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The Persistence of Vengeance from Early Modern England to Postmodern New York

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The Persistence of Vengeance from Early Modern England to Postmodern New York

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
University of New Orleans
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements of the degree of

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in
English

by

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Abstract

As a passing glance at the popular texts of any given period reveals, the subject of vengeance is nearly inescapable; on billboards, websites, and year end lists, revenge represents a curious constant even amid disparate media. This study explores the cultural commonalities that align revenge texts of the English Renaissance and exploitation films of late 20th century America. As in-depth inquiry reveals, numerous ideas and narrative tropes popularized during the Early Modern period are pushed to their logical extremes in these films. The central factor that aligns London during the Renaissance and New York at the cusp of the 1990s relates to traumatic, far-reaching changes in the urban landscape and its uses. There is an observable preoccupation, on the part of playwrights and filmmakers, with the subject of vengeance as tied to notions of locality, space, and rightful ownership.

Shakespeare, William; Kyd, Thomas; Henenlotter, Frank; Beard, Thomas; Spatial Rhetoric; Adams, Thomas; Interdisciplinary Arts and Media; Literature in English; Other Film and Media Studies; Dramatic Literature

Introduction

As a passing glance at the popular texts of any given period reveals, the subject of vengeance is nearly inescapable; on billboards, websites, and year end lists, revenge represents a curious constant even amid disparate media. This study explores the cultural commonalities that align revenge texts of the English Renaissance and exploitation films of late 20th century America. As in-depth inquiry reveals, numerous ideas and narrative tropes popularized during the Early Modern period are pushed to their logical extremes in these films. Furthermore, by addressing plays that bookend Early Modern drama's progression, the persisting elements of revenge narratives come into clearer focus. The central factor that aligns London during the Renaissance and New York at the cusp of the 1990s relates to traumatic, far-reaching changes in the urban landscape and its uses. There is an observable preoccupation, on the part of playwrights and filmmakers, with the subject of vengeance as tied to notions of locality, space, and rightful ownership. At this level, a sense of anger and violence resides just outside the boundaries of acceptable society, taking root in the margins of urban areas. As outside exertions of power seek to modify space, the narratives of the artists within that space address the tensions at hand. In the case of the Early Modern period and the late 20th century, popular vengeance narratives illustrate these tensions through the depiction of violence. However, as this study demonstrates, aggressive spatial reordering often creates a sense of unrest and violence that can take on myriad forms. As Stephen Mullaney asserts in *The Place of the Stage*, “drama, unlike poetry, is a territorial art. It is an art of space as well as words, and it requires a place of its own, in or around a community, in which to mount its telling fictions and its eloquent spectacles” (7). Similarly, the very essence of exploitation film, especially prior to the ubiquity of VHS and DVD

players, relies on the cultivation of spaces and communities for the purpose of transmission and communication.

To this end, the so-called grindhouse theaters of 42nd Street share more in common with the theater spaces of Renaissance London's Liberties than is apparent at first glance:

Entering a Liberty, whatever its location, meant crossing over into an ambiguous territory that was at once internal and external to the city, neither contained by civic authority nor fully removed from it. They were the suburbs of the urban world, forming an underworld officially recognized as lawless; they stood in a certain sense outside the law, and so could serve as privileged or exempt arenas where the anxieties and insecurities of life in a rigidly organized hierarchical society could be given relatively free reign [sic].

(Mullaney 21-22)

While this explanation applies to London during the Early Modern period, it also aptly describes 42nd Street's status as part of New York City's larger urban fabric prior to the 1990s. In these paradoxical zones of social subjugation and creative freedom, we find artists in the midst of negotiating a complex struggle with ideas of spatial and cultural legitimacy.

In addition to the primary Renaissance texts under consideration, the moral treatises of theologians such as Thomas Adams, Thomas Beard, and Philip Stubbes further reveal Early Modern conceptions of vengeance. Simultaneously, in order to analyze the development of revenge narratives in the postmodern epoch, critics like Tim Edensor and Nedra Reynolds contribute to this study through their explorations of spatial rhetoric and its numerous uses. In practical terms, spatial rhetoric addresses purposeful changes in urban configuration. These changes are rhetorical insofar as they physically assert the potential uses of a given space by and

for specific parties. At this level, a city seems to speak to its denizens while governing bodies use words to create tangible change; rhetoric shapes space just as space shapes rhetoric. The pervasive use of spatial rhetoric by playwrights such as Thomas Kyd, William Shakespeare, and film director Frank Henenlotter indicate its primacy in exploring the sociopolitical urge for revenge. As comparisons across historical epochs demonstrate, the prevalence of spatially-coded vengeance narratives stems from tumultuous eras of urban reconfiguration; as one group is displaced or abjected, the desire for restitution builds, often with violent results. This dynamic is observable both in terms of London's late 16th century and the late 20th century in New York.

Thomas Kyd and the Cultural Underpinnings of Early Modern Vengeance

In this light, *The Spanish Tragedy* warrants close consideration by virtue of two paradoxical narrative impulses. In some ways, the play succeeds by virtue of innovations in form and plot. Given its likely date of publication, which is “somewhere between the outer limits of 1582 and 1592,” (Mulryne xiv) it represents a significant milestone for revenge tragedy as part of popular culture. In other words, it predates many popular works within the genre such as Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*. Simultaneously, though, Thomas Kyd is inextricably tied to the social and religious mores of his own time; in a cultural sense, the content of his play is often quite conventional. Part of the play's attraction, then, relates to Kyd's direct engagement with and assimilation of political ideas which pervade Renaissance England. However, the allegorical content of the play is both malleable and elusive. It is exceedingly difficult, due to the text's complexity, to use *The Spanish Tragedy* for the task of pinpointing specific instances of political allegory. Additionally, Kyd displays a clear fascination with the use of authorial removal throughout the play, which serves to complicate plot devices even further. Over the course of the

narrative, his attempts to achieve this authorial removal range from the use of temporally-distant foreign settings to framed narratives that force the audience to directly engage with matters of space. It is nonetheless possible, by closely examining Kyd's rhetoric in its historical context, to illustrate the primary tensions which govern vengeance narratives on the Renaissance stage. By firmly establishing the most common conceptions of revenge during the period, we can begin to track the progress of these ideas across historical epochs. Because the play deftly synthesizes the rhetoric of historians, physicians, and theologians alike, it is also worth examining separate examples of different rhetorical modes. While the play has "no major narrative source" (Mulryne xv), its cultural influences are demonstrable. Though Kyd is partially indebted to Seneca, *The Spanish Tragedy* is better understood by analyzing prose documents which immediately precede and follow the work's popularization. This exploration reveals a strong undercurrent of violence and vengeance relating to the use of space; these traits are evident both in terms of the locally-specific examples and geographically-removed allegories explored in the works of Thomas Beard, Phillip Stubbes, and Thomas Adams.

Given Beard's preoccupation with vengeance, *The Theatre of Gods Judgements* offers a logical starting point for examining *The Spanish Tragedy's* cultural context. At the outset of the text, while extolling the virtues of Beard's chosen medium, M. Heron asserts that history, as a literary form, is the "the proper'st and most advantagious Study that Princes can apply themselves unto, because it containes examples of all sorts" (sig. A2r). Most appropriately, and almost immediately, he qualifies his stance with the evocation of punitive revenge tactics: "In History *Brave* men stand as Marble Statues erected in the Temple of Immortality, and *Bad* men as Malefactors upon Gibbets, expos'd to the publick view of the world to all Posterity" (sig. A2r).

From a rhetorical and cultural standpoint, it is quite telling that the text's numerous "examples" are adapted from sources scattered across wide temporal and geographical expanses. Through illustrating the persistence of vengeance throughout history, Beard is able to establish, to his own satisfaction, the primacy of God's judgments; his text seeks to demonstrate that God's gaze is all-encompassing and inescapable. However, these concepts of judgment and vengeance are coded in decidedly spatial terms from the outset of the text. While men of moral fortitude are placed in the "Temple of Immortality," transgressors are shamed and executed in a public forum. The printer's dedication, therefore, provides us with an initial sense of spatial rhetoric's importance. Though Heron's opinions are his own, they spring from a larger social context; the ideas expressed are far from isolated or unique. In fact, Beard's myriad examples illustrate the degree to which Early Modern society is, from the Liberties to the Tower of London, hierarchized through the privileging of space. Even in the most basic rhetorical sense, the underlying conceit of Beard's text involves an intellectual vanguard presenting lessons and rules from afar. The entire exercise is reinforced by means of fashioning separate spaces through which communication can occur. Beard leaves little room for dialogue except in the case of royalty, should figures like Duke of York choose to respond. In this way, the authors of the text are able to maintain a balance between self-effacement and intellectual superiority as they pursue the larger task of maintaining cultural hegemony.

Kyd is able to achieve a similar effect by prefacing the central narrative components of *The Spanish Tragedy* with the machinations of Don Andrea and Revenge. Though he uses theater and poetry instead of exhaustive anecdotal evidence, Kyd is able to create a sense of historical weight by setting his text against the backdrop of Spain and Portugal's ongoing political

conflicts. However, Kyd “adapted freely” (Mulryne xv) in order to suit his own artistic needs. In this light, Revenge's words are quite telling: “Here we sit down to see the mystery, / And serve for Chorus in this tragedy” (1.1.90-91). With this couplet, the first scene draws to a close in a moment of self-reference; through Revenge, Kyd is able to indicate his knowledge of the standard dramatic practices inherited from classical theater. Simultaneously, through using a tortured ghost and the personification of revenge as a chorus, the playwright is able to subvert the usual theatrical functions of this particular convention. These characters act as a chorus by playing the part of “‘interested spectators,’ sympathizing with the fortunes of the characters, and giving expression[...]to the moral and religious sentiments evoked by the action of the play” (*OED* n.1b). As this definition suggests, their place is one of spatial and temporal removal. However, given the eventual outcome of the plot, it becomes difficult to ascribe specific moral imperatives to Kyd's play as a whole; though Revenge offers to place Andrea's “friends in ease” (5.5.46) while eternally damning his enemies, a sense of moral ambiguity pervades the play even at its conclusion.

Even with the promise of justice in the afterlife, Revenge's closing remarks do little to counteract the horrors depicted just prior to the final scene of the play. Salvation and damnation, as matters of abstraction, are difficult to envision. However, corporeal violence, as portrayed in the play's closing scenes, is visceral, physical, and immediate; as Beard readily admits, “the nature of man is fleshly, and given to be touched with things that are presented before their faces” (5). *The Spanish Tragedy's* rhetorical unevenness at this level effectively places the interpretive burden on Kyd's audience. While numerous acts of violence are shown in the space of the theater itself, there is little in the way of visible redemption. In a sense, this allows Kyd to

construct another layer of removal, either by virtue of moral uncertainty or concern regarding personal safety. This is one of the most important differences between the projects of Beard and Kyd. While both the playwright and the historian are wary of the legal risks surrounding political writing, the latter is protected by the assumption of factual accuracy. The playwright, however, must rely on fantasy and foreign locales in order to claim plausible deniability; in the event that his moral intent comes into question, he is able to abject such concerns by virtue of using distant nations and fictionalized figures. Again, notions of space are used to great effect in these instances. While Beard uses examples from England and abroad to assert the all-encompassing nature of God's wrath, Kyd pushes his narrative out of the local sphere in order to achieve artistic freedom and protection against punishment. This rift is significant because it illustrates a primary source of tension surrounding the nature of revenge. As a contested cultural element of Early Modern society, vengeance is, on repeated occasions, made subordinate to issues of space. Furthermore, by hearkening to Greek mythology instead of Christian doctrine, Kyd speaks to a culture in the midst of reconciling its pagan roots with the government-sanctioned Anglicanism of Renaissance England. This dynamic is especially revealing because it reinforces the primacy of spatial privilege. For example, at the outset of the play, Don Andrea notes that his "soul descended straight / To pass the flowing stream of Acheron" (1.1.18-19), but he is initially denied passage to the underworld due to an improper burial. This illustrates a basic urge, whether by means of Christianity or paganism, to hierarchize the use of space at every level; the threat of judgment, whether cosmic or royal, relies on the basic premise of spatial banishment as a means of exerting control. Moreover, in the most primary worldly sense, the central conflicts which set *The Spanish Tragedy's* plot into motion are directly related to imperial conquest and the assertion

of geographic dominance. This sense of spatial awareness extends to nearly every aspect of Kyd's and Beard's texts, whether in the context of personal relationships or punishment.

