

‘Women’s Weapons’: Education and Female Revenge on the Early Modern Stage

Chloe Kathleen Preedy

‘My tables! Meet it is I set it down’, exclaims the most famous revenger of the early modern theatre, as he employs the study methods he has acquired at university to record a ghost’s lesson of murder and retribution.¹ While initially promising that ‘thy commandment all alone shall live / Within the book and volume of my brain’ (1.5.102–3), Hamlet will later rely on his prior learning to test the truth of his uncle’s guilt, composing ‘a speech of some dozen lines’ that, inserted into *The Murder of Gonzago*, enables him to try the King and ‘tent him to the quick’ (2.2.477, 532). This association between words and violent action, the humanist education system and the pursuit of revenge, became even more emphatic in Jacobean drama, when the figure of the malcontent – often depicted as a socially ambitious scholar whose prospects for advancement have been blocked by entrenched aristocratic privilege – gained in popularity.² From De Flores in *The Changeling* and Bosola in *The Duchess of Malfi*, to Vindice in *The Revenger’s Tragedy* and the eponymous protagonist of *Antonio’s Revenge*, Jacobean revengers invite audiences to reflect on the relationship between humanist learning, with its emphasis on proper governance and moral education, and the violent retribution that they enact upon corrupt rulers and unjust societies. Although this trend may hint at early modern doubts about whether humanism would be able to live up to its ideals in practice,³ such characters are also credited with the ability to ‘manipulate a fluid and contingent world with a dramatist’s inventiveness and authority’; as John Kerrigan has shown, the early modern revenger becomes a ‘surrogate artist’, ‘transmuting creative ambition into narrative and stage action’.⁴ The educational heritage that these fictional characters share with their creators is especially significant. Early modern playwrights and their meta-theatrical protagonists both

drew inspiration from classical models: Seneca's influence on Elizabethan and Jacobean revenge drama has long been recognised by critics, while Tanya Pollard's chapter in this collection demonstrates how early modern authors responded to and reworked the legacy of ancient Greek tragedy.⁵ Yet the significance of the associations between humanist education and revenge action for the female avengers of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century drama have not yet been fully addressed. Examining the revenge plots of Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus*, Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy*, and Chapman's *The Revenge of Bussy D'Ambois*, this chapter argues that women's literacy and classical knowledge play a crucial role in scripting vengeance, enabling educated women to participate actively in the process of revenge rather than being banished to the margins.⁶

If the consequences of humanist learning concerned some sixteenth- and seventeenth-century writers, women's education was an especially controversial topic. Although some humanist commentators suggested that education would aid a female pupil's moral development, others argued that there was something 'intrinsically indecorous' about a woman who violated the 'social code of modest silence'.⁷ The educated woman was often ambiguously portrayed in humanist texts, popular pamphlets, and plays as a potentially unruly figure: 'a threat in the social and sexual sphere'.⁸ Various authors cited the female revengers of ancient Greek and Roman tragedy to condemn women who resisted contemporary expectations: punitive depictions of a weakened Medea were used 'to caution or instruct the reader or audience member', while Thomas Nashe's *Pierce Penilesse* and Christopher Fetherstone's *A dialogue agaynst light, lewde, and lasciuious dauncing* associate promiscuity with the murderous 'strumpet' Clytemnestra.⁹ Those arguing in defence of women were equally aware of such classical precedents. Thus "Ester Sowernam", responding to Joseph Swetnam's 1615 *Arraignment of Lewd, Idle, Froward, and Unconstant Women*, mockingly suggests that Swetnam should have quoted Euripides to strengthen his argument, since women

are vilified in his drama as being without value and ‘most hurtfull to men’; she names ‘the *Gracians, Euripides, Menander, Simonides, Sophocles*, with the like, amongst Latine writers *Invenall, Plautus, &c*’ as ‘vehement and profest enemies against our sexe’.¹⁰ ‘Constantia Munda’, another respondent to Swetnam’s tract, adds that ‘Twas spoken of *Euripides*, that he hated women in *choro*’.¹¹ These comments suggest a shared interest in Euripides’ portrayal of female revengers, such as Hecuba and Medea; Sowernam’s attribution of the verse fragment she quotes to his tragedy *Medea* strengthens this assumption. Munda is also concerned about the related representation of female characters on the early modern stage, warning that every ‘fantasticke Poetaster [who] ... can but patch a [h]obbling verse together, will striue to represent vnseemely figments imputed to our sex, (as a pleasing theme to the vulgar) on the publique Theatre’.¹²

While Munda’s text does not specifically attack the depiction of women in Elizabethan and Jacobean revenge drama, the concerns expressed by these seventeenth-century authors about the classical legacy of the female avenger anticipate the conclusions reached by many recent critics. Marguerite Tassi, while highlighting the active contribution that female characters make to the revenge plots of Shakespeare’s comedies, demonstrates that, for Shakespeare and his contemporaries, avenging women call to mind ‘unruly’ images of the Hyrcanian tiger, Amazon, and virago: tropes that signify a transformation from a conventionally gendered female into a beast or unnatural creature, as discussed elsewhere in this collection.¹³ Janet Clare, evaluating Sir Francis Bacon’s claim that ‘vindictive persons live the life of witches’, suggests that this analogy complements and reinforces the widely-held view that the female avenger is an aberration against nature, noting how Hippolita’s quest for revenge is mocked within *‘Tis Pity*.¹⁴ Alison Findlay agrees that most contemporary discourses vilified female avengers, but ascribes this tendency to fundamental fears about female agency and maternal power; like Tassi

and Willis, she highlights that women in early modern drama are shown to actively instigate, and even perform, acts of vengeance.¹⁵

These critics rightly emphasise that the female revenger is typically characterised by early modern authors as unruly and aberrant, just as a number of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century writers expressed concerns about the moral and societal implications of educating women. At the same time, a humanist education enabled female writers to draw upon the authorising power of these classical works in their own writing, as Swetnam's seventeenth-century opponents recognised. Within *Ester hath hang'd Haman* (1617), Sovernam's citation of Euripides is part of her strategy to discredit *The Arraignment of Women* by belittling the author's writing style, his intellect, and the extent of his classical and Biblical learning. Rejecting any scriptural basis for Swetnam's accusation that 'God calleth women *necessary euils*', Sovernam suggests that his false claim must have been 'faigned and framed out of his owne idle, giddie, furious, and franticke imaginations', since Swetnam is unfamiliar with those 'Pagan' sources that he might otherwise have imitated; invention, in this context, is the despised consequence of Swetnam's ignorance. Her second allusion to Euripides enables her to reiterate the charge, as she concludes that this 'seely man' discusses 'nothing but what he hath stolne out of English writers'.¹⁶ Similarly, Sovernam's predecessor Rachel Speght criticised *The Arraignment of Women* as 'altogether without methode, irregular, without Grammaticall Concordance, and a promiscuous mingle mangle',¹⁷ while Munda denounced Swetnam's 'sottish lies' and his 'bald and ribald lines, / Patcht out of English writers'.¹⁸

