

Masques and Metamorphosis:
The Theatricality of Revenge and How It Shapes Identity

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There are numerous features characteristic of the revenge tragedy genre, including the Machiavellian villain, the supernatural, and madness. It is the distinct play-within-the-play feature, however, that figures most prominently—and most crucially—in the dénouement of revenge narratives. In each example of revenge tragedy, a corrupt political leadership victimizes the story's protagonist. Because the protagonist suffers at the hands of a sovereign entity, he cannot seek recourse through traditional modes of justice. Rather than endure an impotent role within the perverted political landscape, the protagonist seizes dramaturgical authority, creating a performative space that allows him to recast the self into a position of power. Thomas Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy*, Thomas Middleton's *The Revenger's Tragedy*, and George R. R. Martin's novel series *A Song of Ice and Fire*, as well as David Benioff and D.B. Weiss' television adaptation of Martin's work, *Game of Thrones*, each demonstrate the necessity for theatricality and performance as it relates to the revenger's ability to secure private vengeance. Furthermore, despite the apparent successes of these revengers, each work reveals the degenerative moral effects of role-playing, ultimately calling into question the validity and usefulness of revenge.

Oftentimes revenge tragedies begin when a political superior uses his position of authority to violently exploit a non-noble character. This action—traditionally murder,

rape, or mutilation¹—highlights the hierarchal system of power to which the characters in these fictional societies are subject. Not only does the noble's authority provide him opportunity to commit these atrocities, but it also allows him to escape punishment. Despite the lack of legal consequence, the noble's actions are considered villainous and immoral: “a villain is a man who, for a selfish end, willfully and deliberately violates standards of morality sanctioned by the audience” (Boyer 8). From the onset of the play, the audience, therefore, understands the noble's action to be irrefutably monstrous and unjust, thus casting the royal figure into the role of immoral villain.

Beyond simply presenting the royal figure as immoral, revenge tragedy playwrights equate the villain-noble with savagery, dishonor, and godlessness. Kyd's *Spanish Tragedy* establishes this character type through Lorenzo and Balthazar, two villainous, conspiring nobles who use their political power throughout the play to manipulate and murder. One of Lorenzo and Balthazar's victims is the honest Horatio, son of the Knight Marshal Hieronimo. When Hieronimo finds his son's body hanged and stabbed, he calls the unidentified murderer a “savage monster, not of human kind” (Kyd 2.5.19). Furthermore, when Balthazar kills the valiant Don Andrea in battle, his actions are considered “murderous cowardice” and “without respect of honor” (1.4.73-75). Middleton's *Revenger's*, too, presents a villain-noble—the powerful Duke, a man who uses his position to sexually exploit women. Nine years prior to the play's events, the Duke poisons a woman named Gloriana for refusing his overtures. In his opening soliloquy Vindice, Gloriana's fiancé, laments Gloriana's murder, declaring the Duke “impious steeped” (1.1.2). In each example, the offended decries the actions of the villain-noble, equating him with sub-human savagery. Noble, non-noble, and audience

alike condemn the unscrupulous use of authority for criminal intentions. Revenge tragedy authors establish the juxtaposition between the villain-noble's corruption and the protagonist's initial uprightness to further accentuate the eventual moral decline of the revenger.

Despite the public denouncement of his crime, the murderer avoids any semblance of legitimate punishment for his violent act. The nobility and political strength of the villain-noble makes them untouchable by law and "virtually unassailable" (Mercer 55). In *Revenger's*, for example, when the Duchess' son Junior Brother rapes Antonio's wife, the Duke and Duchess delay judgment with the intention of exonerating him soon thereafter. It is this conflict of interest, then, between the villain-noble and the traditional modes of justice, that prevents the victim from obtaining legal justice. According to Engle, "the law offers the revenger no respite" because "the offender is himself a ruler and thus has institutional authority on his side" (1298). Not only does the villain-noble possess authority over the law, some revenge tragedy nobles, such as Middleton's Duke, are so utterly corrupt, they themselves acknowledge their own judicial inadequacies: "It well becomes that judge to nod at crimes / That does not commit greater himself and lives" (2.3.125-126). Middleton's Duke admits he is not in a position to judge or deliver justice due to his own disregard for morality. And although Kyd's Duke appears just, his son Lorenzo uses his position of authority to prevent Hieronimo from vocalizing to the court the crime against his son: "Back! See'st thou not the king is busy?" (3.12.28). Lorenzo thwarts Hieronimo's attempt to seek justice, leaving Hieronimo without legal recourse.

