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The Results of Femininity During Medieval Times

What *The Spanish Tragedy* is able to bring to the audience is the role of femininity during the medieval period when the patriarchy was still considered the top priority. Demonstrating the ability to reject the male-dominated patriarchy, Bel-Imperia exhibits a pronounced ability to use sexuality in being able to achieve her lust for revenge. This is seen in the use of her scarf, a token of her love which is able to be passed around like it means nothing to Bel-Imperia. The repercussions of her lust for revenge must be dealt with when discussing what constitutes as moral revenge.

With Bel-Imperia having rejected the patriarchal society of her time, the scarf that had once belonged to her would represent the casual nature of giving away one's love and, later, life. When Horatio tells Bel-Imperia of her lover Andrea's death, she is presented with the scarf previously given to Andrea as proof of his death. The scarf then becomes a token for the budding relationship, as being both platonic and romantic, between Bel-Imperia and Horatio. Bel-Imperia is likely ready to jump ship on Andrea, after first hearing of his death mere moments ago, to start this new relationship with Horatio when she comments:

BEL-IMPERIA. Yet what avails to wail Andreas death,

From whence Horatio proves my second love? (1.4.60-1)

How she is able to rebound so quickly is able to make more sense if the audience looks at Bel-Imperia's actions as her setting up a game of chess for getting personal revenge for the death

of Andrea. Bel-Imperia is able to quickly move on to a relationship with Horatio without being able to fully comprehend Andrea's death, thus starting to tie in the dual theme of the scarf being a token of both love and death. When Bel-Imperia tells Horatio that she is really admitting how she is willing to fully commit to their romantic relationship after the death of previous lover, Andrea.

BEL-IMPERIA. My heart, sweet friend, is like a ship at sea:

She wisheth port, where, riding all at ease,

She may repair what stormy times have worn,

And, leaning on the shore, may sing with joy. (2.2.7-10)

With the context that it would not have been that long since Andrea has passed away, it makes no logistical sense as to why Bel-Imperia could have managed to accept his death so quickly and move on to another relationship within the span of two to three weeks at most.

Emotional and legal consequences have been present throughout the entire play, and yet there is no one answer towards which would be considered morally correct. This is due to there being three distinct types of revenge (personal, legal, and cosmic) which have implications as to whether or not there will be a true sense of "justice" at the end of the day. Personal revenge would be able to generate the most gratifying conclusion from being able to say that enough justice has been served, since it is a person question as to how much punishment should be given for any one bad action. Legal revenge is dependent on who is involved with the dispute, since an accused in high standing would likely not be prosecuted yet an accuser in high standing would likely be taken as fact, since it would not be worthwhile to go strive for the legality of revenge if the accuser would not be believed. Cosmic revenge that looks at how a higher power would exact justice for those who have been wronged, with there being nothing that could be done. An example would be when Viceroy had lost the battle which he believes to have lost his son in

VICEROY. Fortune may bereave me of my crown.

Here, take it now; let Fortune do her worst; (1.3.18-9)

Fortune would be considered the higher power which made the decisions outside of Viceroy's control.

Bel-Imperia made the choice to go through with personal revenge, as she would not have been able to successfully pursue legal justice while accusing the son of Portugal's king of the murder of her lover. This is why Bel-Imperia goes through the ruse of falling in love with Horatio, she wants a male figure to take the fall for her revenge plot against Balthazar. And after the eventual death of Horatio, Bel-Imperia will join Hieronimo with his plan to kill those who were involved in the deaths of now both lovers.

Work Cited

Kyd, Thomas. *The Spanish Tragedy*. Edited by David Bevington, Manchester University Press, 1996.