Returning to the dedication, then, Beard builds on Heron's argument by stating that "For if God shew himselfe so severe a revenger of their sinnes that take pleasure in displeasing him, there is no doubt but on the contrary he will shew himselfe bountifull, gracious, and liberall in rewarding" (sig. A4r). From a rhetorical standpoint, the reward to which Beard alludes is, of course, eternal life in Heaven. While this dynamic is a common component of Christian doctrine, at each conceivable level, religion and government are represented through the evocation of space. In this context, Heaven is a space of privilege while Hell is a prison from which there is no escape. Interestingly, at either end of the spectrum, threats of violence and retribution are presented as mandatory rhetorical components. As Beard asserts, "it is necessary that wee assay by all means to bring these men (if it be possible) to some modesty and feare of God; which if it cannot bee done by willing and gentle means, force and violence must be used to plucke them out of the fire of Gods wrath, to the end they be not consumed" (5). From a strictly materialist standpoint, and by virtue of resource availability, issues of scarcity and space precede and supersede the construction of morality. As such, the desire to control space for the maintenance of order can be viewed as the primary source for revenge narratives in Early Modern society. In fact, the prevalence of spatial metaphors in the English language is notable in this regard. To this end, Beard's cautionary words are helpful for understanding *The Spanish Tragedy's* grisly outcome. Hieronimo is, in many ways, "carried headlong by the tempest of [his] owne strong and furious passions, into imminent danger and shipwrackes" (3).

Upon discovering the site of his son's violent murder, Hieronimo highlights another

component of the spatial rhetoric employed throughout the play: “See’st thou this handkercher besmeared 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 revenged” (2.5.51-54). Here, through the use of nuanced language, Kyd is able to illustrate the divide created between events in public and private spheres. Hieronimo’s refusal to inter Horatio, whether figuratively or literally, is especially significant in light of Andrea’s earlier remarks regarding improper burial. By the internal logic of the play, the scene’s horror surpasses the visual shock of Horatio’s bloodied corpse; more severely, perhaps, his very soul hangs in the balance, unable to move beyond a purgatorial space. Simultaneously, Hieronimo asserts the importance of publicly and visibly acknowledging the grave injustice committed. Despite the brashness of Hieronimo’s words, Kyd uses them to subtly illustrate various complicated notions of justice. In one sense, it would be counterproductive to hide Horatio’s body, thus shielding others from recognizing the crime by way of ocular proof; again, abstract notions of injustice are less effective, in a human sense, than the immediate, inescapable recognition of violence before one’s eyes. However, to delay the process of funerary rituals jeopardizes Horatio’s ability to pass safely into the underworld. In the span of four lines, then, Hieronimo reveals the increasingly difficult task at hand. Here, Kyd begins to grapple with a central point of tension in Early Modern society: matters of justice, if left to the whims of governing bodies, are often unresolved. The efficacy of law is thrown into a conflict between earthbound wisdom and cosmic intervention. In either case, space is centrally important to the rhetoric employed. The artists and writers of the Early Modern period are especially sensitive in this regard since justice is reliant on deferral to higher powers, whether royal, divine, or both.

To this end, Beard suggests that “our worldly justice hath her hands bound behind her from executing that which is right” (6). Furthermore, he asserts “that the sovereign Monarch of heaven and earth should[...]deliver up the most guilty and hainous sinners to those paines and torments which they have deserved” (6). These words are significant when analyzing Kyd’s text despite the play’s overall avoidance of Christian doctrine. Again, *The Spanish Tragedy* is demonstrably steeped in the dominant social mores of Renaissance England. At the same time, though, Kyd demonstrates a clear interest in the prevailing religious ideas of the Early Modern period. In this way, God’s own words from the New Testament, as recounted through Beard’s text, are given a sense of rhetorical and historical weight: “For *vengeance is mine* (saith he) *and belongeth only unto me*” (8). Certainly, Kyd’s audience is intimately familiar with the ideas espoused by theologians such as Beard. For this reason, *The Spanish Tragedy*’s acclaim is exceptionally fascinating; the play’s enduring popularity indicates widespread cultural interest in the topic of vengeance and its place in everyday life. In this way, audiences are prompted to empathize with Hieronimo’s sense of futility in the face of injustice. Simultaneously, the play mirrors *The Theatre of Gods Judgements*’ assertions regarding the measure by which vengeance is to be meted out. As Heron aptly states in the opening dedication, God “commeth still to one and the same marke which hee once prescribed, to wit, the punishment of the world according to their demerits” (sig. A3r). As Beard’s examples illustrate, acts of vengeance are performed by God in precise ways according to the severity and type of sin committed. Kyd makes explicit reference to this dynamic of equal measure, quite appropriately, through Revenge himself:

Be still Andrea, ere we go from hence,
I’ll turn their friendship into fell despite,

Their love to mortal hate, their day to night,
Their hope into despair, their peace to war,
Their joys to pain, their bliss to misery.

(I.v.5-9)

A similar fascination with achieving balance through the use of opposites is prevalent in Beard's text where, in numerous examples, God often seeks a very specific type of vengeance which is defined as the "satisfaction obtained by repaying an injury or wrong" (*OED* n.1a). As close reading reveals, this notion of repayment is often framed in spatial terms.

In recounting the transgressions of a man named Thomas Arondel, for example, Beard explains "for he that sought to stop the mouth of God in his Ministers, and to hinder the passage of the Gospell, had his owne tongue so swolne, that it stopped his owne mouth, that before his death hee could neither swallow nor speake, and so through famine died in great despaire" (35). There are two primary rhetorical tactics displayed in this brief account. First, the notion of equal measure is exemplified in physical terms as Arondel's mouth is cast as both the source of his sin and the tool of his eventual downfall. Secondly, even the human body, including the act of speech, is coded in spatial terms over the course of the anecdote. In this light, spoken words, whether intended to glorify or denigrate God, are given "passage" and a sense of physical weight in order to heighten the effectiveness of metaphorical abstractions. This tactic functions on a number of complex levels despite the seeming simplicity of Beard's prose. In a basic sense, the story is made part of the reader's physical, spatial reality in the form of the very book in his or her possession. This dynamic's rhetorical power cannot be underestimated, even if unstated in the text itself, given the increasing cultural importance of the written word in the Early Modern

period. At the same time, the persisting significance of speech is taken into account here as well. Again, Beard is concerned with the creation of an all-encompassing text which leaves little room for rebuttal. In the span of a sentence, then, man's ability to exert social control through the use of words is given equal importance to necessary biological functions such as eating and breathing.

As Beard's numerous examples suggest, the intersection of the physical, moral, and spiritual is another essential element of Renaissance culture to take into account when analyzing *The Spanish Tragedy*. In each of these areas, the underlying tension is one of space and its uses. As Beard's text demonstrates, in the Early Modern period, the human body is understood in highly spatial terms. Reflecting that, Thomas Adams's *Diseases of the Soule* offers a treatise regarding the interconnectedness of various maladies on physical and spiritual levels. In his dedicatory opening pages, he explains the basic premise of his text, stating that it “is more *Morall*, then *Physicall*; and yet the greater part *Theologicall*[...]ayming at that punctuall *Center*, and blessed *Scope*, whither all endeuours should looke; the straitening our warped *Affections*, and directing the *Soule* to heauen” (sig. A2v). Here, Adams attempts to position his book in a rhetorical middle ground. Despite his explicit arrangement of each particular element by degree of importance, he is able to craft a work which bridges the gap between the burgeoning fields of medical science and the predominant religious imperatives of his time. Much like Beard, then, Adams seeks to create a comprehensive view of his particular area of interest; while *The Theatre of Gods Judgements* uses the notion of history in order to reinforce the primacy of Anglican faith, *Diseases of the Soule* offers a similar argument, though filtered through the popular medical notions of the Early Modern period. This type of rhetorical exercise is, of course, quite

common among theologians of the Renaissance. For men like Adams and Beard, notions of selfhood, nationality, science, and morality are inseparable from a fundamental belief in Christianity. In this way, though each disease Adams explores is unique, his suggested cures rely on similar notions of prayer and deference to God. Over the course of his text, Adams shares Beard's affinity for spatial metaphors despite his text's relatively narrow focus on the human body and the soul within it; to anatomize one's being, whether as a corporeal form or an ethereal essence, involves the evocation of space.

In order to grasp Adams's project in the context of spatial rhetoric, consider his exploration of inconstancy or “a motion without rule, a various aspect, [and] a diuersifying intention” (8). Over the course of his description of the disease, Adams is markedly concerned with notions of space, geography, motion, and nationality. Certainly, these preoccupations speak to the interests of many citizens during Adams's cultural epoch; increasingly imperialist initiatives call for widespread nation-building exercises, of which his text is certainly one. Much like the concepts explored in Beard's text, Adams's assertions are often intended to explicitly align religion and government. By his assessment, then, a person afflicted with inconstancy “leaves the blessing of his mother, because he beholds his brethren quarrelling: whiles he sees the vnreconcilable opposition of *Rome* and vs, which he fondly labours to atone, he forsakes both, and will now be a Church alone” (9). Here, Adams depicts a man who disregards allegiance to his homeland due to political infighting. Additionally, through trying to reconcile the noted differences between Catholicism and Anglicanism, coded as “*Rome*” and “us” respectively, he is unable to inhabit either religious sect comfortably; the man is, by the rhetoric of Adams's text, a blasphemous church unto himself. Through a complex series of rhetorical layers, Adams is able

to establish another miniature hierarchy founded on notions of spatial difference. He begins by conflating motherhood with one's country of origin, but moves briskly to the confined, relatively small space of a church. Various notions regarding the womb as an interior space will take on added significance as we move, at length, into our analysis of exploitation films. For the moment, however, notions of space become complicated in regards to the Church itself. As an entity, the Church encompasses much more than the individualized church of the inconstant man. By setting himself apart as an individual, he is minuscule, spatially isolated, and sinful. This same dynamic holds true in the case of Hieronimo, as his quest often mirrors the same senses of disconnectedness along with the onset of madness.

Toward the middle of *The Spanish Tragedy*, though unadvisedly, Hieronimo attempts to make a final plea for justice through the legally-sanctioned channel of the King himself. Just prior to this, however, he briefly soliloquizes, detailing the overwhelming urge to succumb to suicide:

Hieronimo, 'tis time for thee to trudge:
Down by the dale that flows with purple gore
Standeth a fiery tower; there sits a judge
Upon a seat of steel and molten brass,
And 'twixt his teeth he holds a fire-brand,
That leads the lake where hell doth stand.

(3.12.6-11)

Here, in the most immediate sense, Kyd's poetry echoes the classic convention of a hero's transformative journey into the underworld, though liberally modified for his own purposes.

However, in Hieronimo's case, there is little suggestion that he will return to the surface as a reinvigorated, empowered figure. Simultaneously, through depicting a quest that is both spatial and reliant on violent imagery, Kyd uses the rhetorical impulse to literalize abstractions and emotional torment; Hieronimo's path, as a physical location and as the perceived action of moving through space, is saturated in gore. In this passage, Kyd also mirrors Adams's interest in matters of hierarchization through the use of space. As made evident by the tower of judgment looming over the proceedings, the playwright is fascinated by many latent and blatant elements of spatial rhetoric. However, the overarching meaning of Kyd's allegory is complicated by the evocation of this hellish, infernal landscape. In this sense, the scene illustrates another connection to the prevailing Christian ideas of Kyd's time, however tangentially; the images of blood and fire, though presented outside of a strictly Biblical context, still evoke the indoctrinated notions held by a Renaissance audience. Much like Kyd, then, viewers are also unable to fully avoid the dominant Anglican mores of their time. The playwright never mentions Lucifer or Satan by name in the scene, and as the play unfolds, it becomes evident that these types of omissions are purposeful. Moreover, despite an underlying conceit that relates, however fragiley, to trust in royal governance and the justice of kings, the scene is foregrounded with violent symbols designed to cast doubt on the entire enterprise. Reinforcing these notions, Hieronimo's choice to retrieve the dagger and halter gives little indication that a peaceful resolution can be reached; his strife drives him to madness, whether feigned or real, which acts as the true catalyst in seeking vengeance. As this scene demonstrates, however, the presence of theatrical asides and soliloquies is especially significant. In a spatial sense, they allow viewers to peer past the boundaries that separate interior and exterior elements of Hieronimo's character.

