

The spanish tragedy by author thomas kyd edited b

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"The Spanish Tragedy" by Thomas Kyd is a seminal work of Elizabethan drama that significantly influenced the development of revenge tragedies and early modern English theatre. Edited by various scholars over the years, the version titled "Edited B" (or similar scholarly editions) offers valuable insights into the text's historical context, textual variations, and interpretive nuances. This article provides an in-depth exploration of "The Spanish Tragedy," focusing on its author, themes, structure, significance, and the importance of editing in preserving and understanding this classic work.

Introduction to Thomas Kyd and "The Spanish Tragedy"

Who Was Thomas Kyd?

Thomas Kyd (circa 1558?1594) was an influential English playwright and dramatist during the late 16th century. Regarded as a pioneer of revenge tragedy, Kyd's work laid the groundwork for later playwrights such as William Shakespeare and John Marston. Although little is known about his life, his contributions to English drama are well acknowledged, especially through his most famous play, "The Spanish Tragedy."

The Significance of "The Spanish Tragedy"

First performed around 1592, "The Spanish Tragedy" is considered one of the earliest and most influential revenge plays. Its complex plot, psychological depth, and use of dramatic devices like the play-within-a-play have made it a cornerstone of Elizabethan theatre. The play's success also inspired numerous adaptations and imitated works across Europe.

Understanding the Text: The "Edited B" Version

What Does "Edited B" Mean?

Scholarly editions of classic texts often come in multiple versions, labeled as "Editions A, B, C," etc., each reflecting different manuscript sources, editorial choices, or critical perspectives. An "Edited B" version of "The Spanish Tragedy" typically refers to a specific scholarly edition that aims to present a reliable, critically examined text, often based on the best available manuscript source, with

annotations, textual variants, and contextual commentary.

Importance of Editing in Literary Studies

Editing plays a crucial role in textual scholarship by:

- Establishing an authoritative text for readers and performers
- Clarifying textual ambiguities and variants
- Providing historical and linguistic context
- Facilitating academic analysis and interpretation

An edition like "Edited B" helps modern readers and scholars appreciate the play's language, themes, and performance history with greater accuracy.

Summary and Analysis of "The Spanish Tragedy"

Plot Overview

At its core, "The Spanish Tragedy" revolves around the themes of revenge, justice, deception, and madness. The main plot involves the character of Bel-Imperia, who seeks revenge against Horatio and Andrea for their betrayal and death. The ghost of Don Andrea, who was murdered, appears to incite revenge and justice.

Key plot points include:

- The murder of Don Andrea and the ghost's vengeful curse
- Bel-Imperia's love for Horatio and her schemes for revenge
- The use of the play-within-a-play to reveal truths and deceive characters
- The tragic climax where multiple characters meet their demise

The Play-within-a-Play Technique

One of the defining features of Kyd's work is the "play-within-a-play" device, which serves multiple purposes:

- Revealing hidden truths
- Enhancing dramatic irony
- Providing commentary on the main action

- Engaging the audience in reflective thought

This device adds layers of complexity to the narrative and emphasizes themes of appearance versus reality.

Themes and Motifs in "The Spanish Tragedy"

Revenge and Justice

Revenge drives the play's action, reflecting the Elizabethan fascination with justice and morality. Characters are often caught between personal vengeance and divine justice, raising questions about morality and consequence.

Madness and Obsession

Many characters exhibit signs of madness or obsession, especially after traumatic events, contributing to the play's intense emotional atmosphere.

Deception and Appearance

The use of disguises, deception, and the play-within-a-play highlight the fluidity between appearance and reality, a common motif in revenge tragedies.

Death and Mortality

The play's numerous deaths underscore the tragic consequences of revenge and the inevitable fate awaiting all mortal beings.

Significance and Legacy of "The Spanish Tragedy"

Influence on Elizabethan and Jacobean Drama

"The Spanish Tragedy" set the template for revenge tragedies, influencing playwrights such as Shakespeare, whose "Hamlet" shares thematic and structural similarities. Its innovative use of dramatic devices and complex characterizations also impacted the evolution of English drama.

Literary and Cultural Impact

The play's exploration of psychological torment and moral ambiguity resonated with audiences and writers, contributing to the development of tragedy as a genre. Its themes remain relevant, reflecting human passions and moral dilemmas.

Modern Relevance

Today, "The Spanish Tragedy" is studied for its literary artistry, historical significance, and influence on modern notions of revenge and justice. Its themes continue to inspire adaptations, including stage productions and scholarly analyses.

Why Choose an Edited B Version?

Advantages of an Edited B Edition

Opting for an "Edited B" version of "The Spanish Tragedy" provides readers with:

- Accurate textual variants and annotations that clarify ambiguities
- Historical context and editorial notes that enhance understanding
- Critical insights into language, themes, and dramaturgy
- A reliable foundation for academic study and performance

How to Use an Edited B Edition Effectively

To maximize the benefits of this edition:

- Read the introduction for background and contextual information
- Pay attention to footnotes and annotations for explanations of obscure language or references
- Compare textual variants if provided, to understand editorial choices
- Use the commentary to explore thematic and stylistic elements in depth

Conclusion

"The Spanish Tragedy" by Thomas Kyd, especially in an edition like "Edited B," remains a cornerstone of English drama that offers rich insight into Elizabethan theatrical innovation, human psychology, and moral complexity. Its influence extends beyond its time, shaping the revenge tragedy genre and inspiring generations of playwrights and scholars. Whether studied for its literary artistry, historical importance, or theatrical techniques, this play continues to captivate audiences and readers alike. Choosing a carefully edited version ensures an authentic and comprehensive understanding of this enduring classic, allowing modern audiences to appreciate its timeless themes and dramatic brilliance.

The Spanish Tragedy by Thomas Kyd (Edited by B): An In-Depth Review

Introduction

The Spanish Tragedy stands as a cornerstone of Elizabethan drama and a pivotal work in the evolution of the revenge tragedy genre. Authored by Thomas Kyd, this play has captivated audiences and scholars alike with its intense themes, complex characters, and innovative dramatic devices. The edition edited by B (assumed to be a scholarly editor or publisher) offers a refined and annotated text that makes this classic more accessible and insightful for modern readers and students. In this comprehensive review, we will explore the play's background, themes, characters, dramatic structure, language, and its significance within the literary canon.

Historical and Literary Context

Origins and Background

- Authorship and Date: Traditionally attributed to Thomas Kyd, The Spanish Tragedy is believed to have been written in the early 1590s, making it one of the earliest revenge tragedies in English literature.
- Influences: The play was heavily inspired by classical tragedies and popular Spanish plays, notably those by Calderón and other contemporaries. Its structure and themes reflect a deep engagement with notions of revenge, justice, and the human condition.
- Publication and Performance: First published in 1592, the play quickly became popular on the London stage, influencing later playwrights like Shakespeare and Marlowe.

Significance in Literary History

- It is often regarded as the prototype of revenge tragedies, setting the template for later works such as Shakespeare's Hamlet and Marlowe's Tamburlaine.
- The play's innovative use of ghostly apparitions, layered revenge plot, and introspective monologues contributed to its lasting influence.

Thematic Overview

Revenge and Justice

- The central motif revolves around the destructive nature of revenge, illustrating how the desire for justice can spiral into chaos and tragedy.
- The play questions whether revenge is justified, and whether it ultimately serves justice or merely perpetuates violence.

Appearance versus Reality

- The theme explores deception, disguise, and the difference between outward appearances and inner truths.
- Characters often hide their motives or intentions, leading to misunderstandings and tragic consequences.

Madness and Obsession

- Revenge obsession consumes characters like Hieronimo, leading to emotional breakdowns and moral decay.
- The play examines the psychological toll of revenge, highlighting the thin line between reason and madness.

Corruption and Power

- The corrupt noble characters, such as Balthazar and Lorenzo, exemplify greed, treachery, and moral decay.
- The play critiques political and social corruption, reflecting anxieties of the Elizabethan era.

Plot Summary and Structure

Overview

The plot centers around the murder of the Spanish prince, Don Andrea, and the subsequent quest for vengeance by his father, Hieronimo. The narrative unfolds through a series of layered revenge schemes, dramatic soliloquies, and ghostly appearances.

Major Plot Points

- The Murder of Don Andrea: Lorenzo and Balthazar, motivated by greed, murder Don Andrea in a treacherous plot.
- Hieronimo's Grief: Hieronimo, the royal marshal, is devastated by his son's death and seeks justice.
- The Revenge Plot: Hieronimo devises a plan to expose the murderers, culminating in a theatrical revenge scene.
- Ghostly Visions: The spirit of Don Andrea appears as a ghost, demanding justice and

foreshadowing tragedy.

- The Tragic Climax: The revenge scheme spirals out of control, resulting in multiple deaths, including Hieronimo's own.

Dramatic Structure

- The play employs a five-act structure, with each act building tension and deepening the tragic complexity.
- The use of soliloquies and asides allows insight into characters' inner thoughts.
- The play-within-a-play device is used as a meta-theatrical tool to mirror real events and heighten dramatic irony.

Character Analysis

Hieronimo

- The play's tragic hero, Hieronimo embodies the themes of justice and revenge.
- His transformation from a grieving father to a vengeful avenger highlights the destructive power of obsession.
- His famous monologue "O memory, of all unholy crimes" encapsulates his internal torment.

Andrea

- The murdered prince whose ghost haunts the play.
- His role is pivotal as the catalyst for the revenge plot.

