

At just eleven lines, the second addition is by far the briefest of them all. The author inserts it shortly after Hieronimo receives a letter written in blood by Bel-imperia. He goes to speak with her, but Lorenzo prevents him. In the original scene, Lorenzo asks why Hieronimo wants to see Bel-imperia, and Hieronimo responds cautiously, quickly wishing him farewell and leaving. With the addition, Hieronimo is less careful. He spends most of the eleven lines minimizing the matter he has come for, calling it “a very toy, my lord, a toy” (3.2.66.3), “an idle thing” (3.2.66.5), and “a thing of nothing” (3.2.66.9) before revealing it as “the murder of a son, or so” (3.2.66.10) and then repeating “a thing of nothing” (3.2.66.11).

In his multiple descriptions of his son’s death as “a thing of nothing,” Hieronimo trivializes the tragedy. His language here is curious: he does not say that it is “nothing,” but rather “a *thing* of nothing.”¹⁰⁶ That is, he describes something that appears to be, but which is not. In essence, he calls the event a shadow without substance.

Addition three: “You’re wide all”

While the first two additions push Hieronimo’s lunacy earlier, the third expands one of the original mad sections. In this scene, Hieronimo meets two Portuguese travellers who ask for directions to Lorenzo. With the new passage, Hieronimo launches into a monologue immediately after being greeted by the travellers, saying, “’Tis neither as you think, nor as you

¹⁰⁶ He anticipates Hamlet’s statement that “The king is a thing... Of nothing” (4.2.26-8).

think, / Nor as you think; you're wide all" (3.1.1.1-2). In these words, he addresses at least three different people, saying "as you think" thrice, but there are only two other characters onstage. The most intuitive stage choice is for him to direct the first two "as you think" phrases at the Portuguese men before delivering the third to a viewer in the audience. Then he could include the audience when he says "you're wide all," thereby suggesting that the viewers are mistaken in their thoughts as the Portuguese travellers are.¹⁰⁷ Although we cannot ever really know how this line was originally performed, it makes the most theatrical sense when directed at the audience.¹⁰⁸ Hieronimo did talk to the offstage viewers in the original play, speaking in soliloquies and asides, but he never commented upon them, as he seems to do here by declaring that they are "wide all." Hieronimo therefore gains an access to the audience that he lacks without the additions.

This would not be the only time than an acknowledgment of the audience has the effect of signifying madness. Take, for instance, the following passage from *Henry VI, Part One*, one of Shakespeare's earliest plays.

Margaret	Why speak'st thou not? What ransom must I pay?
Suffolk	[<i>Aside.</i>] She's beautiful; and therefore to be wooed: She is a woman; therefore to be one.
Margaret	Wilt thou accept of ransom, yea or no?
Suffolk	[<i>Aside.</i>] Fond man, remember that thou hast a wife, Then how can Margaret be thy paramour?
Margaret	I were best to leave him, for he will not hear.
Suffolk	[<i>Aside.</i>] There all is marr'd, there lies a cooling card.
Margaret	He talks at random; sure the man is mad. (5.3.77-85) ¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁷ "wide, adj.^{10c}" *OED*.

¹⁰⁸ Alternatively, he could say "'Tis neither as you think" to one Portuguese traveller, "nor as you think" to the other, and then turn back to the first to say "Nor as you think." He could then direct "you're wide all" at the two men whom he has taken to be three. This possibility, however, seems to me to be less likely.

¹⁰⁹ William Shakespeare, *Henry VI, Part One*, in *The Riverside Shakespeare* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1974). Subsequent citations are from this edition.

In this scene, Suffolk talks to the viewers in asides which Margaret overhears. Observing him speaking, apparently to no one, she interprets his asides as a sign of madness. Although the aside was an established stage convention, this passage shows its potential to signify lunacy, at least to other characters. In doing so, the dialogue also draws attention to the convention itself. Asides almost always go unremarked upon. In fact, being unnoticed is an innate part of how they operate. They are simply not *supposed* to be observed by other characters. By breaking with this convention, *Henry VI, Part One* calls attention to its artificiality. While this scene reflects the irrationality of speaking to thin air, Suffolk is not mad. In *The Spanish Tragedy*, the mad Hieronimo likewise addresses the audience, but his doing so highlights his madness. *Henry VI, Part One* invokes madness to call attention to the convention, but this addition to *The Spanish Tragedy* uses audience address to further assert Hieronimo's madness.

Although speaking to the audience in soliloquies and asides is a typical aspect of the early modern stage, characters rarely make the viewers the object of speech. They may talk *to* them, but rarely *about* them, as Hieronimo seems to do here.¹¹⁰ When they do, they cast them in logical roles for an assembled group, such as mobs and armies. Henry V may give a rallying speech to the audience, but he speaks to them as soldiers. Hieronimo has not cast the viewers as any such group—he talks to them *as audience members*, therefore gaining a unique sort of access past the layer between audience and play.

The rest of the addition consists of Hieronimo's raving about his son. He asks what a son is, initially answering, "A thing begot / Within a pair of minutes, thereabout; / A lump bred

¹¹⁰ Another example of this sort of reference to the audience is Hal's "I know you all" soliloquy from *Henry IV, Part One*.

up in darkness” (3.11.1.4-6). Then he asks a tougher question: “What is there yet in a son / To make a father dote, rave, or run mad?” (3.11.1.9-10). Here Hieronimo is more aware of his madness than he is anywhere else, having acknowledged that his son’s death has made him rave and run mad. We therefore see a self-awareness to him that is absent without the additions. As Hieronimo questions what a son is to him, he evaluates his role in the tragedy. He ponders why one single event in the play, Horatio’s murder, has such an effect upon him, determining everything else that he does. In doing so, he questions the very narrative of the play, interrogating the progression of its events. He ends the added passage with what can be read as a summary of the revenge tragedy formula:

Ay, ay, ay, and then time steals on,
And steals, and steals, till violence leaps forth
Like thunder wrapped in a ball of fire,
And so doth bring confusion to them all. (3.11.1.44-7)

The beginning of this passage describes the passing of time in a revenge tragedy when vengeance is delayed. In plays of this genre, a murder occurs, and the protagonist decides to get revenge. He cannot, however, do so immediately; something prevents action. Typically, this delay is caused by madness, machinations by the antagonist, and, particularly in the case of *Hamlet*, an internal dilemma about whether or not he should kill the murderer.¹¹¹ As Hieronimo says, “Time steals on, / And steals, and steals.” With those words, the repetition of “steals” underscores the staticness of the plot at this part of the tragedy. Time continues stealing on while the revenger strives in vain. Eventually, however, it finally comes time for the climax. At

¹¹¹ Hamlet, however, eventually loses the impulse toward revenge. He only kills his uncle after Claudius has already orchestrated Hamlet’s own death. Perhaps *Hamlet* would best be classified as a non-revenge tragedy, more interested in delay than vengeance.

the end of the play, “violence leaps forth” as many characters are killed in a short span of time. This violence surely “doth bring confusion to them all” (confusion here meaning destruction) during the climactic massacre.