The efforts that these women writers make to establish their classical and Christian credentials – Sovernam, for example, claims to defend 'diuine Maiestie, in the worke of his Creation' – recall Eileen Allman's argument that, in some early modern revenge tragedies, avenging heroines are positively associated with a forceful moral authority that is often religious in nature.¹⁹ Swetnam's opponents, too, characterise their words as the weapons of

righteous avengers. Sovernam claims that, as a woman first invented the sword, so a woman first invented letters, and promises to arraign Swetnam in the court of public opinion; Munda argues that ‘words make worse wounds then swords’ and, likening Swetnam to the notorious tyrant Phalaris, threatens to ‘beate thee at thine owne weapon’; while Speght, although referring Swetnam’s punishment to God, ‘who hath appropriated vengeance vnto himselfe’, is compared in a dedicatory verse to David defeating Goliath.²⁰ Thus, although these early seventeenth-century polemical works have no direct connection with early modern revenge drama, the manner in which their female authors utilise humanist learning as a ‘weapon’ against their persecutors illuminates how the fictional female protagonists of revenge tragedy seek to assert their own mastery of classical sources. Like their real-life counterparts, the educated women of early modern revenge drama seek to manipulate, contest, or take advantage of the very precedents that have been used against them, drawing upon classical and humanist examples in order to script their own narratives of revenge against the men who have wronged them.

Within a number of early modern plays, including *The Spanish Tragedy* and *The Revenge of Bussy D’Ambois*, the narrative authority acquired through learning is further extended when female avengers exchange their pens for the bladed weapons conventionally associated with active masculinity. Coming naturally to the hand of the early modern boy actor, the sword or knife requires direct participation in an attack; physical pressure must be applied to thrust the blade into the victim’s body, creating a continuum between hand and weapon. The potential phallic significance of such penetration was recognised by contemporary writers: in Beaumont and Fletcher’s *Love’s Cure*, the cross-dressed and sword-wielding Clara is warned that ‘nature hath given you a sheath only, to signifie women are to put up mens weapons, not to draw them’ (2.2).²¹ Elizabethan sumptuary laws also limited the carrying of arms to gentlemen. The female character who stabs her victim thus violates social and sexual decorum, while at the same time advertising her affinity with the classical tradition of women’s vengeance: in Ovid’s

Metamorphoses, for instance, Medea bathes her 'wicked knife' in her children's blood and Procne slits her son Itys's throat with a knife, while Euripides' Hecuba stabs her enemy Polymestor's eyes out.²² More centrally, the female character who masters the use of pen and sword can potentially lay claim to the same quasi-authorial power that is often attributed to male revengers.²³ Prior learning can assist female characters in their pursuit of vengeance: while the power possessed by women agents is usually more circumscribed than that of their male counterparts, the female revenger who is knowledgeable about classical sources or possesses eloquence in disputation can intervene in and shape the plot of her tragedy, albeit with varying degrees of success. Thus, from Shakespeare's Lavinia and Kyd's *Bel-Imperia* to Chapman's *Tamyra*, female characters draw on their learning and literary skills to script their own revenge plots, as women's learning becomes a weapon of revenge: the silenced tongue supplanted by the martial pen.

'A' Learning Ovid's Lesson: *Titus Andronicus*

Lavinia might seem like an unusual character to introduce a discussion of female vengeance. Although *Titus Andronicus* owes much to the classical myth of Philomel, Shakespeare's narrative displaces her sister Procne's vengeful role onto a male agent, Titus. In addition, as Deborah Willis notes, critical interest in the play's spectacular display of the female body, written on by violence, has often reduced Lavinia's role to that of passive victim: Lisa Jardine, for example, describes Lavinia as 'a visible symbol of patient suffering, a silent, mutilated emblem'.²⁴ Yet such characterisations of Lavinia underestimate the theatrical potency of her 'lively' on-stage presence (3.1.105),²⁵ as Titus will regularly remind the audience, the actor's body continues to communicate through a language of gestures, sighs, and tears. This physical expressiveness complements the verbal assertiveness that Lavinia demonstrates when she first

meets Tamora in the forest, as Bassianus and the two women compete for interpretative control over the myth of Diana and Actaeon.²⁶ Although Tamora here gains the upper hand by discursively revising the forest space into the *locus horridus* of classical tradition (2.3.91–111), inspiring her sons to take revenge against Bassianus, it is Lavinia who will eventually, and tragically, learn most from their encounter. After being forced to play the role of Philomel, Lavinia becomes more skilled in manipulating Ovidian precedents to her advantage; her brutal silencing at the hands of Chiron and Demetrius paradoxically enhances the familial and communal value of female literacy, when she communicates the truth that ‘womanhood denies my tongue to tell’ (2.3.174) by glossing a culturally-prestigious text that featured prominently in the humanist curricula of Tudor England’s grammar schools.²⁷

While Tamora and Lavinia represent different types of the female revenger, Aaron possesses the most authorial power over the events of Act 2. As Willis remarks, it is Aaron who redirects Tamora’s thoughts towards vengeance prior to Lavinia’s rape, when the adulterous couple become collaborators in an improvisational theatre of revenge,²⁸ and it is Aaron who determines that Ovid’s myth of Philomel, not Actaeon, will provide the model for their revenge action (2.3.43–5). Tamora follows this lead in her description of the forest setting, which recalls the ‘woods forgrown’ of Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* (6.664), and when she allows her sons to rape Lavinia rather than stabbing her opponent to death (2.3.120–1). If the phallic nature of Tamora’s threat still broadly suggested the Ovidian precedent, it is Aaron’s ‘counsel’ (2.1.132) that directly guides her sons’ actions. Equally, it is Aaron’s interpretative power that Lavinia contests through her subsequent use of Ovidian marginalia. In fact, Lavinia’s reassertion of narrative control against considerable odds contrasts with Tamora’s unwitting submission to Aaron’s script in Act 2 as well as her subsequent failure to manipulate Titus: Tamora, who disguises herself as a female Revenge and believes she can use rhetorical eloquence to control Titus (4.4.96–9), represents the dangers of limited education for the typically vilified female

revenger. Her sons' deaths might even be characterised as a judgement on a woman who pretends to greater learning than she possesses: Coppélia Kahn aptly identifies Tamora as the anti-muse to Titus' vengeance since, as Heather James and Liberty Stanavage have shown, Shakespeare's male avenger rewrites her schemes to his own ends.²⁹

