

Vasquez is instrumental to the tragedy, but is not himself a tragic character ess...

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Vasquez is first introduced to us in Act 1, Scene 2 - he is the third character we meet, after the Friar and Giovanni, and, in a way that is telling of what we are to find out about his character later on in the play, he is engaged in a duel with Grimaldi, a man of much higher rank than his own - this immediately highlights a defining feature of revenge tragedies, in that lower ranked characters often interact with those of higher rank in a manner unbecoming of their social standing, and by intertwining Vasquez with such notions from the off, it gives the character an immediate link to the very nature of revenge tragedies, and allows Ford to introduce him instantly as an 'engine of revenge' for Soranzo. This allows Vasquez to commit gruesome acts (the plucking of Putana's eyes) while maintaining that he does so only to defend the honour of his master; indeed, in this initial meeting, Soranzo implies that Vasquez only duels with Grimaldi because the latter has insulted Soranzo ('and on this ground I willed my servant to correct this tongue'). Vasquez's subsequent triumph over Grimaldi, and the pleasure he seems to take in his victory over the higher-ranked Grimaldi is a recurring characteristic of his, in that one of his driving motivations is to prove his ruthlessness to those who may doubt him.

Indeed, Vasquez's bloodthirsty nature seems to be something that pushes certain aspects of the narrative forward, and is often used by Ford as a literary device with which the plot can be pushed forward; this is seen prominently in plot threads such as the one wherein Vasquez schemes to punish Hippolita. Vasquez's luring Hippolita into following him to her doom provides a convenient method through which Hippolita, having served her dramatic purpose of exposing Soranzo's treacherous nature to the audience,

can be disposed of. The way in which he does this, by playing on Hippolita's desire for revenge, gaining her trust, then subsequently betraying her, says much about Vasquez's cunning, and when he, in an aside, says (in reference to Hippolita) ' Work you that way, old mole?

Then I have the wind of you.' it demonstrates his penchant for quick-thinking, and his dedication to Soranzo, in that he will do whatever he takes to protect him from any harm. Vasquez then proceeds to continue to indulge in his desires to cause chaos by, when Hippolita is about to poison Soranzo, giving her the poisoned goblet that she was going to give to Soranzo. By doing so in front of such a large audience, Vasquez ensures that, even in death, Hippolita will be remembered as a woman who, out of jealousy, attempted to kill a man on his wedding day; yet another example of Vasquez's constant exacerbating of situations that could have been easily resolved, or punishing people he sees as ' wrongdoers' in a fashion that the audience would almost certainly have viewed as being needlessly ruthless.

While the excessive aggression on Vasquez's part is a staple of Revenge tragedies, and one that is viewed as being integral to the idea of a ' tragedy of blood' such as ' Tis Pity, it is not without its detractors; " trashy Jacobean violence, so inevitable and conventional", is what Andrew Fuhrmann refers to it as, and indeed, though the idea of Vasquez's violent nature is interwoven into his character by Ford, it can sometimes be overly wanton in terms of shock value, with a prime example being the character's punishment of Putana for her aiding of Giovanni and Anabella's incestuous relationship. In what is one of the final scenes of the play, Vasquez, having

ascertained that Giovanni is Annabella's secret lover, and that Putana knew of this relationship in its entirety, orders for his Banditti to 'put out her eyes instantly', and in order to further emphasise Vasquez's violent nature, Ford displays him as taking great pleasure in this, and immediately after, has the character decry the moral corruption of today's age as being 'excellent and above expectation'.

The fact that he is able to describe Annabella and Giovanni's generation as being corrupt, immediately after having ordered such a horrific fate on Putana, coupled with the way in which he takes obvious glee in the incestuous revelation being made, forces the audience to laugh, and take a form of dark amusement in the juxtaposition of Vasquez's taking a moral high from which he is able to criticize Giovanni, Annabella and Putana, with his ordering of such horrific acts against Putana - this form of macabre humour was common in revenge tragedies, with the fact that it went against the classical idea of decorum, allowing them to stand out as being much more radical and bloody than their traditional counterparts.

Though Vasquez is responsible for much of the conflict that occurs throughout the play, he himself is not very conflicted at all. Indeed, Annabella and Giovanni, the central tragic characters of the play, struggle with their consciences throughout the play, such as the way in which Giovanni constantly visits the Friar, or how Annabella, when told by the Friar about the severity of her sins, sobs, and calls herself a 'wretched creature', demonstrating the sorrow she feels at having committed the sin of incest, a sin which has its foundations in love; such feelings allow the audience to

empathise with the tragic characters, and so makes the eventual calamity that takes place that much more terrible. Vasquez, on the other hand, is able to go about ordering the torture of Putana without any such reservations - demonstrating that he lacks the self-doubt, or internal conflict required to make a tragic protagonist truly human, a feature that both Giovanni and Anabella possess, and one that is vital in making the catharsis of the audience truly effective.

The setting of the play is typical of Jacobean drama, in that any material that could be seen as controversial, which 'Tis Pity certainly is, would be set in a foreign place, in order for a distance to be perceived by the audience, so that the play was not seen to be insinuating that any such scandalous acts could ever occur so close to home; instead, more hot-tempered locations were chosen, such as Italy, as in the Jacobean era, Italians were renowned for their passion, and their rashness, whereas the British saw themselves as possessing the proverbial 'stiff upper lip', thus placing the culture of the audience at odds with the culture in which the play is set. Vasquez's being present in such an environment, (in this case, Italy) immediately creates a suspension of disbelief in terms of what he, and in turn, every other character in the setting of Parma, will or won't do. Ford, by making Vasquez a character who is out of place even in a foreign setting then, implies that the strength of his passion and his impulsiveness will be even more profound than those of the rest of Parma's residents.

Revenge tragedies often emphasise a cycle of vicious pursuit when it comes to one's own personal vengeance, and Vasquez can be seen as being an '

instrument of revenge', who serves no purpose but to carry out revenge, as he takes the duty of fulfilling Soranzo's own personal vendettas, upon himself, and by doing so, becomes part of the aforementioned vicious cycle. Unlike in most revenge tragedies, however, Vasquez does not die at the end of the play, instead merely being banished after having declared that he 'rejoice[s]' in the fact that a 'Spaniard out-went an Italian in revenge' - again highlighting the love he has for murder and destruction, and the pleasure he takes in causing chaos; instead of remorse, he is overjoyed by what he perceives as a 'success' on his part. Revenge tragedies, as was first suggested by Nietzsche, are enjoyed because they focus on the breaking down on what is perceived as being the 'normal, ordered world' - indeed, in a civilized society such as the one Ford would have been writing for, the idea of justice being dealt out fairly would have been a cornerstone of everyday life; the fact that Vasquez suffers no great punishment at the end of the play, only serves to further highlight the tragic nature of the severe culmination of Anabella and Giovanni's love, and the horrific events that occur to 'punish' them.

We are further pushed away from the idea of any sort of emotional connection with Vasquez, because of his lack of megalopsychia, or 'greatness of soul' - he is not born into a noble rank, nor does he possess such qualities that would be deemed as noble, or that we could perceive as being redemptive, indeed, he shows no real, heartfelt, profound emotion at any point in the play, apart from those points at which he is taking glee in the chaos unfolding around him. This lack of greatness, or status, the lack of the very quality which is (initially, at least) exemplified by Giovanni, through

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both his being a typical polymath, or Renaissance man, and of his being of noble, respectable birth, is exactly what makes Vasquez the complete antithesis of what it means, at least by traditional standards, to be a tragic protagonist, in the slightest.