Seneca's Influence on Webster's Revenge Tragedy *The Duchess of Malfi*

Taha Khalaf Salim

ABSTRACT

It is universally admitted that Senecan drama was a turning point in the development of English tragedy. Seneca's tragedies, based on themes of Greek mythology, offered an admirable model that imposed one of the foremost influences on the English tragic writers of Elizabethan and Jacobean periods. Written in an atmosphere of gloom, Seneca's tragic plays immensely concentrated on themes of bloody revenge which were in harmony with the English taste. His stoicism and rhetoric represented significant participations to the Elizabethan form.

John Webster was one of the Jacobean tragedians who continued the trend of stage violence and scan set by Elizabethan writers. Webster's ***The Duchess of Malfi***, which arose as an identifying mark in the history of Jacobean revenge tragedy, is analysed in order to define the extent to which Webster was influenced by Seneca. The research also provides the reader with the basic information about Seneca and his tragedies, the concept of revenge tragedy, and a brief introduction about John Webster as a tragic writer. The aim is to establish the background of this study which ends with a conclusion to sum up the findings.

1. Seneca and Senecan Tragedies

Lucius Annaeus Seneca (4 B.C- A.D 65) was a Roman Stoic philosopher, dramatist, and statesman. He was the second son of Seneca the eldest. In his childhood, he went to Rome where he studied rhetoric and philosophy and earned the fame as a writer and orator. In the first year of Emperor Claudius' reign and as a result of

his intimacy with Claudius' niece Julia, daughter of Germanicus and sister of Caligula, Seneca was about to lose his life. They were condemned for committing adultery. The punishment was to execute Seneca and to send Julia to an island to be killed there. Seneca's sanction was reprieved by Claudius who exiled Seneca to Corsica, an island in the Mediterranean Sea.[1]

In A.D 49, Seneca was called back to Rome by Agrippina the Younger, Claudius's fourth wife. The aim was to tutor her son, Nero, who was appointed as an Emperor rather than Claudius' son, Britannicus, at the age of 12. In A.D 65, Seneca was forced by Nero to commit suicide for a claimed conspiracy to assassinate Nero.[2]

As a tragedian, Seneca supplied the model out of which Elizabethan and Jacobean tragedies developed. Seneca was able to teach the tragic writers of the Renaissance what to say and what tone to use in certain tragic situations. He was effective for his understanding of human emotions and his new approach to tragedy and that is what helped him to stand out as the leader of Greek tragedy revival. Seneca introduced a satisfactory model of tragedy according to which the ancient concept of Greek tragedy of an entire submission to gods had gone. In their tragedies, the Greek tragic writers focused on "the actions of the characters in the grip of abstract fate."[3] In Senecan tragedies, by contrast, "man was sure to be beaten, but Seneca proposed to build up something within the heart of the man which would enable him to gain a pyrrhic victory over fate."[4] The old concept of fate appeared as something strange to the Roman who clung the fidelity to the personal liberty. Believing in the sovereignty of the free will of any individual, Seneca used to focus on this will as a crucial factor to develop individual fortune. According to him, "each man is his own fortune's architect."[5]

In the sixteenth century, Seneca virtually stood as the classical pattern for English tragedy. The popularity of all the ten tragedies ascribed to Seneca was immense for including plenty of

melodrama that kept pace with the popular taste as well as the fact that Seneca's sententious philosophy and his moral maxims pleased the more learned dramatists. Greek tragedies, by contrast, were little studied by Elizabethans for being unfamiliar to most of the students of Oxford and Cambridge universities. During Queen Elizabeth's reign, Seneca's tragedies were translated into English. ***Troas***, ***Thyestes*** and ***Hercules*** were translated by Jasper Heywood. Alexander Neville translated ***Oedipus***. John Studley was responsible for translating ***Agamemnon***, ***Medea***, ***Hercules Oetaues*** and ***Hippolytus***. Thomas Nuce translated ***Octavia***. ***Thebais*** or as it is sometimes called ***phoenissae*** was translated by Thomas Newton.[6] Seneca was the first classical author whose plays were all translated into English. A volume of Seneca's complete plays was published in England in 1581.

There is a specific association between Seneca's tragedies and his personal life. Seneca spent his life in the Rome of tyrants. He witnessed an age when subservience, corruption, and hypocrisy ruled. There was no personal freedom and the political power was monopolized in the hand of one man, the Emperor. Abnormal cruelty, hostility, fright, rape, violence, extravagance vice, lust, incest, selfishness, savagery, and pervasion reached such a degree that some scholars believe that Seneca was not influenced by the ancient Greek authors such as Sophocles and Seychelles but he dramatized the contemporary horrors that his own eyes saw into stories to be narrated by mothers to their kids at that time.[7]

It is unknown whether an actual performance of Seneca's tragedies had occurred during his lifetime and that is why most of the recent critics suggest that his tragedies were written for recitation only. Seneca's "plays were not meant for the stage though the Renaissance people thought so and acted them."[8] Since the plays were written for the reader but not for the theatre, they included little action and that is what makes the whole burden rest on language which was

high-flown rhetoric and full of flamboyant hyperbole. Seneca's use of long rhetorical speech represented an important taint of his tragedies.