Like the seventeenth-century polemicists Speght, Sowernam, and Munda, Lavinia inherits a tainted classical precedent that she must shape to her own ends. After Aaron encourages Chiron and Demetrius to pattern their assault on Tereus's rape of Philomel (2.1.128–30), the Goth brothers self-consciously celebrate their brutal editorial power by cutting off Lavinia's hands as well as her tongue, seeking to distort Ovid's Roman narrative as they mutilate their victim's Roman body.³⁰ Yet their crude handiwork retains a recognisable affinity with its literary source: Titus's brother Marcus, viewing his niece, concludes that 'some Tereus hath deflowered thee' (2.4.26). He even notes that Lavinia has suffered worse than Philomel:

EXT. Fair Philomel, why she but lost her tongue

And in a tedious sampler sewed her mind;

But, lovely niece, that mean is cut from thee.

A craftier Tereus, cousin, hast thou met (2.4.38–41)

The traumatised Marcus seems unable to apply his learning, however; having drawn this comparison, he reduces it to a rhetorical device that decorates his lament. While Chiron and Demetrius are poor readers who evade their interpretative responsibilities, believing they can 'lop' their classical source into an abridged form stripped of its deadly ending, Marcus conversely suffers from an excess of education: trapped within the Ovidian framework of this episode, his only response is to versify.

As the men around her retreat to the extremes of the educational spectrum, Lavinia asserts her independent authority over the text that has been her downfall, and appropriates it as an inspiration to joint action. Thus, when her father fails to interpret her ‘martyred signs’ (3.2.35–44) correctly, her learning provides the solution: at the start of Act 4, she uses the text of Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* to communicate with her family. Her active proffering of this volume is crucial, and a striking moment in performance. While critics such as James and Kahn minimise Lavinia’s agency, characterising her mutilated body as a co-opted text or the scene’s Latin passages as oppressively patriarchal, such readings insufficiently appreciate her literary stature.³¹ Rather than her body acting as a passive vehicle for exchange between the male Goths and the male Andronici, Lavinia assumes the role of active communicant, repudiating the gestural alphabet of her father’s devising for the written Latin that, to an English audience, advertises her comparatively elite education. Shakespeare’s reliance on the *Metamorphoses* confirms Lavinia’s textual independence, substituting Ovid’s counter-epic for the Virgilian narrative within which “Lavinia” would signify in exclusively bodily and reproductive terms:³² as the female-voiced epistles of *Heroides* suggest, Ovid’s verse offered a potential corrective to the traditional silencing of women in epic. His text is one that Lavinia can interpret authoritatively, substituting a tale of female vengeance for the mourning rituals of her male relatives.

Lavinia recalls the ideal humanist model of an educated woman, responsible for teaching the children (and now the adults) of her family. As Marcus reminds her nephew, ‘Cornelia never with more care / Read to her sons than she hath read to thee / Sweet poetry and Tully’s *Orator*’ (4.1.12–5); Titus confirms that Lavinia is ‘deeper read and better skilled’. Although at first he mistakenly assumes that she is using Ovid’s epyllion to ‘beguile thy sorrow, till the heavens / Reveal the damned contriver of this deed’ (4.1.30–6), Lavinia perseveres, turning the leaves until her father realises (with Marcus’s prompting) that she is quoting the pages:

Lavinia, wert thou surprised, sweet girl?
Ravished and wronged, as Philomel was,
Forced in the ruthless, vast, and gloomy woods?
See, see. Ay, such a place there is where we did hunt –
O, had we never, never hunted there –
Patterned by that the poet here describes,
By nature made for murders and for rapes (4.1.51–7).

Although Lavinia cannot embroider a sampler, Marcus's prayer brings the inspiration that she might write in the sand: a solution perhaps inspired by Lavinia's chosen text, in which Io traces her tale of rape in the dust (*Metamorphoses*, 1.642–67). Lavinia guides the staff she uses as a pen to carve out three simple but powerful words: '*Stuprum* – Chiron – Demetrius' (4.1.77).

Lavinia reveals her attackers through her literary agency. Female learning provides a substitute for Philomel's embroidery, just as Renaissance pedagogic texts compared the pursuit of education by aristocratic women to the activities of spinning and embroidery.³³ Critics sometimes characterise this substitution as a lessening of Lavinia's power: Kahn argues that Lavinia is forced to rely on the same male-authored texts that authorise patriarchal values, while Mary Laughlin Fawcett concludes that when Lavinia writes in Latin 'she uses the language of the fathers, the cultural dominators'.³⁴ But Ovid is a more subversive cultural 'father' than these readings suggest, while Lavinia's public authoring of a Latin verb and two Greek names becomes a striking advertisement for her educated power to communicate, in a riposte to Chiron's mocking directive that she learn to 'play the scribe' (2.4.4).³⁵ In reality, Lavinia is more than a scribe, and she carefully distinguishes her own experience from that of Ovid's Philomel. Not only does she substitute the names of her own attackers for that of Tereus, but, as Bethany Packard points out, she inscribes the term *stuprum* rather than *raptus*: *stuprum*, which is not used in *Metamorphoses*, does not carry the same connotations of abduction and theft, of women as the property of husbands or fathers, as *raptus* does.³⁶ Lavinia's narrative control is further evidenced by the fact that, in this scene, she plays the role of tutor and gives

her male relatives a ‘lesson’ in Ovid’s text (4.1.106). In fact, by drawing her father’s attention to Procne’s tale at the very moment she reveals the identity of her rapists, Lavinia hints at how the action of his vengeance should unfold as well as revealing the cause of her own suffering. Titus may even take on the role of Lavinia’s amanuensis, transforming her silently communicated scheme into a written plan of action: he announces that he ‘will go get a leaf of brass, / And with a gad of steel will write’ (4.1.101–5).³⁷

Titus later emerges from his study to confirm that the planned vengeance is set down ‘in bloody lines’, ‘and what is written shall be executed’ (5.2.13–5). As the pun on ‘execute’ hints, this process is repeated when Titus carves the bloody lines that silence Chiron and Demetrius, cutting their throats with a steel gad or blade. Seizing the Ovidian precedent distorted by Aaron and passively reflected by Marcus, Lavinia has conveyed her own version of its ‘lesson’ to her avenging father; although not the agent of revenge, she provides the classical precedent for Titus’ scheme. Her authority in this instance closely replicates Aaron’s role at the start of the play, as he advised Chiron and Demetrius in their assault. If anyone in Shakespeare’s tragedy scripts a direct response to the latter’s mutilation of Ovid’s narrative, it is Lavinia, who incites revenge through the careful conjunction of her fragmented words with the complete book of the *Metamorphoses*, re-joining its foretold outcome to the catalytic act of rape. From her carving of their names in the sand, through Titus’ steel engraving, to the dagger that slices Chiron and Demetrius’s flesh, Lavinia guides her father’s knife along with her uncle’s staff, scripting the ‘bloody lines’ of their mutual vengeance. As Titus tells the doomed Chiron and Demetrius, ‘worse than Philomel you used my daughter, / And worse than Procne I will be revenged’ (5.2.193–4).

