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**NARRATING THE SELF IN ENGLISH RENAISSANCE DRAMA:
STORYTELLING AND SELF-NARRATION IN THOMAS KYD'S
*THE SPANISH TRAGEDY***

This paper examines the use of techniques of storytelling and self-narration on the English stage in the late 16th and early 17th centuries, with an emphasis on Thomas Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy*. The playwrights of the period were negotiating their way in a new world in which language was a medium which was coming more and more to be respected, and those who could wield it had the potential for advancement in ways never before conceivable. In the forefront of those negotiating for such a place through their art was Thomas Kyd. He may be considered the pioneer in the development of the self on the English stage in the early modern period through storytelling and self-narration as representational techniques. The paper also examines some of the profound changes in dramaturgy which took place in the period in question and which culminated in the drama of Thomas Kyd.

Key words: English Renaissance Drama, Thomas Kyd, *The Spanish Tragedy*, storytelling, self-narration

1. INTRODUCTION

As the 16th century moved toward the 17th, tales and especially the manner of their telling became crucial in the development of dramatic technique as the English state itself sought to write its own story on the international scene. And the development of the self in literature, perhaps paralleling the story of the nation and the Tudor project of inventing the English persona, took a giant leap forward. In commenting on an essay by Leonard Tennenhouse, Jonathan Dollimore (1984) asserts that political language and theatrical language must be considered together, and that any split between them is largely an invention of modern times (Dollimore 1984: 10). Indeed, any study of literature without at least some close scrutiny of the historical period in which it appeared dismisses a vital feature of literary investigation. Dollimore comments,

Greville and Raleigh knew then that the idea of literature passively reflecting history was erroneous; literature was a practice which intervened in contemporary history in the very act of representing it. (Dollimore 1984: 10)

However, as useful as such an approach must be, Dollimore goes too far in stressing the theater as an active agent of political commentary and subversion. Paul Yachnin (1997) offers a more balanced view when he writes,

Shakespeare's "Mousetrap" suggests that a theater that has no control over what it means is in no position to be able to influence its audience toward any particular viewpoint. (Yachnin 1997: 11)

Yachnin's view is that the theater's evolution was along professional lines, with the players and writers more concerned with making a profit and appealing to a large audience than with political subversion. And Andrew Gurr (1992) concurs when he writes that

plays were dependent on the conditions of performance as few written works have ever been. They were working playscripts before they became written texts....Almost the whole of Shakespearean drama was written for companies that used their playbooks solely for the purpose of making their living, and by far the best living was to be made in the metropolis. (Gurr 1992: 6)

It is not as if the writers of the period ignored politics. Indeed, issues of class hatred, poverty and starvation, the corruption of the courts of Europe and more were the staples of their narratives. But they evidently learned to disguise such elements, since a blatant critique of the English authorities would surely have brought swift retribution down upon their heads.

The playwrights of the period were negotiating their way in a new world in which language was a medium which was coming more and more to be respected, and those who could wield it had the potential for advancement in ways never before conceivable. In the forefront of those negotiating for such a place through their art was Thomas Kyd. He may be considered the pioneer in the development of the self on the English stage in the early modern period through storytelling and self-narration as representational techniques.

This paper examines the use of techniques of storytelling and self-narration on the English stage in the late 16th and early 17th centuries, with an emphasis on Thomas Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy* (ca. 1587). The paper examines some of the profound changes in dramaturgy which took place in the period in question and which culminated in the drama of Thomas Kyd. It also discusses the relatively new concepts of social mobility and self-fashioning of the period, the notions that what a person could be was not necessarily instilled at birth, as was widely believed in medieval times, but could be gained or donned later in life. Paul Yachnin writes of a growing emphasis in the period on what he calls the knowledge marketplace, and in the same vein this paper argues that the concept of "narrative for sale" — the offering of stories for money in the public theaters — was obviously reflected in the drama of the period but more subtly in the characters who told each other stories, particularly about their sometimes astonishingly complex lives.