The failures of the judicial system cause the offended characters to look to divine justice. It is Isabella who first attempts to allay Hieronimo's—and perhaps her own—grief when she asserts “The heavens are just; murder cannot be hid; / Time is the author of both truth and right, / And time will bring this treachery to light” (Kyd 2.5.57-59). But after what Hieronimo deems too lengthy a delay, he questions the heavens' lack of response to Horatio's murder, asking “How should we term your dealings to be just, / If you unjustly deal with those than in your justice trust?” (3.2.10-11). Similarly, Martin's Arya Stark, a character from his novel series *A Song of Ice and Fire*, a fantasy epic that explores a dynastic war reminiscent of the historic War of the Roses, reflects on the unpunished murder of her family, stating “They are not my Seven. They were my mother's gods, and they let the Frey's murder her... The old gods are dead” (*Feast* 127). Following her family's murderous betrayal, Arya forsakes the gods, believing, like Hieronimo, that divine justice cannot exist while crimes remain unpunished.

In the absence of legal and divine justice, the victims themselves seek “the justice no longer provided by the rule of the law” (Allman 57). However, the protagonist's own virtue and decency—coupled with the social and spiritual boundaries of the play's world—morally complicate the protagonist's evolution from paralyzed non-noble to revenger. Hieronimo, as the Knight Marshal of Spain, is the embodiment of justice and law: “For blood with blood shall, while I sit as judge, / Be satisfied, and the law discharged” (Kyd 3.6.35-36). He is a man of fairness and equity, suggesting that he “to all men just must be” (3.6.9). Not until he realizes “neither gods nor men be just” does Hieronimo don the revenger role (3.6.10). According to Hallet, Hieronimo's desire for

revenge “is in a very real sense a passion for justice” (145). Despite his virtue, Hieronimo must seek private vengeance on behalf of Horatio.

The revenger role similarly falls to eleven-year-old Arya Stark, a character who also seeks justice for her murdered family. Arya’s desire for revenge emerges after the incestuous Queen Cersei, in order to preserve her secret affair with her brother Jaime, has her husband, King Robert, and Hand of the King², Ned Stark, murdered. In response to their father’s unjust execution, Arya’s brother Robb gathers his army and revolts against the crown. During the subsequent battles, Robb—and the other Stark boys—are betrayed, killed, or otherwise incapacitated. Without male heirs and with no potential for justice through the now-corrupt Westerosi judicial system, vengeance falls to the young, unskilled Arya who has “taken upon herself to right all of these wrongs” (Williams, “Game of Thrones Star”). Like Hieronimo, Arya is “forced to break the rules and take the law into [her] own hands” (Engle 1299). Violent vengeance, however, would, in other circumstances, prove inconceivable to a member of the Stark family, a family perceived by both allies and foes as the most honorable, virtuous House in Westeros. Arya, though, unable to obtain recourse through the law or the gods, seeks revenge on those responsible for her family’s demise.

Vindice, too, although his revenge story begins in *media res*, was seemingly a moral man prior to Gloriana’s murder. Hallett contends that since Vindice instantly presents “the vices of the Duke and his sons to us as despicable and sub-human, we associate him immediately with the forces of good” (232). Although Vindice’s narrative objectivity could be questioned, like Arya, he is associated with an honest family whose father was “a worthy gentleman” (Middleton 1.1.122). He and his brother Hippolito,

accomplice to Vindice's revenge, seem to share the worthiness of their father, embodying the "values lodged in the family to which they belong, which contrast at every point with the anti-values... of the court" (Barish 143). After the licentious Duke poisons his betrothed, Vindice's moral purity begins to deteriorate, but prior to the Duke's crime, Vindice was a "good man destroyed by a corrupt court" (O'Callaghan 171). In Vindice—as with Hieronimo and Arya—ethical inclination and lack of political strength complicate the decision to become revenger.

Obsession over the lack of justice, grief over the loss, and duty to family eventually propel each to action, and although the revenge protagonist's morality delays the initial undertaking for revenge, they are, ultimately, willing to sacrifice virtue—and life—to achieve vengeance. During a soliloquy in which Hieronimo mourns Horatio's death, he vows revenge, even if it costs him his own life: "his death behooves me be revenged; / Then hazard not thine own, Hieronimo" (Kyd 3.2.45-46). Although unclear whether Hieronimo plans to gamble his life, integrity, or virtue—or all three—he is clearly willing to renounce his previous life and "surrender up [his] marshalship" (3.12.76). By removing himself from the role of Knight Marshal, Hieronimo, in an attempt to reconstruct his identity, detaches himself from the restrictive social and moral space in which he has existed and recasts himself into the revenger role.

