Measure for Measure Study Guide

Measure for Measure by William Shakespeare

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Introduction

The earliest authoritative text available for *Measure for Measure* was published in the First Folio edition of Shakespeare's plays dated 1623. Today, most critics accept this version of the playas a transcription of Shakespeare's "foul papers," that is, an uncorrected manuscript written in the playwright's own hand. This theory is based on the presence in the text of anomalies often found in uncorrected manuscripts, such as sparse stage directions, omitted and transposed words, and mislineations. The first recorded performance of *Measure for Measure* was on December 26, 1604, when a play entitled "Mesur for Mesur" by "Shaxberd" was performed at Whitehall before King James I and his court by "his Maiesties players," the troupe with which Shakespeare was associated from early 1603 until his retirement

Two works have traditionally been regarded as the Primary sources of *Measure for Measure:* a novella in a collection of tales entitled *Hecatommithi* (1565) by Giovanni Batista Giraldi (known as Cinthio) and George Whetstone's two-part play, *The Right Excellent and Famous Historye of Promos and Cassandra* (1578), which was based on Cinthio's novella. However, several critics have noticed significant parallels between *Measure for Measure* and *Epitia* (1583), a drama adapted by Cinthio from his novella. These discoveries have led to the generally accepted theory that Shakespeare derived the main aspects of hIS plot from both of Cinthio's works and used the structure of Whetstone's drama to organize the actIOn, characterization, and themes of *Measure for Measure* According to this hypothesis, Shakespeare drew upon the *Hecatommithi* for the Duke's magnanimous nature, hIs deputation of Angelo, Isabella's intellectual character and her refusal to accept Angelo's proposition, and the Duke's attraction to Isabella, in *Epitia,* Shakespeare found the conflict between Justice and mercy and expanded It into a central theme in *Measure for Measure.* Finally, Shakespeare incorporated into *Measure for Measure* certain alterations of Cinthio's *Hecatommithi* which Whetstone used in *Promos and Cassandra,* such as the inclusion of a comic subplot. *Measure for Measure* has fascinated and perplexed audiences and Critics alike for centuries. Critical assessments have ranged from profound disappointment in the play's lack of consistency to assertions that *Measure for Measure* ranks as one of Shakespeare's greatest achievements. Scholars have in fact disagreed on virtually every aspect of the play, including its central themes and artistic unity as well as Its style, genre, and characterization. Principal topics of debate have included the characterizations of the Duke, Isabella, and Angelo. Scholars have for example been divided over whether the Duke is manipulative or wise; whether Isabella is rigidly moralistic or saintly and compassionate; and whether Angelo is incomprehensibly split into two separate personalities-one respectable and the other villainous.

Recent criticism has focused on the play's effectiveness at dealing with the themes of Justice versus mercy, and have argued over whether the play functions as an allegory for Christian charity versus the letter of the law Another source of scholarly speculation has been Isabella's silence in response to the Duke's marriage proposal critics have argued over whether her muteness indicates acceptance or rejection of his offer, and both critics and stage directors have suggested a variety of ways of dramatizing

Isabella's reaction. Finally, critics continue to debate over the genre of *Measure for Measure.* While early commentators described the play as a comedy, owing to the fact that it ends in a series of betrothals and marriages, others have called It a tragicomedy that is neatly split into a tragic first half and a comic second half. Today, most Critics agree that *Measure for Measure* has earned its designation as a "problem play"-both because It leaves us with moral Issues which remain ambiguous to the end, and because It refuses to be neatly classified.

Plot Summary

On his departure from Vienna, Duke Vincentio deputizes Angelo to administer the laws of the city in his place, and appoints the wise "old Escalus" as Angelo's assistant. The Duke, who is concerned that he has been too lax in keeping order in the city, in fact has no intention of leaving Vienna. Instead, he plans to disguise himself as Friar Lodowick so that he can monitor the effect that the "precise" Angelo's enforcement of the laws has on the citizens, and to see whether the exercise of power causes any change in Angelo. The new deputy's first actions are to shut down all the brothels in the suburbs and to arrest and sentence to death young Claudio for impregnating his fiancée, Juliet. On his way to prison, Claudio is met by his friend Lucio, who promises to ask Claudio's sister, Isabella, to beg Angelo for her brother's life. Lucio seeks out Isabella at the convent where she has recently become a novice and tells her of Claudio's plight. Distressed at this news, she agrees to speak to Angelo.

Act 1, Scene 1

Act 1, Scene 1 Summary

The Duke of Vienna is to leave the city for a while, and plans to appoint Angelo to rule while he is away. According to the Duke, Vienna has become corrupted and he believes Angelo can help restore order. The Duke asks Escalus, a lord, what he thinks of the decision. Escalus replies that no one deserves the opportunity more because he is so full of grace and honour. The Duke calls Angelo before him and tells him of his decision. Angelo is honoured by the trust the Duke is putting in him, but would rather prove he is worthy before taking on such a task. The Duke answers that he is in a hurry and there is no time for that. He urges Angelo to "enforce or qualify the laws/ As to your soul seems good."

Act 1, Scene 1 Analysis

In the opening scene, we are introduced to three of the major players: the Duke, Angelo, and Escalus. While the action seems to be straight forward, the Duke is leaving and appoints a deputy to rule in his absence, things are not as they seem. The Duke expresses his disappointment at the state of the city. As we will see more fully throughout the play, lawlessness and sin have corrupted Vienna. This raises the question, why would the Duke put someone else in charge to try to fix the city's problems? Does the Duke feel unable to face the task himself? It is especially strange that the Duke does not give a reason for leaving; he only says that he must leave quickly.

Act 1, Scene 2

Act 1, Scene 2 Summary

Lucio and two other gentlemen, at a public place in the city, joke with each other about their immoral practises, which seem to include patronizing brothels and stealing. They tease each other about the sexually transmitted diseases they might have as a result. Mistress Overdone, owner of a local brothel, enters and informs them that Claudio has been arrested for getting Julietta pregnant, and is to be be-headed three days from now. The three men cannot believe that Claudio would be arrested; he is a man of good reputation. Lucio says this explains why Claudio did not meet him two hours ago as planned. The men run off to see what has happened.

Pompey, the clown, enters and tells Mistress Overdone that Angelo has made a proclamation that all brothels in the suburbs (outside the walls of the city) are to be shut down. Mistress is upset because her brothel is in the suburbs.

The Provost leads Claudio through the streets, with Juliet, Lucio, and the other two gentlemen following. Claudio asks why the Provost does not just take him to prison rather than parade him around. The Provost replies that Angelo ordered him to make an example of Claudio. Claudio tells Lucio that he has been arrested because he slept with Juliet, who is betrothed to him, and has been married to him in a public ceremony before witnesses, but not yet in a religious ceremony. They cannot hide what they have done because Juliet is pregnant. He says that Angelo is trying to establish his reputation by giving Claudio the harshest punishment he can. Claudio asks Lucio to find his sister, who is entering a cloister (i.e. becoming a nun) today, and ask her to try to convince Angelo to give him a lighter sentence. Lucio agrees.

Act 1, Scene 2 Analysis

The first part of the scene introduces us to some of Vienna's corrupted citizens, including Lucio. They joke about their trysts at the local brothels, and the resulting venereal diseases. However, if this is the extent of Vienna's corruption, then it is certainly not wicked; rather the people lack moderation, and overindulge their vices.

Angelo has begun his plan for reforming Vienna. He has ordered brothels closed, and is using the harshest punishment against offenders. However, the case of Claudio and Juliet hardly seems to be one that merits the punishment being received, since the two are considered married, although the religious ceremony has not been performed yet. It is true that in such a situation, the couple is not supposed to have sex until the church has married them, but Claudio and Juliet are not exactly examples of immorality. We can see that Angelo's plan for reform may be somewhat extreme, and does not follow the Duke's directive to "enforce or qualify the laws/ As to your soul seems good."

Act 1, Scene 3

Act 1, Scene 3 Summary

The Duke speaks with Friar Thomas about why he seeks secret refuge in the friary. He tells the friar that Vienna has very strict laws that for fourteen years he has let slip. As a result, the laws are "more mocked than feared" among the people, and are thus, useless. To solve this problem, he has put Angelo, "a man of stricture and firm abstinence," in charge. Friar Thomas thinks the Duke would do a better job, and does not understand why he gave the task to Angelo. The Duke replies that he, in a way, encouraged the people to behave as they are behaving by not punishing them for their deeds, and he would be a tyrant to do an about-face and start punishing them. The Duke will observe "both prince [Angelo] and people" disguised as a friar. That way he can observe how things are going. The Duke gives one more reason for wanting to put Angelo in power. He wants to see if having power will change Angelo, who has shown himself to be invulnerable to normal human appetites.

Act 1, Scene 3 Analysis

In this scene, we are finally told what the Duke's motivations are in handing power over to Angelo, and why he does not solve Vienna's problems himself. However, we also see that the Duke is not sure Angelo will be able to do the job. In telling the friar he wants to see if Angelo retains his morals when given power, he suggests he doubts Angelo will succeed. This presentation of the Duke does not show him to advantage, since it shows that he is willing to put someone in power that might make things worse for Vienna, just to see what will happen. His unwillingness to enforce Vienna's laws himself simply because he did not in the past, shows that he is not willing to admit his mistakes and change himself for the better. He would rather someone else fix his mistake for him.

The description of Angelo as a man that will "scarce confess/ That his blood flows or that his appetite/ Is more to bread than stone," puts him as someone who does not fall victim to temptation. Throughout the play, characters often take the role of someone who is extremely pious or extremely licentious. Lucio and his friends are examples of the very licentious, while Angelo is an example of the very pious. The play suggests that humans should possess a balance of both, and characters that lack that balance are presented as unnatural. Vice versus piety is a theme that runs throughout the play, and is illustrated primarily through Angelo.

The Duke planning to disguise himself as a friar in order to observe what happens while he is supposedly away introduces the theme of disguise and manipulation that will become more evident later in the play. Much of what occurs throughout the play could not take place if not for disguise.

Act 1, Scene 4

Act 1, Scene 4 Summary

Isabella, Claudio's sister, is at the convent speaking to a nun about her wishes for as strict and pious a life as possible. Lucio enters and tells her about her brother's arrest, which she at first cannot believe. Lucio assures her he is not joking, but that Claudio is being made an example of by the Duke's deputy, Angelo. Some men have been sent to try to find the Duke, but no one knows where he is. Isabella is not sure how she can help, but promises to try.

Act 1, Scene 4 Analysis

Isabella, introduced here, is another of the play's unnaturally pious characters. Although she appears to be a sympathetic figure, her wish to live a life of "more strict restraint" than the life even the nuns live, makes her a similar character to Angelo.

The terms Lucio uses to describe Isabella, "immortal spirit," "saint," support the idea that she is somehow removed from natural humanity. Indeed, Isabella seems to want to be removed from humanity as seen by her choice to live a cloistered life in a nunnery where she can devote herself to worship. However, her choice to leave the nunnery at Lucio's request is the first choice she makes that will eventually take her away from the nunnery completely. It is also interesting that Isabella agrees to help her brother when he has been arrested for fornication, which is a crime that violates her strict religious beliefs. Although Isabella may be a strictly pious character, like Angelo, her belief system is obviously very different from his. This idea will be more fully developed as the play progresses.

Act 2, Scene 1

Act 2, Scene 1 Summary

Escalus argues with Angelo that he is being too harsh in his punishment of Claudio. He asks Angelo if he has never fallen to the temptation the Claudio has. Angelo answers, "Tis one thing to be tempted, Escalus, / Another thing to fall." Angelo claims he has been tempted, but has never given into such temptations, and orders Claudio beheaded the following morning.

Constable Elbow brings in Froth and Pompey, accusing Pompey of being a bawd, and Froth is accused of having insulted Elbow's wife. Pompey defends Froth, but takes so long to tell his story, that Angelo leaves Escalus to handle the case. The scene is especially comic because Elbow misuses words, confusing everyone around him. Froth is eventually let go. Escalus lectures Pompey about his illegal practises, telling him he never wants to see him in his presence again for any offence, or Escalus will have him whipped. Before he leaves, Pompey predicts that the government's new law against fornication will not last ten years because people will always be tempted by the flesh. Escalus dismisses Elbow, but is so unimpressed with the man's incompetence, that he tells him to produce a list of replacements.

Escalus invites a justice to his house for dinner. He laments Claudio's situation, but agrees with Angelo that the laws need to be enforced. Showing Claudio lenience would only weaken the law again.

Act 2, Scene 1 Analysis

In this scene, Angelo explains why the law must be so strict: it must frighten and deter the people from committing future crimes, which it has not done because it has not been enforced. As a result, the people now ignore the law, as the Duke pointed out earlier. Escalus agrees with Angelo, but urges the need for the law to be tempered with mercy and moderation. We have already seen that Angelo is not a moderate character, which is illustrated again in this scene when he claims to never have fallen to temptation. Angelo is unable to be merciful, because he believes that since he can behave properly, so can others.

In contrast, when Escalus is given Froth and Pompey's case to judge, he lets them off with warnings. The part of the scene dealing with Froth, Pompey, and Elbow is used as comic relief before Claudio's execution. Elbow's use of English is completely incorrect, and Pompey's attempt to tell what happened with Froth and Elbow's wife is so lengthy that it would "last out a night in Russia/ Where nights are longest there."

When the comic characters leave, Escalus turns the scene serious again. He is sorry for Claudio's position, but states that Angelo's severity "is but needful." Escalus can learn to accept Angelo's strict enforcement if it will prevent crime and, thus, punishing others.

Pompey, however, does not believe that strict punishment will work, telling Escalus "If you head and hang all that offend that way/ but for ten year together, you'll be glad to give out a commission for more heads." In other words, if they continue hanging everyone for the crime of fornication, in ten years you will have no heads left to hang.

Act 2, Scene 2

Act 2, Scene 2 Summary

The Provost asks Angelo if he really wants Claudio executed. The Provost does not think Claudio deserves it, and warns Angelo that he may come to regret the order later. Angelo assures him he wants Claudio executed. Angelo orders Juliet taken somewhere she can give birth since she is in labour.

Isabella enters and begs for Claudio's life even though she abhors the crime he has committed. Angelo continues to deny her request, while Lucio encourages Isabella to continue trying. She raises a number of arguments such as that without Christ's mercy they are all sinners and would not go to heaven, no one has been hurt by his crime, no-one else has ever died for the same offence, and accuses Angelo of using his power as a tyrant would. Both Lucio and the Provost quietly cheer Isabella on as she argues for Claudio.

Angelo, in an aside, admits that Isabella's words are getting through to him; they sound sensible to him. He tells her to come back tomorrow because he wants to think about what she has said.

After everyone has left, Antonio wonders what has happened to him. He desires Isabella, and wants to "hear her speak again/ And feast upon her eyes." He admits that her virtue has done what no 'loose' woman's temptations have been able to do- arouse lust or love in him—he is not sure which one.

Act 2, Scene 2 Analysis

When Claudio first tells Lucio to find his sister to plead his case for him, he says that she is good at persuading people; we see the truth of that in this scene. She plays to Angelo's ego by talking about what great power he has and she shapes her argument according to what Angelo responds. Her attempt to reason law with him by pointing out that no one else has ever been punished so harshly for the same crime, does not work. However, her biblical references and arguments that show her religious knowledge and piety do affect him, and so she focuses her argument around those topics. However, Angelo is not swayed by Isabella's arguments, but by how those arguments reflect her virtue. He finds himself attracted to that virtue and can finally understand how one might give into temptation, and thus finally feels pity for Claudio.

Isabella's final argument is to ask Angelo to look in his heart and ask himself if the same weakness that her brother succumbed to does not also reside within him. We saw this argument already from Escalus. Here, Angelo sees the sense in the argument because he finally feels temptation.

Throughout the scene, Lucio gives encouragement from the side. He remarks on a good argument, tells her she is not being convincing enough, or encourages her to continue with an argument that seems to be working well. At times, it seems that Lucio is suggesting Isabella should use her womanish charm to win Angelo. At one point he suggests she hang on his robe, at another she should touch him. However, it is the fact that Isabella does not try to win him with womanly charms that attracts him, to his own surprise.

Act 2, Scene 3

Act 2, Scene 3 Summary

The Duke, disguised as a friar, enters the prison where Claudio is held. He asks the Provost to show him to the prisoners and tell him what crimes they have committed so he can minister to them properly. He is introduced to Juliet and told of hers and Claudio's crime. She tells the Duke she truly repents what she has done, which he is glad to hear. The Duke leaves to speak with Claudio.

Act 2, Scene 3 Analysis

In this scene, the Duke learns of Claudio and Juliet's crime. His disguise allows him to learn what really happened, and if the couple are repentant and deserve mercy. Repentance is important because although it is natural to occasionally give in to temptation, one must sincerely repent of it when it does happen. Claudio and Juliet are worthy of mercy not because their crime was a small one, but because they truly repent of it.

Act 2, Scene 4

Act 2, Scene 4 Summary

Angelo, in soliloquy, admits he cannot stop thinking about Isabella. She arrives, as directed by Angelo the day before. She asks if Angelo has changed his mind. He answers that Claudio must die. Isabella turns to leave when Angelo says that Claudio might live a little longer. He asks if she would rather see her brother die, or give up her body in the same way her brother did to save him. Isabella says she would never give up her body in such a way because she would also be giving up her soul. Her brother would only lose his physical life, while she would lose her eternal life. Angelo admits to Isabella that he loves her, and promises to let Claudio live if she will give him love. Isabella refuses and threatens to tell everyone of his proposition and ruin his reputation. Angelo is not concerned because his reputation has been so spotless that no one would ever believe her. He demands that she sleep with him or he will not only have Claudio killed, but his execution will be long and painful. She must give him an answer by tomorrow.

Left alone, Isabella realizes the truth of Angelo's statement that no one would believe her accusation of him. She believes her brother is too honourable to let her commit sin in order to save him, and accepts that her brother is going to die. She will go and tell him of Angelo's offer and to prepare Claudio for death.

Act 2, Scene 4 Analysis

The extent of Angelo's desire to have Isabella is seen here. Though he has not yet slept with her, he is guilty of a far worse crime than Claudio is. Claudio had mutual sex with someone he loves and to whom he is engaged, whereas Angelo is demanding sex from Isabella who is completely unwilling, and committed to becoming a nun. He even goes so far as to threaten her with a long excruciating death for her brother if she does not comply, using his power in a completely inappropriate way. His demand is especially jarring since he begins his proposition to Isabella by telling her he loves her. It is immediately apparent that he feels only lust for her since he does not want to marry her, and goes on to demand her compliance. This kind of behaviour from a man with a reputation for moral uprightness, despite his severity, is shocking. Corruption underlying goodness is a theme seen throughout the play, first in the presentation of Vienna, and now in Angelo.

Isabella's belief that it would be better for her brother to die than for her to give up her virginity illustrates how pious she is. Although Angelo's request is inappropriate and possibly revolting, Isabella's choice of piety over her brother's life comes across as selfish. Since the play supports the idea that both extreme piety and extreme licentiousness are not healthy, Isabella's decision is not meant to be seen as heroic.

Act 3, Scene 1

Act 3, Scene 1 Summary

The Duke, still in the guise of a friar, ministers to Claudio, preparing him for his coming execution. He argues that life is something that "none but fools would keep." After the sermon Claudio thanks the Duke and says that he now looks forward to death for in "seeking death [he] finds life."

Isabella enters and the Duke excuses himself so they can be alone, but asks the Provost to put him somewhere he can listen to their conversation. Isabella tells of her encounter with Angelo and his proposition to her. Claudio is appalled that Angelo would make a mockery of the law while claiming to enforce it. He tells his sister that she cannot agree to do what Angelo asked, which relieves Isabella. However, his fear of death soon overwhelms him, and he pleads with her: "sweet sister, let me live." Isabella is horrified that Claudio would ask her to give up her virginity to save him, and says that he does not deserve mercy, and wishes him a quick death.

The Duke intervenes and asks to speak to Isabella alone. She leaves the room and the Duke tells Claudio that he is Angelo's confessor and knows that he was only testing Isabella with such a proposal. He admonishes Claudio again to make ready for death. Claudio asks the Duke to apologize to his sister for him.

The Duke speaks with Isabella and tells her he has a plan to redeem her brother without having to harm her honour, and will restore another person's happiness. The Duke tells Isabella of a woman named Mariana, who was engaged to marry Angelo. However, her brother, a soldier, was wrecked at sea and her dowry was lost along with him. Angelo then refused to marry Mariana, claiming she had acted dishonourably. Mariana, despite such mistreatment from Angelo, still loves him even more than before.

The Duke asks Isabella to pretend to go along with Angelo's proposition, but require the incident to be brief, and occur in complete darkness. Then, Mariana will enter Angelo's bed in place of Isabella. When Angelo finds out he slept with Mariana, he will have to marry her because he has taken her virginity. Isabella agrees to go along with the scheme.

Act 3, Scene 1 Analysis

The Duke does a good job of ministering to Claudio: his sermon is convincing and somewhat uplifting considering its purpose is to prepare a man for death. However, it is disturbing that the Duke finds no fault in ministering to a man about to die, when he is not qualified to do so. He is not, in truth, a member of the clergy.

Isabella's conversation with her brother seems to be structured somewhat strangely. It takes her a long time to finally tell Claudio what Angelo said. Claudio finally has to say,

"Let me know the point" before Isabella will tell him. Although Isabella seems resolute in her decision not to have sex with Angelo from the moment the proposition is made and throughout her conversation with her brother, there are reasons to believe she is not sure of her decision. If she were not going to be swayed in her decision, why would she mention Angelo's proposition to her brother? Telling Claudio only gives him hope that he might live. It seems that Isabella is looking for approval of her decision, which would also explain why she takes so long to come to the point since she is afraid of what Claudio will say.

Claudio does ask Isabella to consider Angelo's proposition because he is afraid of death; he is afraid to die and "go we know not where," or "bathe in fiery floods" or "reside in thrilling region of thick-ribbed ice." Claudio's images are vivid and frightening, and make Isabella's excuses about her honour seem weak in comparison.

At this point, the disguised Duke begins to control what will happen in the rest of the play. His plan to help Mariana and save Claudio will allow him to direct what the characters do, making him like a playwright himself. There is a sense that the Duke prefers to be in control of things behind the scenes. It is difficult to know what his motivations are, since, as duke, he can control people as he pleases. If his motivation was to help people, he could easily reveal himself and override Angelo's decision. Instead, he forms a complicated plan to save Claudio, but does not tell Claudio of it. Claudio is led to believe he is going to die the next day. If the Duke's scheme goes as planned, he will have set the stage for a very dramatic outcome.

Act 3, Scene 2

Act 3, Scene 2 Summary

Elbow enters leading Pompey to jail again. When the Duke is told Pompey makes his money from prostitution, he condemns him for being wicked. Lucio enters and teases Pompey about being arrested again. He asks how Mistress Overdone is doing, and Pompey tells him that she no longer has any prostitutes working for her, and has a venereal disease herself. Lucio tells Pompey he deserves to go to jail, and says he will not pay Pompey's bail this time.

Pompey is led off to jail and Lucio asks the disguised Duke if he knows any news of the Duke. The Duke/friar says he has none. Lucio laments the Duke's absence because Angelo is being so strict. The Duke/friar replies that strictness is needed to restore order, to which Lucio replies that Angelo "was not made by man and woman," i.e. is inhuman, and is so cold that his "urine is congealed ice." Lucio goes on to praise the Duke because he would not have a man executed for fornication, but would rather pay to support any bastards that come out of the act. He claims the Duke often committed fornication and was known to drink a lot. The Duke/friar denies such claims are true, and Lucio claims he knows the Duke well and has witnessed what he has described. The disguised Duke says that Lucio should accuse the Duke of this behaviour when he returns; Claudio promises he will and leaves.

Escalus enters with Mistress Overdone who is led by the Provost. She begs Escalus to have mercy on her, but he orders her to jail because she has been a prostitute for eleven years. She blames Lucio for informing against her, even though she has raised his child, which he produced with one of her prostitutes and whom he promised to marry but never did.

When Mistress Overdone is taken away, Escalus approaches the disguised Duke and asks him about himself, and what news there is of the rest of the world. The Duke reports that integrity is lacking in people everywhere, but that is nothing new; he then asks Escalus what the Duke is like. Escalus answers that the Duke is a man of temperance who rejoices to see others happy. Escalus asks him how Claudio is doing, and regrets than he has been able to change Angelo's decision. The Duke tells him of Claudio's regret for his crime and his readiness to die. Escalus praises the Duke for his work with Claudio, and leaves to visit Claudio. The Duke delivers a soliloquy detailing how a ruler should behave: "He who the sword of heaven will bear/ Should be as holy as severe," which we, and the Duke, know to not be true of Angelo. He is severe, but unholy. He condemns Angelo's actions and plans to bring him down by pitting "craft against vice."

Act 3, Scene 2 Analysis

Here is another comic scene following a far more serious scene. Elbow's misunderstanding of the English language and Pompey's strong grasp of it always makes for a good laugh. Lucio, who often uses words with double meanings, adds humour in his teasing of Pompey. For example, Lucio asks Pompey if there are no more women "to be had now, for putting the hand in the pocket and/ extracting it clutched?" The final three words can either mean clutching money, because the women receive money for prostitution, or clutching the man's genitals, because that is the kind of work prostitutes do. But seeing what the other characters are arrested for, many years of prostitution and possible thievery, makes Claudio's offence seem all the more innocent, and Angelo all the more severe.

The most comic aspect of the scene is Lucio insulting the Duke while thinking he is speaking to a friar. The Duke's defense of himself is quite comical, as is Lucio's insistence that everything he is saying is true because he knows the Duke well. The Duke's disguise makes him privy to information he would not normally have. However, he learns from the encounter that even a man, who is of good moral character and enjoys a powerful social position, is not safe from slander. We know that Lucio's claims are likely not true, because he and the Duke obviously do not know each other as Lucio claims they do. Escalus' description of the Duke as a man of temperance is probably more accurate than Lucio is because he does know the Duke well.

The Duke's soliloquy at the end of the scene shows us that he knows how a ruler should behave. He recognizes that a ruler must make allowances for natural human failings, possess virtue, and not condemn others for crimes of which he himself is guilty. He realizes Angelo does not possess any of these characteristics, and laments that his outward appearance is so different from his inner nature.

Act 4, Scene 1

Act 4, Scene 1 Summary

The Duke returns to the friary to find Mariana walking there. Isabella arrives and tells the Duke that she has arranged the rendezvous with Angelo for that night. Angelo showed her how to come into the house through a wooden gate in the vineyard. The Duke introduces Isabella and Mariana to each other and tells Mariana to go with Isabella who will explain an idea they have to make her happy again. The two women return and Mariana agrees to the plan if the friar (Duke) agrees that she should. The Duke tells her he urges her to do it, and she should not fear because she is not committing sin because Angelo "is [her] husband on a precontract;/ To bring [them] this together, 'tis no sin."

Act 4, Scene 1 Analysis

The Duke's plan is coming to fruition. The most striking aspect of this scene is the Duke's assurance to Mariana that she will not be committing a sin by sleeping with Angelo because they were engaged. Mariana's worry about this possibility is the reason she says she will agree to the plan if the friar, supposedly a man of the church, tells her it is okay. In technical terms, she would be committing sin, since the church did not recognize engagements ("precontracts") as sufficient reason to engage in sexual relations; the ceremony must occur first, which is why Angelo is able to arrest Claudio. The Duke disregards this fact in order to carry out his plan. It is possible he believes Mariana will be forgiven the sin because she will marry Angelo soon after. However, if something should go wrong, Mariana will have lost her virginity and, as an upper-class woman, her chances at marrying someone else will not be as good. The Duke is either unconcerned with what happens to Mariana, or has complete confidence in his ability to make events occur as he wishes. As a Duke, and the quasi-playwright in the play, the Duke's confidence is understandable.

Act 4, Scene 2

Act 4, Scene 2 Summary

At the prison, the Provost asks Pompey if he will work as an assistant to the executioner, Abhorson. If he refuses, Pompey will have to serve out his imprisonment and endure the whipping to which he was sentenced. Pompey agrees and discusses the trade of execution with Abhorson. Pompey argues that prostitution is also a trade because prostitutes are like artists. The Provost calls for Barnardine, a murderer, and Claudio who are to be executed tomorrow morning. Claudio tells the Provost that Barnardine cannot be woken.