By offering what serves as a summary of the genre’s typical narrative, Hieronimo reveals a staggering awareness of his own story, well before some of the events he describes. In the original play, this scene shows Hieronimo in one of his least lucid states; in the addition, however, he is aware of his own madness and the revenge tragedy formula.

Addition four: “Can’t paint a sigh?”

The painter scene is the longest and most important addition to the play, consisting of a whole scene, not just a passage, inserted in the third act after scene twelve. It was likely meant to replace the following scene, where citizens petition Hieronimo for justice.¹¹² In both, Hieronimo meets an old man with a murdered son (Bazulto and Bazardo), lashes out violently (tearing up the citizens’ papers in a fit of rage and beating Bazardo), and proposes using art to remedy mental anguish (the song he describes to Bazulto and the painting that he asks Bazardo to create). The painter scene takes inspiration from the replaced scene’s encounter with Bazulto, whom Hieronimo calls the “lively portrait of my dying self” (3.13.84) and “the lively image of my grief” (3.13.159). With Bazardo the painter, whose name betrays his indebtedness to Bazulto, this figurative portrait becomes literal, as Hieronimo asks the old man to actually paint the image of his grief.

¹¹² The beginning of 3.13, the “Vindicta mihi” speech, was probably retained, however, being a frequently referenced part of the play and important to the plot.

As the most significant addition, the Painter scene has seen the most attention from critics. Primarily, they have been interested in its approach to artistic representation. Marguerite A. Tassi writes, “In the presence of the Painter, Hieronimo turns his attention obsessively to the painter’s art as a medium for translating his passions into the form and energies of art.”¹¹³ Also reading it in terms of its aesthetic commentary, Donna Hamilton views the scene as an important part of Hieronimo’s pursuit of an artistic form capable of representing reality.¹¹⁴ Carol Neely describes the scene as a cathartic experience for Hieronimo, wherein he describes “successive self-portraits [which] represent his progression from love to loss to madness to mourning. This catharsis leads Hieronimo first to act out his rage by beating the painter, and then to his considered decision to take revenge in his immediately following soliloquy.”¹¹⁵ But while these scholars also acknowledge the importance of madness to this addition, they say relatively little about the intersection of insanity and art. The placement of the play’s most thorough discussion of art during Hieronimo’s longest mad episode is no coincidence. As Charles Cannon argues, his madness “bestows far keener perception than mere rationality.”¹¹⁶ Hieronimo had gained certain insights through his insanity in the play-sans-additions, primarily in his newfound understanding of the layout of hell. Now he goes further, turning from hell to art. As he says, “I am never better than when I am mad, then methinks I am a brave fellow, then I do wonders” (3.12A.160-1). Indeed, it is precisely during his madness that he is most interested in visions and spectacle.

¹¹³ Marguerite A. Tassi, “The Player’s Passion and the Elizabethan Painting Trope: A Study of the Painter Addition to Kyd’s *The Spanish Tragedy*,” *Explorations in Renaissance Culture* 26, no. 1 (2000): 73.

¹¹⁴ Hamilton, 214.

¹¹⁵ Neely, 37.

¹¹⁶ Cannon, 235.

The scene begins not with Hieronimo, but with his servants Pedro and Jaques. The addition's first account of madness comes from them, as they describe Hieronimo's fits wherein he "grows lunatic and childish for his son" (3.12A.9). Pedro claims that "there is not left in him one inch of man" (3.12A.15). When Hieronimo appears a line later, we see that there is much more than an inch of him left. As soon as he enters, the scene becomes his. He scours the stage for Horatio, and then he insists that his servants should light torches at noon, not night. He and his mad theatrics take control of the stage as he raves wildly.

Hieronimo, however, insists that he is not mad. Believing (like Tamora when she pretends to be Revenge) that madness renders one unable to recognize others, Hieronimo tries to prove his sanity by identifying his servants. After Pedro tells him that "sorrow makes you speak you know not what" (3.12A.41), he tells Pedro,

Villain, thou liest, and thou doest naught
But tell me I am mad. Thou liest, I am not mad.
I know thee to be Pedro, and he Jaques;
I'll prove it to thee, and were I mad, how could I? (3.12A.42-5)

Hieronimo insists that because he "know[s] [him] to be Pedro, and he Jaques," he cannot be mad. He thinks that recognizing those around him proves his sanity, believing that true madness robs one of the ability to identify others. Contrary to what he says, Hieronimo is certainly mad here. In these lines, we can see some of the verbal quirks of his madness from the original play amplified. When he was sane, he repeated structures of words in a patterned, rhetorical style; when insane, he repeats small clusters of words. Now he uses similar phrases in quick succession ("villain, thou liest" and "thou liest"; "I am mad," "I am not mad," and

“were I mad”), thereby replicating one of the signature traits of his mad language from the earlier play.

A luna-tic through and through, his thoughts turn toward the moon. He asks, “Where was she that same night when my Horatio / Was murdered? (3.12A.46-7). He claims that if the moon had shone the night of the murder, Horatio’s illuminated face would have stopped anyone from killing him. These words, a non-sequitur which bears no relation to his attempt to prove he is not mad, prove the opposite. Here another of his mad quirks appears: vacillation between unconnected ideas. In the original play, he alternated quickly between thoughts without any logical progression in his madness. He does the same here.

