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FACULTY OF PHILOLOGY

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SOME COMMON TRAITS SHARED BY ENGLISH RENAISSANCE REVENGE TRAGEDIES

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Abstract: This paper analyzes the origin of the revenge tragedies and the influence of the Roman playwright Seneca on English renaissance tragedies. Furthermore, it will offer a short review on how revenge was perceived in Elizabethan England and with what kind of notions the Elizabethans associated revenge. In addition, this paper will analyze more than a dozen of common traits that English renaissance tragedies share. One of the goals is to establish whether one can speak of some kind of a "common pattern" that, Thomas Kyd, William Shakespeare and possibly other authors used when they endeavored to create these enduringly relevant examples of revenge tragedies.

Key words: *Seneca, revenge, common traits, The Spanish Tragedy, Hamlet, Titus Andronicus*

Origins:

English renaissance revenge tragedies drew their inspiration, structure, motifs and symbols from the tragedies of the Roman dramatist, philosopher and statesman Seneca the Younger (c. 4 BC-AD 65.) The first translation of a Senecan tragedy into English language took place in 1559. In that year, a Jesuit priest Jasper Heywood, translated the *Troas* into English language. Heywood continued with the translations of *Thyestes* in 1560 and *Hercules Furens* in 1561. Other scholars also translated Senecan tragedies. Alexander Neville translated Seneca's *Oedipus* in 1560. Thomas Nuce translated the ninth tragedy of Seneca, called *Octavia* in 1561. John Studley translated and published Seneca's tragedies *Agamemnon* and *Medea* in 1566. Studley also translated *Hippolytus* in 1567 and *Hercules Oeteaus*. Thomas Newton, the publisher of the previous tragedies of Seneca in 1581, added to the publication in 1581 his translation of the *Thebais*. The main themes treated by Seneca in his tragedies are: 1) the inconstancy of fortune 2) portrayals of great crimes and examples of the evil results of murder 3) pleadings in favor of simplicity, poverty and chastity. The theme that most impressed the Elizabethans is the second one, i.e. great crimes and subsequent evil results. Seneca chose themes from antiquity that offered opportunities to deal with various passions, such as: hate, jealousy, ambition, love. These passions, when carried too far, enabled Seneca to deal with the psychology of crime. Crimes are described with realism and vice is portrayed in detail. Most of Seneca's criminals are responsible for their misdeeds. The rare exceptions are: Hercules, Oedipus and Deianira. For Seneca, humans have the ability to choose between good and evil. They have the power of free will. Redemption is possible, on the condition that the guilty person repents in earnest. Seneca regards suicide as justified, if it saves honor or if someone's life is full of pain and unbearable. However, Seneca prefers that the characters in his plays fight adversity rather than surrendering without a struggle. Pity for the victim, as well as for the offender is often felt. Blood-revenge is one of the prominent features of Senecan tragedy. This revenge, given

the fact that is often related to religious responsibility, is often spurred by a ghost. The ghosts are related and incited by a Fury. The revenger is often prompted to act by the hallucination of the appearance of the ghost of the deceased person. The slow progress of the process of revenge enables greater pleasure and revenge develops into terrible punishment. Temporary hesitation may detract the revenger for a certain period. Insanity, real such as in the case of Hercules or claimed divine madness such as in the case of Medea, may occur. Rhetorical ruminations on themes such as: life, death and fate are a common occurrence.

Elizabethans and revenge

If we are to better understand the conditions which paved the way for English renaissance drama one has to take into account the descriptions, opinions and accounts of revenge or vendetta, primarily for Italians, in Elizabethan society. In addition to Italians, revenge was also frequently associated with Spaniards and Turks. The historian William Thomas, described the ethos of the Italians in 1549 as possessing touching honor which deals out death for slander. That trait has made them “ware of theyr tongues, that a man maie goe .x.x. yeres through Italie without finding reproche or villanie, vnlesse he prouoke it hym selfe”¹. Thomas Write (1601) comparison of Englishmen and Italians and Spaniards is as follows: "Our people (for the most part) reueale and disclose themselues very familiarly and easily; the Spaniard and the Italian demurreth much . . . he wil shew a countenance of friendship although he intend reuenge, he can traine his purposes afarre off to vndermine where he pleaseth, he will praise where he hateth, and dispraise where he loueth for a further proiect; he can obserue his times better than we for his plots, and marke out fitter occasions to effectuate his intent."²

A vast number of Italian novelists were introduced in England during the sixteenth centru by *Les Histoires Tragiques* (1559-1570) of Belleforest, later mirrored in 1614 by *Les Histoires Tragiques de nostre Temps* of Rosset. Among other tales of revenge, we find the tale of Amleth, a story that would greatly impact Elizabethan drama. Other *nouelles* that featured revenge were introduced in England by William Painter in his *Palace of Pleasure* (1567-1568), George Touberville in *Tragical Tales* (1574), Robert Smith in *Straunge, lamentable, and Tragical Hystories* retold from Belleforest and Bandello (1577), Thomas Lodge in *The Life and Death of William Longbeard* (1593), and Thomas Beard in his *Theatre of Gods Judgments* (1597).