The Duke, still disguised enters. The Provost asks if he has a pardon for Claudio. The Duke does not have a pardon, but is confident that Angelo will send a pardon (because he knows he is supposed to sleep with "Isabella" in return for Claudio's life). A messenger enters with a message from Angelo. The message tells the Provost to execute Claudio by four o'clock and send him Claudio's head by 5 o'clock. Then Barnadine is to be executed at 8:00.

The Duke asks who Barnardine is, and if he is prepared for his death. The Provost answers that Barnardine has been a prisoner for nine years. He does not care what goes on around him, and he is drunk most of the time. He has been led out for execution a number of times, but he does not care. The Duke then asks the Provost to delay Claudio's execution by four days by executing Barnardine and sending his head to Angelo instead. He says that if the Provost shaves the head and ties the beard, Angelo will not tell the difference. The Provost is reluctant to go against orders, but the Duke presents a letter bearing the Duke's official seal, and tells the Provost that he can consider this order as coming from the Duke himself. As they leave to prepare, it is almost dawn.

Act 4, Scene 2 Analysis

In the conversation between Pompey, the Provost and Abhorson, we learn that Pompey has only been sentenced to an unspecified term in prison and a whipping, even though he has been "an unlawful bawd for time out of/ mind." It appears that Angelo, although strict, has no comprehension of justice, since Claudio's crime is far lighter but his sentence far heavier.

The letter from Angelo, which the Duke understandably expects to be a pardon, reveals that Angelo's corruption goes deeper than sexual weakness, and includes blatant lying and disregard for promises he has made. At this point, we can only assume that Mariana, as Isabella, has carried out her side of the bargain to save Claudio's life. Having gotten what he wanted, Angelo orders the execution to occur sooner than originally planned. In Act II Scene II, we saw how Angelo felt guilty for his attraction to

Isabella. We will later see that his guilt is even greater after having slept with her (or so he believes), and rather than punish himself, he orders Claudio executed as soon as possible.

Angelo's corruption obviously goes deeper than the Duke expects. He does not believe that Angelo will break his part of the bargain, and does not believe he could order a man punished for the same crime he just committed. The Duke is wrong, and as a result, he must quickly make changes to the plan, which he does by asking the Provost to execute Barnardine and say it is Claudio. Unlike Angelo, the Provost does show mercy, as well as loyalty in that he will not agree until he is shown the Duke's seal. As with Mariana, the Duke puts the Provost in great danger if he should be found out.

Act 4, Scene 3

Act 4, Scene 3 Summary

Abhorson tells Pompey to bring Barnardine out to be executed. Pompey cannot get him to move because he wants to sleep. Finally, Barnardine comes out on his own and refuses to be executed that day because he has been drinking too heavily the night before: "I will not consent to die this day, that's certain." The Duke, as friar, agrees that it would be a crime to execute a man in such a condition. Luckily, a man named Ragozine, "a most notorious pirate," died the night before from a fever. They could cut off his head and send it to Angelo as Claudio's; he looks much more like Claudio than Barnardine did anyway. The Duke calls Ragozine's death an accident provided by heaven.

The Provost takes Ragozine's head to Angelo. Isabella enters and asks after her brother. The Duke tells her that Angelo has had him executed and his head has just been sent to him for proof. Isabella says she will go to Angelo and "pluck out his eyes." The Duke tells her to put her faith in heaven, and wait for the Duke who is returning home tomorrow. He advises her to tell her story to the Duke and he will revenge Claudio for her. He then gives her a letter to take to Friar Peter, which asks him to meet the Duke at Mariana's house that night.

Lucio enters and tells Isabella he is sorry for her loss of Claudio. He professes his love for her brother and says that if the "old fantastical Duke of dark corners had been at home, [Claudio] would have lived." The Duke berates Lucio for his slander of the Duke, and Lucio answers, "Friar, thou knowest not the Duke so well as I do."

Act 4, Scene 3 Analysis

The Duke's role as playwright is more fully developed here. As his plan goes wrong, he improvises solutions and directs the people around him as needed. It is interesting that he is able to procure everyone's compliance to his wishes. He often achieves this by relying on his identity as a friar. He tells Isabella, "trust not my holy order/ If I pervert your course." She trusts him because he is supposedly an honest man of the church. Mariana trusts him for the same reason. Throughout the play, there has been a sense that the Duke is abusing the role of friar for his own ends. He told Mariana she was safe from a sin she really is not safe from, and helped Claudio prepare for death when he is not qualified to do so. In this scene, he tells Isabella her brother has been executed. There is no reason for such an action, other than to serve his desire for more drama when she learns her brother is alive. At first, it seemed that the Duke disguised himself in order to do good; but it seems that he is more interested in manipulating the other characters, and bringing about a certain result than helping others.

The scene ends on a comic note with Lucio again insulting the Duke without knowing it. He admits to getting a woman pregnant and lying about it, as we already heard from Mistress Overdone. These occurrences keep the reader wondering what kind of punishment Lucio is going to get once the Duke finally reveals him self. The scene also shows that the Duke cannot control or manipulate everyone around him while in disguise. Lucio refuses to admit that the Duke is nothing like what he says he is.

Act 4, Scene 4

Act 4, Scene 4 Summary

Escalus and Angelo read over a letter just received from the Duke. All of the letters they have received from him contradict each other, and the two men are worried for the Duke's sanity. They are also confused at the contents of the current letter, which directs them to meet him at the gate of the city, and proclaim an hour ahead of his arrival that anyone with a complaint against Angelo or Escalus' actions should present their complaint to the Duke in the street. Escalus explains that the last directive makes sense because that way no one can later make unfair claims.

When Escalus leaves, Angelo worries about what he has done with "Isabella," wondering if she will bring her case to the Duke out of revenge because he failed to keep his side of the bargain. He concludes that he is too powerful for her to do such a thing, but laments that de did not let Claudio live.

Act 4, Scene 4 Analysis

Escalus and Angelo are confused as to why the Duke wants them to meet him at the gate of the city to relinquish their power to him. By now the reader understands the Duke's partiality for drama, which he has obviously planned for his return. Escalus and Angelo's worry that the Duke may be going mad shows that they know something is going on, and the Duke is not really away in Poland or Russia on business.

Angelo's soliloquy reveals his worry that he may be caught for his crime. His confidence quickly overcomes his worry in his powerful position, which puts him above the law, or so he thinks. His regret at having executed Claudio shows that he may have gained some notion of mercy due to his own failings, but he has yet to prove he has learned from what he has done.

Act 4, Scene 5

Act 4, Scene 5 Summary

The Duke speaks with Friar Peter, the one person who knows that the Duke has been disguised. He gives Friar Peter some letters, which he is to deliver to the Duke at the agreed upon time. He tells the Friar to act according the plan the Duke has laid out. He then asks him to call together some men to bring trumpets to the gate.

Act 4, Scene 5 Analysis

It is apparent that the Duke's scheme has become more complicated, but we are not let in on what he is planning. The Duke's role as playwright or the director of action is seen in its full light here. He continues to manipulate those around him, as well as the reader at this point, who can only wait to see what will happen.

Act 4, Scene 6

Act 4, Scene 6 Summary

Mariana and Isabella discuss the roles they have been assigned in the Duke's scheme. Isabella has been directed to accuse Angelo, but thinks Mariana should be the one to do it since she actually slept with him. Mariana urges Isabella to do as the "Friar," i.e. the Duke, says. Isabella has also been warned that the Friar (Duke) may not take her side at first. His reason for this is only that "'tis a physic/ That's bitter to sweet end." In other words, the result will be worth the pain. Friar Peter enters to take Isabella and Mariana to the gate because the Duke is entering.

Act 4, Scene 6 Analysis

More of the Duke's planning is seen here. While some of the planning is revealed, the Duke's motivations for wanting things a certain way are hidden. Why does he want Isabella instead of Mariana to accuse Angelo? We do not know. The one thing we are told is the Duke's reasoning for not taking Isabella's side right away when she makes her accusation: "'tis a physic/ That's bitter to sweet end." We have seen that the Duke often subscribes to this philosophy. It is the same reason he told Isabella her brother had been executed. It is also the basic structure of the play: the characters suffer, but everything is resolved in the end; it is the result that matters--not what happened in between.

The amount of suffering in this play, and the needlessness of a lot of it, makes viewing the play as a comedy difficult. That is why this play is commonly referred to as a 'problem play' or 'problem comedy.' This kind of play conforms to traditional comedic guidelines, but the events of the play lend a sense of tragedy to it, making it problematic to classify.

Act 5, Scene 1

Act 5, Scene 1 Summary

The Duke arrives (as himself) at the town gate and greets Escalus and Angelo warmly. He tells them he has heard good things about their enforcement of justice while he was away. Isabella kneels before the Duke and begs that he hear her complaint and that he give her justice. The Duke replies that Angelo can handle her complaint. Isabella begs the Duke to hear her because Angelo is "a murderer," "an adulterous thief," "an hypocrite, a virgin violator." Angelo suggests Isabella is mad. Isabella argues that she had others to support her story including Lucio.

Isabella tells her story, but excludes everything to do with the "Friar" whose plan she followed. She tells the story as if she slept with Angelo. The Duke pretends not to believe Isabella, and accuses her of purposefully trying to slander Angelo's good name. When she tries to leave in despair, the Duke orders her arrested and taken to prison. He asks who sent her to tell such a story. She replies that Friar Lodowick, the Duke's alter ego, sent her. The Duke sends some attendants to find the friar. Lucio says he knows the friar and does not like him because he spoke badly of the Duke.

Friar Peter steps in and defends Friar Lodowick, and berates Isabella for slandering Angelo. He says that Friar Lodowick is sick, but he sent him to tell what he knows about Isabella. He says that what he has to say will prove Isabella is lying.

Mariana is brought in as a witness, but is veiled. She cannot take off her veil unless told to do so by her husband. She says she is not married, but she has 'known' her husband, though he is not aware of it. She claims her husband is the man charged with fornication by Isabella. She states she can prove her husband is innocent of the charges because he was with her at the time he is accused of committing the crime. Angelo is confused at this statement and tells Mariana to unveil, which she does.

Angelo confesses he was engaged to marry Mariana five years ago, but has not seen her since then. He thinks Mariana and Isabella have been instructed to frame him by someone else, and wants to investigate the matter. Friar Lodowick is sent for to act as a witness, and the Duke exits, leaving Angelo in charge of the case.

The Duke re-enters disguised again as Friar Lodowick. Escalus asks if he put Isabella and Mariana up to slandering Angelo. The Duke denies doing so. The Duke/Friar also says that the Duke is unjust to put the case into the hands of the man who has been accused. Escalus orders The Duke arrested and put on the rack. The Duke argues that they cannot arrest him because he is not a subject there. Angelo asks Lucio to testify against the Duke/Friar. Lucio tells the Duke/Friar to admit the bad things he said about the Duke, to which the Duke replies, "I protest I love the Duke as I love myself."

Escalus orders the Duke arrested and Angelo tells Lucio to help the Provost restrain the Duke. Lucio verbally abuses the Duke and pulls off his hood. The Duke is revealed as him self and orders Lucio held. He tells Angelo that if he has anything to say for himself to speak up, or all will soon be revealed by the Duke himself. Angelo admits everything the Duke knows is true, and only asks for a quick execution. The Duke orders Angelo to marry Mariana instantly. Angelo, Mariana, and Friar Peter all leave to do as the Duke ordered.

The Duke apologizes to Isabella for not saving her brother, but claims it was only because of the swiftness of his execution; his plan was to save him. He then announces that because Angelo unjustly executed Claudio when he himself was guilty of the same, if not worse crime, that he shall be executed. Mariana is upset at the decision, and asks why Angelo would be ordered to marry her if only to be executed the same day? The Duke replies that he wanted to save her reputation, and provide her with Angelo's fortune, which she is entitled to as his widow, to find herself a better husband. Mariana replies that she wants no other husband. At Mariana's pleading, Isabel begs the Duke not to execute Angelo. She argues that her brother's death was just, whereas Angelo's would not be.

Escalus tells Angelo he is disappointed at what he has done. Angelo replies that he is too and desires death more than mercy. The Duke asks The Provost why Claudio was beheaded at such a strange hour. The Provost replies that he received a private message to do so. The Duke fires him for abiding by a private message. The Provost says a man is still alive in the prison that was supposed to die. Barnardine is brought forth and pardoned of his offences, and Friar Peter is to advise him how to behave better. The Provost brought another man, muffled, along with Barnardine who looks like Claudio. The man is un-muffled, and is in fact Claudio. The Duke then asks for Isabella's hand in marriage.

The Duke says he cannot pardon Lucio for his slandering of him. Lucio defends himself by saying he was just saying what everyone else says. The Duke decides that it will be proclaimed all over town that any woman wronged by Lucio should come and be married to him. Lucio pleads with the Duke, saying he does not want to be married to a whore, but cannot change his mind.

The Duke encourages Angelo to love Mariana, thanks Escalus for his goodness, and thanks the Provost for his secrecy. He then tells Isabella he would like to speak to her further about his marriage proposal.

Act 5, Scene 1 Analysis

All of the Duke's machinations come to a head in this scene. All of his manipulating and scheming are about to pay off. When he first enters the town, everything he says is full of dramatic irony. He greets Angelo warmly, and tells him he has heard wonderful things of him during his absence, which we the audience know to be false. His appointing Angelo to oversee a case in which he is accused is unfair, but what we have come to

expect from the Duke since it will serve to increase the drama. The Duke's verbal battles with Lucio, while disguised as a Friar are also extremely ironic since Lucio accuses the Duke of slander against himself. As a result, the Duke's replies to Lucio's accusations, "I love the Duke as I love myself," and "the Duke/ Dare no more stretch this finger of mine than he/ Dare rack his own," are very funny.

Angelo's refusal to admit what he has done when Isabella accuses him shows that he has still not reformed his corrupt ways. He would prefer Isabella, Mariana and Friar Lodowick be unjustly punished than to admit his crime. The fact that that almost happens shows how easily justice can be corrupted and causes the reader to wonder what would have happened in such a case had the Duke not had inside information. His quick repentance once he finds that the Duke knows everything does nothing to redeem him, since he would have otherwise allowed the women and the friar to be imprisoned. However, his request for death, even without a trial, shows how strong his guilt is. He knows he deserves death. His statement that he would prefer death to mercy is most likely sincere.

Although Isabella begs for mercy for Angelo, it takes her some time to do so. Mariana has to implore Isabella twice to help her convince the Duke, saying finally, "O Isabel, will you not lend a knee?" suggesting that she does not think Isabella will consent to help her. When she finally does join Mariana's entreaties, we do not see the impassioned pleading offered when begging Angelo for her brother's life. It is not surprising that Isabella she might want to see Angelo die, since she believed her brother deserved his punishment for a much lesser crime.

The Duke continues to let Isabella believe her brother is dead, a seemingly harsh thing to do. Again, the Duke is attempting to create as much drama as possible. However, his proposing marriage to Isabella the moment Claudio is revealed to be alive is somewhat disturbing, as is the fact that Isabella never speaks again in the play; we are never allowed to see her reaction to her brother being alive, nor her reaction to the Duke's proposal. Because the play is a comedy, most people assume it is implied that Isabella accepts the Duke's offer. However, it should be remembered that Isabella's plan was to enter a convent. Even the Duke himself does not consider the matter settled, since at the end of the play he asks to speak with Isabella further about his proposal.

Since the play is a comedy, it is expected that marriage, which is usually a happy event in an Elizabethan comedy, will occur for at least some of the characters. Some of the characters are married or will be married, but for many, it is not a happy conclusion. For the "bad" characters, marriage is used as a punishment. Lucio is punished for slandering the Duke by being forced to marry a prostitute. Angelo is punished for his crime against Isabella and her brother by being forced to marry Mariana. She is happy with the outcome, but he is not. He says to Escalus, "I crave death more willingly than mercy." If shown mercy, he must marry Mariana. It is interesting that in this play, marriage is considered a tragic outcome by some of the characters. The most pressing question concerning this theme is: What does Isabella think about a possible marriage to the Duke? Would she see it as a happy or a tragic event? Her views on sex and her previous devotion to convent life would suggest she might find it tragic. However, that

would group her with the "bad" characters. Conventionally, such a match would be extremely advantageous for her. Again, that would assign her as a "good" character. Is she necessarily good having chosen virginity over her brother's life? It is possible that Shakespeare leaves the question of her marriage to the Duke open because of these considerations.

Lastly, the play's title is ironic. The phrase 'measure for measure' is a concept of justice similar to that of "an eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burning for burning, wound for wound, stripe for stripe," which comes from the Bible. It suggests that someone who commits a crime will receive punishment equal to his or her crime. However, this concept is never properly carried out in *Measure for Measure*. Claudio is sentenced too heavily for his crime, while worse offenders like Pompey receive light sentences. Barnardine, who we are told is a murderer and perpetual drunk, is allowed to go free with only an admonition to reform his ways. Although the Duke restores order at the end of the play, it is clear that justice has not really been carried out, and most likely will not.

Characters

Abhorson

He is the executioner at the prison where Claudio is being held. His role in the play is a minor one. In IV.ii.21-60 when the provost offers him the bawd Pompey as an apprentice, Abhorson initially objects, arguing that Pompey will "discredit" the executioner's profession. In IV.iii.20-65, Abhorson is prevented from executing Barnardine because that prisoner is too drunk to be prepared for death. While Abhorson's encounters with Pompey and Barnardine are comical, his presence in the play also functions as a grim reminder that Claudio has been sentenced to death.

Angelo

He is one of Duke Vincentio's assistants (the other, more senior, assistant is Escalus). On the pretext that he must leave Vienna for a while, the duke deputizes Angelo, praising his virtues and giving him authority over the administration of the laws in the city. When Angelo protests that he is not yet ready for such responsibility ("Let there be some more test made of my mettle" [I.i.48], he suggests), the duke insists that he accept the commission. Angelo's first actions as deputy are to close down Vienna's brothels and to arrest and sentence to death Claudio for impregnating his fiancee, Juliet. When Claudio's sister, Isabella, begs Angelo to be lenient, the deputy is excited by her purity, and tries to coerce her into having sex with him in exchange for her brother's life.

Angelo has a reputation for rigid self-control and for supporting a strict moral code. Escalus says that Angelo is "most strait in virtue" (II.i.9). The duke describes his deputy as "precise," or puritanical (I.iii.50). Dissolute Lucio complains that Angelo is so cold and prudish that his blood "is very snow-broth" (I.iv.58) and claims that the deputy controls his passions by fasting and studying. Angelo himself argues that people must see others punished before they themselves are willing to behave, and that being lenient with criminals only makes them disrespectful of law and order:

We must not make a scarecrow of the law,
Setting it up to fear the birds of prey,
And let it keep one shape, till custom make it
Their perch and not their terror
(II.i.1-4)

Critics have observed that despite these testimonials to his strictness, Angelo's apparent goodness and self-control are subject to doubt early in the play□even *before* he propositions Isabella. In I.iii.50-54, for example, the duke explains that part of his reason for deputizing Angelo with full authority to govern Vienna is to discover whether such power will corrupt this "seemingly" incorruptible man. And well before his sister

ever meets Angelo, Claudio casts doubt on the purity of the deputy's motives by complaining that Angelo must have resurrected the "neglected" law against fornication simply because he hopes to make a name for himself (I.ii. 170-71). Later in the play, the duke reveals that Angelo was once engaged to a gentlewoman named Mariana, but when her brother and her dowry were lost at sea, Angelo abandoned Mariana, "left her in her tears, and dried not one of them with his comfort," and, in order to break his engagement, he accused Mariana of being unchaste (Ill.i.225-26).

When they try to persuade Angelo to be merciful with Claudio, both Escalus and Isabella reason that if Angelo were ever tempted, he might fall like anyone else. Isabella in fact takes the argument a step further. Referring to her brother, Claudio, who is driven by affection rather than by rules, Isabella asserts that "If he had been as you, and you as he, / You would have slipp'd like him, but he, like you, / Would not have been so stern" (II.ii.64-66). When Angelo finally *does* fall, he compounds his offense with hypocrisy, leading Isabella to exclaim that "This outward-sainted deputy ... is yet a devil" (III.i.88, 91).

Angelo's own theories concerning his loss of self-control have to do with his absolutism□or his insistence that something is either right or wrong, good or evil, but never in-between. As he puts it, he is tempted to badness by Isabella's goodness: "Most dangerous / Is that temptation that doth goad us on / To sin in loving virtue" (II.ii. 180-82). Once he surrenders to temptation□that is, once he propositions Isabella□Angelo decides that there is no going back: if he can't be completely good, then he has to be completely wicked. "I have begun," Angelo declares, "And now I give my sensual race the rein" (II.iv. 159-60). At this point, Angelo seems determined to do all he can to abuse his power. He warns Isabella that if she refuses to submit to him, he will make certain that her brother dies a long and painful death (II.iv. 163-67). After the bed-trick, when he sleeps with Mariana but thinks he is with Isabella, he breaks his word and orders Claudio's execution, worried that Isabella's brother might otherwise try to avenge her rape (IV.iv.28-32).

Critics have observed that *Measure for Measure* is, among other things, a play about self-knowledge. In IV.iv.33-34, Angelo confronts his feelings of remorse for having (so he thinks) sent Claudio to his death after coercing his sister, Isabella: "Alack, when once our grace we have forgot, / Nothing goes right□we would, and we would not."

Later, when Isabella accuses him in front of the duke, Angelo feels compelled to continue in his lies, and claims that Isabella is insane (V.i.33). When Mariana calls herself his wife, Angelo renews his accusation that she is promiscuous, and complains that both Isabella and Mariana are "informal," or mentally unbalanced (V.i.236).

Once his abuses are presented in public, Angelo asks the duke to give him the same, absolute penalty that he had intended to impose on Claudio:

Then, good Prince,
No longer session hold upon my shame,
But let my trial be mine own confession.

Immediate sentence then, and sequent death,
Is all the grace I beg.
(V.i.370-74)

During his final speech in the play, penitent but still absolute, Angelo continues to ask for death rather than mercy (V.i.475-77), but the duke chooses to let him live, and orders him instead to love his new wife, Mariana.

Attendants

Anonymous, unnamed characters with small or no speaking parts who nevertheless contribute to the atmosphere of the play with its emphasis on city life and law and order.

Barnardine

He is a prisoner at the jail where Claudio is being held, and like Claudio, he has been sentenced to death. In contrast to Claudio, however, he is a hardened criminal. The provost describes him as "A man that apprehends death no more dreadfully but as a drunken sleep, careless, reakless, and fearless of what's past, present, or to come" (IV.ii. 142- 44). Barnardine's neutral attitude to death differs markedly from the terror of death which Claudio confesses to his sister in III.i.115-131. In IV.ii, the duke arranges with the provost to have Barnardine executed in place of Claudio, but in IV.iii.43-63, Barnardine insists that he is too drunk to die, and comically refuses to be executed. Duke Vincentio pardons Barnardine at the close of the play (V.i.482- 85), hoping that he will take advantage of this merciful treatment to lead a better life.

Boy

He is a servant to Mariana. The boy appears only once□in IV.i. 1-9□when he sings a melancholy song of false love ("Take, O, take those lips away") at the request of the forsaken Mariana as she sits in seclusion at the moated grange. In IV.i.7, Mariana sends the boy away so that she can talk to the disguised duke without distraction.

Citizen

Anonymous, unnamed characters with small or no speaking parts who nevertheless contribute to the atmosphere of the play with its emphasis on city life and law and order.

Claudio

He is Isabella's brother and Juliet's fiance. On orders from the newly deputized Angelo, Claudio is arrested and sentenced to death for having sex with Juliet out of wedlock. As he is being led to prison, Claudio bitterly observes that the law under which he has been

arrested has not been enforced for nineteen years, and suggests that Angelo has revived "the drowsy and neglected" statute simply to make a name for himself (I.ii.170). In I.ii. 176-86,Claudio asks Lucio to inform Isabella of his plight so that she will persuade Angelo to be lenient with her brother. Claudio thus sets in motion the central conflict in the play, since Isabella's pleas ultimately arouse Angelo's lust.

Claudio has been described as affectionate and dependent upon others for guidance. His graphic speculations in prison about the afterlife reveal an overwhelming terror of death□especially now that he is so close to it:

Ay, but to die, and go we know not where;
To lie in cold obstruction, and to rot;
To bathe in fiery floods, or to reside
In thrilling region of thick-ribbed ice;
To be imprison'd in the viewless winds
And blown with restless violence round about
The pendant world; or to be worse than worst
Of those that lawless and incertain thought
Imagine howling□'tis too horrible!
(III.i.117-18; 121-27)

It has been pointed out that just before Isabella arrives to tell her brother about Angelo's proposition, the duke (in his disguise as Friar Lodowick) successfully reconciles Claudio to the fact that he will be executed.' To sue to live, I find I seek to die, / And seeking death, find life. Let it [death] come on," Claudio declares with resignation (III.i.42- 43). However, once his sister informs him of Angelo's demand for sex with her in exchange for her brother's life, Claudio's acceptance of death weakens. The possibility of survival is impossible for Claudio to resist, and he tries to convince himself that Angelo's proposition is not as bad as Isabella thinks it is. "If it were damnable," Claudio argues, why would "wise" Angelo risk being "perdurably fin'd" just for a moment of pleasure? (III.i.112, 114).

When Claudio begs Isabella to save his life by sleeping with Angelo (III.i.132-35), she recoils in disgust. Shortly afterward, he feels sorry for having made the suggestion, and says remorsefully to the disguised duke, "Let me ask my sister pardon. I am so out of love with life that I will sue to be rid of it" (III.i.171-72).

Duke (Duke Vincentio):

See Vincentio

Elbow

He is a constable, or policeman. In II.i, he arrests the bawd Pompey and the foolish gentleman Froth and brings them to Angelo and Escalus for judgment. Elbow is a comic figure who tends to speak in malapropisms. (A malapropism is an error in speech which

occurs when one word is incorrectly and unintentionally used in place of another, often with a comical result. So, for example, when Elbow calls Pompey and Froth "two notorious benefactors" [II.i.50], he actually means "malefactors.") Elbow's explanation of what happened to his pregnant wife when she encountered Pompey and Froth is so confusing, and Pompey's defense is so long-winded, that Angelo leaves in frustration and Escalus finally lets the two offenders go, but not before discovering that the incompetent Elbow owes his continual reappointment as constable to the laziness and corruption of his fellow citizens. This scene occurs just before Isabella's fateful meeting with Angelo in II.ii, and thus serves as comic relief. (Comic relief is a humorous speech, episode, or scene which is meant to alleviate the tension that precedes it or□as it does in this instance□to heighten the seriousness that follows it.) Elbow arrests Pompey once more in III.ii, but this time there is enough evidence to send the bawd to jail.

Escalus

He is Duke Vincentio's subordinate, and while the duke is away, he acts as Angelo's "secondary," or assistant (I.i.46). Although "Old Escalus" has more seniority in office than Angelo has, the duke passes over Escalus to promote Angelo as deputy□ probably to test the younger man's mettle (see the Duke's conversation with Friar Thomas about Angelo in I.iii.50-54). Undisturbed by Angelo's promotion, Escalus remarks sincerely to the duke that "If any in Vienna be of worth / To undergo such ample grace and honor, / It is Lord Angelo" (Li.22- 24).

Critics have noted that the compassionate and honest Escalus serves as a foil to the absolute and increasingly hypocritical Angelo. (A foil is someone who highlights someone else's traits by providing a contrast to those traits.) Indeed, in II.i.6-16, Escalus urges Angelo to be merciful with Claudio, reminding the deputy that Claudio is a gentleman who "had a most noble father," and prophetically suggesting to him that, had he ever been in Claudio's place, Angelo might have likewise broken the law:

Let but your honor know
(Whom I believe to be most strait in virtue)
That in the working of your own affections,
Had time coher'd with place, or place with
wishing,
Or that the resolute acting of your blood
Could have attain'd th' effect of your own
purpose,
Whether you had not sometime in your life
Err'd in this point which now you censure him,
And pull'd the law upon you.
(II.i.8-16)

Angelo is unconvinced, and refuses to revoke Claudio's sentence.

Alternatively, some critics focus on the practical aspects of Escalus's governing style, noting that while Angelo is too harsh, his assistant is too lenient. They argue that Escalus's philosophy of law and order "Let us be keen, and rather cut a little / Than fall, and bruise to death" (II.i.5-6)is an ineffective method of dealing with such hardened criminals as Pompey. When, for example, Escalus releases him with simply a warning, Pompey declares in an aside that he will remain a bawd as long as it continues to be a lucrative trade (II.i.253- 54). (An aside occurs when a character speaks to the audience without being overheard by the other characters onstage.)

