

## Beyond "The Spanish tragedy" : a study of the works of Thomas Kyd

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### Abstract

This is the first book in more than thirty years on the playwright who is arguably Shakespeare's most important tragic predecessor. Brilliantly fusing the drama of the academic and popular traditions, Thomas Kyd's plays are of central importance for understanding how the drama of Shakespeare and his contemporaries came about. Called 'an extraordinary dramatic... genius' by T. S. Eliot, Thomas Kyd invented the revenge tragedy genre that culminated in Shakespeare's Hamlet some twelve years later. In this book, The Spanish Tragedy—the most popular of all plays on the English Renaissance stage—receives the extensive scholarly and critical treatment it deserves, including a full reception and modern stage history. Yet as this study makes clear, Thomas Kyd is much more than the author of a single masterpiece. Don Horatio (partly extant in The First Part of Hieronimo), the lost early Hamlet, Soliman and Perseda, and Cornelia all belong to what emerges in this study for the first time as a coherent dramatic oeuvre.

### Reference

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## INTRODUCTION

Thomas Kyd was born in London in 1558, six years before Shakespeare and Marlowe. Like Shakespeare, but unlike most of his other contemporary playwrights – Marlowe, Thomas Nashe, John Lyly, Thomas Lodge, Robert Greene, and George Peele – he did not go to university. On entering Merchant Taylors' School in 1565 – four years after Edmund Spenser – the seven-year-old Thomas would have been expected 'to saie his Chathechisme and to read pfectly bothe Englishshe and Latyn and to wright competently'.<sup>1</sup> His subsequent life is a blank until the mid-1580s. We owe the next glimpse we get of Kyd to Thomas Dekker's *A Knight's Conjuring* (1607): The narrator describes an Elysian 'Grove of Bay Trees' in which 'Poets and Musitions' are assembled.<sup>2</sup> In the first bower dwell Chaucer and Spenser:

In another companie sat learned *Watson*, industrious *Kyd*, ingenious *Atchlow*, and (tho hee had bene a Player, molded out of their pennes) yet because he had bene their *Lover*, and a *Register* to the Muses, Inimitable *Bentley*: these were likewise carowsing to one another at the holy well, some of them singing *Pæans* to *Apollo*, som of them *Hymnes* to the rest of the Goddes, whil'st *Marlow*, *Greene*, and *Peele* had got under the shades of a large *vyne*, laughing to see *Nash* (that was but newly come to their Colledge,) still haunted with the sharpe and *Satyricall spirit* that followd him heere upon *earth*. (p. 156)

The passage establishes a chronology within which Kyd is conveniently placed. Chaucer and Spenser, whose *Shepherd's Calendar* had been published as early as 1579, constitute the 'first generation' of English poets. Thomas Watson and Thomas Achelley, who belong to the next group, are known to have been active from the beginning of the 1580s, while the chief creative period of Marlowe, Greene, Peele, and Nashe does not start before 1587. By grouping Kyd with Watson and Achelley and not with Marlowe, Greene, Peele, and Nashe, Dekker appears to regard Kyd as belonging to an earlier generation.<sup>3</sup>

We further learn from the passage that Thomas Watson, Thomas Achelley, and Kyd wrote plays in which John Bentley – 'a Player, molded out of their pennes' – performed. Bentley, one of the leading actors of the Queen's Men along with the popular comedian Tarleton, was buried on 19 August 1585.<sup>4</sup> The Queen's Men had been formed in March 1583.<sup>5</sup> Kyd then appears to have been among the playwrights for the leading adult company and indeed the only one whose skills have left a mark.<sup>6</sup> It may well be that the plays

which Kyd wrote for the Queen's Men between their foundation in 1583 and Bentley's death in 1585 are irretrievably lost.<sup>7</sup> Nevertheless, the passage from Dekker leaves no doubt that Kyd had been among London's leading playwrights for several years when Marlowe left Cambridge for London in 1587 and Dekker's epithet 'industrious' may suggest that Kyd's output had been considerable.<sup>8</sup> Marlowe's arrival on the London stage was clamorous:

From jygging vaines of riming mother wits,  
And such conceits as clownage keeps in pay,  
Weele leade you to the stately tent of War:

(1 *Tamburlaine*, Prologue, 1-3)

Kyd's first attempts were less resounding and have since perished. It has been argued that Elizabethan tragedy came 'out of nowhere' and was created 'in a year of two' by Marlowe and Kyd at the end of the 1580s.<sup>9</sup> Even though the scarcity of extant dramatic texts from the 1580s gives this impression, we may be confident that the reality was more complex. Kyd's lost early plays would no doubt constitute an important chapter in the missing genesis of English tragedy. T. S. Eliot pointed out long ago that Kyd has as good a title to the honour of being the father of English tragedy as Marlowe, a point that is supported by a close look at the chronology of their dramatic careers.<sup>10</sup>

