



# TRAGEDY 1: TO THE ENGLISH RENAISSANCE

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**Faculty of Arts and  
Human Sciences**

**2017/18**

## **LEVEL 5 (YEAR 2)**

### **MODULE TITLE: TRAGEDY 1: TO THE ENGLISH RENAISSANCE**

Reference No: **AME 5 TER 1718**  
Module Level: **5**  
Credit Value: **20 CAT points**  
Study Hours: **150**  
Contact Hours: **36**  
Private Study Hours: **110**  
Module Co-ordinator: **Dr. Alex McSweeney ([mcsweena@lsbu.c.uk](mailto:mcsweena@lsbu.c.uk))**  
Contact: **Rm: B463 – Tel: 0207 815 5183**

#### **Aims**

- To introduce a representative range of examples of tragic drama to the English Renaissance;
- To introduce the theoretical discussion of the concept of tragedy;
- To examine possible continuities and differences between Greek and English Renaissance plays;
- To develop students' understanding of dramatic form and performance theory.

#### **Learning Outcomes**

At the end of the Module, students will be expected to:

- analyse critically a variety of tragic drama from the ancient world and the English Renaissance
- incorporate into their analysis theoretical discussion of the tragic form
- compare and contrast tragic drama across a range of historical periods

## **Overview of Content**

This Module studies the Greek and English Renaissance stages and explores original staging conditions, developing students' understanding of the relationship between space, architecture and meaning, as well as examining their respective social contexts. We will examine the original performance conditions of each period and analyse the relationship of form to meaning paying particular attention to changing concepts of dramatic tragedy. Many of the plays are quite short, but that said, the reading for this Module is fairly heavy; the goal in setting the syllabus has been to expose students to a representative variety of tragic drama in the periods under examination.

## **Overview of Teaching and Learning Style**

Each session will consist of a short lecture, and a longer seminar. Students are advised to focus their preparation for each class primarily on the play for discussion that week. In addition, you should make sure that you familiarize yourself with key critical theories contained in the required and secondary reading recommendations. Each week I have suggested secondary material that is either required reading or particularly relevant to the subjects or topics under study. These essays should not be understood to represent the sum total of secondary reading students should undertake; it is merely an effort to help guide students' reading and preparation for the Module. The bibliography at the end of this guide will help you navigate the wider reading required for the course.

## **Syllabus Content (see core reading section below for the correct editions)**

Sophocles	<i>Oedipus Rex</i>
Aeschylus	<i>Agamemnon</i>
Euripides	<i>Electra</i>
Middleton & Rowley	<i>The Changeling</i>
Tourneur/Middleton	<i>The Revenger's Tragedy</i>
Webster	<i>The Duchess of Malfi</i>

## **Teaching and Learning Methods**

While a certain amount of information will be conveyed in lecture format, you will be asked to take an active role in discussing and analyzing texts which might include play-readings, whole class discussion, small group and pair work. It is absolutely essential that you come prepared to the sessions and you must make sure that you have read the play for discussion. You should also look at the required reading section as this contains the key critical and theoretical works we will be considering. This material will form part of your assessment so you must be familiar with it. Where possible we will analyse the text in performance by reference to stage and film interpretations and the course will also include at least one compulsory theatre visit.

Attendance at every lecture and seminar is vital. If for some reason you are unable to attend, please notify me in advance of the class by:

- e-mail (mcsweena@lsbu.ac.uk)

## Course Outline

### **Week 1: Introduction to the course**

After explaining the teaching programme and assessment of this Module, I will introduce the subject of tragedy in general terms. We will consider the condition of the tragic character and the form and subject of tragedy. Should we understand it as addressing social conflict and human pride, or should we avoid trying to make such trans-historical links? What might be the political function of tragedy – does it discourage individual aspiration, or is it a subversive genre? These questions will be explored with general reference to the work of some of the theorists and dramatists studied over the next eleven weeks.

**Recommended secondary reading:** Introduction to John Drakakis and Naomi Conn Liebler, eds, *Tragedy*; Peter Thomson, "Playhouses and Players in the Time of Shakespeare," Stanley Wells, ed, *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare Studies*.

### **Week 2: Sophocles - *Oedipus Rex* (or *Oedipus the King*)**

This lecture will provide an introduction to the conventions and staging conditions of the ancient Greek theatre. We will consider the original staging of the Greek plays and the ways in which the physical landscape and the architecture of the theatres conditioned the emotional, structural and dramatic scope of the works. We will then proceed to a close analysis of the text, paying particular attention to the character of Oedipus, the plot structure and the dramatic function of the chorus.