Thus while Escalus is admirable, he is also ineffective. He sets professional criminals free, but is unable to stop Angelo from condemning young Claudio to death for sleeping with Juliet who is, according to Renaissance common law, "fast [his] wife" (I.ii.147).

Francisca

She is a nun at the convent which has accepted Isabella as a novice. She appears at the beginning of I.iv, instructing Isabella on the convent's rules and privileges. Francisca's role in the play is brief (she is never even referred to by name in the dialogue); nevertheless, her remark in I.iv.9 that Isabella is as "yet unsworn" into the sisterhood of nuns makes it clear to the audience later, at the close of the play, that Isabella is free to marry the duke. What is more, Isabella's observation to Francisca that the convent's austere rules are not severe enough tells us muchvery early in the playabout the strictness of Isabella's character.

Friar Peter

See Peter

Friar Thomas

See Thomas

Froth

He is a "foolish gentleman" who, along with the bawd Pompey, is arrested by Elbow at a brothel run by Mistress Overdone, and brought before Angelo and Escalus for sentencing (II.i.41-212). Froth remains silent during most of Pompey's rambling excuses, yet says enough to indicate that he is a gullible man living on a moderate income and is often cheated by "tapsters" (bawds) such as Pompey. Escalus lets him go with a warning to stay away from bawds and brothels.

Gentlemen

These two gentlemen (1.Gentleman and 2.Gentleman) are friends of Lucio who appear briefly with him in I.ii. The three of them tease each other about their fondness for brothels and the likelihood that one or other of them has by now contracted a venereal disease. They are also present when the brothel-keeper Mistress Overdone announces that Claudio has been arrested and sentenced to death for fornication, and they exit with Lucio to find out whether Overdone's story is true. According to the stage directions, the two gentlemen reappear with Lucio shortly afterward in I.ii when he questions Claudio about his arrest.

These two gentlemen with their nonchalantly lewd conversation and their familiarity with Mistress Overdone represent the moral "liberty" (I.iii.29) that has sprouted in Vienna under Duke Vincentio's rule and which the duke hopes will be weeded out by Angelo. Their presence in I.ii, occurring as it does immediately after Angelo is deputized in I.i, demonstrates both Angelo's swiftness to act and his misguided sense of proportion, for by the end of I.ii, the new deputy has arrested Claudio for impregnating his common-law wife, Juliet, but has not jailed two men who are self-avowedly dissolute.

Isabella

She is Claudio's sister. She becomes a novice of the order of Saint Clare on the same day that her brother is arrested and condemned to death for fornication. Claudio sends his friend Lucio to seek out Isabella at the convent and ask her to beg the deputy, Angelo, for her brother's life. "In her youth," Claudio explains, "There is a prone and speechless dialect, / Such as move men; beside, she hath prosperous art / When she will play with reason and discourse, / And well she can persuade" (I.ii.182-86). As it.turns out, Isabella's youthful beauty and skill at "reason and discourse" do not convince Angelo to release Claudio, but they do arouse his lust. When Angelo suggests that she have sex with him in return for her brother's life, Isabella refuses in disgust, and goes to tell Claudio that he must prepare to die. She is confident that her brother will agree with her rejection of Angelo, because Claudio has "in him such a mind of honor / That had he twenty heads to tender down / On twenty bloody blocks, he'ld yield them up, / Before his sister should her body stoop / To such abhorr'd pollution" (II.iv. 179-83). She is horrified when, instead of sharing her outrage, her brother pleads with her to save his life by sleeping with Angelo. Calling him a "beast" and a "faithless coward" for wanting to live at the cost of his "own sister's shame," she concludes that it would be best after all if Claudio died quickly (III.i. 135, 136, 139, 150). Isabella's behavior in the play has been the subject of negative as well as positive assessments. It has been pointed out that she gives up too easily in her efforts to persuade Angelo to spare her brother, and that Lucio has to remind her again and again to argue her case more forcefully (II.ii.29-55). Critics have also asserted that Isabella's ideas about right and wrong are too extreme and that she mistakenly assumes that everyone shares her beliefs□when in fact, the only other character who believes in absolutes (absolutists follow the theory that something is either right or wrong, good or evil, but never

inbetween) is her adversary, Angelo. Critics argue further that Isabella is coldly insensitive in her treatment of the terrified Claudio—angrily rejecting him after he begs her to sleep with Angelo, and even suggesting that her brother is illegitimate since, according to her, he is too dishonorable a person to be her father's son:

Heaven shield my mother play'd my father fair!
For such a warped slip of wilderness
Ne'er issu'd from his blood. Take my defiance!
I'll pray a thousand prayers for thy death,
No word to save thee.
(III.i. 140-42, 145-46)

Finally, the character of Isabella has been criticized for inconsistencies in her behavior. For example, her willingness to participate in the "bedtrick" ' (when Mariana secretly sleeps with Angelo in place of Isabella) contradicts the young novice's ardent belief in honesty. Another inconsistency occurs at the close of the play when, at Mariana's urging, Isabella speaks in Angelo's defense. Still thinking that her brother has been executed, Isabella argues that Claudio "had but justice, / In that he did the thing for which he died," but that by contrast and thanks to the bed-trick, Angelo's "act did not o'ertake his bad intent"—he did not sleep with Isabella as he had planned—and therefore he does not deserve to die (V.i.448-49, 451). Critics point out that Isabella's defense here is inconsistent because while Angelo did not have sex with Isabella, he *did* have sex with Mariana, and his relationship to her is similar to Claudio's relationship to Juliet. Those critics who view Isabella in a favorable light argue that she is forced to cope as best she can in a society where she has very little power. They point out that initially, Isabella is tolerant of Claudio and Juliet's predicament, and that her views become inflexible only after she is frightened by Angelo's lust. Before she has spoken with Angelo, and in response to Lucio's news that Juliet is pregnant by Claudio, Isabella declares, "O, let him marry her" (I.iv.49). Later, when she tries to persuade Angelo to be lenient, she tells him that nothing is as admirable as mercy:

No ceremony that to great ones 'longs,
Not the king's crown, nor the deputed sword,
The marshal's truncheon, nor the judge's robe,
Become them with one half so good a grace
As mercy does.
(II.ii.59-63)

Left alone with her thoughts after Angelo has made his proposition, Isabella realizes that she is no match for Angelo's authority or his reputation for integrity, and there is nothing she can do but complain to herself about his hypocrisy:

To whom should I complain? Did I tell this,
Who would believe me? O perilous mouths,
That bear in them one and the self-same tongue,
Either of condemnation or approof,
Bidding the law make curtsy to their will,

Hooking both right and wrong to th'appetite,
To follow as it draws!
(II.iv.171-77)

Critics sympathetic to Isabella also note that although she is ultimately saved from being raped by Angelo, she is nevertheless discouraged by her society from leading the convent life she has chosen: at the end of the play, the powerful Duke Vincentio proposes marriage to her. While Isabella does not respond to his proposal, some audiences and critics assume from Isabella's silence that she will marry him.

Juliet

She is Claudio's fiancee who was impregnated by him and who, like him, is imprisoned by Angelo for fornication. Unlike Claudio, Juliet is not sentenced to death□probably because she is pregnant.

Juliet appears three times during the play: in I.ii she is seen being led to prison with Claudio; in II.iii, during her only speaking part, she expresses her love for Claudio as well as her repentance; finally, at the close of the play in V.i, she is reunited with Claudio, and the two of them are ordered by the duke to get formally married. Juliet's importance in the play is primarily visual: on their way to prison, Claudio remarks that his and Juliet's "most mutual entertainment / With character too gross is writ on Juliet" (I.ii. 154-55)□in other words, Juliet's obvious pregnancy is the proof Angelo uses to imprison her and to sentence Claudio to death.

Justice

He is a minor character whose sole appearance occurs in II.i, at a court of justice where Angelo and Escalus are presiding over cases. Although he is introduced as early as the stage directions of II.i, he remains silent until II.i.277, when he answers Escalus's question about what time of day it is, and accepts his invitation to dinner. His remark to Escalus that "Lord Angelo is severe" (II.i.282) contributes to our overall impression of the deputy's harshness.

Lords

Anonymous, unnamed characters with small or no speaking parts who nevertheless contribute to the atmosphere of the play with its emphasis on city life and law and order.

Lucio

He is a fashionable, dissipated gentleman and a friend of Claudio. During his first appearance in the play, he jokes with two other gentleman about soldiers, prostitutes, and venereal disease. However, once he hears that Claudio has been arrested and

condemned to death, Lucio stops his joking and rushes off "to learn the truth of it" (I.ii.81).

Critics have pointed out that Lucio's character is a mixture of widely different traits. He is a gobetween, a good friend, a heartless lecher, a comic, a liar, and a gadfly who, unlike the other characters in the play, remains rebellious to the end. At his friend Claudio's request, Lucio convinces Isabella to speak to Angelo on her brother's behalf, then coaches her when he thinks she is not being persuasive enough during her interview with the deputy. He laughs when Pompey is sent to jail, and he is accused by Mistress Overdone of heartlessly abandoning a prostitute whom he promised to marry after getting her pregnant (III.ii.199-203). Escalus complains that Lucio is "a fellow of much license" (III.ii.204). By contrast, after Claudio's apparent execution, Lucio sympathizes with the "pretty Isabella" and mourns her brother's death, declaring, "By my troth, Isabel, Ilov'dthy brother" (IV.iii.151, 156).

Lucio gets himself into trouble when he slanders Duke Vincentio to his face. The duke is disguised at the time as Friar Lodowick and therefore unrecognizable. Falsely claiming to be his "inward," or close friend, Lucio calls Vincentio "the old fantastical Duke of dark corners," and describes him as a drunk, a lecher, and a coward (III.ii.130; IV.iii. 156-57). Lucio himself has been described as a comic foil to the duke and his search for virtue. (A foil highlights another character's traits by acting as a contrast to those traits.)

Some critics assert that Lucio is never fooled by the duke's disguise, and that he is simply taking the opportunity to give Vincentio some healthy criticism. Whether or not Lucio recognizes Vincentio, he winds up being soundly punished by the duke at the close of the play. Knowing that Lucio has impregnated and abandoned a prostitute, Vincentio calls him a "lewd fellow," and sentences him first to marry any woman "whom he begot with child" and afterward to be whipped and hanged (V.i.509, 511). When the duke later revokes the whipping and hanging sentences, Lucio protests that forcing someone to marry a prostitute is as bad as "pressing to death, whipping, and hanging" (V.i.522-23).

Mariana

She is Angelo's jilted fiancee. According to the duke (see III.i.209-223), Mariana and Angelo were engaged to be married until Mariana's brother, Frederick, was lost at sea along with his sister's dowry. Unwilling to marry Mariana without her dowry,, Angelo nullified their engagement with the false excuse that Mariana was not a virgin. It is revealed that Mariana still loves Angelo in spite of his treachery, and she lives out her days secluded in a "moated grange" (III.i.264).

In III.i.243-58, the duke convinces Isabella to participate in a "bed-trick," whereby she and Mariana secretly switch places so that it is Mariana who actually sleeps with Angelo□thus reconfirming her engagement with him as well as saving Isabella's honor, while at the same time setting up Angelo to commit the same act for which he has condemned Claudio to death.

Mariana herself first appears in the play at the moated grange in IV.i, when she is told about and agrees to the duke's plan. She appears for the last time at the close of the play in V.i, when she declares Angelo to be her husband, becomes formally married to him on orders from the duke, and passionately pleads for Angelo's life when the duke orders his execution.

Although her role is brief, Mariana is useful to the action of the play because, thanks to the bedtrick, she provides Isabella with a way out of her difficulties with Angelo. Perhaps more importantly, critics have noted that by convincing Isabella to join her in pleading for Angelo's life (V.i.429-453),

Mariana helps to soften the young novice's absolutist personality. Nevertheless, the bed-trick with which Mariana's character is identified increases the play's problematical nature, since this trick requires the strictly honest Isabella to be deceitful.

Mistress Overdone:

See Overdone

Nun

See Francisca

Officers

Anonymous, unnamed characters with small or no speaking parts who nevertheless contribute to the atmosphere of the play with its emphasis on city life and law and order.

Overdone (Mistress Overdone):

She runs a house of prostitution which is closed down as a result of the newly deputized Angelo's strict enforcement of Vienna's laws. According to the provost, Mistress Overdone has been a bawd for eleven years (III.ii. 196-97). In II.i.63-67 Elbow mentions that she has reopened her brothel under the guise of a bathhouse. She is arrested and sent to prison by Escalus in III.ii.190-206; at the same time, Escalus informs the provost that Angelo will not revoke Claudio's death sentence (III.ii.207-08).

Mistress Overdone is the first to deliver the news of Claudio's arrest (I.ii.60-73). In comparison to the death sentence placed on him, the punishment meted out to Mistress Overdone is lenient.

Peter (Friar Peter):

He is one of two friars in the play (the other is Friar Thomas□see Thomas). Friar Peter appears briefly in IV.v-vi and V.i. His central function is to help the duke orchestrate the final scene where Angelo's hypocrisy is revealed and Mariana asserts her right to be Angelo's wife. He also performs the offstage marriage ceremony between Mariana and Angelo (V.i.378-79). Some critics have suggested that he and Friar Thomas (see I.iii) were meant to be the same character, but that Shakespeare forgot the name he had given to the friar and consequently renamed him Peter.

Pompey

Although he claims to be a tapster, or bartender, Pompey Bum is actually a bawd, or pimp, who works for Mistress Overdone; he is thus part of Vienna's illicit underworld. Pompey is arrested by Elbow and brought before Escalus and Angelo in II.i, but he is released for lack of evidence. He is arrested once more in III.ii for pandering and for carrying "a strange picklock"; this time, he is sent to jail. In prison, he takes a job as assistant to the executioner, thereby avoiding a whipping and also reducing his time of imprisonment (IV.ii).

Pompey is an unrepentant career criminal. His arrest is part of the general clean-up of Vienna which is undertaken by Angelo and Escalus. In II.i, he tells Escalus that the authorities would have to "geld and splay all the youth of the city" in order to stop prostitution (II.i.230-31). In IV.iii, he lists the numerous other criminals who, like him, have recently been rounded up and jailed, and remarks that most of them have at one time or another frequented Mistress Overdone's brothel. "One would think [this prison] were Mistress Overdone's own house, for here be many of her old customers," Pompey observes (IV.iii.2-4). The mild punishment that he receives in prison is in striking contrast to the death sentence that is placed upon Claudio.

Provost

He is the warden of the prison where Claudio is being held. In I.ii.116-93, he conducts Claudio to jail. In II.i.32-36, he receives instructions from Angelo for Claudio's speedy execution. He spends much of the rest of the play helping the disguised duke with his plan to save Claudio from death; it is the provost, for example, who suggests substituting the dead pirate Ragozine's head for Claudio's after Barnardine proves "unfit" for execution (IV.iii.69- 75).

The provost has no illusions with regard to his prisoners: he recognizes Mistress Overdone as a "bawd of eleven years' continuance" (III.ii.196- 97), and, although he saves Pompey from a whipping and a long prison sentence by making him the executioner's assistant, he has no time for Pompey's comical "snatches," or quibbles (IV.ii.6). Critics have described the provost as an advocate of equity, and it becomes clear fairly early in the play that he disapproves of Angelo's treatment of Claudio. In

II.ii.1-14, for example, he irritates the deputy by double-checking on his verdict that Claudio must be killed. Shortly afterward (II.ii. 125), he hopes that Isabella will succeed in persuading Angelo to spare her brother's life. Duke Vincentio describes the provost as "gentle," or kindly, observing that it is not often the case that a "steeled jailer is the friend of men" (IV.ii.86-87). -

As kind-hearted as the provost is, he is nevertheless obedient to authority. When the disguised duke initially asks him to save Claudio by substituting heads, he refuses, saying "Pardon me, good father, it is against my oath" (IV.ii.181). It is not until Vincentio reassures him with letters "in the hand and seal of the duke" that the provost is willing to disobey Angelo's orders (IV.ii.192).

Servant

He is a retainer to Angelo. In II.ii. 1-2, the servant receives the provost, who has come to double-check that Angelo indeed wants Claudio put to death. Shortly afterward (II.ii.18-19), the servant introduces a crucial moment in the play when he announces the fateful arrival of Isabella, who has come to plead with Angelo for her brother Claudio's life.

Thomas (Friar Thomas):

He is one of two friars in the play (Friar Peter is the other; Friar Lodowick is merely the duke in disguise). Friar Thomas's only appearance occurs in I.iii, when he and Duke Vincentio are alone in conversation, and the duke reveals to him (and to the audience) his plan to disguise himself as a monk so that he can secretly observe Angelo's enforcement of Vienna's laws. During this brief but important scene, we learn that the duke considers himself immune to love, and that he prefers a "life removed," or secluded, rather than one that is expensive and flamboyantly high-profile (I.iii.1-10). We also learn that the duke believes he has been too lax in fighting crime in Vienna, and that he hopes his new deputy, Angelo, will do a more thorough job of law enforcement than he himself has. Finally, the duke tells Friar Thomas that Angelo seems to be a "precise," or extremely scrupulous person, but that his term as deputy should prove whether he is indeed what he seems or whether he will be corrupted by power (I.iii.50-54). Friar Thomas is never mentioned by name in I.iii itself, but only in the stage directions to the scene; therefore, some critics believe that he is the same character as Friar Peter (see Peter), who appears later in the play, and that Shakespeare simply forgot what name he had given the character first.

Varrius:

He is a follower of Duke Vincentio and appears in only two scenes□IV.v and V.i. Although the duke speaks to him in IV.v.11-13, Varrius himself has no speaking part at all in the play. It has been suggested that as a gentleman of the duke's court, Varrius's function is to provide Vincentio with a fitting escort now that he is appearing in public as

himself rather than as Friar Lodowick. It has also been suggested that Varrius might originally have had lines in the play which have since been lost.

Vincentio (Duke Vincentio):

He is the ruler of Vienna. As the play opens, Duke Vincentio is preparing to leave the city for a while, and when he appoints the puritanical Angelo to govern during his absence, he tells him that "Mortality and mercy in Vienna / Live in thy tongue and heart" (I.i.44-45). Shortly afterward, he informs Angelo that "Your scope is as mine own, / So to enforce or qualify the laws / As to your soul seems good" (I.i.64-66). Thus before he leaves, Duke Vincentio reminds Angelo twice of the need for balance in administering Vienna's laws: "Mortality" (the death sentence) should be tempered with mercy, and strict law enforcement should be "qualified," (modified) according to the case at hand.

In I.iii, we discover that the duke has not left Vienna after all, but plans instead to disguise himself as Friar Lodowick so that he can observe undetected the way in which Angelo administers law and order. The duke gives two reasons for setting up this plan. First, he is disappointed with his own lax enforcement of the laws: "We have strict statutes and most biting laws," he explains, "Which for this fourteen years we have let slip" (I.iii. 19, 21). As a result, the people of Vienna do whatever they feel like, secure in the knowledge that the strict laws won't be enforced against them. Or, as the duke puts it, "liberty plucks justice by the nose," and "the baby beats the nurse" (I.iii.29, 30).

When asked why he doesn't simply begin to enforce the city's laws himself, Vincentio explains that since it is his fault that the citizens are ignoring the rules, it would seem tyrannical if he were suddenly to begin punishing people for disobedience. Thus he employs Angelo, who can administer the laws and punishments without hurting the duke's reputation (I.iii.31-43).

Duke Vincentio's second reason for his subterfuge has to do with Angelo himself. He is worried that his scrupulous deputy might not be as honest as he seems, or that he might be corrupted by power:

Lord Angelo is precise;
Stands at a guard with envy; scarce confesses
That his blood flows; or that his appetite
Is more to bread than stone: hence we shall see
If power change purpose: what our seemers be. (I.iii.50-54)

Once the duke is gone, Angelo arrests Claudio and sentences him to death for sleeping with his fiancee, Juliet. The deputy's "unqualified," and unmerciful enforcement of the law against fornication soon backfires on him when he begins to lust after Claudio's sister, Isabella. When he tries to force Isabella to have sex with him, Angelo demonstrates that his strict notion of what is right and wrong for others hypocritically does not apply to him. Thus by the end of Act II, Angelo has fulfilled Duke Vincentio's worst suspicions.

Critics note that, at this point, the duke begins to direct the action of the play. Still disguised as Friar Lodowick, he suggests the "bed-trick" (the substitution of Mariana for Isabella in bed with Angelo) to Isabella as a solution to her problem, and concludes: "by this is your brother sav'd, your honor untainted, the poor Mariana advantag'd, and the corrupt deputy scal'd" (III.i.253-55).

Vincentio has been called a godlike figure who solves potentially tragic dilemmas and who turns the play into a Renaissance comedy, complete with multiple marriages and a happy ending. According to this interpretation, the duke is in full control of the close of the play. What's more, he triumphs in his attempt to replace absolutism with moderation when he exposes and then forgives Angelo's crimes, and when he teaches Isabella to be more tolerant and sympathetic of others to the extent that she joins Mariana in pleading for the life of her enemy Angelo.

The duke has also been described as a puppeteer who abuses his power and takes advantage of his anonymity as Friar Lodowick to run people's lives. This interpretation focuses on the problematical aspects of the play. It takes issue, for example, with the duke's orchestration of the bed-trick and of the phony executions, both of which involve honest people such as Isabella, Mariana, and the provost in dishonest acts.

The interpretation of the duke as a manipulator also underlines his blunders. Despite his efforts, Duke Vincentio's puppets do not always behave according to plan. Lucio, for example, continually ruffles the duke's dignity with his insinuations, and repeatedly interrupts discussions and revelations even at the close of the play. As for Angelo, after the bed-trick (during which the deputy thinks he has slept with Isabella) he unexpectedly breaks his promise to save Claudio and instead renews his order for Claudio's swift execution (IV.ii. 120-26).

When Vincentio tries to solve this glitch by substituting the condemned criminal Barnardine's head for that of Claudio, the drunken Barnardine refuses to be executed (IV.iii.53-63). When Angelo's villainy is at last exposed, the deputy begs for death, and continues to do so even after the duke has ordered his marriage to Mariana and has forgiven him for his crimes (V.i.366-74; 474-77). Finally, it has been pointed out that the duke chooses to marry Isabella despite the fact that she has clearly decided to become a nun. In this light, her silence in response to his offer of marriage at the close of the play is not regarded as a tacit acceptance of his proposal, but as unwillingness to conform to this part of Duke Vincentio's plans.

Character Studies

Angelo

In the play, Angelo has a reputation for rigid self-control and for supporting a strict moral code. Escalus considers Angelo to be "most strait in virtue." The Duke describes his deputy as "precise," or puritanical. Dissolute Lucio complains that Angelo is so cold and prudish that his blood "is very snow-broth" and claims that the deputy controls his p assions by fasting and studying. Angelo himself argues that people must see others punished before they themselves are willing to behave, and that being lenient with criminals only makes them disrespectful of law and order.

Critics have observed that despite these testimonials to his strictness, Angelo's apparent goodness and self-control are subject to doubt early in the play- even *before* he propositions Isabella. In Act I, for example, the Duke explains that part of his reason for deputizing Angelo with full authority to govern Vienna is to discover whether such power will corrupt this "seemingly" incorruptible man. And well before his sister ever meets Angelo, Claudio casts doubt on the purity of the deputy's motives by complaining that Angelo must have resurrected the "neglected" law against fornication simply because he hopes to make a name for himself. Later in the play, the Duke reveals that Angelo was once engage to a gentlewoman named Mariana, but when her brother and her dowry were lost at sea, Angelo abandoned Mariana, "left her in her tears, and dried not one of them with his comfort," and, in order to break his engagement, he accused Mariana of being unchaste. When they try to persuade Angelo to be merciful with Claudio, both Escalus and Isabella reason that if Angelo were ever tempted, he might fall like anyone else. When Angelo finally does fall, he compounds his offense with hypocrisy.

Several critics have observed that *Measure for Measure* is, among other things, a play about self-knowledge. They remark that at the start of the play, Angelo is a poor ruler because he has no understanding of his own weaknesses and, by extension, his connections with the rest of humanity. By the end of the play, some commentators suggest, Angelo has been forced to acknowledge his own capacity for guilt and as a result will become a more merciful leader. On the other hand, some critics point out that in his last speech in the play, Angelo is still demanding to be executed rather than pardoned for the crimes that he has committed- he is, therefore, as rigid in his thinking as he ever was.

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Isabella

Isabella's behavior in the play has been the subject of negative as well as positive assessments. It has been pointed out that she gives up too easily in her efforts to persuade Angelo to spare her brother, and that Lucio has to remind her again and again to argue her case more forcefully. Critics have also asserted that Isabella's ideas about right and wrong are too extreme and that she mistakenly assumes that everyone shares her beliefs- when in fact, the only other character who believes in absolutes (absolutists follow the theory that something is either right or wrong, good or evil, but never in-between) is her adversary, Angelo. Critics argue further that Isabella is coldly insensitive in her treatment of the terrified Claudio- angrily rejecting him after he begs her to sleep with Angelo, and even suggesting that her brother is illegitimate since, according to her, he is too dishonorable a person to be her father's son.

Finally, the character of Isabella has been criticized for inconsistencies in her behavior. For example, her willingness to participate in the "bed-trick" (when Mariana secretly sleeps with Angelo in place of Isabella) contradicts the young novice's ardent belief in honesty. Those critics who view Isabella in a favorable light argue that she is forced to cope as best she can in a society where she has very little power. They point out that initially, Isabella is tolerant of Claudio and Juliet's predicament, and that her views

become inflexible only after she is frightened by Angelo's lust. Before she has spoken with Angelo, and in response to Lucio's news that Juliet is pregnant by Claudio, Isabella declares suggests that the two lovers should marry. Later, when she tries to persuade Angelo to be lenient, she tells him that nothing is as admirable as mercy.

Critics sympathetic to Isabella also note that although she is ultimately saved from being raped by Angelo, she is nevertheless discouraged by her society from leading the convent life she has chosen: At the end of the play, the powerful Duke Vincentio proposes marriage to her, and although Isabella does not respond to his proposal, some commentators believe that we are left with the assumption that she will marry him.

Conclusion

Measure for Measure is a disturbing play for critics, directors, and audiences alike. While the play raises a variety of compelling issues- the extent to which mercy should temper justice, the nature of power and the need for self-knowledge; the relationship between men and women and the definition of gender roles and human sexuality- none of these questions appears to be answered definitively by the close of the play. Angelo seems to be as inflexible as ever; Isabella 15 silent in the face of the Duke's marriage proposal; the Duke has used subterfuge to accomplish his aims; and Mariana is married to someone who doesn't want her. Is this, commentators ask, the stuff of tragedy or comedy? How, directors wonder, should Isabella's silence be staged? What are we to think of the Duke's behavior- is it manipulative or full of wisdom? Such issues continue to be hotly debated. Ultimately, we are left to conclude that the questions raised by *Measure for Measure*- and our own varied responses to them- are more worthwhile than anyone answer the play might otherwise provide.

Themes

Gender Roles and Sexuality

Most critics see the issues of gender roles and sexuality in the playas a power struggle between the sexes. This battle, many commentators argue, is ultimately won by the male characters. Angelo's attempted rape of Isabella and the Duke's management of the bed-trick have been discussed as methods by which the play's male characters reestablish control over the females whom they regard as disruptive or sexually overpowering. Several critics have remarked that the fear of women depicted in *Measure for Measure* was typical of the Renaissance period in which Shakespeare wrote, and that later plays by other authors were more violent in displaying the general distrust of women.

Commentators have offered varying responses to the marriages that close the play. Some argue that the Duke's orchestrated series of betrothals and weddings function as a way of reassetting male control over females. By contrast, others see the marriages as a method of restoring balance between the sexes.

Several commentators evaluate the role of female chastity in the play. Some have argued that Shakespeare both acknowledges and criticizes a double standard regarding sex outside of wedlock, wherein a woman who was simultaneously expected to be the guardian of chastity and suspected of being a sexual temptress- was traditionally blamed for leading her lover astray. Critics also suggest that *Measure for Measure* makes a distinction between the value of the severe, celibate chastity of the novice Isabella and the loving, emotional chastity of the faithful Mariana.

Justice and Mercy

Justice and mercy are generally regarded as central themes in *Measure for Measure.* Commentators contrast the two terms, defining "justice" as a strict and objective adherence to law and describing "mercy" as a humane, more subjective interpretation of law. Customarily, Angelo (and to a certain extent Isabella) has been regarded as a rigid upholder of justice while Duke Vincentio is considered the administrator of a justice softened or tempered by mercy. Critics have drawn attention to the Duke's admission in Act I that he has been too lax in upholding Vienna's laws as well as to his suspicion that his deputy, Angelo, will prove too harsh a judge. It is clear, critics conclude, that the play is searching for a balance between these two extremes.

