

Nicoleta Cinpoş (ed.). *Doing Kyd: Essays on The Spanish Tragedy*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016. Pp 240.

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Thomas Kyd's oft-taught revenge play *The Spanish Tragedy* engages with issues resonant in our time: authoritarianism, economic and social inequality, globalization, and the seeming impossibility of worldly justice. Though this collection emerged from a 2006 workshop at the University of Warwick and seems to have had a long gestation, its publication is well-timed for the current political moment. *Doing Kyd*, part of 'The Revels Play Companion Library', offers in twelve essays various perspectives on *The Spanish Tragedy*. Together, the essays consider the play's full chronological range: its initial popularity in the 1590s, its influence on other revenge plays (especially *Titus Andronicus* and *Hamlet*), its continental adaptations in the seventeenth century, its absence from the Restoration stage, and its twentieth and twenty-first century editions and stage revivals. The scope of the volume is deliberately broad, and as a whole the essays, though sometimes uneven, make a persuasive case for the 'importance of the playwright and *The Spanish Tragedy* for early modern theatre and beyond', as Nicoleta Cinpoş writes in her editor's introduction (4). The collection aims to distinguish itself in its breadth, its attention to *The Spanish Tragedy*'s stage lives, and its willingness to revisit past interpretations. It largely succeeds, especially in the first two goals. Given the play's ubiquity in non-Shakespearean drama courses, some essays in this volume will also be useful in the classroom. The book is divided into five sections: four sets of essays followed by a Kyd bibliography compiled by Cinpoş.

Doing Kyd is dedicated to the late Philip Edwards, editor of the 1959 Revels edition of *The Spanish Tragedy*. Edwards's essay 'Supernatural Structures in Kyd and Shakespeare' begins the first section, 'Vindicta Mihi'. This section examines revenge tragedy as a genre and the place of Kyd's play within it. Edwards's retrospective contribution revisits his past claim that the play is concerned with the 'web of consequence' proceeding from human activity and shows supernatural intervention to be farcical (15). Edwards mainly summarizes his own past arguments, but his presence in this collection, given his significant midcentury edition, is fitting. Jonathan Bate's 'Enacting Revenge: The Mingled Yarn of Elizabethan Tragedy' is one of the collection's strongest entries. Bate provides a comprehensive overview of Elizabethan theories of tragedy, which, *contra* Aristotle,

emphasized tragedy's admonitory moralism. Like other contributors, Bate highlights Kyd's interest in the 'resources and semiotic potentialities of theatre' (35), considering his ironic use of the Revenge/Andrea frame and his deployment of multilingualism in Hieronimo's playlet to concentrate the audience completely on the murderous action (37). His essay strikes me as especially useful for students and I expect I will even use excerpts from it with my undergraduates. Evghenii Musica also attends to Kyd's theatricality, arguing that the play metaphorizes justice as theatre and theatre as justice; revenge tragedy exposes universal justice as an illusion. Though Musica's use of secondary theoretical sources is skimpy, like Edwards and Bate he problematizes the presence of Revenge in the play's frame. The final essay in this section, Kristine Steenbergh's 'Gendering Revenge in *The Spanish Tragedy*', offers a coherent and convincing argument that *The Spanish Tragedy* 'employs gender strategies to problematise the theatrical performance of vengefulness' (53). She shows that, while Senecan tragedies performed at the Inns of Court associate private revenge, feminine fury, and lawlessness and civil war, Kyd troubles these associations by having Hieronimo appropriate the language of female revengers like Clytemnestra while Bel-imperia expresses a rational vindictiveness coded as masculine.

If the essays in the first section together take up genre and theatricality, the two pieces in the second section, '*The Spanish Tragedy* in Print', engage with textual problems, including the vexed issue of whether or how to incorporate the 1602 'Additions' into modern editions. Simon Barker relates the process of editing *The Spanish Tragedy* for *The Routledge Anthology of Renaissance Drama*. He is admirably forthright about the editorial tradeoffs involved in producing a low-cost classroom anthology. His essay also points to the importance of supplemental publishers' websites, where textual and contextual material (including the 'Additions') were ultimately housed. Jesús Tronch explains key considerations for editing *The Spanish Tragedy* for *Arden Early Modern Drama* (2013). He focuses on the choice to use Q1 as the base text, typographic strategies for incorporating the 'Additions' while setting them off from the main text, and emendations to Q1's readings. Though their editions have very different audiences and price points, both Barker and Tronch offer methodological reflections likely to be of interest to editors, classroom adopters, and readers of early modern playtexts.

