

Female Fury and the Masculine Spirit of Vengeance:
Revenge and Gender from Classical to Early Modern Literature
5-6 September 2012
University of Bristol, UK

KEYNOTE SPEAKERS: Professors Alison Findlay and Edith Hall

Revenge is often thought of as a quintessentially masculine activity, set in a martial world of blood feuds and patriarchal codes of honour. However, the quest for vengeance can also be portrayed as intensifying passionate feelings traditionally thought of as feminine. In such instances revenge does not confirm a man's heroic valour, but is a potentially emasculating force, dangerous to his reason, self-mastery, and gender identity. Such alternative ways of viewing revenge are also relevant when the avenger is a woman. To what extent is revenge deemed to be natural or unnatural to a woman, and what is its effect upon her psyche and perceived gender? Does the same impulse which effeminizes a man make a woman dangerously masculine? And how should we view the indirect ways that women influence retribution, such as through mourning, cursing, or goading? Are these an important means of female agency, or do they suggest women's exclusion from active revenge, reinforcing traditional gender roles? Are certain acts of violence interpreted differently if the perpetrator is a man or woman, father or mother, son or daughter?

This conference aims to explore these questions, re-evaluating the complex and varied ways that gender impacts the performance and interpretation of revenge. Proposed papers may take up any intersection of revenge and gender in texts from Classical to early modern literature, and can focus on individual texts and periods or take an interdisciplinary or cross-temporal approach. Topics may include, but are not limited to: the ways in which revenge bolsters, threatens or transfigures an individual's gender identity and/or role within the family; how individual acts of vengeance reinforce or undermine homo-social or female bonds; personifications of revenge; how the relationship between gender and revenge are reconfigured in a text's translation, reception, and reinterpretation over time; the ethical, cultural and social implications for the ways in which revenge is gendered.

We invite proposals (250 words) for papers addressing these questions. Submissions from postgraduate students, and early career researchers are welcomed. Pre-formed panel proposals will also be considered. Abstracts may be in Word, WordPerfect, or RTF formats with the following information and in this order: a) author(s), b) affiliation, c) email address, d) title of abstract, e) body of abstract.

Please send your proposals or any queries to Lesel Dawson:
lesel.dawson@bristol.ac.uk

Deadline for proposals: 31 May, 2012