There is little doubt that Kyd did not have his first experiences with the stage as playwright for the Queen's Men on their foundation in 1583 but considerably earlier as an actor at Merchant Taylors' School. Richard Mulcaster, the progressive headmaster, included the acting of plays in both Latin and English in the curriculum. The judge Sir James Whitelocke, who had been educated at Merchant Taylors', later reported that every year Mulcaster 'presented sum playes to the court, in whiche his scholers wear only actors, and I on among them, and by that meanes taughte them good behavioure and audacitye [i.e. self-confidence].'<sup>11</sup> Kyd may have remained at Merchant Taylors' until 1573-75.<sup>12</sup> Mulcaster's students performed four times at court from 1573 to 1575 and Kyd may have been among the actors. If so, he would also have played in Merchant Taylors' Hall early in 1574 in front of a paying audience, the earliest known instance of a commercial boys' company.<sup>13</sup> Despite the absence of hard evidence, the likelihood is that Kyd, like Shakespeare, Jonson, and Anthony Munday, was once a player as well.

While the 1570s saw the beginning of strong opposition to the theatrical profession and the publication of several anti-theatrical

tracts stressing the immorality of impersonation and disguise, the humanist education at Merchant Taylors' exposed Kyd to the belief that acting can teach 'good behaviour and audacitye'. Even for the University Wits, writing plays for the public stage instead of taking to a 'normal' profession to which their degrees entitled them was, no doubt, a questionable choice. Marlowe, after six years in Cambridge, became a playwright instead of taking holy orders. In *Greene's Groatsworth of Wit* (1592), Marlowe, Peele, and Nashe are exhorted to cease writing plays for the stage and to amend their lives. After his education at Merchant Taylors' under Mulcaster, Kyd's attitude towards writing for the stage was possibly quite different. Writing a closet tragedy (*Cornelia*), projecting a poem on the conversion on St Paul, and furnishing players with *The Spanish Tragedy* may have seemed more appropriate to Kyd than to most of his contemporaries.<sup>14</sup>

Thomas Kyd was a witness of and a participant in the first generation of the professional stage in London. He was fourteen when the 'Act for the punishment of vagabonds' forced players to secure patronage, may have acted before the Queen as one of Merchant Taylors' boys when fifteen, was eighteen when James Burbage had the Theatre constructed in Shoreditch, and was among London's leading playwrights at twenty-five. He was in the right position to contribute to the changes from amateurish beginnings to artistic and commercial success.

And contribute he did. In 1582, around the time when Kyd may have begun his career as a professional dramatist, the preacher and pamphleteer Stephen Gosson painted a bleak picture of contemporary stage craft:

Sometime you shall see nothing but the aduentures of an amorous knight, passing from countrie to countrie for the loue of his lady, encountering many a terrible monster made of broune paper, & at his retorne, is so wonderfully changed, that he can not be knowne but by some posie in his tablet, or by a broken ring, or a handkircher, or a piece of cockle shell, what learne you by that?<sup>15</sup>

Gosson mocks the random progression of the action in which one episode is followed by the next with a complete absence of stringent causality. Early romantic plays such as *Common Conditions* and *Clyomon and Clamydes*, written in deadly monotonous fourteeners (lines of fourteen syllables), have precisely this loose structure.

Kyd's extant plays, in contrast, introduced the complex intrigue plot characteristic of many later Elizabethan and Jacobean plays. Even the dramaturgy of Marlowe's main plays, with the possible

exception of *Edward II*, shows a less radical break with the medieval heritage than Kyd's. The structure of *Tamburlaine*, *Doctor Faustus*, and *The Jew of Malta* is basically linear and shows the protagonist move from one episode to the other: from Mycetes and Cosroe, to Bajazeth, to the Soldan of Egypt, to the virgins of Damascus in *1 Tamburlaine*, from Valdes and Cornelius, to the Pope, to Rafe and Robin, to the Emperour, to the Horse-courser, to the Duke and the Duchess of Vanholt, to the old man in *Doctor Faustus* (1604), and from the three Jews, to Mathias and Lodowick, to the two friars, and to Bellamira and Pilia-Borza in *The Jew of Malta*. Structure and character constellation in Kyd's plays are altogether different. In *The Spanish Tragedy*, in *Soliman and Perseda*, and in *Hamlet* (assuming Kyd's lost play of that name resembled Shakespeare's *Hamlet* as seems indeed plausible – see chapter 6), the chief characters are introduced early on and the rest of the play develops a plot of intrigue and revenge in which the action does not advance in episodic linearity, but through tightly dramatised causality. As Aristotle put it in his *Poetics*, 'there is a great difference between happening next and happening as a result'.<sup>16</sup>