Lorenzo

- The ambitious and treacherous antagonist who commits murder for personal gain.
- His duplicity and moral corruption make him a quintessential villain.

Balthazar

- Lorenzo's accomplice, complicit in the crimes.
- Represents the moral decline among the younger characters.

Horatio

- Hieronimo's confidant and friend.
- Acts as a foil to Hieronimo, offering perspective and occasionally trying to restrain him.

Isabella

- Hieronimo's wife, who shares in the tragedy and grief.
- Her emotional responses deepen the play's portrayal of family and loss.

Dramatic Devices and Language

Ghosts and Supernatural Elements

- The ghost of Don Andrea is a key dramatic device, intensifying the play's eerie atmosphere and emphasizing themes of revenge beyond the grave.
- Ghostly appearances serve as catalysts for action and moral reflection.

Play-within-a-Play

- Hieronimo's staging of the revenge play mirrors real events, blurring the lines between reality and performance.
- This device heightens dramatic irony and engages the audience in questions of truth and deception.

Soliloquies and Monologues

- The play is rich in introspective speeches, providing deep insight into characters' motivations and moral dilemmas.
- Hieronimo's monologues are particularly poignant, revealing his internal conflict.

Language and Style

- Kyd's language combines poetic grandeur with raw emotional intensity.
- The play's diction employs vivid imagery, metaphors, and rhetorical devices to evoke emotion

and moral reflection.

Critical Reception and Legacy

Contemporary Impact

- Upon release, The Spanish Tragedy was immensely popular and established Kyd's reputation.
- Its blend of classical influence with Elizabethan theatrical innovation set new standards for revenge drama.

Modern Interpretations

- The play has been adapted numerous times for stage, film, and academic study.
- Critics appreciate its exploration of revenge psychology, its theatrical innovation, and its influence on subsequent tragedies.

Significance in the Canon

- Recognized as one of the earliest and most influential revenge tragedies.
- Its themes continue to resonate, reflecting universal questions about justice, morality, and human nature.

The Edited Edition by B: Features and Significance

Scholarly Annotations

- The edition edited by B provides extensive footnotes and annotations, clarifying archaic language, historical references, and theatrical devices.
- Annotations aid comprehension and encourage deeper analysis.

Textual Variants

- The editor offers a critical examination of different versions and manuscripts, ensuring a more accurate and reliable text.
- This scholarly approach enhances understanding of Kyd's original intentions.

Contextual Essays

- The edition includes essays on the play's themes, historical background, and influence.
- These essays situate the play within Elizabethan society and literary tradition.

Modern Language and Accessibility

- While maintaining the original language, the edition offers glosses and explanations to make the text accessible to contemporary readers.

Conclusion

The Spanish Tragedy by Thomas Kyd, especially in the edition edited by B, remains a monumental work that bridges classical tragedy and Elizabethan innovation. Its exploration of revenge, justice, and psychological torment continues to captivate audiences and scholars. The play's layered narrative, compelling characters, and theatrical ingenuity have cemented its place as a foundational text in the history of drama. The edited version enhances this legacy by providing clarity, scholarly insight, and contextual richness, ensuring that new generations can appreciate and study this timeless tragedy. Whether viewed as a historical artifact or a timeless reflection on human passions, Kyd's The Spanish Tragedy endures as a powerful, provocative work that continues to inspire and challenge.

Question What is the significance of 'The Spanish Tragedy' by Thomas Kyd in English literature? 'The Spanish Tragedy' is considered one of the first major Elizabethan tragedies and a precursor to revenge tragedies like Shakespeare's plays. It significantly influenced the development of English drama and introduced themes of revenge, madness, and political intrigue. What are the main themes explored in Thomas Kyd's 'The Spanish Tragedy'? The play explores themes such as revenge, justice, madness, betrayal, and the corrupting influence of revenge. It also examines political power and the consequences of vengeance. How does the edited version of 'The Spanish Tragedy' differ from the original manuscript? The edited version typically includes modernized language, clarifications of original archaic terms, and sometimes scholarly annotations to enhance understanding. Editors may also organize the text for better readability and highlight significant thematic elements. Why is 'The Spanish Tragedy' considered a pioneering work in the revenge tragedy genre? It popularized the revenge tragedy formula with its elaborate plot, use of ghostly apparitions, complex characters, and themes of retribution, setting a template that influenced later Elizabethan and Jacobean dramas. Who was Thomas Kyd, and what impact did he have on Elizabethan theatre? Thomas Kyd was an English playwright and poet of the late 16th century, best known for writing 'The Spanish Tragedy.' His work helped shape Elizabethan tragedy, and he is credited with pioneering the revenge tragedy genre that influenced playwrights like William

Shakespeare.

Related keywords: Spanish Tragedy, Thomas Kyd, Elizabethan drama, revenge tragedy, Renaissance theatre, early English tragedy, dramatic literature, Kyd's plays, tragic plays, Elizabethan playwrights

The spanish tragedy arden early modern drama

The Spanish Tragedy Arden Early Modern Drama: An In-Depth Exploration

The Spanish Tragedy Arden early modern drama stands as a cornerstone in the evolution of English theatre, marking a pivotal transition from medieval mystery plays to the more sophisticated and psychologically complex dramas of the Renaissance. Written by Thomas Kyd in the late 16th century, this play not only captivated audiences of its time but also laid the groundwork for future playwrights, including William Shakespeare. To fully appreciate its significance, it is essential to explore its historical context, thematic richness, and influence on early modern drama.

Historical Context of The Spanish Tragedy

Origins and Authorship

The Spanish Tragedy was composed around 1587-1592 by Thomas Kyd, a prominent figure in Elizabethan theatre. While the exact date remains debated, the play's influence was immediate and profound. Kyd's work was inspired by the Spanish play "La Celestina," as well as other classical and contemporary sources, blending elements of tragedy, revenge, and horror.

Elizabethan Theatre Landscape

During the late 16th century, English drama was undergoing rapid development:

- Rise of Public Playhouses: The construction of venues like The Theatre and The Curtain facilitated widespread audience engagement.
- Shift from Religious to Secular Themes: Plays increasingly focused on human passions, political intrigue, and complex characters.
- Influence of Continental Drama: Spanish and Italian plays introduced new themes and stylistic devices to English dramatists.

Significance of The Spanish Tragedy in Early Modern Drama

This play is often regarded as the first true "tragedy" in English literature, setting the stage for the development of revenge tragedies. Its innovative use of dramatic devices, such as the play-within-a-play and the ghostly appearances, showcased the theatrical potential of symbolism and psychological depth.

Thematic Elements and Literary Features

Revenge and Justice

At its core, The Spanish Tragedy explores the destructive nature of revenge:

- The protagonist, Hieronimo, seeks justice for the murder of his son, leading to a cycle of violence.
- The play examines the moral ambiguities of revenge, questioning its righteousness and consequences.

Madness and Madness as a Motif

The play vividly portrays mental instability:

- Hieronimo's descent into madness reflects the chaos unleashed by revenge.
- The motif underscores the tragic cost of vengeance on the individual psyche.

Supernatural and Ghosts

The play employs supernatural elements to heighten suspense:

- The ghost of Andrea, Hieronimo's son, appears to demand justice.
- Ghosts serve as catalysts for action and symbolize unresolved guilt and moral reckoning.

Complex Characters and Psychological Depth

Unlike earlier morality plays, Kyd's characters display:

- Internal conflicts and moral dilemmas.

- Flawed human emotions, making them relatable and realistic.

Structural and Stylistic Features

- Play within a Play: The "mousetrap" scene mirrors the main plot, emphasizing themes of deception and truth.
- Use of Soliloquies: Characters reveal inner thoughts, providing insight into their motivations.
- Chorus and Asides: These devices engage the audience and comment on the action.

The Influence of The Spanish Tragedy on Early Modern Drama

Impact on Revenge Tragedies

The play is credited with popularizing the revenge tragedy genre, characterized by:

- A revenge-driven plot.
- A protagonist consumed by vengeance.
- Themes of moral corruption and downfall.

Notable works influenced include:

- William Shakespeare's "Hamlet"
- John Webster's "The Duchess of Malfi"
- Thomas Middleton's "The Revenger's Tragedy"

Introduction of Dramatic Devices

Kyd's innovations became staples of Elizabethan and Jacobean drama:

- The use of ghosts and supernatural elements.
- The play-within-a-play structure to explore deception.
- Psychological complexity in character development.

Language and Poetic Style

The play's poetic diction, characterized by:

- Elevated language and vivid imagery.
- Rhythmic and rhythmic patterns that heightened emotional impact.
- Use of rhetorical devices to persuade and evoke empathy.

Legacy and Modern Relevance

Enduring Themes

The themes of revenge, justice, madness, and moral ambiguity remain relevant today, resonating with contemporary audiences through:

- Psychological thrillers.
- Crime dramas.
- Tragedies exploring human morality.

Modern Adaptations and Interpretations

The Spanish Tragedy has been adapted into various formats:

- Stage productions emphasizing its psychological depth.
- Literary reinterpretations exploring its themes in modern contexts.
- Films and television series inspired by revenge narratives.

Academic and Cultural Significance

Scholars regard The Spanish Tragedy as a seminal work that:

- Marked the transition to more complex and darker themes in drama.
- Influenced the structure and language of subsequent tragedies.
- Contributed to the development of the revenge tragedy as a defining genre of early modern drama.

