

JACOBAN TRAGEDY

TUDOR VS JACOBAN WORLD ORDER

"The whole structure of Tudor government had been geared to the concept of **personal morality** supervised by **paternal authority**; the Stuarts tried to continue, and even rigidify, the structure they found. In a small community, where each man acts on his own responsibility as an individual, this scheme might work, but it can hardly apply to the actions of a joint-stock company. ... or to a bank which is largely controlled by the fluctuations of a distant money market. **Old values applied to new situations inevitably bred rancor.**"

(Robert M. Adams, *The Land and Literature of England* 202, emph. mine).

Jacobean: James I (1603)

TUDOR OPTIMISM

- Stability;
- Defeat of the Armada (1588);
- Succession debate

JACOBAN MELANCHOLY

- Money (favour and monopolies)
- Malcontents ("masterless men"; second sons);
- Law (royal prerogative; freezing out of parliament);
- Religion ("closet" Catholicism)

The Jacobean in Jacobean Tragedy

- DISILLUSIONMENT:
 - "fitness" for rule;
 - Ethos of corruption (moral → state)
- MALCONTENT
 - Humanist education
 - Shrinking Civil Service
 - Disaffected, talented men without a defined "place"
- DESTABILIZED TRUTHS
 - Divine justice/Divine right
 - Cosmic order as ground of morality
 - providence

- CAPITALISM
 - Reconceived concepts of "value";
 - Association with debased values/morality;
 - Disruption of traditional systems of status and fealty
- HORROR/FASCINATION
 - Transitional: Elizabethan "stability" → Enlightenment "self-confidence";
 - Deterioration and uncertainty

The Tragedy in Jacobean Tragedy

"...the overburdened human creature, placed between mighty opposites, working out his salvation or damnation" (A.P. Rossiter qtd. in McAlindon 11).

Influences

SENECA:

- UNITIES: time, place, action;
- Chorus;
- 5-act structure;
- Declamatory;
- Conventional characterization;
- Off-stage violence.



Elizabethan Re-vision Of Senecan Tragedy

- On-stage violence
- Stylized, symbolic violence
- Assoc. w/ SUDDEN IMBALANCE of forces
- Underlying concept of order: CONCORDIA DISCORDS
- Sacrifice of the hero to re-establish order
- MACHIAVELLIAN
 - Appearance of virtue
 - Ends justify means

Jacobean Re-Vision of Tragedy

- Anatomy: exposure of inner workings/corruption
- Malcontent
- Interrogation of Order as a concept
- MACHIAVELLIAN
 - Survival in corrupt society
 - Surface/substance
- Disruption: new order? Endless decay?