Kyd then is 'the first English dramatist who writes dramatically' in the sense that he is the first who skilfully represents human causality on stage.<sup>17</sup> A. P. Rossiter rightly pointed out that '[i]f we seek a sharp break between medieval and Renaissance ways with drama, it is to be found much rather with Kyd than with Marlowe'.<sup>18</sup> Lyly is in many ways a greater stylist than Kyd, but his is a drama of thought rather than of plot. Marlowe, even though the greater poet than Kyd, was not necessarily the greater dramatist, and the development from *Tamburlaine* to *The Jew of Malta* shows more traces of Kyd's influence than Kyd ever shows of Marlowe's.<sup>19</sup> Peele's plays, unlike Kyd's, show little interest in dramatic situation and characterisation and lack a tight dramatic structure. Likewise, Greene's plots, in the words of his editor, 'are too loosely constructed, his characters as a rule too sketchy, and his range too limited to entitle him to a high place among dramatists'.<sup>20</sup> More than anyone else, Kyd appears to have paved the way for Shakespeare's dramaturgy.

The numerous near-contemporary references to and quotations from Kyd's plays, in particular *The Spanish Tragedy*, are well documented and hint at Kyd's lasting importance. To instance only a few, Sly quotes Hieronimo's 'go by' (*The Taming of the Shrew*, Induction i.7), Don Pedro cites Lorenzo's 'In time the savage bull doth bear the yoke' (*Much ado About Nothing*, I.i.243–4), the Bastard refers to

'Basilisco' (*King John*, I.i.244), and Dol Common, as late as 1610, quotes the King's 'Now say Lord General, how fares our camp?' (*The Alchemist*, III.iii.33). In themselves, however, these passages say as little about the nature of Kyd's influence as the scraps of Seneca in countless Elizabethan plays indicate about the formative role of the Latin playwright. Too specific at one extreme, the relationship of later plays to Kyd's is in just as many cases too general to be one of real significance. For the revenge tragedy, the Machiavellian villain, the successful impingement of the comic upon the tragic, the mixture of Senecan theme and elaborate plotting, the crucial importance of the play-within-the-play, and possibly even the two-part play, Kyd set a precedent for later dramatists. *Titus Andronicus*, *Hamlet*, *Antonio's Revenge*, *The Malcontent*, *The Tragedy of Hoffman: or a Revenge for a Father*, *The Revenger's Tragedy*, *The Atheist's Tragedy: or The Honest Man's Revenge*, and *The Revenge of Bussy D'Ambois* all share definite generic features with *The Spanish Tragedy* and the lost *Hamlet*.<sup>21</sup> Lorenzo stands at the head of a list of Machiavellian villains that includes Barabas, Aaron, Edmund, Iago and many others. To argue, however, that Kyd is the 'source' for all the later plays that contain features first introduced by him is of course wrong-headed. As 'the first English dramatist who writes dramatically', he was followed by playwrights who had soon absorbed and in some ways developed several features of his dramatic method and made of it the stock of the well-plotted love-and-crime tragedy.

Shakespeare, perhaps more than anyone else, seems to have specifically profited from Kyd's works, especially in his tragedies of the 1590s. His first tragedy, *Titus Andronicus*, follows closely the structure of *The Spanish Tragedy*.<sup>22</sup> His second tragedy, *Romeo and Juliet*, did what only Kyd's *Soliman and Perseda* among extant plays had done before on the public stage, namely to place a conflict of love at the centre of a tragedy.<sup>23</sup> His third tragedy, *Julius Caesar*, covers the same period of Roman history as Kyd's *Cornelia*, and Shakespeare's Brutus may well owe something to Kyd's. Finally, the chief source of Shakespeare's fourth tragedy, *Hamlet*, is undoubtedly Kyd's work of the same name. The precise relationship between the two plays will never be known. Yet, even in the absence of Kyd's *Hamlet*, *The Spanish Tragedy*, its companion-piece, can be shown to contain far-reaching analogues. Like *Hamlet*,