Lavinia’s agency is circumscribed in *Titus Andronicus*. Without hands, she cannot directly wield the knife that cuts the rapists’ throats, and must instead perform the more passive role of holding a basin to receive their blood. Her ceremonial participation in this execution may even

arguably require her to re-experience her rape: the flowing of Chiron and Demetrius's life-blood into the vessel she carries echoes their earlier penetration of Lavinia's womb, symbolised on-stage by the 'blood-drinking hole' – although, as Willis suggests, the eventual reduction of her attackers to drained corpses, butchered animals at the end of the hunt, allows the Andronici to control the hunting analogies that Aaron, Tamora, and her sons employed in their assault on Lavinia.³⁸ Titus's subsequent killing of his daughter is even more problematic; with Lavinia silenced, we cannot confirm whether or not she is complicit in this particular appropriation of classical precedent.³⁹ Nonetheless, Shakespeare's tragedy suggests an emerging alignment between female education and the ability of the female revenger to script her own vengeance, without being vilified as a cruel or unnatural monster: thus Lavinia, recognising that Philomel's tale was the model for her rape, appropriates this classical allusion to initiate a revenge action that takes Procne as its 'precedent, and lively warrant' (5.2.43–6). Although she lacks hands to stab, her revenge is realised through the literate actions of reading and writing; female education takes the place of embroidery, in this narrative as in the manuals of humanist educators.

Scripting Vengeance in *The Spanish Tragedy*

Around the time that Shakespeare wrote *Titus Andronicus*, Thomas Kyd penned *The Spanish Tragedy*. Like his Mediterranean drama *Soliman and Perseda*, Kyd's tragedy features an educated female character whose learning facilitates her vengeance. Indeed, Bel-Imperia is explicitly cast in the role of avenger: a personified Revenge reassures the ghost of the murdered Andrea that he will 'see the author of thy death, / Don Balthazar the prince of Portingale, / Deprived of life by Bel-imperia' (1.1.87–9).⁴⁰ Thus, as in *Titus Andronicus*, the 'authoring' murderer is opposed by a female revenger who is able to script his ending. The quasi-directorial

authority that Revenge possesses over the events that unfold provides another instance of authoring female revenge: Andrea's plea for vengeance is granted by the goddess Persephone, patron of the play's action, while the drama's self-consciously classical framework suggests that Revenge may also have been played as female.⁴¹

Bel-Imperia's literary skills are evident within *The Spanish Tragedy*. She is adept in word-play and classical allusion, which she uses to keep Prince Balthazar at a distance while courting an alliance with Andrea's friend Horatio. Thus Balthazar characterises her as a sharp critic, reporting how his love-letters 'work her no delight': their lines 'are but harsh and ill, / Such as do drop from Pan and Marsyas' quill' (2.1.14–6). For the reader of Ovid, the threat of violent retribution haunts his words. In contrast, Bel-Imperia's letters to Horatio are eloquent, 'fraught with lines and arguments of love' (2.1.84–6), and she integrates classical precedents smoothly into their conversation: 'If I be Venus thou must needs be Mars, / And where Mars reigneth there must needs be wars' (2.4.34–5). Although this latter reference unintentionally foreshadows the conclusion to their meeting, when they are surprised by Bel-Imperia's murderous male relatives, it also prophetically anticipates the play's second revenge cycle, which provides the necessary framework for her success.

Deprived of her intended ally, Bel-Imperia recognises Horatio's father Hieronimo as a new partner. However, Hieronimo is not simply her male proxy. Instead, Kyd unites two related but disparate actions of vengeance: Bel-Imperia avenges Andrea, while Hieronimo acts on Horatio's behalf. Although Hieronimo provides the literal script for their joint vengeance, it is Bel-Imperia who first writes herself into his plot. Her letter, which appears in apparently providential response to Hieronimo's plea to the heavens for some means to avenge his son (3.2.22–5), is penned, like Titus's revenge plot, in the author's blood. Since the imprisoned Bel-Imperia cannot pursue her campaign, she urges Hieronimo to act:

‘For want of ink, receive this bloody writ.
Me hath my hapless brother hid from thee;
Revenge thyself on Balthazar and him,
For these were they that murdered thy son.
Hieronimo, revenge Horatio’s death,
And better fare than Bel-Imperia doth’ (3.2.26–31).

The legal term ‘writ’ may hint at Bel-Imperia’s awareness of Hieronimo’s preoccupations, and outlines a formal partnership. Yet Hieronimo, now appointed her representative, still fails to act. Suspecting the letter is a forgery, he waits on events while Bel-Imperia laments his emasculating passivity: ‘Hieronimo, why...art thou so slack in thy revenge?’ (3.9.7–8).