**Recommended secondary reading:** P.D. Arnott, *An Introduction to the Greek theatre*; Rush Rehm, *Greek Tragic Theatre*.

### **Week 3: *Oedipus Rex*/Aristotle's *Poetics***

The lecture will open with a discussion of Aristotle's theory of tragedy, **which students should have read before class**. I will then offer a close analysis of the themes, characterization, and structure of the *Oedipus Rex*, exploring in particular some reasons why this play, according to Aristotle, was the ideal example of tragic drama. The seminar will provide students with the opportunity to consider more fully both Aristotle's theory and Sophocles' drama, and the relationship between them.

**Required secondary reading:** Aristotle, *Poetics*.

### **Week 4: Thomas Middleton/William Rowley – *The Changeling* (*The Changeling opens at The Globe indoor theatre on Jan 15<sup>th</sup> 2015*)**

This week we will focus primarily on close analysis of the text. We will discuss points of historical relevance and examine the differences and similarities with the ancient Greek theatre form. We will consider some of the social and religious conditions of the English Renaissance. We will examine *The Changeling*'s social context in terms of its portrait of a materialistic society where judgements are made on appearances and upon the attitude towards women within the patriarchal society.

**Recommended secondary reading:** Gordon McMullan, "The *Changeling* and the dynamics of ugliness" in E. Smith and G. Sullivan Jr, eds, *The Cambridge Companion to English Renaissance Tragedy*.

### **Week 5: Augusto Boal and ‘Aristotle’s Coercive System of Tragedy’.**

The lecture this week will open with an examination of *The Changeling* in the light of Aristotle’s theory of tragedy. We will then consider the limitations of trying to read examples of the tragic form according to a single theoretical model. Objections to what has been read as Aristotle’s conservative agenda will be briefly presented through reference to Augusto Boal, “Aristotle’s Coercive System of Tragedy.” Students will be introduced to cultural materialism, and the view of tragedy as a potentially subversive form, through essays by Sinfield and Dollimore. The seminar will go on to explore these critical and theoretical approaches to tragedy in more depth through further close analysis of the play.

**Required secondary reading:** Augusto Boal, ‘Aristotle’s Coercive System of Tragedy’ in John Drakakis and Naomi Conn Liebler, eds, *Tragedy*;

**Recommended secondary reading:** Jonathan Dollimore, ‘Subversion through Transgression’ in Kastan and Stallybrass, eds, *Staging the Renaissance*; Alan Sinfield, *Faultlines: Cultural Materialism and the Politics of Dissident Reading*, pp. 230-7

### **Week 6: Independent Study Week**

This week will be set aside in order for you to make an individual tutorial appointment to discuss your essay assignment.

### **Week 7: Aeschylus - Agamemnon**

The lecture will begin by outlining the background to the events of the play as found in Homeric legend. I will then examine the presentation of justice and the thematic significance of the gods in *Agamemnon*. We will also analyse Aeschylus’ treatment of the character of Clytemnestra in light of our discussions concerning Beatrice-Joanna. We will then move on to consider the theatrical presentation of violence on the Greek stage beginning with a discussion of the convention of reported action and progressing to a close analysis of the structural and linguistic means by which Euripides creates a sense of horror. This discussion will be further developed in the following week when we will compare and contrast the dramatic techniques of Euripides and Webster.

**Recommended Secondary Reading:** John Kerrigan, ‘Medea Studies: Euripides to Pasolini’ *Revenge Tragedy: Aeschylus to Armageddon*; Martha Nussbaum, ‘Aeschylus and practical conflict’ *The Fragility of Goodness*.

### **Week 8: Webster – *The Duchess of Malfi***

This week’s lecture will develop the discussion of the female tragic protagonist introduced in the session concerning Beatrice-Joanna and Clytemnestra. We will begin by exploring Webster’s portrayal of the claustrophobic world of the court, and discuss the relationship between Ferdinand and the Duchess. We will then contrast the male public arena of the court with the private domestic world constructed secretly by the Duchess and consider how the Duchess’ gender threatens to destabilize the existing social order. This will lead to a discussion of the Duchess as tragic heroine, and an analysis of the play’s unusual dramatic structure (the Duchess dies in Act 1).

