

Controversy Passage 1

Critics have long been puzzled by the inner contradictions of major characters in John Webster's tragedies. In his *The Duchess of Malfi*, for instance, the Duchess is "good" in demonstrating the obvious tenderness and sincerity of her love for Antonio, but "bad" in ignoring the wishes and welfare of her family and in making religion a "cloak" hiding worldly self-indulgence. Bosola is "bad" in serving Ferdinand, "good" in turning the Duchess' thoughts toward heaven and in planning to avenge her murder. The ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle implied that such contradictions are virtually essential to the tragic personality, and yet critics keep coming back to this element of inconsistency as though it were an eccentric feature of Webster's own tragic vision.

The problem is that, as an Elizabethan playwright, Webster has become a prisoner of our critical presuppositions. We have, in recent years, been dazzled by the way the earlier Renaissance and medieval theater, particularly the morality play, illuminates Elizabethan drama. We now understand how the habit of mind that saw the world as a battleground between good and evil produced the morality play. Morality plays allegorized that conflict by presenting characters whose actions were defined as the embodiment of good or evil. This model of reality lived on, overlaid by different conventions, in the more sophisticated Elizabethan works of the following age. Yet Webster seems not to have been as heavily influenced by the morality play's model of reality as were his Elizabethan contemporaries; he was apparently more sensitive to the more morally complicated Italian drama than to these English sources. Consequently, his characters cannot be evaluated according to reductive formulas of good and evil, which is precisely what modern critics have tried to do. They choose what seem to be the most promising of the contradictory values that are dramatized in the play, and treat those values as if they were the only basis for analyzing the moral development of the play's major characters, attributing the inconsistencies in a character's behavior to artistic incompetence on Webster's part. The lack of consistency in Webster's characters can be better understood if we recognize that the ambiguity at the heart of his tragic vision lies not in the external world but in the duality of human nature. Webster establishes tension in his plays by setting up conflicting systems of value that appear immoral only when one value system is viewed exclusively from the perspective of the other. He presents us not only with characters that we condemn intellectually or ethically and at the same time impulsively approve of, but also with judgments we must accept as logically sound and yet find emotionally repulsive. The dilemma is not only dramatic: it is tragic, because the conflict is irreconcilable, and because it is ours as much as that of the characters.

1. The primary purpose of the passage is to
 - (A) clarify an ambiguous assertion
 - (B) provide evidence in support of a commonly held view
 - (C) analyze an unresolved question and propose an answer
 - (D) offer an alternative to a flawed interpretation
 - (E) describe and categorize opposing viewpoints

2. The author suggests which one of the following about the dramatic works that most influenced Webster's tragedies?
 - (A) They were not concerned with dramatizing the conflict between good and evil that was presented in morality plays.
 - (B) They were not as sophisticated as the Italian sources from which other Elizabethan tragedies were derived.
 - (C) They have never been adequately understood by critics.
 - (D) They have only recently been used to illuminate the conventions of Elizabethan drama.
 - (E) They have been considered by many critics to be the reason for Webster's apparent artistic incompetence.

3. The author's allusion to Aristotle's view of tragedy in lines 10–13 serves which one of the following functions in the passage?
 - (A) It introduces a commonly held view of Webster's tragedies that the author plans to defend.
 - (B) It supports the author's suggestion that Webster's conception of tragedy is not idiosyncratic.
 - (C) It provides an example of an approach to Webster's tragedies that the author criticizes.
 - (D) It establishes the similarity between classical and modern approaches to tragedy.

4. It can be inferred from the passage that modern critics' interpretations of Webster's tragedies would be more valid if
 - (A) the ambiguity inherent in Webster's tragic vision resulted from the duality of human nature
 - (B) Webster's conception of the tragic personality was similar to that of Aristotle
 - (C) Webster had been heavily influenced by the morality play
 - (D) Elizabethan dramatists had been more sensitive to Italian sources of influence
 - (E) the inner conflicts exhibited by Webster's characters were similar to those of modern audiences

5. With which one of the following statements regarding Elizabethan drama would the author be most likely to agree?
 - (A) The skill of Elizabethan dramatists has in recent years been overestimated.
 - (B) The conventions that shaped Elizabethan drama are best exemplified by Webster's drama.
 - (C) Elizabethan drama, for the most part, can be viewed as being heavily influenced by the morality play.
 - (D) Only by carefully examining the work of his Elizabethan contemporaries can Webster's achievement as a dramatist be accurately measured.
 - (E) Elizabethan drama can best be described as influenced by a

composite of Italian and classical sources.

6. It can be inferred from the passage that most modern critics assume which one of the following in their interpretation of Webster's tragedies?

- (A) Webster's plays tended to allegorize the conflict between good and evil more than did those of his contemporaries.
- (B) Webster's plays were derived more from Italian than from English sources.
- (C) The artistic flaws in Webster's tragedies were largely the result of his ignorance of the classical definition of tragedy.

(D) Webster's tragedies provide no relevant basis for analyzing the moral development of their characters.

(E) In writing his tragedies, Webster was influenced by the same sources as his contemporaries.

7. The author implies that Webster's conception of tragedy was

- (A) artistically flawed
- (B) highly conventional
- (C) largely derived from the morality play
- (D) somewhat different from the conventional Elizabethan conception of tragedy
- (E) uninfluenced by the classical conception of tragedy

Controversy Passage 2

In 1887 the Dawes Act legislated widescale private ownership of reservation lands in the United States for Native Americans. The act allotted plots of 80 acres to each Native American adult. However, the Native Americans were not granted outright title to their lands. The act defined each grant as a “trust patent,” meaning that the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), the governmental agency in charge of administering policy regarding Native Americans, would hold the allotted land in trust for 25 years, during which time the Native American owners could use, but not alienate (sell) the land. After the 25year period, the Native American allottee would receive a “fee patent” awarding full legal ownership of the land.