Whether this balance is achieved has become a source of contention. Some commentators believe that Angelo cannot judge fairly until he has himself sinned. Others argue that one's personal experiences have nothing to do with the administration of justice. These problems reach a climax in Act V when Vincentio delivers harsh sentences on Angelo and Lucio, only to withdraw them immediately afterward. But

whether the Duke has acted fairly and wisely in his administration of a justice tinged with mercy is open to debate. To reach his goal, Duke Vincentio has orchestrated the bed-trick and has led Isabella to believe that her brother is dead; many commentators are troubled by the fact that fairness is achieved at the close of the play through trickery and lies.

Structure

Whether or not *Measure for Measure* lacks unity is a difficult problem to solve. The play has been criticized for its apparently inconsistent characters as well as for its unresolved themes and unclear genre. Thus many scholars look to the play's structure for overall coherence. At least two unifying structural devices have received attention. First, it has been noted that the play consists of scenes based either on action or on conversation; the action scenes serve to further the plot while the conversation scenes give the audience time to reflect on the significance of the action.

Second, and in response to the charge that *Measure for Measure* fails to fulfill the requirements of anyone genre, several critics have suggested that the play is united around its two-part structure. In the tragic first half, Claudio is sentenced to death, Isabella is threatened with rape, and Angelo has fallen from his rigid moral principles. In the comedic second half, Duke Vincentio steps in to judge Angelo, to save Claudio from death and Isabella from rape, and to unite the group in multiple marriages. Thus, some commentators observe, the play achieves unity as a tragicomedy.

Modern Connections

Measure for Measure is considered one of Shakespeare's "problem plan ys." Problem plays introduce moral dilemmas without offering clear-cut or comforting solutions to these dilemmas. Since these plays deal with universal topics such as sex, power, and life and death, they are still appreciated and debated over by audiences today.

While the mores and living conditions of Shakespeare's time were significantly different from what they are today, several interesting parallels can still be drawn between our world and the one dramatized in *Measure for Measure.*

If, for example, the play were set in modern Vienna rather than the Renaissance Vienna of nearly 400 years ago, Claudio would not be facing execution for engaging in premarital sex. On the other hand, casual, unprotected sex today carries with it a potential death sentence in the form of AIDS. As he is being led to jail, Claudio tells his friend Lucio that the relationship between himself and Juliet is not casual, but that they were joined by a "true contract" which was sanctioned by common law if not by the church (I.ii.145). Today, unmarried couples often face other obstacles. Depending, for instance, on the state or country in which they live and work, they may find that they are not covered by each other's medical insurance, or that they are treated differently from legally married couples by the tax system or by the laws.

Laws and their enforcement are what motivate Duke Vincentio to leave Vienna in the care of his deputy, Angelo. The duke explains that in Vienna, "We have strict statutes and most biting laws / . . . / Which for this fourteen years we have let slip" (I.iii.19, 21). Vincentio hopes that Angelo□"A man of stricture and firm abstinence"□will be more effective at enforcing the laws than the duke has been or ever could be (I.iii.12). Once deputized, Angelo adheres to the letter of the law by closing down the city's brothels and condemning Claudio to death. In reaction to Angelo's harsh measures, the citizens of Vienna complain that their deputy would have to throw everyone in jail in order to stop some crimes, or, as Isabella observes with regard to Claudio's offense, "There's many have committed it" (II.ii.89). Today, people put forth similar arguments with regard to everything from prostitution, drug use, and tax evasion to parking infringements and speeding: there are some laws, they argue, that no one cares enough about to follow or enforce, or that the crimes are widespread enough to make the laws extremely difficult to enforce.

The duke's rationale for putting a disciplinarian such as Angelo in charge is that Vienna had become a decadent and morally lazy city. Today, people who worry about the lack of politeness in our society, the decay of family values, and the onset of crime and overcrowding wonder whether re-education, stronger laws, and stricter law enforcement would solve some of these problems.

Beyond his desire to see Vienna's laws enforced, Duke Vincentio offers another reason for deputizing Angelo. Angelo, the duke argues, is "precise"□that is, he is a perfectionist when it comes to morals and behavior (I.iii.50). By putting Angelo in charge, the duke

hopes to see "if power change [or corrupt] purpose" and whether his deputy is as virtuous as he seems (I.iii.54). As it turns out, Angelo abuses his power by trying to force Isabella to have sex with him. When Isabella threatens to expose Angelo's abuse, he replies that no one will believe her charges when they are weighed against his "unsoil'd name" and "th'austereness" of his life (II.iv.155). This issue remains a compelling one for us today, when some rape cases are decided on the credibility of the accuser versus that of the accused.

It has been argued that Duke Vincentio also misuses power, by manipulating people as though they were puppets. Today, people are worried enough about the corrupting effects of power that they have called for and in some instances voted in favor of political term limits.

Ultimately, true to its designation as a problem play, *Measure for Measure* poses difficult questions that we are still trying to answer today: What should we do when the rules and penalties that we apply to our society don't fit every case? When should punishment give way to mercy? How do we stop power from corrupting those who have it? How do we protect ourselves from those in power? And is anyone completely free from hypocrisy?

Overviews

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Critical Essay #1

Source: "Measure for Measure," in *Northrop Frye an Shakespeare,* edited by Robert Sandler, Yale University Press, 1986, pp. 140-53.

[Frye uses the title of Measure for Measure *to organize his essay around some fundamental* components *if the play: char acterization, theme, and* genre. *He demonstrates, fir example, haw the play measures one character against another (such as Angelo versus Claudio) and one theme against another (such as justice versus* mercy, *or "a justice that includes equity and a justice that's a narrow legalism"). Frye also looks at the Duke's role as stage manager in the drama that occurs between Isabella, Angelo, and Mariana, and concludes by remarking on the way in which* Measure for Measure *"proceeds upward" from potential tragedy to fulfill the requirements of comedy through marriage, forgiveness, and reconciliation.]*

Most critics link the title of this play with a verse from the Sermon on the Mount: "Judge not, that ye be not judged: for with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged; and with what measure ye mete, It shall be measured to you again." The phrase is a common one, and was used by Shakespeare in an earlier play, but the link with this quoted passage seems to be clearly there, and suggests that this play is concerned, like much of *The Merchant of Venice,* with the contrast between justice and mercy. Only it doesn't talk about Christians and Jews; it talks about the contrast between large-minded and small-minded authority, between a justice that includes equity and a justice that's a narrow legalism. The title also suggests the figure of the scales or balance that's the traditional emblem of justice. The play seems to me very closely related to the late romances, and that's why I'm dealing with it here, although it's earlier than *King Lear* and *Antony and Cleopatra.*

The story used in the play has many variants, but the kernel of it is a situation where a woman comes to a judge to plead for the life of a man close to her, husband or brother, who's been condemned to death. The judge tells her that he'll spare the man's life at the price of her sexual surrender to him. In some versions she agrees and the judge double-crosses her, having the man executed anyway. She then appeals to a higher judge, king or emperor, who (in stories where it's a husband she'd pleaded for) orders the judge to marry her and then has him executed. All these elements of the story are in Shakespeare's play; but he's redistributed them with his usual infallible instinct for what fits where.

The versions closest to his play are a long (two-part), crowded, rather cumbersome play called *Promos and Cassandra,* by George Whetstone, which goes back to 1578, and a story in a collection by an Italian writer who used the name Cinthio, a collection that also seems to have provided, whether in the original or in a French translation, the source of *Othello.* Shakespeare used such collections of stories a good deal: one reason, and we'll see in a moment why it is a reason, is that a lot of the stories are very close to being folk tales; in fact a lot of them are folk tales that the author has picked up

somewhere and written out. This play, as most critics recognize, has three well-known folk-tale themes in it: the disguised ruler, the corrupt judge and the bed trick

If we look at the first of these themes, the disguised ruler, we run into a difficulty that's central to this play. The Duke of Vienna, Vincentio, feels that his town is getting morally out of hand, especially in its sexual permissiveness, so he disappears, leaving a subordinate named Angelo to administer a law very strictly providing the death penalty for adultery. Our reactions to this may be very unfavourable to the Duke. Surely he's being a coward when he runs away from his responsibilities, leaving someone else to administer an unpopular and perhaps sick law because he's afraid of spoiling his nice-guy image (at least, that's more or less the explanation he gives); he's being incompetent in putting Angelo in charge instead of his more conscientious and humane colleague Escalus; and he's a sneak to come back disguised as a friar to eavesdrop on the consequences of what he's done. But whether our reactions are right or wrong, they clearly seem to be irrelevant to the play. Why are they irrelevant? We can see that Lear is being foolish when he abdicates, and our knowledge of that fact is highly relevant: what's different here?

I haven't any answer to this right now, except to say that this is a different kind of play: I have first to explain what I think is going on. We saw in *King Lear* that when the king abdicates, his kingdom is plunged into a lower level of nature, and when Lear has reached the bottom of that, on the heath with the Fool and Poor Tom, he starts to acquire a new kind of relation to his kingdom, where he feels his affinity with the "poor naked wretches" he prays to. Because *King Lear* is a tragedy, this doesn't get far before Lear is involved with other things, like madness and capture. In *Measure for Measure* what happens as a result of the Duke's leaving the scene is not that we descend to a lower order of nature, but that we're plunged into a lower level of law and social organization. The Elizabethans, like us, attached great importance to the principle in law called equity, the principle that takes account of certain human factors. Angelo is out simply to administer the law, or rather *a* law against fornication, according to legalistic rules.

Authority is essential to society, but what we called in *King Lear* "transcendental" authority, with an executive ruler on top, depends on the ruler's understanding of equity. If he hasn't enough of such understanding, authority becomes a repressive legalism. Legalism of this sort really descends from what is called in the Bible the knowledge of good and evil. This was forbidden knowledge, because, as we'll see, it's not a genuine knowledge at all: it can't even tell us anything about good and evil. This kind of knowledge came into the world along with the discovery of self-conscious sex, when Adam and Eve knew that they were naked, and the thing that repressive legalism ever since has been most anxious to repress is the sexual impulse. That's why a law making fornication a capital offence is the only law the abdicating Duke seems to be interested in.

In the framework of assumptions of Shakespeare's day, one was the doctrine in the New Testament that the law, as given in the Old Testament, was primarily a symbol of the spiritual life. The law in itself can't make people virtuous or even better: It can only

define the lawbreaker. You're free of what Paul calls the bondage of the law when you absorb the law internally, as part of your nature rather than as a set of objective rules to be obeyed. Under the "law"_ man is already a criminal, condemned by his disobedience to God, so if God weren't inclined to mercy, charity and equity as well as justice, nobody would get to heaven. This is what Portia tells Shylock in *The Merchant if Venice,* where Shylock symbolizes the clinging to the "bond" of the literal law that was the generally accepted view of Judaism in England at the time. It's a very skewed notion of Judaism, naturally, but there were no Jews legally in England then, and so no one to speak for another point of view. *Measure for Measure,* I suggested, deals with the same target of narrow-minded legalism, but without the very dubious attachments to assumed Christian and Jewish attitudes. What Jesus attacked in the Pharisees is as cornmon in Christianity as it is anywhere else, and Angelo's breakdown illustrates the fact that no one can observe the law perfectly. Portia's point is repeated by Isabella when she says to Angelo: "Why, all the souls that were were forfeit once" (II.ii. 73).

I've often referred to the ideology of Shakespeare's day, the set of assumptions his audience brought into the theatre with them. Every society has an ideology, and its literature reflects the fact. But I don't think any culture is really founded on an ideology: I think people first of all make up stories, and then extract ideas and assumptions from them. The Christian ideology of Shakespeare's day, as of ours, was a derivation from Christian mythology; that is, the story that Christianity is based on. Our word "myth" comes from the Greek *mythos,* meaning plot, story, narrative. The Christian myth, the complex of stories it tells, is, we said, structurally closest to comedy. Critics a hundred years ago said that *Measure for Measure* was a play in which Shakespeare was trying to discuss serious issues like prostitution and the theory of government, but couldn't get far because of censorship and other obstacles. Of course he couldn't have got far with such themes: the assumption is that he wanted to discuss them, and that's an assumption I very much distrust. Other critics think the play is a kind of dramatic exposition of Christian doctrines and principles. I distrust the assumption in that even more. I think Shakespeare uses conceptions taken from the ideology of his time incidentally, and that we always have to look at the structure of the story he's telling us, not at what gets said on the way. That is, as a dramatist, he reflects the priority of mythology to ideology that I've just spoken of. Further, he reflects it increasingly as he goes on. Because of this, his later plays are more primitive than the earlier ones, not, as we might expect, less so. They get closer all the time to folk tales and myths, because those are primitive stories: they don't depend on logic, they don't explain things and don't give you room to react: you have to listen or read through to the end. That's what brings *Measure for Measure* so close to the romances at the end of Shakespeare's productive period, both in its action and in its mood.

Well, it's time we got to the second theme, the crooked judge. We saw from *A Midsummer Night's Dream* how often a comedy begins with some kind of irrational law-irrational in the sense that it blocks up the main thrust of the comic story, which somehow manages to evade or ignore it. Usually such a law is set up to block the sexual desires of the hero and heroine, and sometimes it isn't really a law, but simply the will of a crotchety parent who lays down *his* law. Sometimes, instead of the law, we start with a mood of deep gloom or melancholy, and that's the main obstacle the comic

action has to scramble over. *Twelfth Night,* for example, begins with Duke Orsino overcome with love melancholy- at least he thinks he is- and Olivia in deep mourning for a dead brother. These elements in comedy are those connected with the corrupt judge theme in *Measure for Measure.* The ugly law is scowling at us from the beginning, and Angelo's temperament, in both his incorruptible and his later phases, ensures that there will be enough gloom.

Angelo, to do him justice (we can't seem to get away from that word), expresses strong doubts about his fitness for the post. Nonetheless he's put in charge of Vienna, ready to strike wherever sex rears its ugly head. He has a test case immediately: Claudio is betrothed to Julietta (I call her that for clarity), and betrothal in Shakespeare's time could sometimes be a fully marital relation, complete with sexual intercourse. Claudio and Julietta have got together on this basis, but have failed to comply with all the provisions of the law about publicizing the marriage. So he's guilty of adultery, and has to have his head cut off. Lucio, a man about town, is horrified by this, not because he's a person of any depth of human feeling, but because he sees how en forcing such a law would interfere with his own sex life, which is spent in brothels. So he goes (at Claudio's urging, it is true) to Claudio's sister, Isabella, who is almost on the point of becoming a novice in an order of nuns, to get her to plead with Angelo for her brother's life. Isabella is not very willing, but Lucio finally persuades her to visit Angelo, and accompanies her there.

Before this happens, though, there's a broadly farcical scene in which a dimwitted constable named Elbow comes into the magistrate's court presided over by Angelo and Escalus, with a charge against Pompey, who is a pimp and therefore one of the people the newly enforced law is aimed at. The scene *seems* to be pure comic relief, but it establishes three important points. First, Angelo walks out on the proceedings before long and leaves Escalus to it: his speech on doing so ends with the line "Hoping you'll have good cause to whip them all" (II.i. 136). Angelo despises the people before him so much that he can't bother to listen to their meanderings. The phrase from the Sermon on the Mount, "Judge not, that ye be not judged," comes to mind. What it surely means, among other things, is: If you despise other people for their moral inferiority to yourself, your own superiority won't last long; in fact, it's effectively disappeared already. Second, even Escalus can hardly figure out who did what to whom, so we wonder about the ability of law ever to get hold of the right people, or understand what is really going on about anything. Third, while Claudio, who is a decent man, is going to be beheaded, Pompey, who at least is an avowed pimp (and incidentally quite proud of it), is let off with a warning.

We may notice another feature of the scenes with the bawds: very little is said about the relatively new and then terrifying disease of syphilis; it's clearly in the background, but it stays in the background. "Thou art always figuring diseases in me," says a fellow patron to Lucio, "but. . . I am sound" (I.ii. 49). That isn't because Shakespeare felt reticent about the subject: if you think he did, take a look at the brothel scenes in *Pericles.* But to pull down houses of prostitution because of the danger of syphilis would give the law in this playa more rational motive than Shakespeare wants to assign to it. He's no more

out to justify the law than to attack it: he merely presents the kind of hold that such law has on society, in all its fumbling uncertainty and lack of direction.

We're ready now for the big scene with Angelo and Isabella. I've suggested to you that when you're reading Shakespeare you might think of yourself as directing a performance, which includes choosing the kind of actors and actresses that seem right for their assigned parts. If I were casting Angelo, I'd look for an actor who could give the impression, not merely of someone morally very uptight, but possessing the kind of powerful sexual appeal that many uptight people have, as though they were leading a tiger on a leash. If I were casting Isabella, I'd want an actress who could suggest an attractive, intelligent, strongly opinionated girl of about seventeen or eighteen, who is practically drunk on the notion of becoming a nun, but who's really possessed by adolescent introversion rather than spiritual vocation. That's why she seems nearly asleep in the first half of the play.

If the setting of the interview weren't so sombre, with a man's life depending on the outcome, the dialogue would be as riotously funny as the strange case of Elbow's wife. Let's resort to paraphrase. Isabella: "I understand you're going to cut my brother's head off." Angelo: "Yes, that is the idea." Isabella: "Well, I just thought I'd ask I have to go now; I have a date with a prayer." Lucio: "Hey, you can't do that! Make a production of it; weep, scream, fall on your knees, make as big a fuss as you can!" So Angelo and Isabella start manoeuvring around each other like a couple of knights who are in such heavy plate armour that they can't bend a joint. The effect is that of a sombre Jonsonian comedy of humours. The humours in this case are two forms of predictable virtue, in people paralyzed by moral rigidity. We've already heard Isabella telling a senior nun that she would like her convent to be as strict and rigid as p ossible; we've heard Angelo saying out of his shell 0 righteousness:

'Tis one thing to be tempted, Escalus,
Another thing to fall.
(II.i. 17-18)

Isabella goes into general maxims about the beauty of combining strength with gentleness, and Angelo, genuinely bewildered, says: "Why do you put these sayings on me?" (II.ii. 134). But something keeps them going; Isabella gets increasingly interested in her role, another meeting without Lucio is arranged, and eventually the serpent of Eden thrusts itself up between Justice in his black robes and Purity in her white robes, and tells them both that they're naked.

At least, I'm pretty sure that the serpent speaks to them both, although of course it doesn't get through to Isabella's consciousness. Her overt reaction, when she finally understands what Angelo is proposing, is simply horror and outrage. But I wonder if she isn't suppressing the awareness that she's much more attracted to Angelo than she would consciously think possible, and that in her gradual warming-up process Angelo has done more warming than Claudio. However that may be, she goes off to visit Claudio in the prison and tells him that he will now have to die, not to fulfil the demands of the law, but to save his sister's honour, which naturally he will do with the greatest

willingness. She's utterly demoralized to discover that Claudio is very unwilling to die, and quite willing to have her go along with Angelo to preserve his life. To paraphrase once again: "But it's my chastity," screams Isabella. "Yes, but it's my head," says Claudio. Isabella then explodes in a furious tirade (in which, incidentally, a Freudian listener would hear a strong father fixation, even though the father does not exist in the play). She pours all the contempt on Claudio that her very considerable articulateness can formulate, tells him that the sooner he dies the better, and even that "I'll pray a thousand prayers for thy death" (III.i. 145). She's awakened out of all her dreams, and the world around her that her awakened eyes see is a prison. A real prison, not the dream prison she'd like her convent to be.

So far the action has been fairly unrelieved tragedy for the major characters. The Duke has disappeared. The Friar, not generally known to be the Duke, is a prison chaplain, or seems to be functioning as one. His opening gambit as Friar doesn't seem to have much promise: It's a speech addressed to Claudio, telling him to "be absolute for death," that he should welcome death because if he lives he may get a lot of uncomfortable diseases. It is doubtful that any young man was ever reconciled to immediate death by such arguments: certainly Claudio isn't. The terror of death he expresses to Isabella, in the wonderful speech beginning "Ay, but to die, and go we know not where,"_ shows that the Friar's consolations have left him untouched. Angelo has betrayed his trust; Claudio is about to die; Isabella's dreams of a contemplative spiritual life, free of the corruptions of the world, are shattered forever.

We notice that as we go on we feel less and less like condemning people, because of the steady increase of a sense of irony. We can't condemn Claudio for his fear of what he feels to be, despite Isabella and the Friar, a totally undeserved death; we can't condemn Isabella for turning shrewish when she feels betrayed by both Angelo and Claudio. As for Angelo, he now knows what it's like to fall as well as to be tempted. As almost an incarnation of the knowledge of good and evil, he's in a state of schizophrenic war with himself, the newly born impulse to evil determined on its satisfaction, the repudiated impulse to good despising, hating, and being miserably humiliated by its rival. This sense of a dramatic irony replacing an impulse to make moral judgments again points to the limitations of law, or at least of this kind of law.

It was generally accepted in Shakespeare's day that the writing of a play was a moral act, and that the cause of morality was best served by making virtue attractive and vice ugly. Whetstone's play, mentioned earlier, says this in its preface, and Hamlet endorses the same view. No doubt *Measure for Measure* accomplishes this feat too in the long run, but in the meantime we wonder about the dramatic pictures of virtue and vice that we've had. Angelo is certainly not more likable as a hypocritical fraud than he was in his days of incorruptibility, but he seems somehow more accessible, even more understandable. Perhaps we can see, if we like, that what finally broke him down was not Isabella's beauty, and not even his own p owerfully repressed sexuality, but the combining 0 the two in a sadistic position of authority over a supplicating girl. But Isabella, in her invulnerable virtue, would not be anyone's favourite heroine, and, at the other extreme, there's Lucio, who retains something about him that's obstinately likable,

though he's clearly a basket case morally, and Bamardine, whose vitality makes it pleasant that he gets away with his refusal to be beheaded.

In any case, the action in the prison scene reaches a complete deadlock, with Claudio still begging Isabella to do something to help him, and Isabella telling him in effect, in every possible sense, to go to hell. Then the disguised Duke steps forward to speak to Isabella, and the rhythm abruptly switches from blank verse to prose (III.i. 150).

This is the most clearly marked indication of structure, I think, that we've yet reached in any of the plays we've talked about. The play breaks in two here: the first half is the dismal ironic tragedy we've been summarizing, but from now on we're in a different kind of play. One of the differences is that the Duke in disguise is producing and directing it, working out the plot, casting the characters, and arranging even such details as positioning and lighting. So it's really a play within a play, except for its immense size, a half play that eventually swallows and digests the other half. Within the Duke's own conventions, he's playing with real-life people, like those nobles who used to play chess games using _their own servants for pieces. In anything like a real-life situation, such a procedure would almost certainly meet with disaster very quickly, like Lear staging his love test. But in *Measure for Measure,* where we're in the atmosphere of folk tale, our only reaction is to see what comes next. It'll all work out just fine, so don't you worry.

The first element in this new play that the Duke produces is the story of Mariana, who provides a close parallel and contrast to the Claudio situation, and one which involves Angelo. Angelo had previously been engaged to a lady named Mariana, who still loves him, but the engagement fell through because the financial arrangements weren't satisfactory. According to the way the law works things out, Angelo's uncompleted engagement leaves him a person of the highest social eminence, whereas Claudio's uncompleted betrothal leaves him a condemned criminal. So much for the kind of vision the knowledge of good and evil gives us: even if Angelo had remained as pure as the driven snow, the contrast in their fates would still be monstrous. The way the Duke proposes to resolve this situation is the device of the bed trick, where Isabella pretends to go along with Angelo's proposal and assign a meeting, but substitutes Mariana in her place. It sounds like a very dubious scheme for a pious friar to talk a pious novice into, but something in Isabella seems to have accepted the fact that she's in a new ball game, and that the convent has vanished from her horizon.

I've talked about the affinity of this play with folk tales, and we can't go far in the study of folk tale without coming across the figure of the trickster. The trickster may be simply mischievous or malicious, and may be associated with certain tricky animals, like the fox or the coyote. But in some religions the trickster figure is sublimated into a hidden force for good whose workings are mysterious but eventually reveal a deep benevolence. There are traces of this conception in Christianity, where a "providence" is spoken of that brings events about in unlikely and unexpected ways. I don't want to labour the religious analogies, because they're structural analogies only: if we try to make them more than that, they get very misleading. I think the Duke in this play is a trickster figure who is trying to turn a tragic situation into a comic one, and that this operation involves the regenerating of his society: that is, of course, the dramatic society, the cast of

characters. A trickster, because, while tragedy normally rolls ahead to an inevitable crash, comedy usually keeps something hidden that's produced when it's time to reverse the movement.

Let's go back to King Lear and his abdication. I said that when he's reached the bottom of his journey through nature, he discovers a new awareness of the "poor naked wretches" of his kingdom. He abdicates as "transcendental" ruler and takes on another identity in an "immanent" relation to his people, especially the suffering and exploited part of his people. As I said, this theme can't be completed in a tragedy, but a comedy like *Measure for Measure* can take it a bit further. Duke Vincentio opens up, by leaving his place in society, a train of events headed for the bleakest and blackest tragedy. By his actions in disguise, he brings the main characters together in a new kind of social order, based on trust instead of threats. I'm not talking about the moral of the play, but about the action of the play, where something tragic gradually turns inside out into something comic.

The trickster element in him comes out in the fact that his schemes involve a quite bewildering amount of lying, although he assures Isabella that there's no real deception in what he does. He starts by telling Claudio privately, in the prison, that Angelo is only making trial of Isabella's virtue. He gets Isabella to agree to the bed trick scheme, which necessitates lying on her part; Isbella is told the brutal lie that Claudio has been executed after all; he gives such strange and contradictory orders to Angelo and Escalus about his retum that they wonder if he's gone off his head; his treatment of that very decent official, the provost of the prison, would have a modem civil servant heading for the next town to find a less erratic boss. Whenever he remembers to talk like a friar, he sounds sanctimonious rather than saintly. We have only to put him beside Friar Laurence in *Romeo and Juliet* to see the difference between a merely professional piety and the real thing.

There are two or three references in the play to frightening images that turn out to be harmless: an indulgent father's whip, a row of extracted teeth in a barber shop, and, on the other side, Angelo's "We must not make a scarecrow of the law" (II.i. 1). In this play most of the major male characters are threatened with death in some form; the two women are threatened with the deaths of others. Yet in the long run nobody really gets hurt: even the condemned criminal Barnardine is set free, except that he has another friar attached to him. A pirate in the prison who died of natural causes has his head employed for some of the deceptions, that's all. It's an ancient doctrine in comic theory that one of the standard features of comedy is what's called in Greek the *basanos,* which means both ordeal and touchstone: the unpleasant experience that's a test of character. This seems to be why the Duke starts off with his "Be absolute for death" speech to Claudio in the prison. He doesn't seriously expect Claudio to be reconciled to death by hearing it, but it leaves him with a vision of seriousness and responsibility for the whole of his life that will make him a proper husband for Julietta and ensure that he doesn't drift off into being another Lucio. Sounds far-fetched, but you won't think that an objection by now.

Angelo, of course, gets the bed trick deal, which is a popular device in literature. Shakespeare used it again in a comedy that's usually thought of as a companion piece to this one, *All's Well that Ends Well.* Even the Bible has such a story, when Jacob, who wanted and expected Rachel, woke up to find Leah in his bed instead. Jacob's society being polygamous, he got them both in the long run, but in Shakespeare's bed trick plays the device is used to hook a man to a woman he ought to be married to anyway. It's one of the devices for the middle part of a comedy, the period of confused identity in which characters run around in the dark, as in *A M idsummer Night's Dream,* or the heroine puts on a boy's clothes. One thing it represents in the two comedies where it occurs is the illusory nature of lust, in contrast to genuine love. Angelo's lust tells him that he wants Isabella and doesn't want Mariana, but in the dark any partner of female construction will do, and on that basis his wakened consciousness can distinguish between what he wants and what he thinks he wants. For Angelo the bed trick is the agent both of his condemnation and of his redemption. When his deceptions are uncovered in the final scene, he welcomes the death sentence as the only thing appropriate for him: he's still a man of the law, even if his conception of law has matured. Mariana is the spark plug of the second half of the play: without her steady love for Angelo, no redeeming force could have got started. It nearly always happens in Shakespearean comedy that one of the female characters is responsible for the final resolution. Her importance, I think, is marked by the fact that when we meet her we hear a song, no less, and a very lovely song, in this grim clanking play.