Though *The Spanish Tragedy* is but one of many Early Modern plays in which a protagonist offers frequent soliloquies, it is still beneficial to consider Kyd's uses of this literary device. In the most immediate sense, the use of soliloquy is helpful for clearly illustrating moments of emotional development. However, given the larger rhetorical thrust of the play, Kyd's use of this theatrical tool is another means by which he is able to explore the basic importance of space. At this level, the device's use is twofold: first, Kyd self-reflexively acknowledges the artifice of his writing by, at least implicitly, addressing the very audience viewing the play. As such, though soliloquy is defined as “[a]n instance of talking to or conversing with oneself, or of uttering one's thoughts aloud without addressing any person” (*OED* n.1a), the internal logic of the practice relies on repeatedly forging and breaking the layers of separation between character and viewer in the theater space itself. This type of dramatic speech depends on audience-level understanding and awareness of literal and figurative spaces. Because of this, notions of intimacy between actor and crowd are necessarily fragile. In practice, when Hieronimo begins to speak his thoughts aloud, he simultaneously amplifies both his emotional connection to and acute separation from the audience. The traumatic inability to inhabit any cultural sphere in perpetuity, according to Adams's earlier notions of spiritual disease, casts Hieronimo as a man plagued with inconstancy; just as his place on the stage creates a literal separation from much of the audience, his emotional unrest creates a figurative separation from the denizens of his society. In Adams's terms, “As he is a Noun, hee is only adiective, depending on euery nouel perswasion: as a Verbe, he knowes only the Present Tense[...]One party thinke him theirs, the aduerse theirs: he is with both, with neither, not an howre with himselfe” (8). In other words, Hieronimo's actions in the wake of his son's death are marred by

shortsightedness and a lack of firm, and timely resolve. This is but one of many ideas explored in *Diseases of the Soule* which resonates strongly with the content of *The Spanish Tragedy*.

At all points, whether purely narrative or cultural, the viewer is made explicitly aware that Hieronimo is trapped in a purgatorial state much like Andrea. In order to understand this parallel, it is beneficial to consider Andrea's exchange with Revenge at the beginning of the play. Speaking from a state of understandable woe and self-pity, Andrea asks, "Come we for this from the depth of underground, / To see him feast that gave me my death's wound? / These pleasant sights are sorrow to my soul, / Nothing but league, love, and banqueting!" (1.5.1-4). As a response to the notion of Hieronimo's imagined journey into the "dale that flows with purple gore" (3.12.7), Andrea's words suggest that the classical descent/ascent dynamic does little to mitigate the harshness of *The Spanish Tragedy's* unforgiving universe. In moments such as this, Kyd cleverly reinforces the spiritual limitations of seeking revenge through one's own devices and for one's own gain. In this regard, Adams's exploration of what he terms "*Phrenzy* or *Madnesse*" (12) is, from a cultural standpoint, quite compelling:

Anger in the best sense is the gift of God, and it is no small art, to expresse anger with premeditated termes, and on seasonable occasion. God placed *Anger* amongst the affections ingraffed in nature, gaue it a seate, fitted it with instruments, ministred it matter whence it might proceed, prouided humours whereby it is nourished. It is to the *Soule* as a nerue to the body. The Philosopher calis it the *Whetstone to fortitude*, a spurre intended to set forward Vertue. This is simply rather a propassion, then a passion. (12)

Adams's opening remarks about anger reveal the nuances of this concept in terms of Early

Modern thinking. In short, the emotion is not immediately cast in negative terms. As the text suggests, anger can be a source of motivation which prompts virtuous behavior. Much like Hieronimo's soliloquy, the governing conceit of Adams's explanation relies on the suggestion of movement through space. In this instance, he evokes the notion of travel by horseback through referring to spurs sharpened by the whetstone of anger. Though markedly subtle, his reliance on spatial rhetoric reinforces its primary importance as a part of Early Modern literature. Despite the presence of such triumphant imagery, however, Adams's notions of anger remain multifaceted. At this level, delineating between God-given anger and its counterpart in spiritual sickness has much to do with the differences between propassion and passion.

Though propassion is seldom used in modern English, it means “[a] feeling that precedes or anticipates passion [or] the first stirring of a passion” (*OED* n.1). In order to decode the subtle spatiality of this dynamic, the term is best understood as an emotion which occupies a space beyond or, more precisely, before human cognition; it is purely reactive and unmarred by the folly of human ego. In this way, the explicitly religious connotations of “passion” in the Renaissance period take on added significance. While the term is used to evoke “[s]enses relating to physical suffering and pain” (*OED* n.1), it is still firmly-rooted in the notion of Christ's agonizing journey toward crucifixion. He is, though of divine character, still human. In other words, propassion is considered involuntary or divine, while succumbing to passion is intentional; the former is pure, while the latter is highly susceptible to folly and presumption. However, Adams allows for the potential to productively express anger in “premeditated termes” (12). Both Adams and Beard illustrate a similar source of tension. Ultimately, Renaissance writers are unable or unwilling to establish an all-encompassing rule to guide readers toward

morally permissible acts of anger and vengeance. In the case of Adams, he attempts to circumnavigate this rhetorical shortcoming entirely; instead of adopting Beard's propensity for abundant examples, he attempts to show what proper anger is by virtue of what it is not: legitimate madness.

Given Hieronimo's development over the course of the plot, the overall movement of the narrative is designed to cast him in a favorable light, in terms of audience reception; Hieronimo is, at the very least, pitiable and understandable on a human level. In this respect, much like Adams, the playwright grapples with issues of proper anger and retribution as set against wholly sinful acts of vengeance. Certainly, there is an overarching sense of hegemonic orthodoxy throughout the play given the eventual outcome of the plot; despite the growing urge to see the story's various malefactors receive comeuppance, the extremity of the violence used is difficult to justify from a moral standpoint. This conflict is crafted purposefully on the part of the playwright; there are no easy answers in *The Spanish Tragedy*. One underlying lesson, however, is that each act of personal vengeance is damning by virtue of demanding immediate restitution. This is a dramatic illustration of the potential follies of passion over propassion. As explored in Beard's text, leveling gestures of judgment are, by Christian doctrine, reserved for God alone. By this logic, one is essentially restricted to patiently awaiting cosmic rewards in the hereafter as opposed to corporeal gratification on earth. Again, the spatial hierarchy imposed by the threat of hell over heaven is intended to cast humans into a space of reactive subservience as opposed to active agency. In fact, Adams's treatise speaks to this very concern as he turns his focus to improper anger. As he asserts, "there is a vicious, impetuous, franticke *anger*, earnest for priuate and personall grudges; not like a medicine to cleare the eye, but to put it out" (12). In context,

Adams's use of the word "priuate" implies personal selfishness as well as our modern sense of privacy in terms of spaces closed removed from public view. Kyd complicates these notions further in his text by framing the play with Andrea's desire for retribution. This layering effect intentionally prevents a straightforward reading of the text. All the same, the notion of personal grudges and violence explored in Adams's book are prevalent throughout *The Spanish Tragedy*. Despite Hieronimo's best intentions, it becomes unclear where the barrier between seeking justice for the deceased and seeking vengeance for one's own satisfaction lies.¹

These same concepts also function in the development of other characters. For example, Isabella's frantic speeches mirror Adams's rhetoric in numerous significant ways as she descends into madness:

So that, you say, this herb will purge the eye,
And this the head?
Ah, but none of them will purge the heart:
No, there's no medicine left for my disease
Nor any physic to recure the dead.

(3.8.1-5)

Interestingly, these words read like direct responses to Adams's earlier metaphors regarding the notion of healing a diseased eye. However, Isabella, in her panicked state, suggests that there is no cure for a malady as severe as her own. This is in keeping with the purported symptoms of frenzy detailed in Adams's text as Isabella displays a "[s]welling of mind so high and so full, that there is no room for any good motion to dwel by it[...]" In this raging fit, Reason, Modesty, Peace, Humanitie, &c. runne from him, as seruants from their mad master" (15). There are several

aspects of this passage to note, especially when examining Isabella's development amidst Kyd's repeated evocations and uses of space. Much like Adams, Isabella implicitly suggests that physical and spiritual diseases are complexly related to one another; there is a strange type of dialogue taking place both internally and with unseen elements beyond human understanding. In both *The Spanish Tragedy* and *Diseases of the Soule*, however, this anatomizing dynamic is reliant on complex uses of space. By literalizing cognitive space as a dwelling for thoughts, Adams is able to craft a useful metaphor which draws on commonplace reference points. Simultaneously, much like Beard's text, the rhetoric illustrates a persistent tension surrounding the potential impropriety of private spaces. The underlying suggestion, then, is that attempts at self-isolation, whether from fellow humans, one's homeland, or God, lead to disaster. This notion is reinforced by numerous instances of soliloquizing on the parts of both Hieronimo and Isabella.

Having divorced herself from all forms of consolation, then, Isabella channels her need for vengeance into an attack on the physical spaces around her: "Since neither piety nor pity moves / The king to justice or compassion, / I will revenge myself upon this place / Where thus they murdered my beloved son" (4.2.2-4). The power of literal space is amplified in this scene as Isabella imbues the landscape with a measure of guilt for her son's murder. In this way, to tear down what the text describes as an "arbour" takes on added significance. Here, given the context provided by Isabella's speech, the term most likely refers to "[a] garden of fruit trees [or] an orchard" (*OED* n.3). Simultaneously, then, she attempts to strip the land of its ability to bear fruit while divorcing herself from the corporeal world through self-murder. In a state of utter powerlessness, she turns her aggression against nature, hoping, however misguidedly, to exact vengeance on the Earth itself. A similar notion of expelling oneself from the oppressions of the

physical world is present throughout the text, though epitomized by Hieronimo's final acts of vengeance. To explore *The Spanish Tragedy's* interest in commingling these complex ideas regarding selfhood and the space one inhabits, Phillip Stubbes's *The Second Part of the Anatomie of Abuses* is instructive. Rhetorically, he synthesizes aspects of both Adams's and Beard's texts; he simultaneously shows an acute interest in instructing by way of numerous examples as well as defining concepts through the evocation of space. As the text states from the outset, it is designed to be a “display of *Corruptions, with a perfect* description of such imperfections, blemishes and abuses, as now reigning in euerie degree, require reformation for feare of Gods vengeance to be powred vpon the people and countrie, without speedie repentance and conuersion vnto God” (sig. A1r). Stubbes's approach is pervaded by notions of vengeance and locality. However, he opts for another rhetorical mode altogether by writing in the style of a Platonic dialogue.

The importance of nationality is made apparent from the beginning of Stubbes's text as the two principal characters, Theodorus and Amphilogus, introduce themselves. While the latter is a native of Dnalgne, or England in reverse, the former is “of the country and nation of *Idumeans*, a cruell, fierce, and seruile kind of people” (sig. B1v). Certainly, an element of plausible deniability plays a role in Stubbes' choice to rename England in his text, but a subtler symbolic component is more likely. Additionally, through providing the visual metaphor of a name reversed in print, Stubbes displays a sophisticated understanding regarding the importance and innovation of the written text as a form; he finely hones the most effective aspects of his dialogue through directness of prose and the use of layout in order to maximize the spatial immediacy of his chosen medium. To visually display the name in reverse suggests the degree to

which the nation, as a whole, is figuratively backward. As Amphilogus asserts, “here not any nation or countrey vnder the sunne that for pride, whoredome, droonkennes, gluttonie and all kinde of oppression, iniurie, and mischiefe, may compare with this one country of Dnalgne” (sig. B2r-v). In this way, Amphilogus' rhetoric is aligned with both Adams and Beard in their urgent concerns for the moral well being of England as a whole; at the heart of each religious treatise, in fact, there lies the basic motivation to remedy the transgressions of an entire society in the midst of drastic social change. In this way, Stubbes's decision to highlight elements of nationality, geography, and space is unsurprising. Along with the rise of secular humanist thinking taking place during the Early Modern period, there is, of course, fierce opposition on the part of religious thinkers. As with many complicated social issues, whether political, emotional, or both, it is simpler to allegorize criticism through the use of familiar narrative and symbolic patterns; this rhetorical tendency is found in *The Second Part of the Anatomie of Abuses*.²

Simultaneously, Stubbes's text reinforces the assertions of both Beard and Adams when his treatise states that it is better “to suffer a little wrong with patience, referring the reuenge to him who saith: *Mihi vindictam, & ego retribuam*, Uengeance is mine, and I wil reward” (sig. C2r). The Latin portion of this passage, though drawn directly from the Bible, is featured prominently in *The Spanish Tragedy* as well. Kyd's use of the popular phrase highlights a paradox which rests at the heart of these texts. In each, there is a persistent struggle to reconcile humanity's proper place, both figuratively and spatially, in relation to God's judgments. By filtering these vengeful words through the protagonist instead of God or even Revenge, Kyd presents his audience with a moral and theological challenge. After all, most of the play is structured around producing a sense of connectedness and sympathy with Hieronimo. Ultimately,

that Kyd's text shares so much common ground with Beard, Adams, and Stubbes is no trifling matter. While there is insufficient evidence to suggest a direct textual lineage among these writers and their works, it is clear that all parties are informed by the same sources of cultural tension. Specifically, these works attempt to navigate the tension between an absolutist ruler and an increasingly restless and potentially vengeful populace.