Then Isabella enters. After Hieronimo says that he, Pedro, and Jaques are “very merry, very merry” (3.12A.59), Isabella asks how he could feel any joy in “the place... Where my Horatio died, where he was murdered?” (3.12A.61-2). Aside from the first new passage, this scene marks the only time that Isabella appears in the additions, which devote themselves to her husband’s lunacy, not to hers. According to Charles Cannon, although the additions do not direct expand upon her madness, they give Isabella’s final scene “a much more disturbing significance”¹¹⁷ by establishing the theme of a desperate attempt to root out evil from the world. No longer “a pathetic little picture of a lunatic woman,” Isabella represents “the utter impossibility of ever tearing out the principle of evil from this world... nothing is left for Isabella but to destroy herself.”¹¹⁸ In addition to this thematic significance, this scene further alters her last appearance in the play, where she destroys the arbor and kills herself, by giving the central tree its own backstory. The newly provided genealogy of the plant, the information

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 237.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

that Hieronimo himself “set it of a kernel” (3.12A.64) and watered it twice daily, casts the tree as a second child of his and Isabella’s. His bitter joke that the tree then “grew a gallows, and did bear our son. / It bore thy fruit and mine” (3.12A.70-1) suggests that the tree is like another Isabella “bearing” Horatio in death as she “bore” him in life. With these associations established in the painter scene, Isabella’s destruction of the arbor takes on new significance as an assault against the tree, a child, and her self.

After Hieronimo and Isabella discuss this tree, Bazardo the painter arrives. He, like Hieronimo, is an old father of a murdered son. Bazardo has come for justice, the very thing that Hieronimo seeks but cannot find. Hieronimo, seeing himself in the painter, asks, “Art thou not sometimes mad? Is there no tricks that comes before thine eyes?” (3.12A.104-5). In this moment, the protagonist exhibits an awareness of his own mental state. Furthermore, here he associates visions with madness, suggesting that “tricks” appearing before one’s eyes are a sign of insanity. Bazardo says that he is sometimes mad and likewise sees illusions before his eyes, but he behaves rationally in this scene. Hieronimo’s plan for the two old men to “range this hideous orchard up and down / Like to two lions reaved of their young” (3.12A.100-1) comes to naught, and he raves alone.

Artistic representation and madness are both at the center of this addition. Although Bazardo the painter comes to Hieronimo to get justice, most of the scene consists of Hieronimo requesting a painting. He begins by asking for a typical, respectable image of himself, saying, “I’d have you paint me in my gallery in your oil colours, matted, and draw me five years younger than I am” (3.12A.113-5), commissioning an ordinary portrait. He asks Bazardo to add Horatio and “Isabella standing by me, with a speaking look to my son Horatio”

(3.12A.116-7). He wants his wife painted with a “speaking look,” an expression that conveys the words “God bless thee, my sweet son” (3.12A.119). Donna Hamilton argues that, in his desire for a speaking portrait, Hieronimo really describes poetry, which the early moderns often thought of as a speaking picture.¹¹⁹ In this moment he wants more than mimesis (that is, the representation of reality through art); he wants a painting of a past reality, one where he is younger, his son is still alive, and Isabella dotes lovingly on Horatio.

Then Hieronimo’s thoughts move from this desire to reclaim the past to a wish to capture the trauma of finding his son murdered. He asks for an image of him finding Horatio’s body and his subsequent madness. He asks the painter to do impossible things, such as painting a “doleful cry” (3.12A.123-4). The painter can do it “seemingly” (3.12A.125), but seeming is not quite enough for Hieronimo: “Nay, it should cry—but all is one” (3.12A.126). Toward the end of Hieronimo’s description of the picture he wants, he asks Bazardo to paint even more extraordinary sights:

Draw me like old Priam of Troy, crying, ‘The house is o’ fire, the house is o’ fire!’, as the torch over my head. Make me curse, make me rave, make me cry, make me mad, make me well again, make me curse hell, invoke heaven, and, in the end, leave me in a trance, and so forth. (3.12A.152-7)

In this passage, Hieronimo’s mind turns toward another famous bereaved father, king Priam. He creates irrational connections based on similarities, such as that between Priam’s house on fire and his own torch. He then asks Bazardo to depict him a multitude of ways, taking him through grief and madness, then finally restoring his sanity. While describing the sort of image he wants Bazardo to create, his words “make me” hint at a desire for the Painter to actually affect him personally, eventually making him well again. He does not merely want a painting,

¹¹⁹ Hamilton, 204.

he wants a cathartic experience that will transpose his wellness in the painting onto reality. He seeks to be transformed through art. As he describes the stages he wants to be taken through, Hieronimo likely acts each one out, thereby showing how all these states are depicted onstage through this discussion of art.

Bazardo never attempts to fulfill Hieronimo's requests. Another artist does, although outside of the play. Hieronimo tells the painter to paint him finding his son's body: the subject of the woodcut on the 1615 edition. The image is not exactly what Hieronimo describes, as it also includes Bel-imperia calling for help and Lorenzo taking her away. It does, however, match the description of him "in my shirt and my gown under mine arm, with my torch in my hand, and my sword reared up thus" (3.12A.135-138).



Fig. 7. The 1615 woodcut¹²⁰

¹²⁰ This is the same woodcut as the one shown in chapter one, from the 1615 title page of *The Spanish Tragedy*.

In this image, Hieronimo is indeed presented in his shirt with his sword and a torch in his hands (see Fig. 7). Although the image contains dialogue, it does not use the words that Hieronimo tells the painter to use, “What noise is this? Who calls Hieronimo?” (3.12A.138). Instead, the illustrated Hieronimo says, “Alas, it is my son Horatio,” paraphrasing a line from 2.5: “Alas, it is Horatio, my sweet son!” (2.5.14). Nevertheless, here we get a taste of what Hieronimo asks for on a literal level, with him “behold[ing] a man hanging, and tottering” (3.12A.157-8). And yet, we know that this would not suffice for him. It shows him finding the body, but it cannot show the succession of passions that he requires. It cannot make him well again.

