

Hypocrisy/duality:

Michael Neill describes the sense of 'Uncanny' in the use of doubles: '**the uncanny world of *Changeling*, with its contradictory, double selves**' → CHANGELINGS

- Beatrice is '**transformed into her own dark double**' → '**In what the act has mad you, y'are no more now.**'
- This idea of the '**evil substitute haunts the play**'
- Vermandero says of his castle: '**our citadels/Are plac'd conspicuous to outward view,/On promonts' tops; but within are secrets.**' Allegory for corruption of the society; and reality lying beneath façade, mask.
- Beatrice's dual nature, her façade of virtue is hypocritical, maintaining mask of modesty: '**Though thou writ'st maid, thou whore in thy affection**' – duality of nature
- De Flores, called 'Honest De Flores' by Tomazo, is in fact a '**viper**' and '**serpent**'
- Antonio/Tony
- **Patricia Thomson:** maid Diaphanta '**has to fill the dual role of honest virgin and bawdy waiting-maid**'
- Use of 'asides' provides insight into character's inner lives vs outer facades, motivations and desires concealed by the masks they present to the world

Ben Jonson, *Volpone*, 1606 –

- Typical Renaissance City Comedy: addressed social hypocrisy, materialistic greed, avarice; use of masks, performance of roles; set in Venice – disengagement with morality.
- Addressing social customs and financial dealings of London's new and prosperous merchant class. Plots were about social climbing and greed, often moralizing. Popular due to presentation of possible social transformation e.g. Mosca. Expose con men and amorality but celebrate wit and ambition.
- De Flores compared to Mosca, who wears mask of servility to master, Volpone, but has his eye ever on the advantage. '**I could skip out of my skin, now, like a subtle snake, I am so nimble.**' Masks/fluidity of identity, self.
- Mosca - '**change a visor, swifter than a thought**'
- Volpone's impersonation of an invalid, in order to amass a fortune from gifts → like Antonio's impression of an idiot; performance – costume of '**ointment**' and '**caps**,' has a '**feigned cough**.'
- **Greenblatt** argues that because V's identity is self-fashioned, he is utterly free, '**liberated even from himself, uncommitted to a single, fixed role.**' Renaissance individual autonomy?
- Theatricality – '**Volpone transforms himself into a theatre in which he is both actor and audience.**' [**Greenblatt**].

Morality

Duality is strongly linked to morality in this play, the artificial mask of goodness disguising inner corruption. Moral decay at core of the body politic [see castle metaphor]:

- '**hidden malady**' within Alsemero represents societal concealed corruption beneath courtly surface;
- Mirrors De Flores' corruption between his mask of servility, which '**shelter[s] such a cunning cruelty**'
- Inescapability of sin, temptation: Isabella: one '**need not gad about to seek her sin**'

- During the Renaissance, there had been a centralisation of power in the monarch at the expense of the influence of the aristocracy; *Span Trag* 'views with alarm a system that concentrates power in a single crowned head' [Maus], with the King's inattentiveness contributing to the disaster. Portuguese subplot – Portuguese Viceroy has the power to exact revenge on whom he chooses → rash decision to have Alexandro murdered, with little evidence; contrasts to the painstaking efforts of Hieronimo to petition the Spanish King, and then plot and organise the murders.
- The enactment of revenge t/f 'blurs the line between personal retaliation and political coup.' Taking the law into one's own hands demonstrates a lack of faith in the system → t/f, 'blood vengeance subverts the power of the crown' [Maus]. Viceroy- 'They reck no laws that mediate revenge.' (I.iii.48). Disregard for establishment.
- Dual role of the revenger: the revenger seeks to restore balance and justice to the social order, but undermines it at the same time; 'double bind' [Maus]

Hieronimo and Horatio are not of high birth, and rely upon the patronage of the king, wielding no influence of their own – they distinguish themselves through their hard work and skill; appear to be achieving their own social advancement. Appearance of meritocracy is a mirage – 'birth rather than worth remains decisive in a Renaissance court' [Maus]; Lorenzo's choice of Balthazar as a companion, a man of his social caste, over Horatio; Spanish king flirts with his Portuguese counterpart, ignoring Hieronimo's information

Revenge tied up with beliefs about nobility; ignoble not to seek justice. **Gordon Braden:** play documents the 'problematics of morality and self-respect' – Hieronimo chides himself, 'for shame' to 'neglect' his duty to his son; Bel-Imperia also chastises his delay. Nobility held to a higher chivalric code – Alexandro: 'Not that I fear the extremity of death- /For nobles cannot stoop to servile fear' (III.i.40-41)

Religion

Description of Underworld is pagan; not a Christian world. Hieronimo's pagan dirge for Horatio in Latin – the audience would not all have been able to understand. A pre-Christian world; able to explore primal and medieval ideas of vengeance?

