Introduction

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'*Vindicta mihi!*' are two of the most famous words of the 1590s. Some Elizabethans would have heard them uttered from the pulpit (Romans 12:19); others, cried out from the stage, with renewed pathos and urgency, by Hieronimo, father and Knight Marshal, whose only son has fallen victim to the murderous hands of the very power he faithfully serves. The play was Thomas Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy*, the box-office and print success of its day. In the four months of Lord Strange's Men's first season at Philip Henslowe's Rose, the play – recorded by Henslowe as *Jeronymo* – was performed an extraordinary nineteen times, sometimes in tandem with a partner piece, 'the comodey of Jeronymo', and by 1597 had seen twenty-nine performances.[1]

Among the top three plays of the 1590s (along with Marlowe's *The Jew of Malta* and the now lost *The Wise Men of West Chester*), *The Spanish Tragedy* is a play which Shakespeare, a young, recent arrival in the capital, must have taken a good note of. It not only ran in repertoire with his *Henry VI* ('harey the vj') at the Rose but, being the blockbuster of the day, it served as a benchmark, informed his imagination and entered his theatrical vocabulary. Its shadow stretches through *Titus Andronicus* and *Richard III*, down to *Hamlet*. The track record of Kyd's dramatic masterpiece was impressive both on the stage and on the page. Between 1592 and 1604, it was put on by four of the most reputable theatre companies of the day: Lord Strange's Men, Lord Pembroke's Men, the Lord Admiral's Men and the Lord Chamberlain's Men (who later became the King's Men),[2] and the lead role, Hieronimo, was performed by the stars of the time – Edward Alleyn and, most likely, Richard Burbage. After the 1592 edition, the earliest survivor of the printed versions, but clearly not the play's first, as it boasts to be 'newly corrected and amended of such grosse faults as passed in the first impression', *The Spanish Tragedy* appeared in

ten separate quarto editions before 1633, a record unsurpassed by any Shakespeare play. Some of these editions followed the 1592 text, others, particularly those which came out after 1602, advertised a play '[n]ewly corrected, amended, and enlarged with new additions of the Painters part, and others', an announcement which has sparked centuries of debate regarding the authorship of the Additions, with Jonson, Webster and William Shakespeare amongst the contenders.[3]

Apart from its huge stage success, the measure of the play's importance lies in its impact on Elizabethan playwriting. Though it drew on both Seneca and the Tudor morality play, *The Spanish Tragedy* was a singularly innovative play in its astonishing stage craft engaging the full potential of the public playhouses and launching a new vogue for revenge tragedy. Kyd's theatrical imagination influenced Christopher Marlowe, his writing partner, room-mate and star of the early Elizabethan stage, as well as several generations of playwrights, including Shakespeare, Webster, Middleton, Tourneur and Ford. Seminal at home, Kyd's oeuvre was also influential abroad. Well into the seventeenth century *The Spanish Tragedy* was on the boards in Germany, in the Low Countries and in Prague.[4] By the end of the Caroline period its popularity had turned it into a handy subject for pastiche and critique (by Nashe, Jonson), a kind of prolonged life with a comic twist. During the closure of the playhouses (1642–61), like all plays, *The Spanish Tragedy* disappeared from view. Its return can be traced through a brief entry in Pepys's diary: '24 February 1667/68 at the Nursery Theatre in Hatton Garden'. Lukas Erne comments on this Restoration revival noting a shift in status, from a 'play [...] performed by the leading actors on London's main stages for about half a century' to one 'played in a marginal and temporary playhouse by mediocre actors'.[5] After this, both Kyd and *The Spanish Tragedy* disappear from view and sink into anonymity.