The book *The historie of Guicciardin containing the warres of Italy*, translated in 1579, also gave the Elizabethans many stories of murders, atrocities and revenge. Thomas Nashe summed up the English perception of the Italians in 1592 by stating that “The Italian saith, a man must not take knowledge of iniurie till he be able to reuenge it” and in 1593 that “Nothing so long of memorie as a dog; these Italians are old dogs, & will carrie an iniurie a whole age in memorie: I haue hearde of a boxe on the eare that hath been reuenged thirtie yeare after”³

Englishmen were further acquainted with Italian vengeance through the work of Gentillet “A Discourse.... Against Nicholas Machiavel”. Gentillet writes: *According to the honour of his [Machiavelli's] Nation, vengeances, and enmities are perpetuall and irreconcilable; and indeed, there is nothing wherein they take greater delectation, pleasure, and contentment, than to execute a vengeance; insomuch as, whensoever they can haue their enemie at their pleasure, to be reuenged vpon him they murder him after some strange & barbarous fashion, and in murdering him, they put him in remembrance of the offence done vnto them, with many reproachfull words and iniuries to torment the soule and the bodie together; and sometimes wash their hands and their mouthes with his blood, and force him*

¹ The historie of Italie (1549), fol. 4

² The Passions of the Minde in General (ed.1630)

³ "The Unfortunate Traveller," Works, Vol. II, p. 298

Peter Heylyn described the Italians in 1621 as being “ graue, respectiue, and ingenious, excellent men”. However, they had several drawbacks, among them, murder a man rather than slander him”⁵.

To sum up, Elizabethans were afraid of Italian deceitful revenge, even to the extent of visiting Italy, in order not to bring back in England Italian practices. William Harrison in 1587 described this attitude: “This . . . will turne to great ruine of our countrie, and that is, the vsuall sending of noblemens & meane gentlemens sonnes into Italie, from whence they bring home nothing but meere atheisme, infidelitie, vicious conversation, & ambitious and proud behaiour, whereby it commeth to passe that they returne far worsse men than they went out. A gentleman at this present is newlie come out of Italie who went thither an earnest protestant, but comming home he could saie after this maner: ‘Faith & truth is to be kept, where no losse or hinderance of a further purpose is sustained by holding of the same; and forgiuenesse onelie to be shewed when full reuenge is made.’”⁶

Lily Bess Campbell argues that “there was a persistent condemnation of revenge in the ethical teachings of Shakespeare’s England, a condemnation which was logically posited and logically defended.”⁷ In her opinion this attitude towards revenge was based upon two verses from the Bible: “Recompense to no man evil for evil. . . . Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath; for it is written, Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord.”⁸

Major characteristics of English revenge tragedies

English revenge tragedies share a number of similarities with regard to the plot and the structure. With regard to the plot the similarities are as follows: 1) a corrupt court 2) revenge of a father for a son, or the reverse 3) the revenge often involves the ghost of the deceased man 4) hesitation of the hero 5) play within a play 6) the use of real or pretended insanity 7) suicide or contemplation of suicide 8) a scheming villain (A Machiavellian figure) and intrigues 9) philosophical soliloquies 10) murder on stage (often violent) 11) degeneration of the hero 12) the avenger (hero) is killed 13) a number of accomplices 14) innocent victims. This paper will analyse these fourteen common characteristics in three English revenge tragedies: The Spanish tragedy by Thomas Kyd, and Hamlet and Titus Andronicus by William Shakespeare.

The three courts are corrupted. In The Spanish Tragedy, Lorenzo who is the son of the Duke of Castille lies and wants to take credit for capturing Balthazar. In Hamlet, King Hamlet is killed by his brother, Claudius. As Hamlet exclaims “Something is rotten in the state of Denmark” (Act I, scene 4, line 95). In Titus Andronicus, while the two sons of the late Emperor, Saturninus and Basianus, squabble over who will succeed him Titus is proclaimed as the Emperor. Titus refuses the throne and backs Saturninus for new Emperor. When Saturninus is declared an Emperor, he declares that he will marry Lavinia who is already betrothed to his brother Basianus, who refuses to give her up. As a conclusion, there is a great deal of corruption at the three courts in these plays.