[i]t has a background of wars and politics, with ambassadors going back and forth. Hieronimo distrusts the letter which reveals the murderer just as Hamlet distrusts the Ghost. He reproaches himself for delay, even

accuses himself of preferring words to blood. He has thoughts of suicide. His situation is reflected in that of other fathers as Hamlet's is in that of other sons. He takes one father for a spirit come to rebuke his tardiness. He arranges the performance of a play which is less innocent than it seems. Instead of mirroring the crime, as in *Hamlet*, this play presents the vengeance; yet the image of the crime is still there in the exhibition of Horatio's corpse, and the play, by effecting vengeance in the guise of an entertainment before an unsuspecting court, extends the analogy with Hamlet to include the fencing-match as well. In an ironic prelude to it the avenger and his destined victim, like Hamlet and Laertes, have a public reconciliation. For the rest, *The Spanish Tragedy* has a heroine whose love is opposed by her father and brother, and another woman, Hieronimo's wife, who goes mad and kills herself.<sup>24</sup>

Kyd's contribution to the dramatic architecture of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* was substantial.<sup>25</sup>

Despite his considerable influence on Elizabethan drama, Kyd was virtually forgotten after the Restoration and only occasionally referred to in cursory remarks as the author of *Cornelia*. Kyd's disappearance from literary history is best reflected by *The Lives of the Poets* in five volumes of 1753 – attributed to Theophilus Cibber though now believed to be by Robert Shiels – which contains portraits of Francis Beaumont, George Chapman, Samuel Daniel, John Day, Thomas Dekker, John Fletcher, John Ford, Greene, Heywood, Jonson, Lodge, Lyly, Marlowe, Marston, Nashe, Shakespeare, and of many others, but not of Kyd. *The Spanish Tragedy* remained anonymous until 1773 when Thomas Hawkins, in *The Origin of the English Drama*, quoted Thomas Heywood's *Apology for Actors* (1612): "M. Kyd in *The Spanish Tragedy* [...]" (II, p. 3). Kyd's plays were printed in Robert Dodsley's *Select Collection of Old Plays* (1744) and its various reissues (1780, 1825, 1874), but no scholarly edition of Kyd's works appeared before the twentieth century. The recently discovered volume entitled *Dramatic Works of Thomas Kyd* of 1848, now extant in the Folger Library, is in fact a re-binding of eighteenth-century editions to which only a title page was added.<sup>26</sup>

In the nineteenth century, it was John Payne Collier who did more than anyone else since the Restoration for a reappraisal of Kyd.<sup>27</sup> His evaluation was original in that it went far beyond the repetition of the clichés with which the few pages of earlier Kyd criticism had abounded. He was the first to recognise that

Kyd was a poet of very considerable mind, and deserves, in some respects, to be ranked above more notorious contemporaries: his thoughts are often both new and natural [...]. In taste he is inferior to Peele, but in force and character he is his superior; and if Kyd's blank-

verse be not quite so smooth, it has decidedly more spirit, vigour, and variety. As a writer of blank-verse, I am inclined, among the predecessors of Shakespeare, to give Kyd the place next to Marlow.<sup>28</sup>

Collier found *The Spanish Tragedy* 'very powerful' and 'parts of it [...] in the highest degree pathetic and interesting', adding that '[Hieronimo's] grief is not as sublime, but it is as intense as that of Lear'.<sup>29</sup> While many twentieth-century critics agreed with this view, it had been pioneered in the first half of the nineteenth century.

Collier's judgement led to a gradual rise in Kyd's reputation which reached its passionate peak in A. F. Hopkinson's somewhat uncritical rhapsody on Kyd:

In his time he was second only to Marlowe in his influence on the drama and the stage; in many things he was his equal, and in some his superior. His genius was of a sombre turn; and even his comedy has a sardonic cast – he frequently conveys a flash of lightning in a sunbeam. Nevertheless, his genius was of a high order, and he but wanted the one essential – possessed by Shakespeare – to have made his *Spanish Tragedy* as puzzling and as immortal as *Hamlet*. Death, unfortunately, carried him off at a very early age, before his unquestionably great powers had approached to anything like maturity. It is useless speculating, in the face of accomplished facts, as to what Kyd would have achieved had he lived another decade; but I am firmly convinced he would have conquered new realms of poetry and tragic passion, without trespassing on the regal dominions of Marlowe or Shakespeare.<sup>30</sup>

Serious scholarship on Kyd started late in the nineteenth century. Gregor Sarrazin's *Thomas Kyd und sein Kreis* (1893) is the first full-length study of his works. Most of it is now outdated, but it remains valuable for its chapter on *Soliman and Perseda*. A little later followed Gassner's edition of *Cornelia* (1894) and the first scholarly editions of *The Spanish Tragedy*, J. M. Manly's in old spelling (*Specimens of Pre-Shakespearean Drama*, 1897), Josef Schick's in the Temple Dramatists series (1898), the same Schick's much fuller edition in the German series of the *Litteraturhistorische Forschungen* (1901), and F. S. Boas's in *The Works of Thomas Kyd* (1901) – see the Bibliography.