Anonymity continued to be their fate until 1773, when Kyd's name was (re)connected with the play and its title restored; the discoverer was Thomas Hawkins, who paid attention to Heywood's (passing) reference to 'M. *Kid*, in the *Spanish Tragedy*'.[6] The late nineteenth-century interest in the medieval and Tudor periods resurrected the play for an academic reading public and attracted the interest of editors. Only in 1921 did it return to the stage owing to the enthusiasm of an amateur troupe, the Birkbeck Players (at Birkbeck College, University of London), who staged it again in 1931. Next followed a spate of Oxford productions: 1932 at Christ Church, 1937 at St Edmund Hall, 1951 at St John's College. Productions, put on by university dramatic societies, as the special correspondent of *The Times* noted, aimed

to give life to 'dramatic masterpieces of the past', which 'could not survive the vulgar tests of the box-office'.[7] During the two following decades, the play's life was secured by amateur dramatics and radio productions, whose objective was to 'lift the curtains on unfamiliar plays'.[8] As a result, their shared approach was to 'rid the plays of […] "anything that is indigestibly diffuse or archaic"', according to John Barton, then Fellow of King's College, Cambridge, who 'prepared the programme', 'arranged the plays for broadcasting' and 'introduce[d] each production' on BBC Radio in 1956.[9]

Unlike the first performances and editions of the play, the amateur and radio productions reached a rather different audience from Kyd's early modern one – not the ordinary spectator or reader of cheap quartos but the scholar, student and a specific group of radio listeners.[10] Outside scholarly exegesis (most notably Boas's *The Works of Thomas Kyd* (1901)), Kyd's play featured only in collections and anthologies (of minor Elizabethan dramatists or non-Shakespeare plays of the period) before appearing, again, as self-independent editions. In 1959, Philip Edwards's trailblazing edition finally reclaimed the play's position in the history of early modern drama, thus securing its presence in the curriculum, and a renewed interest towards it and its author in the second half of the twentieth century. A number of independent editions followed (Cairncross in 1967, Mulryne in 1970, Bevington in 1996 – all of which had reprints), as did specialised anthologies (of revenge tragedies or Renaissance plays). The play finally had its first modern professional stage production at the Mercury Theatre, London, in 1973.

While Kyd's presence in print steadily rose in the late twentieth century, *The Spanish Tragedy* has never again matched its initial page and stage success. Productions remained few and far between: only three professional stagings (Citizens Theatre, Glasgow, in 1978; National Theatre, London, in 1982 and 1984; and The Swan Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon, in 1997); one radio production (1994) and a healthy number of amateur (university) ones. Academic interest and amateur performance can be credited with saving Kyd's play and allowing it to reach the point where it again becomes topical as ideas of revenge have gained a new currency in a world fuelled by war, conflict, cruelty, death, corruption and injustice.

Just as in the 1590s, in the twenty-first century Kyd's play is sharing the stages with *Titus Andronicus* (another play which has undergone a huge upsurge in interest). Productions engage head on with state politics, domination, religion, national identity, lack of hope. Whether set in the corporate world that tramples over individuals and their lives (as

in the Doublethink production, Arcola, London, 2009), or focusing on war tearing families apart (as in the Lazarus Theatre Company, Blue Elephant Theatre, 2013), Kyd's play is treading the boards again and talking to us. In a number of seminal studies published during the first decades of the millennium, Kyd and his *Spanish Tragedy* have been at the forefront of critical and editorial debates regarding early modern stage practice, the emergence of the revenge genre in England, authorship, collaborative playwriting and the (re)distribution and attribution of plays from the period.[11] The play's presence in the English curriculum – albeit among the 'other', non-Shakespeare plays – has contributed to repositioning Thomas Kyd within the early modern period and to re-charting the socio-cultural practices of the period itself.

The current volume, *Doing Kyd: Essays on The Spanish Tragedy*, recognises the importance of the playwright and *The Spanish Tragedy* for the development of early modern theatre and beyond. It approaches the play and its author within their social and theatrical set-up by mapping out the context from which Kyd's dramatic work emerged. Its aim is to familiarise readers with the play which, literally, set the stage for the Elizabethan revenge tragedy boom. The chapters revisit theories of revenge, and examine the play's latest editions, stage productions and screenplay adaptations.

The novelty of the collection is threefold. Firstly, it 'does Kyd' in the broadest sense: in wide-ranging chapters contributors look at the play's immediate impact and its legacy, at textual and contextual reception, at genre and gender, at editing (for the page, stage and film), at stage productions; and, in addition, it offers a significant bibliographical update. Secondly, it 'does justice' to Kyd in that it explores what, to date, is still a less trodden territory: the stage life (and afterlife) of *The Spanish Tragedy*. Last, but not least, it 'undoes Kyd', as several of the contributors revisit their own professional encounters with the play and propose new interpretative avenues.