Conclusion

The Spanish Tragedy Arden early modern drama exemplifies the innovative spirit of Elizabethan theatre, blending classical influences with new theatrical techniques. Its exploration of revenge, morality, and psychological complexity not only captivated audiences during its time but also profoundly shaped the trajectory of English drama. As a pioneering work, it paved the way for

playwrights like Shakespeare and Webster, establishing conventions that continue to influence theatre and literature today. Recognizing its significance offers valuable insights into the evolution of dramatic storytelling and the enduring power of early modern plays.

Keywords for SEO Optimization:

- The Spanish Tragedy
- Arden early modern drama
- Elizabethan revenge tragedy
- Thomas Kyd plays
- Early modern English theatre
- Revenge tragedy genre
- Influence of The Spanish Tragedy
- Elizabethan drama features
- Gothic elements in early modern drama
- Legacy of The Spanish Tragedy

The Spanish Tragedy Arden Early Modern Drama

The Spanish Tragedy Arden Early Modern Drama

The Spanish Tragedy, written by Thomas Kyd in the late 16th century, stands as a cornerstone of early modern English drama. Its influence extends beyond its immediate theatrical context, shaping the contours of Elizabethan and Jacobean tragedy and leaving an indelible mark on the development of English literature. This play, often considered a pioneering work that bridged medieval morality plays and the more complex tragedies of later centuries, exemplifies the thematic richness, structural innovation, and dramatic vigor characteristic of early modern drama.

In this article, we delve into the significance of The Spanish Tragedy within the Arden early modern drama framework, exploring its historical background, thematic layers, structural features, and lasting influence on subsequent playwrights. Through a detailed examination, we aim to contextualize Kyd's work as a vital piece in the evolution of theatrical art during a pivotal era.

Historical and Literary Context of The Spanish Tragedy

Understanding The Spanish Tragedy requires situating it within the broader landscape of late 16th-century England. This period was marked by a burgeoning interest in classical learning, humanist philosophy, and the arts, fueling a renaissance that infused English drama with new themes, forms, and complexities.

Key Contextual Factors:

- The Rise of Elizabethan Theatre: The late 1500s saw the emergence of professional theaters like The Theatre and The Rose, which provided platforms for plays that combined entertainment with moral and philosophical explorations.
- Influence of Classical and Continental Drama: English playwrights drew inspiration from Latin and Greek tragedies, as well as Italian commedia dell'arte and Spanish dramas, adapting these influences into distinctively English forms.
- The Tragedy Genre's Evolution: Early tragedies often centered on noble characters facing moral dilemmas, with themes of revenge, justice, and fate. The Spanish Tragedy exemplifies this evolution, blending revenge tragedy with ghostly apparitions and complex plotting.

Thomas Kyd's Role:

- As a pioneering dramatist, Kyd's work was instrumental in popularizing the revenge tragedy genre in England.
- His play's success paved the way for later giants like William Shakespeare, whose tragedies would expand upon and refine these themes.

Thematic Depth and Motifs in The Spanish Tragedy

At its core, The Spanish Tragedy explores profound themes that resonate within the early modern worldview, especially concerning revenge, madness, deception, and the supernatural.

Major Themes:

- Revenge and Justice: Central to the play is the quest for revenge by Horatio for the murder of his friend, Andrea. The play interrogates the moral implications of revenge, often portraying it as a destructive force that corrupts the soul.
- Madness and Obsession: The play vividly depicts characters descending into

madness?particularly Hieronimo, whose grief and obsession consume him, blurring the lines between rationality and insanity.

- Deception and Manipulation: Intrigue and deception drive the plot, with characters disguising their true motives through elaborate schemes and false appearances, heightening suspense.
- Supernatural Elements: Ghosts and apparitions are pivotal, serving as agents of conscience or justice, and reflecting the Elizabethan fascination with the supernatural as a moral and narrative device.
- Corruption and Morality: The play reflects on the corrupting influence of vengeance and political treachery, offering a commentary on the moral decay within society.

Motifs and Symbols:

- Ghosts and Specters: Embodiment of unresolved guilt or moral reckoning.
- Masks and Disguises: Signify deception and hidden identities.
- Blood and Violence: Visual metaphors for revenge and moral injury.

Structural and Dramatic Features of The Spanish Tragedy

Kyd's play is notable for its innovative structure and dramatic devices, many of which became staples of early modern tragedy.

Structural Elements:

- Five-Act Format: Following classical models, the play is divided into five acts, allowing for a well-paced development of plot and themes.
- Complex Plotting and Subplots: The play weaves a layered narrative involving revenge, political intrigue, and personal vendettas, creating a dense tapestry of action.

- Use of Soliloquies and Asides: Characters reveal their inner thoughts directly to the audience, fostering a sense of intimacy and psychological depth.

Dramatic Devices:

- The Play-within-a-Play: A key device where a staged performance mirrors the main plot, heightening dramatic irony and emphasizing themes of illusion and reality.

- Ghostly Apparitions: The ghost of Andrea appears to Horatio, urging him toward revenge, serving as a moral compass and narrative catalyst.

- Chorus-like Narratives: Some scenes employ narrators or messengers, guiding the audience through complex plot developments.

Impact of Structure and Devices:

These features contribute to a heightened emotional intensity and complex characterization, setting a template for subsequent revenge tragedies and influencing playwrights like Shakespeare, especially in plays like Hamlet.

The Influence of The Spanish Tragedy on Early Modern Drama

The significance of The Spanish Tragedy extends beyond its immediate plot and themes; it fundamentally shaped the trajectory of early modern drama.

Key Influences:

- Revenge Tragedy Genre: The play is widely regarded as the prototype of revenge tragedies, inspiring numerous adaptations and imitations in England and continental Europe.

- Character Archetypes: The play's characters—vengeful avengers, mad characters, manipulative villains—became standard archetypes in later tragedies.

- Dramatic Devices: The use of supernatural elements, play-within-a-play, and soliloquies became commonplace, enriching theatrical storytelling.

- Moral and Philosophical Inquiry: The play's exploration of revenge's moral costs influenced subsequent tragedies? emphasis on psychological depth and ethical dilemmas.

Legacy in Literature and Theatre:

- William Shakespeare's early plays, notably Hamlet, draw heavily from the themes and structures pioneered by Kyd.

- The play contributed to the development of the revenge tragedy as a distinct genre, characterized by intense emotional conflict, dark themes, and complex plotting.

The Arden Edition and Modern Reappraisal

In recent decades, editions like The Arden Series have reinvigorated interest in The Spanish Tragedy, making it accessible to students, scholars, and theater practitioners.

Features of the Arden Edition:

- Comprehensive Annotations: Clarify historical references, language, and theatrical conventions.
- Critical Essays: Offer scholarly perspectives on themes, context, and influence.
- Performance Notes: Guide modern productions in interpreting the play's staging and dramatic devices.

Modern Reappraisal:

- The play's exploration of psychological trauma and moral ambiguity resonates with contemporary audiences.
- Its structural innovations are studied for their influence on narrative techniques in drama and film.

- The Arden edition helps to appreciate the play's complexity, historical significance, and ongoing relevance.

Conclusion: The Enduring Power of The Spanish Tragedy

The Spanish Tragedy Arden early modern drama exemplifies the richness and complexity of Elizabethan theatrical innovation. Its thematic depth, structural ingenuity, and influence on subsequent generations of playwrights establish it as a foundational work in the canon of English drama. As a pioneering revenge tragedy, it set standards for emotional intensity and dramatic sophistication that continue to resonate today. Modern editions, like those from Arden, ensure that new audiences and scholars can continue to explore and appreciate its enduring power, cementing its place as a vital artifact of early modern theatrical achievement.

By studying The Spanish Tragedy, we gain insight not only into the theatrical practices of the late 16th century but also into the human passions and moral dilemmas that continue to shape storytelling across centuries. Its legacy underscores the timeless nature of tragedy as a mirror to human experience, a testament to the enduring artistry of early modern drama.

Question What is 'The Spanish Tragedy' and why is it considered an important work in early modern drama? 'The Spanish Tragedy' is a play by Thomas Kyd, written in the late 16th century, and is regarded as a foundational work of Elizabethan tragedy. It significantly influenced the development of revenge plays and early modern drama through its complex plot, themes of revenge, madness, and political intrigue. **Answer** How does 'The Spanish Tragedy' exemplify characteristics of early modern drama in Arden's context? In Arden's context, 'The Spanish Tragedy' showcases features like heightened emotional expression, intricate plotting, use of soliloquies, and a focus on revenge and morality, reflecting the Renaissance interest in human psychology and theatrical innovation prevalent in early modern drama. What role does revenge play in 'The Spanish Tragedy,' and how does it reflect early modern themes? Revenge is the central theme of 'The Spanish Tragedy,' driving the plot and characters' actions. It embodies early modern preoccupations with justice, moral ambiguity, and the tragic consequences of revenge, aligning with the period's exploration of human passions and ethical dilemmas. In what ways does 'The Spanish Tragedy' influence later playwrights, particularly in the Arden early modern drama tradition? 'The Spanish Tragedy' influenced later playwrights like Shakespeare and Marlowe by popularizing revenge tragedy, complex character development, and the use of motifs like ghosts and madness, shaping the themes and structure of early modern drama in Arden's theatrical landscape. How does Arden's early modern drama approach themes of madness and supernatural elements in plays like 'The Spanish Tragedy'? Arden's early modern drama often employs madness and supernatural elements, such as ghosts and visions, to explore psychological states and moral themes. In 'The Spanish Tragedy,' these elements heighten the emotional intensity and serve as devices to advance the tragic narrative. What is the significance of the play-within-a-play device in 'The Spanish Tragedy' and its relevance to early modern drama? The play-within-a-play in 'The Spanish Tragedy' functions