As Theodorus aptly inquires in *The Second Part of the Anatomie of Abuses*, “What if the prince be a tyrant, a wicked prince, and an ungodly, is he notwithstanding to be obeied?” (sig. D1v). If removed from the larger context of Stubbes's governing conceits, these words appear to be bluntly treasonous. However, by presenting his ideas through fictionalized surrogates, the writer is able to obscure his own views regarding a potentially dangerous subject. Moreover, Stubbes takes great care to preemptively address any potential offenses in the opening pages of his text. Ultimately, he asks the reader to “either expunge [the offending passages] with [a] penne, qualifie them with the oile of [one's] fauorable iudgement, or else at the least so to construe & interpret them as they both may stand with the truth” (sigs. A6v-A7r). Even more explicitly than Kyd, Stubbes is willing to place the responsibility of interpretation directly in the hands of his readership; through this evasive rhetorical maneuver, he attempts to offer criticism with complete impunity. The rhetorical space created allows the interpreting reader to have a measure of autonomy and authority. In this way, the notion of framing one's ideas in the form of creative dramatization is of central importance for both Stubbes and Kyd. Whether expressed in the form of classical dialogue or the play-within-a-play featured in *The Spanish Tragedy*, the presentation of controversial content is made possible by the use of conceptual and spatial removal.

In another moment illustrating Kyd's textual self-reference and removal, Balthazar asks, "What, you would have us play a tragedy?" (4.1.86). In his response, Hieronimo highlights the essential elements of Kyd's choice to refer to a genre of such great antiquity: "Nero thought it no disparagement, / And kings and emperors have ta'en delight / To make experience of their wits in plays!" (4.1.87-89). Much like Beard, through hearkening to a distant historical example, Kyd lends his entire text a sense of provable merit; after all, the genre is highly esteemed and persistent. Through this complex process of authorial removal, he continually abjects moral responsibility for the controversial elements of revenge tragedy. Additionally, though he is indebted to Seneca "as a matter both of structure and expression" (Mulryne xvii), the substantive elements of *The Spanish Tragedy* differ from the classical sources in significant ways. While the historically-referential elements of using a play-within-a-play are essential for understanding Kyd's rhetorical tactics, another important aspect pertains to the purposeful complication of written and spoken verse's potential to effect change. To this end, Hieronimo's assertions about poetry are significant: "When I was young I gave my mind / And plied myself to fruitless poetry: / Which though it profit the professor naught, / Yet it is passing pleasing to the world" (4.1.71-74). The act of spoken verse is elevated and denigrated in equal measure. Subtly, this passage also reasserts authorial removal by suggesting that the act of composing poetry benefits the rest of the world while offering few returns to those who profess it. In this way, producing plays and volumes of poetry is cast as a selfless act of benevolence at best, and childish frivolity at worst. In neither case, however, does one find the suggestion of producing long-lasting social change. This process of self-effacement serves functions both within the plot of *The Spanish Tragedy* and within Early Modern culture. At all points, Kyd fashions his own space of artistic authority while

leaving room to escape responsibility for social critique; adaptability, both figuratively and spatially, are essential components for his success as a playwright.

The sense of menace Hieronimo's revenge plot creates is the direct result of the spatial and figurative separation mechanisms explored throughout play. As Hieronimo's mental state deteriorates before the audience's eyes, the trajectory of his desperation and the need for vengeance becomes apparent. In this way, the violence which takes place amidst his miniature theatrical production registers a degree of shock, but not complete and outright surprise, for as the protagonist states, "I'll play the murderer, I warrant you, / For I already conceited that" (4.1.133-134). Even at this juncture, however, spatial rhetoric is centrally important to the proceedings. The very concept of performing a play within the confines of another is necessarily reliant on notions of space; the narrative is able to fashion a semblance of internal, material space on stage while implicitly acknowledging the place of the audience in the theater itself. Furthermore, by crassly displaying his son's unburied corpse, Hieronimo transgresses various notions of physical and mental propriety; Horatio's mangled, rotting body is unfit to inhabit a royal court. The sense of narrative symmetry which this act creates is the direct result of satisfying Hieronimo's promise to force the truth, with all its gory details, into the public sphere. In short order, he aggressively violates the king's safety, privacy, and judgment through the use of theater. Ultimately, he exacts revenge of equal measure by causing his enemies to experience strife that mirrors his own.

As Kyd, Beard, Adams, and Stubbes all make apparent in their texts, Early Modern culture is persistently fixated on the hierarchization of space. Given the diversity of the rhetorical approaches observed throughout these writers' works, it is clear that nearly every aspect of

Renaissance life, whether mental, physical, spiritual, or otherwise, is governed by complicated uses of spatial rhetoric. In art, as in day-to-day life, these attempts at managing various spaces often bring citizens into traumatic, violent conflict. It is fitting, then, that the regulation of urban space, whether in Renaissance London or New York during the late 20th century, often results in the desire for vengeance. While it is difficult to seek specific authorial intent through reading Kyd's play, we can begin to grasp the intense malleability of moral and political concepts throughout the Early Modern period nonetheless. Even in eras guided by strict religious and governmental initiatives, artists and their audiences are capable of effectively synthesizing and repurposing the dominant cultural narratives of their time periods. These traits are carried on into the late Renaissance as well, as Shakespeare's genre-defying experiments demonstrate.

William Shakespeare and the Spatial Evolution of Revenge

As an introductory review of vengeance in the Renaissance reveals, there are many complex spatial concerns to consider when analyzing the representation of vengeance in drama and prose. However, in order to discern the trajectory of revenge as a transforming cultural entity, exploring *The Tempest* helps to establish an even larger context. In this way, moving beyond the Renaissance in order to discern the far-reaching influence of canonical writers such as Shakespeare need not be an exercise in forced and pedestrian interpretation. Furthermore, by synthesizing recent theoretical findings in the field of spatial rhetoric, many of the concerns illustrated by an analysis of Kyd, Beard, Stubbes, and Adams will come into clearer focus. At the outset of *Geographies of Writing*, Nedra Reynolds poses an important question: "What do bodies, city walls, pathways, streams, or plane trees have to do with rhetoric, writing, or an intellectual discussion?" (11). While this point of inquiry is essential for establishing the

trajectory of her argument, it also illustrates the primacy of spatial rhetoric in analyzing texts. Reynolds shows how rhetoric is capable of shaping tangible, geographical spaces. Of equal importance, however, is the potential for explicitly spatial conflicts to affect how rhetoric is employed; as we observed in the case of *The Spanish Tragedy*, the relationship is cyclical and complex. However, the intersections of art and history can act as points of entry for interrogating these spatial tensions. Additionally, while Eric Schaefer's critical approach deals narrowly with the study of exploitation films, it is valuable to recognize the degree to which Shakespeare's plays also "tell us about the ways in which [his] society dealt with sexuality [and] race" (96). These concerns, while not exhaustive, are of central importance to *The Tempest's* exploration of vengeance and the concept of spatial legitimacy.

In order to fully grasp the connections that align Shakespeare and his modern counterparts, it is helpful to survey standard readings of *The Tempest*. Scholars scrutinize the play through numerous lenses. Often, critics examine the play's latent notions of conquest as metaphors for England's imperialist aims before and during Shakespeare's life. Prospero's behavior, given his rule of the unnamed island and subsequent manipulation of all parties on it, readily lends itself to such readings. At the same time, the sensational elements of Shakespeare's tale, with its shipwrecks, magic use, and dramatic love interests, remain compelling to modern audiences. As Stephen Greenblatt suggests in *Shakespeare's Freedom*, the playwright "understood his art to be dependent upon a social agreement, but he did not simply submit to the norms of his age. Rather[...]he at once embraced those norms and subverted them, finding an unexpected, paradoxical beauty in the smudges, marks, stains, scars, and wrinkles that had figured only as signs of ugliness and difference" (15). Here, Greenblatt's notions of social

agreement and subversion resonate with Mullaney's analyses regarding the place of culturally marginalized art forms. As we observed in examining *The Spanish Tragedy*, for instance, despite certain elements of iconoclasm and controversy, it is impossible for artists to completely remove themselves from their own local and historical contexts. However, by contorting the usual generic and moral standards of a given period to their own ends, artists like Shakespeare are able to safely prompt questioning and criticism without resorting to didacticism or the rhetoric of political manifestos. As we will see, Henenlotter pursues a similar project when he adopts certain techniques and thematic elements of *The Tempest* and uses them to new ends, leaning heavily on spatial and cultural tensions to which Shakespeare was clearly attuned.

One of the many reasons suggested for Shakespeare's constant use of foreign locations, a tactic he shares with Kyd, has to do with the censorship constraints of his time period. While he must have found his "art made tongue-tied by authority," (sonnet 66, line 9) his projection of socially-relevant issues onto unrelated spaces parallels the transient nature of theater itself. The latter dynamic of artistic transience is different, though coexistent with the former concerns regarding censorship and punishment. The reason it is important to examine this difference critically has much to do with the often radical nature of Shakespeare's writing. Whether it be *Othello* or *The Merchant of Venice*, where issues of race, birthright, and jealousy collide to horrific ends, the locus of conflicts is always irrevocably tied to ideas of property and thus of space. When Shakespeare treats figures cast as Others with sensitivity and human consideration, he questions, even if indirectly, the ability of hegemonic power to prescribe space for specific individuals. With the framing mechanism of distant or imagined locales in place, Shakespeare is able to subvert the potential for censorship. Additionally, his work is able to critique the

haphazard governance of theater spaces in Renaissance London. In essence, the poet's obsession with movement in and around spaces of abjection speaks to issues which range from personal to governmental.

Given Shakespeare's desire to explore such a broad range of topics throughout the play, it is appropriate that *The Tempest* would be performed beneath a comedy flag despite the narrative's often violent themes. Furthermore, considering the play's arrival during the concluding moments of the Renaissance, notions of generic convention become complicated. By this point in Shakespeare's career, the playwright's preferred mode of storytelling resists oversimplification; just as there are moments of legitimate hilarity permeating his tragedies, there is vengeance, anger, and long stretches of exposition to be found even in his most lighthearted comedic endeavors. Because of this, there are numerous factors that often challenge first-time readers or viewers of *The Tempest*. For example, the play moves jarringly between elaborate scenes of masquerade and thoughtful contemplation of physical reality:

Our revels now are ended. These our actors
(As I foretold you) were all spirits, and
Are melted into air, into thin air,
And like the baseless fabric of this vision,
The cloud-capp'd tow'rs, the gorgeous palaces,
The solemn temples, the great globe itself,
Yea, all which it inherit, shall dissolve,
And like this insubstantial pageant faded
Leave not a rack behind. (4.1.148-156)

Prospero's words, though relevant to his immediate situation, illustrate Shakespeare's prescience in regard to the transient nature of spaces for the arts. Additionally, once the spectacle ends, the audience is left to reconcile the social issues raised, whether as a matter of internalized contemplation or discussion with peers. In the case of *The Spanish Tragedy* and *The Tempest*, the audience is presented with stark dramatizations which reveal the absolute limits of art, governance, revenge, and repression. However, it is often difficult for viewers to track these notions amid what seem to be unconventionally-structured narratives. Simultaneously, Prospero's words accentuate the degree to which Shakespeare is able to speak to his audience members in their own context. In fact, the poet's discernible preoccupation with local spaces becomes more pervasive upon close reading. Indeed, both Shakespeare and Henenlotter often “interrogated [the] desperation” (Schaefer 96) of their respective time periods. Take, for example, both artists' heightened awareness regarding the plight of social outcasts such as Caliban. As we will see, Henenlotter's appropriation of Shakespeare's work acts as a logical continuation of these same concerns in his depictions of the character Belial. Through insistently focusing on locality, the director is able to preserve an image of 42nd Street long since passed. Similarly, though limited by the censorship constraints of Renaissance England, Shakespeare alludes to his own time and place by referencing “the great globe itself.” To the attentive audience member in the Globe Theatre, the gravity of what Prospero's speech suggests is much more severe: even physical spaces are rendered insubstantial and fleeting by the movement of capital. This attention to self-reference and audience engagement also shows a form of continuity bridging Shakespeare and Kyd in meaningful ways; both artists continually display a heightened sensitivity in regard to matters of space and its uses.

Tim Edensor's work in *Industrial Ruins* helps to further illustrate the importance of spatial rhetoric in the context of examining theater practices. His study also readily lends itself to addressing issues of cultural lineage due to his insistence on reading urban areas as spatial narratives. In this way, while the Liberties of Renaissance London were not, at least strictly speaking, literal spaces of ruin, the relevance of Edensor's work persists even outside the confines of his particular study; to the Puritans of the Early Modern period, in fact, the Liberties were spaces of dire moral ruin. To this end, Edensor is correct to note that “[r]uins do not take one shape but are manifold in form, fashioned by the era in which they were constructed, their architectural style and their industrial function, and also partly depending upon the strategies mobilised by firms towards them after abandonment” (4). Without bending the spatial realities of London, smaller cross sections of urban space can be fruitfully examined in relation to cultural and/or industrial ruins. Indeed, “[t]he dynamic colonisation of space by capital infers that all space has the potential to become lucrative, whether now or in the future. All space can be transformed from useless to prosperous and back again through investment and disinvestment” (Edensor 7). As Mullaney's text demonstrates, this transformative process was prevalent in the margins of London as Renaissance theater rose to cultural prominence despite its precarious and often controversial nature. In this realm of dramatic change, Prospero's words are especially grave; in many ways, the rise of modern urbanism ensures that all “shall dissolve” (4.1.-154) amid the ever-shifting whims of capital and investment. In the case of Kyd, Shakespeare, and Henenlotter, these notions of cultural and spatial transience create the foundation from which revenge narratives arise.