In *Game of Thrones*, Arya travels to the distant land of Braavos—a "free city" that exists outside the political and social constraints of her family's homeland. While in Braavos, Arya trains with the Faceless Men, a "secretive society of assassins" (*A World of...* 276). Here Arya learns the skills necessary to become an effective revenger. To be accepted into the guild, Arya must first train to become "no one." She must discard her

previous identity as Arya Stark, so that she may more effectively disguise herself as another³. Like Hieronimo, who, before shedding himself of his marshalship, vacillates between seeking revenge—“For in revenge my heart would find relief” (2.5)—and justice—“Justice, O, justice to Hieronimo” (3.12)—Arya, too, has difficulty abandoning her past.

After a period of training, the Kindly Man, an authority within the Faceless Men, evaluates Arya’s progress, suggesting she has “taken other names, but . . . wore them lightly as you might wear a gown. Under them always was Arya” (Martin, *Feast* 452). Arya struggles to shed both her familial and personal identity. When the Kindly Man asks her to abandon all of her personal effects, she abandons them all but her sword, a gift from her brother, because “Needle was Robb and Bran and Rickon, her mother and her father” (455). She continues to identify as a Stark, disregarding the Kindly Man’s explanation that to become ‘no one’ the “price is all you have and all you ever hope to have” (Martin, *Dance* 916). Vindice also presumably has a difficult time initially donning the revenger role as he delays retaliation on the Duke for over nine years. By the onset of *Revenger’s*, however, he has assumed a new identity and prepares for action.

Each of Vindice, Hieronimo, and Arya succumb eventually to the revenger role, and their disguises and subsequent theatrical creations are what ultimately permit moral abandonment. According to Mercer, “revenge is not something someone does but a role that awaits performance” (58), and so after obsessing for nearly a decade, Vindice concludes that in order to avenge Gloriana he must “turn into another” (Middleton 1.1.134). Hieronimo feigns madness, awaiting an opportunity to avenge Horatio, which arises from a chance to play another role. To avenge her family, Arya seeks to learn from

the group of masked assassins. In each case, the revengers recognize the need to play a role different from their own, and these disguises permit them “to act in ways contrary to their nature” (Hallett 238). Even the vile Supervacuo understands the correlation between violence and disguise: “A masque is treason’s license, that build upon; / “Tis murder’s best face when a vizard’s on” (Middleton 5.1.188-189). Murder thrives under the cover of disguise, a cover that allows the revengers to perform a role outside the restrictions of their moral and social boundaries.

Prior to the protagonists successfully obtaining their revenge, only the tragedies’ authority figures commit unjust murder. In many ways throughout these stories, violence and power are inextricably linked: “violence has a relationship to power and powerlessness” (Nevitt 6). Only characters in a position of power are able to commit acts of violence; therefore, in order to obtain vengeance, the revengers need to gain power over the noble authority. Hieronimo connects violence with the power of authorship, which, within the context of a play, is total authority: “To know the author were some ease of grief / For in revenge my heart would find relief” (Kyd 2.5.40-41). Hieronimo not only associates Horatio’s murderer with an ‘author’ but also speaks of revenge in close dialogical proximity to authorship. Furthermore, Hieronimo refers to the doomed Pedringano as an “actor in th’accursed tragedy” (3.7.41). Hieronimo—whether consciously or not—connects authorship, murder, and theatrics, precipitating his development into “author and actor” in his own revenge performance (4.3.147).

In order to gain power, the revenger must become an authority, and so the revenger constructs a theatrical space that allows him to author the roles and rules of the performance world. According to Condon, “control of space... justifie[s] control of those

subjects who occup[y] that space” (65). It is within this performance space that the powerless become the powerful, as “Final authority is theatrical, and it belongs to the figure granted control of the play’s text” (Allman 105). In addition to seizing control, within the revenger’s constructed play world, there exists “no restrictions, legal or moral” (Hallett 236). The revenger “can initiate activity more daring, volatile, and free than the constraints and dangers of the world normally allow” (Wilshire 24). By creating a theatrical space separate from the play’s, the revenger attempts to free himself from moral and social restrictions, and like the corrupt rulers of the play’s real-world space, can act without fear of reprisal. Through authorship, the revenger seizes power and opportunity, and the ability to take violent action against the play’s real-world authority.