Part I, '*Vindicta mihi!*', engages with the revenge genre from its Senecan roots to its early modern Englishing and the problems around its reception. Its first chapter, 'Supernatural structures in Kyd and Shakespeare', by Philip Edwards, the play's 1959 editor, takes the reader on a rewarding journey from Kyd's Proserpine to Shakespeare's Prospero. He argues that, while Shakespeare's later work, especially *Macbeth* and *King Lear*, shows little or no direct influence of Kyd's play, it demonstrates how Kyd's scepticism continued to affect his plays. Setting the sixteenth-century aesthetic and theatrical scene, Jonathan Bate argues that Kyd's generation found tragedy 'classical' (Greek mediated through Latin) and left it 'English(ed)'. His 'Enacting

revenge: the mingled yarn of Elizabethan tragedy' traces the (trans) formation of the genre from an imitation of a received aesthetic model into an indigenous exploration, both as topic and as form, from a static work of debate into public action and spectacle. Evghenii Musica's 'Vindicating revenge' interrogates the acceptance of 'revenge' as genre-designator in recent readings of tragedy in the context of ongoing investigations into the evolution of the term. He focuses on the relationship between *The Spanish Tragedy* and *Hamlet* – two plays which testify simultaneously to the paradigmatic consolidation and the dissolution of the genre. His argument posits and analyses the paradox of self-destruction and perpetuation of revenge within and beyond the context of its origin. Kristine Steenbergh concludes Part I by situating gendered representations of revenge in *The Spanish Tragedy* in relation to cultural frictions caused by the attempts of the Elizabethan legal system to eradicate extrajudicial traditions of revenge. Her 'Gendering revenge in *The Spanish Tragedy*: feminine fury and the contagiousness of theatrical passion' argues that the Inns of Court, one of the central legal institutions, which mediated the introduction of Seneca's revenge tragedies into Elizabethan culture, used their performances to shape an association between vengeance and uncontrolled feminine passion, thus strengthening the image of a masculine and rational law. Other plays emphasised the heroics and rationality of masculine revenge, a surmise that gendered representations of revenge were central to the stage's contributions to debates over retribution.

Part II, '*The Spanish Tragedy* in print', brings two personal editorial accounts on what it means to edit *The Spanish Tragedy* in the third millennium. Simon Barker's '"Undoing Kyd": the texts of *The Spanish Tragedy*' is a retrospective account, one of co-editing (with Hilary Hinds) *The Routledge Anthology of Renaissance Drama*, published in 2003. Beginning with a short preamble on the project and the editorial and critical issues that it gave rise to, the chapter explores the way in which 'the text' of *The Spanish Tragedy* has been (re)constructed by editors over the course of the four centuries since its first staging, with particular emphasis on twentieth-century editions and the *Routledge Anthology*. He argues that there is an analogous relationship between the management of the text and the critical, or introductory, material accompanying it in editions and in anthologies, where it is placed alongside other works from the period. Barker suggests that this most important of early modern texts has a very unstable history in print and in its encounters with various critical and theoretical movements, and that some recent textual and critical work has been 'undoing' the Kyd of earlier times. The chapter concludes with an analysis of Kyd's

evolving literary reputation as a significant figure in his own right as well as a source for others, an interest partly produced by speculation about his life and his relationships with his contemporaries. Finally, Barker reviews this reputation with a plea for more critical attention to Kyd's minor work, an approach which will 'undo' the dramatist, but restore him as a key figure of the dramatic and non-dramatic literature of late Tudor England. Jesús Tronch's 'Editing *The Spanish Tragedy* in the early twenty-first century' started as the work in progress of an editor readying himself for the editorial enterprise by considering the principles and problems involved in producing a play-text that is 'new' and original in relation to previous critical editions. His account specifically focuses on the decisions and consequences of a modern-spelling edition based on the 1602 quarto, which pursues the socially oriented editorial aims of reconstructing the text intended by its publishers.[12]