Soon, Hieronimo loses faith that he can be well again. When the painter asks, “And is this the end?” (3.12A.158), he replies, “Oh, no, there is no end; the end is death and madness” (3.12A.159-60). Believing that no outcome without madness exists, he accepts that he cannot undo what has been done to him and be made sane again. Nor does he now wish to. Hieronimo says, “I am never better than when I am mad, then methinks I am a brave fellow, then I do wonders” (3.12A.160-1). Indeed, it is hard not to see the truth in his words; he most entertains audiences in his madness, and it is precisely in those episodes that he does wonders. The author of the additions seems to agree with Hieronimo that he is “never better than when [he is] mad,” presenting more of the protagonist at his best.

But then, at the end of the scene, we also see him at his worst. The painter scene ends with sudden violence, as Hieronimo “*beats the Painter in*” (3.12A.166). Without the additions, Hieronimo’s violence is directed solely at inanimate things—papers, the ground—until the final scene where he gets revenge. Now, however, he lashes out at an innocent man, one with

whom he shares his grief. He attacks the painter as he thinks about what he would do to his son's murderers, "thus would I tear and drag him up and down" (3.12A.164-5), getting so carried away that he commits real violence. In this moment, his madness has made him unable to distinguish between reality and his own imagination.

Addition Five: "Now do I applaud what I have acted"

Coming near the end of the play, the fifth addition replaces some of the dialogue following "Soliman and Perseda," adding to Hieronimo's boasts about the vengeance he has just performed. Now Hieronimo is even more cruel in his victory, mocking the King of Spain, the Duke of Castile, and the Viceroy of Portugal after murdering the next generation of their families. He asks them, "But are you sure they are dead?" (4.4.187.1), and upon hearing that they are quite sure, says, "Nay, then I care not. Come, and we shall be friends; / Let us lay our heads together. / See, here's a goodly noose will hold them all" (4.4.187.4-6). His invitation that the three hang themselves in one noose goes predictably unheeded. Then he tells the Viceroy (who has done him no direct harm) that he wants to see him "ride in this red pool" (4.4.187.15) and die along with his son Balthazar. And then, when the three royal men can hear no more, the addition ends with Hieronimo biting out his tongue just as in the original play.

Although Carol Neely argues that in this part Hieronimo "is not clearly presented as mad," she acknowledges that "he is (briefly) more out of control than in the original version and harps on his obsessive theme, the murder of his son."¹²¹ Hieronimo's madness may not be

¹²¹ Neely, 38.

as clear as it was earlier, but it is present nevertheless. In his verbal torture of the king, duke, and viceroy, he comes across as sadistically unhinged, far removed from the sympathetic old man that we are familiar with. His unsettled mind manifests in his language, alternating between thoughts as he did in his earlier madness. For instance, he describes killing Lorenzo thus, “’twas I that killed him. / Look you this same hand, ’twas it that stabbed / His heart—do you see this hand?” (4.4.187.36-8). In these lines, he moves quickly from his hand to Lorenzo’s stabbed heart, then abruptly back to his own hand. This repetition and alternating between thoughts mark his most consistent verbal indicators of insanity. By restoring Hieronimo’s madness to him, the addition suggests that he has been mad through his preparation and performance of the play-within-the-play. The implicit connection between “Soliman and Perseda” and his mental state therefore becomes more clear.

Before he bites out his tongue, Hieronimo declares, “Now do I applaud what I have acted” (4.4.187.46). In this line, he refers to his roles in both *The Spanish Tragedy* and “Soliman and Perseda,” having acted both as revenger in the play and as the bashaw in the play-within-the-play. Earlier, before he revealed that Lorenzo, Balthazar, and Bel-imperia were actually dead, the King of Spain and the Viceroy of Portugal applauded his efforts, the king saying, “Well said, old Marshal, this was bravely done” (4.4.67). Their praise stopped, of course, when they realized the tragedy they had just witnessed. In the last addition, Hieronimo applauds himself, continuing the earlier praise while also commending the other tragedy that he has created: *The Spanish Tragedy*.

“Is this the end?”: The Ghosts of *The Spanish Tragedy*

When the Painter asks Hieronimo, “And is this the end?” (3.12A.158), he wonders if he has finished describing the image, but that is not how Hieronimo takes it. He replies, “Oh, no, there is no end; the end is death and madness” (3.12A.159-60). Hieronimo’s words paradoxically assert that there both is and isn’t an end. He says there isn’t one, but he also claims that there is in death and madness. The final words of the play likewise propose and deny an ending. Revenge says that he will bring Andrea’s enemies into hell and “there begin their endless tragedy” (4.5.48). These words conclude the play but also describe a never-ending tragedy in hell. There is, however, another sense in which *The Spanish Tragedy* never ends. Revised and reworked, it rears its head upon the stage in altered forms, such as when transformed by the 1602 additions.

Even when actors performed other plays on the early modern English stage, the ghosts of *The Spanish Tragedy* sometimes linger, often through imitations of the play. In 1599, John Marston parodied the painter scene in *Antonio and Mellida*:

Balurdo	I would have you paint me, for my device, a good fat leg of ewe mutton, swimming in stewed broth of plums (boy keel your mouth, it runs over) and the word shall be, “ <i>Hold my dish, whilst I spill my pottage.</i> ” Sure, in my conscience, t’would be the most sweet device, now.
Painter	’Twould scent of kitchen-stuff too much.
Balurdo	Gods neakes, now I remember me, I have the rarest device in my head that ever breathed. Can you paint me a driveling reeling son, & let the word be, “Uh.”
Painter	A belch.
Balurdo	Oh, no no: “Uh,” paint me “uh,” or nothing.
Painter	It can not be done sir, but by a seeming kind of drunkenness.
Balurdo	No? Well, let me have a good massie ring, with your own poesie graven in it, that must sing a small treble, word for word, thus;

*And if you will my true lover be,
Come follow me to the green wood.*

Painter O Lord, sir, I can not make a picture sing. (5.1.20-39)¹²²

Marston keeps close to the pattern of the fourth addition. Balurdo's description of himself brought forth with "a good fat leg of ewe mutton" imitates Hieronimo, but with his sword replaced by a leg of mutton. While Hieronimo wanted to be painted saying "What noise is this? Who calls Hieronimo?" Balurdo asks to say, "Hold my dish, whilst I spill my pottage." Instead of painting a "doleful cry," Balurdo wants a belch. And, of course, the name Balurdo hearkens to the name of the painter in *The Spanish Tragedy*: Bazarro. All this creates a comical, drunk version of Hieronimo's painting.