as a metatheatrical device, allowing characters to comment on events and justice. This technique reflects early modern drama's experimentation with theatricality and self-awareness, influencing Arden's theatrical practices. How does 'The Spanish Tragedy' reflect the societal and political anxieties of early modern England? 'The Spanish Tragedy' explores themes of revenge, justice, and moral corruption, mirroring societal concerns about authority, morality, and the chaos of political intrigue in early modern England, resonating with Arden's audience's experiences. What are the key differences between 'The Spanish Tragedy' and other early modern revenge tragedies in Arden's context? While sharing common themes, 'The Spanish Tragedy' is distinguished by its emphasis on supernatural elements, complex plotting, and its influence on the revenge play genre. Compared to later works like Shakespeare's, it has a more straightforward narrative structure and heightened melodrama. In what ways did 'The Spanish Tragedy' shape the development of tragedy in Arden's early modern theatre? 'The Spanish Tragedy' helped establish revenge as a central theme, introduced innovative theatrical devices, and contributed to the rise of tragic intensity in Arden's early modern drama, paving the way for later tragedians to explore complex moral and psychological issues. Why is 'The Spanish Tragedy' still studied today in the context of Arden early modern drama? 'The Spanish Tragedy' remains a key text for understanding the origins of revenge tragedy, early modern theatrical practices, and Renaissance views on morality and human passions. Its influence on subsequent drama makes it a crucial part of Arden's early modern theatrical canon.

Related keywords: Spanish tragedy, Thomas Kyd, Elizabethan drama, revenge tragedy, early modern theatre, Arden Shakespeare, Renaissance drama, tragic plays, revenge plays, Elizabethan tragedy

The changeling thomas middleton william rowley rev

The Changeling Thomas Middleton William Rowley REV

The Changeling, a groundbreaking play from the early 17th century, is a collaborative masterpiece attributed primarily to Thomas Middleton and William Rowley, with the addition of the dramatist George Wilkins. Its enduring significance in the canon of English Renaissance drama is well-deserved, owing to its intense exploration of themes such as madness, deception, and revenge. This article delves into the history, themes, characters, and theatrical relevance of The Changeling, highlighting the contributions of Thomas Middleton and William Rowley, and examining its lasting impact on modern theatre.

Introduction to The Changeling

The Changeling is a dark, complex tragedy first performed in 1622, renowned for its psychological

depth and intense portrayal of human passions. It is often classified as a revenge tragedy, akin to other works of the period like Shakespeare's Hamlet or Kyd's The Spanish Tragedy. The play's notoriety stems from its controversial subject matter, including murder, madness, and sexual manipulation, which challenged the moral sensibilities of its original audience.

The Play's Origins and Authorship

Historical Background

The Changeling was first staged in the early 17th century and quickly gained notoriety for its shocking content. It is believed to have been performed at the Whitefriars Theatre in London, a popular venue for private performances catering to aristocratic audiences.

Collaborators: Thomas Middleton and William Rowley

- Thomas Middleton (1580?1627): A prolific playwright known for his sharp wit, complex characterizations, and dark themes. Middleton's works often explore societal corruption and human depravity.
- William Rowley (c. 1585?1626): A dramatist and actor whose contributions often include comic relief and vivid character portrayals. Rowley collaborated frequently with Middleton.
- George Wilkins: Though sometimes credited as a co-author, Wilkins' role remains debated. The primary authorship is usually attributed to Middleton and Rowley.

The collaboration between Middleton and Rowley resulted in a play that combines Middleton's dark, psychological insight with Rowley's flair for vivid characters and intense scenes.

Thematic Elements of The Changeling

Revenge and Justice

At its core, The Changeling explores the destructive nature of revenge. The play's plot revolves around the murder of Beatrice-Joanna's husband, driven by her desire to marry Alonzo. The pursuit of revenge leads to a cascade of violence and tragedy, illustrating the chaos that ensues when moral boundaries are crossed.

Madness and Psychological Turmoil

The character of De Flores embodies obsession and madness, showcasing the play's exploration of psychological deterioration. Themes of insanity, deception, and moral corruption run throughout the play, making it a profound commentary on human frailty.

Deception and Appearance vs. Reality

The play features numerous instances of disguise, manipulation, and concealment. Characters often hide their true intentions, leading to a labyrinth of lies that culminate in violence and tragedy.

Sexuality and Power

The Changeling also examines themes of sexual manipulation and power dynamics, especially through Beatrice-Joanna's complex relationships and her willingness to sacrifice morality for personal gain.

Major Characters in The Changeling

- **Beatrice-Joanna:** The play's tragic heroine, who is caught in a web of deception and moral compromise.
- **De Flores:** A jealous and obsessive servant who becomes the play's central figure of madness and violence.
- **Alonzo:** Beatrice-Joanna's intended husband, whose murder sets the tragic events in motion.
- **Alsemero:** A nobleman interested in Beatrice-Joanna, representing authority and moral contrast.
- **Diaphanta:** A secondary character, often representing innocence amid chaos.

Understanding these characters provides insight into the play's complex psychological and moral landscape.

Theatrical Significance and Performance History

Innovations in Stagecraft

The Changeling is noted for its intense scenes of violence and psychological depth, which challenged the theatrical conventions of its time. Its staging often involved elaborate effects to depict madness and murder, pushing the boundaries of early 17th-century theatre.

Modern Revivals and Adaptations

The play continues to be revived in contemporary theatre, appreciated for its dark themes and complex characters. Modern adaptations often emphasize psychological realism and explore themes of gender, power, and identity, making The Changeling relevant for today's audiences.

Influence on Later Literature and Theatre

The Changeling's influence can be seen in later revenge tragedies and psychological dramas, inspiring playwrights and directors to explore darker aspects of human nature.

Academic and Literary Analysis

Critical Interpretations

Scholars have examined The Changeling through various lenses:

- Psychological analysis: Emphasizing the play's exploration of madness and obsession.
- Feminist critique: Analyzing Beatrice-Joanna's agency and victimization.
- Moral philosophy: Discussing the play's commentary on morality, justice, and corruption.

Scholarly Resources

For those interested in deeper analysis, key texts include:

- The Middleton and Rowley Plays (edited collections)
- Literary journals focusing on Renaissance drama
- Critical essays examining revenge tragedy tropes

SEO Tips for The Changeling Content

To optimize content related to The Changeling for search engines, consider the following:

- Use relevant keywords such as "The Changeling play," "Thomas Middleton William Rowley," "Renaissance drama," and "revenge tragedy."
- Incorporate long-tail keywords like "themes of madness in The Changeling" or "character analysis of Beatrice-Joanna."
- Create engaging meta descriptions highlighting the play's significance and historical context.
- Include internal links to related topics such as Renaissance theatre, other Middleton plays, and revenge tragedy analysis.
- Use descriptive alt text for images or videos related to performances of The Changeling.

Conclusion

The Changeling by Thomas Middleton and William Rowley remains a seminal work in English dramatic literature, notable for its intense psychological depth, complex characters, and exploration

of dark human passions. Its collaboration resulted in a play that not only challenged the conventions of its time but also continues to resonate with modern audiences and scholars alike. Whether examined through historical, literary, or theatrical perspectives, *The Changeling* offers a powerful window into the societal anxieties and moral ambiguities of early 17th-century England. Its enduring relevance and influence underscore its place as a cornerstone of Renaissance tragedy and a testament to the enduring power of compelling storytelling.

Keywords for SEO Optimization:

- The Changeling play
- Thomas Middleton William Rowley
- Renaissance revenge tragedy
- 17th-century drama
- psychological themes in *The Changeling*
- Beatrice-Joanna character analysis
- tragedy and deception in *The Changeling*
- adaptations of *The Changeling*
- history of English Renaissance theatre
- dark themes in Elizabethan drama

By integrating these keywords naturally throughout the content, the article can effectively reach audiences searching for in-depth information on *The Changeling* and its creators, ensuring higher visibility in search engine results.

The Changeling Thomas Middleton William Rowley Rev: Unveiling the Legacy of a 17th-Century Renaissance Drama

The Changeling Thomas Middleton William Rowley Rev stands as a compelling testament to the richness and complexity of English Renaissance drama. Crafted in the early 17th century, this play continues to captivate scholars, theater enthusiasts, and historians alike with its intricate plot, vivid characters, and its reflection of societal mores of the time. To fully appreciate its significance, it's essential to delve into its origins, authorship, thematic depth, and enduring influence in the theatrical canon.

Origins and Historical Context

Understanding *The Changeling* requires a grasp of the tumultuous period in which it was written. Emerging during the English Renaissance—a period marked by artistic, cultural, and political upheaval—the play was composed around 1622, amidst a vibrant theatrical scene in London. This era saw the rise of professional acting companies, the proliferation of public theaters such as The

Globe, and a burgeoning interest in complex, morally ambiguous characters.

The play was performed by the King's Men, a prominent acting troupe that also staged works by William Shakespeare. Its popularity was evident in its immediate success and the considerable attention it attracted from critics and audiences. The play's themes—deception, madness, social ambition—resonated deeply with contemporary audiences, reflecting anxieties about morality, power, and social stability.

Authorship and Collaborative Origins

The Changeling is widely attributed to Thomas Middleton and William Rowley, with scholarly consensus leaning towards Middleton as the primary dramatist, complemented by Rowley's contributions. This collaboration exemplifies the collaborative nature of Renaissance theater, where playwrights often worked in teams or contributed to shared projects.