But of course Isabella is the Duke's staged masterpiece. After being instructed how to act, she brings her accusation against Angelo, and there follows a great to do about not believing her and a stretching of tension to the limit. Eventually Angelo is publicly humiliated, ordered to marry Mariana, and condemned to death immediately afterward. Mariana's pleas for his life are rejected, so she turns to Isabella. Isabella's speech corresponds dramatically to Portia's speech on mercy in *The Merchant of Venice,* but the latter is a rhetorical set speech: Portia after all is a lawyer, or pretending to be one. Isabella's speech is short, thoughtful, painfully improvised, as the rhythm shows, and full of obvious fallacies as a legal argument. She is also making it at a time when she believes that Angelo has swindled her and had her brother executed after all. The essential thing is that the woman who earlier had told her brother that she would pray a thousand prayers for his death is now pleading for the life of the man who, as she thinks, murdered him, besides attempting the most shameful treatment of herself. People can't live continuously on that sort of level, but if one's essential humanity can be made to speak, even once in one's life, one has a centre to revolve around ever after. The Duke is so pleased that he announces that he is going to marry her, though later he speaks of proposing to her in a private conference.

The final confrontation is with Lucio, and that one is perhaps the strangest of all. Lucio was the spark plug of the first half, as Mariana is of the second: without his efforts on Isabella, all the Duke's schemes would, so far as we can see, have ended in nothing but a dead Claudio. Yet he is the only one of the Duke's characters (apart from Barnardine, whose inner attitude is unknown to us) on whom the Duke's benevolent trickery makes no impression whatever. The Duke transfers to him the penalty he assigned to Angelo: Lucio is to marry the whore he has made pregnant, then executed. The threats of

whipping and hanging are ignored by Lucio, and he doesn't seem to notice that they are remitted, but he protests strongly against the violation of his comfortable double standard. He seems to be possessed by a peculiarly shabby version of the knowledge of good and evil. What is "good," or at any rate all right, is what other fashionable young men do. Slandering a prince is all right because it's only the "trick," the fashion; visiting whorehouses likewise. But of course the whores are "bad" women.

And yet the final scene would be much poorer without him: he gets all the laughs, and the Duke's rebukes of him are simply ineffective bluster. He represents in part the sense of vestigial realism that we still have, the part of ourselves that recognizes how unspeakably horrible such snooping and chsguised Dukes would be in anything resembling actual life. His slanders are forgiven, perhaps because he was describing the kind of person he would admire more than he does the actual Duke. And while the bulk of what he says is nonsense, one phrase, "the old fantastical Duke of dark comers" (IV.iii. 156) is the most accurate description of him that the play affords.

The title of the play is quoted by the Duke when he speaks of the retribution in the law: "An Angelo for a Claudio, life for life" (V.i. 407). This is the axiom of tragedy, especially revenge tragedy, with its assumption that two corpses are better than one. From there, the action proceeds upward from this "measure for measure" situation to the final scene with which Shakespearean comedy usually ends: the vision of a renewed and regenerated society, with forgiveness, reconciliation and the pursuit of happiness all over the place. Forgiveness and reconciliation come at the end of a comedy because they belong at the end of a comedy, not because Shakespeare "believed" in them. And so the play ends: it doesn't discuss any issues, solve any problems, expound any theories or illustrate any doctrines. What it does is show us why comedies exist and why Shakespeare wrote so many of them. And writing comedies may be more valuable to us than all the other activities together, as we may come to realize after the hindsight of three or four hundred years.

Critical Essay #2

The issues of are closely connected in *Measure for Measure.* Critic Ronald Huebert discusses the ways in which the male characters' "manliness" is formed by their sexual education combined with self-knowledge. Claudio, for example, exhibits the manly virtue of courage when faced with death for impregnating Juliet; however, when tempted with the possibility of reprieve- even at his sister's expense- he manfully comes to terms with the fact that his courage is not proof against temptation. By contrast, Huebert describes Angelo's rigid morality as "a caricature of genuine manliness" and asserts that the deputy achieves real manliness only after he openly acknowledges his own transgressions and learns to recognize his own sexual desires.

For many scholars, gender role and sexuality depend upon the nature of power in the play- how power is defined and who it is that wields it. David Sundelson remarks that for characters such as Duke Vincentio and Angelo political and sexual power are virtually one and the same. For Duke Vincentio, sense of self and masculinity depend upon his correcting the moral laxness of Vienna without humiliating himself with possible failure. Sundelson observes that both the Duke and his deputy, Angelo, display a fear of women that pervades the play in the form of sexual imagery. Angelo, for example, becomes frightened as Isabella's assertive plea for her brother's life begins to weaken his resolve. The Duke, meanwhile, feels overwhelmed by Mariana's powerful love for Angelo. Both men, Sundelson argues, try to use their political power to reassert themselves against what they see as the potentially devastating effects of female power. Thus, Angelo claims authority over Isabella by demanding that she trade sex for her brother's life; the Duke reestablishes his own will by managing Isabella and Mariana in the dubious "bed trick" and by prolonging Isabella's grief over the supposed execution of her brother.

Alberto Cacicedo suggests that the male characters' fear of female power is in fact a fear of female sexuality that was symptomatic of the Renaissance. Sexual promiscuity in *Measure for Measure*- and by analogy, in Renaissance England- was the fault of women who tempted men (such as Angelo) into weakness. According to Cacicedo, marriage in England and at the end of the play was a "necessary evil" that forced women back into their subordinate role. Harry V. Jaffa, by contrast, *sees* marriage as an instrument for renewing the balance between genders that was disturbed by the Duke's unwillingness to assert moral authority and by Isabella's insistence on celibacy.

I.inda Macfarlane and Juliet Dusinberre view the female characters in *Measure for Measure* as powerless. Macfarlane argues that Isabella, for example, is in "a no win situation" when confronted by male power: on her own, she has no defense against Angelo's exertion of his sexual and political power but must turn to another male- the Duke- for protection. Dusinberre remarks that when couples participated in unwedded sex in Renaissance England, the woman was always regarded as the guiltier of the two; she asserts, however, that Shakespeare criticized this double standard in *Measure for Measure* by posing the negative, celibate chastity of Isabella against the positive, spiritual chastity of Mariana.

Source: "Misogyny and Rule in *Measure for Measure,"* in *Women's Studies,* Vol. 9, 1981, pp. 83-91.

[Sundelson focuses on the male characters' insecurity regarding their masculinity in Measure for Measure. *Sundelson argues that in the play, there is the fear that loss of power can cause a man to lose his sexual identity. Thus the Duke protects his masculinity by working from the sidelines- allowing his standin A ngelo rather than himself to be made a fool of publicly. A ngelo, on the other hand, demonstrates his fear of women when he tries to force himself upon Isabella. Sundelson argues that in this case, Angelo is afraid that a woman's "pretty fare and . . . confident tongue" can weaken and emasculate a man- a fear that is violently expressed against women in later plays of the period]*

When Hamlet welcomes the Players to Elsinore, he pays special attention to one of them. "What, my young lady and mistress! by'r lady, your ladyship is nearer to heaven than when I saw you last by the altitude of a chopine. Pray God your voice, like a piece of uncurrent gold, be not cracked within the ring" (I1.ii.429-33). Although the repetition of "lady" and the bawdy puns ("cracked," "ring") may betray a certain uneasiness about what is female, Hamlet can joke comfortably enough about a farewell to it, about a boy actor who will soon be unable to playa woman's role. For Shakespeare, the movement from androgyny to a clearer, more certain masculinity is evidently not disturbing.

What can be very disturbing indeed is the idea of reversing this movement. The idea haunts *Measure for Measure;* at its heart are grave fears about the precariousness of male identity and, linked to them, fears of the destructive power of women. Together, these fears explain much of what seems most puzzling about the play. Take for example its central problem: the behavior of Duke Vincentio. To mention only two of the questions it raises, why does he entrust Angelo with power, and why does he allow Isabella to believe that her brother is dead? I want to show that the answers to these questions are related. *Measure for Measure* fuses anxieties about political and sexual power, and I believe that the Duke's actions, which have struck readers as mysteriously benign or haphazard or even perverse, belong instead to the coherent defensive strategy of a shrewd prince and an insecure man. The Duke does treat his subjects as puppets, as Empson remarks, but not simply "for the fun of making them twitch."

The executioner Abhorson is a convenient emblem of the play's preoccupations. With his highly suggestive name ("abhor," "whore," "whoreson") and his pride of office, ills ax and his assistant the bawd, he reflects a network of fantasies about power, sex, degradation and punishment. Only the Deputy learns all the connections in the network, learns how easily the throne room can become the bedroom or the block. But even Escalus, kindly and disinterested as he is, finds that power brings out an impulse in him that smacks of Angelo's ugly proposition: "Pray you, my lord, give me leave to question; you shall *see* how I'll handle her. . . I will go darkly to work" (V.i.270-7). Judicial office is dangerous to hold; as if to avoid being compromised by working darkly, Elbow's neighbors pay him to serve their terms as constable.

Instead of buying a surrogate as they do, the Duke appoints one.

I have on Angelo impos'd the office:
Who may ill th' ambush of my name strike
home,
And yet my nature never in the fight
To do in slander.
(1.iii.40- 3)

"Ambush," "strike," and "fight" make government aggressive and violent. "To do in slander" is unclear (the text may be corrupt), but the phrase adds an erotic dimension to the power the Duke is unwilling to wield. If the fear of sadistic impulses, of the temptation to let the body politic "straight feel the spur" (I.ti.1S1) is one reason for his abdication, he also dreads humiliation, the moment when "the rod / Becomes more mock'd than fear'd" (I.iii.26-7) and "I.iberty plucks Justice by the nose" (I.iii.29). He seems to equate rule and exhi bition- "to stick it in their children's sight / *For* ter *ror"* (I.iii.25-6)- and ranges nervously from one vulnerable appendage to another. To save his nose from plucking, he confers on Angelo "all the organs / Of our own power" (I.i.20-1) in the hope that his double, "one that can my part in him advertise" (I.i.4I), will perform the exhibition for him, and with *more* vigor than he himself is willing to risk: "In our remove, be thou at full ourself" (I.i.43).

"Part" suggests both a role and an organ, but Angelo finds that to advertise his parts is to jeopardize them. While he gives every sign of being the aggressor with Isabella, her very approach makes his heart "unable" (II.iv.21) and, even worse, "disp°ssesses" all his "other parts / Of necessary fitness" (1I.iv.22-3). "I would to heaven I had your potency, / And you were Isabel" (II.ii.67-8), the lady exclaims in their first interview, and a similar notion of exchange or androgyny surfaces in Pompey's answer when the Provost asks if he can cut off a man's head: "if he be a married man, he's his wife's head; and I can never cut off a woman's head" (II.ii.2-4). With a joke, Pompey can pluck the flower, safety, from the nettle, danger, but in Angelo's second meeting with Isabella, uncertain sexual identity becomes *more* and *more* unsettling.

We see the uncertainty in the deputy's description of his desire as "the strong and swelling evil / Of my conception" (II.iv.67); the metaphor seems male and female at once. Similarly, a wish for passivity lies beneath his assault. "Teach her the way" (II.iv.19) he says when Isabella returns, as if he wanted to be seduced, and complains openly: "your sense pursues not mine" (II.iv.74). If at first Isabella has "too tame a tongue" (II.ii.46) to affect him, she soon grows *more* assertive, and her increasingly penetrating rhetoric corresponds to Angelo's growing doubt. She begins to boast of "true prayers, / That shall be up at heaven and enter there" (II.ii.152-3), and in her second visit threatens to attack the Deputy "with an outstretch'd throat" (II.iv.152). "How might she tongue me" (IV.iv.23), he worries, and her later denunciation realizes his worst fears.

These warnings of female potency make Angelo's violence seem like a defense, as if he resorted to rape so as not to confront his own weakness.

Angelo Be that you are,
That is, a woman; if you be *more,* you're
none.
If you be one-as you are well express'd
By all external warrants- show it now,
By putting on the destin'd livery.
Isabella I have no tongue but one: gentle my
lord,
Let me entreat you speak the former language. *A ngelo* Plainly conceive, I love you.
_II.iv.133-40)

Love has nothing to do with the case, of course; the nightmare intensity of this dialogue comes from its barely suppressed anxieties. "If you be one," Angelo says, and the doubt persists; he fears that Isabella may really be a man. She tries to convince him that she hides nothing beneath the "external warrants" of her gender-"I have no tongue but one" - but the reassurance is not enough, and "gentle my lord" is hardly tactful at such a moment. She must wear the "livery" that announces submission and, *more* important, "plainly conceive": only by bearing a child can she dissolve Angelo's fear that their encounter has made him a woman.

In the light of Angelo's ordeal, the rules of Isabella's convent seem designed to protect men *more* than women.

When you have vow'd, you must not speak
with men But in the presence of the prioress; Then, if you speak, you must not show
your
face;
Or if you show your face, you must not speak.
(I.iv.10-13)

Men must not confront the double danger of a pretty face and a confident tongue, and the playas a whole reinforces these rules by keeping a tight rein on female energy and initiative. No Portia or Rosalind wears male clothing. Isabella is quite dependent on the Duke and needs Lucio's urgent coaching- "You are too cold" (II.ii.56)- in her interview with Angelo. Juliet and Mariana are conspicuously submissive. Mariana even apologizes for listening to music- sad music at that and introduces convent discipline into her marriage: "I will not show my face / Until my husband bid me" (V.i.171-2). As needy or compliant as they are, however, the women still threaten. "0, I will to him and pluck out his eyes" (IV.iii.119), Isabella cries when she learns of Angelo's perfidy. Describing Mariana, the Duke begins with pity and ends with something close to fear: "His unjust unkindness, that in all reason should have quenched her love, hath, like an impediment in the current, made it *more* violent and unruly" (III.i.240-4). Mistress Overdone- "Overdone by the last" (II.i.199) of her husbands, according to Pompey- has in fact survived all nine of them. "Women?- Help, heaven!" (II.iv.126) Isabella exclaims; like Pompey's joke, her remark leaves the weaker sex's identity in doubt and gives an ironic turn to her wish that "a *more* strict restraint / Upon the sisters stood, the votarists of Saint Clare" (I.iv.4-5).

This nervousness helps to explain the play's considerable misogyny. Its expressions range greatly in intensity and self-consciousness; they include Lucio's casual reference to Mistress Kate Keepdown, who has borne him a child, as "the rotten medlar" (IV.iii.171) and Elbow's malapropism: "My wife, sir, whom I detest before heaven" (II.i.68). Less humorous is Angelo's metaphor when he predicts what will happen to Isabella if she tries to accuse him: "you shall stifle in your own report, / And smell of calumny" (II.iv.157-8). Angelo must bear the pain of recognizing that his own sexuality is inseparable from his wish to annihilate women, although self-awareness at least gives him a certain moral stature: "Shall we desire to raze the sanctuary / And pitch our evils there? 0 fie, fie, fie!" (II.ii.171-2).

Far more painful to Isabella than his attempted extortion, ironically- and it is perhaps the central irony in the play, the one that makes us most uneasy- is her protracted torment at the hands of the Duke, who never for an instant admits that he has anything at heart but her good. He lets Isabella believe that her brother has been executed, and, as if that were not enough, accuses her of madness and drives her uncomfortably close to it by pretending not to believe her denunciation of the deputy. "Look," the Duke tells the Provost, "th' unfolding star calls up the shepherd" (IV.ii.202-3). He invites us to regard him as that kindly guardian, guided by a star, but his rationale for lying to Isabella suggests that the lamb this shepherd tends best is himself- Lucio's epithet "sheep-biting" (V.i.352) is appropriate in more ways than one.

She's come to
know
If yet her brother's pardon be come hither;
But I will keep her ignorant of her good
To make her heavenly comforts of despair
When it is least expected.
(IV.iii.106-10)

Isabella has wished for her brother's death- "Take my defiance, / Die, perish!" (III.i.142-3)- and the lie punishes her for that wish, in fairy tale fashion, by pretending to grant it. The lie also feeds the rage which can make Isabella so threatening, directs it once again at Angelo, and enables the Duke to dispel it and belittle its power: "This nor hurts him, nor profits you a jot. / Forbear it therefore; give your cause to heaven" (IV.iii.123-4). What happens is not unlike an exorcism: a woman's hidden and unpredictable menace is exposed and then tamed by the controlling wisdom of her husband to be.

The Duke proposes to Isabella only after explosions at the Deputy and Claudio have exhausted her rage, and he makes sure that Angelo will marry Mariana, whose love is so violent and unruly. With a deputy to act out the play's most dangerous fantasies, both aggressive and passive, the Duke is free to define his own identity in safer terms. Concealing the truth about Claudio will let the Duke restore him to his sister as if resurrecting him from the dead. "To make her heavenly comforts" thus reveals a cold-eyed view of how to resemble a god and cloaks in piety a questionable but psychologically useful act. The synthetic miracle will earn Isabella's perpetual gratitude, but this strategy, surely, is at the heart of our disappointment in their union. It

establishes control where we hope for playfulness and freedom, fixes permanently what ought to be flexible, and defines a hierarchy patron and debtor- which preludes any marriage 0 true minds. It makes us fee, in short, that Isabella leaves one sort of convent only to enter another.

The Duke's method with his other subjects is much the same; the purity of his own motives is his constant theme, even with Barnardine, Pompey, and Abhorson for an audience. He speaks to the Provost of "yonder generation" (IV.iii.89) as if he weren't a part of it himself, and the calculated strangeness, so unlikely in a comic hero, is essential to his manner. "Not of this Country," as he tells Escalus, but on "special business from his Holiness" (I1I.ii.210-14), he seeks to rise above the messy domains of human sexuality and power, to assume, like some Christian knight-errant, a sanctity not available to ordinary men: "trust not my holy order, / If I pervert your cause" (IV.iii.147-8). Crucial here is the pun on "order": the masquerade defines his power in terms which will persist long after he has ceased to play the friar. He wants obedience without recourse to the spur, and the note of piety hallows what would otherwise be only a prince's bidding. In addition, this "most bounteous sir" (V.i.442), as Isabella learns to call him, finds a novel strategy: he rules by forgiving. As the play ends he pardons not only the obvious offenders Angelo, Claudio, Lucio, and Barnardine, but the Provost, Escalus, and Isabella as well. It is startling to hear Isabella, after all her needless suffering, ask forgiveness for having "employ'd and pain'd / Your unknown sovereignty" (V i.385-6), but such is the power of his spell.

Measure for Measure leaves us nevertheless with mutUally exclusive resolutions: a Duke both retiring and worldly, who sounds like an altruist but serves only himself. "Your friar is now your prince" (V .i.380), he tells Isabella, but the transformation is incomplete; he clings to both roles at once, as his language sways doubtfully between courtliness and piety.

As I was then,
Advertising and holy to your business,
Not changing heart with habit, I am still Attorney'd at your service.
(V.i.380-83)

The Duke's weakness at least makes him a reassuring husband for Isabella- no threats of rape are likely from a man who "can do you little harm" (III.ii.162), even if he is the "more mightier member" (V.i.236) Angelo perceives behind Mariana's accusation. But what are we to think of a bridegroom who referred earlier to "the dribbling dart of love" (I.iii.2) and whose most passionate words, even now, are "Dear Isabel, / I have a motion much imports your good" (V.i.531-2)? Such excessively modest overtures are hardly the occasion for comic rejoicing. Indeed, if Isabella's plea for the deputy's life balances her wish for Claudio's death, die anxieties about women are too strong to be completely resolved. Angelo has tried once to define a woman in a limited, reassuring way- "if you be more, you're none"and the attempt continues in the Duke's catechism of Mariana.

Duke What, are you married?
Manana No, my lord.

Duke Are you a maid?
Manana No, my lord,
Duke A widow, then?
Mariana NeIther, my lord.
Duke Why, you are nothing then;
neither maid, widow, nor wife!
(V.i.172-9)

Once again, we see the play's fearfulness about women and its willingness to obliterate their mystery ("You are nothing") rather than embrace it, features which anticipate the explosion of violence against them in subsequent Jacobean drama.

Critical Essay #3

Source: "Taking the Measure of Manliness," *in Dalhousie* Review, Vol 63, No.1, Spring, 1983, pp. 125-34.

[Huebert looks at Shakespeare's definition if manliness in his plays in general and in Measure for Measure *in particular and concludes that, judging from such characters as Pompey, Claudio, Lucio, and Angelo, Shakespeare settled on courage, accountability, honesty, and earthiness as the qualities of man hood. Huebert awes that while all four of these characters achieve a degreeif manliness by the end if the play the Duke, by contrast, fails to prove himself.]*

In choosing a title for this essay I've taken the liberty of referring casually to *Measure for Measure,* by first name only, and I've suggested that manliness is the particular question that interests me as I read it. To prevent falSe expectations, I should admit that I'm not proposing a feminist interpretation of the play, and I'll have little to say about the notoriously double standard which everyone in Shakespeare's Vienna seems to take for granted. I'm not offering a phenomenology of sexual experience in the play. Nor am I going to set out anything in the way of new evidence (from seldom-read letters, commonplace books still in manuscript, or plays of the period so obscure as to be neglected byeveryone but the over-achievers of Elizabethan studies). All of these would be worthwhile objectives, but I've decided not to follow other beckonings in the interests of getting somewhere with one simple question: namely, What are the implicit standards for judging manliness of character or behaviour in *Measure for Measure?*

If the play had been written either by [Christopher] Marlowe or [Ben] Jonson, the answer to this question wouldn't be what it is. Marlowe, I'm convinced, would have made Claudio into something altogether more splendid than Shakespeare did. Claudio earns his place in the plot by being sexually impetuous, and is then placed in the awkward position of having to define his attitude towards a system of authority that condemns him. What Marlowe could have done with such an opportunity for defiant rebellion can be suggested by remembering what he in fact did with Piers Gaveston or Doctor Faustus or Leander. Jonson, conversely, would have made something altogether more grotesque out of Angelo. Perhaps the closest analogue in Jonson's plays to Angelo's dilemma is the position of Zeal-of the-land Busy as he confronts the pleasures of Bartholomew Fair. He knows that eating pig is an abomination, especially if you enter the tents of the wicked to do it, but this doesn't prevent him from washing down two-and-a-half of Ursula's dripping man-sized portions with a pailful of Mooncalf's ale. For Jonson, Angelo's puritan hypocrisy would have been the signal for a satiric performance of uninhibited virtuosity.

In Marlowe's plays, manliness is an ideal that asserts itself by soaring above the ordinary; in Jonson, it's a position of stability from which the masquerades of the world can be seen for what they are. Shakespeare seems at times to share Marlowe's view of the matter (to judge by Cleopatra's requiem for Antony), at other times Jonson's (to judge by Hamlet's confidence in Horatio). But in Shakespeare as in life, it's easier to

deduce the precise meaning of a standard from conspicuous failures than from celebrated successes. And for this purpose I'm going to comment briefly on two flagrant offenders: Romeo and Macbeth.

The streets of Shakespeare's Verona are bursting with young men who have something to prove. Tybalt's way of achieving manhood is to carve out a reputation as Prince of Cats- a title which stands in constant need of defence by swaggering once it has been established. Mercutio's method is to simulate the knowing weariness of the man of the world. Cassius Clay before he changed his name; Bob Dylan before whatever it was that happened to him. Romeo's experience looks blissfully normal by comparison: he's in the process of becoming a man by learning the difference between infatuation and love. And, even if love is what absorbs him, it doesn't detract from the respect he has earned from his peers. If Tybalt sends a challenge, Benvolio knows that "Romeo will answer it" (II.iv.9). That's not quite what happens when the fighting begins, but I think it's clear that Romeo shows more courage in trying to stop the fight than either of the combatants. And when he does draw his weapon, the mighty Prince of Cats goes down.

But these acknowledged marks of manliness (bravery, self-restraint, physical daring) are in one sense less than what Romeo needs. After his banishment, while hiding in the Friar's cell, Romeo falls to the ground in a seizure of adolescent despair. The Nurse bustles in to find him in the same predicament as Juliet: "Blubbering and weeping, weeping and blubbering" (III.iii.S6). While the Nurse and Friar Laurence are making practical arrangements to preserve his future, Romeo is threatening suicide. He deserves the rebukes both of his elders offer. "Stand, and you be a man," says the Nurse (III.iii.S7). The Friar expands this shrewd advice into a moving sermon on manliness:

Art thou a man? Thy form cries out thou art.
Thy tears are womanish, thy wild acts denote
The unreasonable fury of a beast. . . .
Thy noble shape is but a form of wax
Digressing from the valour of a man
(III.iii.108-26)

The Romeo who needs these exhortations is still lovable, perhaps even understandable, but not admirable. In this scene he's a failure by the very standards he has earlier been able to uphold.

Macbeth's failure happens for the opposite reasons: he loses not the ability to stand up but the willingness to bend. At the outset Macbeth is winning all of the rewards that fall to models of manliness: victory in battle, admiration from his best friend, congratulations and caresses from his wife, promotion, trust, adulation. But he has not lost either the gentleness of spirit that marks him out as a real hero, or the ability to stop the crescendo of applause for the purpose of asking moral questions. Lady Macbeth knows that his nature "is too full o'th'milk of human kindness" (I.v.l7) to allow him to kill in cold blood. So with ferocious determination she goads and challenges and manipulates him, using a variety of rhetorical pitches all of which lead to her most provoking question,

"Are you a man?" (III.iv.57). He tries to silence her by affirming his moral position: "Pr'ythee, peace. / I dare do all that may become a man" (I.vii.45-6). But she won't hear his answers. She dazzles him with histrionics, torments him with the thought of cowardice, threatens him with sexual deprivation. He can move ahead only after he's accepted her shallow interpretation of manliness, which he does in the form of an equivocal compliment:

Bring forth men-children only!
For thy undaunted mettle should compose Nothing but males.
(I.vii.73-5)

To accept this view amounts to killing or excluding everything else; dominance at any cost means that Macbeth can't keep the things he really wants: "honour, love, obedience, troops of friends, / I must not look to have" (V.iii.25-6). But by the time he says these words it is too late. The arbitrary code of manliness which Macbeth learned from his wife has become habit, and he sees no alternative but to keep on butchering until someone butchers him.

The hollowness of the code Macbeth adopts is beautifully counterpointed by the case of Macduff. Here too is a man of action and courage. When Macduff leaves for England without so much as a farewell note, Lady Macduff complains (understandably) that "He wants the natural touch" (IV.ii.9). But this is precisely untrue. Just as Macbeth loses his gentleness at the prompting of his woman, so Macduff reveals his own fully developed humanity in relation to his family. While the revolutionary forces are assembling in England, Macduff receives the news of his great loss. Malcolm wants to turn private grief at once into a battle cry: "Dispute it like a man," he urges (IV.iii.220). Macduff is still absorbing the horror and the hurt and the unspeakable sense of loss. He falters, repeats himself, disbelieves, curses. And he does accept Malcolm's challenge, with a qualification:

I shall do so;
But I must also feel it as a man
(IV .iii.220- 21)

Here if anywhere in the play is the distinction between the rampantly destructive machine nicknamed "manliness" and the deeply coherent sense of courage which deserves the name. Lady Macbeth's question *("Axe* you a man?") gets its complete answer only here. Yes, if I can also feel it as a man.

To return to the comparison I suggested earlier, it would appear that the assumptions Shakespeare makes about manliness are neither as idealistic as Marlowe's nor as tough as Jonson's. If you prefer an assessment more flattering to Shakespeare, you might say that Shakespeare's manliness is more flexible than Marlowe's, more chivalrous than Jonson's, more generous than both. In the closing scene of *Measure jar Measure,* just after Mariana has become a bride, she's told that she'll soon be a widow. Judged by his own system of pure 'precision, Angelo will have to die. As Angelo's widow, Mariana will be entitled to his property and this, the Duke assures her, ought to

be enough "To buy you a better husband" (V.i.423). But Mariana won't be satisfied with anything less than a real man. "0 my dear lord," she says to the Duke, "I crave no other, nor no better man" (V.i.423-4). She kneels, begs, argues, persists:

They say best men are moulded out of faults,
And, for the most, become much more the
better
For being a little bad. So may my husband.
(V.i.436-8)

On the face of it, this looks like dubious moral theory and a recipe for a disastrous marriage. Only by laundering a great deal of the evidence against Angelo can you come up with the notion that he's been "a little bad." But Mariana's plea is based on something deeper than a clear-sighted review of the evidence. She's desperately in love with Angelo, and the years of waiting have intensified her need. As the Duke explains, the betrayal by Angelo "that in all reason should have quenched her love, hath, like an impediment in the current, made it more violent and unruly" (III.i.241-4). Now that she's slept with Angelo at last (and married him too, as luck would have it), she feels for the first time the blessedness of having the man she wants. Not the perfect man, just the man she wants. And, convicted of demonstrable sensuality, Angelo somehow seems a lot more manly than he did when his reputation for icy correctness was intact. I'm going to return to the question of Angelo's manliness before long, but since his is a difficult case, I want to deal first with the other sexual offenders in *Measure for Measure.* They arein the order of ascending complexity- Pompey, Lucio, and Claudio.