Hieronimo receives this authorial opportunity when Balthazar, with Lorenzo, requests Hieronimo’s assistance in manufacturing entertainment for his and Bel-Imperia’s impending wedding celebration. Unwittingly, Hieronimo’s enemies provide him with an occasion to reconstruct power dynamics: “Hieronimo’s play is a device with which he will for a crucial moment gain total control over his enemies” (Mercer 55). Though Balthazar and Lorenzo maintain authority over Hieronimo in the real-world of the play, Hieronimo controls the play-world. When Castile asks Hieronimo why he alone is preparing for the play, Hieronimo responds “it is for the author’s credit, / To look that all things may go well” (Kyd 4.3.3-4). Hieronimo alone possesses authorial control over the action of his story.

As part of his play-world construction, Hieronimo casts his enemies into fatal roles. After Balthazar and Lorenzo acquiesce to Hieronimo’s suggestion of a tragic performance, Hieronimo intends for each, including himself “to play a part” (Kyd

4.1.83). Hieronimo's tragedy will mimic the details of Horatio's murder—and *The Spanish Tragedy* as a whole—wherein an emperor murders the husband of the woman he loves. In Hieronimo's version of this story, however, he—and not Lorenzo—will “play the murderer” (4.1.133). Hieronimo's casting for the tragic *Perseda and Erastus* subverts the play's real-world power hierarchy when he places himself, as emperor, in a position of political superiority, a role that allows him to take violent action against the suddenly non-noble Lorenzo.

It is only through Hieronimo's creation of a performance space outside the boundaries of the play's real world that he can wrestle “control of the plot from the tyrant and [manipulate] his fellow characters into acting out his play” (Allman 105). Once he gains authorial power, Hieronimo can finally fulfill his desire for revenge: “these accursed murderers, / Which now performed, my heart is satisfied” (4.3.128-129). In doing so, however, Hieronimo becomes a murderer, and though he attempts to “conclude his part” he cannot separate himself from his performance (4.3.149). He cast himself as the deceitful murderer, and so he becomes one. In the chaotic aftermath of his performance, Hieronimo slays the Duke, a man who seems to respect Hieronimo and has done him no wrong. At this point, Hieronimo's excessive, unwarranted violence categorizes him as the monstrous savage he had hoped to eliminate. According to Ayres, “Hieronimo's final actions would have lost him the [Elizabethan] audience's sympathy” (361). The Duke is innocent within the context of both the real world of the play and Hieronimo's constructed world, so Hieronimo's murder of him is unjust. To Rosendale, an “unkilled Lorenzo is an affront to our sense of justice and decency, a troubling emblem of unchecked human mischief... an unkilld Hieronimo then becomes in turn

equally intolerable, particularly when there is no certain divine mandate for his excessive actions” (12). Like Boyer suggests, when a character violates the moral approval of the audience, that character becomes a villain (8).

Like Hieronimo, Vindice finds power through performance, and “exerts a similar kind of control over the characters” in *Revenger’s* (Hallett 235). Lussurioso, the Duke’s heir, like Lorenzo, unwittingly presents Vindice with an opportunity to exact vengeance. While under the guise of the Lorenzo-ordered Piato and at the behest of the lustful Duke, Vindice devises a scenario in which he will arrange a sexual encounter for the Duke. Vindice deceives the Duke with his disguise and intention: “the old Duke / Thinking my outward shape and inward heart / Are cut out of one piece” (Middleton 3.5.8-10). Assuming a role other than his own allows Vindice to gain authority within the context of this role-play. Vindice leads the Duke to an “unsunned lodge” (3.5.18), a theatrical space outside the physical and political boundaries of the court. It is here where Vindice creates new roles and narrative.

Within his play-world, Vindice casts Gloriana’s skull, too, into a character. She will play “the Duke’s concubine” (Middleton 3.5.42), a role Gloriana died attempting to avoid. Vindice dresses the skull in “tires,” masking the skull: “I have not fashioned this only for show / And useless property; no, it shall bear a part / E’en in its own revenge” (3.5.99-101). In the same manner in which Hieronimo inverted the murderer-victim role in his recreation, Vindice intends to murder the Duke utilizing the same scenario and methods the Duke used to murder Gloriana. Vindice, author of this scene, empowers Gloriana and immobilizes the Duke. As the Duke kisses the poisoned skull, Vindice cries out, “Royal villain” (3.5.143). Vindice includes himself and his brother within the same

designation, condemning the group as “Villains all three!” (3.5.153). It is not until Vindice’s violence and scope become excessive, however, that he truly becomes a villain.