A close look at historical documents and texts from both Renaissance London and

postmodern 42nd Street reveals the motivations behind seemingly constant changes in active theater spaces, both geographically and architecturally. Certainly, the flow of capital, whether internally or as an outside force, has much to do with these reconfigurations. An accurate analysis of these circumstances requires the consideration of many factors; there are numerous points of intersection among economic pressures, larger governmental initiatives, and the compensatory needs of the artists themselves. Of course, in places like Broadway and Hollywood, the enterprises of theater and film are primarily matters of business. Whether members of larger city- or nation-wide communities consider these art forms to be productive and beneficial is another subject of debate, however. Indeed, “for those for whom space must have an evident function as productive or as property, such a purposive idea means that ruined space is understood as somewhere in which nothing happens and there is nothing” (Edensor 8). Accordingly, the theater spaces of Renaissance London and 20th century 42nd Street were cast as spaces of ruin; social frameworks of tourist capital and government initiatives create seamless, homogenized urban landscapes to the detriment of the lower classes.

Though the complexities of city space in the Renaissance predate modernist theory, the ideological urges that commonly characterize the movement stem from earlier cultural tensions. In this way, Edensor's theories regarding the dualism found in modernist city planning are relevant: “Modernity seems to have been riven by two opposing forces, namely the quest for a seamless order and the simultaneous desire to transcend a regulated life, to enter a realm of surprise, contingency and misrule” (53). These paradoxical urges, as described by Chris Rojek, are Apollonian and Dionysian in nature; the former, which comes to encompass this “seamless order,” takes a privileged position amidst those who prescribe the fate of city spaces. As Edensor

continues, “contemporary production of urban space is coterminous with regulation, surveillance, aesthetic monitoring and the prevalence of regimes which determine where and how things, activities and people should be placed” (54). These assertions ring true even if the notion of contemporaneity is replaced by Renaissance London or New York under former Mayor Rudolph Giuliani. At this juncture, the work of Renaissance scholars intersects in a meaningful way.

As Andrew Gurr points out, Renaissance playhouses were often pushed out of densely-populated downtown spaces into the outlying suburban areas of London. Since “the [Privy] Council had agreed with the Lord Mayor that playing at all city inns was to be banned” (27), theater builders such as James Burbage intimately knew the complications of maintaining stable centers for the arts. In the face of an overriding desire for a seamless order, the art of theater was forced to become a complex brand of cultural marginalia. For some, the mere presence of theaters near their businesses or homes presented a nuisance as the “regular daily flow of large numbers of playgoers was [seen as] an unpleasant novelty in London” (Gurr 40). The operative word choice here is, of course, “flow,” which resonates with Edensor's analysis. As he asserts, “[the processes] of ordering lead to the demarcation of zones, routes and areas for specific activities, producing connected single-purpose spaces and a geography of centres, terminals and unidirectional flows” (55). In the case of Renaissance London, the spectacle of playgoing is the perfect literalization of the Apollonian/Dionysian tension to which he refers. This issue is manifested both in terms of theater locations and audience composition. Appropriately, these notions of relocation and motion are defining factors of Shakespeare's narrative undertakings throughout *The Tempest*.

The play begins with a voyage at sea and the eponymous storm which sets the story itself in motion. Shakespeare chooses to describe the setting as “[a]n uninhabited island” (Norton 3) in the *dramatis personæ* despite the fact that such an assertion is untrue: Caliban was born on the island. While printed versions of the text were eventually available to those outside of the acting profession, given Shakespeare's uninterest in the reproduction of his works, this description of setting is significant. From a logical standpoint, this short description of setting simply conveys a state of mind to the actors by way of establishing context; their physical and mental states are predicated upon surviving a horrific shipwreck only to be cast upon what appears to be a deserted island. What this indicates, at the very least, is attentiveness to the importance of spatial rhetoric. Here, it applies both to the inner workings of the play and the perspective of the audience. Additionally, at least in a figurative sense, the island is perpetually uninhabited; by virtue of the characters' constant movement, disquietude, and emotional unrest, no one is allowed to find comfort in his or her surroundings. This is in large part because every character in the play is moved to or about the island by the agency of another. The island is, in essence, what Gloria Anzaldúa would describe as a “borderland.”

Anzaldúa's theories regarding what she calls “borderlands” are especially helpful since they accurately articulate the spatial tensions felt both in Renaissance London and on New York's 42nd Street. As she demonstrates, marginalized individuals “are outsiders to the dominant culture and therefore must develop the freedom of movement and the ability to occupy different perspectives” (Reynolds 36). The notion of occupation takes on several layers of relevance in regard to Shakespeare and Kyd. While these playwrights figuratively reside in different methods of expression, as we saw with Kyd's elusive assertions of authority and self-effacement, they are

literally forced to relocate the theaters such as the Globe in order to maintain financial solvency. Despite numerous points of difference, the “borderlands” model positing spatial hybridity and the necessary outsider status of the artist is essential for understanding both Shakespeare and Henenlotter in their contexts and in relation to one another: “One has to stay on the move in borderlands, weaving between cultures or communities, languages or dialects” (Reynolds 36). The concept of motion here, in both literal and literary senses, is significant given the power dynamics of urban areas undergoing drastic reconfiguration. As Alex Vitale points out in *City of Disorder*, “Society at large usually is indifferent to the means that the police use to maintain order on the edges of society. The police had always treated those on the margins of society in a repressive manner” (2). The punitive element Vitale illustrates throughout his study of New York City is especially powerful in the context of revenge narratives in both Early Modern London and on 42nd Street. In essence, those disempowered by the movement of capital and governmental moralism are able to recapture agency or a kind of release through dramatic, fictionalized depictions of vengeance and violence.

In this light, Caliban takes on a great deal of significance as the “savage and deformed slave” (Norton 3) of *The Tempest*. Just as Anzaldúa's theory would suggest, Caliban is forced to move between different cultures. Upon Prospero's arrival, Caliban becomes a useful pet and servant:

When thou cam'st first

Thou strok'st me and made much of me; wouldst give me

Water with berries in't; and teach me how

To name the bigger light, and how the less,

That burn by day and night. (1.2.332-336)

After his attempted rape of Miranda, Caliban was reduced to slavery by means of Prospero's use of physical punishment. Though *The Tempest* only briefly addresses this moment of sexual violence, Shakespeare uses Caliban's attempted rape of Miranda to raise a number of spatial issues. Indeed, the poet challenges his audience with content and concerns that exploitation films readily address time and time again. In Shakespeare's play, the dissolution of what Prospero perceives to be an amicable relationship with Caliban is ultimately the result of Caliban's attempt to regain control of the island. The act of rape, along with Caliban's admission that he would have "peopled else / This isle with Calibans" (1.2.350-351), shows his desire to usurp spatial power and not merely to gratify some basic carnal urge. His goal is to populate the land with his spawn; even his phrasing demonstrates a desire for control as he opts to pluralize his own name as opposed to using a simple signifier such as "children" or "offspring." In a literal way, Caliban seeks to create an army based on his own genetic makeup in order to capitalize on all available space.

Caliban's words also reveal the necessity of learning a non-native tongue in order to communicate and move within this new societal framework. He persistently shows a great deal of insight as to the spatial dynamics of the island, rightly accusing Prospero of usurping land which is his birthright. At the same time, Caliban is required to offer his local wisdom in order to stay in the good graces of his slave master. In this way, he must constantly adapt, move and, in his case, plot vengeance in order to reassert rightful dominion over the space of the island. That his conflict is decidedly spatial in nature is epitomized by one of Shakespeare's most well-known passages:

Be not afeard, the isle is full of noises,
Sounds, and sweet airs, that give delight and hurt not.
Sometimes a thousand twangling instruments
Will hum about mine ears; and sometime voices,
That if I then had wak'd after long sleep,
Will make me sleep again, and then in dreaming,
The clouds methought would open, and show riches
Ready to drop upon me, that when I wak'd
I cried to dream again. (3.2.134-143)

Caliban's plight is only complicated further by the introduction of cognitive space, as he describes the process of moving back and forth between reality and dreams, inner and outer. In this regard, resonances of Adams's insistence on anatomizing the human body, consciousness, and soul bear on Shakespeare's depiction of Caliban. Much like the afflictions detailed in *Diseases of the Soule*, Caliban's maladies are both internally and externally dependent, though the underlying tension is always related to spatial displacement. Additionally, in these moments, the playwright grants his character an acute awareness of the traumatic nature of spatial reordering and its pervasiveness on personal and societal levels.

Traumatic Urban Reconfiguration and Frank Henenlotter's Postmodern Vengeance

Without denigrating the artistry of Shakespeare, we can observe the degree to which his centrality as a figure in popular culture is maintained through a specific kind of cultural assimilation; despite the radical and violent content we have observed thus far, his plays are accepted in ways that exploitation films are not. Furthermore, contemporary scholarship, despite

its tacit acceptance of Shakespeare's influence, tends to ignore the poet's cultural persistence once it takes unexpected forms.² There is an unsettling potential for this type of academic research to reinforce reductive delineations between “legitimate text” and “trash.” As such, without attempting to posit some type of master narrative, it is possible to acknowledge the degree to which Henenlotter's texts bear the same type of anxiety exhibited in *The Tempest*, *The Spanish Tragedy*, and many others. Ultimately, the tension which persists throughout both artists' texts is one of vengeance as motivated by purposeful uses of space. In this way, Henenlotter's *Basket Case* refigures Caliban through Belial Bradley, the conjoined twin brother of Duane Bradley. Arriving in New York City, the siblings seek violent recompense for their forced separation and the attempted murder of Belial. In *Basket Case*, much like *The Tempest*, it is instructive to consider how space is employed, restricted, and depicted. Through this type of analysis, the cultural connections uniting the two artists and time periods become clearer.

By keeping these notions of space in mind, it is easier to consider Shakespeare's ongoing influence throughout *Basket Case*. In his film, Henenlotter sets a precedent by directly quoting Caliban's speech extolling the island. In the film, however, the lines are filtered through the Duane and Belial's aunt. Immediately, then, the social dynamic of the scene illustrates the importance of familial ties. Poignantly, and self-reflexively given the horrific content of the film, she begins by asking the two children, “Art thou afeard?” (3.2.134). Henenlotter's decision to use Shakespeare's lines during a flashback is highly appropriate given the underlying filmic conceit of hearkening to the past. Indeed, it is by looking to his forebears that Henenlotter is able to set the stage for what transpires throughout the entire series of *Basket Case* films. The preexisting difficulties which accompany Shakespeare's narratives are compounded by Henenlotter's choices

in synthesizing the source material. It is difficult to discern where to begin untangling the director's strange ode to 42nd Street and Shakespeare. In a violent and immediate way, however, revenge and space once again present the most evident point of entry for interrogating the film. *Basket Case* opens with action and movement as a panicked Dr. Lifflander tries to fend off an unseen attacker; this is similar to *The Tempest's* opening, which finds a desperate group of aristocrats fighting against unknown forces of nature and magic. Given his state and the ominous audio cues, the audience is provided ample evidence to suggest that danger is close at hand. After displaying his grisly demise, the film immediately cuts to Times Square. In this moment, the viewer is propelled down 42nd Street itself. Henenlotter, much like Shakespeare, wastes no time framing the narrative in an explicitly spatial context. Additionally, it is later revealed that the twin protagonists are responsible for a series of vengeful murders carried out in a precisely-measured fashion. This is important to note given our earlier exploration of the Renaissance period's interest in revenge as an act of equal measure.