Boas's Clarendon edition is the only edition of Kyd's works to this day. While it can claim the obvious merit of having laid the foundations for further Kyd studies, its inadequacies were commented upon soon after its appearance and, owing to the insights gained in the course of the century, have now become glaring.<sup>31</sup> Boas's extensive discussion of Kyd's *Hamlet* (pp. xlv–liv) is marred by the assumption that the first quarto of *Hamlet* of 1603 allows detailed inferences about Kyd's *Hamlet*. His text of *The*

*Spanish Tragedy* shows no awareness of Manly's old-spelling edition. *Soliman and Perseda*, on the other hand, adopts readings of a nineteenth-century type-facsimile and, even discounting this blunder, has been shown to be riddled with errors.<sup>32</sup> Boas erroneously includes the prose pamphlet *The Murder of Iohn Brewen* among Kyd's works and, in the appendix, prints Ayler's poor adaptation of *The Spanish Tragedy* while hardly mentioning the much better anonymous Dutch adaptation. These are only some of the more serious flaws of Boas's edition. Kyd's works, perhaps more than those of any other Elizabethan and Jacobean playwright, need a competent new edition.<sup>33</sup>

A number of significant single-play editions of *The Spanish Tragedy* have been published in the course of the century: W. W. Greg's Malone Society Reprints of the first extant edition (1925) and of the first edition with additions (1948), Philip Edwards's for the Revels Plays (1959, still the standard edition), and J. R. Mulryne's for the New Mermaids (1970, 2nd edn 1989). Cairncross's edition of *The First Part of Hieronimo* and *The Spanish Tragedy* (1967) as a two-part play argues an interesting point but does so superficially. J. J. Murray's edition of *Soliman and Perseda*, finally, has rightly been described as 'extremely undependable, both textually and critically'.<sup>34</sup>

Of the remaining full-length studies on Kyd, four limited themselves to *The Spanish Tragedy*: P. W. Biesterfeldt's *Die dramatische Technik Thomas Kyds* (1936), Peter B. Murray's *Thomas Kyd* (1969), Frank R. Ardolino's *Thomas Kyd's Mystery Play: Myth and Ritual in 'The Spanish Tragedy'* (1985) and the same author's *Apocalypse and Armada in Kyd's 'Spanish Tragedy'* (1995).<sup>35</sup> Félix Carrère's *Le Théâtre de Thomas Kyd* (1951) is a detailed and painstaking study in the best French tradition which, however, added little that was new except for the dubious rejection of Kyd's authorship of *Soliman and Perseda* and the equally doubtful ascription of *Arden of Feversham* to Kyd. Philip Edwards's short *Thomas Kyd & Early Elizabethan Tragedy* (1966) usefully placed Kyd within the dramatic traditions of his time, while Arthur Freeman's *Thomas Kyd: Facts and Problems* (1967) is a detailed and generally balanced study to which all modern Kyd scholars are indebted. The central problem with Freeman's book, however, is that, apart from the biographical chapters, it largely confines itself to *The Spanish Tragedy* and *Soliman and Perseda*, thereby leaving out an important, albeit problematic, part of Kyd's work. Even though Freeman holds that *Don Horatio* may well have been written by Kyd and

thinks it is probable that *The First Part of Hieronimo* constitutes a revision of *Don Horatio* (pp. 175–7), he does not discuss the play nor relate it to the contemporary vogue for two-part plays. He further disposes of the lost *Hamlet* as a 'primarily Shakespearian' (p. 175) problem and shows little interest in *Cornelia* beyond its dedication. Freeman's aim 'to provide a broad basis for the study of Kyd's works' (p. viii) was only partly achieved.

One of the purposes of this study then is to present a comprehensive scholarly and critical introduction to Kyd's works that reviews, amends, and updates previous work on Kyd. As a study of this kind is by its nature dependent upon earlier criticism, it is legitimate to ask what my new contributions are. Scholarly matters such as date, sources, text, language, company connections, the additions to *The Spanish Tragedy*, and Nashe's famous attack on Kyd have repaid scrutiny and yielded new insights. Other parts of my study are more original, for instance the investigation of the textual history of *The First Part of Hieronimo* and of its relationship to *Don Horatio* (chapter 1); the discussion of the bearing of the forepiece upon *The Spanish Tragedy* and of Kyd's place in the history of the Elizabethan two-part play (chapter 1); the analysis of the dialectical structure (chapter 4) and of the best early adaptation (chapter 5) of *The Spanish Tragedy*; the twentieth-century stage history of the same play (chapter 5); and the examination of the dramaturgy of *Soliman and Perseda* (chapter 8).