Another feature was that his tragedies were characterized by a preoccupation with fearful crimes in addition to the tyrannical abuse of power. The hero should be driven to a murder by uncontrollable motives such as vengeful anger, sexual jealousy, and lust. Ghosts, furies, and meddlesome divinities were employed to prod these motives which were an outcome of evil rooted in the past.[9]

Other significant characteristics were: the theme of revenge stood out as an identification mark of Senecan tragedies, usually suggested by the ghost of the victim; the messenger figure, whose rhetorical speeches usually report the catastrophe and the five-act structure with a chorus employed to mark the end of each act.[10] Seneca's interest in stoicism was an important feature that influenced Webster especially in creating the character of the heroine of his ***The Duchess of Malfi***.

Edward Albert states that Seneca "had produced tragedies notable for the horrors which filled them, for their exaggerated character-drawing, their violently rhetorical language coupled with emotional hyperboles, and a wealth of epigram."[11]

Martin Stephen and Philip Franks sum up the main characteristics of Senecan tragedies as follows:

They were written to be read rather than performed, with dialogue more like formal speech than everyday dialogue, and are full of bloody and horrific events. The theme is usually revenge, the ending a complete bloodbath, and ghosts and other strange events pepper the action.[12]

2. Revenge Tragedy

No discussion of revenge tragedy will be satisfactory without giving an idea of what revenge is. It is an old term used to describe the harmful action emanated from someone who has been trespassed.

It is directed against the aggressor as a reaction to oppression. During the Elizabethan age, the Church and the state did not accept revenge. Committing private bloody revenge was illegal; the original criminal and the revenger should face the same punishment for the reason that justice, with no doubt, was among the heavy responsibilities of the government. Moreover, revenge murder was regarded as the worst of all kinds of murders for being forbidden. The Christian ethics condemned revenge considering "it a right that only God has-Vengeance is mine saith the Lord."[13] In accordance with a profoundly rooted tradition, the wronged person believes that it is rightful to carry his revenge out so as to restore family standing. The revenger acts far from religion and law thinking that justice should be achieved even if aside from valid laws. "Always the motive is revenge, a motive often conceived in the Senecan spirit, not a wild kind of justice, but as a solemn duty which may not be neglected."[14]

Revenge tragedy was given us by the Greeks. It had its roots in Sophocle's and Euripide's tragedies. As its name signifies, revenge tragedy is “a tragic play in which the tragedy results from the revenge that is taken, for some wrong or wrongs, either by the person wronged himself or by someone else on his behalf.”[15]

Depending on Greek tragedy, Seneca was the one who laid down the ground work and the pattern to be followed for all the Renaissance tragedians. T.S. Eliot states, "no author exercised a wider or deeper influence upon the Elizabethan mind, upon the Elizabethan form of tragedy than did Seneca."[16] He was the greatest classical tragedy author whose writings the Elizabethans had read. Elizabethan and Jacobean tragedians were gripped by Seneca's model. Although he wrote many types of tragedies, they were attracted to Senecan revenge tragedies and in particular Medea, Thyestes, and Agamemnon.

The genre of English revenge tragedy started from the mid-1580s to the early 1640s, that was from the Elizabethan to the

Caroline period. Almost in all revenge tragedies, a crime should occur and the criminal is able to get off punishment for different causes. In most cases the crime is sexual, violent or both. It is always committed against one of the close relatives of the main character whose soliloquies and asides enable him to establish good relationship with the audience. A ghost appears to urge the main character to seek revenge. Henceforth the plan for revenge is put in operation; the revenger starts to behave outside religious and lawful orders. Sometimes, the revenger pretends madness in order to cover his intention. Madness offers an excellent protection system because the mad man is avoided by others and is irresponsible even in front of the laws. Pretending madness enables the revenger to avoid the responsibility of any wrong behaviour and as a result the powerful enemy to go on in his vengeful plan. Delay or hesitation occurs to prolong the events of the play. These are attended by conspiracies and sometimes a play within the play. The theme of revenge undoubtedly is the main idea around which all the events of the play are centered.

Most of the great dramatists of Elizabethan and Jacobean periods participated in developing this type of tragedy including William Shakespeare, Thomas Kyd, Christopher Marlowe, John Webster, John Marston, John Ford and others. It is to be noted that the mentioned dramatists were not working in accordance with a restricted blueprint of what revenge tragedy must be. They dealt with revenge tragedy as a concept that one can vary concentration from one instance to another rather than to follow defined standards. As one critic states, "tragedy is today a concept that we deduce from the contemplation of a heap of tragedies."[17] It is true that Seneca's impact on Elizabethan tragic writers was very clear, but one cannot deny the fact that during the time between Kyd and Webster many other elements came across their route into Elizabethan and Jacobean revenge tragedies.