**Recommended secondary reading:** Lisa Jardine, “I am Duchess of Malfi still’: Wealth, Inheritance and the spectre of strong women’ in Dympna Callaghan, *Woman and Gender in Renaissance Tragedy*.

### **Week 9: Webster – *The Duchess of Malfi***

This week we will focus on a discussion of social and moral disorder. The debate will be linked to Webster’s drama and its preoccupation with degree and social transgression. The presentation of sexuality and, in particular, what was seen to constitute deviant sexuality, will be examined.

We will analyse the play's presentation of transgression particularly in the scene of the Duchess' s torture and murder and consider what the overall tragic message might be.

The seminar will be used also consider the dramatic conventions surrounding the figure of the malcontent, and the connections that might be drawn between Bosola and revenge tragedy.

**Recommended secondary reading:** Frank Whigham, "Incest and Ideology," in Kastan and Stallybrass, (eds,) *Staging the Renaissance*.

### **Week 10: Euripides - *Electra***

This week I want to consider the role of women in the Greek theatre. We will examine the dramatic action of *Electra* closely, paying particular attention to the character of the tragic heroine and discussing the extent to which any moral evaluation of Electra's actions is problematic. We will also look at Electra's compulsion to self-determination in the light of Nietzsche's theory of dramatic tragedy and her propensity to "hang on to grief".

**Required secondary reading:** Nietzsche, F., *The Birth of Tragedy*

**Recommended secondary reading:** Sarah B. Pomeroy, "Images of Women in the Literature of Classical Athens," John Drakakis and Naomi Conn Liebler, eds, *Tragedy*.

### **Week 11: Tourneur and Middleton - *The Revenger's Tragedy***

This week I want to further consider the representation of violence in theatrical form while also considering revenge tragedy as a distinct genre. I will begin by explaining the peculiarities of revenge tragedy and the extent to which Tourneur's play is dependent on the Senecan tradition; in particular, the hero doesn't fall from greatness due to any fault of his or her own, but rather is confronted with an action seemingly demanding revenge. The very plot structure of revenge tragedy thus implies a different moral agenda from other tragic forms. Students will be asked to compare and contrast Aeschylus' and Middleton/Tourneur's treatment of the genre.

**Recommended secondary reading:** John Kerrigan, "Remember me!": Horestes, Hieronimo, and Hamlet' in *Revenge Tragedy: Aeschylus to Armageddon*; Robert N. Watson, "Tragedy," in Braunmuller and Hattaway, eds, *The Cambridge Companion to English Renaissance Drama* (NB: this chapter is of general relevance to the Renaissance drama studied on this Module)

### **Week 12: Revision Session**

In this final lecture I will highlight some of the continuities and developments in the tragic form we have uncovered over the course of the twelve-week Module, and I will offer a broad overview of the range of theoretical work we have studied in relation to the drama. In the seminar we will return to some of the questions with which the Module opened concerning the subject matter of tragedy and its relation to human nature and society. We will then brainstorm responses to past exam papers, thinking about how different plays and theorists may be related and contrasted to one another.

## **Assessment**

The assessment will consist of two components, each worth **50%** of your total mark.

- One 2 000 word essay to be submitted on Wednesday, 3 November 2017, 1:00 PM
- One 2 hour unseen exam in January 2018. Please see your MyLSBU for time and date.

The essay questions will be posted on Moodle four weeks before the submission

date on 07/10/15. The pass mark for the Module is **40%**. The pass mark for each element is **30%**. In order to pass the Module students must attain a mark of over 30% for each element.

### Assessment Criteria

These are the areas that we consider in arriving at an assessment of your work:

- A. Knowledge of the topic of the essay question or task. Ability to refer to the texts under discussion with accuracy and clarity.
- B. Analysis of the issues in relation to the primary and secondary material.
- C. Evidence of a critical framework and a coherent and developing argument.
- D. Appropriate and accurate use of background material and secondary reading
- E. Presentation of work in line with academic conventions of spelling, punctuation, paragraphing, sentence structure, referencing.

With these in mind, the following model can be used as a guide:

#### **70% and above: First Class**

This mark represents **outstanding** work which shows a broad and deep understanding of the subjects and themes of the module and presents a sophisticated, close analysis of the texts used. A first class essay is very well presented, *extremely well written* and well structured. It is clearly argued and supported by a range of secondary reading, all of which is properly referenced in an accurately written bibliography.