In what follows, most of my investigations will focus on Kyd's dramatic works.<sup>36</sup> However, as I disagree with earlier identifications of Kyd's patron – the one biographical issue with a definite impact upon Kyd's dramatic career – I discuss the matter in an appendix. Chapters 1 to 9 deal with the five plays attributable to Kyd in what I take to be their chronological order: *Don Horatio* (c. 1586/87) (via *The First Part of Hieronimo*), *The Spanish Tragedy* (c. 1587), the lost *Hamlet* (c. 1588/89), *Soliman and Perseda* (c. 1588/89), and *Cornelia* (1593/94).

Chapter 1 gives a new account of the textual and theatrical history of *Don Horatio* – which was played in conjunction with *The Spanish Tragedy* in 1592 – and the textually corrupt *First Part of Hieronimo* (printed in 1605). The latter play, I argue, is a reworking for the Children of the Chapel of c. 1603/04 of what appears to have been Kyd's forepiece to *The Spanish Tragedy*, preserving most of the 'political level' of the Kydian original but with a new 'private level'. While the revised part is burlesque in style and completely incompatible with *The Spanish Tragedy* in plot, the original part is



continuous and at times indeed finely in tune with its sequel, allowing interesting insights into how Kyd seems to have constructed his two-part play. Not only Marlowe's *Tamburlaine*, but also the contemporary Kydian diptych, thus stands at the head of the Elizabethan vogue for two-part plays. Shakespeare's 2 and 3 *Henry VI* as well as paired plays of which the second part is a revenge tragedy – Marston's *Antonio and Mellida* and *Antonio's Revenge*, Chapman's *Bussy D'Ambois* and *The Revenge of Bussy D'Ambois*, and possibly Chettle's lost *Danish Tragedy* and *The Tragedy of Hoffman: or a Revenge for a Father* – appear to follow a pattern first established by Kyd's *Don Horatio* and *The Spanish Tragedy*.

There are four chapters on *The Spanish Tragedy*: chapter 2 surveys introductory matter, in particular sources, date, text and language. In chapter 3, I investigate the 'origins' – the dramatic traditions as well as the political and socio-historic pressures – out of which the play grew. Chapter 4 is purely critical and highlights some of the play's central tensions while simultaneously trying to integrate some of the useful criticism of the past. Chapter 5, finally, explores the play's theatrical destiny after the death of Kyd, especially the additions to the play first published in 1602, the various continental adaptations as well as the play's revival on the twentieth-century stage.

The short chapter on the lost *Hamlet* takes a fresh look at the passage in Thomas Nashe's preface to Robert Greene's *Menaphon* upon which Kyd's claim to its authorship depends, adducing new evidence why Kyd, and only Kyd, appears to be the target of Nashe's diatribe. I further attempt to separate the little that possibly can be inferred from Shakespeare's play about Kyd's from all that cannot.

Chapters 7 and 8 deal with *Soliman and Perseda*, the former with introductory matters (authorship, date, sources, text, company and auspices), the latter a critical analysis of the play's artistry. In particular, I explore the play's careful two-part structure, its daring generic blend, and Kyd's skilful and instructive transformation of a loose narrative into a tightly dramatised play on the threshold to the great Elizabethan drama.

In the following chapter, I situate *Cornelia*, Kyd's translation of Robert Garnier's *Cornélie*, in the context of the drama of its time and show that both its thematic interest and its language occupy an organic place within Kyd's works. My study concludes with a brief consideration of Kyd's non-dramatic works, in particular *The Householder's Philosophy*, a translation of Tasso's *Il Padre di Famiglia*, and with a survey of Kyd's dramatic apocrypha.