Thomas Middleton (1580–1627) was renowned for his dark, satirical plays that interrogated societal corruption, such as *The Revenger's Tragedy* and *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside*. William Rowley (1585–1626), on the other hand, was notable for his versatility—writing comedies, tragedies, and masques—and for his skillful character development.

While the precise division of labor remains speculative, evidence suggests Middleton wrote the core plot and characterizations, with Rowley contributing to certain scenes, especially those involving comic relief and secondary characters. The collaborative process resulted in a layered, multifaceted work that balances intense psychological drama with sharp humor.

Plot Summary and Structural Overview

At its core, *The Changeling* explores themes of love, madness, revenge, and societal corruption through the story of Beatrice-Joanna, a young woman entangled in a web of deception and moral compromise.

- **Main Plotline:** Beatrice-Joanna, promised to her father to marry a nobleman, is secretly in love with Alonzo. When her father arranges her marriage to the unscrupulous De Flores, she seeks help from her servant, De Flores, to eliminate her intended bridegroom. De Flores, a villainous character, agrees and murders Alonzo, setting off a chain of events involving guilt, madness, and revenge.

- **Secondary Plotline:** The play also features a subplot involving the scheming servant Diaphanta, and the comic misadventures of the comic characters, which serve to balance the darker main narrative.

- Themes and Motifs: The play explores the destructive power of obsession, the facades people maintain, and the corrupting influence of greed and lust. The motif of transformation?both physical and psychological?is central, encapsulated in the metaphorical "changeling" of characters who undergo moral and emotional metamorphosis.

Themes and Symbolism

The Changeling employs rich symbolism and thematic exploration to critique societal norms:

- Madness and Insanity: The title itself hints at psychological unraveling. Characters like Beatrice-Joanna descend into madness, symbolizing the chaos of suppressed desires and moral decay.

- Deception and Masks: The play vividly portrays characters hiding their true intentions behind façades, reflecting the duplicity of social interactions and the peril of appearances.

- Corruption and Morality: Middleton and Rowley scrutinize the corrupting influence of power, greed, and illicit passions, often portraying characters who are morally compromised and face tragic consequences.

- Gender and Power Dynamics: The play subtly examines gender roles and societal expectations, especially through Beatrice-Joanna?s constrained position and her eventual agency, albeit through destructive means.

Dramatic Techniques and Style

The Changeling showcases a blend of poetic dialogue, sharp wit, and intense psychological realism:

- Use of Soliloquies and Monologues: Characters often reveal their inner thoughts directly to the audience, heightening the psychological tension.

- Dark Humor and Irony: Middleton?s characteristic irony underscores the tragic elements, providing moments of levity that deepen the play?s complexity.

- Structural Pacing: The play's tightly woven plot employs swift scene changes and layered subplots to maintain suspense and thematic richness.

Revival and Modern Interpretations

Over the centuries, *The Changeling* has undergone various revivals, each reinterpretation shedding new light on its enduring relevance. Modern productions often emphasize its psychological depth and explore themes of identity, madness, and societal hypocrisy.

- Contemporary Themes: Recent adaptations have drawn parallels between the play's depiction of deception and modern issues like political corruption and social masks.

- Performance Style: Directors have experimented with minimalist staging, feminist perspectives, and innovative lighting to highlight the play's dark themes.

- Academic Interest: Scholars continue to analyze the play's language, character development, and its reflection of early 17th-century societal anxieties.

Legacy and Influence

The Changeling remains a significant work within the canon of Elizabethan and Jacobean drama, influencing subsequent playwrights and theatrical traditions:

- It is regarded as a precursor to modern psychological thrillers and tragedies, with its focus on moral ambiguity and character complexity.

- The play's exploration of madness and deception has inspired numerous adaptations in theater, film, and literature.

- Its collaborative authorship exemplifies the creative processes of the Renaissance stage, offering insights into theatrical practices of the period.

Conclusion

The Changeling by Thomas Middleton and William Rowley exemplifies the richness of early modern

drama? a work that combines psychological depth, societal critique, and theatrical innovation. Its enduring appeal lies in its unflinching portrayal of human passions and the corrupting influence of desire and ambition. As scholars and audiences continue to explore its layers, the play remains a vital window into the complexities of 17th-century society and the timeless human condition.

Whether performed on stage or studied in academic circles, *The Changeling* stands as a testament to the collaborative spirit of Renaissance playwrights and the enduring power of theater to mirror the darkest corners of the human psyche. Its legacy endures, inviting audiences to confront the masks we all wear and the chaos that lies beneath.

Question Who was William Rowley and what was his role in 'The Changeling' by Middleton and Rowley? William Rowley was a playwright and actor who collaborated with Thomas Middleton on the play 'The Changeling,' contributing to its writing and performance aspects. What is the main plot of 'The Changeling' by Middleton and Rowley? 'The Changeling' centers around themes of deception, madness, and revenge, focusing on the character of Beatrice-Joanna who seeks to marry for status but becomes entangled in a web of murder and moral corruption. Why is 'The Changeling' considered an important work in Elizabethan and Jacobean drama? 'The Changeling' is regarded as a significant example of dark, psychological drama from the early 17th century, highlighting complex characters and themes of deception and morality that influenced later plays. What role did Thomas Middleton play in the creation of 'The Changeling'? Thomas Middleton was a co-author of 'The Changeling,' contributing to its development, dialogue, and dramatic structure, helping craft its intense and morally complex narrative. How does 'The Changeling' reflect the social and theatrical context of early 17th-century England? 'The Changeling' reflects the darker themes and moral ambiguities typical of Jacobean drama, and its staging and characters reveal societal anxieties about corruption, authority, and human nature during that period. What are some notable themes explored in 'The Changeling'? Notable themes include deception, revenge, madness, corruption, the nature of evil, and the consequences of moral decay. How is the character of De Flores depicted in 'The Changeling'? De Flores is portrayed as a cunning, ruthless villain involved in schemes of murder and manipulation, embodying the play's themes of deception and moral corruption. What is the significance of the title 'The Changeling'? The title 'The Changeling' symbolizes themes of transformation, deception, and the idea of characters undergoing moral or psychological change, often reflecting hidden identities or true natures. What is the critical reception and relevance of 'The Changeling' today? Today, 'The Changeling' is regarded as a classic of early modern drama, studied for its complex characters, dark themes, and influence on subsequent theatrical works, maintaining its relevance in discussions of morality and human psychology. Are there any modern adaptations or performances of 'The Changeling'? Yes, 'The Changeling' has been adapted and performed in various modern contexts, including contemporary theater productions and academic settings, to explore its enduring themes of deception, morality, and human nature.

Related keywords: changeling, Thomas Middleton, William Rowley, Elizabethan drama, Jacobean

tragedy, English Renaissance theatre, Elizabethan playwrights, 17th-century plays, revenge tragedy, theatrical revivals

Three revenge tragedies

Three Revenge Tragedies

Revenge tragedies have long captivated audiences with their intense emotional depth, complex characters, and themes of justice, vengeance, and moral ambiguity. Rooted in classical literature and flourishing during the Renaissance, these plays often explore the destructive consequences of revenge on individuals and society. This article examines three of the most influential revenge tragedies: Hamlet by William Shakespeare, The Spanish Tragedy by Thomas Kyd, and The Revenger's Tragedy by Thomas Middleton. We will analyze their themes, characters, and significance within the genre, providing a comprehensive understanding of their enduring legacy.

Understanding Revenge Tragedies

Revenge tragedies are a subgenre of tragedy that focus on a protagonist's quest for vengeance, often leading to destructive consequences. These plays typically feature themes such as moral corruption, madness, betrayal, and the inevitable downfall of the avenger. They reflect societal anxieties about justice and morality, often questioning whether revenge can ever be justified.

Key characteristics of revenge tragedies include:

- A central act of revenge that sets the plot in motion
- A haunted or vengeful protagonist, often driven by grief or injustice
- Ghosts or supernatural elements that demand vengeance
- Complex, often morally ambiguous characters
- A tragic ending with death or downfall

1. Hamlet by William Shakespeare

Overview and Plot

Hamlet, one of Shakespeare's most famous plays, is a quintessential revenge tragedy. The story follows Prince Hamlet of Denmark, who is deeply disturbed by the murder of his father, King Hamlet, by his uncle Claudius. The play begins with the appearance of King Hamlet's ghost, which reveals

that Claudius murdered him to seize the throne. Hamlet vows to avenge his father's death, leading to a series of tragic events.

The plot revolves around Hamlet's internal struggle between revenge and moral hesitation, his feigned madness, and the eventual tragic culmination where multiple characters, including Hamlet himself, meet their demise.

Themes and Significance

- Revenge and Justice: Hamlet's quest raises questions about the morality of revenge and whether justice can be achieved through vengeance.
- Madness: Both real and feigned madness serve as tools for Hamlet to navigate political and personal treachery.
- Corruption and Decay: The play explores political corruption and moral decay in Denmark, symbolized by the rotten state of the Danish court.
- Existentialism: Hamlet's famous soliloquy ("To be or not to be") reflects existential contemplation about life, death, and morality.

Hamlet remains a profound exploration of the psychological toll of revenge, illustrating how obsession with justice can lead to self-destruction and chaos.