As the story continues, Dr. Needleman, anxious and desperate, exclaims that “Lifflander is dead, murdered, cut in half!” In a sense, Dr. Lifflander's death is a mirror image of his own transgressions; as the narrative reveals, he takes part in separating Duane and Belial, thus creating two unstable characters from one whole being. Another necessary component to the brothers' vengeance requires that each victim understand his or her reasons for being slain. Dr. Needleman and Dr. Kutter (named in the obvious tradition of Shakespearean punning) also sense the ever-increasing threat of violence as Duane and Belial draw nearer. In some ways, this replicates the sense of panic and confusion caused when the brothers are traumatically separated. The safe interior spaces of the doctors' homes and offices are shown to be illusory and transient as

the twin brothers intrude. The voice of Prospero echoes in their actions here, imploring to “[l]et them be hunted soundly. At this hour / Lies at my mercy all mine enemies. / Shortly shall all my labors end[...].” (IV.i.262-263). However, Belial and Duane's desire is not simply to satisfy bloodlust, but to quench an age-old need for justice their society is unwilling or unable to provide. These notions resonate meaningfully with Hieronimo's quest for restitution in the face of indifferent governing bodies. Much like Hieronimo and Caliban, Duane and Belial are forever marked as outcasts in a world where legitimacy and normalcy reign. However, just as Prospero is able to hone his magic powers during exile, Belial and Duane are able to exact vengeance while seeking the isolation of hotel rooms on 42nd Street.

In this way, Henenlotter acts as Shakespeare's heir not only through reusing the playwright's verse, but by continuing many literary and cultural traditions in his own films. By screening *Basket Case*, a film heavily-steeped in the culture of 42nd Street, in Times Square itself, Henenlotter meets his audience members in their own context, thus increasing their involvement in the text itself. His art is, in many ways, created in direct response to his connection with the people and places of 42nd Street. In an even broader sense, his films exist as a type of dialogue between audience and director; through this type of engagement, both parties are able to experience a complicated symbiosis. As noted in the exploration of Kyd's use of the play-within-a-play, the reflexivity of this exercise is a recognized feature of revenge drama. However, Henenlotter's cultural awareness and ability to synthesize canonical texts of an earlier period further align him with Shakespeare in meaningful ways. Indeed, much like Shakespeare's plays, exploitation films “are often hard to situate from an aesthetic standpoint” (Schaefer 94) as they move from “sequences of spectacle (scenes of seduction, sexual initiation, and elaborate masked

swinging parties)” to the exploration of “ennui and discontent” (Schaefer 95). Here, Schaefer explains why teaching drive-in exploitation films to students can present particular difficulties. Simultaneously, as Russ McDonald asserts, “[t]he history of Shakespeare in performance is marked by actions, reactions, and countermovements as theater people search for new ways of selling the plays to the public” (353). In 1991, New York's historic 42nd Street became an extension of this grand tradition. As part of a \$2.5-billion initiative intended to reform the “international symbol of vice and street hustle” (Tierney 1), a director from the Royal Shakespeare Company was given control of the block's oldest theater. Though previously renowned for screening transgressive films, the Victory Theater began to host daily Shakespeare performances as spearheaded by an organization optimistically called Theater for a New Audience. While debates pertaining to these urban planning endeavors persist, there remains much to be learned through analyzing historical precedents established during the Early Modern period. It is thus instructive to consider whether Shakespeare was truly a new voice in 42nd Street's theaters by the advent of the early 1990s. Indeed, even after the “arrival of movies brought a more egalitarian crowd” (Tierney 2) to Times Square, the author's presence was demonstrable through both explicit references and clever appropriation in exploitation films. However, the reasons for Shakespeare's cultural persistence are complex. At the level of exploitation films, we find directors like Henenlotter repurposing canonized literature as an act of artistic legitimization and brash postmodern deconstruction.

In order to fully grasp the lasting influence of Early Modern England, both in terms of narrative practices and cultural ideals, it is important to actively include texts which have been pushed to the margins. Though recent scholarship has begun to acknowledge the relevance of

exploitation films to postmodern culture, the process of contextualizing these works as part of a larger cultural narrative is widely ignored. As Schaefer notes, “those low-budget, sensational movies of various stripes that revel in sex, nudity, vice and violence[...]present some unique challenges and can be classified as 'difficult' films” (94). For this reason, the films of directors such as Henenlotter deserve scrutiny as products of a vastly different, pre-1990s 42nd Street. However, the story does not and cannot simply end there; as we have observed, both New York and Renaissance London, to various extents, were punctuated by strategic, forcible relocation of spaces for the arts, authors interested in exploring complex societal issues, a shocking willingness to toil in filth, and of course, the desire for profit. Additionally, legitimate analyses of low-budget film adaptations of Shakespeare are rare, even in discussions about creative appropriation. In this way, if New York's 42nd Street acts as London's historical mirror, Henenlotter serves as the unwitting Bard of Long Island. As if in response to this point, the director states that he has “nothing against Shakespeare, but [he thinks] it's criminal what's happened to the Times Square theaters” (Tierney 1). Indeed, to suggest that Henenlotter, creator of all three *Basket Case* films is wholly unfamiliar with or has an aversion to the famous playwright is simply untrue. In fact, he is concerned with many of the same issues of parentage, otherness, physical deformity, and revenge.

As Schaefer notes, exploitation films often “tell us about the ways in which society dealt with sexuality, race, and drug use[...]doing so in ways that were generally avoided in the mainstream motion picture industry” (96). The issue, as is often the case with Shakespeare scholarship, is one of historical context counterbalanced against form. Indeed, close consideration of Shakespeare or Henenlotter “gradually peels back layers to not only reveal their

beleaguered conditions of production, but to expose broader issues of power and capital” (Schaefer 96). This political tension is apparent when reading accounts of New York's transformation in the early 1990s: “They're looking to move in a new class of people here[...]They want to get rid of the poor folks. Who's going to pay \$22 to see Shakespeare?” (Tierney 2). Much like Shakespeare's London, 42nd Street's theaters and artists were marginalized as a matter of course by the city government. In a similar way, due to the widespread perception that the block was an epicenter of iniquity, Mayor Giuliani's sweeping, city-wide changes showed little regard for legitimate elements of subcultural importance that had grown amid the crime and poverty of 42nd Street. Much like the poor denizens of 42nd Street, the artists working in the immediate vicinity were forced into different spaces. Furthermore, as Schaefer aptly asserts, the circumstances surrounding the creation of these films are often overlooked. Indeed, the budgetary constraints which prompt criticism of exploitation films were equally problematic for Early Modern playwrights. In fact, Shakespeare's dramas were conceived “with a certain group of actors in mind and with a financial stake in suiting his matter to his means” (McDonald 44). While this manifests in different ways, the same sense of economy is certainly applicable to the business of exploitation filmmaking. The persistence of this necessity-driven creative model includes Henenlotter's use of continuity in casting. For example, Kevin Van Hentenryck, an actor who appears in all three *Basket Case* films, appears in Henenlotter's *Brain Damage* as well. Additionally, Beverly Bonner, the actress who portrays *Basket Case*'s Casey, appears in every one of Henenlotter's films. As with the reappearance of actors in Shakespeare's plays, her repeated presence serves as a reminder both of previous characters and, in a larger sense, of themes which remain relevant throughout Henenlotter's oeuvre. However, these economic

constraints are often reflected in the physical spaces of the theaters used.

Much like attending an Early Modern theater, with its bare stages and lighting constraints, enjoying exploitation films in their proper spatial context requires significant suspension of disbelief and an engaged imagination. While *Basket Case* avoids the problematic nature of staging thanks to on-location filming in New York, its budgetary constraints often manifest in the use of practical effects; certainly, moviegoers are acutely aware that the screen is filled with dramatic splashes of red corn syrup and camera trickery as opposed to true instances of violent murder.³ However, this dynamic can serve as another means by which viewers form a meaningful connection with the films and ideas on display. This form of active participation is a central part of what makes for a legitimate audience experience; in fact, the films address the crowd itself by demanding a particular kind of attention and understanding. This narrative tactic, as we observed in the case of Kyd's soliloquies, helps to craft a separate cognitive space for those in attendance. Moreover, writers and directors of these films understand the desires of their patrons and allow them to participate in the creation of unique cultural literacies; exploitation films use a shared vernacular that speaks to the concerns and yearnings of the marginalized. Henenlotter is unique, however, for his appropriation of Shakespeare's words in this context.

It is appropriate that Henenlotter directly quotes *The Tempest* in *Basket Case* given his narrative's reliance on the themes and images established by Shakespeare. There are meaningful deviations from the source text, however, because Henenlotter's films are not remakes, but postmodern re-imaginings. Throughout the entire *Basket Case* series, issues of space are pervasive, presenting a thematic constant that weaves through all three entries. From the outset, the co-protagonists of the story are set into motion by virtue of difference. Having been born

conjoined twins, Duane and Belial are cast as Others in a household where normativity is highly prized. Having left the safe interior of their mother's womb, the twins are beset by conflicts involving both physical and mental space. In a sense, their mother's death during childbirth establishes a strong theme for the series: the spaces of the outside world are traumatic, dangerous, and inhospitable. Even their fragile notions of personal space are rendered useless by the surgical separation that nearly kills Belial. The privileging of interior space occurs repeatedly as the two twins spend the film seeking new, closed-off areas where they are allowed a sense of safety, however illusory. Whether leaving their temporary residences of seedy hotel rooms on 42nd Street or the wicker basket to which Belial is most often confined, their brief excursions to the outside world often result in violence. These notions of contested space are addressed throughout *Basket Case* as Henenlotter highlights the pervasive notions the cultural imperialism that take root in New York during the late 1980s.

As many critics are apt to note, “*The Tempest* has been uniquely adopted by formerly colonized nations in refashioning their post-colonial identities” (Arden 2). These same resonances are discernible, though on a different scale, in Henenlotter's works before, during, and after 42nd Street's drastic spatial reordering. By setting his texts on the block itself, Henenlotter makes his films self-referential at the level of his audience's predisposition toward localism. In a larger sense, his preoccupation with this unique sub-space of New York speaks to a point of anxiety that the rhetoric of his films represent. In the proper context, what initially appears to be a non sequitur used to introduce Duane's love interest takes on particular significance:

Sharon: Just visiting New York or...

Duane: Yeah, this is my first time.

Sharon: So, have you gone to the Empire State Building yet and the Statue of Liberty?

Duane: No, I haven't had the time.

Sharon: Haven't had the time?! Well, what about Radio City Music Hall or the U.N.? Had time for them?!

Duane: No, I, I...

Sharon: Well, what about the World Trade Towers or the trolley cars?

Duane: It's not that I don't want to, but...

Sharon: The Met, the Cloisters, Grauman's Chinese?!

Duane: It's just that I don't know where anything is.

Sharon: Well, if you need a tour guide, I'd be happy to volunteer. We'll even buy you some 3D postcards and an "I Love New York" t-shirt.

Though exaggerated for effect, this scene shows that artists like Henenlotter were acutely aware of spatial tensions which posed an ever-present threat to their subculture. Mayor Giuliani's attempts at reform were still years away from realization, but there was, at the very least, a growing awareness of a dangerous binary construction being disseminated throughout the city. Here, it seems that an idea of the "real" city and its residents is poised in opposition to a slew of tourist-oriented locales. Sharon's increasingly-irritated rhetoric illustrates the importance of space in the narrative as she creates a hierarchy based on location. However, by this point in the story, she has no knowledge of Duane's temporary residence on 42nd Street. To her, his chosen space seems rather immaterial; any location that does not, at least tangentially, involve the accepted cultural landmarks of the city is a non-space, or perhaps even a place of ruin. At this level, urban

space is characterized by notions of aesthetic legitimacy and even genre. In fact, Sharon's inability to grasp New York's pluralism as an urban environment also reveals the film's adept use and misuse of genre conventions.

The genre of *The Tempest* is romance – “[a] fictitious narrative, usually in prose, in which the settings or the events depicted are remote from everyday life, or in which sensational or exciting events or adventures form the central theme” (*OED* n.3a). Since Henenlotter is actively involved in the process of conflating his narrative with *The Tempest*, it is important to examine the complications created by genre in this regard. In one sense, attempting to contort *Basket Case* in such a way that it conforms to the definition of a “romance” is counterproductive because it is decidedly rooted in the subcultural elements of exploitation and horror. At the same time, it is helpful to consider how the label functions in order to elucidate certain cultural conventions being carried on through Henenlotter's work. In a sense, as the product of spatial dislocation in the texts, both Shakespeare's fantastical island and Henenlotter's surreal depiction of 42nd Street are engaged in the use of relatively “remote” locales, as the *OED* suggests. By no means does this immediately consign *Basket Case* or its sequels to the status of “romance.” However, the film's historical roots are tied to a genre convention that is predicated on explicitly spatial concerns. Through examining what took place on 42nd Street in the 1990s, it is possible to properly contextualize these issues of space.