## Notes

- 1 T. W. Baldwin, *Small Latine and Lesse Greeke*, 2 vols. (Urbana, Ill., 1944), I, p. 415.
- 2 Thomas Dekker, *A Knights Conjuring*, ed. Larry M. Robbins (The Hague, 1974), p. 155. Most of *A Knight's Conjuring* is identical with Dekker's *Newes from Hell* (1606), published the previous year. Dekker disguised the pamphlet as new by adding some nine pages at the beginning and at the end and by dividing the text into nine chapters. The passage quoted above is part of Dekker's additions to *Newes from Hell*. As *A Knight's Conjuring* is not included in *The Non-dramatic Works of Thomas Dekker*, ed. Alexander B. Grosart, 5 vols. (London, 1884–86, reissued New York, 1963), I quote from Robbins's edition.
- 3 See T. W. Baldwin, 'Thomas Kyd's Early Company Connections', *PQ*, 6 (1927), 311–13, and Freeman, p. 13.
- 4 Bentley is also mentioned by Nashe in *Pierce Penniless: 'Tarlton, Ned Allen, Bentlie, shall be made known to France, Spain, and Italie'* (McKerrow, I, p. 215). See also Chambers, II, pp. 105–7, 303. For an account of Bentley's life, see Edwin Nungezer, *A Dictionary of Actors* (New Haven, 1929), p. 45.
- 5 For a full and original study of this acting company, see Scott McMillin and Sally-Beth MacLean, *The Queen's Men and Their Plays* (Cambridge, 1998). Though the specific bearing of this study on Kyd's known plays is slight, its attempt to study a portion of the English drama of the 1580s and early 1590s in its own right rather than as 'pre-Shakespearean' is highly valuable.
- 6 No extant English plays can be assigned to either Watson or Achelley. However, William Cornwallis affirmed in 1592 that Watson 'could devise twenty fictions and knaveryes in a play which was his daily practise and his living' and Harington's *Ulysses upon Ajax* (1596) refers to 'the froth of witty Tom Watson's jests, I heard them in Paris fourteen years ago: besides what balductum [trashy] play is not full of them' (quoted in Chambers, III, p. 506). The only other playwrights connected with the Queen's Men are the actors Richard Tarlton and Robert Wilson. The second part of Tarlton's *Seven Deadly Sins* (c. 1585), of which the 'platt' (plot summary) is extant, homiletically exposes Envy, Sloth, and Lechery in three independent playlets. Robert Wilson's *Three Ladies of London* (printed 1584) is a straightforward morality play 'wherein is notably declared and set foorth, how by the meanes of Lucar, Love and Conscience is so corrupted, that the one is married to Dissimulation, the other fraught with all abomination. A perfecte patterne for all Estates to looke into' (title page, quoted in Chambers, III, p. 496).
- 7 The Queen's Men made eight appearances at court between 1583 and 1585, performing the now lost *Phyllida and Corin*, *Felix and Philomena*, *Five Plays in One*, and *Three Plays in One* besides unnamed plays. It seems plausible to assume that Kyd contributed to these plays.
- 8 Note though that 'industrious' also had the now obsolete meaning 'showing intelligent or skilful work' (OED).
- 9 Edwards, *Kyd*, p. 5.
- 10 See T. S. Eliot, *Selected Essays*, p. 118.