This is not the only parody of *The Spanish Tragedy*—far from it. *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, for instance, parodies Hieronimo's extreme grief in its own play-within-the-play, "Pyramus and Thisbe." When Pyramus finds his love's dead body, he says, "Which is—no, no, which was—the fairest dame" (5.2.286), mocking Hieronimo's lines when he finds Horatio: "Alas, it is Horatio, my sweet son! / Oh, no, but he that whilom was my son!" (2.5.14-5). Bottom, overacting as Pyramus, mimics the emotional excess and language of Hieronimo.

There are many such moments where *The Spanish Tragedy* pokes through the surface of other plays. When Titania says "What angel awakes me from my flowery bed?" (3.2.125), her line parodies Hieronimo's "what outcries pluck me from my naked bed?" (2.5.1). The line "Hieronimo, beware; go by, go by" (3.12.30) became commonly quoted in other plays, such as *The Taming of the Shrew*, *Every Man In His Humour*, and *The Shoemaker's Holiday*. Most of all, *The Spanish Tragedy*'s influence can be felt in the general structure of revenge tragedy,

¹²² John Marston, *Antonio and Mellida*, in *The Plays of John Marston* (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1934). For clarity, I have modernized the spelling and altered the punctuation.

patterned upon Kyd's play. In my last chapter, I discussed *Titus Andronicus*, perhaps the play which most closely conforms to the shape of *The Spanish Tragedy*, allowing the ghost of Kyd's most famous work to frequently shine through it. Now, I shall turn to a ghost of the additions, a scene which similarly expands a revenger's madness and turns it metatheatrical: the fly-killing scene in *Titus Andronicus*.

Chapter 4: Shadow and Substance in the “Fly-killing Scene”

At the crux of act three, scene two of *Titus Andronicus*, often known as the “fly-killing scene,” the title character stabs at a fly repeatedly, pretending that it is his enemy, Aaron the Moor. Upon seeing this behavior, Marcus says, “Grief has so wrought on him / He takes false shadows for true substances” (3.2.80-1). In these lines, Marcus literally refers to Titus’s madness, but he also points toward his act of imagination. When Titus takes the fly for Aaron, he does so intentionally, casting it within a miniature revenge play. The “false shadows” are a product both of Titus’s mad delusions and his theatrical experiment. Here we can see the culmination of the development I have traced; lunacy and drama are united by a shared mistaking of shadows for substance. The relationship between madness and drama across *The Spanish Tragedy*, *Titus Andronicus*, and the 1602 *Spanish Tragedy* additions builds to this moment. At long last, madness and metadrama coincide as Titus’s episode of lunacy creates theater, the play-within-the-play serving as both a sign of madness and a dramatic exercise.

The “fly-killing scene” is an addition to the play that was first published in 1623 in the first folio of Shakespeare’s plays. The scene centers on the surviving Andronici after the deaths of Quintus and Martius, the rape and mutilation of Lavinia, and the onset of Titus’s madness. For a long time, scholars have accepted that Shakespeare added this scene to the play later, as it doesn’t appear in the quarto texts and it doesn’t advance the plot.¹²³ This scene seems to serve

¹²³ For a recent argument that Thomas Middleton wrote the scene sometime after 1607, see Gary Taylor and Doug Duhaime, “Who Wrote the Fly Scene (3.2) in *Titus Andronicus*?: Automated Searches and Deep Reading,” in *The New Oxford Shakespeare: Authorship Companion*, eds. Gary Taylor and Gabriel Egan, 67-91 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017). Much of their case rests upon the argument that the inclusion of the fly-killing scene violates the “law of re-entry,” which states that characters should not leave the stage and immediately re-enter for the next scene. Because musical interludes between acts only began in 1608, Taylor and Duhaime argue that the scene had to be written that year or later, so

the same purpose as the 1602 additions to *The Spanish Tragedy*; they both elaborate upon their protagonists' madness. In addition to adding more of Titus's lunacy, the "fly-killing scene" continues the investigation of the onstage representation of thoughts and emotions without the use of speech or gestures. At the height of his madness, Titus is more concerned with the theatrical representation and the value of art than ever before.

Because shadows and substances are at the heart of this scene, let us begin by examining this opposition's place in early modern literature. In exploring the trope of shadow and substance in poetry, John Hollander writes that the terms "are ubiquitous in sixteenth- and seventeenth century usage."¹²⁴ However, the classical precedent for this antithesis is not between shadow and substance, but "between shadow and body, Latin *umbra* and *corpus*."¹²⁵ As Hollander notes, the shift from body to substance seems to have already emerged by 1579, when John Lyly wrote in the popular prose fiction *Euphues*, "they be shadows without substance."¹²⁶ Lyly would frequently invoke the topos in his plays as well. In *Campaspe*, Apelles tells Campaspe, "the sweet thoughts, the sure hopes, thy protested faith, will cause me to embrace thy shadow continually in mine arms, of the which by strong imagination I will make a substance."¹²⁷ In *Gallathea*, Diana calls love "the shadows of virtue instead of the

that the four characters do not simply exit and enter. However, the painter scene in *The Spanish Tragedy* is another addition which violates the "law of re-entry," as Hieronimo leaves the stage only to come back on at the start of the next scene with a book in his hands (just as Lucius's son does). Because the painter scene was performed and printed well before 1608, there is therefore precedent for the "law of re-entry" being violated without a musical interlude.

¹²⁴ John Hollander, *The Substance of Shadow: A Darkening Trope in Poetic History* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1999), 15.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ John Lyly, *Euphues*, in *An Anthology of Elizabethan Prose Fiction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 99.

¹²⁷ John Lyly, *Campaspe* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), 4.4.11-5.

substance.”¹²⁸ In these instances, the characters’ uses of this topos point offstage: Apelles to a hypothetical future, Diana to a figurative understanding of love.