The audiences of Renaissance drama as it evolved in the minds of men like Thomas Kyd were caught up in the life stories of the characters on the stage not only because they found them entertaining, but also because they perceived relevance to the times and themselves there. Hieronimo struggles against an uncaring bureaucracy and a murderous and completely self-interested aristocracy. He bemoans the fact that justice is simply unavailable to those who cannot pay for it. And this very hard fact, presented starkly on the stage before the first audiences of *The Spanish Tragedy*, would surely have been taken to the hearts of many in those audiences who knew only too well that Hieronimo was speaking the truth.

This paper draws at times on theories of cultural materialism and new historicism in order to accurately depict the circulation of social energies which existed in the

theater and elsewhere in early modern England. Since a discussion of the concepts of subjectivity and social mobility is the focus of the second section of the paper, it suffices here to simply review the major tenets of cultural materialist and new historicist criticism.

Essentially, cultural materialism practices a new kind of history: one in which, in the words of Jean Howard and Marion O'Connor, "reality is knowable only through the discourses which mediate it, and that there is a constant, if subterranean, struggle over whose constructions of the real will gain dominance" (Howard and O'Connor 1987: 3). In short, this method argues against any form of essentialism or the search for universal truths, feeling that such ideas are not ubiquitous but ideologically relative. Such criticism may take many forms. Strict cultural materialism concentrates on foregrounding, in the text of a play, three aspects of an ideological and dialectical process: consolidation, subversion, and containment (Dollimore 1984: 10). According to Jonathan Dollimore, "[t]he first refers, typically, to the ideological means whereby a dominant order seeks to perpetuate itself, the second to the subversion of that order, the third to the containment of ostensibly subversive pressures" (Dollimore 1984: 10).

Cultural materialism, however, does not take social class and its corresponding power structure as its predominant frame of reference nor is it as overtly committed to a political project. Some, of course, is: new historicism, which has produced important readings of Renaissance plays which are impressively contextualized in some aspect of Elizabethan or Jacobean life, finds its impetus in a materialist frame of reference. According to Brook Thomas, "[t]he new historicists... would have us see that even the most unlike poems are caught in a web of historical conditions, relationships and influences" (Thomas 1989: 237). New historicists insist on a thick description of relevant material surrounding the work under consideration. This "thick description," according to Walter Cohen, might entail contextualization in certain political tracts surrounding the play or in any number of 'historical documents' as various as a tract on sexuality, a French Troubadour poem, or a sermon on almost any subject matter, the theory being that "any social practice has at least a potential connection to any theatrical practice" (Cohen 1987: 34). This may be so. But some of the connections made between "cultural practices" and "theatrical practices" are spurious at best. The merit of this type of criticism lies in its commitment to the synchronic relationship between text and context, its drawback, perhaps, in the location of this relationship in terms of a Foucauldian power structure. The new historicist's link between theory and context often appears dubious. For example, in his introduction to *The Power of Forms in the English Renaissance* (1982), Stephen

Greenblatt moves from a description of the Essex conspiracy to broad social implications and the informing assumption that “the play had broken out of the boundaries of the playhouse” (Greenblatt 1982: 3). These societal concerns are privileged over a more detailed analysis of the historical situation itself.

The Spanish Tragedy might then be regarded not as an artistic representation of a single specific political event, but as a depiction of a general and overarching reorientation of ideas on a social level. Recognition and analysis of such a realignment of values and belief systems in the microcosmic arena of the play proves mutually enlightening to the study of the development of the self on the stage throughout Renaissance and post-Renaissance England as well.

2. EMERGENCE OF THE RENAISSANCE THEATER: STORY TELLING AND SELF-NARRATIVE AS REPRESENTATIONAL TECHNIQUES ON THE ENGLISH STAGE

This section examines the changes that affected dramaturgy in the transitional period of the late 16th century. It provides an insight into how the new theater grew from the old and how Kyd and his contemporaries in the professional theater world were able to exploit the resources of narrative.