4 A Discourse . . . Against Nicholas Machiavel (1608), trans. Patericke, Part III, max. 6.

5 Microcosmus, or A little Description of the Great World (1621), p. 90. See also Thomas Palmer, An Essay of the Meanes how to make our Travailes . . . (1606), p. 66; G. B. A. F., A Discovery of the Great Subtiltie and wonderful w'tsedome of the Italians (1591), sig. Bav.

6 A description of England (1577). The passage was added in the 1586 or 1587 edition

7 Theories of revenge in Renaissance England, Lily B. Campbell, 1931

8 The Bible. Verse 12:17 and 19; cf. deut. 23:35

The second point, revenge of a father for a son or the reverse, is present in the three tragedies. In *The Spanish Tragedy*, Hieronimo seeks to revenge the death of his son Don Andrea, in *Hamlet*, Prince Hamlet seeks to revenge the death of his father King Hamlet. In *Titus Andronicus*, the general Titus kills the eldest son of the captured queen of the Goths, to avenge the deaths of his sons in the war against this Germanic tribe. The Queen of the Goths Tamora, in turn, seeks to revenge the death of her son by killing Titus' sons. The revenge cycle continues as Titus kills the sons of Tamora to avenge the rape and mutilation of his daughter.

With regard to the third point, the presence of the ghost of the deceased man, this feature is present in *The Spanish Tragedy*, represented by the Ghost of Don Andrea, in *Hamlet*, it is represented by the Ghost of King Hamlet. In *Titus Andronicus* there is no direct presence of a ghost. Rather, Lucius demands "Ad manes fratrum⁹ sacrifice his flesh" (Act I, scene 1, line 115) and that the sacrifice of Tamora's eldest son takes place "That so the shadows be not unappeased"- (Act I, scene 1, line 117). Titus Andronicus demands the same: "These are their brethren, whom you Goths beheld Alive and dead, and for their brethren slain Religiously they ask a sacrifice: To this your son is mark'd, and die he must, To appease their groaning shadows that are gone (Act I, Scene 1, lines 139-143)". However, the term "shadows" and *spirits* can be interpreted as the ghosts of the deceased seeking revenge. In addition, Tamora, Demetrius and Chiron appear disguised as Revenge, Murder and Rape.

With regard to the fourth point, hesitation of the hero, this feature is present in the three plays. Hieronimo doesn't know who killed his son Horatio. When he receives Bel-Imperia's letter implicating Lorenzo and Balthazar for the murder, he is uncertain and decides to procrastinate and investigate further. The same is valid for Hamlet as he is uncertain that King Claudius is the killer, hesitates and procrastinates the act of revenge. The hesitation of Titus is of a different sort. He learns about "the traitors and the truth" (Act IV, scene 1, line 1605) in other words the names of Tamorra's sons who mutilated and raped his daughter Lavinia in Act IV scene I. However, the actual revenge begins late in Act V Scene II when Titus cuts the throats of Demetrius and Chiron and vows to grind their bones, bake their heads, make a banquet and play the cook.

These three plays also share the fifth point as a common feature, a play within a play that serves to facilitate the act of revenge. In *The Spanish Tragedy* the play within a play is Soliman and Persida, in *Hamlet* it is *The Murder of Gonzago* and in *Titus Andronicus* it is Tamora and her sons masquerading as Revenge, Rape and Murder, the actual roles they have performed throughout the play.

These plays also share the sixth characteristics, real or pretended insanity. Hieronimo in *The Spanish Tragedy* goes almost mad as his wife Izabella commits suicide, and Lorenzo prevents him from seeing the king. In an outburst, digging the ground with his dagger, he in Act II, Scene 12, lines 70-74 he exclaims: "Give me my son! you shall not ransom him! Away! I 'll rip the bowels of the earth, [He diggeth with his dagger. And ferry over to th' Elysian plains, and bring my son to show his deadly wounds. Stand from about me!]" Lorenzo explains to the King that Hieronimo's odd behavior is due to the fact that he is covetous of the ransom that his son received for Balthazar and is "Distract, and in a manner lunatic." (Act III, scene 12, line 8). Hamlet also pretends insanity or displays characteristics of insanity. From the outset, Hamlet plans to behave in a strange way or pretend to be mad. He says: "As I perchance hereafter shall think meet to put an antic disposition on" (Act I Scene 5, line 173). In the next act he continues his acting and pretends as though his odd behavior is due to his love for Ophelia. However, in the same act, his insecurities border insanity as he is questioning the reality of his father's ghost. In the third act, one cannot define clearly when he is acting as being insane and when he is really insane. In the fourth act, Hamlet kills Polonius by a mistake, and shows no remorse which can be regarded as a