#### **60—69%: upper second class (2:1)**

These marks are awarded to a **very good** piece of work that demonstrates a competent understanding of the essential concepts of the texts, the unit and/or the dissertation topic. The essay is well written, well structured and well presented. Some secondary material is used critically in support of the arguments. The essay demonstrates a sound understanding of the texts discussed, clear focused analysis and an understanding of the themes and concerns of the unit or dissertation.

#### **50—59%: lower second class (2:2)**

A good to satisfactory piece of work that is clearly written showing a good understanding of the topic and the principal reading: an assessment that achieves this grade should properly referenced with an accurately written bibliography. The essay might be largely descriptive in places, rather generalised or lacking in analysis or argument. The essay is on the whole well written but there is some evidence of poor expression and poor grammar, spelling, punctuation or sentence structure.

### **40—49%: third class (3<sup>rd</sup>)**

This is work that shows a poor grasp of the texts discussed. The essay might be wholly descriptive. The work might not be sufficiently organised around the question. The expression is poor, with spelling mistakes, weak grammar and a lack of paragraphing. The work might lack a clear introduction, conclusion or overall structure. There might be little or no attempt at referencing.

### **0—39%: fail**

The work barely answers the question or does not answer it at all. It is badly structured, poorly written and poorly presented. It is purely descriptive and lacks analysis. There is little evidence of planning or of understanding the unit objectives or assessment criteria. Please see your *Combined Honours Programme Student Guide* and your *Student Handbook* for the regulations governing procedure when a unit is failed.

## **Core Reading**

These are the editions I will be using in class and the ones you should read. **You must make sure that you bring a copy of the correct edition to the session.**

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Sophocles (1984) *Oedipus Rex* in '*The Three Theban Plays*', Penguin Classics

Middleton (& Rowley) (1988) *The Changeling* in *Thomas Middleton: Five Plays*. Penguin Classics.

Aeschylus (1977) *Agammenon* in *The Oresteia*. Tranlated by Robert Fagles. Penguin Classics

Webster, John (1997) *The Duchess of Malfi*, Revel's Student Edition, Manchester University Press.

Euripides (1998) *Electra* in *Electra and Other Plays*. Translated by John Davie. Penguin Classics

Middleton & Tourneur (1996) *The Revenger's Tragedy*, Revel's Student Editions, Manchester University Press.

## **Secondary Reading**

This bibliography is not exhaustive; it merely offers a good starting point for your own research. There is more relevant reading in the library than is indicated on this reading list, and you may further wish to take advantage of other libraries in and around London. Please note that a core text for the English Renaissance section of the Module, *Renaissance Drama: An Anthology of Plays and Entertainments*, ed Arthur Kinney, offers excellent suggestions for further reading for each play.

## Overview

Bradley, A.C 1904, rpt 1978. *Shakespearean Tragedy*, London: Macmillan

Drakakis, J & Liebler, N C. (eds) 1998. *Tragedy*, London: Longman

Faas, Ekbert 1984. *Tragedy and After: Euripides, Shakespeare, and After*, Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press

Gregory, Justina (ed) 2005. *A Companion to Greek tragedy*. Malden, MA: Oxford: Blackwell

Kaufmann, Walter 1992. *Tragedy and Philosophy*, Princeton: Princeton University Press

Kerrigan, John 1996. *Revenge Tragedy: Aeschylus to Armageddon*. Oxford: Clarendon Press

Kuhns, Richard 1991. *Tragedy: Contradiction and Repression*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press

Rabinowitz, Nancy Sorkin 2008. *Greek Tragedy*, Malden MMA: Oxford: Blackwell

Steiner, George 1995. *The Death of Tragedy*, London: Faber and Faber

## Greek Tragedy

Aristotle. *Poetics*, translated by Malcom Heath, London: Penguin 1996

Arnott, P.D. 1982. *Introduction to the Greek Theatre*, London: Macmillan Press

Aylen, L. 1964. *Greek Tragedy in the Modern World*, London: Methuen

Boal, A. 1979. *Theatre of the Oppressed*. London: Pluto Press

Davies, M 1998. 'Euripides' Electra: The Recognition Scene Again' in *The Classical Quarterly*, Vol. 48, No. 2 (1998), Cambridge University Press, pp. 389-403

Easterling, P.E. 'The Infanticide in Euripides Medea', Mossman, Judith (ed) 2003. *Oxford Readings in Classical Studies: Euripides*. Oxford: Oxford University Press

Foley, Helene P. 2001. *Female Acts in Greek tragedy*, Princeton, N.J.: Oxford: Princeton University Press