In his *Self-Speaking in Medieval and Early Modern English Drama* (1997), Richard Hillman comments that Tudor secularization of the theater is very much in the forefront in explaining what he calls “the representation of subjectivity” (Hillman 1997: 68). If this is true, then the situation in the late 16th century was one of a rapidly developing professional theater which was looking to establish itself as a profitable and permanent fixture of the London business world. And the writers and players of that theater chose ways to represent human beings which suited their art and which would appeal to the public. This suggests that the characters which came to be represented on the stage in the 1580s and afterwards found favor with the audiences. Characters with complicated life stories suggestive of depths previously unknown on the stage must have been popular to thrive on it. The writers of the period found many ways to develop the life stories of characters, in ways that suggested a previously unknown measure of character subjectivity and interiority. As Yachnin puts it,

Nevertheless, [the] shifting of the angle of view so that it includes persons as persons rather than as mere effects of power remains highly instructive for anyone

pursuing an understanding of how Renaissance playwrights might have negotiated for legitimacy within an ideological field not of their own making, not under their control, and not even fully visible or comprehensible to them. (Yachnin 1997: 35)

It is true, then, that the concept of the self as spoken in the life stories and other narratives of the characters on the Renaissance stage changed radically during the late 16th century. Paul Yachnin and Richard Hillman argue that this change took place partly because of the secularization of the theater and the move by that same professional theater to negotiate a place for itself in what Yachnin has termed the knowledge marketplace. From what we know of many of the writers of the period, it seems that humble beginnings were the rule rather than the exception in their own life stories. Thomas Kyd, Ben Jonson, Christopher Marlowe, John Webster, and William Shakespeare all came from backgrounds in which labor rather than privilege provided a living. It is not so surprising to see an accent on self-invention through language in the works of these men. That they could negotiate a respected place in the theatrical culture of London through their skill with language was unthinkable in medieval times, and it is not a wild surmise to say that this must have delighted them, perhaps even astonished them, that an entire milieu had developed in the London business world in which men of their particular skills could not only earn a living but might be held in high esteem, too. And this could be accomplished without the ownership of land, another new concept unheard of in medieval times. Asa Briggs (1983) comments on the shifting ground of the late 16th century in the social fabric of England, in which it was difficult to know the rules of society when mobility within that society was becoming more and more evident (Briggs 1983: 85). For Kyd and others it was an opportunity not to be missed, provided the new theater could be used as a vehicle for the new man of stature.

Joan Lord Hall (1991) goes a step further when she writes,

A more recent challenge to the notion of character or unified self in these plays has come from deconstructionists. Jonathan Dollimore, writing from the standpoint of cultural materialism, argues that Renaissance drama 'problematizes subjectivity rather than foregrounding man as a spiritual or psychological unity'. The more radical philosophical movements of the time, he finds, deconstruct man as an 'essential' self at the centre of a providentially organized universe. While it is true that the self emerging in the period is 'flexible, problematic, elusive, dislocated', the possibilities are surely creative as well; to define the self as an

'object and effect of power' is to ignore man's impetus towards integrity and coherence, plus his desire to shape his own destiny - however much socio-historical forces may help to determine, or inform, his choices overall. (Hall 1991: 5)

Hall goes on to argue that older ways of interpreting the plays of the period have not necessarily been superseded by newer criticism such as that of Dollimore. The 'essential' self of which she speaks is a very neat contention which seems to have eliminated the loose ends inherent in a study of characterization in the Renaissance period. But such a view tends to attempt to lift literature into another realm in which the grubby, everyday business of making money is supposed to fade into the background. And it cannot be plausibly argued that Kyd and the others who wrote for the Renaissance stage were not interested in money.

However, Hall makes an argument for an aesthetic appreciation of just how character was handled by the writers of the period and finds that the self is at the center of the stage. Renaissance characters, she says, are often very self-aware. Writing of John Webster, for example, she says that his

tragic characters (Vittoria, Flamineo, and the Duchess of Malfi) also exploit 'acting' or imaginative self-dramatization. By doing so they integrate a self in an environment where the pressures towards fragmentation are immense. (Hall 1991: 7)

In criticizing Dollimore, then, Hall does not disallow the possibility/probability that the self on the Renaissance stage was a construct onto which the writers of the period projected their own desire for social advancement and financial gain. She seems, rather, to agree with Briggs, who writes,

While it is important for the social historian to recognize the value of a poet's reactions to his society as historical evidence, they need especially close scrutiny. They may encompass uncommon views of common experience and common views uncommonly, even dazzlingly, expressed. (Briggs 1983: 130)

In other words, it is important to realize that we can appreciate the way characters were portrayed on the Renaissance stage without necessarily pigeon-holing them into political categories. This is an approach that deserves our attention.