After Vindice completes his revenge against the Duke, he targets Lussurioso. Although it is clear Lussurioso struggles with ethical behavior, he has not unjustly murdered any of Vindice’s family; therefore, there would seemingly be no reason for Vindice to seek such disproportionate revenge against him. Vindice, though, decides to “blast this villainous dukedom vexed with sin” (5.2.6). Gathering some scorned noblemen, Vindice plans to murder Lussurioso and the remainder of the Duke’s family. He casts each of the noblemen into performance roles, teaching them to impersonate the dance of the upcoming masque. By the conclusion of the performance, the entire royal family lies murdered.

At the conclusion of the massacre, the now nefarious Vindice accuses the fourth noble for the assassinations. Mercer suggests there is no more “unheroic, indeed squalid, way to take revenge than to shift blame onto an anonymous extra” (114). Not only has Vindice deflected responsibility for his actions, his gruesome and misplaced violence has become excessive: “Vindice becomes a villain, as do all revengers who allow their passion for justice to drive them beyond the limits of human prerogative” (Hallett 232). Like Hieronimo who, in his desire for revenge, unjustly kills the Duke, Vindice extends beyond the justifiable boundaries of revenge, and he becomes the villain. Antonio, the ostensible moral reset for the kingdom, condemns Vindice and his brother, calling them “villains” (Middleton 5.3.121). According to McMillin, “Morally the play is perfectly clear. The revenger becomes his own enemy, and one shouldn’t do that” (275). Vindice, like Hieronimo, ultimately come to parallel the villains they seek to eliminate.

Similar to her Elizabethan and Jacobean predecessors, Arya seeks power through performance. Once Arya begins to digest the techniques of the Faceless Men, she begins to edge her way towards becoming a revenger. Arya experiences prolonged difficulty with detaching herself from her Stark identity, so Martin adds an additional theatrical layer to her story. While wearing the face of a young girl named Mercy, she joins a theatre troupe as part of an assignment, deepening the depth of Arya's role-play within the context of the *Game of Thrones* narrative. During one night's performance, Raff the Sweetling, a Westerosi man-at-arms and one of the king's men, who years prior unjustly murdered Arya's friend, is in attendance. Arya, as Mercy, flirts with Raff, thinking to herself, "He'll want me or he won't... let the play begin" (Martin, "Excerpt from *Winds...*"). Arya entices Raff out of the theatre crowd and into a private quarter, suggesting to him that he too "could be a mummer, if he wanted" and that she "could teach [him] to say a line" (Martin, "Excerpt from *Winds...*"). Arya begins to assume authority within this context. She removes herself and Raff from the physical landscape and fixed-roles of the theatre to create a dramaturgical space in which she and Raff adopt new roles according to her design.

As Arya draws Raff into her performance, she casts him into the role of Lommy, her murdered friend, and she projects herself into the role of Raff, his murderer. This echoes the way in which Hieronimo, in his own staging, adopts the Lorenzo role while placing Lorenzo in the role of Horatio. Like Hieronimo, Arya finds success in her authorial debut, and once within her controllable play-world, she entraps Raff. Raff assumes Mercy has sexual intentions, but instead, unbeknownst to him, she purposefully slices his femoral artery: "Mercy gave a gasp and stepped away, her face confused and

frightened” (Martin, “Excerpt from *Winds...*”). Arya’s emotional response is a performance. Raff asks Mercy to locate a healer, but she replies, “You have to go to him. Can’t you walk?” Incredulous, Raff responds, “Walk... You’ll need to carry me.” The short exchange between the two mirrors the conversation Raff had with Lommy prior to stabbing him through the throat. When Arya hears Raff ask her to carry him, she thinks, “See? You know your line, and so do I” (Martin, “Excerpt from *Winds...*”) and proceeds to mimic the way in which Raff killed Lommy, stabbing him through the throat.

As Arya begins eliminating those on her kill list, her methods become increasingly macabre and less scripted. She ultimately leaves the Faceless Men, realizing she can neither wholly reject her Stark heritage nor take the personal component out of her quest for revenge. On her way back to Westeros, Arya uses a stolen face to disguise herself, seeking revenge on Walder Frey⁴. Her desire for justice in this scenario fits the tradition of the revenge tragedy genre—corrupt authority unjustly murders protagonist’s family member, protagonist seeks retribution—but like Hieronimo’s murder of the Duke and Vindice’s murder of Lussurioso—this scene fails to mimic an original murder and occurs outside the boundaries of theatrics.