Part III, '"Chronicles of Spain" or tales of Albion?', engages with issues of identity – English, Spanish, early modern – and new ideas regarding the play's complex relations with its political and cultural context of emergence and early circulation. Taking up the frequently asked question 'How Spanish is *The Spanish Tragedy*?', Clara Calvo's response begins with an analysis of *The Spanish Tragedy* in relation to other early modern English plays. Her cross-textual comparison evidences that, while other playwrights signalled national identity through a diverse array of dramatic means, including racial features, linguistic difference and attitudes to the world, Kyd did not avail himself of any of these practices, and that, in (textual) fact, there is little about the characters, the plot, the manners, the language or the play as a whole that can be seen as particularly Spanish or Portuguese, which suggests that national identity and the idiosyncrasies of national character are not the play's crucial concern. Instead, Calvo argues, Kyd grapples with the identity of monarchies and courts, and the clash of political and geographical entities. In this sense, his play rather encodes an anxiety as much to do with Spain and Portugal as with England, as it ends with two kingdoms without heirs to the throne. Her chapter, 'How Spanish is *The Spanish Tragedy*? Dynastic policy and colonial expansion in revenge tragedy', advocates a shift in the critical approaches to *The Spanish Tragedy*, away 'from debating whether the play reflects Habsburg Spain or Renaissance Italy to considering how it portrays Mediterranean culture (Spanish, Portuguese, Italian, French and Ottoman) in relation to early modern England and its desire to play a role in the European colonial expansion'. Calvo concludes that *The Spanish Tragedy* can be read as a play that grafts

its English interest on to Iberian affairs (reaching beyond the Armada and the religious conflict) and that 'simultaneously favours a view of corrupt Mediterranean monarchies and contemplates future imperial dreams for England'.

Frank Ardolino, author of two books and numerous articles on Kyd and *The Spanish Tragedy*, looks at the play afresh and argues that, in the Pedringano hanging episode (III.v–vii), Kyd creates a political subtext which is related to the play's anti-Spanish theme. While acknowledging that the play is anti-Leicester – as others have suggested – he posits that Kyd combines aspects of the anti-Leicester tradition with the anti-Spanish black legend as primarily expressed in Antonio Pérez's *Relaciones*, first published in France in 1591, which perhaps did more to undermine Philip II's image as a responsible and prudent monarch than any work in the anti-Hispanist tradition. His chapter, 'Kyd's use of Antonio Pérez's *Las Relaciones* in *The Spanish Tragedy*', places the play firmly within the pro-Leicester context of the ideological war between Spain and England. It argues that *The Spanish Tragedy*, which has been regarded primarily as a 'blood and guts' revenge tragedy, was actually written to promote the Protestant politico-religious ethos, represented by Leicester, against Catholic Babylon/Spain under Philip II.

Ton Hoenselaars and Helmer Helmers discuss the European fortunes of *The Spanish Tragedy* during the seventeenth century, devoting special attention to the reception history of Kyd's play in the Low Countries. Their '*The Spanish Tragedy* and revenge tragedy in seventeenth-century Britain and the Low Countries' places three early Dutch translations and adaptations of *The Spanish Tragedy* in relation to other drama imported from England, such as Thomas Middleton's *The Revengers' Tragedy* (translated by Theodore Rodenburgh, in 1617) and *Titus Andronicus* (rewritten by Jan Vos as *Aran and Titus*, in 1638). Besides mapping the early impact of the English genre on Dutch drama, their contextual and cross-textual exploration seeks to illustrate how such early translations can be useful in 'un-editing' some of the versions of the playtexts currently in circulation. Such an analysis of the adapted plays, the two authors argue, may contribute to our understanding of the changing appreciation of the genre during the seventeenth century. As it entered the discourse of the English Civil War, the initially averse attitude to revenge in the Low Countries (marked by additions to the texts of the translated plays) was modified. Already during the 1650s, the stereotypical carnage at the end of the revenge play was in several instances replaced by happy endings, a cultural longing for the restoration of order, which appears only in

post-Restoration plays in England. Considering the fact that Dutch adaptations of English texts dealing with revenge were often part of the propaganda effort of English royalists in exile, Hoenselaars and Helmer conclude that the changes made to the revenge genre in the Dutch Republic were part of the ongoing development of the English genre. In other words, not only did *The Spanish Tragedy* affect the literary scene in the Low Countries during the seventeenth century, but the Dutch revision of the genre, in its turn, gave a new lease of life to the English tradition in the post-Restoration period.