Elizabethan tragedians grew more capable with the form of revenge tragedy for being more sophisticated in treating characters,

themes, and motifs. It was Kyd who founded the genre of revenge tragedy in England by 1586 when he wrote ***The Spanish Tragedy***, a play which contained many of the basic characteristics of the genre. Although critics agree that Kyd was the innovator of English revenge tragedy, they marked that his plays were coarse and even unrefined in exploring the theme of revenge. Shakespeare's first attempt to write revenge tragedy was his ***Titus Andronicus*** (1594). It was greatly influenced by ***The Spanish Tragedy*** and was one of the frightful plays. Revenge tragedies of the late Elizabethan period, the Jacobean period, were characterized by grim and cynical statements directed to criticize the moral and spiritual disorder created because of decay and moral disintegration of the society.[18] After ***The Spanish Tragedy***, this kind of drama can be traced in some tragic plays such as Shakespeare's ***Hamlet***, Tourneur's ***The Revenger's Tragedy***, Marston's ***Antonio's Revenge*** and ***Malcontent***, and Webster's ***The White Devil*** and ***The Duchess of Malfi***.

3. John Webster: the Man and the Dramatist

John Webster, a son of a coach maker also named John Webster, was an English Jacobean dramatist. Most of what is known about Webster pertains to his activities as a dramatist. Little is recorded of his personal life. He was born free of the Merchant Taylor's company perhaps about 1580. Webster attended Merchant Taylor's school in Suffolk Lane, London. In 1598, he was admitted to the middle Temple, an inn belonging to the court. Webster married Sara Peniall, a girl of seventeen, on 18 March 1606 at St. Mary's Church, Islington. A special license was given for this marriage because Sara was seven months pregnant. In 1634, Thomas Heywood referred to Webster as dead.[29]

Webster's dramatic activities can be chronologically classified into three historical periods of which the first was of collaboration and apprenticeship (1602 to 1607). In the second period (1612 to 1614), Webster reached his summit. He became known to everyone

by the two great tragedies ***The White Devil*** and ***The Duchess of Malfi*** which were considered as the masterpieces of the early seventeenth century. The third was of the tragicomedy which started about 1620 and ended at an unknown time. The most important fact of Webster's life was that he composed these two tragedies. Nothing in his drama before and after them reflected a comparable power of writing.

Webster's tragic art arose from a number of foreign and national influences. He was greatly influenced by Seneca, Elizabethan revenge tragedies, and Machiavelli's political and philosophical ideas stated in ***The_Prince***. Webster's exceptional ability of expression enabled him to be one the greatest masters of English revenge tragedy. His genius found its perfect expression in ***The Duchess of Malfi*** which was built on the conflict between the stoical protagonist, the young widowed Duchess, and the Machiavellian villains, the Cardinal, the Duke, and Bosola. Webster introduced blood and horror in his tragedies, but he was not completely lost in vengeance and blood similar to the other tragedians of the age. He rose above them for the following fact:

Whereas no dramatist of the Revenge school succeeds in heightening the terrific effect of laying bare the inner mysteries of crime, remorse and pain, Webster succeeds eminently and he comprehends and reproduces abnormal elements of spiritual anguish in more refined manner than any one of them could do.[20]

Webster took the subject matter of his tragedies from Italian life of the post-Renaissance period in which the main characteristics were conspiracies, cheating, fright, different types of tortures the innocent people were subject to by the princes, and many other bad taints. The everlasting conflict between good and evil was another subject matter of Webster's tragedies which were dominated by strong female protagonists. In ***The Duchess of Malfi***, "the eye is carried first

to the figure of the Duchess because of clear luminous quality with which it is invented."[21]

There was a well marked defect in the structure of Webster's great tragedies. Their plots were so clumsy and that is what was responsible for the inferiority given to him in contrast with Shakespeare. Pessimism was another renowned feature of Webster's tragic art. Strange images of death dominated his imagination. Sadness and desperation tainted his tragedies although there was triumph for his good characters over innumerable inflictions they were subject to. "The moral vision of Webster is not clouded by pessimism."[22]

4. Seneca and Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi*

The Duchess of Malfi is a macabre revenge tragedy written in 1613 or 1614 and originally published in 1623 as ***The Tragedy of the Duchess of Malfi***. It is loosely based on real events that took place in the early sixteenth century in Italy. Webster did not invent the story of this play, but it was drawn, as many of Shakespeare's plays were, from William Painter's ***The Palace of Pleasure***, a common collection of stories published in 1567. The play is a kind of revenge tragedy modeled on Seneca's model. It can be seen as a continuity of Seneca's influence on English revenge tragedy for including violence, conspiracies, and the theme of revenge in addition to the five-act structure. Although Webster borrowed most of the dramatic elements of this genre, he adapted some of them in order to be in agreement with his purposes. The complexity of some of its characters, especially the Duchess and Bosola, as well as the grand language of the writer placed this play among the greatest tragedies of the English Renaissance drama. ***The Duchess of Malfi*** told us the tale of a young widow who faced her tragic end, violent death, for resisting the traditions of her society. She fell in love and married beneath her social class and that is what set off a storm of vengeance. Her two

powerful brothers imposed their revenge, "destroying themselves in the process."[23]