Katharine Eisaman Maus claims that religion is not attractively presented in the play; the Underworld 'seems as capricious and nepotistic as the court of Spain: it reproduces rather than compensates for the defects of this world.' Hades makes his decision based upon Proserpine's flirtatious intervention; Don Andrea is allowed to dictate the fates of the dead, and misplaces them.

However, arguably the religious dimension, and presence of Ghost allows a degree of catharsis to the end of the play; although all characters are dead, the good will be rewarded and the bad punished, allowing for an element of didacticism. Revenge- 'place thy friends in ease, the rest in woes./For here though death doth end their misery,/I'll there begin their endless tragedy.' (IV.v.46-48).

GENDER:

Bel-Imperia is interesting Renaissance female protagonist; Kyd explores ideas of agency, and limitations of female autonomy. Name 'Bel-Imperia' reflects the conflict in her character = 'beautiful dominion.' Inevitably under the control of men, throughout the play she attempts to assert her own agency.

Work shared between men and women; farming labour carried out **'irrespective of sex'**; education available to all; Hythloday views them as an untapped resource, full of potential. **'Both sexes are given military training.'** Women can be priests.

Paul Turner: **'rigidly patriarchal character of Utopian society'** – inequality of the monthly repentance: **'no provision is made for the domestic shortcomings of the male.'** Society has patriarchal structure: the household comes under **'the authority of the oldest male'**; **'wives are subordinate to their husbands'**

Paul Turner: **'in sexual matters the penal code is barbarous.'** Brutal punishment for pre-marital sex (life-long celibacy) provides incentive for marriage; conditioning

Prospective bride and groom **'exhibited stark naked'** to each other – marriage compared to buying a horse; **'don't even bother to take it out of its wrappings'** – objectification.

INDIVIDUAL AUTONOMY:

The government's treatment of its citizens contradicts Renaissance notions of individual agency, frequently suffocating the individual as well as nurturing it, through tight control and supervision. **Sanford Kessler:** **'the restricted quality of their lives'** makes Utopia **'hard to reconcile with any version of [...] philosophical excellence.'** The strong influence the state wields over the lives of its citizens means that personal liberty is often sacrificed in exchange for social equality and stability.

- Repression of the individual: **'all with the same language, laws, customs [...] all built on the same plan ... all look exactly alike'** – noogeneity; deliberate effacement of individuality, encouraging citizens to serve society rather than themselves
- **'everyone on the island wears the same sort of clothes'**
- Never hear a Utopian's name
- Lack of private property, whilst it ensures equality, no disparity between living conditions; privacy of domestic space compromised: **'anyone can go in and out'** – neighbourhood surveillance in place
- Free time: **'not to waste their time in idleness and self-indulgence, but to make good use of it in some congenial activity'**; must be usefully employed, purposeful.
Paul Turner: **'heavy casualties among the minor pleasures of life, especially the more frivolous ones'**
- Lack of respect for the individual, coldly uprooted: **'surplus population is transferred,' 'supernumerary adults'** – an indistinct mass rather than individuals
- Young not allowed to sit next to each other at meals, but mixed up with elder generation: surveillance, preventing rebellious thought – **'respect for the older generation tends to discourage bad behaviour amongst the younger ones – since everything they say or do is bound to be noticed by the people sitting just beside them'** – watched, scrutinised. Unable to engage in private conversations
- Limited freedom of movement – Utopian needs permission to travel. **Paul Turner:** **'lack of personal liberty'; 'severely punished'** for travelling without a passport. Metaphorical difficulty of movement reflects general claustrophobia and paralysing effect Utopian social policies have upon individual autonomy generally
- **'everyone has his eye on you, so you're practically forced to get on with your job'** – totalitarianism; close supervision of the state. Sinister.

On the other hand, the radical ideals of *Utopia* would have been alien to early sixteenth-century English society, which inhibited individual autonomy through repressive social