Yachnin argues,

In general, then, the playwrights moved to open up dramatic form to a multiplicity of interpretations in order to capture as large a segment of their heterogeneous audience as possible, and also to be able to represent political issues from the blind of their devotion to the nonpolitical world of the imagination. (Yachnin 1997: 16)

Commenting on the change in the theaters in the late 16th century, A.R. Braunmuller (1990) writes,

Theatres, like universities, are among society's most conservative institutions. When they admit or achieve innovation it is often spasmodic rather than prolonged, intense rather than gradual, and the old long lingers beside the new. (Braunmuller 1990: 53)

Given this principle, that the theaters are often a paradox of conservatism and innovation, we must ask why storytelling and self-narration stayed rather than faded in theatrical discourse as the 16th century closed and the 17th century progressed. For stay they did, which is plainly evident in the drama of the later period.

This point is absolutely crucial. There must have been something more in the relation of narrative on stage than mere novelty. It has been remarked that narrative “in all its forms must be partly shaped by its social and cultural context; not only by the intentions of the speaker, but by the customs, wishes, whims and thoughts which together shape the imagination of the audience” (Chamberlain and Thompson 1998: 15). So when a character on the stage revealed something to the audiences of the public playhouses, the playwright was in fact challenging those audiences to make judgments about the speaker’s motives and credibility. The audiences were also being warned to listen to the details revealed in the narratives of the speakers, because this would give insight into the complex world of the play. This was a very different type of theater than the medieval one. And evidently the crowds kept coming back.

3. NARRATING THE SELF IN THOMAS KYD'S *THE SPANISH TRAGEDY*

The relation of tales and information, and especially the onstage giving of information about one’s own self and background, was clearly a part of early English drama. Thomas Norton and Thomas Sackville’s *Gorboduc*, written “for the Christmas revels

of the Inner Temple in 1561-2 and staged before the queen early in the new year [sic]" (Hillman 1997: 79) is a good example. As Richard Hillman comments,

In authentic medieval fashion, its many lengthy soliloquies and monologues reflect their speakers to the audience as confirming or opposed to an omnipresent transcendental discourse - a discourse that univocally unites political wisdom with personal morality and religious truth. (Hillman 1997: 79)

Gorboduc, then, was politically motivated, a piece of Tudor propaganda. Yet, as Hillman allows, the rhetorical speeches contained in this play can be passionately delivered and require a deeper understanding of a character than just identification with a medieval stereotype. Queen Videna, whose anguished speech on the death of her son at the hands of the other, argues Hillman, foreshadows the future of the theater. As he says,

Perhaps all the more because of its rigorous containment of the potential for subjective slippage, Videna's soliloquy makes a deceptively complex anticipation of the numerous discursive transitions from self-loss to self-recovery effected by (mostly male) revengers in the later public theatre. (Hillman 1997: 80)

In other words, ground had been covered in the development of subjectivity in dramatic characters. This is in spite of the fact that *Gorboduc* and other didactic plays like it sound excruciatingly boring and seem like they would have been penitential to watch in actual performance.

As the professional theater became more and more established in London, this device evolved into an extremely effective device to indicate character interiority and subjectivity. In one or two places in *Gorboduc*, it is not the information supplied in the tale so much as the telling of it which counts for dramatic effect, to show the speaker as a liar rather than simply a mouthpiece to deliver lines. We cannot know if Thomas Norton and Thomas Sackville meant it this way, of course. However, this is a bit of foreshadowing of what was to come in the drama of later generations.

An increasingly different concept of the self than that offered in plays like *Gorboduc*, that pillar of Tudor propaganda, informs Thomas Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy*. We see this very clearly when Don Andrea and Revenge enter the stage. In life, says Andrea, he was a courtier, and he tells us, not without a certain measure of pride,

*My name was Don Andrea; my descent,
Though not ignoble, yet inferior far
To gracious fortunes of my tender youth. (I. i. 5-7)*

This serves much more than a merely pragmatic function. In life, we learn, the ghost stepped beyond the boundaries of class in the fulfillment of his “gracious fortunes.” Now he is dead. The audience identifies immediately with the character, because bloody violence as the reward for getting beyond one’s social station would likely be seen as unjust by the audience’s lower-class members and perceived uneasily by those in the audience who happened to agree that this was the natural order of things. Times were changing. As Greenblatt, Yachnin and others tell us (see Greenblatt 1980; Gurr 1992), the possibility of social mobility was a real issue of the age and would likely be bitterly resented by those who had the most to gain from fixed rigidity of the classes.