As Hieronimo weighs the morality of vengeance, Lorenzo releases Bel-Imperia from captivity. Her learning plays its part in her escape. Recognising that Lorenzo wishes to persuade her with his oration, she feigns acquiescence (3.10.83–6), before bandying a series of Latin tags with her brother: Lorenzo responds, ‘Nay, an you argue things so cunningly, / We’ll continue this discourse at court’ (3.10.104–5). Bel-Imperia’s carefully-managed return then spurs Hieronimo into action; she is ‘instrumental’ in transforming Hieronimo into an active revenger, of the type she herself personifies.⁴² While her catalytic role is arguably problematic, given the controversial morality of private vengeance, Hieronimo at least regards her arrival as a sign from above: ‘Why then, I see that heaven applies our drift, / And all the saints do sit soliciting / For vengeance on those cursed murderers’ (4.1.30-4). Here, Bel-Imperia may anticipate the female heroines of Jacobean revenge tragedies such as *The Maid’s Tragedy* and *The Second Maiden’s Tragedy*, who Allman believes are celebrated for their opposition to tyranny and assumption of moral authority.⁴³

Hieronimo characterises Bel-Imperia as a roughly equal partner, entreating her to play an active role in the execution of his revenge. Janet Clare stresses the remarkable nature of this performative collaboration, noting that Hieronimo’s exclamation, ‘For what’s a play without a woman in it’ (4.1.97), draws attention to the fact that he has included Bel-Imperia in the cast

despite the all-male acting convention of early modern drama; although his play is being staged at court, it is not a masque, and would not typically involve female performers.⁴⁴ Hieronimo also acknowledges that Bel-Imperia's involvement is the direct result of her education, which must rival that of the 'gentlemen and scholars' for whom this university drama was originally written (4.1.98-103). Indeed, he emphasises the intellectual requirements of his plot, stating that 'because I know / That Bel-Imperia hath practised the French, / In courtly French shall all her phrases be'. Bel-Imperia's response suggests that she too regards herself as an independent agent: she takes on the meta-theatrical authority of the revenger, joking that 'you mean to try my cunning then, Hieronimo' (4.1.176-9). During the subsequent performance, she appropriates this power for real when she stabs Balthazar, becoming the author of his death in accordance with Revenge's prediction. The fact that she wielded the weapon herself is reiterated several times by the watching courtiers, while her independence is further illustrated by the alteration she makes to Hieronimo's script: he intended her to feign suicide, but she continues along her self-determined trajectory. As interpreted for Kyd's audience by Hieronimo, this decision owes nothing to performative confusion but is rather attributable to her learning; Bel-Imperia knew the precedent for this staged narrative well enough to edit the ending:

For, though the story saith she should have died,
Yet I of kindness and of care to her
Did otherwise determine of her end;
But love of him whom they did hate too much
Did urge her resolution to be such (4.4.135-47).

Hieronimo correctly identifies himself as the main 'author and actor in this tragedy', but Kyd's Bel-Imperia is both his ally and an independent agent who pursues her own objectives. Moreover, although her active collaboration in and revision of the male protagonist's revenge scheme significantly exceeds the usual parameters of the female avenger's role, as she

concludes a separate revenge action on Andrea's behalf, there is no indication that Kyd's drama condemns her unusually active contribution to the play's narrative of vengeance.

Bloody Lines and Letters: *The Revenge of Bussy D'Ambois*

In *The Spanish Tragedy*, Bel-Imperia's actions inspire the hesitant Hieronimo, and he credits her intervention to divine inspiration. While George Chapman's *The Revenge of Bussy D'Ambois* continues and extends Kyd's interest in the morality of revenge, however, the female revengers of this Jacobean drama are not as well received by their male counterparts. Of the play's three avenging women, Bussy's sister Charlotte and his former lover Tamyra are both rebuked by male relatives for the actions that they take to avenge him; the Countess, who moves quickly from threats of vengeance to tears after Bussy's brother Clermont is betrayed, suffers for being 'so passionate' (4.3.102) when she weeps her eyes to blindness.⁴⁵ The criticisms directed against Tamyra and Charlotte equally draw attention to their passionate behaviour; unlike Kyd's Bel-Imperia, who mourns Andrea and Horatio with restraint, Chapman's female revengers are associated with violent outbursts of grief and anger.⁴⁶ Charlotte and Tamyra's highly-wrought behaviour is significantly at odds with the Stoic values endorsed by Chapman's protagonist, Clermont; they invoke mythological exemplars of vengeance while Clermont cites classical philosophers to advocate moderation.⁴⁷ One possibility is that Chapman, influenced like Kyd by Seneca, contrasts disordered passion with moral constancy in order to drive home his play's didactic message of 'excitation to virtue, and deflection from her contrary',⁴⁸ juxtaposing two rival modes of humanist argument in the process. Yet further investigation suggests that the distinction is not so straightforward. Geoffrey Miles points out that even in Seneca's drama, Stoicism is problematised since amoral characters such as Medea are often more constant than their virtuous counterparts, while Richard Ide (discussing Clermont and

Charlotte's Act 3 debate over the morality of revenge) argues that Chapman shows Clermont's Stoic perspective to be as 'partial, limited, and inadequate' as his sister Charlotte's opposing view; Ide concludes that, in *The Revenge of Bussy D'Ambois*, too rigid an adherence to Stoic principles becomes almost as undesirable as an excessively passionate response.⁴⁹

The idea that neither Clermont nor his female counterparts offer an entirely positive model, but rather provoke Chapman's spectators and readers to moral reflection, is persuasive. Both post-Reformation Protestantism and Stoic philosophy promoted a tradition of rigorous self-examination,⁵⁰ and Joel Altman has shown that Chapman's prequel *Bussy D'Ambois* is itself structured in accordance with the humanist model of arguing *in utramque partem*; Altman considers that Chapman's drama adopts a 'neutral, interrogative stance'.⁵¹ Thus Charlotte and Tamyra's interventions contribute significantly to Clermont's personal and narrative development, by prompting him to analyse his own actions and values. This argument may also explain why the play's female revengers differ in their methods. Whereas Kyd's *Bel-Imperia* combined clever plotting and violent action to pursue her vengeance, Chapman's Jacobean play goes further than Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus* in distinguishing between various modes of female retribution: thus Tamyra collaborates with Clermont to script a joint revenge, but it is Charlotte who is most ready with a weapon.⁵² Tamyra's contribution to the play's revenge action is especially noteworthy, although often-undervalued by critics,⁵³ since her active contribution is framed and facilitated by her prior learning.

Tamyra, whose love affair with Bussy precipitated her husband Montsurry's violent revenge against the eponymous protagonist of Chapman's prequel, is quickly identified as an important ally in Clermont's quest to avenge his murdered brother (1.1.101–5). In comparison with *Bel-Imperia*, Tamyra assists her male proxy more than she leads the action; yet her role is not insignificant, since it is only with her co-operation that Clermont can pursue the 'noblest and most manly course' (1.1.90) of retribution against Montsurry. Tamyra's independent plans for

vengeance predate her alliance with Clermont, and are informed by a long-standing tradition of female revenge: in her first appearance, she draws upon her classical knowledge to invoke a personified 'Revenge, that ever red sitt'st in the eyes / Of injur'd ladies' (1.2.1–10). Such learning also helps her to refute Montsurry's subsequent attack on her relationship with Bussy. Rather than being shamed by his accusations of 'witchlike' deeds (1.2.31), she counters eloquently, with reference to geometry (1.2.53–7), martial precedent (1.2.63–71), and a classical fable (1.2.79–88). Tamyra demonstrates much greater familiarity with these tenets of humanist education than her husband, and it may even be through her 'design' that Clermont is able to challenge Montsurry in the first place (1.2.106): certainly, as a literate woman, she is shown to actively support Clermont's delivery of a written challenge (1.2.139).