2. The Spanish Tragedy by Thomas Kyd

Overview and Plot

The Spanish Tragedy, written in the late 16th century, is often credited as one of the earliest and most influential revenge tragedies in English literature. The play centers around Hieronimo, the marshal of Spain, whose son, Horatio, is murdered by Balthazar, a Spanish nobleman. Driven by grief and a desire for justice, Hieronimo seeks vengeance, which culminates in a bloody and tragic revenge.

The play is notable for its complex plot, revenge motifs, and the use of a play-within-a-play device to reveal secrets and motives.

Themes and Significance

- Revenge and Moral Ambiguity: Hieronimo's quest demonstrates the destructive power of revenge and raises questions about morality and justice.
- Corruption and Deception: The play exposes political corruption, betrayal, and the corrupting

influence of revenge.

- Madness and Despair: Hieronimo's descent into madness highlights the psychological toll of revenge.
- Supernatural and Dramatic Devices: The play employs ghostly apparitions and a play-within-the-play to heighten dramatic tension.

The Spanish Tragedy influenced later revenge tragedies, including Shakespeare's Hamlet, and helped establish the conventions of the genre.

3. The Revenger's Tragedy by Thomas Middleton

Overview and Plot

The Revenger's Tragedy, written in the early 17th century, is a dark and satirical revenge play that explores themes of corruption, morality, and nihilism. The protagonist, Vindice, seeks revenge against the Duke Antonio, who murdered Vindice's fiancée to gain political power. Vindice's elaborate schemes lead to a series of murders and moral decay.

The play is characterized by its cynical tone, complex characterizations, and critique of societal corruption and revenge as a destructive force.

Themes and Significance

- Corruption and Moral Decay: The play exposes the corruption within aristocratic society and the moral depravity of revenge.
- Nihilism and Chaos: It questions the morality of revenge, suggesting that it leads to chaos and destruction.
- Deception and Manipulation: Characters frequently deceive and manipulate others to achieve their goals.
- Satirical Tone: Middleton employs satire to criticize societal and political corruption.

The Revenger's Tragedy is notable for its dark humor, complex characters, and its critique of revenge as a destructive and often futile pursuit.

Comparison and Legacy of the Three Plays

While each of these revenge tragedies shares core themes of vengeance, morality, and downfall, they also differ significantly in tone, structure, and message.

Comparison Highlights:

- Hamlet emphasizes internal conflict and philosophical questions about morality and existence.
- The Spanish Tragedy focuses on revenge as a catalyst for chaos, with supernatural elements and political intrigue.
- The Revenger's Tragedy employs satire and cynicism, highlighting decay and chaos in society.

Legacy:

- These plays laid the foundation for modern revenge stories, influencing countless works in literature, theater, and film.
- They explore the timeless human obsession with justice and the destructive potential of revenge.
- Their complex characters and themes continue to resonate, prompting reflection on morality, justice, and human nature.

Conclusion

Revenge tragedies remain a vital genre that explores the darker aspects of human nature and societal values. Hamlet, The Spanish Tragedy, and The Revenger's Tragedy exemplify different approaches to the theme—philosophical, political, and satirical—each offering unique insights into the destructive power of revenge. Their enduring relevance underscores the timeless nature of their themes and their influence on literature and drama. Whether questioning the morality of vengeance or depicting its devastating consequences, these plays continue to captivate audiences and scholars alike, cementing their place in the canon of classic tragedy.

Keywords: revenge tragedies, Hamlet, The Spanish Tragedy, The Revenger's Tragedy, classical tragedy, revenge genre, Shakespeare, Thomas Kyd, Thomas Middleton, revenge themes, tragic plays, revenge morality, revenge and justice

Exploring the Depths of Revenge Tragedies: A Detailed Analysis of Three Classic Plays

Revenge tragedies have long captivated audiences with their intense emotional landscapes, complex characters, and themes of justice, morality, and human folly. These plays delve into the darker aspects of human nature, illustrating how the pursuit of vengeance can lead to destruction and chaos. In this article, we will explore three quintessential revenge tragedies—Hamlet by William Shakespeare, The Spanish Tragedy by Thomas Kyd, and Titus Andronicus by William Shakespeare—analyzing their themes, structures, and enduring significance in theatrical history.

Understanding Revenge Tragedy: An Overview

Before diving into specific plays, it's essential to understand what defines a revenge tragedy.

Typically, these plays feature a protagonist who seeks retribution for a grave wrong, often resulting in a cycle of violence and tragedy. They often include elements such as ghostly apparitions, complex plots of deception, and a focus on moral ambiguity.

Common features of revenge tragedies include:

- A revenge motif that drives the plot forward
- A protagonist compelled by justice or personal grievance
- A ghost or supernatural figure revealing the cause of revenge
- A play within a play or deception to uncover the truth
- A tragic ending, often involving multiple deaths

Hamlet by William Shakespeare: The Quintessential Revenge Tragedy

Background and Context

Hamlet, written around 1600, is perhaps the most famous revenge tragedy in English literature. Set in Denmark, the play follows Prince Hamlet's quest to avenge his father's murder, which is revealed through the ghostly apparition of King Hamlet. The play explores complex themes such as madness, morality, and the ambiguity of human motives.

Key Themes and Elements

- Revenge and Justice: Hamlet's internal struggle with the morality of revenge leads to philosophical debates about justice and revenge.
- Madness: Both real and feigned madness serve as tools to explore characters' inner conflicts.
- Corruption and Decay: The motif of rot and decay symbolizes political corruption and moral decline.
- Existential Inquiry: Hamlet's famous soliloquies probe questions of life, death, and human purpose.

Structural Highlights

- Ghost's Revelation: The ghost of King Hamlet calls upon Hamlet to avenge his murder, setting the revenge in motion.
- Dramatic Irony: The audience is aware of Hamlet's intentions while other characters remain oblivious.
- Tragic Flaws: Hamlet's indecision and obsession with morality contribute to the tragic outcome.

Impact and Legacy

Hamlet exemplifies the destructive cycle of revenge, highlighting how obsession with justice can lead to personal and collective ruin. Its complex characters and philosophical depth continue to influence countless adaptations and interpretations.

The Spanish Tragedy by Thomas Kyd: The Birth of Revenge Drama

Background and Context

Written in the late 16th century, The Spanish Tragedy is often regarded as a precursor to Elizabethan revenge tragedies. It centers around Hieronimo's quest for justice after the brutal murder of his son, Balthazar, by the Spanish court.

Key Themes and Elements

- Vengeance and Madness: Hieronimo's descent into madness exemplifies the destructive power of revenge.
- Deception and Revenge: The play features complex plots of disguise and deception to unearth the truth.
- Moral Ambiguity: Characters grapple with issues of justice, morality, and revenge's toll on the soul.
- Supernatural Elements: Ghosts and visions serve to heighten the play's dark atmosphere.

Structural Highlights

- Play within a Play: Hieronimo stages a theatrical performance to reveal the murderer, blurring the lines between reality and performance.
- Climactic Revenge Scene: The play culminates in a bloody, chaotic revenge sequence that emphasizes the tragic costs.
- Character Complexity: Hieronimo's transformation from a grieving father to a revenge-driven avenger offers rich psychological insight.

Significance in Literature

The Spanish Tragedy established many conventions of revenge tragedy, including the use of ghosts, elaborate plotting, and intense emotional states. Its influence is seen in later Elizabethan and Jacobean tragedies, shaping the genre's evolution.

Titus Andronicus by William Shakespeare: The Revenge Tragedy of Excess

Background and Context

Titus Andronicus, believed to have been written between 1588 and 1593, is one of Shakespeare's earliest and most visceral tragedies. It depicts a cycle of brutal revenge between Roman characters, marked by graphic violence and political intrigue.

Key Themes and Elements

- Revenge and Violence: The play is notorious for its graphic acts of revenge, including mutilation and cannibalism.
- Corruption and Power: Lust for power fuels much of the violence, highlighting political and personal corruption.
- Moral Decay: The play portrays a world where moral boundaries are shattered by revenge.
- Family and Loyalty: The breakdown of familial bonds underscores the destructive nature of revenge.

Structural Highlights

- Cycle of Revenge: Titus's desire for vengeance against Tamora and her sons drives the plot's relentless brutality.
- Chorus and Narration: Titus's speeches often serve as commentary on the cycle of violence.
- Climactic Violence: The play culminates in a series of gruesome acts, emphasizing the tragic toll of revenge.

Critical Reception and Legacy

Titus Andronicus stands out for its unflinching portrayal of revenge's horrors. Its shocking content has sparked debates about morality and catharsis, and it remains a powerful example of revenge tragedy's capacity for visceral impact.

Comparing the Three Revenge Tragedies

| Aspect | Hamlet | The Spanish Tragedy | Titus Andronicus |

|-----|-----|-----|-----|

| Focus | Internal moral conflict, philosophical inquiry | External revenge, deception | Excessive

violence, political intrigue |

| Main Character | Hamlet, Prince of Denmark | Hieronimo, Spanish nobleman | Titus, Roman general |

| Tone | Reflective, philosophical | Dark, suspenseful | Graphic, shocking |

| Notable Features | Ghostly revelation, existential themes | Play within a play, psychological transformation | Extreme violence, revenge cycle |

Why Revenge Tragedies End in Tragedy

A defining characteristic of revenge tragedies is their tragic ending, often involving multiple deaths and moral lessons. These plays suggest that revenge, while seemingly justified, often leads to self-destruction and chaos. They serve as cautionary tales about the destructive power of obsession and unchecked passion.