By the time the play is fourteen lines old - about a sonnet’s worth - the audience would be completely captured, because, as Andrea tells us,

*In secret I possess’d a worthy dame,
Which bight sweet Bellimperia by name.
But in the harvest of my summer joys
Death’s winter nipp’d the blossoms of my bliss,
Forcing divorce betwixt my love and me. (I. i. 10-14)*

Don Andrea’s trespass against the upper classes was sexual, then, as he lets us know in this story-within-a-story. This would make the audience hold its collective breath, some with anger and some with glee. This play’s elements, introduced in the first few lines by the self-narrative of the ghost - violence, illicit sexuality, class hatred, the possibility of bloody revenge, and a lively tale to tell - all tend to support Mary Chamberlain and Paul Thompson’s point that an audience, listening to self-narrative, must have an investment in the process (Chamberlain and Thompson 1998: 15). Here the interest may be pure prurience, but surely Kyd is using the storytelling device to say, “Listen! give me your attention and I’ll tell you a spicy mystery!”

And it *is* a mystery, as William Empson (1994) points out. Don Andrea obviously knows he has been killed dishonorably. But Empson suggests that there is more at play here, that the play reveals to Andrea as well as to the audience that his death in

combat was prearranged between the members of the upper classes, the Duke of Castile and his son Lorenzo on the one hand and Balthazar of Portugal on the other. Their motive for this rank piece of national treachery is ironically enough what Andrea has already told us, that he has “possess’d” a woman of the aristocracy high above Andrea in social stature.

Andrea’s seemingly simple narrative, furthermore, is full of ambiguities and is in no way a straightforward, objective account of events. Daniel Albright (1997) comments, “[l]iterature is particularly suspicious of the remembered self” (Albright 1997: 21), and this principle must apply here. Kyd’s creation shows an astonishing sense of self when we recall that he is merely a generation away from *Everyman* and *Mankind*. Don Andrea tells a tale of young love thwarted, of honorable passion crushed by forces high in social status but low in integrity, and of murder and just revenge to follow. But for us there are unanswered questions. Keeping in mind that “[s]elf is not an entity that one can simply remember, but is, rather, a complex mental edifice that one constructs by the use of a variety of mental processes, one of which must surely be remembering” (Bruner 1994: 41), we legitimately question Andrea’s version of events. Does the lady in question view their union similarly? Were there other considerations besides true love (strenuously extolled by Don Andrea) in the relationship, perhaps social climbing on his part, perhaps a mere dalliance with a rugged but ultimately socially unacceptable soldier on hers? Kyd manipulates these ambiguities from the very beginning of the play, so that the stories we hear and the story we end up with at the end of the play may not necessarily be the same straightforward story.

We cannot, of course, absolutely know what Kyd was thinking or what he definitely intended, but Yachnin’s idea of ambiguity as a very saleable commodity in the new marketplace comes to mind here.

Don Andrea, though, for all that we view him through an ambiguous glass, does not strike us as a particularly self-reflective type of man. He is not looking for meaning. Rather, he is looking for blood, and continually presses on Revenge his impatience to achieve it. Hieronimo is quite different. Richard Hillman tells us, “[a] condition of the drama’s development of tragic subjectivity is the valorization of human anguish in itself” (Hillman 1997: 95). *Everyman*’s sense of anguish stems from his realization that he had given far too little time to spiritual matters. Hillman’s point is that anguish and pain represented for their own sakes, outside the containing walls of the divine plan, was a major step in dramatic development. For in taking on the role of “the scourge destined to be scourged” (Hillman 1997: 115), Hieronimo

dooms himself. Nor does he do it right away, but by degrees, and in so doing hints at parts of his life that will lead him to the decision to take revenge into his own hands.

Hieronimo is, quite simply, the quintessential socially made self, a man whose very identity comes from his office and various functions. In the scenes following Don Andrea's first appearance, we see him performing as he has done for years and years. He is polite, deferential and, when we meet him, bursting with pride that his son has distinguished himself in the recent conflict with Portugal. As he himself says, he has hoped for great things for Horatio "from his tender infancy" (I.ii.117), but "He never pleas'd his father's eyes till now, / Nor fill'd my heart with over-cloying joys" (I.ii.119-20).

