

Abstract

Through a close reading of the key topoi in early modern revenge tragedy, this thesis investigates the ancient philosophical debate about anger in respect of violence and revenge. The through line of the argument is that the Roman philosopher Seneca's dramatic and philosophical treatment of anger is privileged by the early modern playwrights in their representation of anger in revenge tragedy.

Reading early modern revenge tragedy against the philosophy and poetics of anger, this thesis argues that revenge is not solely dependent on this emotion, and that sometimes anger itself becomes the action in a play prompting creative dramatic statements. This assumption is both similar and different to the prevailing theory of the humors, which was widespread at the time of writing these early modern revenge tragedies. Through this theory, Seneca's influence survives into Elizabethan revenge tragedy. I also argue that, the early modern understanding and decoding of this emotion straddles contradictory political messages calling either for passivism or resistance.

Throughout the selected body of work, the female anger emerges as an indication of the early modern cultures' view of female anger as a sign of moral inferiority. This topic is touched upon due to its cultural significance in Elizabethan revenge tragedy because it implies the moral superiority –even when anger is condemned in both men and women- of men's anger when compared to women's emotions in general and anger in particular.

The treatment of anger on the early modern stage involves philosophical, political, cultural, moral and aesthetic dimensions. This thesis argues that these are broad enough to result in

unique representations of anger in each of the texts in question. The depiction of anger is a never-ending process of assimilating and reproducing these cultural, political, historical, and aesthetic changes which reflect the deep restlessness of the revenge genre.