When the shadows are located onstage, however, the topos brings out aspects of the nature of theater, suggesting that the events onstage are merely shadows. *The True Tragedy of Richard the Third*, a play which precedes Shakespeare’s own history about the notorious king, begins with a conversation between Truth and Poetry:

Poetry	Truth well met.
Truth	Thanks, Poetry, what makes thou upon a stage?
Poetry	Shadows.
Truth	Then will I add bodies to the shadows, Therefore depart and give Truth leave To shew her pageant. ¹²⁹

Here Poetry itself acknowledges that it merely presents shadows upon the stage. Fortunately, Truth is there, able to “add bodies to the shadows” and supply the substance for the history’s events. This scene shows a certain anxiety related to theater, caused by an awareness that plays are essentially shadows and nothing more. In this particular case, the play’s historical basis rescues it from consisting of mere shadows. In Shakespeare’s *Henry VI Part One*, Talbot says “No, no, I am but shadow of myself. / You are deceiv’d, my substance is not here” (2.3.50-1). Talbot refers to himself as a shadow because he does not have his soldiers, who “are his substance, sinews, arms, and strength” (2.3.63). Because these words are spoken by an actor, they betray another meaning: the man onstage is but the shadow of the real Talbot, a theatrical representation of a man long dead. In these plays, *The True Tragedy of Richard III* and *Henry*

¹²⁸ John Lyly, *Galatea* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2012), 3.4.50-1.

¹²⁹ Anonymous, *The True Tragedie of Richard the Third* (London: 1594). *Early English Books Online*.

VI Part One, the onstage shadows do have substance, although that substance is located in the historical past.

Truth can provide the substance for histories (or at least claim to—we should not assume that the history is accurate), but what does that mean for fictional plays that lack historical substance? Early modern antitheatrical writers were bothered by the substancelessness of plays. As Jonas Barrish writes, puritans thought that fiction was sinful because “it was to imply that what had never happened at all might be more interesting than what had, that God’s own efforts had somehow fallen short.”¹³⁰ Stephen Gosson, the most important antitheatrical writer of the time, uses the shadow/substance topos to describe plays, writing that “the expressing of vice by imitation brings us by the shadow, to the substance of the same.”¹³¹

Enemies of the theater were not alone in being concerned with its substanceless—so too were playwrights themselves. Shakespeare would frequently examine the antithesis of shadow and substance throughout his career, especially in his explorations of the theater. His particular interest in the medium is unsurprising; unlike Lyly, his career began on the stage, and he worked as an actor himself. Theseus talks explicitly about plays in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*: “The best in these kinds are but shadows, and the word are no worse if our imaginations amend them” (5.1.210). These words admit that even the best plays can be no more than shadows and illusions. At the beginning of the epilogue Puck says,

If we shadows have offended
Think but this, and all is mended:
That you have but slumbered here

¹³⁰ Jonas Barrish, *The Antitheatrical Prejudice* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981), 93.

¹³¹ Stephen Gosson, *Plays Confuted in Five Actions*, in *Shakespeare’s Theater: A Sourcebook*, edited by Tanya Pollard (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 108.

While these visions did appear. (5.1.413-6)

In this moment, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is particularly self-conscious about theater, admitting that the play consists of “shadows.” The epilogue’s defence against criticism of the play lies in its very lack of substance. As Puck tells the audience, if you are displeased, just remember that there was no substance in “these visions.” In these instances, we can get a sense of Shakespeare’s ambivalence about the nature of theatre. As an illusory activity, it can resemble both dreams and madness. He seems simultaneously concerned and fascinated by the potential of the poetic imagination.

The “fly-killing scene” takes place during a banquet, although one where Titus urges his family to “eat no more / Than will preserve just so much strength in us / As will revenge these bitter woes of ours” (3.2.1-3). With these words, he recognizes his role in the play: to take revenge. He reduces himself to that function, as he denies himself any more food than what will allow him to accomplish this goal. By making this scene a banquet, Shakespeare connects it to the climactic banquet in the final scene. Titus’s stated desire to only eat enough to get revenge looks forward toward the banquet wherein he finally avenges his family’s woes. This scene, like the climax, is also made particularly performative because the banquet is a type of ceremony-within-the-play, an onstage spectacle.

From Titus’s opening speech, the scene foregrounds problems of representing emotions. Marcus begins the scene with his arms folded in a “sorrow-wreathen knot” (3.2.4)

which Titus bids him to unknit. After the mutilations of the previous scenes, Titus and Lavinia “cannot passionate [their] tenfold grief/ With folded arms” (3.2.6-7) and are therefore denied that basic dramatic gesture to represent their woe. Folding one’s arms was an established sign of grief and melancholy, making up part of the iconography of that condition. Woodcuts of melancholics, on the frontispieces of both *The Melancholy Knight* and *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, show men with folded arms (see Figs. 8 and 9).



Fig. 8 & 9. Melancholics with folded arms¹³²

As Titus says, he and Lavinia cannot replicate this standard melancholy pose, deprived so of their hands. Titus says that he is, however, still able to use his “poor right hand... to tyrannize upon my breast” (3.2.7-8), referring to the thumping of the chest associated with tyrants (see Fig. 10 & 11).

¹³² These images are taken from the frontispieces of Samuel Rowlands, *The Melancholie Knight* (London, 1615). *Early English Books Online*; and Robert Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy* (Oxford, 1651). *Early English Books Online*.



Fig. 10 & 11. Titus thumping at his heart¹³³

While he can still thump at his heart, he acknowledges that Lavinia “canst not strike it thus to make it still” (3.2.114). He describes her as a “map of woe, that thus dost talk in signs” (3.2.12). However much Titus’s capacity to represent his emotions in conventional ways has been limited, Lavinia has been all the more deprived. Her “poor heart beats with outrageous beating” (3.2.13), but she is denied the standard dramatic representations of grief: words and hand gestures.

In this scene, Titus continues to misinterpret Lavinia. Now he takes her to be suicidal, giving ridiculous instructions for drowning her sorrows:

Wound it with sighing, girl, kill it with groans,
 Or get some little knife between thy teeth
 And just against thy heart make thou a hole,
 That all the tears that thy poor eyes let fall
 May run into that sink and, soaking in,
 Drown the lamenting fool in sea-salt tears. (3.2.15-20)

¹³³ *Titus Andronicus*, directed by Jane Howell (London: BBC Television, 1985), DVD; and *Titus*, dir. Julie Taymor.