⁹ *To the spirits of our brothers*

sign of insanity. However, although on the surface he utters confusing words, these words have a deeper meaning and foreshadow the murder of King Claudius. For example: “A man may fish with the worm that had eat of a/ king, and cat of the fish that had fed of that worm (Act IV Scene 3, lines 28,29), telling the king in couched terms that his end is near and “In heaven/ send hither to see; if your messenger find find him not there, seek him i` the other place / yourself. (Act IV Scene 3, lines 32,33), foreshadowing his revenge. In Act V, Scene 2, lines 220-230, Hamlet says:

“If Hamlet from himself be taken away, /And when he's not himself does wrong Laertes,
Then Hamlet does it not, Hamlet denies it. /Who does it, then? His madness. If't be so,
Hamlet is of the faction that is wrong'd; /His madness is poor Hamlet's enemy.

Sir, in this audience, /Let my disclaiming from a purpos'd evil

Free me so far in your most generous thoughts /That I have shot my arrow o'er the house
And hurt my brother. (Act V, Scene 2, lines 220-230)

With these lines Hamlet apologizes to Laertes and blames his mental illness for his actions. However, his explanation is not valid and sane, as both body and mind are an integral parts of a person.

Titus Andronicus is also bordering sanity. For example, in Act IV, scene 3, lines 1926-1941, he shoots arrows with messages to the gods: “Marcus, we are but shrubs, no cedars we No big-boned men framed of the Cyclops' size; /But metal, Marcus, steel to the very back, /Yet wrung with wrongs more than our backs can bear: /And, sith there's no justice in earth nor hell, We will solicit heaven and move the gods /To send down Justice for to wreak our wrongs. /Come, to this gear. You are a good archer, Marcus; [He gives them the arrows] 'Ad Jovem,' that's for you: here, 'Ad Apollinem:' /'Ad Martem,' that's for myself: /Here, boy, to Pallas: here, to Mercury: /To Saturn, Caius, not to Saturnine; /You were as good to shoot against the wind. /To it, boy! Marcus, loose when I bid. /Of my word, I have written to effect; /There's not a god left unsolicited.”

However in Act V, Scene II, lines 2453-2455, he seems to have recovered as he recognizes the disguised Tamora as Revenge and Demetrius and Chiron as Murder and Rape: “ I know them all, though they suppose me mad, / And will o'erreach them in their own devices: /A pair of cursed hell-hounds and their dam!”

The seventh point, suicide or contemplation of suicide is also present in the three plays. In The Spanish Tragedy, Hieronimo's wife Izabella commits suicide. Hieronimo contemplates suicide when he poses a rhetorical question in Act III, Scene 2, lines 16-20 “This way, or that way? Soft and faire, not so! / For if I hang or kill my-selfe, lets know/ Who will revenge Horatio's murther then!” After performing the act of revenge in the last scene of the play, Hieronimo commits suicide. Bel-Imperia also commits suicide. In Hamlet Ophelia commits suicide, and Hamlet contemplates suicide in the famous soliloquy “To be or not to be” (Act III, Scene 1, lines 1749-1783). In the closing lines of the Fifth Act of Titus Andronicus, Lucius and Marcus Andronicus state that if they have done anything wrong, they shall “hand in hand” (Act V, scene 3, line 2672) fall from the cliffs and “beat forth their brains” (Act V, scene 3, line 2673), in other words they shall commit suicide.

The eight common point, a presence of a scheming villain is also encountered in the three plays. In The Spanish Tragedy, the scheming villain is Lorenzo, who cheats his way into taking credit for the capture of Balthazar, bribes a servant to find who is his sister's lover, kills Horatio, convinces Pedringano to kill Seberine, afraid that he will reveal the truth and arranges Pedrignano's arrest to get rid of him and writes a fake letter “demanding” the release of the prisoner. Lorenzo lies to Hieronimo that Horatio is alive and prevents him from seeing the King, by claiming that the King is too busy. Furthermore, he lies to the King about the nature of Hieronimo's odd behavior.