Conclusion: The Enduring Power of Revenge Tragedy

Revenge tragedies continue to resonate because they explore universal themes of justice, morality, and human fallibility. Hamlet, The Spanish Tragedy, and Titus Andronicus exemplify different facets of the genre, from introspective philosophical debates to visceral displays of violence. Their enduring relevance lies in their ability to portray the tragic consequences of revenge, reminding audiences of the thin line between justice and destruction.

Whether through the contemplative soliloquies of Hamlet, the intricate plotting of Hieronimo, or the shocking brutality of Titus, these plays challenge us to reflect on the costs of vengeance and the moral complexities that accompany it. As timeless works, they continue to influence literature, theater, and popular culture, affirming revenge tragedy's place as a profound exploration of the darker sides of human nature.

Question What are the main characteristics that define the 'three revenge tragedies' in Elizabethan drama? The 'three revenge tragedies' typically share themes of revenge, moral corruption, madness, supernatural elements, and intense emotional conflict. They often feature protagonists driven by a desire for justice or revenge, leading to tragic outcomes, and are characterized by complex plots and dark atmospheres. Which plays are commonly included in the 'three revenge tragedies' and who are their authors? The most commonly included plays are 'The Spanish Tragedy' by Thomas Kyd, 'Hamlet' by William Shakespeare, and 'The Revenger's Tragedy' by Cyril Tourneur. These works are considered quintessential examples of revenge tragedies in English literature. How did the 'three revenge tragedies' influence the development of Elizabethan and Jacobean drama? These plays established conventions such as the revenge plot structure,

complex characters, and dark themes that became staples in Elizabethan and Jacobean drama. They also inspired later playwrights to explore psychological depth and moral ambiguity, shaping the evolution of tragedy. What themes are most prominent in the 'three revenge tragedies' and how do they reflect the societal concerns of the time? Prominent themes include justice and revenge, corruption, madness, mortality, and the supernatural. These themes mirror societal anxieties about morality, authority, and the consequences of vengeance, reflecting the tumultuous political and social landscape of the late 16th and early 17th centuries. In what ways do the protagonists in these revenge tragedies differ in their motivations and moral choices? Protagonists vary from Hamlet's contemplative indecision to the impulsive revenge of the characters in 'The Spanish Tragedy' and 'The Revenger's Tragedy'. Their moral choices often lead to tragic consequences, highlighting themes of moral ambiguity, internal conflict, and the destructive nature of revenge. Why are the 'three revenge tragedies' still studied and performed today? They remain relevant because of their timeless exploration of human nature, morality, and justice. Their complex characters, intense emotional conflicts, and dramatic storytelling continue to resonate with modern audiences and influence contemporary theatre and literature.

Related keywords: tragedy, revenge, classical drama, Greek tragedy, Elizabethan drama, revenge play, tragedy themes, revenge motifs, dramatic structure, tragic heroes

Four revenge tragedies spanish tragedy the revenge

Four Revenge Tragedies Spanish Tragedy The Revenge

Revenge tragedies have long captivated audiences with their intense emotional landscapes, complex characters, and intricate plots centered around themes of justice, morality, and vengeance. Among the most influential works in this genre are four notable tragedies that have significantly shaped the evolution of revenge drama: The Spanish Tragedy by Thomas Kyd, Hamlet by William Shakespeare, The Revenge by Georg Büchner, and The Revenger's Tragedy by Cyril Tourneur. These plays, though diverse in their origins and stylistic approaches, share core thematic concerns and dramatic structures that exemplify the revenge tragedy genre at its finest.

Introduction to Revenge Tragedies

Revenge tragedies are characterized by their focus on protagonists driven by a desire to avenge wrongs committed against them or their loved ones. They often explore the destructive consequences of revenge, the moral ambiguities involved, and the chaos that ensues from cycles of violence. The genre emerged in the late 15th and early 16th centuries, gaining prominence in Elizabethan and Jacobean drama.

Overview of the Four Major Revenge Tragedies

This section provides a comprehensive overview of each of the four plays, emphasizing their historical context, thematic concerns, and significance within the revenge tragedy genre.

The Spanish Tragedy by Thomas Kyd

Historical Context:

Written in the late 1580s or early 1590s, The Spanish Tragedy is often regarded as the pioneering work that defined the revenge tragedy genre in English drama. It was immensely popular and influential, shaping subsequent playwrights, including Shakespeare.

Plot Summary:

The play centers around Hieronimo, the Spanish viceroy's jester, whose son Horatio is murdered by Balthazar, a nobleman. Hieronimo's quest for justice transforms into a spiraling cycle of revenge, involving feigned madness, elaborate plays within the play, and ultimately a bloody massacre.

Themes and Significance:

- The destructive nature of revenge
- The corrupting influence of power and justice
- Madness and psychological torment

Unique Features:

- Use of a play-within-a-play to explore themes
- Emphasis on supernatural and tragic elements

Hamlet by William Shakespeare

Historical Context:

Written around 1600-1601, Hamlet is one of Shakespeare's most famous tragedies, blending revenge with philosophical introspection.

Plot Summary:

Prince Hamlet seeks to avenge the murder of his father, the King of Denmark, by his uncle Claudius, who has usurped the throne. The play explores Hamlet's internal struggle, feigned madness, and the tragic consequences of revenge.

Themes and Significance:

- The moral dilemma of revenge
- The ambiguity of truth and appearance
- Madness, both real and feigned
- The corrupting influence of revenge on the human soul

Unique Features:

- Deep psychological characterization
- Soliloquies exploring internal conflict
- Complex use of language and symbolism

The Revenge by Georg Büchner

Historical Context:

Written in 1837, The Revenge by Georg Büchner is a lesser-known but significant European revenge tragedy that emphasizes social and political themes.

Plot Summary:

The play depicts a story of personal and societal revenge, focusing on a protagonist's quest to avenge a perceived injustice. Büchner's work emphasizes raw emotion and often portrays revenge as a destructive force.

Themes and Significance:

- The moral ambiguity of revenge
- The societal and personal costs of vengeance
- The critique of authority and justice

Unique Features:

- Intense expressionism and emotional realism
- Focus on psychological turmoil over elaborate plotting

The Revenger's Tragedy by Cyril Tourneur

Historical Context:

Written around 1606-1607, The Revenger's Tragedy is a quintessential Jacobean revenge tragedy that combines dark humor, satire, and complex characters.

Plot Summary:

The play revolves around Vindice, who seeks revenge against the corrupt Duke and his courtiers for the murder of his fiancée. The narrative is marked by treachery, moral corruption, and nihilism.

Themes and Significance:

- Corruption and moral decay in society
- The destructive cycle of revenge
- The ambiguity of morality and justice

Unique Features:

- Use of allegory and symbolism
- Dark humor and grotesque imagery
- A nihilistic tone questioning authority and morality

Common Themes Across the Four Plays

Despite their differences, these revenge tragedies share several thematic concerns that underpin their narratives:

Revenge as a Double-Edged Sword

All four plays depict revenge as a powerful but perilous force. It often leads to destruction not only of the enemies but also of the avengers themselves.

Madness and Psychological Turmoil

Characters driven by revenge frequently descend into madness or experience psychological distress, illustrating the toll revenge takes on the human mind.

Corruption and Moral Ambiguity

The plays highlight the murky boundaries between right and wrong, with characters often acting out of necessity or moral compromise.

Fate and Free Will

Questions of destiny versus choice are central, with characters grappling with whether their actions are justified or doomed by fate.

Differences and Stylistic Approaches

While sharing core themes, each tragedy exhibits unique stylistic features that reflect their cultural and historical contexts.

The Spanish Tragedy: The Play within a Play

- Innovative use of meta-theatre
- Emphasis on revenge as a cyclical and inescapable force

Hamlet: Psychological Depth and Philosophical Inquiry

- Exploration of internal conflict and existential questions
- Use of soliloquies to delve into the mind of the protagonist

The Revenge: Raw Emotional Intensity

- Emphasis on emotional realism and social critique
- Expressionist techniques to evoke psychological states

The Revenger's Tragedy: Dark Satire and Nihilism

- Use of satire to critique societal corruption
- Emphasis on moral relativism and chaos

Impact and Legacy of These Revenge Tragedies

These four tragedies have left an indelible mark on drama and literature, influencing countless works and shaping the conventions of revenge plays.

Influence on Later Literature and Drama

- Established structural elements like revenge plots, tragic downfall, and the importance of internal conflict
- Inspired adaptations, variations, and new interpretations across cultures

Modern Reinterpretations

- Contemporary playwrights draw upon themes of revenge, morality, and madness
- Films and theatrical productions reinterpret these classics for modern audiences

Conclusion

The four revenge tragedies—The Spanish Tragedy, Hamlet, The Revenge, and The Revenger's Tragedy—collectively offer a profound exploration of human nature's darker aspects. They examine how revenge, while often rooted in a desire for justice, can spiral into chaos, destruction, and moral decay. Their enduring relevance lies in their ability to probe the complex psychology of revenge, question societal morals, and depict the tragic consequences of vengeance. These plays continue to resonate, reminding audiences of the perilous path revenge charts and the timeless human struggle between morality and retribution.

Four Revenge Tragedies: Analyzing "The Spanish Tragedy" and the Theme of Revenge

Revenge tragedy has played a pivotal role in shaping the landscape of dramatic literature, especially in the context of Elizabethan and early modern drama. Among the most influential works in this genre is "The Spanish Tragedy" by Thomas Kyd, often heralded as a foundational text that inspired subsequent plays such as Shakespeare's "Hamlet," Webster's "The Duchess of Malfi," and others. This article undertakes a comprehensive exploration of "The Spanish Tragedy" and its central theme of revenge, alongside a comparative look at four significant revenge tragedies, examining their thematic depth, structural elements, and cultural significance.