Hieronimo's hope is very plain. Having been rewarded for faithful service all his life, he hopes to found a line of faithful servants who will most surely reap the same or even greater rewards, a kind of hereditary meritocracy. Indeed, here Kyd shows a keen observation of his own society. As Katharine Eisaman Maus (1995) notes:

None the less, the critique of monarchy differs from play to play. In a sense Kyd, who pioneers the English revenge tragedy in the late 1580's, understands its premisses more radically than do many of his successors. His heroes are not aristocrats. Hieronimo is a civil servant who holds his position by virtue of expertise and hard work - the kind of person who in England had, in fact, benefitted from nationalizing trends. (Maus 1995: v)

And of course he is to get a bitter lesson in dirty court politics when Horatio, seen by his superiors as a social climber, is hoisted up and hanged in his father's garden. Hieronimo's anguished cry, "O poor Horatio, what hadst thou misdome / To leese thy life, ere life was now begun?" (II.v.28-29) quite probably indicates that until that moment he has viewed Horatio embryonically, as a future repository of the favors and gifts of his political masters. This is the "life" of which Hieronimo speaks: Horatio's life as a court servant and his father's probable successor.

The scene in the garden, in fact, begins Hieronimo's change from social self to individual self, from a faithful dog created by the state to a revenger made thus by his bitter desire to get back at his wrongdoers. As he vows,

*See'st thou this handkercher besmear'd with blood?
It shall not from me till I take revenge.
See'st thou those wounds that yet are bleeding fresh?*

*I'll not entomb them, till I have reveng'd.
Then will I joy amidst my discontent;
Till then my sorrow never shall be spent. (II. V. 51-56)*

Until this moment, Hieronimo has carefully written his life story as a faithful servant. Now, he will construct himself differently, casting himself in the chaotic mould of the revenger. The rest of the play involve Hieronimo's journey toward his revenge. He finds out the depths of the corruption of the court, the identities of those responsible for the murder, and the terrible price which will have to be paid to get his revenge.

And amidst a considerable amount of philosophizing about the rightness or wrongness of revenge, Hieronimo suspects that Lorenzo is setting a trap in which he "should draw / Thy life in question and thy name in hate" (III.ii.42-43). There is more here than just a threat to Hieronimo's physical life. Having eliminated Hieronimo, Lorenzo would have control over his posthumous life story. What preposterous fabrications might he not construct to show that the court was well rid of the old Marshall? Hieronimo's concern must be seen as one of Kyd's most profound innovations in this play. No character from the medieval stage would worry about his posthumous reputation on earth, only in the afterlife. Their time on earth was done, and now the other time would be about to begin, as the Church mythology of the period had indicated for hundreds of years. Kyd posits quite a different scenario, and on in keeping with his times. A man of reputation, having built his own life meticulously, fears being taken out of the way in some murky court intrigue because he will then have no control over the self he has constructed. A.J. Fletcher (1985) tells the story of Sir Francis Hastings who, in 1605, was publicly stripped "of his places on the bench and in the deputy-lieutenancy. Hastings was devastated" (Fletcher 1985: 95). The knight's devastation was understandable, since, as Fletcher goes on to say,

Hastings's sense of vulnerability was suddenly acute. His letters provide unusual insight into the state of mind of a public man shorn of his public platform. Reputation, his sense of identity even, was slipping away from him. (Fletcher 1985: 96)

This is the full implication of Hieronimo's fear that Lorenzo would draw his "name in hate" - it would all have been for nothing, and Hieronimo, at this point, is aware

of what he would lose and is loath to let it go. In fact, it would all have been for less than nothing, for Hieronimo fears that his life story would be used to support the low political expediency of a man like Lorenzo. As he says, "Then hazard not thine own, Hieronimo, / But live t'effect thy resolution" (III.ii.46-47). He will no longer inhabit the subject positions given to him by a court that finds him useful but does not love him or his. He will fashion himself into a revenger.