In a world where people are willing to mortify themselves and execute others in the name of abstractions, it's reassuring to meet somebody like Pompey. He has the kind of authority that comes from knowing who he is: "Truly, sir, I am a poor fellow that would live" (II.i.220). It's this willingness to live at the level of the flesh that gives Pompey his greatness, expressed largely in terms of the comic advantage he holds in the confrontations with Escalus and Elbow. When Escalus tells him that the law isn't going to tolerate promiscuity, Pompey answers with a question that implicitly defends the body against the tyranny of the soul: "Does your worship mean to geld and splay all the youth of the city?" (II.i.228-9). This isn't the only question that might be asked of the law in Vienna, but it's an honest one. In a good production, Pompey will get a chorus of approving laughter on this line-laughter in which the spectators are congratulating him, in effect, for cutting through all the sanctimonious twaddle about the dangers of too much liberty and the dignity of the great legal symbols. To put it another way, Pompey gets his authority from direct contact with experience. Escalus gets his from Angelo, who gets it from a Duke who's nowhere to be found, who gets it from a statute on sexual behaviour which has been asleep for either fourteen or nineteen years (nobody seems quite sure which). Even if the statute were a holograph in God's handwriting, the transmission of the manuscript is (as usual) a history of early neglect and subsequent corruption. Against these dubious claims, Pompey has every right to defend himself as a poor fellow who wants to live.

Pompey enters the play under the accusation of sexual misconduct. Elbow's dignity as a husband has been offended because Pompey has done something to his wife (the judicial inquiry makes the nature of the deed progressively less clear). As the constable of his parish, Elbow thinks he can get legal redress for Pompey's action. While the absurdity of the case is unfolding, like the gigantic silk banner which used to be the handkerchief in the clown's pocket, Angelo leaves. Absurdity is among the things he can't abide. So Escalus is left in charge, and he sees through both the accuser and the accused. When he learns that Elbow has held seven consecutive terms as constable, he's disturbed: *"Axe* there not men in your ward sufficient to serve it?" he asks (II.i.263-4). Despite his naive charm, Elbow isn't a sufficient man by any standards. Despite his record as a pimp and his habitual irreverence, Pompey (on his own terms) is. He escapes with a warning which he intends to follow "as the flesh and fortune shall better determine" (II.i.250-51). To be at the mercy of the flesh and fortune is not what the complete man might aspire to, but it's the best a poor fellow who wants to live can afford.

Lucio manages to put together a plausible semblance of manliness. If Pompey follows the promptings of the flesh out of habit, Lucio does the same out of allegiance to a theory. He's a libertine. A very likeable one, in fact, who can say clever things like, "thy head stands so tickle on thy shoulders, that a milkmaid, if she be in love, may sigh it off" (I.ii.161-3), or "'tis my familiar sin, / With maids to seem the lapwing, and to jest / Tongue far from heart" (I.iv.31-3). Among the women who owe their happiness to this praiser of his own potency is Kate Keep-down, once the recipient of Lucio's promise to marry her, now the mother of his one-yearold. At the end of the play Lucio is forced into facing responsibility just as Angelo is. First, he'll have to marry the woman whose child he fathered. "The nuptial finished," says the Duke, "Let him be whipp'd and hang'd" (V.i.510-11). The threat of hanging doesn't seem to bother Lucio, or at least it's upstaged by the larger insult of being married "to a whore," as he puts it; "good my lord," he begs, "do not recompense me in making me a cuckold" (V.i.511-15). I think the threat of hanging is only a threat (as it is in Angelo's punishment), because the Duke continues to insist that marriage is Lucio's inescapable penance, while adding: "Thy slanders I forgive, and therewithal / Remit thy other forfeits" (V.i.517-18). So, when Lucio is led off to prison, it's to await the execution of nothing more serious than his long-overdue reunion with Kate Keep-down and family. ForLucio, that's a serious blow nonetheless; it hurts him where he's most vulnerable. It's a blow to the unfettered manhood he's been proclaiming as his only principle.

The other man who fathers a child out of wedlock is Claudio. Morally, Claudio's sex-life begins on the pattern set for him by Lucio: with a promise of marriage to Juliet. It's pregnancy that forces the distinction, best expressed in the domesticated chivalry of Victorian language, between the man of character and the cad. Claudio does the decent thing in standing by Juliet, whom he describes as "fast my wife" (I.ii.136), and whom he would gladly marry if her tiresome relatives could settle their bickering about the dowry. It may be the integrity of his response to Juliet's pregnancy that wins Claudio his reputation for special worth. Mistress Overdone, whose views shouldn't be taken lightly where the point at issue is manliness, gives Claudio her loudest praise: "There's one yonder arrested and carried to prison, was worth five thousand of you all" (I.ii.56-7). And

the Provost, after dutifully making the arrest, describes his prisoner as "a young man / More fit to do another such offence, / Than to die for this" (II.iii.13-15).

Under the shadow of a death sentence, especially in his confrontation with Isabella, Claudio faces the hardest test of his manliness. For Isabella the solution is clear enough, as she indicates in the one line from the play that has found a life of its own as an ironic proverb: "More than our brother is our chastity" (II.iv.184). Armed with such fierce conviction, she's horrified when Claudio doesn't simply applaud her decision. "Death is a fearful thing," he says (III.i.115), and, realizing that it's within her power to rescue him, he begs her to change her mind:

Sweet sister, let me live.
What sin you do to save a brother's life, Nature dISpenses with the deed so far
That it becomes a virtue.
(III.i.132- 5)

This argument provokes a retort from Isabella more scathing than anything she's said to Angelo. Her speech beings with "0, you beast!" and ends with "No word to save you" (III.i.135-46). Between these unrelenting extremes is a withering assessment of his valour: "Wilt thou be made a man out of my vice?" What Marlowe's Faustus referred to as "manly fortitude" should, on Isabella's terms, be enough to ensure that her brother be willing to give his life to the cause of absolute purity.

I'm not going to concern myself with Isabella's motives, or the arguments for and against her choice. Whatever they are, she's being unfair to Claudio. He's not a coward. In conversation with the supposed Friar Lodowick (really the Duke, of course), he resigns himself to the universal human fate: "Let it come on" (III.i.43). And to Isabella, before she's explained the terms of Angelo's proposal, he's equally brave:

If I must die,
I will encounter darkness as a bride
And hug it in mine arms.
(III.i.82-4)

But there's an understandable impatience in these lines. The "If" is haunting Claudio's mind like the flickering trunk of a palm tree between vertical bars of desert heat. Yes, yes, I'll die bravely if I have to, but please don't prolong this test of my courage if there's anything else to report. Manliness doesn't prevent Claudio from sharing a bottom-line instinct with Barnardine, who announces quite sensibly that he drank too much last night to face the ordeal of execution today, or with Pompey, who knows that he's a poor fellow who wants to live.

Angelo stands over the rest of society, "Dressed in a little brief authority" (II.ii.119), brittle rather than tough, self-absorbed rather than self-assured, a caricature of genuine manliness. "I would to heaven I had your potency," Isabella says to him during their first interview (II.ii.67). But almost as soon as she's said the word, she limits its meaning to the official one: the power to judge. Angelo's professionalism is impeccable. He has the

kind of perfect record that makes you wonder if he's not hiding something. And once he's in control, it's obvious that his reputation has been won at the expense of everything that matters more. When the Provost asks him what's to be done "with the groaning Juliet" (II.ii.15), for example, Angelo's reply- "See you the fornicatress be remov'd" (II.ii.22)-is a desecration of woman in her sacred state. Anyone as obsessed with power as Angelo is will have little patience with the chivalry of sexual behaviour. That's why his rejection of Mariana, though legally clean, has more in common with Lucio's treatment of Kate Keep-down than with Claudio's treatment of Juliet.

Morally, Angelo is the perfect example of Jonson's view, as recorded in *Discoveries,* that "Too much pickednesse is not manly." It's obvious from the plot that his fastidious legalism hurts and threatens to hurt other people. What *it* does to him is equally damaging. "It is certain," says Lucio, "that when he makes water, his urine is congealed ice; that I know to be true. And he is a motion ungenerative; that's infallible" (Ill.ii.l0S-8). This would be vulgar instead of funny if it didn't ring true. Angelo has bruised the body to pleasure the soul. In doing so, he's come perilously close to losing his manliness. His dealings with Claudio, Elbow, Pompey, Juliet, and Mariana show him up as little more than the "ungenitured agent" that Lucio imagines him to be (III.ii.167-8).

It's the habit of renunciation that has made Angelo what he is. That's why he feels threatened as soon as he knows that he's responding to Isabella's presence not with professional severity but with lust. "0 fie, fie, fie, fie!" he says shortly after she's left him; "What dost thou, or what art thou, Angelo?" (II.ii.172-3). And as he waits for her to return, he knows he'd pawn his "gravity" for the "idle plume" he now desires (II.iv.9-11). The rest of Angelo's part in *Measure for Measure* is a painful education in the rudiments of manly behaviour. He thinks he can have a night's indulgence- secretly and then return to the austerity of his professional routine. But he finds that "This deed unshapes me quite" (IV.iv.18). He's made himself vulnerable in ways that he won't understand completely until the Duke reveals all at the close.

And as his own brittleness begins to soften, Angelo starts to wonder about the feelings of others. He has "A deflower'd maid" on his hands now (IV.iv.19). What will "her tender shame" (IV.iv.21) prompt her to do or prevent her from doing? Angelo's answers aren't yet the ones a manly lover might give. But at least he's asking the questions. And he's come a long way from the days when a woman who slept with a man could be dismissed as a "fornicatress." As for Claudio, "He should have lived," Angelo now admits (IV.iv.26), though he fights this admission as soon as he makes it with as much legal jargon as he can remember. Still, "Would yet he had lived" (IV.iv.30). What Angelo is going through is the kind of education in manliness described by Mariana in her plea at the end of the play. He's beginning to understand the sense in which all men, including himself, are "moulded out of faults."

If I can risk a few premature conclusions, I'd say that the standard of manliness in *Measure for Measure* is like the pattern in Marlowe's plays in that it celebrates personal desire. If Claudio gets "possession of Julietta's bed,"_ as he puts it (I.ii.13S), that's because he's bold enough to go after what it is he wants. But desire in Shakespeare

has its social as well as personal character, partly because it promises (or threatens) fertility. If

Claudio sleeps with Juliet, that's a private matter of course, until everyone in Vienna starts making it into a public matter. In *Edward II,* society punishes desire in just the way that Angelo would like to but can't. I'd also say that Shakespeare's manliness is like the Jonsonian pattern in the sense that *it* places value on the kind of integrity that comes from self-knowledge, and scorns the rigidity of merely mechanical behaviour. The most Jonsonian image in the play is the "angty ape" (II.ii.121) which Isabella holds up to Angelo as a mirror of his false manliness. But the suggestion that manliness itself is "moulded out of faults" - this is a more tolerant and less exacting view than either Marlowe or Jonson would allow.

I'm aware that *Measure for Measure* includes a major icon of manliness whom I've mentioned only in passing. The Duke, in my scheme, remains an unsolve problem. I shall invoke only one production of *Measure for Measure*- the one directed by John Barton for the Royal Shakespeare Company in 1970- and I'd like to introduce the Duke's problem by recalling what happened in the final moments of this interpretation. The Duke approached Isabella with outstretched arms on the words, "Dear Isabel" (V.i.531), and looked invitations at her during the next few lines, ending with, "What's mine is yours, and what is yours is mine" (V.i.534). Then he waited, and waited, and waited. At last Isabella slowly turned away from him and, without looking back, made her exit at stage left. The Duke spoke the final couplet- about referring to "our palace" (V.i.535)with understandable sadness. Then, slowly, he made his exit stage right.

I don't think for a moment that anything comparable to this happened at the Globe in 1604. But I think the unconventional ending chosen by the RSC does point up a serious difficulty, namely, that the Duke has done nothing, dramatically, to deserve Isabella's hand in marriage. While he's busy testing everyone else's manliness, his own remains untried. Lucio claims that, despite the Duke's previous record as a womanizer, "He's now past it" (III.ii.176). I'd like to be able to dismiss this as the most cutting of Lucio's "slanders" against the Duke, but I can't be satisfied quite so easily because Lucio is demonstrably perceptive about the sexual behaviour of just about everyone else. I'm aware that one can invent various symbolic marriages for this pair, perhaps embellishing them with stage directions borrowed from the tradition of the morality play: *"Here Courtly I.iberty, being now past it, taketh Chaste Vigilance by the hand, and leadeth her in a sprightly measure to the music of Sellinger's Round."* Still, it doesn't feel like a real court ship. And it's infuriatingly true that, in response to the Duke's proposal, Isabella says nothing. It's Angelo who says that the Duke has been omnipresent, "like power divine" (III.i.367). Perhaps. But in theatrical terms, he has spent most of the play fulfilling Lucio's description of him as "the old fantastical duke of dark comers" (IV.iii.156).

I suppose it's an egalitarian perversity that prompts me to suppose that dukes, like other men, should have to prove themselves. If so, I think it's an attitude encouraged by a play in which the man who judges turns out to be moulded out of the very faults he won't admit to himself or allow to his fellow men.

Critical Essay #4

Source: "Heads You WIn Tails I Lose," in *Critical Survey,* Vol. 5, No.1, 1993, pp. 77-82.

[Macfarlane argues that in the world of Measure for Mea sure, women are effectively powerless because the only power they supposedly possess- sexual- is defined and limited by men. Men, on the other hand, are seen to possess the power to govern, accumulate wealth, and set moral standards. Macfarlane suggests that this discussion of the nature of men and women is relevant to today's society.]

In *Measure For Measure* Isabella is placed firmly in a no win situation. Even on the threshold of a convent, at the very moment of making a clear statement about her vocation, her desires and her sexuality, she is not safe. She is plucked back into the outside world to bear the responsibility for the sexual urges, misdemeanors and fantasies of four men.

As Lucio approaches to plead for Isabella's intervention in her brother's cause his greeting sexualises her: 'Hail, virgin- if you be, as those cheek roses / Proclaim you are no less!' Lucio clearly identifies Isabella by her sexuality and his subsequent encouragement of her in the face of her imminent failure to win over Angelo supposes she must use her sexuality if she is to succeed. He assumes that Isabella's assertion that she will 'bribe' Angelo is an offer of sex. He suggests that she 'had marred all else!' a statement which indicates at this early stage in the play the limited possibilities perceived by men for women. In fact Isabella's 'bribe' is to be 'with true prayers'. Lucio is unable to do other than he does- the exchange he envisages is part of the parcel of assumptions about women which this play foregrounds.

It is with this 'parcel of assumptions' that this essay is concerned. As the play explores matters of power, justice and mercy, it chooses to do so through a revelation of gender relations which makes it deeply relevant to a twentieth-century audience. Attitudes to female sexuality and choice are a particular focus and are clearly signalled in the opening moments of the play when Isabella's choice of a convent life is being totally disregarded- in fact, is not even considered.

Angelo, of course, shares Lucio's assumptions and the fascination with Isabella's virgin state. It is her purity which makes her desirable and for Angelo, who sees sex as something corrupt and corrupting, to have that which is untouched holds its own attraction. This point about the desirability of the sexually inexperienced is made when Angelo, tom by his desires and wracked by his hatred of sex, questions himself:

What is't I dream on?
0 cunning enemy, that, to catch a saint,
With saints dost bait thy hook! Most danger
ous
Is that temptation that doth goad us on
To sin in loving virtue. Never could the

strumpet,
With all her double vigour, art and nature
Once stir my temper; but this virtuous maid Subdues me quite.
(II. ii. 178-85)

It is noticeable that for all the emphasis on virtue and saintliness it is Isabella's lack of sexual experience, made clear in the contrast between 'maid' and 'strumpet', which stirs Angelo's temper. He is unable to envisage a state of chastity or purity which is sexual. There is nothing between abstinence and prostitution. This points to one of the many double binds women find themselves in: to be sexually active is to be suspect, to be a virgin is to be desirable and therefore potentially sexually active and potentially suspect. Either way women lose. Either way they are sexualised.

Claudio's demands of his sister are couched in a language which presumes her power: 'sweet sister, let me live:' and heaps all the responsibility for his life (or death) onto her shoulders. Her power to save him is vested at this juncture totally in her assent or refusal to use her sexuality.

Isabella is reduced by the attitudes of Lucio, Angelo and Claudio to a sexual being at the very point in her life when she has chosen abstinence from sex as a way of life. Isabella is reduced, not because sexual activity is essentially reductive, but because all other aspects of identity are being denied her.

The demands made of Isabella's sexuality do not end here. At the end of the play her mentor, the Duke, who in his guise of friar has ostensibly taken a vow of chastity which should guarantee Isabella's freedom from predation and respect for her own choice of vocation, exerts another pressure, again sexual and invites (commands?) marriage. This it must be noted in spite of the assurance given earlier to the Provost that 'My mind promises with my habit no loss shall touch her by my company.' (III. i. 178-80). It must be asked why it is felt necessary to give this assurance. It is as if, by being female, Isabella is automatically 'at risk' and that this 'risk' entails some form of taking or having by which she will be diminished in some way, hence the idea of 'loss'. The Friar/Duke is at least conscious of the state of things even as he professes the purity of his intentions. His words also make clear that the agent of the supposed 'loss' would not be Isabella herself. As has already been noted, the Duke's words to the Provost prove meaningless.

Isabella and male attitudes to her are placed at the centre of the play, thus audiences are forced to face their own attitudes to female sexuality. Many directors of the play have shown us an Isabella actively or unconsciously encouraging Angelo's advances. This has usually to be done by some surreptitious glance or coy movement or even, in one recent production, by the removal of Isabella's head covering by Angelo as she abased herself at his feet. Whilst one would not like to deny directors interpretive powers, it is clear that such an interpretation owes much to the deep-seated belief that when women say no they mean yes and nothing at all to the evidence of the text. The text makes the Isabella! Angelo situation unambiguous. Angelo is attracted by Isabella's aloofness and she is prepared to bribe only with prayers. If Angelo finds all tlus attractive then he must, as he clearly does, accept the responsibility and look to himself:

What's this? What's this? Is this her fault or
mine?
The tempter or the tempted, who sins most?
Ha, not she. Nor doth she tempt; but it is I
That, lying by the violet in the sun,
Do as the carrion does, not as the flow'r,
Corrupt WIth virtuous season.
(II. ii. 162-7)

The emphatic positioning of 'I' at the end of the third line of this quotation makes the point unequivocally that the tempter is imbued with the power to tempt by the tempted. That Angelo is responsible and accepts responsibility for his own feelings is clear and further, having named Isabella as tempter, he then restates his position, 'Nor doth she tempt'. He knows who is the agent in this particular act of temptation even if others have been less clear.

What has been ignored by all the male characters is Isabella's choice of vocation. Her decision to become a nun assumes sexual abstinence as part of a way of life, but this has been disregarded as unimportant not only within the play, but by a body of opinion which has focused on Isabella as some sort of fanatic with a neurotic attachment to her virginity. The judgment is turned on the woman who in asserting her freedom to choose is held responsible for her brother's death- this in spite of the fact that she is being manipulated and pressured by men, especially Angelo, who have alternatives open to them. She is sexualised, marginalised and depersonalised as remorselessly by such criticism as she is by Lucio, Claudio, Angelo and the Duke.

One of the points the play illustrates so well is that Isabella's freedom to choose is severely limited by male versions of her, all of which limit her identity to that which is simply sexual. The issue of choice between Claudio's life and Isabella agreeing to Angelo's demands, though central to the play, is often subsumed in the spurious argument about whether Isabella would be giving. up much if she agreed to Angelo's demands. Roughly stated the argument runs, 'what's a one off sexual encounter against a man's life?' The play is not merely asking this question. Those who reduce the issue to this align themselves clearly with those who collectively pressure Isabella and collectively disregard her version of herself and her version of personal integrity. They also miss much that is revealed by the play's probing of attitudes to sexuality, both male and female, but especially of male attitudes to women as wholly and only sexual. For if we project ourselves imaginatively into the situation where Isabella has gone to Angelo and if we approve her going though we know how unwillingly she goes, we are accepting that female sexuality should be traded to satisfy the tyrannical desires of the rich and powerful. If we accept this state of affairs then who should we really be judging?

The reduction of the issue to a simple choice between enforced sex and a man's life disregards Isabella's version of herself. She does not split off her sexuality from the rest of herself. It is an integral part of herself- in fact this attitude to the self as somehow integrated leads her to offer her life for Claudio's life. It leads her to assert: 'I have spirit

enough to do anything that appears not foul in the truth of my spirit.' (III. i. 208). What is emphasised here is a self which has the potential to be faithful to its own idea of truth. The argument centres on a notion of integrity of ideal and action in which there can be no split between what is believed and what is done, between one's sexual self and the rest.

In spite of, or perhaps because of this version of herself, Isabella does not judge others' sexual behaviour. Her immediate response to the news of Juliet's pregnancy reveals this: '0 let him marry her.' (I. iv. 48). What she does judge is Angelo's abuse of power and Claudio's fear of death. Her passionate outburst as she scorns Claudio's pleading for life comes from the torment of being caught in an intolerable situation. The intemperate nature of her response and her abhorrence at what she is being asked to do is surely understandable. It should be emphasised that it is the idea of buying her brother's life with loveless and enforced sex that Isabella finds abhorrent, not sex itself. It is the context which revolts Isabella. As a woman of Christian commitment and absolute faith it should not surprise us that she has no fear of death. To Isabella death is preferable to the shame of such an exchange as Angelo has suggested. In her desperation she makes the mistake of expecting her brother to have the same response as she does.

So what is Isabella's real 'crime'? Is it simply that she chooses a way of life which includes sexual abstinence as one of its aspects? Those of us who do not make this choice may well ask why we feel threatened by those who do- why, when someone expresses abhorrence at the idea of loveless enforced sex, we feel free to judge that person, usually female, as somehow abnormal. In Isabella's case this 'defect' has also been given the label frigidity, which is another sexual category applied to women, though in the situation we are dealing with it is difficult to see that the term has any meaning.

Perhaps it would be more helpful if we were to see Isabella's choice as a form of sexual freedom. After all, it is no less asexual freedom than sexual activity in its various forms; both are circumscribed as are all notions of free choice. Indeed some might see sexual activity as the greater evil, leading, as our male writers have often shown us, to a tension between desire and the ability to cope with that desire. Such agonisings have long been the subject of male writings in the form of novels, poems, plays, jokes and films. Angelo in this play is but one example. His appallingly inadequate response to his desire for Isabella is to degrade rather than celebrate sexual desire, to be inwardly tormented into self-hatred and to outwardly disregard the otherness of Isabella. Whatever our views about the 'value' of individual sexuality, whether we cherish and celebrate it by being sexually active or by sexual abstinence or whether, like Angelo, we fear and mistrust it, what is abhorrent is not only that Isabella is expected to 'give up' that which she has chosen to 'protect', but that her attitude to her own sexuality as an integral part of herself is being scorned.

At the moment when the play produces absolute alternatives, it mercifully avoids the choice. The Isabella-Marianna swap is an avoidance not a negation of the situation which has been vividly presented to us. It conveniently prevents Isabella from having to

face the consequences of her decision- whatever that ultimately might have been, for there were many options available. The closure in the play prevents the audience from witnessing one of the awful alternatives- the death of a man about to become a father or the sexual humiliation of a woman against her own clearly expressed wishes, almost literally on the threshold of a convent. The closure prevents the dramatic following through of either alternative, but it does not prevent the imaginative engagement with what the play has opened up.

The swap is a necessary dramatic convention and represents that moment when the play ceases to be an exploration of the attitudes to sexuality it has hitherto disclosed and imposes on itself a schematic resolution to its own problem. Having turned away from the great difficulty it has set itself the play returns to its beginning, coming full circle in the final denouement as Isabella is propositioned by the Duke and faces once again her earlier dilemma, albeit in the form of marriage.

Isabella's failure to reply, her collapse into silence, may signal her utter disbelief and exhaustion or her resignation at the turn events have taken. It may also show that Isabella has learned to use one of the few sources of female power, silence. To reserve at least one's thoughts to oneself denies the power of knowing to others. It may also bring us back symbolically to the earlier entry into the silent and enclosed order of nuns at the play's opening or to a beginning in which Isabella's silence represented her initial inability to plead with Angelo. In any case we have learned that both her silence and her articulate pleadings, her quick-witted rhetoric and her logical arguments have got her precisely nowhere. In not answering the Duke she makes no commitment, but, ironically, places herself in the position of the woman who says nothing and can therefore mean anything.

Isabella has nowhere to turn in this play. Even as she and Marianna manipulate events to get Isabella off the hook they are indebted to the Duke for suggesting and enabling the course of action they plan to follow. It is a course of action in which power is defined in a peculiarly female form, that is the use of sex and supported by another, deceit. The very framework which enables also reveals the limits of female power and clearly reminds us that for the women in this play there is no other power available. The convenient willingness of Marianna only serves to highlight the helplessness of her situation while at the same time revealing the limited nature of the control she and Isabella have over their own lives.

As a result of the machinations of the Duke and the actions of the two women, Marianna is secure in the knowledge that she will at last be married- a state which represents one of the options open to women in the play, the others being whoredom, institutionalised chastity or pregnancy outside of marriage. All are defined by sex.

Isabella represents the female struggle to define and decide her own project for herself. If the site of the struggle is to be the limited spectrum of female choices offered in the play, all of which are delineated by particular versions of female sexuality, then she has to function within that world. When she does threaten to expose some of the conupt structures which u'phold it she is constrained by the obvious power relations between

Angelo, the embodiment of state power and herself, a woman wishing only to escape the world to enter a convent. Her total defeat by Angelo, who *rep* resents one form of male power, is only prevented by her total dependence on that other powerful male, the Duke. This play shows very forcefully what is the nature of the limits placed on female choices and by whom those choices are defined. It seems Isabella would have been safe from the predations of the males only if she had become a fully fledged nun. It says much that Isabella's decision to express her sexuality in her own way could not be respected unless supported by the external and protective walls of an institution- the convent enclosing its order of nuns. It says more when we consider that this freedom is enclosed by a male sanctioned institution.

Critical Essay #5

Justice and mercy play pivotal roles in *Measure for* Mea *sure.* Justice is defined by most critics as an objective adherence to the letter of the law and in fact, *Joel* Levin uses the term "law" in place of the term "justice." Mercy, on the other hand, is described as a charitable and tolerant interpretation of the law. Levin uses the term "equity" in close conjunction with the term "mercy"_; both he and Wilbur Dunkel point out that the Duke, as the representative of mercy in the play, and Angelo, as the standard-bearer for justice, each prove inadequate to solving the problems of the conupt Viennese society. Dunkel an Levin contend that the answer lies in combining justice with mercy; additionally, they suggest that this solution occurs at the close of the play when the Duke "both condemn[s] and allow[s] a wrong" by sentencing and then forgiving the transgressions of Angelo, Claudio, and Lucio.

The relationship between justice and mercy is taken a step farther by Robert Grams Hunter and Rolf Soellner, both of whom argue that Angelo cannot judge others fairly until he himself has sinned, and that once he thinks he has "deflower'd" Isabella and put Claudio to death, he begins to understand guilt; as a result, they explain, Angelo will discover his own humanity, along with the virtue of charity towards other people's weaknesses. David Thatcher rejects Soellner and Hunter's thesis as inconsistent. While he agrees that Angelo should be condemned for his attempted rape of Isabella and for his rigid enforcement of unreasonable laws, Thatcher contends that "natural guiltiness," or a judge's own guilt, is not sufficient reason for that judge to be merciful towards someone else who has committed the same crime. Further, Thatcher suggests that the issue of "natural guiltiness" - that is, the moral gray area be tween enacting justice versus granting mercy- is what makes *Measure for Measure* a "problem play."

