

vulgarity and shame that is associated with sex before marriage. Castiza uses a metaphor to comment on the vulnerability of chastity; she claims that a “a virgin honour is a crystal tower”. Just as in Hamlet, chastity is once again being associated with luxurious materials in order to objectify women. However, more importantly and perhaps more worryingly, from a feminist viewpoint, is the fact that a woman is now relaying this notion, which would suggest that patriarchal perceptions have been deeply embedded in females, like Castiza.

The collapse of moral duty, in both plays, is most evident in the characters that are at the top of the social hierarchy. The two antagonists, Claudius and The Duke, are presented as callous and self-seeking individuals. Perhaps Shakespeare and Middleton are subtly exposing the corruption in royal government at the time of James I's reign, or even during Elizabeth's time in power. However, criticism of royalty was subject to great punishment in the early 17th century, therefore the playwrights could not explicitly express their discontent. Both plays are set in foreign countries to avoid English similarity. Indeed, The Revenger's Tragedy was first published anonymously which may be because Middleton was fearful of being branded an iconoclast. Claudius fails to fulfill the 17th century duty to honour the King. The Divine Right of Kings was a widely accepted ideology that suggested the King is God's representative on earth and therefore he should be regarded as the most supreme and respected being. Claudius rejects this notion and commits not only regicide but also fratricide, “a brother's murder”. The unwanted transition in monarchical power could be a reflection of James taking the throne after Elizabeth, which was also an unpopular occurrence. Claudius also struggles to fulfil his duties as the King of Denmark. Hamlet compares his father's brilliance to his uncle's incompetence; suggesting that it is like comparing a “hyperion to a satyr”. Hamlet's use of mythical allusion to compare the two men, even before he is aware of the murder, amplifies the difference in the two characters. Old Hamlet, the ‘hyperion’, who is also regarded as the ‘God of Light’ in Greek mythology is a very able and strong King, whereas Claudius, the ‘satyr’ who is known as a lustful woodland creature, does not possess the same qualities and is therefore unable to fulfil his duties as King. Similarly, the Duke's cruel and perverted nature makes him equally as unable to fulfil his duty as an honourable leader. There is a plethora of lustful characters in the play; one of which being Junior who rapes Lord Antonio's wife. The Duke is appalled by his stepson's misbehaviour, claiming that he has “thrown ink upon the forehead of our state, which envious spirits will dip their pens into after our death and blot us in our tombs”. This extended metaphor is deeply ironic considering that The Duke has also sexually harassed multiple females, and even killed a woman (Gloriana) who refused to give in to his desire.

Both older female figures, Gertrude and Gratiana, struggle to fulfil their duties, or to even understand what duty they are expected to fulfil, at times. This is not necessarily because either of them are bad people, but because their oppressive environment can sometimes blur the line between what is good and bad. It is perhaps fair to say that the two women are superficial and power hungry, however in a patriarchal society that deprived women of their self-worth, this is a somewhat understandable reaction and they can certainly be sympathised with. Both Hamlet and Vindice express disgust and resentment towards their mothers. Hamlet, a self-proclaimed misogynist, is deeply distressed by his mother's actions, he believes that it is her duty to remain loyal to his father by not remarrying. His attitude towards his mother manifests into a universal hatred for women, he claims that women are weak and incompetent: “frailty, thy name is woman”. Although, this is a misrepresentative portrayal of women, ‘frail’ may be an unfortunately fitting adjective for the Queen. She does appear to cling onto men with power and status for her own benefit; with Claudius as King, she is “the imperial jointress to this warlike state”. Vindice is equally as disillusioned by his mother's desire for materialistic gain. Gratiana ultimately fails to fulfil her duty as a mother that looks out for the interest of her daughter. Vindice is in disbelief that his mother is willing to prostitute his sister in return for gold. In an aside, he sarcastically asks “pray did you see my mother?”. The use of an interrogative to mock Gratiana indicates how shocked he is, his tone appears to be almost hysterical.