When Montsurry fails to accept Clermont's challenge, Tamyra is instrumental in forcing her husband into the duel that will kill him. Although she and Clermont's ally Renel apparently devise their plan in collaboration – Renel reports that 'The complot / Is now laid sure betwixt us' (4.5.85–6) – it is through Tamyra's letter that Clermont learns the details: her use of written communication is intriguing, since it underlines her authorial contribution to the scene that follows, and would be emphasised in performance by the physical delivery of the letter. Moreover, the fact that Tamyra arranges her husband's betrayal by letter highlights the mimetic nature of the play's revenge action. In *Bussy D'Ambois*, Montsurry tortured Tamyra into sending a message that led Bussy into an ambush, and so her letter-writing now implicitly wrests textual control back from her husband in a motif of active, and literate, female reprisal.

The process whereby Tamyra metaphorically transforms her pen into a sword by arranging Clermont's duel with her husband acts as the preface to the play's final scene, in which she will literally wield a blade against Montsurry. When the latter initially refuses to fight despite the revengers' successful ambush, Clermont hands his duelling dagger to Tamyra:

Revenge your wounds now, madam; I resign him
Up to your full will, since he will not fight.
First you shall torture him (as he did you,
And justice wills) and then pay I my vow.
Here, take this poniard (5.5.49–53).

Tamyra, it seems, obliges, writing her revenge onto her husband's body until he hastily agrees to the duel.⁵⁴ Since Tamyra had previously written to Bussy in her own blood, the lines she now carves into Montsurry's flesh simultaneously reinforce the significance of writing, both in this play and as used by Shakespeare and Kyd's educated female revengers. While in one sense the female revenger is vilified, as Clermont encourages Tamyra to take retribution in a manner that he considers too ignoble to perform himself, Chapman's protagonist still explicitly defends Tamyra's actions to Montsurry (5.5.56–7). The threat of mimetic retribution may be more in line with his sister Charlotte's ambition to be 'equal' by revenging 'a villainy with villainy' (3.2.96–7), than with Clermont's commitment to the 'noblest and most manly course' (1.1.90), but it is only through introducing the threat of his sister's script that Clermont can pursue his preferred course of action: a course that in turn brings Montsurry the possibility of redemption, when at the end of the duel he repents for his treatment of Bussy and Tamyra (5.5.109–12).

Female revenge is certainly not an unquestioned positive in *The Revenge of Bussy D'Ambois*. Charlotte's attempts to enact violent retribution personally are condemned by numerous commentators, including her own brother, who advises her dismissively to 'Take other ladies' care; practice your face' (3.2.128). Even after she disguises herself as a man in the hope of taking Clermont's place in the duel, her annoyance at Clermont's failure to kill an unarmed man is problematic, while it is Clermont's final refusal to let her fight Montsurry in his stead that seems to inspire the latter's dying plea for forgiveness: as Bussy's Ghost demands, perhaps somewhat anxiously, it is Clermont who 'must author this just tragedy' (5.3.46) – even if Tamyra scripted their encounter. Moreover, Tamyra's membership of a female community of revengers is inverted in the play's final moments, when she identifies

herself unfavourably with the Furies: 'Hide, hide thy snaky head! To cloisters fly, / In penance pine! Too easy 'tis to die.' (5.5.208–9). Nonetheless, as in *The Spanish Tragedy* and *Titus Andronicus*, the partnership between an educated female partner and the male avenger is crucial to the successful attainment of revenge for a murdered relative. Women's vengeance may be 'bloody' (4.2.36), but, even in Chapman's more cautious depiction, it is simultaneously associated with learning and the revenger's meta-theatrical ability to script the action. Charlotte's ability to dispute the nature of revenge eloquently with her brother, challenging the Ghost's exclusively masculine and patriarchal definition,⁵⁵ may help Clermont to appreciate Tamyra's desire for vengeance; he, in turn, allies his honour code to the disturbing power of female fury by handing his poniard to Tamyra so that she may write in bloody lines on her husband's body. Montsurry, who began the play fearful that 'the Furies haunt me' (1.2.102), does indeed suffer at the hands of Revenge's female agents, as they collaborate in his downfall.

Conclusion: Women Writing Revenge

Charlotte, Tamyra and Bel-Imperia are not the only female avengers to take up the sword in early modern tragedy: Lesel Dawson and Janet Clare have for instance demonstrated how Aspatia and Evadne script the revenge actions of Beaumont and Fletcher's *The Maid's Tragedy*.⁵⁶ Yet *Titus Andronicus*, *The Spanish Tragedy* and *The Revenge of Bussy D'Ambois* illustrate particularly well an apparent association between female learning and active participation in vengeance. The connection between the educated status of these female characters and their aristocratic rank may be a factor in their ability to exert control over the actions of others,⁵⁷ within the hierarchically-conscious world of early modern drama. At the same time, the narrative importance of classical precedents within Elizabethan and Jacobean revenge plays and the meta-theatrical authority often attributed to the revenger suggest a deeper

significance: when an educated woman wields the pen, such authoring power in turn facilitates her vengeance. Uniting the persuasive power of female eloquence with the literal penetration of the murdered male body, pen and sword together become ‘women’s weapons’. Thus, as an aptly named tract from the women’s pamphlet war put it, these female avengers take *Women’s Sharp Revenge* on the male characters who have wronged them.

