

The White Devil

Three Deaths, Noble and Ignoble

Today:

- Compare the deaths of
 - Brachiano;
 - Flamineo;
 - Vittoria (Zanche);

Q: What is the relationship between the deaths of the major characters and

- The status of "revenge" in the play;
- The overall "world" that the play describes?

Noble Deaths

- EXPOSURE: "the moment of truth";
- ANAGNORISIS or recognition based on core values (E.g. sacrifice, understanding of "place" in complex circumstances);
- CLARIFICATION: separation of "right" from "wrong";
- (RE)INSTATEMENT of "proper" place and relationships to state/society/family etc.;
- ASSERTION OF SELFHOOD: corrective to self-loss and corruption of values and identity.

Noble Death in an Anchorless World

Q: Is it possible to achieve a noble death in a corrupted world?

Q: What is the meaning of death in a corrupted world?

Locating Corruption

► Flamineo:

"Pray what means have you / to keep me from the galleys, or the gallows?" (1.2.322-23);

"I visited the court, whence I returned / More courteous, more lecherous by far" (1.2.332-33).

► Vittoria:

"Condemn you me for that the duke did love me?" (3.2.205).

► Francisco:

"Tush for justice! / What harms it justice? .../...for the fame/ Shall crown the enterprise" (5.3.272-75).

► Monticelso:

"And some divines you might find folded there [in the catalogue of knaves], / But that I slip them o'er for conscience' sake" (4.1.60-1).

Corruption: a Capsized Ship

- Lack of resources makes one corrupt but being rich also enables corruption → there is no escape from corruption;

► 2 WAYS to SURVIVE:

- have money and escape **consequences** OR
- serve and exploit those with money and hope for **protection**.

► VULNERABILITY to FAVOUR

Q: If corruption is everywhere, what happens to the idea of revenge as a mode of SURGERY?

Brachiano's murder:

- "TREACHEROUS ENTERTAINMENT": corrupted tournament;
- RITUAL: last rites corrupted by impersonation;
- POISON: External poison; Inward poison (?);
- SELF-LOSS/CONTAMINATION: early self-abandonment
→ : madness, rambling, deterioration of self and connection to others;
- EXPOSURE: revelations have no power to reveal or produce justice (at that moment).

Q: What does the nature of Brachiano's death tell us about the nature of Francisco's revenge?

Francisco's Revenge

- MACHIAVELLIAN REVENGER... or is he?
- (UN)TIMELINESS: "O strange discovery! Why, till now we knew not / The circumstance of either of their deaths" (5.3.269-70)
 - The **knowledge** comes after the act of revenge;
- ANATOMIST: Revengers with privileged knowledge / access to grounding morality (i.e. Natural Law); therefore the ability to "see inside" the corrupt;
- JUSTICE:?

Noble Death

- Exposure: "the moment of truth";
- *anagnorisis* or decision based on core values (E.g. sacrifice, understanding of complex circumstances);
- Clarification: separation of "right" from "wrong";
- (Re)instatement of "proper" place and relationships to state/society/family etc.;
- ASSERTION OF SELFHOOD: corrective to self-loss and corruption of values and identity.

Vittoria: Redefining the Discourse of Nobility

ASSERTION OF SELFHOOD: corrective to self-loss and corruption of values and identity:

"Yes, I shall welcome death, / As princes do some great ambassadors" (5.6.221-23);

"I'll tell thee what, / I will not in my death shed one tear, / Or if look pale, for want of blood, not fear" (5.6.227-29)

► POWER OF LANGUAGE:

- Ability to DEFINE THE TERMS of one's life and the meaning of one's death

Noble Death

- Exposure: "the moment of truth";
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- **ASSERTION OF SELFHOOD:** corrective to self-loss and corruption of values and identity.

Flammineo's Resistance: Noncompliance

LODOVICO:...What dost think on?

FLAMINEO: Nothing; of nothing; leave thy idle questions, – I am I'th'way to study a long silence:

To prate were idle. – I remember nothing.
(5.6.205-7)

I do not look / Who went before, nor who shall follow me / No, at myself I will begin and end" (5.6.259-61).

► POWER OF SILENCE:

- Ability to refuse the interrogating gaze, and to assert the privacy of the interior.

So...

Q: Is it possible to achieve a noble death in a corrupted world?

Q: What is the meaning of death in a corrupted world?

FOR NEXT DAY: *The Changeling* 1.1

THEMES:

- TIME: timeliness/haste;
- IRONY: language "out of joint": doubleness, asides etc.;
- TRANSFORMATION of SELF: due to
 - Outward circumstance OR;
 - Inward drives;
- ARCHITECTURES OF CONTROL: Temple vs. Madhouse vs. Fortress;
- SERVICE (vassalage and sexual/chivalric);
- VISION: who gets to see and who is seen.

Q: Why is *The Changeling* categorized as a revenge drama?