Similar to Shakespeare's ***Othello***, the beginning of this play appears as a conclusion of a romantic love story, and then the events turn towards violence and fright leading to the sorrowful end of its protagonist. On the one hand, Ferdinand, the twin brother of the Duchess, and the Cardinal, her other brother, admonish the recently widowed Duchess not to marry again. They go so far to threaten their sister with carrying out revenge and death giving no satisfactory reason to justify their wish. As a woman of free nature, the Duchess, on the other hand, refuses to be bullied by anyone. After her brother's departure, she gets engaged to Antonio, the steward in her house who is much beneath her standing, granting him her wedding ring. In a limited ceremonial party, they specify the Duchess maid, Cariola, to be the witness of their marriage which becomes legal but in secret.

As a result of their intuition that the Duchess will conduct against their recommendations, the bothers employed Bosola, the villain of the play, to spy on her and provide them with reports about her behaviour. A few months later, the ruin of the Duchess begins when Bosola suspects that she is pregnant because of her doubtful acting of late. As a Machiavellian character of strong ability of cunning, Bosola is able to confirm his suspicion by using apricot. There was a common belief that apricot is effective to accelerate pregnant woman labour. After making sure, Bosola sends his report to her brothers informing them the truth of the Duchess' pregnancy. They burst into anger and specially Ferdinand who starts shouting describing his sister as a "notorious strumpet."[24] They decide to carry out revenge for not listening to them:

Card: *Why do you make yourself*
So wild a tempest?

Ferd: *Would I could be one,*
That I might toss her palace, bout her ears,

Root up her goodly forests, blast her meads,
And lay her general territory as waste
As she hath done her honours. (II. v, 23-29)

Ferdinand is very ardent to avenge the honour of the family and that is what is reflected in the following speech:

Ferd: *I would have their bodies*
Burnt in a coal-pit with the ventage stopp'd,
That their crus'd smoke might not ascend to heaven;
Or dip the sheets they lie in in pitch or sulphur,
Warp them in't, and then light them like a match;
Or else to boil their bastard to a cullis,
And give't his lecherous father to renew
The sin of his back. (II. v, 87-93)

The macabre way used by Ferdinand to describe the torment and homicide of his twin sister reveals his revengeful attitude and cruel intention. The Cardinal is against Ferdinand's wrath asking him to be quiet in order to be able to plan his revenge carefully.

Many years later, when the Duchess begets three children by her new husband, Ferdinand starts his revengeful plan. The Duke comes to visit his sister showing no anger. He decides to spy on her directly addressing Bosola, "You told me/ you had got, within these two days, a false key/ Into her bed-chamber." (III. i, 96-98) He sneaks into her bed room at night. He gives her a dagger asking her to stab herself saying, "Die, then, quickly." (III. ii, 81) According to Ferdinand, it is the punishment that she deserves for abasing the dignity of their family.

The Duchess perceives the danger and that is why she decides to defend her family. She fires her husband of his job asking him to flee with their eldest son to Ancona where they will be in safety. The fatal mistake committed by the Duchess is that she trusted the wrong man, Bosola, telling him, "this good one that you speak of is my husband." (III. ii, 320) Bosola, who advises her to overtake her husband, immediately informs her brothers the new information. Here the Cardinal practises his role of revenge on the family of his sister. He banishes them out of Ancona. Meanwhile, Bosola comes with a letter from Ferdinand claiming that it is for reconciliation. The Duchess is aware, "I suspect some ambush." (III. v, 70) She directs Antonio to go to Milan with their eldest son looking for peace.

Bosola arrested the Duchess and her remaining children. Ferdinand comes to meet his sister in darkness claiming that he has sworn not to see her again. The Duke exploits dimness to present her with a dead man's hand wearing wedding-ring. The plan is to make her believe that it is her husband's hand. However, she believes that it is her brother's hand asking why it is so cold. Moments later, Ferdinand departs leaving Bosola to complete the trick. Bosola presents false waxen figures made to appear as if they are her family lifeless bodies. The Duchess believes him requesting to be fastened to Antonio's corpse in order to die with him. "If they would bind me to that lifeless trunk/ and let me freeze to death." (IV. i, 81-82) Bosola realizes that they are able to "bring her to despair." (IV. i, 144) He implores Ferdinand to stop her torment and to send her to a convent. The Duke refuses this idea ordering him to overtake to Milan to find Antonio "to feed a fire as great as my revenge." (IV. i, 173) Ferdinand sends mad men to do an archaic dance in front of the Duchess. This is followed by the appearance of Bosola who has disguised as tomb maker. He tells her that he comes to design her own tomb. Then executioners enter carrying a coffin, cords, and a bell. Bosola informs the Duchess, "strangling; here are your executioners." (IV. ii, 240) She answers bravely:

Duch: *Who would be afraid on't,*
Knowing to meet such excellent company
In the other world?
……
Dispose my breath how please you. (IV. ii, 245-265)

All of them, the Duchess, her children, and her maid are executed. In this act many devices are used by the author for the aim of creating horror which is a common taint of Senecan revenge tragedy. Actually Ferdinand diversifies in tormenting his sister using many base means. She is brave and patient enough to bear such brutal torture and that is what reflects her stoical character. The Duchess has welcomed her death as if it is a gift presented by her brother for thinking that she will be brought to heaven where she can meet her husband in addition to her children. The Machiavellian characters represented by the two brothers and their sycophant, Bosola, do not hesitate to operate according to Machiavelli's main principle: *the end justifies the means*.