In a *Game of Thrones* scene that echoes *Titus Andronicus*, Arya serves an unwitting Walder Frey his own children in baked pies. She proceeds to remove her mask prior to murdering Walder, conflating her revenger identity with her own: “My name is Arya Stark... I want you to know that. The last thing you are ever going to see is a Stark smiling down at you as you die” (“The Winds of Winter” 51:29-51:40). She is Arya at the moment she murders Walder. Like Hieronimo who is unable to “conclude his part” and Vindice whose revenger identity and true identity remain muddled throughout, Arya

allows her honorable Stark identity to fuse with the identity of the excessively violent villain. To Wilshire, “role on stage illuminates ‘role’ off” (205), and within the play’s world, the character-actors become so consumed with revenge, they cannot separate themselves from their roles.

After the revengers succeed in obtaining vengeance, they publically identify themselves in an attempt to reclaim their identity. Like Arya, who names herself while killing Walder, Vindice—“’Tis I, ‘tis Vindice, ‘tis I” (Middleton 3.5.170)—and Hieronimo—“And, princes, now behold Hieronimo / Author and actor in this tragedy” (Kyd 4.4.146-147)—each attempts to recover their previously concealed self. According to Rosendale, however, the “‘pursuit of equity’ can lead to much darker places” (5). The revengers ultimately cannot escape the roles they have created. Maisie Williams, the actress who portrays Arya, reflects on her character’s evolution, claiming “it’s sad when our heroes take it too far and they don’t just do their job, they actually *enjoy* it and you see a twisted spark behind the eyes. It’s worrying” (Williams, “‘Game of Thrones’ star...”). In each example, the revenger loses restraint and commits atrocities outside the boundaries of their created play-world.

The revenger’s theatrical performance “begins as merely superficial behavior and then is gradually and unwittingly internalized” (Targoff 20-21). Revengers internalize the immoral behaviors of their fictive roles. If it is “theatre’s responsibility... to help deny violence the status of ‘normal’ and ‘human’” (Nevitt), then revengers who seek private vengeance, especially through murder, become morally reprehensible despite attempts to sidestep the moral and social implications of violence. Vindice recognizes this miscalculation as he accepts his fate: “‘tis time to die when we ourselves our foes”

(Middleton 5.3.130). Previously, Hippolito anticipates the revengers' decline, claiming "Brother, we lose ourselves" (4.2.205). Similarly, Hieronimo's actions brand him "a faulty character" (Bowers 99). None of the revengers are able to successfully disassociate their selves from their roles.

Although each of these characters ultimately succeeds in doling out justice, Hieronimo's, Vindice's, and Arya's paths to retribution are paved with a self-destructive obsession for revenge. Seemingly morally upright characters at the beginning of their respective stories—Hieronimo, the Knight Marshal of Spain, Vindice, an opponent of unchecked libidinous desire, and Arya, a lady of the moral and justice-driven Stark family, each, instead of performing the theatrical revenger role as an extension of the self, allows the fictitious role to collapse with their own identity, leading to moral decline. This conflation of role and identity blurs the line between art and reality, causing the protagonists to lose moral direction, and to, ultimately, parallel the villains they wish to bring to justice. As the Kindly Man informs Arya at the beginning of her training, despite the offenses done to her, "It is not for [her] to say who shall live and who shall die" (Martin, *Feast* 445). Kyd, Middleton, and Martin all warn against the individual, social, and moral repercussions of assuming the role of judge and executioner.

¹ The offense, although not always directly a murder, results in death. Mutilation and rape frequently result in suicide, such as in the case of Antonio's wife, or "mercy killing," as is the case with Shakespeare's Lavinia.

² The Hand of the King is the most powerful political position in Westeros, with the power to "protect" and to deliver "the King's justice." In this case, justice is literally and symbolically executed and eliminated.

³ The Faceless Men wear the faces of the deceased as masks. There is a magical quality to this practice, and the idea of becoming "no one" allows the renderer to assume the true appearance and identity of the deceased individual.

⁴ Walder Frey, one of the Westerosian lords, previously betrayed Robb Stark. After granting Robb and his bannermen "guest right," he slaughters the entire Stark army, violating the sacred laws of hospitality.

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