Though his interest pertains to the evolution of architectural trends in peep show theaters on 42nd Street, Tom Burr's exploration of spatial rhetoric on the block helps illustrate the magnitude of the changes taking place in New York during the 1990s. “In addition to the complete redesign of the area and the roster of new corporate tenants, in October of 1995 Mayor

Giuliani and the City Council announced their intentions to pursue zoning ordinances to force the relocation of sex shops in New York City. 'We changed the rules,' said Giuliani in September of 1997" (93). The changes to which Giuliani refers most certainly had negative effects on the burgeoning exploitation film industry that took root in prior years. Reconfigurations of urban locales based on capital tend to adhere to certain types of rhetoric, whether spoken, written, or spatial; the use or usurpation of space acts as a mechanism by which one segment of the population is privileged over another. While the formal elements of Shakespeare's work were appreciated by royalty and the lower classes, a primary source of cultural tension had to do with a desire for spatial separation that replicated the social hierarchy. That royals and aristocrats saw fit to commission plays to be performed at court reinforces this idea. In the same way, there was an undeniable shift in stable public spaces for exploitation film screenings. The common desire, on the part of local policymakers, to excise the unseemly elements of society results in sanctioned spaces for midnight movies or private viewings; in this way, transgressive cinema is effectively secreted away from those it might offend or challenge. In literal and symbolic ways, the artistic landscape during New York's early 1990s was forced to change.

As Mike Crang notes in *Cultural Geography*, another helpful way to view a landscape, whether urban or pastoral, is through the concept of a palimpsest. With its etymology rooted in the process of using writing blocks for printing, the term

refers to where an original inscription would be erased and other written over it, again and again. The earlier inscriptions were never fully erased so over time the result was a composite – a palimpsest representing the sum of all the erasures and over-writings. Thus we might see an analogy with a culture inscribing itself on an area to suggest the

landscape as the sum of erasures, accretions, anomalies and redundancies over time. (22)

This metaphor complements Edensor's approach to analyzing urban space, though Edensor qualifies the notion by asserting that a "palimpsest can be difficult to decode in its regulated appearance" (131). Indeed, the Apollonian approach to city planning seeks to strip a given area of its spacio-historical rhetoric unless it can cleanly assimilate it as something nonthreatening and largely vestigial. This tension is materially manifested within both *The Tempest* and *Basket Case*, but is coded spatially in relation to the bodies of characters themselves. In this way, it is helpful to consider the body as "[t]he complete physical form of a person or animal; the assemblage of parts, organs, and tissues that constitutes the whole material organism" (*OED* n.1a). The notion of physical completeness is especially important to consider during the Renaissance; culturally, it was believed that external appearance was the outward and visible sign of one's moral condition, as we observed in Thomas Adams's exploration of diseases. Elements of this prejudice persist within the modern sphere, as is evidenced by the sense of terror the physically repulsive Belial is meant to prompt. Though discernibly anthropomorphic, his body appears unfinished and monstrous⁶, with missing or misshapen limbs and a fetus-like coloration. At the same time, Belial's behavior is marked by brutish outbursts of violence despite his ability to reason. In this way, he is cast as an aberration, and as something base and primitive. In a sense, Duane's body is also a type of palimpsest; he bears the signs of past changes in the form of unsightly physical scars and pronounced mental instability. The physical space of his body, its disfigurements and deviations, are made parallel to 42nd Street's denigrated status within New York as a larger urban landscape. As we observed in the texts of Beard, Adams, and Stubbes, the evocation of space takes on myriad forms ranging from the body and soul to one's

notions of nationality.

After analyzing even a handful of Shakespeare's or Henenlotter's texts, it is evident that issues of parentage are highly important to both artists. In a complicated scene involving loss of inhibition, drunkenness, and confession, Duane shouts, "Our mother died giving birth to us. He was attached to my right side. They wouldn't let us go to school or anything. They kept us hidden. We were the big family secret. Everybody hated us except our aunt!" Blurring the lines between him and Belial, Duane explains their mental connection and momentarily loses track, confusing his name with his brother's; for a brief moment, a shared sense of cognitive space overtakes Duane. Furthermore, Henenlotter's decision to create conjoined twin protagonists recalls Prospero's threats to cause Caliban "[s]ide-stitches, that shall pen thy breath up" (I.ii.324-326). The imagery evokes a literal splitting of the sides, which accurately describes the operation tearing the two brothers apart. As the film continues, Duane's father, amidst a crowd of family and friends, says, "And then...and then, after they tell me my wife died, after they tell me my child is a twisted lump of flesh, then she tells me I need two names for it: One for the child and one for the monster, as if I had two sons instead of one freak!" The same emotions, which range from disdain to hatred, register in Prospero's interactions with Caliban. The play leads its audience to believe that Caliban's treatment is due to his lineage, physical state, and actions, ignoring the extent to which the latter are a result of enslavement. As Caliban rightly states, "This island's mine by Sycorax my mother, / Which thou tak'st from me" (1.2.331-332). His claim introduces further complication, since the narrative conflates Prospero and Caliban; in a certain respects, they are united by having their land and social standing usurped. Their connection creates the model for an uncomfortable, abusive, and symbiotic relationship which

Henenlotter uses throughout the *Basket Case* series. In both instances, forced spatial relocation acts as the catalyst for violence and revenge.

Because of time period and geography, Henenlotter is able to take many ideas to extremes which Shakespeare could never have attempted; fortunately, the director has no Master of the Revels censoring every scene in his films. This does not mean, however, that he is completely free from the interference of censorship: “I’ve found that the MPAA [Motion Picture Association of America] has been so ridiculously unfair in the past[...]I don’t think that they’re impartial and I don’t think they can be trusted” (McAllister 1). Though Henenlotter and his contemporaries are often met with resistance from ratings boards, at the very start of his career, he was faced with similar obstacles on a smaller scale. As he explains in an interview, “[t]he manager of the theater was so offended by *Slash of the Knife*, he pulled it after a single showing” (Bavota 1). To date, this film has yet to resurface for public viewing. Shakespeare and his fellow playwrights had to contend with censorship for many of the same reasons as modern filmmakers. Again, it was important to establish plausible deniability in regard to criticizing or mirroring the society in which the playwrights lived. Documented incidents such as the popularity and subsequent restriction of a lost Early Modern play entitled *The Whore New Vamped* stand as testaments to the tension dramatists often prompted. This particular play, from what surviving records suggest, “attacked the city's mercantile interests savagely” going so far as to call “the monopolist Sir William Abell, a city alderman, a knave and drunkard, [while it] showed the proctors of the probate court as dishonest” (Gurr 218). The consequences of staging scandalous material could be severe, as evidenced by Ben Jonson's imprisonment following the performance of *The Isle of Dogs*. The various obstacles threatening artistic integrity during both periods are strikingly

similar despite temporal distance. This once again illustrates an important point of convergence for Shakespeare and Henenlotter. Both artists are capable, within their respective media, of carefully challenging cultural hegemony through art. Furthermore, in both cases, criticism from the margins of society causes discomfort for those in power. At this level, the notion of audience reception becomes especially complex.

Socially, Renaissance London had “nothing like the amorphous 'middle class' which provides the great bulk of modern theatre audiences” (Gurr 58). However, as historical documents demonstrate, playgoing was often considered a pastime of the working classes. However, it is difficult to posit that members of one economic group or social class were the exclusive theater patrons during either period. It is simpler to analyze the attitudes of theatergoers in either case in order to understand how certain media and works of art were received. As Henenlotter recounts in an interview, “[t]he audience not only got hostile to the films, but started wrecking the theater[...]started throwing things at the screen. You know, when an angry audience on 42nd Street gets unruly, it's scary” (Bavota 1). Similar accounts of occasionally violent behavior also appear in documents which describe Renaissance audiences. There are “several references to 'pippins' being used as ammunition” (Gurr 43) along with the ubiquitous hissing associated with disapproval. As Gurr writes, “The audience, as an active participant in the collective experience of playgoing, had no reason to keep its reactions private” (53). The concept of unrestrained audience participation resonates in either time period, in fact. In these unique spaces, this type of behavior was an expected part of the experience.

A beneficial way to approach the issue of the theatergoing crowd is to acknowledge the differences between audiences and spectators. As Gurr points out, an audience is “a collective

term for a group of listeners” while a spectator is “an individual, seeing for him or herself” (1). In this way, his account provides the essential difference between modern playgoers and those of Shakespeare's time. Since Gurr mainly focuses on the art of performance theater, however, his analysis overlooks a central feature of Henenlotter's 42nd Street experience. Close analysis of interviews and anecdotal evidence offers important insights about moviegoing of the period: “[...]these crowds genuinely loved what they saw in the theater. If they saw a little bit of blood, they were cheering. If you showed money, if you showed actual currency on camera, they would be screaming and cheering. A gun on screen: cheering” (Sorrento 1). As a matter of course, audience interaction with a film differs widely from the spectrum of possibilities generated during a live theatrical performance. However, being part of an audience on 42nd Street became more of a collective, shared event than most would attribute to an average movie theater outing; as with playgoing in Early Modern London's Liberties, an important part of the exploitation film experience also had to do with venturing into the margins of a larger urban area. Henenlotter consistently reaffirms this sentiment in interviews about his days spent frequenting the block. As he recalls, “[t]here was a laundry lady at one theater[...]she must have done her laundry in the ladies['] room, and would bring out her garments, go to the first two rows, and she would put her wet clothes on the backs of the seats. And then she would stand in the aisle guarding the clothes, and if anybody would try to go there she'd start screaming” (Sorrento 1). Henenlotter concludes by saying that “sometimes watching her was more fascinating [than] watching the film” (Sorrento 1). In this anecdote, there are perverse, if not strangely inverted echoes of the Renaissance's “stool sitting gallants in their ostrich plumes” and other characters intent on distracting fellow audience members with their shows of “colorful variety” (Gurr 47). Rather

subtly, this parallel illustrates the shared aspect of audience membership which Gurr so aptly highlights in his book. In essence, there was something more visceral, more tangible, and potentially more dangerous about seeing exploitation movies before the early 1990s. Indeed, these features were part of what made 42nd Street uniquely comparable to the Renaissance in terms of theatergoing. In both cases, the cultivation of specific spaces for the purposes of viewing and communication is essential. These notions of spatial cultivation are prevalent throughout both *Basket Case* and *The Tempest*.

With Caliban's procreative and spatial motivations in mind, Belial's actions toward the end of *Basket Case* clearly adhere to the internal logic established by Shakespeare's play. Much like Caliban's confinement to a rock, Belial is forced to spend his days hidden in a basket, unable to speak to anyone but Duane; Belial intimately knows the feeling of being enslaved by circumstance. Despite the fact that acts of vengeance are shared by both brothers, Belial is required to physically enact the murders throughout the series. At the same time, until *Basket Case 3*, he is barred from asserting himself as a creature with any reproductive prowess. Plagued by jealousy at being, in some ways, the lesser of the two brothers, Belial seeks a form of ascension similar to Caliban's. Following various attempts to impede Duane's burgeoning romance with Dr. Lifflander's secretary, Belial satisfies his desires through murder, and ultimately, rape. As the *Basket Case* series progresses, Belial is able to succeed where Caliban fails. Though his initial attempt produces no heirs, it leads to the final scene of the first film as he and Duane reach the point of physical altercation. As if to compensate for his own castration, Belial lifts his brother into the air by the groin, forcing them both to fall through a hotel window. Once again, the brothers are violently ejected from one space and into another.

Despite interviews revealing Henenlotter's opinion that *Basket Case 3* is “an absolute disaster” or perhaps “the worst film ever made in the history of mankind,” (McAllister 1) it provides a useful kind of symmetry as the series' final attempt at reconciling modified ideas taken from its source text. In many ways, the third entry represents Belial's (and by extension, Caliban's) success at recapturing potency and agency. While *Basket Case 2* sets events into motion which allow for Belial's success, only the third entry's conclusion fully reveals the larger thematic implications of Henenlotter's project.⁷ Taken in by the benevolent Granny Ruth, Belial is finally able to forge a physical relationship with a member of the opposite sex; amidst other rescued “unique individuals,” he meets Eve. Though her history is not shown, she physically mirrors Belial in her disfigurement, which causes her to have a similar aversion to being seen in the open. As such, she is cast as an Other even in a space designed to house social outcasts. Perhaps due to their similarities, she and Belial bond, consummating their relationship in the graphic scenes which conclude *Basket Case 2*. Here, Henenlotter's marriage to Shakespeare's cultural lineage is solidified. Having spent the length of two films moving toward this point, Henenlotter can finally grant the Other an opportunity to claim victory.