The scheming villain in Hamlet is King Claudius. King Claudius poisons his brother, Hamlet's father, King Hamlet. King Claudius confesses: “O, my offence is rank it smells to heaven” (Act III, Scene 3, Line 40). Claudius sends Hamlet to England in order to get him killed, and sets up a rigged fencing match. Claudius also summons Rozencrantz and

Gildenstern, Hamlet's childhood friends, to serve as spies to ascertain the cause for his odd behavior.

The scheming villain in *Titus Andronicus* is Aaron the Moor. He is the secret lover of Tamora. He convinces Tamora's sons Chiron and Demetrius to kill Bassianus, and rape Lavinia. In addition, he writes a forged letter, implicating Titus' sons Martius and Quintus for death of Bassianus. Aaron visits Titus, and falsely tells him that Saturninus will spare his sons for their misdeed if either Titus, his brother Marcus, or Titus's son, Lucius, severs one hand and sends it to the Emperor Saturninus. Titus cuts off his hand and sends it to Saturninus. Meanwhile, Tamora gives birth to child fathered by Aaron. Since Aaron doesn't want anyone to know about this event, he kills the nurse to keep the child's race a secret.

The ninth common point, philosophical soliloquys¹⁰, are also present in the three plays. In *The Spanish Tragedy*, the character that employs soliloquy is Hieronimo. One example is in Act III, Scene 2, lines 1-11: "Oh eies! No eies but fountains fraught with tears". In the following lines, Hieronimo faces internal reflection over two questions: 1) need for evidence for his sons's murderers 2) and a conflict between him and an unjust world that refuses to provide him clues. When he reads the letter, he is unconvinced and he says to himself: "Hieronimo, beware!" (Act III, scene 2, line 37). A second example is found in Act III, Scene 7, lines 1-4 where Hieronimo again comes up with a philosophical soliloquy: "Where shal I run to breath abroad my woes-/ My woes whose weight hath wearied the earth, / Or mine exclaims that haue surcharged the aire/ With ceasles plaints for my deceased sonne?" Although his lamentations were deep, his soul is tortured (act III, scene 6, line 11) "with broken sighes and restles passions". He ruminates that he can't achieve justice and revenge as they are placed in "imperiall heights" (Act III, Scene 6, line 15). A third example of soliloquy is in Act IV, Scene 5. Here Hieronimo explores the idea of "what's is a son?" (Act IV, scene,5, line 4). He concludes that often a son "reckons his parents among the ranke of fooles" (Act IV, scene,5, line 23). However, that is not the case with his son: "He lovd his loving parents, he was my comfort/ And his mother's joy" (Act IV, scene,5, lines 30-31). He concludes by stating that time steals on till violence brings confusion to the murderers. The previously mentioned Hieronimo's contemplation of suicide in Act III, Scene II, can also be regarded as a philosophical soliloquy. There are numerous philosophical soliloquys in *Hamlet*. The most notable is Hamlet's contemplation of suicide in "To be, or not to be: That is the question" (Act III, Scene 1, lines 1749-1783). Another example of soliloquy is "Now might I do it pat while he is praying" in Act III, Scene 3, lines 74-97). This soliloquy explores the idea of prayer as a redeemer and protector from malice. Namely, Hamlet refuses to kill Claudius while he is praying, because in that case he will go to Heaven, and that would not be revenge. Another example of philosophical soliloquy is in Act IV, Scene 4, Lines 31-65 "How all occasions do inform me". In this soliloquy, Hamlet ruminates on the difference between humans and beasts. As a human, he should employ his reason to act if his honor demands it (a father killed, a mother stained) even if the task seems unfeasible. The most striking example of philosophical soliloquy in *Titus Andronicus* is Aaron the Moor's soliloquy in Act II, Scene 1 lines 548-572, where by using references from Greek mythology he explores the idea of using his power as the lover of the new Empress Tamora, to destroy Rome.