Part IV, 'Doing Kyd', engages with performances of *The Spanish Tragedy* – one chapter offers a spectator's first-hand experience of the play in what is the first extensive study of the professional stage life of the play in the twentieth century; the other explores some of the challenges adaptors face when turning it into a screenplay. Tony Howard's analysis of professional productions of *The Spanish Tragedy* in the United Kingdom discusses their ways of dealing with the play's metatheatricality. Howard shows how directors such as Robert David MacDonald (at Glasgow Citizens Theatre, in 1978), Michael Bogdanov (at the National Theatre, Cottesloe studio, in 1982), Michael Boyd (at the RSC's Swan Theatre, in1997) and Alan Drury (BBC Radio 3, in 1994) pursued unique textual and interpretative strategies, illustrated by their approach to the play's catastrophe for which each created a different balance between tragedy, pathos, black comedy and horror. His analysis of Act IV of *The Spanish Tragedy* in the four productions demonstrates how intricate the relationship between language and action can be, and how these productions explored the power of performance to elucidate meaning in startling ways.

In 'Hieronimo still mad: Why adapt *The Spanish Tragedy* today?', Tod Davies argues that an adaptor of *The Spanish Tragedy*, not unlike its editors, is faced with the choice of multiple 'texts' and the 'technical problem' of dealing with the 'extraneous bits' – the 1602 Additions. That, she suggests, becomes more acute if the 'dominant theme' of the play, brought to the fore by the general plot streamlining and action pruning, is 'the theme of the tragedy of a well-intentioned, honourable man who believes in the justice of an unjust society – until it takes away the thing he loves most in the world'. In this chapter Davies takes a retrospective look at the adaptation of *The Spanish Tragedy* for film and considers 'historical interest' and current 'artistic relevance' as two, not unrelated, reasons for adapting an older play.[13]

Cued by the woodblock illustration on the title page of the 1615 edition of *The Spanish Tragedy*, Carol Chillington Rutter's '*For what's a play without a woman in it?*' provides an epilogue to Part IV in its

review of some of Kyd's doings, namely 'the patterns' and 'precedents' it sets for his contemporary playwrights through the four characters portrayed – Horatio, Lorenzo, Bel-imperia and Hieronimo. Rutter's study, however, is particularly concerned with the 'fifth figure' which does not make it into the 1615 illustration and which can be regarded as much of a 'precedent' as the others. Much like Hieronimo, in his 'what's a play without a woman?' (IV.i.97), she challenges readers to see the woman *within* it. Her reading brings Isabella in the spotlight and remembers the work she does in the play, as a wife and as a mother, and the cultural work she has done since, in a survey of her long line of offspring – Shakespeare's Ophelia and Lady Macbeth, Sheridan's Tilburina, Stoker's Lucy Westenra, Williams's Blanche du Bois, O'Casey's Nora, Kane's *4:48 Psychosis* – thus functioning also as a prologue to 'doing Kyd' differently.

Part V, 'Thomas Kyd bibliography, 1993–2013', is a comprehensive, though by no means an exhaustive, account of all Kyd work done between 1993 and 2013. Continuing the Kyd bibliographic account – starting where José Ramón Díaz Fernández's 'Thomas Kyd, a bibliography 1966–1992' ended[14] – it captures the renewed and diverse interest in *The Spanish Tragedy* over the past two decades. The subsections aim to differentiate between the editorial, critical, performance and digital focus, while indicating (without any attempt at hierarchising) the type of the source and the play's presence in it. The bibliography, which includes editions of the play, single-authored books with Kyd as the exclusive focus, chapters in single-authored books, articles in collections and journals, unpublished material (i.e., doctoral theses), professional stage history (listing reviews) and a sample of electronic resources, brings up to date the record of 'doing Kyd'.