Here his language is at its most fanciful, as he tells her to use her teeth to cut a hole in her chest so that her tears can drown her heart. In the first line, Titus uses violent words, the verbs “wound and “kill,” to describe the harmless acts of sighing and groaning. In the following lines, he couches descriptions of more violent behaviors in gentler terms. He does not tell her to stab or cut, but rather to “make thou a hole.” The hole would not even be her cause of death, as Titus narrates it, but her tears would “drown the lamenting fool,” her heart. Therefore, Titus describes Lavinia’s griefs ending her life. As I discussed earlier, Isabella’s madness is represented through her ravings, violence, and suicide in *The Spanish Tragedy*. Lavinia cannot rave, but other characters assume that she is violent when she chases her nephew. In this addition, suicidal thoughts are projected upon her, thereby increasing the degree to which characters misinterpret her signs as those of Isabella’s madness.

Marcus, shocked by Titus’s words, says, “Fie, brother, fie! Teach her not thus to lay / Such violent hands upon her tender life” (3.2.21-2). Titus, seizing upon Marcus’s use of the word “hands,” replies, “O handle not the theme, to talk of hands, / Lest we remember still that we have none” (3.2.29-30). Titus sees the disconnect between his brother’s metaphor and reality, as Lavinia cannot lay hands against anything, being handless. Titus then plays on the word “hand,” asking his brother not to “handle” the theme. In this moment of wordplay, he willfully twists Marcus’s metaphor, punning on the very word he criticizes his brother for using. Immediately afterwards, he admits that he would not “forget we had no hands / If Marcus did not name the word of hands” (3.2.32-3). Gillian Murray Kendall argues that at this point the play finally shows “recognition of word as word and thing as thing.”¹³⁴ Titus

¹³⁴ Gillian Murray Kendall, “‘Lend me thy Hand’: Metaphor and Mayhem in *Titus Andronicus*,” *Shakespeare Quarterly* 40, no. 3 (1989): 304.

recognizes that Marcus's metaphor doesn't actually change the reality of the situation, nor his awareness of it. In the scene added to expand his madness, Titus is most attuned to the relationship between language and meaning.

Titus, aware of his irrational speech, says, "How frantically I square my talk" (3.2.31). The word "frantic" indicates disorder, meaning "affected with mental disease; 'lunatic', insane; (in later use) violently or ragingly mad."¹³⁵ The word "square" suggests the opposite. In this instance, to "square" means to "to regulate, frame, arrange, or direct, by, according to, or on some standard or principle of action."¹³⁶ In other words, Titus here describes ordering his speech with disorder. His observation is accurate—he does speak the improbable and absurd, but there is reason underlying his words. Voicing this paradox helps show Titus's awareness of his own madness as well as his altered attention to words themselves. He explicitly says that "no man should be mad but I" (3.2.24), displaying a consciousness of his mental state that he lacks elsewhere.¹³⁷ Like Hieronimo in the additions to *The Spanish Tragedy*, Titus has become aware of his lunacy. Both madmen become aware of the paradoxes of madness, as Hieronimo says that he is never better than when he is mad, and Titus recognizes the disordered order of his words.

After this admission of madness, Titus's thoughts return to Lavinia and the struggle to understand her. He claims that he "can interpret all her martyred signs— / She says she drinks no other drink but tears, / Brewed with her sorrow, mashed upon her cheeks" (3.2.36-8).

Despite his claims, he misinterprets her, projecting his own poetic nonsense upon her.

Although he fails now, he intends to develop a way of understanding her, of breaking past the

¹³⁵ *OED*, "frantic, adj.^{A.1}"

¹³⁶ *OED*, "square, v.^{II}"

¹³⁷ See 5.2, where he says "I am not mad" (5.2.21).

limitations caused by her inability to speak or gesture, where from her signs he “will wrest an alphabet / And by still practice learn to know thy meaning” (3.2.44-5). He describes a new system of communication, whereby he can finally interpret his daughter correctly.

Titus’s grandson, young Lucius, pleads, “Good grandsire, leave these bitter deep laments; / Make my aunt merry with some pleasing tale” (3.2.46-7). Here he proposes an affective model of literature, wherein stories can alter one’s emotions by presenting merriment to the reader. Happy stories can relieve grief, and “make merry” the suffering Lavinia. Wallowing in grief, in “bitter deep laments,” does nothing to help the afflicted, according to the boy. Marcus’s next words affirm this view: “Alas, the tender boy in passion moved / Doth weep to see his grandsire’s heaviness” (3.2.48-9). Emotion is contagious, these lines suggest, for better *and* for worse. The boy suffers as he watches his grandfather suffer, and Lavinia can be made merry with merry tales. In both these cases, young Lucius and Marcus suggest that audiences share in the emotions they witness.

At the end of this scene, Titus rejects the view that Lucius and Marcus express here. Rather than try to cheer his daughter with tales of happiness, he decides to read “sad stories chanced in the times of old” (3.2.84) to Lavinia. In proposing this course of action, he asserts a cathartic model of literature, where reading about misery can help the reader feel better. Titus seems to side with Aristotle, who says that tragedy involves “through a course of pity and fear completing the purification of tragic acts.”¹³⁸ Michael Schoenfeldt sees this sort of catharsis at work in *King Lear* and *The Rape of Lucrece*. In both those works, he finds characters who find fellow sufferers in either art or reality. He says, “Regarding the pain of others with engagement

¹³⁸ Aristotle, *Poetics*, trans. Gerald F. Else (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1967), 1446b.

and sympathy, and doing what we can to ameliorate that suffering, may almost miraculously provide an anodyne for our own pain.”¹³⁹ Titus likewise seeks relief through sympathizing with those suffering in literature.

