



# The Duchess of Malfi, The White Devil, The Broken Heart and 'Tis Pity She's a Whore (Penguin Classics)

By John Webster, John Ford

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**A new volume of the greatest revenge tragedies of the seventeenth-century stage**

These four plays, written during the reigns of James I and Charles I, took revenge tragedy in dark and ambiguous new directions. In *The Duchess of Malfi* and *The White Devil*, John Webster explores power, sex, and corruption in the Italian court, creating two unforgettable anti-heroines. In *The Broken Heart*, John Ford questions the value of emotional repression as his characters attempt to subdue their desires and hatreds in ancient Greece. Finally, Ford's masterpiece *'Tis Pity She's a Whore* explores the taboo themes of incest and forbidden love in a daring reworking of *Romeo and Juliet*.

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## Editorial Review

### Review

Revenge, hatred, villainy, incest, and murder upon murder are their constant themes ... and they handle these horrors with little or no moral purpose, save that of exciting and amusing the audience ... We should call him a madman who allowed his daughters or his servants to see such representations -- Charles Kingsley

### About the Author

**JOHN WEBSTER** was born in about 1578 in London. He studied law at the Middle Temple before embarking on a career in the theater, collaborating on many plays with contemporary dramatists. But it was his two solo-authored tragedies, *The White Devil* (1612) and *The Duchess of Malfi* (1614), that sealed his reputation. He died in the 1630s.

**JOHN FORD** was born in 1586 in Devon, England. His early career was wholly concerned with poetry and philosophical works, and it was not until the 1620s that he began writing stage plays, including *The Broken Heart* (1620) and *'Tis Pity She's a Whore* (c.1630). Nothing more is known of Ford after the performance of his last play in 1638.

**JANE KINGSLEY-SMITH** (editor) is a reader at Roehampton University, London, and author of *Shakespeare's Drama of Exile* and *Cupid in Early Modern Literature and Culture*.

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