Finally, Linda Anderson broadens the discussion of justice and mercy to include revenge. She disagrees with those critics who describe the theme of *Measure for Measure* as the triumph of mercy over justice and *re* venge and instead observes that revenge works as an instrument of justice and mercy. In other words, the Duke disguises himself so that he can protect the rights of innocents such as Isabella and Mariana even while he tricks the guilty such as Lucio and Angelo into calling revenge down upon themselves. Thus by the close of the play, all three concepts have merged as the Duke "takes revenge against wrongdoers, establishes justice for everyone, and extends a limited forgiveness to Angelo and Lucio not because they deserve it, but because his power, wisdom, and magnanimity allow him to be generous."

Source: "Problem Comedies," in A *Kind of Wild Justice:* Revenge in *Shakespeare's Comedies,* University of Delaware Press, 1987, pp. 156-68.

[In this excerpt from her study of the pervasiveness of revenge "as a useful social instrument in Shakespeare's comedies," Anderson reminds us that the Duke temporarily leaves Vienna in Angelo's hands not only to correct the city's excessive was but also to test Angelo's ability to wield power fairly. Further, Anderson observes that as Isabella is forced to make decisions regarding her chastity, her brother's life, am

Angelo's hypocrisy- am as the Duke himself steps in to draw the play to a dose-- the concept of revenge is intermingled with the concepts of justice am mercy to the extent that the three become "almost indistinguishable" from one another.]

None of Shakespeare's titles is more suggestive of revenge than *Measure for Measure.* Although the phrase itself may mean no more than strict justice, it recalls the Old Testament law often cited as vengeful:

. . . thou shalt paye life for life,
Eie for eie, tothe for tothe, hand for hand,
fote for fote,
Burning for burning, wonde for wonde,
stripe for stripe.
(Exod. 21 :23-25)

This is the spirit in which the Duke uses the phrase:

The very mercy of the law cries out
Most audible, even from his proper tongue, "An Angelo for Claudio, death for death!"
Haste still pays haste, and leisure answers leisure;
I.ike doth quit like, and *M easure* still *far*
Measure.
(5.1.407-11)

Yet the phrase itse]f is from quite another context:

Judge not, that ye be not judged.
For with what judgement ye judge, ye shal be judged, and with what measure ye' mette, it shal be measured to you againe.
(Matt. 7:1-2; *see* also Luke 6:37-38)

That the Duke in judging Angelo for judging Claudio should condemn him with a paraphrase of a biblical injunction condemning judging suggests a more complex irony than merely that "the ending of the play, then, really contradicts the title." Although a traditional objection to the play is that Angelo escapes any real revenge, revenge is not absent from the play but is so intertwined with justice and mercy that what are elsewhere separate and even opposing qualities become, in *Measure jar Measure,* almost indistinguishable.

The standard reading of the play, based on the Duke's explanation to Friar Thomas (1.3 .19-43), is that Vincentia intends Angelo to (re)enforce the "strict statutes and most biting laws" of Vienna "to strike and gall" the citizens. But this is not what the Duke says to Angelo; rather, he 1inks severity and leniency:

Mortality and mercy in Vienna
I.ive in thy tongue and heart.
(1.1.44-45)
Your scope is as mine

own, So to enforce or qualify the laws As to your soul seems good.
(1.1.64-66)

Since the Duke does not tell Angelo to be severe, but tells Friar Thomas that this severity is his aim in temporarily abdicating, if we take his words at their face value we can only assume that his knowledge of Angelo's character leads him to believe that Angelo will not err on the side of mercy. Although he is certainly correct in that belief, it has been asserted that the Duke fails to understand his deputy's character and is thus responsible for Angelo's actions.2o Not only does it seem rather harsh to condemn the Duke for accepting Angelo's character as Angelo presents it, but such a reading ignores another of Vincentia's purposes. In deputizing Angelo, the Duke has made it clear that he has no respect for a fugitive and cloistered virtue:

Angelo: There is a kind of character in thy life,
That to th' observer doth thy history
Fully unfold. Thyself and thy belongings
Are not thine own so proper as to waste Thyself upon thy virtues, they on thee. Heaven doth us as we with torches do,
Not light them for themselves; for if our
virtues
Did not go forth of us, 'twere all alike
As if we had them not.
(1.1.26-35)

Not only does the Duke wish to make use of Angelo's virtue for the good of the state, he wishes to observe how Angelo's professed character is affected by power:

. . . Lord Angelo is precise;
Stands at a guard with envy, scarce confesses That his blood flows; or that his appetite Is more to bread than stone: hence shall we *see* If power change purpose: what our seemers be.
(1.3.50-54)

Angelo's trial begins with his judgment on Claudio, who enters not merely arrested but exhibited publicly through the streets at Lord Angelo's "special charge." Claudio at first seems resigned to a just punishment for an admitted crime:

Claudio' Thus can the demigod, Authority,
Make us pay down for our offense by weight
The words of heaven: on whom it will, it
will;
On whom it will not, *so;* yet still 'tis just.
Lucio: Why, how now, Claudio? whence
comes this restraint?
Claudio: From too much liberty, my Lucio,
liberty:
As surfeit is the father of much fast,

So every scope by the immoderate use
Turns to restraint. Our natures do pursue,
I.ike rats that ravin down their proper bane,
A thirsty evil, and when we drink we die.
(1.2.119-30)

But having explained the extenuating circumstances of his offense (1.2.145-55), Claudio's tone changes. Although still admitting that he broke the law, he expresses feelings of persecution:

And the new deputy now for the Duke
Whether it be the fault and glimpse of new
ness,
Or whether that the body public be
A horse whereon the governor doth ride,
Who, newly in the seat, that it may know
He can command, lets it straight feel the spur, Whether the tyranny be in his place,
Or in his eminence that fills it up,
I stagger in- but this new governor
Awakes me all the enrolled penalties
Which have, like unscour'd armor, hung by
th'wall So long that nineteen zodiacs have gone round And none *of* them been worn; and for a
name Now puts the drowsy and neglected act Freshly on me- 'tis surely for a name.
(1.2.157-71)

Our next glimpse of Angelo is likely to incline us to Claudio's latter view. Angelo's first argument in favor of executing Claudio is not that the punishment fits the crime but that the ultimate penalty is needed *pour encourager les autres.* When Escalus argues for mercy and suggests that in a similar situation Angelo himself might have acted similarly, Angelo rejects the argument (2.1.131). Not until later in the play does the irony of this rejection become clear: "Moreover- and it is one of the dramatist's most subtle and original uses of parallelism- Claudio's relation to Juliet had been almost of a piece with that of Angelo to Mariana. But where the one for worldly reasons left his already affianced bride in the lurch, the other with generous impetuosity had preferred disregard of an outward form to heartless desertion. Thus Claudio's transgression is in itself most venial, and Angelo is the last man justified in visiting it with condign penalties" (Boas 1896, 362). Whether *or* not Angelo would equate his situation with Claudio's, he calls down vengeance upon his own head if he ever commits Claudio's offense:

When I, that censure him, do so offend, Let mine own judgment pattern Out my death,
And nothing come in partial.
(2.1.29-31)

Our opinion of Angelo's severity is influenced *by* that of the other characters who enforce the laws in Vienna. Not only does Escalus plead for and pity Claudio, but the

Justice remarks that "Lord Angelo is severe" (2.1.282) and the Provost risks Angelo's anger by questioning the order for execution (2.2.7-14) and comments to himself on Claudio's state:

Alas, He hath but as offended in a dream!
All sects, all ages smack *of* this vice, and he To die for't!
(2.2.3-6)

These characters serve to support the opinion that "Aigelo (the name is patently ironical: he puns on it himself) is law *or* legalism, rather than justice. His hard, prim, precise ruling *by* the book is not felt to be just, because his rule makes all offences the same size; and to think of incontinence *or* fornication as if it were murder does violence to all normal human feelings" (Rossiter 1961, 121). In a minor key, however, Angelo's severity triumphs over his legalism when he expresses his hope for punishment in the case against Pompey and Froth, which he does not bother to hear:

I'll take my
leave, And leave you to the hearing *of* the cause,
Hoping you'll fwd good cause to whip them
(2.1.135-37)

Isabella, at first, seems to find it difficult to argue with Angelo. Admitting that Claudio's offense is

a vice that most I do abhor,
And most desire should meet the blow *of*
justice
(2.2.29-30)

she is easily swayed by Angelo's statement that his function is to punish criminals; declaring it a "just, but severe law" (2.2.41), she would abandon Claudio to his fate, if it were not for Lucio. Her succeeding (though unsuccessful) arguments are rather an odd mixture.

She first suggests that Angelo might pardon Claudio "and neither heaven nor man grieve at the mercy' (2.2.50); to this, Angelo replies that he will not. she then argues that mercy is the greatest ornament of authority, and that if their positions were reversed Angelo would have sinned as did Claudio, but Claudio would not have condemned him for it; Angelo asks her to leave. She then pleads as a Christian:

Why, all the souls that were were forfeit once, And He that might the vantage best have took Found out the remedy. How would you be
If He, whIch is the top of judgment, should But judge you as you are? 0, think on that, And mercy then will breathe within your lips, I.ike man new made.
(2.2.73-79)

Angelo replies that "It is the law, not I, condemn your brother" (2.2.80), and Isabella again shifts her ground, first requesting a reprieve and then asking "Who is it that hath

died for this offense?" (2.2.88). Angelo responds that the reawakened law, enforced, will prevent future evils. When Isabella asks him to "show some pity" (2.2.99), he equates that quality with justice:

I show it most of all when I show justice;
For then I pity those I do not know,
Which a dismiss'd offense would after gall,
And do him right that, answering one foul
wrong,
I.ives not to act another.
(2.2.100-104)

But Isabella replies to this with another equation, asserting that what Angelo calls justice is in fact tyranny (2.2.106-9, 110-23, 126-28, 130-31, 134-36), adding,

Go to your bosom, Knock there, and ask your heart what it doth
know
That's like my brother's fault. If it confess
A natural guiltiness such as is his,
Let It not sound a thought upon your
tongue
Against my brother's life.
(2.2.136-41)

'This argument now seems to affect Angelo, although he has already heard it from Escalus and rejected it (2.1.8-31). But we soon learn that it is not Isabella's varied pleas that justice be tempered WIth mercy that have affected Angelo's professed conviction that harsh justice for Claudio is mercy for Vienna. Angelo's final speech in this scene reveals how her arguments have touched him: "Isabella has insisted that there is a natural, sexual man hidden below Angelo's exterior of virtue. And at her bidding the sexual man steps forth with a ve[n]geance" (Stevenson 1966, 42). Realizing this, Angelo (in soliloquy) completely reverses his previous argument:

0, let her brother live!
Thieves for their robbery have authority
When judges steal themselves.
(2.2.174-76)

Finally, he sounds the first note of vengeance in the play with his invocation of the tempter who seeks to avenge his fall on mankind:

0 cunning enemy, that to catch a saint,
With saints dost baIt thy hook!
(2.2.179-80)

With these lines Angelo, the villain of the piece, reveals that he feels himself a victim of diabolical revenge. But since he attributes the revenge to his righteousness, it is difficult to feel much sympathy for him even before he begins plotting his crimes.

At their second meeting, Angelo and Isabella continue to debate justice and mercy even though the subject of the argument has widened to include Isabella's chastity as well as Claudio's life. Isabella, however, is concerned now with divine justice, rather than the divine mercy she invoked in their previous argument, while Angelo concentrates on earthly concerns:

A ngelo' Which had you rather, that the
most just law
Now took your brother's life, [or,] to redeem
him,
Give up your body to such sweet uncleanness
As she that he hath stain'd?
Isabella: Sir, believe this,
I had rather give my body than my soul.
A ngelo: I talk not of your soul. . . .
(2.4.52-57)

Angelo insists that divine justice is earthly cruelty, that there might be "a charity in sin" (2.4.63), but Isabella insists on maintaining distinctions:

Isabella: Better it were a brother died at once,
Than that a sister, by redeeming him,
Should die for ever.
Angelo: Were not you then as cruel as the
sentence
That you have slander'd so?
Isabella: Ignomy in ransom and free pardon
Are of two houses; lawful mercy
Is nothing kin to foul redemption.
(2.4.106-13)

Ultimately, their debate results in threats of revenge:

Isabella: Ha? little honor to be much believ'd,
And most pernicious purpose! Seeming,
seeming!
I will proclaim thee, Angelo, look for't!
Sign me a present pardon for my brother,
Or with an outstretch'd throat I'll tell the
world aloud
What man thou art.
(2.4.149-54)
Angelo' Redeem thy
brother
By yielding up thy body to my will,
Or else he must not only die the death, But thy unkindness shall his death draw out To

ling'ring sufferance.
(2.4.163-67)

While Angelo's righteousness crumbles, we see the disguised Duke combining justice and mercy by trying Juliet's repentance (2.3.21-36) and counseling Claudio to be absolute for a death that the Duke's presence insures he will not suffer (3.1.5-41). Moreover, this presence, and in particular the Duke's eavesdropping on Claudio and Isabella, may direct our opinion of her passionate outburst against her brother's plea that she yield to Angelo.

Various critics have found repugnant Isabella's conviction that "more than our brother is our chastity" (2.4.185). But the Duke, our principal standard of eth *ics* in the play, expresses no such repugnance; on the contrary, he describes Isabella as "having the truth of honor in her" and tells her "the hand that hath made you fair hath made you good" (3.1.164, 180-81). As for the possibility that she is affected by "her recoil from her rage at Claudio" (Stevenson 1966, 46), there is no evidence of *it;* not only has she previously threatened to expose Angelo, but before the Duke proposes his plot and assuming that Claudio will already have been executed, she tells Vincentio "But 0, how much is the good Duke deceiv'd in Angelo! If ever he return, and I can speak to him, I will open my lips in vain, or discover his government" (3.1.191-94). If Isabella suffers any loss of innocence, It is due to the discovery of evil in Angelo and cowardice in Claudio; both discoveries make her justifiably angry, but they do not affect her virtue, which, as the Duke says, is bold (3.1.208). As for the "duplicity" of the plot, the Duke has answered the question before *it* was asked: "the doubleness of the benefit defends the deceit from reproof" (3.1.257-58).

The deceit is particularly interesting for the multiplicity of purposes it serves, as the Duke suggests more than once (3.1.199-204, 251-55). It allows the Duke to provide justice for Mariana and Angelo, mercy for Claudio, and pleasure for himself, in addition to allowing Isabella revenge on Angelo by turning his own scheme against him. The rightness of the plot is reinforced by the various episodes in the remainder of act 3, in which we see the Duke act justly toward various transgressors. After attempting in vain to persuade Pompey of the error of his ways, he concludes

Correction and instruction must both work Ere this rude beast will profit.
(3.2.32-33)

Similarly, he tries to dissuade Lucio from slandering the Duke and, failing that, challenges him to stand by his slanders when the Duke returns (3.2.116-57). Finally, he comments on Angelo and on his own plans:

1£ his own life answer the straitness of his proceeding, it shall become him well; wherein if he chance to fail, he hath sentenc'd himself.
(3.2.255-57)
Craft against vice I must apply.
With Angelo to- night shall lie
His old betrothed (but despised); So disguise shall by th' disguised Pay with falsehood

false exacting, And perform an old contracting.
(3.2.277-82)

The Duke's use of craft is further justified when Angelo compounds his tyranny with treachery, refusing to pardon Claudio after all (4.2.120-26). Driven to further shifts to save Claudio, the Duke also tries to deal both justly and mercifully with "the magnificent and horrible Barnardine" (Rossiter 1961, 166), seeking to advise, comfort, and pray with him before his deserved execution (4.3.50-52). But being unwilling to damn Bamardine's soul, he is compelled to spare him. But though Barnardine is spared, Isabella is not, for the Duke tells her that Claudio has been executed. His excuse for this cruel lie

But I will keep her ignorant of her good, To make her heavenly comforts of despair,
When it is least expected
(4.3.109-11)

- is hardly convincing. A more likely explanation for such behavior from a character who throughout the play tests and interrogates others is that he is preparing to test Isabella. The actual test, however, will not take place until the last act. Although Isabella's reaction to the news of her brother's death- "0, I will to him [Angelo], and pluck out his eyes!" *(4.3.119)-is* that of a stage revenger rather than a novice nun, it meets, in tenor if not in immediate action, with the Duke's full approbation:

If you can pace your wisdom
In that good path that I would wish it go,
And you shall have your bosom on this
wretch,
Grace of the Duke, revenges to your heart,
And general honor.
(4.3.132-36)

Revenge is likewise on Angelo's mind. Apprised of the Duke's return and of his proclamation that citizens craving redress of injustice may petition him upon his arrival, he is forced to consider, although he rejects, the possibility that Isabella may avail herself of this opportunity. Further, he explains his reason for proceeding (as he thinks) with Claudio's execution:

He should have
liv'd,
Save that his riotous youth with dangerous
sense
Might in the times to come have ta' en
revenge, By so receiving a dishonor'd Me With ransom of such shame.
(4.4.28-32)
Just as the Duke administers to Isabella
a physic
That's bitter to sweet end
(4.6.7-8)

so to Angelo he administers praise that will make the blame to come more bitter (5.1.4-8, 9-16). After Isabella has made her accusation, he twists the knife further, pretending to disbelieve what he knows- in intent, at least- to be true and expressing an opinion of Angelo's character that- though popularly thought true- he knows to be false:

By heaven, fond wretch, thou know'st not
what thou speak'st,
Or else thou art suborn'd against his honor In hateful practice. First, hIs integrity
Stands without blemish; next, it Imports no
reason
That with such vehemency he should pursue Faults proper to himself. If he had so
offended,
He would have weigh'd thy brother by
hints elf,
And not have cut him off.
(5.1.105-12)

The Duke's behavior toward Angelo is compounded of justice, mercy, and revenge. It is just to make him suffer the mental anguish that he has inflicted on Claudio, Isabella, and Mariana. I.ike the criminals the Duke advised in Ins role as a friar, Angelo can receive mercy only after he has been made to feel true remorse. Finally, the entire plot against Angelo, with its disguises, accomplices, and presentation to him first of Isabella's false charge (which he believes to be true) and Mariana's true charge (which he believes to be false), is a classic revenge. Angelo is hoist with his own petard- caught doing what he condemned Claudio for doing, although he thought he was doing something much worse.

Although the Duke is entrapping Angelo, and allowing Lucio to entrap himself, we can feel little sympathy for them because of their shameless persistence in their evil ways. Angelo, still believing he can bluff his way out of the case against him, calls down the law's vengeance on his own head, even though he is perceptive enough to *see* that his secret is out and that several people are plotting against him:

I did but smile till now.
Now, good my lord, gIve me the scope of
justice,
My patience here is touch'd. I do perceive These poor informal women are no more But
instruments of some more mightier
member
That sets them on. Let me have way, my
lord,
To find this practIce out.
(5.1.233-39)

Similarly, Lucio attempts to cover his own guilt by slandering an innocent friar (and thereby, although he doesn't know it, again slandering his prince). It is therefore appropriate that, urged on by Angelo, "when Lucio plucks off the Friar's hood and

discovers the Duke, the impudent buffoon also accomplishes his own exposure" (Oscar James Campbell1943, 130)- and Angelo's.

Although both Angelo and Lucio recognize that they are caught, they react very differently to the knowledge. Lucio merely remarks "This may prove worse than hanging" (5.1.360), while Angelo begs to be punished:

0 my dread lord, I should be guiltIer than my guiltiness,
To think I can be undiscernible,
When I perceive your Grace, like pow'r divine, Hath look'd upon my passes. Then, good Prince,
No longer session hold upon my shame, But let my trial be mine own confession.
Immediate sentence then, and sequent death, Is all the grace I beg.
(5.1.366-74)

The Duke, having given Mariana justice by marrying her to Angelo, seems willing to grant Angelo's request for immediate execution, but he phrases the sentence in such a way as to reassure the audience that death will not be allowed to mar the ending of this comedy. "An Angelo for Claudio, death for death!" (5.1.409) would be strict justice; but in fact no death has occurred, and it would therefore be unjust to execute Angelo. As Isabella says, in another context:

His act did not 0' ertake his bad intent, And must be buried but as an intent
That perish'd by the way. Thoughts are no
subjects,
Intents but merely thoughts.
(5.1.451-54)

But at this point in the play, neither Angelo nor Isabella knows that Claudio is still alive. In addition to drawing out Angelo's punishment, the Duke seems to be testing Isabella's reaction to her brother's "murderer," although he is subtle about it. When Mariana asks Isabella to join her in pleading for Angelo's life, the Duke maintains that for her to do so would be so unnatural as to call down (or, in this case, up) supernatural vengeance:

Against all sense you do importune her.
Should she kneel down in mercy of this fact, Her brother's ghost his paved bed would break,
And take her hence in horror.
(5.1.433-36)

Isabella nevertheless does join Mariana in her pleading, but her charity changes nothing, since the Duke continues to uphold Angelo's death sentence and Angelo himself professes to prefer death to mercy (5.1.455, 47477). It is not until Claudio is revealed to be alive that the Duke pardons Angelo, and the "quickening" in the latter's eye indicates, presumably, that he has resigned himself to life (5.1.494-95).

Yet even as he forgives Angelo, Claudio, and Barnardine, the Duke declares

I find an apt remission ill myself;
And yet here's one in place I cannot pardon.
(5.1.498-99)

Since Lucio's crime seems to us far less serious (and far more amusing) than Angelo's, tills statement and the Duke's later speeches concerning Lucio have been taken by some critics as indications that Vincentio is vengeful rather than just in this case. In fact, however, the Duke behaves toward Lucio very much as he has toward Angelo, allowing him to suffer the apprehension of justice for his crimes and then extending mercy. Even the punishment that Lucio suffers is merely justice to the woman he has wronged.

If the Duke is more vindictive in his threats to Lucio than in those to Angelo, it may be excused on a number of counts. Angelo has, up to the point of his "temptation" by Isabella (and excluding his treatment of Mariana), been reputed a righteous man; even his condemnation of Claudio, although harsh, is within the law. It is difficult to imagine Lucio being able to plead a previous good character, and his victim, the Duke, is apparently entirely innocent of the accusations Lucio makes against him. Angelo's wicked designs remain merely "intents"; Lucio, on the other hand, actually commits the crime of "slandering a prince." Finally, Angelo professes remorse and craves punishment; Lucio makes excuses and seeks to avoid punishment. At the end of the play, there is hope that Angelo may truly reform; Lucio, like Barnardine, is forgiven because of the virtue of the Duke, not because he has deserved forgiveness or because we can even imagine him deserving it.

The playas a whole, and particularly the ending, have provoked a variety of critical responses. Oscar James Campbell, who *sees* the playas a satire on hypocrisyas embodied by Angelo- and libertinism- as embodied by Lucio- finds the ending false: "the play does not end as a satire should. Angelo is exposed but not ejected from the play with a final burst of derision. . . . Angelo deserves not a wife, but scornful ridicule" (1943, 125). If we assume that the "darker" aspects of the play do, in fact, indicate a satirical intention, tills may be a valid criticism, but not every critic is willing to make such an assumption: "however much incidental gloom or bitterness may be there, the themes of mercy and forgiveness are sincerely and not ironically presented" (Tillyard 1950, 139). Knight takes an entirely different angle, viewing Angelo and Lucio as neither satiric figures nor objects of mercy but, in some degree, the heroes of the piece: "The punishment of both is tills only: to know, and to be, themselves. This is both their punishment and at the same time their highest reward for their sufferings: self-knowledge being the supreme, perhaps the only, good" ([1930] 1949, 94-95). Finally, O1akravorty sees the playas a statement that mercy is superior to justice: "Punishment is the function of justice and belongs to the State which is an impersonal machinery; mercy or forgiveness, on the other hand, is the function of a superior ethic and belongs only to the individual" (1969, 259).

None of these positions seems to me to be completely accurate. *Measure for Measure* does not appear to be any kind of sustained satire. Angelo is not, at least at the beginning, entirely without merit, and even Lucio behaves well in trying to help his friend Claudio and urging Isabella on against Angelo. Although there are elements of the

puritan in Angelo and of the swaggerer in Lucio, neither character is merely a conventional type; they are too individual to be the straw men of satire. On the other hand, there is no direct evidence that either character attains self-knowledge, except insofar as Angelo learns that he is not proof against temptation; Lucio merely attains self-pity. Although mercy is certainly a theme in the play, it is not presented in isolation or in opposition to justice or revenge. Rather, what the Duke achieves at the end of the play is a balanced combination of these three qualities, in which malefactors are lured by the devices of the stage revenger into betraying themselves, threatened with the force of justice, and finally pardoned. Angelo and Lucio do not get off without suffering or without making at least some restitution; Isabella does not declare that she loves Angelo, nor the Duke that he loves Lucio. The Duke alone is able to extend mercy (though others can ask for it), but he does not do so by nullifying justice. Rather, by applying "craft against vice," he takes revenge against wrongdoers, establishes justice for everyone, and at last extends a limited forgiveness to Angelo and Lucio not because they deserve it, but because his power, wisdom, and magnanimity allow him to be generous.

Critical Essay #6

Source: "The Measure of Law and Equity: Tolerance in Shakespeare's Vienna," in *Law and I.iterature Perspectives,* edited by Bruce 1. Rockwood, Peter Lang Publishing, Inc., 1996, pp. 193-207.

[Levin clarifies the distinction between "law' and "equity" explaining that while law fives a civilization a set of impartial rules by which to govern its peop1£, equity allows for the sub jective but necessary qualities of mercy, faimess, and tolerance. Levin then examines how Measure for Measure treats the issues of law and equity by revealing through the course of the action that each is inadequate without the other; for examp1£, at the start of the play the Duke's Vienna is described as libertine and ungovernab1£, but during the course of the play, Angelo's Vienna is shown to be unfairly rigid. Levin points out that by the end of the play, there are signs that the Duke's notion of equity and A ngelo's (and Isabella's) notion of the rule of law will be combined and thus tempered by one another to create a better form of government for Vienna.]

Legal history often appears to be little more than a contest between law and equity. Law's defenders hold that individuals cannot be trusted to reach the right decision outside formal, firm, knowable, fixed, reliable rules. Equity's defenders argue that rules can hardly account for the diversity of social situations which are governed by them or for the need for creativity, mercy, individuality, and perceived justice which constitute the mix often labeled "equity"_. Notions as ancient and universal as "the rule of law" and "a government of rules not men" suggest a wariness, all too terribly and shamefully justified, of unfettered equity. Yet, the history of autocracies from Rome through the Soviet Union indicates the shortcomings of rules without equity or, more exactly, how little protection is afforded by sure and definitive standards bereft of equity and fairness.

No legal system more completely formalized the dichotomy between law and equity than Shakespeare's 17th century England. The national law courts- King's Bench, Common Pleas and Exchequer- applied the legal rules, and often served as a bulwark against unfettered power: both at the county and the national level. However, rules were often harsh on one hand and ineffective on the other. Relief could be sought in separate courts with their own judges, applying a different law: the law of equity. For example, if a mortgage contract allowed a creditor both to retain the real estate and keep all funds if a debtor missed even one payment, the debtor could go to the Chancellor in the equity courts and receive an "equity of redemption" to regain the overcharges (or, more or less, the excess principal). Similarly, if property were required to be sold and the seller refused, equity could order to have done what ought to be done, and imprison indefinitely the recalcitrant seller. The division between law and equity was, significantly, carried over into a division of both bench and bar.

The friction between law and equity is apparent as Shakespeare's *Measure Por Measure* opens. The Duke of Vienna, wounded by criticisms of his leniency and individualistic remedies in administering the city, announces he will leave Vienna indefinitely. While absent, the city will be governed by his stem deputy, Lord Angelo, "a

man of stricture and firm abstinence" (1.3.12). Angelo will provide an antidote to the lax rule of the Duke, who admits

We have strict statutes and most biting laws,
The needful bits and curbs to headstrong
weeds,
Which for this fourteen years we have let slip,
Even like an o'ergrown lion in a cave,
That goes out not to prey. Now, as fond
fathers,
Having bound up the threat'ning twigs of
birch, only to
Stick it in their children's sight
For terror, not to *use;* in time the rod
Becomes more mocked than feared; so our
decrees,
Dead to infliction, to themselves are dead,
And I.iberty plucks Justice, by the nose;
The baby beats the nurse, and quite athwart
Goes all decorum.
(1.3.19-31)

The Duke remains in Vienna, though disguised as a friar, and observes Angelo's arrest of Claudio for fornication with the now pregnant Juliet. Angelo sentences Claudio to death, despite Claudio's assertion that

Thus stands it with me: upon a true contract
I got possession of Julietta's bed.
You know the lady, she is fast my wife,
Save that we do the denunciation lack
Of outward order. This we came not to,
Only for propagation of a dower
Remaining in the coffer of her friends,
From whom we thought it meet to hide our
love
Till time had made them for us.
(1.2.148-156)

Isabella, Claudio's sister, delays taking her vows as a Dun in order to plead with Lord Angelo for mercy. After some hesitation and indecision, Angelo suggests that should Isabella give up her virginity to him- that is, commit the very crime for which he is sentencing Claudio- he would release Claudio. After initially rejecting this blackmail offer, Isabella is convinced by the Duke in his priestly disguise to agree, but to substitute (in a darkened place) Angelo's jilted former fiancé, Mariana. This masquerade works and Angelo unknowingly consummates his relationship with Mariana, but nevertheless reneges on his agreement and orders Claudio executed. However, Angelo is unmasked at the end by the Duke, who has conveniently saved Claudio from death and suggests a

courtship might begin between the Duke and Isabella. Meanwhile, Angelo's fate is determined jointly by the Duke and Isabella: he both condemns Angelo to death and orders him to marry Mariana, but then allows Isabella to pardon him from the first edict.