- 11 White Locke is quoted in Baldwin, *Smalle Latine and Lesse Greeke*, I, pp. 420–1.
- 12 See Freeman, p. 9.
- 13 See Michael Shapiro, *Children of the Revels: The Boy Companies of Shakespeare's Time and Their Plays* (New York, 1977), p. 14.
- 14 For the projected poem on St Paul, see Kyd's letter to Sir John Puckering (MS. *Harl.* 6849, fols. 218–19), printed in Freeman, pp. 182–3. On Mulcaster, see Richard L. DeMolen's four articles: 'Richard Mulcaster and the Elizabethan Theatre', *Theatre Survey*, 13 (1972), 28–41; 'Richard Mulcaster's Philosophy of Education', *Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, 2 (1972), 69–91; 'Richard Mulcaster and Elizabethan Pageantry', *SEL*, 14 (1974), 209–21; 'Richard Mulcaster: An Elizabethan Savant', *Shakespeare Studies*, 8 (1976), 29–82. See also William Barker's edition of Mulcaster's *Positions Concerning the Training Up of Children* (Toronto, 1994).
- 15 In *Playes Confuted in Five Actions*, quoted from Arthur F. Kinney, *Markets of Bawdrie: The Dramatic Criticism of Stephen Gosson* (Salzburg, 1974), p. 161.
- 16 D. A. Russell and Michael Winterbottom (eds), *Classical Literary Criticism* (Oxford, 1972), p. 64.
- 17 G. G. Smith, 'Marlowe and Kyd. Chronicle Histories', in Sir A. W. Ward and A. R. Waller (eds.), *The Drama to 1642, Part One*, The Cambridge History of English Literature, V (Cambridge, 1910), p. 163.
- 18 *English Drama from Early Times to the Elizabethans* (London, 1950), p. 160.
- 19 T. S. Eliot is the most prominent but by no means the only critic of Elizabethan drama to have argued that Marlowe was not 'as great a dramatist as Kyd' (*Selected Essays*, p. 118).
- 20 Collins, I, p. 58.
- 21 The fullest treatment of the revenge tragedy genre and of Kyd's role in instigating it is still Fredson Bowers's *Elizabethan Revenge Tragedy 1587–1642* (Princeton, 1940), in particular the chapter 'The School of Kyd' (pp. 101–53). Unfortunately, Bowers did not include Shakespeare's *Hamlet* in his study and his account of Kyd's *Hamlet* (pp. 85–98) is marred by the mistaken assumption that *Hamlet* Q1 allows far-reaching inferences about it. For a more recent survey of the revenge tragedy genre up to 1642, see Wendy Griswold, *Renaissance Revivals: City Comedy and Revenge Tragedy in the London Theatre 1576–1980* (Chicago, 1986), pp. 55–100.
- 22 See, for instance, *Titus Andronicus*, ed. Jonathan Bate, Arden Shakespeare (London, 1995), pp. 86–7.
- 23 See also Arthur Freeman, 'Shakespeare and *Solyman and Perseda*', *MLR*, 58 (1963), 481–7, and L. L. Brodwin, *Elizabethan Love Tragedy 1587–1625* (London, 1971). It has also been argued that *Romeo and Juliet* shows 'Kyd's lessons of the irony of endeavours, of the self-cancelling actions, of the intricacy of the web of love, hate and fortune' (Edwards, *Kyd*, p. 43).
- 24 *Hamlet*, ed. Harold Jenkins, Arden Shakespeare (London, 1982), pp. 97–8. See also Bullough (VII, pp. 16–18), who points out 'over a score of parallels', and E. E. Stoll, 'Hamlet and *The Spanish Tragedy*', *MP*, 35 (1937–38), 31–46.

- 25 An interesting case has also been made for *The Spanish Tragedy* exercising on *Richard III* 'what I take to be a decisive influence' (Emrys Jones, *The Origins of Shakespeare* (Oxford, 1977), p. 196, see pp. 196–206). See also Philip Edwards, 'Shakespeare and Kyd', in K. Muir, J. L. Halio, and D. J. Palmer (eds.), *Shakespeare: Man of the Theater* (Newark, 1983), pp. 148–54. For Kyd's influence upon 2 and 3 *Henry VI*, see chapter 2.
- 26 See Lukas Erne, 'W. E. Burton's *Dramatic Works of Thomas Kyd of 1848*', *NQ*, 242 [n.s. 44] (1997), 485–7.
- 27 See *The History of English Dramatic Poetry*, 3 vols. (London, 1831), III, pp. 205–12.
- 28 *Ibid.*, III, p. 207.
- 29 *Ibid.*, III, pp. 209–11.
- 30 *Play Sources: The Original Stories on which were Founded the Tragedies of 'Arden of Faversham' and 'A Warning for Fair Women'* (London, 1913), pp. vii–viii.
- 31 See W. W. Greg, 'The Works of Thomas Kyd', *MLQ*, 4 (1901), 185–90. Greg's review gives a good impression of the quantity and the seriousness of Boas's mistakes in establishing his texts. Charles Crawford's *Concordance to the Works of Thomas Kyd* (London, 1906–10) is based on Boas's edition and thus shares its mistakes and limitations.
- 32 In Arthur Freeman, 'Inaccuracy and Castigation: The Lessons of Error', in Anne Lancashire (ed.), *Editing Renaissance Dramatic Texts, English, Italian, and Spanish* (New York and London, 1976), pp. 97–120.
- 33 Arthur Freeman's projected Clarendon edition has, alas, long been abandoned, but his bibliographical article 'The Printing of *The Spanish Tragedy*', *The Library*, 5th Series, 24 (1969), 187–99, as well as his 'Inaccuracy and Castigation: The Lessons of Error' referred to above will be of help to a future editor.
- 34 Freeman, p. 156.
- 35 To these should be added Serena Cenni's *Il Corpo insepolto: Discorsività e affettività in 'The Spanish Tragedy' di Thomas Kyd* (Trento, 2000), of which I became aware after completing my manuscript. My thanks go to Fernando Cioni for drawing my attention to this book and to the author for providing me with a copy.
- 36 For the most detailed discussion of the known facts of Kyd's life, see Freeman, pp. 1–48, and Arthur Freeman, 'Marlowe, Kyd, and the Dutch Church Libel', *ELR*, 3 (1973), 44–52.