In the latest stage reincarnation of the play, 'Vindicta mihi!' (III.xiii.1),[15] these most recognisable words of *The Spanish Tragedy*, were not heard from the stage of the Blue Elephant theatre in Camberwell, London, 2013. This was one of a series of daring directorial interventions in the play, performed by Lazarus Theatre Company.[16] Other changes included casting a young Hieronimo, brother (not father) to Horatio, which brought a clearer sense that their fate was interchangeable, a female King of Spain and a Pedragina. This was a play of young and angry rulers, soldiers and servants, initially indistinguishable in the warm-up exercise which opened the production. The play's classical frame – the Ghost of Don Andrea and Revenge – was edited and inserted as flashbacks, into an unsettling story about war, corruption and competing interests, set against a background of vulgar victory celebrations and raucous entertainment. Hieronimo's *coup de théâtre*

– which struck dumb both the onstage audience and those sitting in the theatre – was not (only) his staging of *Soliman and Perseda* in pantomime key but the 'spectacle' (IV.iv.89) he unveiled by pulling down a curtain. His dead son's corpse stood propped up against the back wall on which a giant chalk inscription read: 'Vengeance is mine!' These words – an unclaimed, muted cry – remained in the spotlight after Don Andrea and Revenge consigned everyone to their fate. The words stared back at the audience, offsetting a stage littered with the remains of a wedding party – balloons, party hats, the script pages of Hieronimo's play, earlier handed around to the onstage audience. They haunted the theatre space in 2013 as they did in the sixteenth century, while stacked-up volumes of Marlowe's and Shakespeare's plays 'spectated' from stage left. Like this volume, Lazarus Theatre 'did' Kyd by acknowledging his central position in print and on the boards – both the modern and the early modern.

NOTES

1 Greg, *Henslowe's Diary*, pp. 13–14.
2 See Philip Edwards, *Thomas Kyd* (1966), and Clara Calvo and Jesús Tronch's introduction to the Arden edition of the play (2013).
3 The case for Shakespeare has been reopened in the recent years, with Warren Stevenson's book *Shakespeare's Additions* (2008), Brian Vickers's recent computer analysis evidence, in 'Identifying Shakespeare's additions' (2012), Douglas Bruster's further proof of Shakespeare's hand in the Additions in 'Shakespearean spellings' (2013) and the play's inclusion in Bate and Rasmussen's *William Shakespeare and Others*: *Collaborative Plays* (2013).
4 For more on the play's travels on the continent in the seventeenth century and its subsequent German and Dutch adaptations, see Philip Edwards, *Thomas Kyd* (1996), Ton Hoenselaars, 'The seventeenth-century reception' (1999) and Lukas Erne, *Beyond the Spanish Tragedy* (2001).
5 Erne, *Beyond The Spanish Tragedy*, pp. 134–5.
6 Thomas Hawkins was then editing a three-volume work, *The Origin of the English Drama*, when he discovered Thomas Heywood's reference, in his *Apology for Actors* (1612), to 'M. *Kid*, in the *Spanish Tragedy*'. See J. R. Mulryne's entry on Kyd in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.
7 *The Times*, 31 July 1937.
8 *The Times*, 24 September 1953.
9 *The Times*, 22 August 1956.
10 For more information on the performance history of the play – amateur, professional and radio – see my website *The Jacobethans*.
11 Part V of this book is indicative of the renewed interest in Thomas Kyd and his work after 2000. The increased number of single-author volumes

and extended critical articles on Kyd and *The Spanish Tragedy* signals the clear shift from highly specialised and/or sporadic interest, mainly in relation to other established names and/or texts of the period, to establishing Kyd studies in their own right.

12 Back in 2006, at the Doing Kyd workshop, University of Warwick, Tronch was working through the editorial principles and priorities of an edition yet to be accomplished; his and Clara Calvo's effort was released, in 2013, by the Arden Early Modern Drama series, as the latest edition of Kyd's play.

13 Following *The Revengers* [*sic*] *Tragedy* (directed by Alex Cox, 2001), *The Spanish Tragedy* is the second of nine plays that made Exterminating Angel's project JACOBEANS.NET™.

14 Díaz-Fernández's was the last Kyd bibliography published, in the *Bulletin of Bibliography*, the leading journal in bibliography which kept abreast with the world of research since 1897 but which sadly ceased publication in 2002.

15 All quotations from *The Spanish Tragedy* in this book are taken from Philip Edwards's edition, The Revels Plays (London: Methuen, 1959) and are referenced parenthetically in the text.

16 The production was directed by Ricky Dukes.

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