Later, when he is speaking to two Portuguese visitors, Hieronimo tells them,

*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. (III. xi. 13-17)*

Perhaps it is Lorenzo's guilty conscience, or the one he should have, to which Hieronimo is referring, but it is far more likely his own guilty conscience leading to his own "melancholy thoughts." Hieronimo, it may be presumed, has raised his son to view the court as a beneficent body, the source of good things that will surely follow good service. Horatio has given good service, in imitation of his father, and the resultant catastrophe has destroyed him. This terrible irony, that his life has culminated in the betrayal and death of his son, is more than likely what is plaguing Hieronimo now.

As the play draws to its murderous climax, Kyd uses self-narration in a different way. As Hieronimo prepares his noble actors to perform for the court, he says to Balthazar,

*Why then, I'll fit you; say no more.
When I was young, I gave my mind
And plied myself to fruitless poetry,
Which though it profit the professor naught
Yet is it passing pleasing to the world. (IV. i. 67-71)*

This small snatch of self-narrative on the part of Hieronimo serves two purposes. First, and probably foremost, it furthers the plot in that it prepares us for the performance of the play Hieronimo has chosen as his vehicle for slaughter. But second, it adds a depth to Hieronimo, a dimension which we knew about when he

put on the pageant of the English knights in Act I, but which is reinforced here. “When in Toledo I studied, / It was my chance to write a tragedy” (IV.i.74-75), he says, and the image of a younger Hieronimo writing, travelling, studying, and the like comes to mind. It is an interesting addition to an already interesting character, and serves as a calm and perhaps even pathetic counterpoint to the manic madness he will shortly fall into.

Even Lorenzo, in getting caught up in the action of the play, shows a flash of enthusiasm. When Hieronimo compliments the Italian tragedians for being able to perform with but an hour’s rehearsal, Lorenzo interjects, “And well it may; for I have seen the like / in Paris ‘mongst the French tragedians” (IV.i.161-62). Lorenzo has travelled, too, and speaks of a foreign capital while Hieronimo’s travel has been domestic. Perhaps the upper classes are able to go further because they have the money/leisure/opportunity to do so, but really, in the context this is just a thought that might momentarily occur to the audience. The point is that another world of experience is suggested, again by a brief self-reference.

One of the most problematic of scenes in *The Spanish Tragedy* comes at the play’s very climax: the gory, frenzied murder scene during the play-within-a-play. Hieronimo, on his way to hang himself, declares, “And, gentles, there I end my play; / Urge no more words: I have no more to say” (IV. iv.151-52). But the king and his cronies have other ideas on the subject. The Viceroy tells him, “Do but inform the king of these events; / Upon mine honour, thou shalt have no harm” (IV.iv.158-59), but the king himself roars, “I will make thee speak. / Why hast thou done this undeserving deed?” (IV. iv. 165-66). Clearly, the Spanish court and its allies are under the impression that narrative, like everything else in the play, is at their command. Hieronimo is a subject. Therefore, he must speak when the king instructs him to do so. Richard Hillman observes,

It seems clear enough, both in the ‘original’ and the supplemental texts, that Hieronimo’s revenge entails a symbolic assumption of power over language, which has failed him as a route to justice because of its corruption and suppression by villainy. (Hillman 1997: 116-17)

Language has indeed failed Hieronimo, even to the point of having his cries for justice ignored by the king and malignly interpreted by Lorenzo. Therefore he seizes control over the one clear and pressing story the king longs to hear. If he is to have his revenge, he must either have the last word (which is impossible in this court), or

choose his own moment of silence. Clearly, the second is his choice, after he gives details of the plot but taunts his tormentors with, "But never shalt thou force me to reveal / The thing which I have vow'd inviolate" (IV. iv.189-90). What is this inviolate thing, this detail Hieronimo is intent upon taking to his grave? It is highly ambiguous. We might dismiss this secret element of Hieronimo's story as a piece of his madness. Then again, perhaps Kyd wishes to indicate greater depth to his character, or impress us with his perverse nature, or taunt us along with the king, defying us to discern Hieronimo's ultimate secret. Whichever choice we make (or do not make), it is a highly theatrical moment made more theatrical still by the suggestion of a great story cut off - quite literally in Hieronimo's case, who severs his own tongue in what must have been a very memorable moment in the playhouses - before its ultimate climax. By withholding rather than delivering discourse, Hieronimo ironically piques our curiosity by doing the same thing, invoking silence as the final end to the telling of a story. And Kyd's character uses the withheld story as a goad, a weapon, in an innovative way we do not find on the medieval stage.