The book's third section, "Chronicles of Spain" or Tales of Albion?', returns to the first section's questions of genre and theatricality, but with a cultural and historical focus. The title of Clara Calvo's essay, 'How Spanish Is *The Spanish Tragedy*?', neatly summarizes what has been a persistent issue for critics of this play interested in national identity and cross-cultural exchange on the early modern stage. Calvo

notes that Kyd does not use conventional theatrical markers of foreignness like epithets and marked speech and concludes that the play is less about Spain and Portugal than about 'dynastic policy and the anxiety of succession' (120). *The Spanish Tragedy*, she claims, offered Spain as a model for England in two ways. Spain's failure at the end of the play might foretell England's failure without an heir for Elizabeth, but Spain's conquest by Portugal in the play might give England hope of itself conquering Spain and controlling its colonies. Frank Ardolino extends his earlier work on *The Spanish Tragedy* in relation to the Armada by teasing out an anti-Spanish political subtext in the episodes of the murder of Serberine and execution of Pedringano. These episodes, he shows, echo an account of Philip II's perfidy given in Antonio Perez's influential Black Legend text *Las Relaciones* (1591), which was merged by Kyd with a similar Catholic libel of Robert Dudley, the earl of Leicester. Ton Hoenselaars and Helmer Helmers examine a different continental context for Kyd's play in their essay 'The Spanish Tragedy and Revenge Tragedy in Seventeenth Century Britain and the Low Countries'. They consider Dutch adaptations of English revenge tragedies and the emergence in the 1650s of a new revenge genre, the 'justified royal revenge', which shares the royalist politics of English Restoration tragicomedies. While their historicization of the genre is valuable, even more compelling is Hoenselaars and Helmer's methodological argument: scholars and practitioners should pay more attention to continental translations and adaptations, since these can shed light on bibliographical questions, textual influences, stage directions, and theatrical practices. *The Spanish Tragedy* and English players travelled; we must, too.

Section 4 looks at and listens to the staging of *The Spanish Tragedy* in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Tony Howard's essay 'Staging Babel' considers four major twentieth-century revivals and how they resolved editorial questions, focusing especially on the staging of the playlet in 'sundry languages' in 4.4. Two productions (National Theatre 1982 and RSC 1997) commissioned translations of the playlet 'back' into French, Italian, Latin, and Greek. He describes in detail how these productions showed that 'we could understand emotional complexities in this scene despite its language barriers' (182). Indeed, to return to Bate's argument, the languages may concentrate and focus audience attention on the acting out of revenge. Howard's attention to themes of language and communication across four different productions sometimes makes his essay difficult to follow, but its details are welcome. The section closes with two shorter pieces. Screenwriter Tod Davies discusses her adaptation of the play and its relevance for the twenty-first century. She sees its cacophony and its focus on 'the decent man betrayed by an indecent society' as strikingly contemporary (197). Carol

Chillington Rutter traces the figure of Isabella, the mad wife/mother, from *The Spanish Tragedy* through Shakespeare, Tennessee Williams, and into the twenty-first century. Her essay is somewhat out of place in the final section but provides a strong coda to the volume as a whole, as she shows the persistence of Kyd's tropes of mad grief.

The collection ends with a bibliography covering editions, books, chapters, articles, dissertations, reviews, and online resources published between 1993 and 2013. Since *Doing Kyd* offers tastes of the major critical issues — generic, editorial, historical, and theatrical — for studying *The Spanish Tragedy*, the bibliography fittingly presents a wider menu. I expect we will see more new productions of *The Spanish Tragedy*, given its resonance with the current historical moment, and *Doing Kyd* is a fine companion to Hieronimo's (and Kyd's) 'endless tragedy' (4.5.48).