The next step of the brother's plan is to slay Antonio. The Cardinal assigns Bosola to achieve this task. While he is leaving, Julia, the Cardinal's mistress, stops Bosola threatening to fire him for being dishonest for her love. He is able to manipulate Julia's mind and to direct her to discover the truth of the Cardinal's role in the plan against the Duchess. Bosola conceals himself at the time that Julia makes an attempt to get the wanted information. The Cardinal confesses that he has a part in the scheme then he forces Julia to kiss a poisoned cover of a Bible as a vow not to disclose his secret. His aim is to keep her silent forever.

Bosola becomes distressed because he discovers that he has committed all these crimes for nothing. The Duke and the Cardinal deny their promise to reward him. As a result he turns against the two brothers and decides to kill them and to help Antonio. Thinking that

he is the Cardinal, Bosola mistakenly kills Antonio who comes recently looking for reconciliation with the Cardinal. Later, Bosola kills the Cardinal and fights Ferdinand and the result is that each one stabs the other to death. The final scene witnesses the appearance of the Duchess' eldest son by Antonio who becomes the lawful heir of Malfi fortune.

In their book, ***A History of English Literature***, J. N. Mundra and S. C. Mundra state that in Webster's ***The Duchess of Malfi*** "revenge is a nominal theme…"[25] This idea is unaccepted for the reason that all the events of this play are built on the idea of revenge which is the main cause behind developing the plot in spite of the fact that Webster has explored other themes. He succeeds in presenting the theme of revenge in the most hideous form by stepping up the villainy of the Duchess' revengeful brothers to reach its highest degree. They are both villains and are gripped by a type of idiotic anger which controls their mind leading them to be of missing insight and pitiless men. Their cruelty is matchless. The piteous ache of their sister, the victim, stimulates even Bosola's conscience who has expressed sympathy towards her when he asks the cruel bother to stop torture.

Webster uses different ways to deal with the theme of revenge. It is built on two crimes of which the murder that must be avenged takes place so late. At the beginning, the writer emphasizes the crime of disgrace represented by the Duchess' disobedience which comes against the will of her brothers. It is unknown why the revengeful brothers keep silent for a long time not to start their fearful plan of revenge. According to them, the Duchess has destroyed the fame and the social status of the family as reflected in the Cardinal's following speech:

Card: *Shall our blood,*
The royal blood of Arragon and Castile,
Be thus attainted? (II. v, 30-32)

They think that she has committed a heinous crime for getting secret marriage below her rank and that is why she deserves the torment to which she is subject. They want to kill her, "I'll find scorpions to string my whips/ And fix her in a general eclipse." (II. v, 102-103) The aim is to avenge their family reputation.

There is no doubt that the Duchess has committed a fatal mistake. She chooses to marry Antonio in secret and as a result she should govern her Duchy alone. As a leader, she is remiss in her duties towards her subjects. The welfare must be the first item in her agenda. She forgets that she has to be aware when to take any determination because she is the leader and the whole Duchy will be affected badly by taking a wrong decision. In accordance with the tradition of their society, it is impossible to marry a worker who serves in her own mansion. The Duchess behaves undisciplinedly by getting married to her steward and that is why the Duchy is thrown into a state of disorder. The Duchess is not able to introduce herself as a successful governor to her people. Exactly on the contrary, the citizens lose their respect for her when she starts to get pregnancy time and again. They denounce their Duchess as a whore for having no information about the situation in spite of the fact that they have the right to know whether she has legally got married again or her new children are whoresons.

Moreover, the Duchess flees to Antonio when Ferdinand comes to discover the truth. She prefers to take steps to save her family regardless of her responsibilities as a ruler. The Duchess appears as a woman who expresses no interest towards leadership. She is clearly uncomfortable for putting herself in a position which is traditionally for men. She has no other choice but to do so. She even hates her high status as reflected in her statement, "The misery of us that are born great!" (I. i, 523)

The Duchess is a woman of strong mental vigour to the point that she does not hesitate to challenge her brother's will and to take

the first step to woo Antonio, "We are forc'd to woo, because none has woo us;" (I. i, 524) It is the mental strength that enables the Duchess not to lose her sanity in spite of the kinds of tortures exercised against her. She does not beg for sparing her life, she tenaciously accepts death. The Duchess addresses the executioners saying:

Duch: *pull, and pull strongly, for your able strength*
Must pull down heaven upon me:
……
Come violent death,
Serve for mandgragora to make me sleep
(IV, ii, 268-273)

The public opinion comes to support her brother's attitude and to condemn this unbalanced marriage. Antonio, for them, is not equal to a lady of high born, the Duchess. The people express their disagreement as follows:

First pilg: *Here's a strange turn of state! who would*
Have thought
So great a lady would have match'd herself
Unto so mean a person? (III. iv, 26-29)

After the murder of the Duchess, a turning point takes place in the events of the play. Bosola becomes the one who looks for revenge. He decides to repent for the reason that he becomes aware that following malice cannot be the right way of successfulness. He resolves not to carry out the brother's order of killing Antonio, but to find him to form a union against them.

Bos. ……..*Well, good Antonio,*
I'll seek thee out; and all my care shall be

To put thee into safety from the reach
Of these most cruel biters that have got
Some of thy blood already. It may be,
I'll join with thee in a most just revenge. (V. ii, 398-403)

Unfortunately, he fails to join Antonio, instead he kills him mistakenly.

Although Bosola states that he wants to avenge the murders committed under his supervision by the order of the Cardinal and the Duke, he determines to kill the two brothers to avenge himself for exploiting him as a means to achieve their dirty tasks. In the situation where he is about to stab the Cardinal he states:

Bos: *Now it seems thy greatness was only outward;*
For thou falls't faster of thyself than calamity
Can drive thee. I'll not waste longer time; there!

(V. v, 57-59)

When he kills Ferdinand, who is stricken by lycanthropy, Bosola declares:

Bos: *Now my revenge is perfect. Sink, thou main cause*

……

Revenge for the Duchess of Malfi murder'd
By the Arragonian brethren; for Antonio
Slain by this hand; for lustful Julia
Poison'd by the man; and lastly for myself,
That was an actor in the main of all. (V. v, 84-109)

Following the Senecan model, madness is shown. In ***The Duchess of Malfi***, "the theme of insanity is multilayered."[26] According to Jacobean values, the young widowed Duchess remarries

for satisfying her lust and that is what leads her to lie and to stand against all the religious tenets of her time. Also, the marriage of a high born lady is supposed to be subject to political arrangement but not to personal whim. As a governor, the Duchess is not able to succeed for preferring her personal craving for remarriage rather than her official responsibilities towards her people. In other words, she mocks the patriarchal authority by getting married of a man who belongs to low class regardless of her brother's recommendation and that is what threatens the stability of the state. In the light of this point of view, this marriage is nothing but "a fearful madness." (I. i, 595)

Another image of madness occurs in Ferdinand's fury. He cannot accept the fact that his twin sister has a lover in secret. This causes mental break which develops later to a horrible disease, lycanthropy. Ferdinand starts to fancy that he is a wolf then to behave accordingly. He starts even to attack his own shadow, "I will throttle it." (V. ii, 42)

Webster's ***The Duchess of Malfi*** keeps step with traditional revenge tragedy in dealing with horror. It is qualified as a play of horror for showing unbelievable types of horror using unheard devices. Charles Lamb states, "to move a horror skillfully, to touch a soul to the quick, this is only Webster can do." [27] Webster, influenced by Seneca, presented the motive of revenge with abundant bloodshed and the ugliest images of villainy for increasing the impact of horror. As the events of the play progress the comparison between the Duchess and the cruel brothers becomes more evident than before. Assisted by Bosola, who is able to know the secret of the Duchess, the Cardinal and Ferdinand personify the theatrical aspects of horror. In Act One and act two, the wanted atmosphere of future horror is prepared. In Act Three, horror comes out in its theoretical fashion. When the Duke sneaks to his sister's bedroom at night, he appears as a man of horrible speech and obscene language. As it was explained previously, horror reaches its climax in Act Four, a lot of elements of horror are used to horrify the Duchess and then to strangle her. Horror

is a key element of developing plot and the action along with the language are used to create cruelty. "So it is justified to describe it as a horror play."[28]

In ***The Duchess of Malfi***, Webster has diverted from Senecan model in presenting the supernatural elements. He does not present a ghost in this play. He replaces it by the echo of the Duchess' voice which is employed to caution Antonio not to go to the Cardinal and to "be mindful of [his] safety." (V. iii, 41) Also, it informs Antonio that his wife has been assassinated. "Never see her more." (V. iii, 54)

Webster introduces the espionage to be a new characteristic of revenge tragedy. Ferdinand, from the very beginning, employs Bosola as a spy in return for some gold coins. The duty of this filthy spy is to be Ferdinand's "invisible devil in flesh." (I. i, 293) and the aim is to keep looking at the Duchess:

Ferd: *To not all the particulars of her haviour,*
What suitors do solicit her for marriage,
And whom she best affects. She's a young widow:
I would not have her marry again. (I. i, 283-286)

It is Bosola who reports the Duke about the Duchess' pregnancy, the new born child, and her plan to flee to Ancona where she is imprisoned and tortured to death under Basola's guidance by Ferdinand's instructions.