There are a number of violent murders in these three plays. In *The Spanish Tragedy*, Horatio is hanged and stabbed. Pedringano is hanged. Hieronimo stabs Lorenzo and Balthazar in front of the King, Viceroy and Duke. Hieronimo also kills the Duke, and finally commits suicide. In *Hamlet*, Claudius pours poison in the ear of King Hamlet. Hamlet kills Polonius. Getrude, Hamlet's mother drinks poison intended for Hamlet and dies. Laertes, Ophelia's brother, wounds Hamlet with the poisoned blade. The same happens to Laertes, who is killed by Hamlet. Hamlet kills King Claudius. Rosencrantz and

¹⁰ This paper and passage doesn't include and analyse all the examples of philosophical soliloquys, due to paper length restrictions

Guildestern are reported to have died. There are a number of violent murders in Titus Andronicus. Titus sacrifices Alarbus, the son of Tamora, to avenge the loss of his sons in the war against the Goths. In a scuffle, Titus kills his own son Mutius. Tamorra's sons kill Bassianus. The severed heads of Titus' sons Martius and Quintus are brought to Titus by a messenger. Aaron kills the nurse, who saw the birth of his child. Titus cuts the throats of Demetrius and Chiron. With the excuse that Lavinia has been raped, Titus kills his own daughter. After eating his baked sons Demetrius and Chiron, Titus kills Tamora. In turn, Titus is killed by the Emperor Saturninus. Titus' son Lucius, in an act of revenge, kills Saturninus. Aaron is buried chest-deep to die of thirst and starvation.

With regard to the eleventh point, degeneration of the hero that is valid for the three tragedies. Aristotle described the following characteristics of a tragic hero. He must be of noble birth, to have a tragic flaw (hamartia) which emerges from his heroic and virtuous qualities, the result often is the downfall and death of the tragic hero. These tragedies are about revenge and have a similar common theme, private justice vs public justice. Francis Bacon described revenge as a sort of "wild justice". In addition, it's clear from the Bible that revenge is in the province of God "It's mine to avenge; I will repay" Deuteronomy (32:25, and Hebrews 10:30). In addition to the fact that the heroes take justice in their own hands,, the degeneration of the hero is evident due to the fact that Hieronimo kills the innocent Duke, Hamlet kills Polonius by a mistake which indirectly leads to the madness and subsequent suicide of his innocent daughter Ophelia, and Titus Andronicus kills his son Mutius and Lavinia.

With regard to the twelfth point, that the hero is killed, this is valid for the three plays. In the Spanish tragedy, Hieronimo commits suicide. Hamlet is killed by Laertes, and Titus Andronicus is killed by Saturninus.

With regard to the thirteenth point, there are a number of accomplices in the three plays. In The Spanish Tragedy, the accomplices are: Balthazar, Pedringano and Serberine. In Hamlet, the accomplices are: Polonius, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. In Titus Andronicus, the accomplices are: Demetrius and Chiron.

With regard to the fourteenth point, innocent victims, in The Spanish Tragedy they are represented by Isabella and the Duke of Castille. In Hamlet, the innocent victims are Ophelia and Gertrude. In Titus Andronicus, the innocent victims are his sons: Mutius, Martius and Quintus, his daughter Lavinia and the nurse.

In addition to the aforementioned common traits, these revenge tragedies seem to share one more common trait. That trait is the notion of silence and references to tongue as a symbol of speech. Thus in the Spanish Tragedy, Hieronimo bites out his own tongue and says "Urge no more words, I have no more to say". In Hamlet, Hamlet proclaims "But break my heart, for I must hold my tongue! (Act I, Scene 2, line 362) and the play finishes with a quote reminiscent of Hieronimo's, "So tell him, with th' occurrents, more and less, /Which have solicited- the rest is silence. Dies." (Act v, Scene 2, lines 419-420). Titus Andronicus also fits this description as the tongue of Lavinia is cut off. Demetrius points this out "She hath no tongue to call, nor hands to wash; /And so let's leave her to her silent walks. (Act II, Scene 4, lines 1068-1070). Thomas Middleton's Revenger's tragedy, although not discussed in this paper, also fits the last common trait. Namely, Lussurioso in Act V, scene 5.1, lines 2668-2670 ends with a speech similar to that of Hieronimo and Hamlet: "Farewel to al; He that climes highest has the greatest fall. My tongue is out of office."

Concluding remarks: This paper has analyzed some common characteristics of Revenge tragedies. Although written by different authors, the shared characteristics might come from the fact that: the authors lived in the same period, lived in the same city (London), frequented the same places, read similar books and drew their inspirations from the same authors. Revenge tragedies were extremely popular and no wonder that one might even talk about a similar "template" on a revenge tragedy was written. This might be due to the fact that it was likely that the end result of such play would be a success for the author as well as for the theater company. In addition to the success that they have enjoyed and still

enjoy, these plays are still relevant today and probably will be in the future, as in addition to other qualities that they possess, the theme of revenge is still part and parcel of the human condition to a different degree around the world.

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