

The Revengers Tragedy: Things to work on for the Feb. 1 class:

1. 2.1 and 4.4: The “seduction” of and confrontation with Gratiana.
Consider the notion of the “divine comedy.” This phrase is most immediately associated with the 14th-century poem by Dante Alighieri (“Inferno,” “Purgatorio,” and “Paradiso”), but in its larger context, it refers to the spiritual life of both individual humans and humanity as a whole. The individual, it was thought, may reiterate the spiritual journey of all humankind through the following stages: Temptation, Fall, Repentance, and Redemption. Do you feel that Gratiana, whose name means “grace,” represents this process? Does her case challenge the process? Do you feel that her repentance in 4.4 is genuine? Why or why not? What are the implications of your decision for the larger themes of the play, those concerning vengeance, redemption, and justice? In other words, what kind of world are we dealing with in this play?
2. 3.5: The death of the Duke.
Consider the way that the duke’s death is staged. What do you make of the self-conscious theatricality of this scene (it is a case of “metatheatre,” or a theatrical moment that comments on its own use of theatrical motifs and practices)? How does the scene relate to the ideas of DECORUM and the multiple articulations of justice we’ve been thinking about (see Junior’s trial, for instance, or compare to Titus’s experience)? Most importantly, why does the duke die *in the middle of the play* rather than at the end? How does this construction of the narrative relate, for example, to the title of the play?