The extent to which the active pursuit of revenge by female characters within these plays is depicted positively remains a more challenging question, however. Lavinia learns to assert interpretative control over the Philomel narrative of Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, rivalling Aaron’s authorial power and schooling her male relatives in the revenge script that they will follow, yet she acquires this ability at a terrible personal cost; after her father emerges from his study to appropriate Tamora’s masque of a female Revenge to his own purposes, Lavinia returns to a supporting role, and is cast again in the role of victim during the play’s final scene. Similarly, in *The Revenge of Bussy D’Ambois*, Charlotte’s words eventually influence her brother Clermont’s understanding of revenge and prompt him to give Tamyra an authoring role in his vengeance against Montsurry, but the Stoic moral code that informs Chapman’s play qualifies the power that Tamyra acquires by bringing the honour of her actions into question. If Clermont’s alliance with Tamyra suggests that Chapman’s drama attempts to partially reconcile Stoic values with an honour code based on passionate emotion, Chapman’s play nonetheless ends in gendered fragmentation: the masque establishes a closed male circle of victims and murderers, while the women withdraw to a convent to mourn.⁵⁸ Kyd’s *Bel-Imperia* is, conversely, able to appropriate Hieronimo’s masque design to her own ends, after she becomes his acknowledged partner in the revenge action of *The Spanish Tragedy* and an avenger in her own right. Her initial involvement and eventual success are however dependent upon physical sacrifice, as she first writes a letter to Hieronimo in her own blood and then revises the masque’s ending through an act of suicide. Thus, while classical learning and the

ability to read, write, and dispute successfully enable educated female avengers to play an active role in *Titus Andronicus*, *The Revenge of Bussy D'Ambois*, and *The Spanish Tragedy*, wielding authorial power and even physical weapons in their own right, such agency still requires a continuous, often competitive, process of negotiation in order to accommodate the revenge agendas of these female avengers with those of their male relatives and allies. It is perhaps unsurprising that the collaboration between Hieronimo and Bel-Imperia is the most equal of the three examples, being the most removed from the controlling structure of the patriarchal family – yet, in all three plays, the active involvement of women in the revenge action remains ultimately inseparable from physical suffering, bodily weakness, and personal sacrifice. A humanist education might present the female avengers of early modern drama with an opportunity to actively perform vengeance, but any authorial revisions to the play's revenge narrative must be written in their own blood.

Notes

¹ William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, ed. Ann Thompson and Neil Taylor (London: Arden Shakespeare, 2006), 1.5.107.

² See for example Mark Thornton Burnett, 'Staging the Malcontent in Early Modern England', in Arthur F. Kinney (ed.), *Companion to Renaissance Drama* (Oxford and Malden, Mass.: Blackwell Publishers, 2002), pp. 336–52; Frank Whigham, 'Sexual and Social Mobility in *The Duchess of Malfi*', *PMLA* 100 (1985), pp. 167–86; Larry S. Champion, 'The Malcontent and the Shape of Elizabethan-Jacobean Comedy', *Studies in English Literature, 1500–1900* 25.2 (1985), pp. 361–79.

³ Cathy Shrank discussed such concerns in 'Rewriting Robert the Devil: Thomas Lodge and Medieval Romance', the Tucker-Cruse Lecture delivered at the University of Bristol, May

2013; I am grateful to her for sharing the script of this lecture with me. See also Burnett, ‘Staging the Malcontent’, pp. 336–52.

⁴ John Kerrigan, *Revenge Tragedy: Aeschylus to Armageddon* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1996), p. 18.

⁵ See Gordon Braden, *Renaissance Tragedy and the Senecan Tradition: Anger’s Privilege* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985); Jessica Winston, ‘Seneca in Early Elizabethan England’, *Renaissance Quarterly* 59 (2006), pp. 29–59; Tanya Pollard, ‘What’s Hecuba to Shakespeare?’, in this collection; also Katherine Heavey, *The Early Modern Medea: Medea in English Literature, 1558–1688* (Houndsmill, Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2015), pp. 84–113.

⁶ The extent to which the traditional revenge narrative marginalises women, who appear as either idealised figures of chastity or ‘vulnerable vessels’, is discussed by Edward Muir in *Mad Blood Stirring: Vendetta & Factions in Friuli during the Renaissance* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), xxviii; see also Deborah Willis, ‘“The Gnawing Vulture”: Revenge, Trauma Theory, and *Titus Andronicus*’, *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 53 (2002), pp. 21–52, (p. 24).

⁷ Juliet Dusinberre, *Shakespeare and the Nature of Women*, 3rd edition (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), p. 2; Lisa Jardine, *Reading Shakespeare Historically* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), p. 50.

⁸ Jardine, *Reading Shakespeare Historically*, p. 7; Sara Eaton, ‘A Woman of Letters: Lavinia in *Titus Andronicus*’, in Shirley Nelson Garner and Madelon Sprengnether (eds) *Shakespearean Tragedy and Gender* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), pp. 54–74, (p. 62).

⁹ Heavey, *Early Modern Medea*, p. 18, pp. 84–118; Thomas Nashe, *Pierce Penilesse his supplication to the diuell* (London: printed by Abell Jeffes, for J. B[usby], 1592), G1r;

Christopher Fetherstone, *A dialogue agaynst light, lewde, and lasciuious dauncing* (London: Thomas Dawson, 1582), C8v.

¹⁰ Ester Sowernam [pseud.], *Ester hath hang'd Haman* (London: printed [by Thomas Snodham] for Nicholas Bourne, 1617), C2r, E4v.

¹¹ Constantia Munda [pseud.], *The worming of a mad dogge* (London: printed [by George Purslowe] for Laurence Hayes, 1617), C4r-C4v.

¹² Ibid. B3r.

¹³ Marguerite A. Tassi, *Women and Revenge in Shakespeare: Gender, Genre, and Ethics* (Selinsgrove, PA: Susquehanna University Press, 2011), p. 117; see also Alessandra Abbattista, 'The Vengeful Lioness' in this collection.

¹⁴ Sir Francis Bacon, 'Of Revenge', in Brian Vickers (ed.), *The Major Works*, Oxford World's Classics (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 348; Janet Clare (ed.) *Four Revenge Tragedies* (London: Methuen Drama, 2014), pp. xviii–xix.

¹⁵ Alison Findlay, *A Feminist Perspective on Renaissance Drama* (Oxford and Malden, Mass.: Blackwell Publishers, 1999), p. 50. See also Willis, 'Gnawing Vulture', pp. 22–4.

¹⁶ Sowernam, *Ester hath hang'd Haman*, C2r, E4v.

¹⁷ Rachel Speght, *A Mouzell for Melastomus* (London: printed by Nicholas Okes for Thomas Archer, 1616), F1r.

¹⁸ Munda, *The worming of a mad dogge*, A4r.

¹⁹ Sowernam, *Ester hath hang'd Haman*, B1r; Eileen Allman, *Jacobean Revenge Tragedy and the Politics of Virtue* (London: Associated University Presses, 1999), p. 18.

²⁰ Sowernam, *Ester hath hang'd Haman*, D1r-D1v, E2r; Munda, *The worming of a mad dogge*, B4r, D1v.

²¹ Cited by Dusinberre, *Shakespeare and the Nature of Women*, p. 242.