Fortuity is immensely used by the author for serving Basola's services of espionage. In the night when his first son is born, Antonio unwillingly drops the horoscope of his son's birth to be retrieved by Basola, the spy who is looking for an evidence to prove his suspicion towards the pregnancy of the Duchess:

Bos: *O, here it is.*
What's here? A child's nativity calculated!
……

I' the morning posts to Rome: by him I'll send
A letter that shall make her brother's galls
O'erflow their livers. This was a thrifty way.
Trough lust do mask in ne'er so strange disguise,
She's oft found witty, but is never wise. (II. iv, 72-94)

Once more, fortuity assists the foul. The Duchess trusts Bosola divulging all her secrets to him. "As I taste comfort in this friendly speech/ So would I find concealment." (III. i, 345-346) By chance he is the man who is employed to spy upon her. He is able to cheat her for being a smooth-spoken man. She does not know that she is spinning her sorrowful end by her own hand for trusting untrustworthy man.

5. Conclusion

In summing up one can conclude that Webster is greatly influenced by the Roman dramatist Seneca who taught Webster and other playwrights of Elizabethan and Jacobean periods the main principles of creating tragic situations and how to design them, how to focus on crimes that should be committed, on the victims that should be tormented to death, and on creating disorder that should be restored at the end. ***The Duchess of Malfi*** immensely appears as a revenge tragedy modeled on Seneca's pattern for including almost all the elements of this pattern as in the following points:

1. The plot of the play is arranged according to the five-act structure.
2. Mass murders occur during the events.
3. The desire of revenge is available.
4. There are physical torments exercised against the victims.
5. The events of the play are centred around the activities of high born characters, the Duchess and her revengeful brothers.

6. Disorder is restored in the final scene, the Duchess' eldest son by Antonio appears to be the lawful heir of the Malfi fortune.
7. Stoicism is shown in this play. The Duchess appears as a stoical figure for her patience to endure the torture imposed upon her.
8. Madness is presented in the character of the insane Duke. Ferdinand's lycanthropy is a state of insanity.
9. There is plenty of violence and unheard horror especially in the fourth and the fifth acts.
10. The revengers lose their lives at the end of the play.

Although Webster composes ***The Duchess of Malfi*** following Senecan revenge tragedy, he modifies some aspects of this model. In presenting supernatural elements, for example, Webster deviates from the origin making replacement that he uses echo instead of a ghost for a specific purpose. By doing modification, he is able to make the play more reasonable to the audience. Moreover, he appends some new characteristics to the genre such as spying and fortuitous events. Webster is able to define the limits between good and evil clearly. The Duchess and her husband are not vicious. They become the victims of malice for marrying against the customs. The process of creating characters is amazing. Many characters, particularly Bosola and Ferdinand, can be psychologically studied.

End Notes

1. Frank Laurence Lucas, ***Seneca and Elizabethan Tragedy*** (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1922), pp. 28-31.
2. "Seneca the Younger," URL: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Seneca the Younger. p. 2 of 8.
3. Wilbur D. Dunkel, "The Roman way in English Literature," ***The Nuntius***, Vol. XIV, No. 2 (January, 1940), p. 4.
4. Hardin Craig, "The Shackling of Accidents: A Study of Elizabethan Tragedy," in R. J. Kaufmann, ed., ***Elizabethan***

Drama: Modern Essays in Criticism (New York: Oxford UP, 1961), p. 32.

5. Lucas, p. 19.
6. E. M. Spearing, "Seneca's Tragedies and the Elizabethan Drama," in E. M. Spearing, ***The Elizabethan Translations of Seneca's Tragedies*** (Cambridge: W. Hefper & Sons.,1912). URL: http://www.shakespeareonline.come/plays/hamlet/senecadrama.html.pp. 1-2 of 10.
7. Geza Kallay, ***The Sight, the Voice and the Deed: An Introduction to Drama: from Sophocles to Goethe***. URL: http:// Seas.3.elte.hu/coursematerial/kallayGeza/thesightUCSC. Pdf. p. 65.
8. J.N. Mundra and S.C. Mundra, ***A History of English Literature***, Vol. 1 (India: Prakash Book Depot, 2007), p. 146.
9. Tom Mcalindon, "What is Shakespearean Tragedy," in Claire Mceachern, ed., ***The Cambridge Companion to Shakespearean Tragedy*** (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2002), p. 9.
10. J.A. Cuddon, ***Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory*** (London: The Penguin Group, 1998), p. 806.
11. Edward Albert, ***History of English Literature***, 5th ed., (New Delhi: Oxford UP, 1979), p. 88.
12. Martin Stephen and Philip Franks, ***Studying Shakespeare*** (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1984), p. 22.
13. Martin Stephen, ***English Literature: A Student Guide,*** 3rd ed., (England: Longman, 2000), p. 107.
14. John Webster, ***The White Devil,*** 8th ed., Raghukul Tilak and Anupam Gupta, eds., (New Delhi: Rama brothers India PVT, Ltd., 2009), p. 43.
15. Ibid, p. 42.