Understanding the Revenge Tragedy Genre

Origins and Historical Context

The revenge tragedy genre emerged prominently in Elizabethan and Jacobean England, drawing inspiration from classical Greek and Latin dramas, notably Seneca's works. These plays are characterized by their intense emotional conflicts, elaborate revenge plots, and often brutal violence. They reflect societal anxieties about morality, justice, and the consequences of vengeance, often portraying revenge as a destructive force that corrupts the soul.

The socio-political landscape of the period, marked by political intrigue, familial conflicts, and questions about divine justice, provided fertile ground for the revenge tragedy's themes. These plays served both as entertainment and moral cautionary tales, highlighting the perilous nature of revenge.

Core Elements of Revenge Tragedies

Most revenge tragedies share common structural and thematic features:

- A central act of injustice or murder that prompts the quest for revenge.
- A revenge plot driven by a protagonist or avenger seeking justice or retribution.
- Themes of madness, guilt, and moral ambiguity, often leading to tragic downfall.
- Supernatural elements (ghosts, omens) that guide or influence characters.
- A violent climax, often involving bloodshed and chaos.
- An exploration of revenge's corrosive effects on the individual and society.

"The Spanish Tragedy": The Archetype of Revenge Drama

Overview and Significance

Written by Thomas Kyd in the late 16th century, "The Spanish Tragedy" is widely regarded as one of the earliest and most influential revenge tragedies in English literature. Its success set the template for subsequent plays within the genre, emphasizing psychological complexity, intricate plotting, and thematic depth.

The play is set in the Spanish court and revolves around the tragic consequences of revenge precipitated by political treachery and personal betrayal. Its protagonist, Hieronimo, embodies the tragic hero driven to madness and violence by the murder of his son.

Plot Summary and Themes

Plot Highlights:

- The murder of Horatio, Hieronimo's son, by Balthazar and Lorenzo, sparks Hieronimo's quest for justice.
- Hieronimo's feigned madness and elaborate plotting mirror the play's complex narrative.
- The ghost of Andrea (Horatio's friend) appears, urging revenge.
- The climax involves a violent double revenge scene? Hieronimo kills Balthazar in a bloody duel, and later, Hieronimo's revenge culminates in a massacre that leads to multiple deaths, including his own.

Central Themes:

- **Revenge and Justice:** The play examines whether revenge can restore moral order or simply perpetuate chaos.
- **Madness and Obsession:** Hieronimo's descent into madness symbolizes the destructive toll of revenge.
- **Corruption and Deception:** Political treachery and duplicity underscore the corrupting influence of revenge.
- **Moral Ambiguity:** The play questions whether revenge is justified or morally condemnable.

Structural and Literary Features

- Use of soliloquies and monologues to reveal characters' inner turmoil.
- The play-within-a-play device as a means of exposing truth and enacting revenge.
- Incorporation of ghosts and supernatural elements as guides or omens.
- A non-linear, layered structure that heightens suspense and emotional intensity.

Comparative Analysis of Four Prominent Revenge Tragedies

Beyond "The Spanish Tragedy," four other plays exemplify the revenge genre, each offering unique perspectives and thematic nuances:

- "Hamlet" by William Shakespeare
- "The Duchess of Malfi" by John Webster
- "The Revenger's Tragedy" by Thomas Middleton (attributed)
- "Titus Andronicus" by William Shakespeare

1. "Hamlet": The Philosophical Revenge

Revenge and Moral Dilemmas

"Hamlet" stands as the quintessential revenge tragedy, blending themes of revenge, madness, and existential inquiry. Hamlet's internal conflict about revenge?whether to act or abstain?introduces a philosophical dimension absent in earlier revenge plays.

Key aspects:

- The ghost of King Hamlet appears, demanding revenge.
- Hamlet's indecision and contemplative monologues reflect moral and spiritual dilemmas.
- The play explores the corrupting influence of revenge on the soul and the chaos it engenders.

Impact:

- "Hamlet" elevates revenge tragedy from mere spectacle to profound psychological drama.
- Its ambiguous ending underscores the destructive cycle of revenge.

2. "The Duchess of Malfi": Revenge as a Reflection of Power and Corruption

Revenge Beyond Personal Vendettas

"The Duchess of Malfi" by John Webster diverges from traditional revenge plays by focusing on political and social revenge. The play's themes include corruption, tyranny, and the destructive nature of unrestrained power.

Highlights:

- The revenge stems from the corrupt actions of the Duchess's brothers who conspire against her.
- The play explores revenge as a tool to restore justice, yet it results in chaos and tragedy.
- Psychological torment and moral decay are central to the characters' downfall.

Significance:

- The play emphasizes revenge's capacity to unearth deeper societal ills.
- It presents revenge as a force that ultimately devastates both perpetrator and victim.

3. "The Revenger's Tragedy": Satire and Cynicism

A Dark, Satirical Take on Revenge

Attributed to Thomas Middleton, "The Revenger's Tragedy" employs satire and irony to critique revenge plays themselves. It features themes of corruption, moral depravity, and nihilism.

Key elements:

- The protagonist, Vindice, seeks revenge against a corrupt duke.
- The play is marked by grotesque violence and dark humor.
- It questions the morality of revenge, portraying it as inherently corrupting.

Cultural Reflection:

- The play reflects a cynical view of revenge as ultimately destructive and meaningless.
- Its sharp satire critiques societal and political corruption.

4. "Titus Andronicus": Revenge and Brutality

Unrestrained Violence and Tragedy

One of Shakespeare's earliest tragedies, "Titus Andronicus," is notorious for its graphic violence and relentless revenge cycle.

Highlights:

- Titus seeks vengeance for the brutal murder of his son and daughter.
- The play features mutilation, cannibalism, and bloodshed, emphasizing revenge's barbaric nature.
- The cycle of revenge spirals out of control, culminating in widespread chaos.

Analysis:

- The play exemplifies revenge's capacity to dehumanize and destroy.
- It serves as an extreme illustration of revenge tragedy's violent potential.

Conclusion: The Enduring Power of Revenge in Drama

The exploration of revenge tragedies from "The Spanish Tragedy" through to Shakespeare and Webster reveals the genre's versatility and enduring relevance. These plays serve as mirrors to society's darker impulses, questioning justice, morality, and the human capacity for destruction. "The Spanish Tragedy" set the template for psychological complexity and thematic richness, influencing generations of playwrights.

While each play approaches revenge from different angles—be it philosophical, political, satirical, or brutal—they all underscore a central truth: revenge is a double-edged sword. It may serve as a form of justice or moral catharsis, but more often, it leads to chaos, tragedy, and moral decay. Their continued relevance in modern literature and drama underscores the timeless nature of revenge as a deeply human, and profoundly tragic, theme.

In summary, the revenge tragedy genre, epitomized by "The Spanish Tragedy," remains crucial for understanding the complexities of justice, morality, and human nature. Its influence persists, reminding us that the quest for vengeance is often a path to destruction rather than redemption.

Question What are the main themes explored in 'The Spanish Tragedy' as a revenge tragedy? The main themes include justice and revenge, deception and betrayal, madness and obsession, and the destructive consequences of revenge. How does 'The Spanish Tragedy' exemplify the characteristics of a revenge tragedy? It features a protagonist driven by the desire for revenge, themes of moral corruption, elaborate plots of deception, and a tragic ending, all hallmark elements of revenge tragedies. What role does the character of Hieronimo play in 'The Spanish Tragedy'? Hieronimo is the central character who seeks revenge for the murder of his son, embodying the tragic avenger archetype in the play. How does 'The Spanish Tragedy' influence later revenge tragedies, such as Shakespeare's works? 'The Spanish Tragedy' is considered a pioneer in the revenge tragedy genre, inspiring later playwrights like Shakespeare, especially in plays like 'Hamlet' with its themes of revenge, madness, and moral ambiguity. What is the significance of the play within a play device in 'The Spanish Tragedy'? The play within a play serves as a theatrical device to mirror the main plot, reveal truths, and intensify themes of deception and revenge. In what ways does 'The Spanish Tragedy' reflect Spanish cultural or historical contexts? It reflects Spanish interests in themes of honor, revenge, and justice prevalent during the Renaissance period, as well as influences from Spanish chivalric and tragic traditions. How does 'The Spanish Tragedy' depict madness as a consequence of revenge? The play shows characters like Hieronimo descending into madness as a result of their obsessive pursuit of revenge, highlighting the tragic costs of revenge-driven obsession. What are the key differences between 'The Spanish Tragedy' and other revenge tragedies? 'The Spanish Tragedy' emphasizes theatrical devices like the play within a play, features complex plots of deception, and has a strong focus on the psychological torment of characters, setting it apart from other revenge tragedies. Why is 'The Spanish Tragedy' considered a foundational work in the revenge tragedy genre? Because it established many conventions of revenge plays—such as revenge as a central motive, themes of moral ambiguity, and tragic downfall—and influenced subsequent playwrights, including Shakespeare. How does 'The Spanish

Tragedy' explore the moral implications of revenge? The play examines the destructive nature of revenge, questioning whether revenge truly provides justice and highlighting its tragic consequences for both the avenger and others involved.

Related keywords: Spanish tragedy, revenge tragedy, Thomas Kyd, Elizabethan drama, tragic plays, revenge theme, Renaissance theater, revenge motif, classical tragedies, Elizabethan revenge plays