²² Ovid, *XV Bookes Entytuled Metamorphosis* (1567), trans. Arthur Golding (Amsterdam: Theatrum Orbis Terrarum, 1977), 7.503; Euripides, *Hecuba*, in James Morwood (ed.), *The Trojan Woman and Other Plays* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

²³ Tassi, *Women and Revenge*, p. 23, has demonstrated that female authorship and revenge converge in the drama of Shakespeare and his contemporaries more often than many critics have recognised, arguing that avenging women become amateur dramatists in plays such as *The Merry Wives of Windsor* and *Twelfth Night*.

²⁴ Willis, 'Gnawing Vulture', p. 22; Jardine, *Reading Shakespeare Historically*, p. 186.

²⁵ William Shakespeare, *Titus Andronicus*, ed. Sonia Massai (London: Penguin, 2005).

²⁶ See Bethany Packard, 'Lavinia as Coauthor of Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus*', *Studies in English Literature, 1500–1900*, 50.2 (2010), pp. 281–300, (pp. 286–7).

²⁷ T. W. Baldwin. *William Shakspeare's Small Latine & Lesse Greeke*, 2 vols. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1944), vol. 2, p. 418.

²⁸ Willis, 'Gnawing Vulture', p. 39.

²⁹ Coppélia Kahn, *Roman Shakespeare: Warriors, Wounds, and Women* (London: Routledge, 1997), p. 69; Liberty Stanavage, "'Welcome, Dread Fury, to my Woeful House": The Female Revenger as Masculine Escape Fantasy in *Titus Andronicus* and *The Spanish Tragedy*', paper presented at Revenge and Gender conference, University of Bristol, 6 September 2012; Heather James, *Shakespeare's Troy: Drama, Politics, and the Translation of Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 73.

³⁰ James, *Shakespeare's Troy*, pp. 63–8, identifies the attack on Lavinia as an assault on the textual legacy of Virgil's *Aeneid*. Crucially, however, it is the ignorant Goth brothers (who later misinterpret a Horatian ode [4.2.19–28]) who engage with an incomplete version of Rome's literary heritage. While Shrank rightly notes that Aaron's lesson is suggestive of early modern concerns about the failure of education, or literature, to guarantee its moral

efficaciousness, Chiron and Demetrius' partial knowledge of their source suggests that the fault lies in their reading practices.

³¹ James, *Shakespeare's Troy*, pp. 77–8; Kahn, *Roman Shakespeare*, pp. 61–2.

³² See James, *Shakespeare's Troy*, p. 77; Packard, 'Lavinia as Coauthor', p. 282, p. 292.

³³ Jardine, *Reading Shakespeare Historically*, p. 52.

³⁴ Kahn, *Roman Shakespeare*, pp. 61–2; Mary Laughlin Fawcett, 'Arms/Words/Tears: Language and the Body in *Titus Andronicus*', *English Literary History* 50 (1983), p. 269.

³⁵ Eaton, 'Woman of Letters', p. 57.

³⁶ Packard, 'Lavinia as Coauthor', p. 93.

³⁷ Caroline Bicks 'Incited Minds: Rethinking Early Modern Girls', *Shakespeare Studies* 44 (2016): pp. 180–202, explores how various early modern authors depicted acts of joint artistic creation by father and daughter, sometimes crediting the latter's inventive powers after the classical model of Dibutades and his daughter, in. I am grateful to her for sharing the manuscript of this article.

³⁸ Willis, 'Gnawing Vulture', p. 48. Katherine Rowe 'Dismembering and Forgetting in *Titus Andronicus*', *Shakespeare Quarterly* 45 (1995), pp. 279–303, also argues that Lavinia, by receiving her persecutors' blood, transforms herself from 'a figure of dismemberment into a figure of agency' (p. 300). Cf. Findlay, *Feminist Perspective*, p. 65.

³⁹ See James, *Shakespeare's Troy*, pp. 78–9.

⁴⁰ Thomas Kyd, *The Spanish Tragedy*, ed. David Bevington (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1996).

⁴¹ Tassi, *Women and Revenge*, p. 145.

⁴² Findlay, *Feminist Perspective*, p. 57.

⁴³ Allman, *Jacobean Revenge Tragedy*, p. 19.

⁴⁴ Clare, *Four Revenge Tragedies*, p. xix.

⁴⁵ George Chapman, *The Revenge of Bussy D'Ambois*, in Katherine Eisaman Maus (ed.), *Four Revenge Tragedies* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), pp. 175–248.

⁴⁶ For a full account of how female mourning is represented by early modern authors, see Lesel Dawson, *Lovesickness and Gender in Early Modern English Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), esp. pp. 92–127.

⁴⁷ See for example Fred M. Fetrow, 'Chapman's Stoic Hero in *The Revenge of Bussy D'Ambois*', *Studies in English Literature, 1500–1900*, 19.2 (1979), pp. 229–37.

⁴⁸ George Chapman, 'To the right virtuous and truly noble knight, Sir Thomas Howard', in Katherine Eisaman Maus (ed.), *Four Revenge Tragedies* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 176.

⁴⁹ Geoffrey Miles, *Shakespeare and the Constant Romans* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), pp. 58–62; Richard S. Ide, 'Exploiting the Tradition: The Elizabethan Revenger as Chapman's "Complete Man"', *Medieval & Renaissance Drama in England* 1 (1984), pp. 159–72, (p. 165).

⁵⁰ See for example Book 3 of Marcus Aurelius' *Meditations*, ed. and trans. C. R. Haines (Cambridge, M.A.: Harvard University Press, 2014), pp. 44–65.

⁵¹ Joel B. Altman, *The Tudor Play of Mind: Rhetorical Inquiry and the Development of Elizabethan Drama* (Berkeley and London: University of California Press, 1978), p. 305.

⁵² Findlay, *Feminist Perspective*, p. 68, characterises Charlotte as 'vengeance personified'.

⁵³ Maus, *Four Revenge Tragedies*, p. xxvi, for instance, suggests that 'women become virtually irrelevant' in this play, describing Tamyra's contribution as 'peripheral'.

⁵⁴ Maus' edition does not provide a stage direction for this action, but Clermont's imperatives and Montsurry's subsequent exclamation suggest a performance signal for the actors in accordance with standard early modern practice.

⁵⁵ Findlay, *Feminist Perspective*, p. 70.

⁵⁶ Dawson, *Lovesickness and Gender*, pp. 91–126; Janet Clare, “‘She’s Turned Fury’: Women Transmogrified in Revenge Plays’, in this volume.

⁵⁷ Cf. Dawson, *Lovesickness and Gender*, pp. 96–7.

⁵⁸ Findlay, *Feminist Perspective*, p. 72.