Before he decides to read piteous tales, Titus first sympathizes with an unlikely subject: a fly that Marcus kills. Titus quickly condemns the killing, saying that “a deed of death done on the innocent / Becomes not Titus’ brother” (3.2.56-7). At first, Marcus justifies the act by suggesting that his brother is overreacting, saying, “Alas, my lord, I have but killed a fly” (3.2.59). This defense does not suffice for Titus, who asks, “How if that fly had a father and a mother?” (3.2.61). Having lost three sons already in the play (and twenty-one before it starts), he thinks of the fly’s parents and how they, like Titus, may be affected by the death of a child. Then his mind turns to the fly’s buzzing, silenced by Marcus, as he mourns the “poor harmless fly, / That with his pretty buzzing melody / Came here to make us merry” (3.2.64-6). His description of the fly’s pleasing melody resembles Marcus’s words upon finding Lavinia after being raped and mutilated: “Had he heard the heavenly harmony / Which that sweet tongue hath made, / He would have dropped his knife and fell asleep” (2.3.48-50). The fly resembles Lavinia, bringing joy to others through song, but silenced through a cruel act committed by unrepentant attackers. Titus therefore thinks of the fly as both his dead sons and his silenced daughter, and focuses on the experiences of its parents and those who could have enjoyed its song.

Marcus realizes that he cannot gain Titus’s forgiveness by minimizing the act, so he revises it. He says, “Pardon me, sir, it was a black ill-favoured fly, / Like to the empress’ Moor.

¹³⁹ Michael Schoenfeldt, “Shakespearean Pain,” in *Shakespearean Sensations*, eds. Katharine A. Craik and Tanya Pollard (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 207.

Therefore I killed him” (3.2.68-9). He shifts the subject represented by the fly from Titus’s children to his enemy, Aaron the Moor. Titus accepts this revision of the act, praising Marcus for “a charitable deed” (3.2.71). J.K. Barret says that the “strange scene provides a paradigm for the act of interpretation, and the nature of metaphor.”¹⁴⁰ By changing the interpretation of the act, Marcus alters Titus’s reaction, making him accept and approve of the killing. After accepting the interpretation of the fly as Aaron, he uses the newly recast insect to stage a miniature revenge play of his own, wherein the fly plays Aaron. Titus, unable to get revenge in reality, resorts to creating a fiction, “flattering myself as if it were the Moor” (3.2.73). Although Titus never explicitly says that he is creating a play of any sort, he nevertheless engages in theatrical practice. He has become director, playwright, and actor as he casts the fly as Aaron, decides how the play will go, and acts out the stabbing himself (see Fig. 12 and 13).



Fig. 12 & 13. Titus stabbing the fly.

Marcus’s response, “he takes false shadows for true substances,” operates as a dual metaphor for both madness and drama. The two converge, united by a shared acceptance of illusion. In choosing to see the fly as Aaron, Titus accepts it for what it isn’t, in much the same

¹⁴⁰ J.K. Barret, *Untold Futures: Time and Literary Culture in Renaissance England* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2016), 128.

way that audiences intentionally accept actors as their characters despite knowing otherwise. If Titus is mad for his actions here, the scene suggests, then perhaps so are the viewers who willingly take false shadows for true substances.

Epilogue: “And is this the end?”

This thesis began on the stage. During the summer of 2015, when I was participating in the Shakespeare at Winedale program, I played a madman in *The Duchess of Malfi*. During one performance, I jumped off of the stage and onto an empty chair. I turned to the person seated next to it, stared into his eyes, and growled. Climbing over the row in front of me, I ventured further into the audience. When the scene was over, I sat down backstage and started to think about how I had just intruded upon the audience far more than I ever had before. I wasn’t sure why I did it—it just felt right, somehow. My curiosity led me to consider other times when stage madness turns toward the audience. I thought about the mad characters who see specters in the spectators, transforming them into monstrous shapes. Then I remembered Theseus’s words which admit that poets and madmen are of the same ilk, both letting their imaginations take over their realities. I began to wonder if Shakespeare might have viewed theater as a kind of ordered madness. Then I pondered my own experiences. As an actor, I became people I never was, lived places I never went, and suffered passions I never felt. As a spectator, I accepted a playwright’s fiction for a couple hours, willingly believed that people I knew were monarchs long dead, and let illusions transport me.

This thesis is thoroughly indebted to a number of performances. The bulk of my ideas about *The Spanish Tragedy* emerged when I directed the play for a student theater troupe. This production allowed me to explore the tragedy and puzzle through its challenges. In it, I emphasized the play’s metadramatic elements by having puppets play all of the characters besides Andrea and Revenge (see Fig. 14). Then, at the climax of the play, Hieronimo and

Bel-imperia stabbed the puppeteers controlling Lorenzo and Balthazar, not the puppets. At that moment of the tragedy, where the layer between play and play-within-the-play collapses, we broke down the dramatic barriers further, casting aside the puppets and letting the actors take the puppets' places as the characters.



Fig. 14. Hieronimo and the painter¹⁴¹

Once during a rehearsal for *The Spanish Tragedy*, the actor playing Hieronimo told me that, during the mad scenes, he kept wanting to move closer to the audience and deliver more lines to them. When I asked him why, he told me that it just *felt* right. He couldn't fully explain why he felt more connected to the audience in this role, but his intuition made it feel natural. For some reason, he felt disconnected to the other characters when Hieronimo was mad, but closer to the viewers.

In this thesis, I've offered up an idea as my own, that madness and metadrama converge in early modern plays, and that studying this overlap is worthwhile and productive. While

¹⁴¹ The actors in the picture are Austin Hanna and Laura Doan as Hieronimo and Bazardo, respectively.

researching previous criticism, I haven't seen this argument clearly written. But I have seen it performed. I've watched King Lear speak to the audience only after going mad, pointing to individuals to represent each delusion. I've watched Hamlet pretend to be a lunatic by performing a set of expected behaviors. I've watched a host of characters imbued with a certain dynamic, theatrical energy during manic episodes. Even though the relationship between lunacy and metatheatre has been rarely written about, it often emerges onstage during performances.

This thesis has largely been my effort to understand why it felt natural to leave the stage as a madman in *The Duchess of Malfi*, and why that actor playing Hieronimo felt so connected to the audience. In these pages, I've traced the overlap between madness and metatheatre across two plays and the additions to them, but I believe that this connection extends beyond these two early revenge tragedies. It can be felt most acutely when plays like *The Spanish Tragedy* or *King Lear* are performed. We see ourselves in the madmen on stage, as we, like them, take false shadows for true substances.

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