Goldhill, Simon 1986. *Reading Greek Tragedy*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Hall, Edith; Macintosh, Fiona & Wrigley, Amanda (eds.) 2004. *Dionysus since 69: Greek tragedy at the dawn of the third millennium*, Oxford: Oxford University Press

Kitto, H.D. 2002. *Greek Tragedy: a Literary Study*, London; N.Y.: Routledge

Kitto, H.D. 1964 *Form and Meaning in Drama: a Study of Six Greek Plays and of*

*Hamlet*, London: Methuen

Lesky, A (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.) 1978. *Greek Tragedy*, London: Benn

Ley, G 1991. *Short Introduction to Ancient Greek Theatre*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press

Macintosh, Fiona et al. (eds) 2005. *Agamemnon in Performance 458 BC to AD 2004*. Oxford: Oxford University Press

MacDonald, Marianne 2003. *The Living Art of Greek Tragedy*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press

Nietzsche, Friedrich 1897. *The Birth of Tragedy: Out of the Spirit of Music*, translated by Shaun Whiteside, London: Penguin 1993.

Nussbaum, Martha 1986. *The Fragility of Goodness*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Rehm, Rush 1992. *Greek Tragic Theatre*, London: Routledge

Shomit, Dutta (ed.) 2004. *Greek Tragedy: Aeschylus, Euripides & Sophocles*, London; Penguin

Vernant, Jean-Pierre & Vidal-Naquet, Pierre 1988. *Myth and Tragedy in Ancient Greece*, New York: Zone Books

### English Renaissance Tragedy

Aughterson, Kate 2001. *Webster: the Tragedies*, Basingstoke: Palgrave.

Boas, F.S. 1940. *Christopher Marlowe: A Critical and Biographical Study*, Oxford: Oxford University Press

Braunmuller, A.R. & Hattaway, Michael (eds.) 1990. *The Cambridge Companion to English Renaissance Drama*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Burks, Deborah 1995. I'll Want My Will Else": "The Changeling" and Women's Complicity with Their Rapists. *ELH*, Vol. 62, No. 4 (Winter, 1995), pp. 759-790. The Johns Hopkins University Press

Callaghan, Dympna 1991. *Women and Gender in Renaissance Tragedy*, London: Prentice-Hall

Dollimore, Jonathan (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.) 1984. *Radical Tragedy*, Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf

Edwards, Philip 1966. *Thomas Kyd and Early Elizabethan Tragedy*, London: British Council

- Farr, D.M. 1973. *Thomas Middleton and the Drama of Realism*, London: Oliver and Boyd
- Forker, C.R. 1986. *The Skull Beneath the Skin: Interpretations of Webster*, Illinois: Southern Illinois University Press
- Gomme, A.H. 1969. *Jacobean Tragedies*, Oxford: Oxford University Press
- Hopkins, Lisa 2008. *Christopher Marlowe, Renaissance Dramatist*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press
- Howard, Jean E. 1994. *The Stage and Social Struggle*, London: Routledge
- Hunter, G.K. 1969. *John Webster: A Critical Anthology*, London: Penguin
- Jardine, Lisa 1983. *Still Harping on Daughters*, Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf
- Kuriyama, Constance Brown 2002. *Christopher Marlowe: a Renaissance Life*, Ithaca, N.Y. Cornell University Press
- Kastan, David Scott & Stallybrass, Peter (eds.) 1991. *Staging the Renaissance*. London: Routledge
- Luttring, Sara D. 2011 "Narratives and the Politics of Virginity in "The Changeling" and the Essex Divorce' in *Renaissance Drama, New Series*, Vol. 39 (2011), University of Chicago Press, pp. 97-128
- McMullan, Gordon 2006. "The Changeling and the dynamics of ugliness" in E. Smith and G Sullivan Jr, eds, *The Cambridge Companion to English Renaissance Tragedy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- O'Neill, J. 1969. *Critics on Marlowe*, London: Allen and Unwin
- Salgado, Gamini 1961. *Three Jacobean Tragedies*. London: Penguin
- Sinfield, Alan 1992. *Faultlines: Cultural Materialism and the Politics of Dissident Reading*, Oxford: Clarendon Press
- Smith, Emma & Sullivan Jr, Garrett A. 2010. *The Cambridge Companion to English Renaissance Tragedy*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- Thomson, Peter 1986. 'Playhouses and Players in the Time of Shakespeare' in Stanley Wells, ed, *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare Studies*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press