Two main reasons were advanced for the restriction on the Native Americans’ ability to sell their lands. First, it was claimed that free alienability would lead to immediate transfer of large amounts of former reservation land to nonNative Americans, consequently threatening the traditional way of life on those reservations. A second objection to free alienation was that Native Americans were unaccustomed to, and did not desire, a system of private landownership. Their custom, it was said, favored communal use of land.

However, both of these arguments bear only on the transfer of Native American lands to nonNative Americans; neither offers a reason for prohibiting Native Americans from transferring land among themselves. Selling land to each other would not threaten the Native American culture. Additionally, if communal land use remained preferable to Native Americans after allotment, free alienability would have allowed allottees to sell their lands back to the tribe.

When stated rationales for government policies prove empty, using an interestgroup model often provides an explanation. While neither Native Americans nor the potential nonNative American purchasers benefited from the restraint on alienation contained in the Dawes Act, one clearly defined group did benefit: the BIA bureaucrats. It has been convincingly demonstrated that bureaucrats seek to maximize the size of their staffs and their budgets in order to compensate for the lack of other sources of fulfillment, such as power and prestige. Additionally, politicians tend to favor the growth of governmental bureaucracy because such growth provides increased opportunity for the exercise of political patronage. The restraint on alienation vastly increased the amount of work, and hence the budgets, necessary to implement the statute. Until allotment was ended in 1934, granting fee patents and leasing Native American lands were among the principal activities of the United States government. One hypothesis, then, for the temporary restriction on alienation in the Dawes Act is that it reflected a compromise between nonNative Americans favoring immediate alienability so they could purchase land and the BIA bureaucrats who administered the privatization system.

8. Which one of the following best summarizes the main idea of the passage?

- (A) United States government policy toward Native Americans has tended to disregard their needs and consider instead the needs of non-Native American purchasers of land.
- (B) In order to preserve the unique way of life on Native American reservations, use of Native American lands must be communal rather than individual.
- (C) The Dawes Act's restriction on the right of Native Americans to sell their land may have been implemented primarily to serve the interests of politicians and bureaucrats.
- (D) The clause restricting free alienability in the Dawes Act greatly expanded United States governmental activity in the area of land administration.
- (E) Since passage of the Dawes Act in 1887, Native Americans have not been able to sell or transfer their former reservation land freely.

9. Which one of the following statements concerning the reason for the end of allotment, if true, would provide the most support for the author's view of politicians?

- (A) Politicians realized that allotment was damaging the Native American way of life.
- (B) Politicians decided that allotment would be more congruent with the Native American custom of communal land use.
- (C) Politicians believed that allotment's continuation would not enhance their opportunities to exercise patronage.
- (D) Politicians felt that the staff and budgets of the BIA had grown too large.
- (E) Politicians were concerned that too

much Native American land was falling into the hands of non-Native Americans.

10. Which one of the following best describes the organization of the passage?

- (A) The passage of a law is analyzed in detail, the benefits and drawbacks of one of its clauses are studied, and a final assessment of the law is offered.
- (B) The history of a law is narrated, the effects of one of its clauses on various populations are studied, and repeal of the law is advocated.
- (C) A law is examined, the political and social backgrounds of one of its clauses are characterized, and the permanent effects of the law are studied.
- (D) A law is described, the rationale put forward for one of its clauses is outlined and dismissed, and a different rationale for the clause is presented.
- (E) The legal status of an ethnic group is examined with respect to issues of landownership and commercial autonomy, and the benefits to rival groups due to that status are explained.

11. The author's attitude toward the reasons advanced for the restriction on alienability in the Dawes Act at the time of its passage can best be described as

- (A) completely credulous
- (B) partially approving
- (C) basically indecisive
- (D) mildly questioning
- (E) highly skeptical

12. It can be inferred from the passage that which one of the following was true of Native American life immediately before passage of the Dawes Act?
- (A) Most Native Americans supported themselves through farming.
 - (B) Not many Native Americans personally owned the land on which they lived.
 - (C) The land on which most Native Americans lived had been bought from their tribes.
 - (D) Few Native Americans had much contact with their nonNative American neighbors.
 - (E) Few Native Americans were willing to sell their land to nonNative Americans.
13. According to the passage, the type of landownership initially obtainable by Native Americans under the Dawes Act differed from the type of ownership obtainable after a 25year period in that only the latter allowed
- (A) owners of land to farm it
 - (B) owners of land to sell it
 - (C) government some control over how owners disposed of land
 - (D) owners of land to build on it with relatively minor governmental restrictions
 - (E) government to charge owners a fee for developing their land
14. Which one of the following, if true, would most strengthen the author's argument regarding the true motivation for the passage of the Dawes Act?
- (A) The legislators who voted in favor of the Dawes Act owned land adjacent to Native American reservations.
 - (B) The majority of Native Americans who were granted fee patents did not sell their land back to their tribes.
 - (C) Native Americans managed to preserve their traditional culture even when they were geographically dispersed.
 - (D) The legislators who voted in favor of the Dawes Act were heavily influenced by BIA bureaucrats.
 - (E) Non-Native Americans who purchased the majority of Native American lands consolidated them into larger farm holdings.