16. Belgin Sakiroglu, "Senecan Drama and Its Influence on The Spanish Tragedy and The Revenger's Tragedy," ***Journal of Arts and Sciences*** Vol. 5 (May, 2006), p. 62.

17. Stephen Regan, "An Introduction to Tragedy," in kiernan Ryan, ed., ***Shakespeare: Text and Context*** (UK: Macmillan Press Ltd., 2000), p. 82.

18. "Revenge Tragedy: Introduction," URL: http://www.enotes. com/revengetragedy-essays/revenge-tragedy. p. 3 of 6.

19. "John Webster," URL: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John Webster. p. 1 of 4.

20. Mundra, p. 228.

21. Una Ellis-Fermor, ***The Jacobean Drama: An Interpretation***, 4th ed., (London: Methuen and Co. Ltd., 1958), p. 40.

22. Mundra, p. 235.

23. "The Duchess of Malfi," URL: http://en.wikipedia .org/wiki/The Duchess of Malfi. p. 1 of 13.

24. John Webster, ***The Duchess of Malfi*** (London: Aldine house, 1900), p. 46. All subsequent quotations from this play are taken from this edition.

25. Mundra, p. 228.

26. Kumaraditya Sarkar," Madness in The Duchess of Malfi," URL: http// www. Indiastundychannel.com./resources/111988-madness-The-Duchess-Malfi.aspx. p. 1 of 3.

27. Avinash Moharil, "Webster's Duchess of Malfi: A Horror Play," ***International Indexed and Referred Research Journal***, Vol. IV, No. 38 (March, 2012), p. 20.

28. Ibid.

Bibliography

Albert, Edward. ***History of English Literature***, 5th ed., New Delhi: Oxford UP, 1979.

Craig, Hardin. "The Shackling of Accidents: A Study of Elizabethan Tragedy," in R. J. Kaufmann, ed., ***Elizabethan Drama: Modern Essays in Criticism***, New York: Oxford UP, 1961.

Cuddon, J.A. ***Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory***, London: The Penguin Group, 1998.

Dunkel, Wilbur D. "The Roman way in English Literature," ***The Nuntius***, Vol. XIV, No. 2 (January, 1940).

Ellis-Fermor, Una. ***The Jacobean Drama: An Interpretation***, 4th ed., London: Methuen and Co. Ltd., 1958.

Kallay, Geza. ***The Sight, the Voice and the Deed: an Introduction to Drama: from Sophocles to Goethe*** , URL: http://Seas.3.elte.hu/ coursematerial /kallayGeza /thesight UCSC.

Lucas, Frank Laurence. ***Seneca and Elizabethan Tragedy***, Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1922.

Mcalindon, Tom. "What is Shakespearean Tragedy," in Claire Mceachern, ed., ***The Cambridge Companion to Shakespearean Tragedy***, Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2002.

Moharil, Avinash. "Webster's Duchess of Malfi: A Horror Play," ***International Indexed and Referred Research Journal***, Vol. IV, No. 38 (March, 2012).

Mundra, J.N. and S.C. Mundra. ***A History of English Literature***, Vol. 1, India: Prakash Book Depot, 2007.

Regan, Stephen. "An Introduction to Tragedy," in Kiernan Ryan, ed., ***Shakespeare: Text and Context***, UK: Macmillan Press Ltd., 2000.

Sakiroglu, Belgin. "Senecan Drama and its Influence on The Spanish Tragedy and The Revenger's Tragedy," ***Journal of Arts and Sciences***, Vol. 5 (May, 2006).

Sarkar, Kumaraditya. "Madness in The Duchess of Malfi," URL: http://www. Indiastundychannel.com./resources/111988-madness-The-Duchess-Malfi.

Spearing, E. M. "Seneca's Tragedies and the Elizabethan Drama," in E. M. Spearing, ***The Elizabethan Translations of Seneca's Tragedies***, Cambridge: W. Hefper and Sons, 1912. URL: http:// www.shakespeare-online. come/plays /hamlet /senecadrama.html

Stephen, Martin and Philip Franks. ***Studying Shakespeare***, Oxford: Oxford UP, 1984.

Stephen, Martin. ***English Literature: A Student Guide,*** 3rd ed., England: Longman, 2000.

Webster, John. ***The Duchess of Malfi***, London: Aldine house, 1900.

Webster, John. ***The White Devil***, 8th edition, eds., Raghukul Tilak and Anupam Gupta, New Delhi: Rama brothers India PVT, Ltd., 2009.

"John Webster," URL: http:// en.wikipedia.orG/wiki/John Webster.

"Revenge Tragedy: Introduction," URL: http://www.enotes. com/revengetragedy-essays/revenge-tragedy.

"Seneca the Younger," URL: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Seneca the Younger.

"The Duchess of Malfi," URL: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/ The Duchess of Malfi.