At this moment, a complete inversion of the brothers' power dynamic takes place as Belial is free, enjoying the company of Eve, while Duane is confined to a mental institution. Much like Hieronimo, then, Duane's need for vengeance both overtakes and traps him. Denied agency, Duane struggles with his figurative and literal confinement throughout the remainder of the series. At the opposite end of the spectrum, Belial's true victory reaches its apex when Eve gives birth. By pursuing a similar project of peopling the isle of Manhattan with vengeful offspring, the couple succeeds where Caliban once failed. Henenlotter's insistence on showing

the emergence of each “baby Belial,” along with an audible count of all twelve, is noticeably Shakespearean in its obsession with repetition for effect. The script's syntax also echoes Shakespeare's earlier pluralization of Caliban, as the alliterative “baby Belials” becomes the term of choice when speaking of the newborns. This is significant because it exemplifies the textual lineage to which Henenlotter is hearkening, revealing a level of thematic and linguistic unity. Despite all obstacles, physiological or otherwise, Belial is able to “fertilize an even dozen eggs,” enacting Caliban's vengeance on a world which strives to further subjugate the marginalized. At this juncture, Henenlotter even goes so far as to give his monster storytelling agency by showing the audience a glimpse of Belial's dreams. Prompted by Granny Ruth's admission that “[i]t's just so difficult to know what he's thinking,” the scene changes. A new voice is heard as Henenlotter directly quotes Shakespeare once again in his script. As the image comes into focus, the camera reveals two topless women on a bed with Belial, reciting “Sonnet 18” in his honor. Caressing his face, the woman asks, “Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?” In this moment, the audience is shown the internal space of Belial's fantasy world; Henenlotter reinforces of the repressed desires of the Other for power, education, and respect. In Belial's mind, he is all-powerful, desirable, and most of all, contented.

Similarly, Shakespeare's apparent interest in the plight of the Other is a popular notion for many reasons. The poet was socially and economically marginalized by his own class throughout his life. Exploitation film, as a genre, functions in a similar way. Henenlotter's work, whether intentionally or not, appropriates elements of high art as a means of legitimation. However, it is wholly insufficient to suggest that direct quotation of Shakespeare's work in this context functions merely to lower the poet for comedic effect. To the contrary, these moments in the

Basket Case series create an environment of mutual elevation, just as Shakespeare's plays do for his source texts. At all points, Henenlotter exemplifies exploitation cinema's penchant for destabilizing themes which have become societally normative. The process by which his films cause unease acts as proof that Shakespeare's thematic obsessions remain relevant in the present day. In many ways, by responding to the overall desensitization of modern audiences, Henenlotter's work depends on challenging and transgressing. While Shakespeare alludes to Caliban's rape attempt, Henenlotter forces the camera to unflinchingly show the act in perverse, violent detail. This ability and desire to take familiar ideas to new extremes comes to characterize the essence of appropriating Early Modern vengeance narratives.

When used as a lens for viewing Henenlotter's vision of 42nd Street, *The Tempest's* Prospero helps to reveal much about the director's own relationship with the area. As the director states, "I just loved that I was leaving the clean sunshine of Long Island for the dark, grim 42nd Street" (Sorrento 1). Indeed, it was "that seedy, wonderful atmosphere" (Sorrento 1) which provided the initial inspiration write *Basket Case*. Noting how Prospero's obsession with self-education allows both for his betrayal and redemption, the director's own life story takes on special significance. "I used to cut high school when I was growing up on Long Island. I'd take the train into Manhattan and would go to 42nd Street back when it was the greatest paradise in the world" (Tierney 1). As an unlikely counterpoint to Shakespeare's classical education, Henenlotter suggests that 42nd Street "was the greatest film school on the planet" (Bavota 1). By freeing himself of social and governmental pressures which plagued playwrights of the Renaissance, Henenlotter's work thrives on its ability to take Shakespeare's ideas and expose them to the excess and filth of 42nd Street. As the director states, "When I was cutting classes in high school,

that block had films you'd never see anywhere else. It was the underbelly. It was where I grew to love exploitation films. I don't mind them taking out the porno stores, but leave the theaters. Leave the last refuge of dignity" (Tierney 1). To some, Henenlotter's evocation of dignity when speaking of 42nd Street is purely absurd, but this is a fundamental point of divergence for criticism of each respective medium; where some find boundlessly expressive art, others find marginal, insignificant trash.⁸ Prospero's words ring true in this instance, moving beyond the boundaries of *The Tempest*: "Knowing I lov'd my books, he furnish'd me / From mine own library with volumes that / I prize above my dukedom" (1.2.166-168). Indeed, his self-isolating obsession with knowledge causes both his downfall and redemption. In this way, perhaps Henenlotter is similar to Prospero, jettisoned because of his inability move outside the safe interiority of his studies and his culture. As Henenlotter states regarding his films, "They just sort of flow out of [me] like an illness" (Bavota 1). Though appropriately rooted in crass images of bodily excretion, Henenlotter's words speak to the organic nature of his work and to his seemingly unconscious synthesis of his Early Modern predecessors.

Conclusion

By exploring the myriad connections between Early Modern London and 20th century New York, this study seeks to articulate the fundamental basis for vengeance narratives across history. By design, this approach leaves many important texts and historical moments untouched. However, by focusing specifically on eras dominated by aggressive reconfigurations of urban space, the underlying basis for revenge narratives becomes much clearer. As a recent resurgence in exploitation film's popularity demonstrates, social tensions regarding notions of rightful space persist; films like *Hobo with a Shotgun* and *Machete* enjoyed modest box office success as they

reconsidered many of the same tensions explored by both Henenlotter and Shakespeare. Given the rise of urban gentrification and disputes over America's borders, it comes as no surprise that the topic of vengeance is reemerging from the margins. In this way, social unrest and and revenge are inextricably tied. Though this study is far from exhaustive, it is intended to act as a catalyst for more extensive and detailed analysis in the future.

Notes

1. Indeed, both Andrea and Hieronimo are apt to “entertaine this fire [of anger] sodainly, and retaine it perpetually, not desisting without reuenge. These are like fire, which bewrayeth not it selfe without the ruine and waste of that matter wherein it hath caught: this worst” (Adams 14).

2. One may reasonably expect to find resistance or outright dismissal when positing that films like *Frankenhooker* warrant close consideration in the company of Shakespeare. Indeed, the goading sensationalism of exploitation films both invites and revels in provoking strong reactions. However, the trappings of low-budget cinema also belie a certain depth which causes noticeable discomfort in viewers; though easily dismissed, exploitation films are able to explore legitimate social anxieties that demand credence. That these films are often serialized speaks to the persistent need for healthy outlets for the exploration social tensions, in fact. In the same way that Hamlet feigns insanity, exploitation cinema often affects wholesale ignorance in order to subvert both external and textual standards. As Henenlotter readily states in regard to his chosen method of filmmaking, “Oh, I’m proud of it! When I do exploitation it gives me the freedom to go a little nuts” (McAllister 1). While contemporary academics and audiences contend with a lack of personal information about Shakespeare, living writers such as Henenlotter are able to provide thoughts on their own work and its reception. Though this cannot be the sole basis by which critics analyze texts, it provides a unique opportunity that does not exist in regard to Shakespeare and other Early Modern poets. This is another reason why recent phenomena such as exploitation films bear honest and thoughtful consideration, especially in regards to what they reveal about historical changes in urban space.

3. With Early Modern plays like *Titus Andronicus*, theatergoers are engaged in a similar

process. Lavinia's entrance with “*her hands cut off, and her tongue cut out, and ravish'd*” (2.4), though shocking, is a work of creative staging. This type of violence is both familiar to and expected by audiences of exploitation films. Arguably, the same can be said for the audiences of Early Modern plays who had the option of spending their entertainment pence watching blood sports at the Bear Garden. The conceit that the on-stage and on-screen violence is staged functions in two basic ways: first, despite various advertising claims to the contrary, films and plays are understood to be creative fabrications; witnessing a “snuff film” or a live act of murder is highly unlikely. The second component is contingent upon the fact that audience members want to believe what they see as part of a desire to safely explore taboo subjects. Appreciation of art at this level goes beyond the aesthetic into the psychological desire to experience the dangerous actions of characters such as Prospero, Caliban, Duane, and Belial; in this space, the fears and curiosities of society can be explored with few tangible consequences. Shakespeare's plays and Henenlotter's films provide ample room for this type of intellectual exercise.

4. However, the visceral directness with which Stubbes examines the criminal justice system of England is particularly noteworthy when analyzing *The Spanish Tragedy*. Theodorus, prompted by Amphilogus' unrelenting criticism, openly questions whether “man [can] remit him, whom God doth condemne” (sig. C5r). This line of questioning is quite reasonable when preceded by the assertion that

Sometimes it commeth to passe by reason of (will doe all) otherwise called mony, and sometimes by fréends, or both[...]that great abuses are committed. For if any man that hath fréends and mony[...]chance to haue committed neuer so heinous, or flagicious a déed[...]then letters walke, fréends bestir them, and mony carieth all

away[...]

(sigs. C4v-C5r)

These words offer a simplified summary of the misdeeds visited upon Hieronimo over the course of *The Spanish Tragedy*; he is continuously victimized by members of court who have excessive privilege and wealth. In this way, both Kyd and Stubbes, though protected by various defensive postures, present highly unflattering views of justice as administered by royalty.

5. An important defining feature of exploitation cinema relates to the genre's propensity for exploring controversial topics due to its “low” or obscure nature. While the genre often exploits a popular convention or stereotype such as race, gender, or physical disability, it paradoxically grants a kind of agency and voice to these marginalized figures on display. Even a passing glance at Shakespeare's work reveals his penchant for similar narrative tendencies as culturally marginalized figures – Moors, Jews, and women – take center stage. Many of the features which problematize straightforward readings of Shakespeare's work are present in Henenlotter's films as well. As Henenlotter says, “I like the way I can blend comedy, horror and sex and just sometimes[...]self-indulgence” (McAllister 1). While in Shakespeare's case these are celebrated aspects of the playwright's works, exploitation films are often criticized for crassness, excessive violence, and inconsistent narrative pacing. For those unaccustomed to Shakespeare's complicated storytelling methods, however, his plays can be similarly frustrating. Certainly, this is not to suggest a type of cross-temporal equality of artistic merits. On the contrary, this inquiry and comparison is intended to interrogate popular texts across history with a sense of relativism and proper context in mind; such oversimplified designations as “high” and “low” art address the tensions of their respective historical epochs. In order to better understand

the latent tensions they hold in common, however, it is important to grant each type of text adequate study and consideration.

6. That “[t]he athletic Frank Benson played Caliban as an apish missing link by imitating monkeys and baboons he had observed at the zoo” (Arden 93) is quite telling. Benson's interpretation of the character hearkens to the same sources of tension noted when analyzing the horror of Belial. Part of the unease caused by these figures is related to society's inability to safely assimilate them without a nuanced acknowledgement of difference. Over the course of history, many “writers re-examined Caliban and found some merit in his rebellious claims to ownership of the enchanted isle” (Arden 89). Despite the character's often monstrous behavior, such as the rape of Miranda, Caliban is still able prompt empathy and concern from the audience. Henenlotter uses this dynamic to great effect, appropriating *The Tempest's* keen sense of spatial rhetoric to humanize Duane and Belial despite their vengeful, murderous acts. Once again, subjugation through the exertion of power over one's physical space acts as the catalyst for traumatic conflicts. From the outset of both narratives, the author/auteur makes it abundantly clear that Duane, Belial, and Caliban are unwanted in the spaces being constructed by their respective societies.

7. If *Basket Case's* narrative equates Belial to the likes of Caliban, the process of fitting the script's other characters into the groundwork of *The Tempest* begins somewhat organically. However, it would be difficult to suggest, with sufficient textual evidence, that Duane functions like a perfect mirror for Prospero. Additionally, though Henenlotter avoids creating a scene-for-scene remake of Shakespeare's play, the comparison is still meaningful in numerous ways. The psychic connection between the Bradley brothers, along with Belial's physical deformity, takes

the enslaver/enslaved dynamic from *The Tempest*, using it to different ends: while Caliban is forced to rely on Prospero for certain civilizing elements such as language, an initial subordination in the opposite direction takes place each time Prospero relies on Caliban to show him “all the qualities o' th' isle...” (I.ii.337). With Duane and Belial, the same type of tension exists, though processed in different ways through Henenlotter's narrative. Even though he proves his physical strength on numerous occasions, Belial is neutered by virtue of needing Duane to provide certain necessities such as food and shelter. However, Duane's need for vengeance relies on Belial's murderous strength. Their relationship, though demonstrably loving and familial in nature, still entails manipulation by and of both parties. Here, the parallels to Caliban's relationship with Stefano and Trinculo further illustrate Henenlotter's indebtedness to *The Tempest* as source material.

8. The fissure that divides critical analysis of works like *Basket Case* is illustrated perfectly in an advertisement which appeared in issue number 53 of *Gore Gazette*, a fan-made horror magazine produced in the 1980s: quite tellingly, Rex Reed calls it the “sickest movie” he has ever seen while Jim Holberman retorts that the film is “[m]ore disgustingly human than the lovable 'E.T.'” From the outset of his career, Henenlotter embraced this polarizing aspect of his films' critical reception. His cultural awareness was cultivated not only through using the formal traits of films he observed in 42nd Street's theaters, but through an understanding of his forbearers, such as Shakespeare.

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