4. CONCLUSION

One of the most important concepts of the Renaissance period was the concept of the self. Stephen Greenblatt (1980) comments,

My subject is self-fashioning from More to Shakespeare; my starting point is quite simply that in sixteenth-century England there were both selves and a sense that they could be fashioned. Of course, there is some absurdity in so bald a pronouncement of the obvious: after all, there are always selves - a sense of personal order, a characteristic mode of address to the world, a structure of bounded desires - and always some elements of deliberate shaping in the formation and expression of identity. (Greenblatt 1980: 1)

This is the point of Thomas Kyd's art. That is, he takes what has been generally acknowledged for a long time and applies it to his work. In this way he and many others genuinely explore the inner man on stage. This paper is not arguing that Kyd sacrificed the exterior, the concepts of spectacle and sensation, for a study of the self on the stage. Quite the opposite, in fact we need only to think of Hieronimo's mad

suicide to know that this is not true. Kyd, too, obviously loved sensation and action on the stage. Duels, drinking and bawdy jokes, costumes and more suggest that he knew that his audiences liked these things and appreciated them in the plays they paid to see.

But whether as a marketable commodity, or as a sincere attempt to probe the depths of the human being, or most likely as a mixture of both motives, Kyd invested his characters with dynamic past lives. And these life stories did not simply become an accoutrement of the characters involved, a kind of extra something which would, to help move the plot along, give the character something to talk about while on the stage. That would have been easy. Instead, Kyd saw the possibilities in such an investment. Marchette Chute (1949) comments,

An Elizabethan audience had become highly susceptible to the use of words, trained and alert to catch their exact meaning and full of joy if they were used well. (Chute 1949: 90)

Such audiences, accustomed to the necessity of listening to the language of the play, were fertile grounds for men like Kyd. If a character stands and lectures and the playwright has nothing more to offer, it is a tiresome business. But if the writer has a feeling for his craft, and gives the characters amusing, spicy, funny, and sad things to say, and if the performance is done well, the audience would naturally feel it had been given its money's worth.

This is exactly where the relation of narrative fits on the Renaissance stage. *In The Spanish Tragedy*, Kyd shows a keen appreciation of the possibilities of giving a character a past life. In engineering the murder of the two princes, Hieronimo ultimately defines himself and a whole genre of tragedy. He is the revenger, the man who gives up his own life to pursue and realize a bloody vengeance on his enemies. That Kyd was widely imitated is a matter of record. The revenge tragedy was popular on the Renaissance stage for over fifty years after *The Spanish Tragedy*. And Kyd, although he suffered a terrible fate at the hands of the authorities, may very well have gone on to explore the possibilities of character subjectivity through storytelling and self-narration had he lived.

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NARACIJA SEBSTVA U ENGLLESKOJ RENESANSNOJ DRAMI: PRIPOVIJEDANJE I SAMONARACIJA U ŠPANSKOJ TRAGEDIJI THOMASA KYDA

Sažetak

Ovaj rad istražuje upotrebu tehnika pripovijedanja i samonaracije u engleskom pozorištu tokom kasnog 16. i ranog 17. vijeka, sa naglaskom na *Špansku tragediju* Thomasa Kyda. Pisci ovog perioda krčili su sebi put u novom svijetu u kojem je jezik bio medij koji se sve više i više poštivao, a oni koji su uspijevali da ga savladaju imali su mogućnost napredovanja koje do tada nije bilo dostižno. Na čelu onih koji su kroz svoju umjetnost krčili sebi put do takvog položaja bio je Thomas Kyd. On se može smatrati pionirirom u dramatisaciji sebstva kroz reprezentativne tehnike pripovijedanja i samonaracije u engleskom pozorištu ranog modernog perioda. Ovaj rad također istražuje neke od dalekosežnih promjena u dramaturgiji koje su se desile u navedenom periodu i koje su kulminirale u drami Thomasa Kyda.

Ključne riječi: renesansna drama, Thomas Kyd, *Španska tragedija*, pripovijedanje, samonaracija