This tidy solution carried oUt, the play nevertheless raises dramatic and moral questions, and has engendered sharp criticism. Is the Duke's leaving merely a device to show how personally invaluable he is to the governance of the city? Is fornication not only to be unpunished but in fact rewarded? Are the positive laws of the state meaningless? Why should Angelo, guilty of corruption, rape, and attempted murder, be pardoned?

In fact, why should a priest s advice, even a fake Doble one, be to encourage the deflowering of Mariana? How satisfying is a conclusion allowing Mariana's marriage to Angelo, especially as a happy ending to a comedy? Most suspiciously, how convincing is what Coleridge called a "painful play" and "hateful work", where abuse of power, licentiousness, fornication, weakness of the will, and deceit is left unpunished; where the characters are variously weak (Angelo and Claudio), self-righteous and morally rigid (Isabella), a braggart, liar and opportunist (Claudio's friend, Lucio), or morally opportunistic and willing to ignore the moral precepts and social norms of the day to obtain their ends (Mariana and the Duke)? Particularly, how satisfying is this play when considered that it was immediately preceded by *"Othello"* and immediately succeeded by *"King Lear"* and *"Macbeth"?*

The answer to these concerns, and the defense of the play, lies with understanding how Shakespeare used equity to ameliorate the harshness of traditional rules and to allow for an idea new to societies emerging from the early Renaissance: the idea of tolerance. The Duke is established as a teacher (or "Doctor," as the masters of equity jurisprudence were sometimes called) who wished to demonstrate the need for rule by equity, although a peculiar form of it. The society needed to be shown the consequences of positive law without equity, and of an administrator who applies rules without thought of fairness. The primary teaching device becomes the law of the marriage contracts, and the principal teacher the ambiguous and deceitful character of Angelo. However, neither the applicable legal rules nor the actual equities of the situation can be taken as the entire explanation of either the play's or the Duke's strategy. As a matter of law, the contracts fail technically, and as a matter of equity they fail for immorality. Rather, in the play the contracts serve as dramatic props to establish justice through an unfolding demonstration of an emerging idea of toleration.

I. The Dilemma of The Contracts

Let us look briefly at the marriage contracts, or rather, the facts behind them. Claudio and Juliet would be married but for some difficulty with Juliet's family providing the dower. In every other way, they treat each other as husband and wife. The legal rules operate as a bar, but it is a guiding principle of equity that it generally declares as done what ought to be done. Angelo and Mariana provide the converse. Mariana's dowry, too, is lost. But the prevention of the marriage is due to the greed of one of the patties to the marriage- the grasping Angelo- and not to the outside force of a recalcitrant family.

When Mariana's brother dies at sea, she loses her brother, her fortune and her one loyal betrothed, Angelo.

She should this Angelo have married; was affianced to her by oath, and the nuptial appointed. between which time of the contract and limit of the solemnity, her brother Frederick was wracked at sea, having in that perished vessel the dowry of his sister. But mark how heavily this befell to the p oor gentlewoman: there she lost a noble an renowned brother, in his love toward her ever most kind and natural; with him, the portion and sinew of her fortune, her marriage dowry; with both, her combinate husband, this well-seeming Angelo.

(3.1.217-228)

There is no legal bar to their marriage. Nothing is being held back by the family, if there is one aside from her late brother. Yet a free-ranging equity would defeat the purpose of the terms of the original agreement.

If the two near-contracts of marriage both fail for want of a dower, the character differences lie in the reaction of the potential groorns. Both brides wish to continue the romance, with Mariana pining for Angelo and Juliet bedding with Claudio. Angelo, however, refuses to have any more to do with Mariana, and in fact

Left her in her tears, and dried not one of them with his comfort; swallowed his vows whole, pretending in her discoveries of dishonor: in few, bestowed her on her lamentation, which she yet wears for his sake; and he, a marble to her tears, has washed with them, but relents not.
(3.1.229-234)

The failed contracts involve, conversely, illegality (the fornicating couple) and injustice or inequity (the estranged couple). In both cases, the marriages were prevented by a lost dower, or more simply, by the lack of money. The ultimate beneficiary of the dower is *de facto* the intended husband who requires it, and thus, in the financial sense, the moral high ground belongs to Claudio. But in terms of the societal respect, the official opinion is

If any in Vienna be of worth
To undergo such ample grace and honor,
It is Lord Angelo.
(1.1.22-24.)

Crucial, then, to the Duke's demonstration of the justification of equity is not merely his appointment of Angelo as the strict defender of the rule of law. It is seeing Angelo as the reneger of his promises who has made use of technical defenses to extricate himself from a financially unprofitable bargain. The Duke observes Angelo's flawed character, and if unsure what form it will take once unleashed, allows it free reign for further revelation.

The plot, then, is set in motion when the fonnal political system is headed by a legal formalist. Angelo's behavior constitutes, in fact, the plot. He condemns Claudio to death unfairly, with the unfairness arising not so much because fornication appears (to our eyes), at best, a minor offense, or because the misbehavior in engaging in sexual conduct without marriage is due to extrinsic and arbitrary circumstances concerning a family reluctant to grant a dower, but because the sentence is so suddenly, harshly and violently imposed without a hint of notice. Claudio appears the victim because the law which springs to lie does so at his expense, almost *ex post facta*

Why, however, is the elaborate facade of the Duke's leaving the city, Angelo's promotion to the sovereignty, the Duke's wearing a friar's garb, the condemnation of Claudio, and the deceptive coupling of Angelo and Mariana necessary to show that the rarely enforced laws on the books should remain unenforced? The answer is that equity, while a corrective to the tyranny of bad legal rules, could not be put directly in the service of fornicators and those wronged by greedy but not breeding former betrotheds. That is, equity originated from a religious moral code which condemned nontraditionally legitimate sexual practices on the one hand, and gave little comfort to those unable to fulfill the terms of an unexecuted contract on the other. Even modem notions of equity which are stripped of their religious justifications and structures (although equity's voice almost never reverberates without deafening theological echoes) do not necessarily endorse fornication and contract breach.

II The Inadequacies of Equity and Mercy

Equity, then, is not enough. There is no suggestion that the rules of Vienna are bad, wrong, improper, illegitimate, immoral, discriminatory, unfounded, indefensible, arbitrary, capricious, or barbaric. In fact, rejudged by the civil sovereign turned holy man they might even be right. Shakespeare uses a cleric of a church not known for smiling on sexual relations outside marriage to devise two plots contrary to canon law: encouraging (via Angelo) and pardoning (via Claudio) fornication.

In fact, the entire plot might be seen as establishing, in a primitive way, the idea of tolerance. To tolerate an act is not necessarily to endorse or approve it. Rather, an act might consistently be tolerated and condemned at the same time by the same person. The notion of tolerance is relatively recent in political theory, and has been justified by a whole host of reasons equally recent in origin: the autonomy of the person, the limited power of the state, the notion of individual rights, the marketplace of ideas, and a general rise in cultural, moral, political, and spiritual relativism. None of those reasons would appear compelling to an Elizabethan. Instead, the 17th century observer, if unhappy with the political and legal structures he or she faced, would not need to compromise, but to choose a new (and probably equally intolerant) set of rules or principles. The choice would not be whether to forgive or tolerate fornication but whether to endorse it.

The traditional analogue to what we now consider toleration is, of course, mercy. Mercy allows us to condemn the act but pardon the actor. A large part of the role of the women in the play is to articulate the case for mercy. (Mercy is often portrayed as a peculiarly

feminine virtue). Initially, Claudio's friend Lucio enlists Isabella in the plot to save her brother, telling her

. . . All hope is gone,
Unless you have the grace by your fair prayer
to soften Angelo.
. . . Go to Lord Angelo,
And let him learn to know, when maidens
sue,
Men give like gods, but when they weep and
kneel,
All their petitions are as freely theirs
As they themselves would owe them.
(1.4.65-67, 79-84)

Isabella, in fact, makes the traditional appeal for mercy, which gains the traditional response.

Isabella. I do beseech you, let it be his fault,
And not my brother.
Angelo Condemn the fault, and not the actor
of it?
Why, every faults condemned ere it be done.
(2.2.35-36, 38-39)

Mercy tends to be a somewhat clumsy devise, whereby the pleader needs both to join in the condemnation and beg in an unflattering manner. Moreover, in such cases there is usually no good reason for mercy, except the plea "that we all are weak, so let's not be too harsh." This is exactly the reason suggested by Isabella, and deserved (more or less) the response of Angelo.

Those many had not dared to do that evil, If the first that did th' edict infringe
Had answered for his deed."
(2.2.91-93)

No special reason is given why Claudio should be spared, and given how clear was the law and how widespread the (perceived) problem of licentiousness, punishment (if less harsh punishment) appears reasonable. If the Duke were sitting in Angelo's place, he would have had few, if any, attractive options when an appeal of mercy were made. Claudio's act was open, continuing, likely to be repeated, well-known and clearly in violation of the law. The attractiveness of mercy as a remedy lies in its ability to take care of the *sui genris* case. Almost every special reason for special treatment in such cases is lacking here, and the Duke would be hard pressed to justify mercy without undermining the law itself.

Dramatically, then, mercy must be tried and must fail. The slippage between law and equity can then give a foothold to tolerance. The legal rules are not judged to embody

tainted values, and the equitable principles can not be put in the service of impious and sexually immoral claimants. Yet the requirement of mercy needs to be fulfilled: condemn the act but tolerate the actor.

If mercy is inappropriate, and the law is not in need of repair, then allowing the wrong-doing to exist is the only remedy. The Duke accomplishes this by double negation. The act of banning Angelo is discredited.

III. The Concept of Governmental Tolerance

Governmental tolerance, in its full-blooded form, has (at least) four elements: lack of punishment of the offender, an indication by authority of the problematic nature of enforcement against such offenders generally, a policy of curbing such enforcement, and rights in the offender to carry out the offending activity.

These four elements might variously be labeled the elements of mercy, leniency, weak tolerance, and strong tolerance. It is the suggestion of weak tolerance in the play which is a relatively new concept, and which is the concept raised by the slippage between law and equity.

The slippage might be seen as follows:

The legal rules concerning marriage contracts, sexual conduct, and criminal punishment are always valid, never directly attacked, but never lauded. Equitable principles-fairness, *lex talionis* (appropriate punishment for an offense, where the greater the offense, the greater the punishment) and enforcement and completion of inchoate and unperformed contracts offer a remedy but not one guaranteed or formal. The equitable principles operate as a wide-spread standard by which to judge the law, but insufficiently weighty to convert it. The point of *Measure Par Mea sure* is, then, to legitimize the role of equity by allowing it to operate as part of the governing structure. Equity, though, in the special form of a head of government who acts as a private detective to uncover hypocrisy and investigate police facts remains indispensable. As such, it remains indispensable. More dependable would be a concomitant attitudinal shift, where the lessons of equity are used to curb the hardness of received rules. "Tolerance" would be the name of such an attitude.

Mercy and leniency are the traditional province of equity. Equity, at least in English courts and in Shakespeare's version of Viennese equity, would be rooted in a Christian idea of morality, even if that idea passed first through neo-Platonist and then Aristotelian filters. Mercy operates independently of the culpability of the actor under such ideas. Any person, regardless of the evil he has done, can qualify. Leniency is a stronger concept and suggests that the mercy is not pure, but justifiable. Clearly, the entire drama of *Measure Par Measure* sug gests good reasons for not enforcing the rules. Put simply, whatever the general validity of the rules, they would be unfair if applied here. For example, it is clear Shakespeare wants the audience to agree that Mariana should have been married to Angelo, and Juliet to Claudio, although the contractual promises

of a dowry were not met. This is true even though such promises were not, at least to the Elizabethan mind, indefensible preconditions of performance.

The dispensation, and correcting of such wrongs without challenging the rules, comes in the form of mercy. The clearest act of mercy occurs when the rules themselves are the least likely to cause objection to their strict enforcement: where, for example, they would call for a severe penalty to be given to Angelo for any number of felonious acts: *i.e.,* extortion, blackmail, and the beasts of power and (apparent) murder. Isabella makes a plea for mercy, nonetheless. No reason is given and none need be for mercy. However, as Angelo himself made clear earlier, the law itself cannot provide for mercy.

Law itself can not be, or traditionally has not been, lenient. Either a rule applies or it does not, and the consequences of such rules also apply in an all-or-nothing manner. The chief local spokesman for rules, and a man who is clearly cognizant of their violation when they get in his way, is Lord Angelo. When the law turns against him, Angelo's speech is that of a hypocrite caught, but not one hypocritical about rules

0 my dread Lord,
I should be guiltier than my guiltiness,
To think I can be undiscernible,
When I perceive your Grace, like powr divine, Hath looked upon my passes. Then, good prince,
No longer session hold upon my shame, But let my trial be mine own confession.
Immediate sentence then, and sequent death, Is all the grace I beg.
(5.1.369-377)

A rule-oriented, common-law partisan here is unable to seek a remedy to save himself in equity. Certainly, Angelo is an individual whose moral depravity would allow him to make any viable argument for self-preservation, if only he knew of a legitimately persuasive one. It is left to Isabella to introduce an equitable notion of leniency to save him. Leniency does not require disregard of rules, it merely suggests that there are times when there are better reasons for following equitable principles than for obeying legal rules. Isabella argues for the life of the man whom she thinks has killed her brother not by suggesting that all rules should be followed, but by saying that her

. . . brother had but justice
In that he did the thing for which he died.
(Act V, Sc. I, Lns. 451-452.)

Equity does not invalidate the rules, but merely justifies non-enforcement in a particular situation. In so doing, it can also suggest the possibility of a generalized theory of non-compliance, which may encompass a category (or assortment) of acts which, though illegal, fail to justify judicial sanction.

IV. Protecting Bad Intentions

Of course, it is just such a notion of tolerance which arises from this complicated interplay of law and equity. By the play's end, all is outwardly restored as before, without

any wide-spread attack on the validity of the rules, and yet with a clear notion that they would not be enforced. The underlying misconduct which is considered morally reprehensible throughout the play, and which is itself never justified, is thus no longer banned. There is, of course, no change in the *de Jure,* statutoty law, at least in the criminal code. Rather, the reader is left with the impression that such misbehavior, while not being approved, will undoubtedly be tolerated. Isabella suggests this first by pointing out that while there may be evidence of misbehavior, which is reprehensible, it is basically not the concern of the state, the public, or the law:

His act did not 0' ertake his bad intent,
And must be buried but as an intent
That perished by the way. Thoughts ate not
subjects,
Intents but merely thoughts.
(5.1.454-457)

Here, "not subjects" means not subject to law. Protected are bad intentions, a relatively modem notion about tolerating free thought and giving the individual sovereignty. Suddenly, there is a right of privacy with regard to matters of the mind and heart. As long as there was not extra, overt, additional action, there should be no basis for legal intervention.

This notion of weak tolerance is strengthened by the final speech of the play. There, the Duke allows all to return to their former position without any thought of subsequent punishment. Instead, thanks are given to various characters, accolades and directions for the future are passed out Goy to Mariana, love to be bestowed by Angelo, thanks to the senior advisor Escalus) and, in general, a suggestion that everyone should return home without fear:

So, bring us to our palace, where we'll show What's yet behind, that's meet you all should know.
(5.1.541-542)

The concept of tolerance, then, triumphs, but only through guises, private pleas, and indirection. There is no overt triumph for equity as overruling the legal rules. These rules stay in place, their harshness the *de facto* standard. The Duke never establishes any right to do the "wrong thing" - the test of a truly tolerant authority- and never authorizes equitable excuses for failing to follow the rules. The behavior remains illegitimate, fornication is never considered excusable, yet the Duke himself encouraged the act. It was his idea, after all, to permit Angelo's scheme to trade a night in bed with Isabella for her brother Claudio's life to go forward, and the Duke adds to the deception when he suggests that Mariana substitute for Isabella. Whatever the injustice of Angelo's failing to wed Mariana, the plot portrays the Duke, a secular ruler, exploiting his role as a religious figure, to have an unmarried, presumptively virginal, woman engage in a sexual union with Angelo:

. . . Go you to Angelo; answer his requiring with a plausible obedience; agree with his demands to the point; only refer yourself to this advantage; first, that your stay with him may not be long; that the time may have all shadow and silence in It; and the place answer to convenience. This being granted in course- and now follows all- we shall advise this wronged maid to stead up your appointment, go in your place. If the encounter acknowledge itself hereafter, it may compel him to her recompense: and here, by'this, is your brother saved, your honor untainted, the poor Mariana advantaged, and the corrupt deputy scaled. The maid will I frame and make fit for his attempt. If you think well to carry this, as you may, the doubleness of the benefit defends the deceit from reproof. What think you of it?
(3.1.247-264)

The defense for this impropriety, this "deceit", is the "doubleness of the benefit". The formal, juristic mechanisms are insufficient to cure the situations, but the ideas inherent in the legal and equitable concepts allow this kind of circuitous remedy. The target of the remedy is the person who is the embodiment of the rules, Angelo, and he is clearly to be taught a lesson. As the Duke stated earlier, this is in order to "heal the rupture and cure the dishonor."

For the traditionalist, it might be argued, equity is embodied in the head of state. The power to dispense pardons, commute sentences, exempt citizens from rules which apply to others, and order (natural) justice generally belongs to the king, or here, the Duke. What the Duke does is not more private in matters of justice than in other matters of state. The head of Elizabethan and Stuart equity, after all, was the monarch's chief advisor, the Lord Chancellor. Thus, it might be argued by a traditionalist, the acts of the Duke in dispensing rough and *sui generis* justice to his subjects constitutes equity as usual. This argument misses two points: first, even though England shows the least reliance on natural law as a system in Europe, a large, even cumbersome, equity judiciary and bar existed, with a life apart from that of the monarch; and second, announcements in equitable courts had precedential value, had influence with all the bench and bar, and were intended to be judicial announcements with a general force and effect. By not using the tainted Angelo or the judicious Escalus in the process of resolving the disputes and problems of the city, the Duke fails to make the leap from a weak and budding tolerance to a right grounded in precedent not to have the state intrude in private matters.

"Strong tolerance" in the form of formalized rights is not established in the Duke's Viennna by the actions portrayed in the play, but may be on the horizon. Authority has publicly intervened to both condemn and allow a wrong, creating a fact on the ground that may be the beginning of the authorization of strong tolerance. The story of the travails of Claudio, Mariana, Angelo, Isabella, Juliet and the Duke give rise to this possibility.

Critical Essay #7

Anthony Caputi and Gregory W. Lanier tackle the problem of locating unity in a playas complex as *Measure for Measure.* Both assert that any consistent pattern to the play depends on its structure. Caputi, for example, remarks that while themes such as Christian ethics, atonement, and mercy run through the play, none of them is expansive enough to unify all 0 the dramatic plots and subplots. Further, Caputi argues that Shakespeare intentionally scattered his major characters "irregularly" in order to indicate that character development was not the central issue in the play. Caputi notes that what stands out in *Measure for Measure* is the unusual structure of the acts and scenes: while some are filled with action, others- particularly Act V-level out to long stretches of conversation. Caputi suggests that Shakespeare relied on the long conversational scenes to give his audience time to reflect on his principal focus- that civilization may stumble but it is bound to recover- which is what it does as the play draws to a close.

Gregory W. Lanier on the other hand observes that the play divides into halves- the first comic and the second tragic- so that structurally as well as thematically the play falls into the genre of tragicomedy. Lanier notes that it is left to the Duke to shift the play from its tragic to its comedic structure as he works behind the scenes, advising Isabella and Mariana and stage-managing the bed-trick. Lanier also notes that many of the play's tragic scenes are mirrored in the second half of the play by their direct comic opposites. Ultimately, Lanier explains, what the Duke and the structure of the play anticipate is Isabella's transformation from someone desiring revenge for the apparent execution of her brother to someone willing to forgive Angelo for his heinous crimes. This "tolerance" or "moderation" on Isabella's part signals the end of extremes which mark the play's tragic first half, thus allowing the action to shift into the multiple marriages which characterize comedy.

Source: "Scenic Design in *Measure for Measure,"* in *JEGP,* Vol. LX, 1961, *pp.* 423-34.

[Caputi argues against the idea that an "ethical pattern" are set of moral themes such as justice, 11m)! *ar Christianity organizes* Measure for Measure. *Further, he does not believe that the play is organized around any particular character or characters. Instead, he asserts that the play is intentionally structured far dramatic effect around "long slowly developing scenes" which dearly resolve themselves in the last act into a positive view of civilization.*]

Much of the best criticism of *Measure for Measure* has focused on what one critic has called the "ethical pattern of the play." Critics have by no means agree on the nature of that pattern or its function, but an impressive number have agreed that the play is governed structurally by a conceptual scheme. The strength of this criticism derives from the fact that the play is unusually rich in ideas- particularly ideas about law and Christian doctrine. Yet to grant that these critics have properly identified the play's subject matter is not to accept their assumption about the play's structure: that an "ethical pattern" determines it, that a single or even multiple thesis about the law,

Christian justice, mercy, or atonement can or ought to account for every detail of character, every placement of scene, and every fleeting allusion to the order of St. Clare. Whatever its value, this approach to the play reveals an unmistakable weakness in its inability to deal with the total play without at some point invoking Special responses dependent on a jurist's knowledge 0 Elizabethan law or elaborate theories of revision or textual corruption.

Indeed, something in the nature of this criticism has prevented a conclusive answer to the most basic question about the play: What kind of play is *Measure for Measure?* Is it, as Hardin Craig insists, "gloomy and unpropitious"? Or is it, as R W. Chambers argues, a paean to Christian forgiveness? Or is it, as one reviewer said of the recent production at the American Shakespeare Festival, "Lovely, rollicking, grand farce"? This question can probably never be answered with the certainty with which one might answer a similar question about a Plautine farce. Yet perhaps a fresh approach to the question can be undertaken if, while keeping what critics of the play's "ethical pattern" have said of its subject matter, we abandon their assumption about its structure and examine the playas a dramatic entity, one that achieves its peculiar power largely through a dramatic pattern. Such an approach inescapably emphasizes the large units from which the play is built rather than particular speeches, the general lines of development rather than nice points of theology and law. But in the process it directs attention to that dynamic unity so essential to a play's capacity to move an audience to a particular state of thought and feeling.

And perhaps that is where the emphasis belongs.

Actually, the dramatic pattern of *Measure for Measure is* clearer than it might otherwise be, because of the rather clumsily joined seams that have prompted universal claims of textual corruption. This unfinished quality has left exposed an unusually clear outline of tensions and movement. Clues to this pattern are most easily found in two fairly obvious, if neglected, features of the play: Shakespeare's sporadic use of important characters and the dramatic design of certain scenes. In *Measure for Measure* Shakespeare has used his principal characters so irregularly as to imply unmistakably that character was not his primary concern. Angelo, for example, though extremely important early in the play, drops out of it between the end of Act II and IV.iv. The Duke, though he emerges in III.i to dominate the action, plays a rather slight part before Act III. Isabella, though a center of interest through III.i, becomes largely instrumental to the intrigue thereafter. And Mariana, though crucial to the action, is hardly prominent at all, indeed is not even mentioned until the end of III.i. The dramatic design encountered in key scenes *is,* perhaps, even more closely linked to the dramatic pattern that we are seeking to clarify. It is strange that so little has been made of the unusual design within scenes. Though the play has the usual five acts, almost three of them are given over to long scenes in which very little happens, scenes in which, instead of action, we get an inordinate amount of talk. After Act I, in which the action advances very rapidly, Act II settles down to a series of rather static interviews. First we have the long scene in which Escalus examines Pompey and Froth, then the long scene of Angelo's first interview with Isabella, then the short scene involving the Duke and Juliet, and then the long scene of Angelo's second interview with Isabella. And the same is true of most of Act III.

Only at the end of Act III does the action regain speed and variety to press into Act IV, where events move very rapidly. But in Act V the action again levels out, this time into one long trial scene.

Clearly any attempt to describe the structure of *Measure for Measure* must come to terms with these structural peculiarities. That they are what they are by intention seems beyond question: they are far too prominent to be the result of carelessness or a botched text. And that they are closely related to each other seems no less clear. It is altogether likely, in a play where great artention has been given to long, slowly developing scenes, often involving no more than two characters, that important characters will drop out of sight for long intervals. Thus Angelo does not appear from the end of Act II to the end of Act IV. He is a central character in his major scenes with Isabella, but almost irrelevant in Act III, where Claudio's interviews with the Duke and Isabella hold the stage. Thus the Duke appears only briefly in Act II, since here every resource is drawn upon to heighten the effect of Angelo's interviews with Isabella. And thus Isabella, after her big scenes in Acts II and III, becomes an instrumental character since interest subsequently centers in the Duke.

If we begin with the observation, then, that *Measure for Measure* gives unusual prominence to long, slowly developing scenes- indeed, that more than half of the play consists of such scenes- surely it would not be unreasonable to suppose that they contribute heavily to the play's power. An examination of these scenes reveals that all, with the notable exceptions of the short scene between the Duke and Claudio (III.i) and, for different reasons, the last act, are similar in structural outline in that all resemble informal debates or disputations. Because they are conversational and spontaneous, they are, of course, different from the formal debate. But, like all debates, they typically involve two characters who articulate, carefully and at some length, *opposing positions.*

This feature alone has important implications for *Measure far Measure.* Clearly, in scenes wherein characters argue something at length, as compared with scenes like the banquet scene in *Macbeth*- in which events develop rapidly and unexpectedly, the dual effect is that they draw the audience's critical faculty into play and insist upon a certain critical distance. But this feature, if pressed further, leads to still more important observations. If we compare the scenes in question (excepting, again, the Duke's scene with Claudio and the last act), we discover that in none of them are the opposing positions reconciled. On the contrary, all end in unresolved states of conflict: characters meet, talk, discover differences of opinion, discuss their differences, and part only after having heightened the tension expressed by their disagreement. Moreover, if we compare the opposing positions expressed in these scenes, we also find a certain consistency among them. In each the conflict involves one character who takes, essentially, the position of civilized man with confidence in his codes and decorums and a second character who takes, essentially, the position of natural man with a vivid sense of his frailties and imperfections. In II.i, Escalus speaks for civilization and Pompey for the "poor fellow that would live"; in II.ii, Angelo defends the law while Isabella defends natural man against it; in II.iv, Angelo and Isabella change roles; and, subsequently, Claudio, the Duke, and Lucio take their turns. As the argument develops and the positions crystallize, they become increasingly irreconcilable. We are made distinctly

aware that the positions taken by the characters are drawing apart until, at the end of each scene, the situation seems hopelessly stalemated- far worse than it was at the beginning.

Of course even this general description requires some qualification. However stalemated Escalus and Pompey seem at the end of their scene, obviously their scene is qualitatively very different from Angelo's scene with Isabella. By setting aside the low-life scenes for a moment, however, we can see that all the other pertinent scenes are designed to convey a vivid impression of the incompatibility of civilized and natural man, to bring before us in almost paradigm form a dramatized challenge to civilized or moral life. By communicating an awareness of the inadequacy of law and decorum to man's condition and, conversely, an awareness of man's inadequacy to his laws and codes, these scenes generate a disturbing sense of the very precarious foundations on which civilized life is built- what, for the purposes of this play, can be called a distinct sense of moral distress.

In view of the prominence of these scenes in the first three acts and of the qualitatively comparable scene in Act IV, in which the Duke waits for Claudio's pardon only to learn that Angelo is capable of depths he dreamed not of, we can tentatively infer that the dramatic pattern of the first four acts of *Measure for Measure* is calculated to make us feel much of what the Duke feels in III.ii, that "there is scarce truth enough alive to make societies secure, but security enough to make fellowships accursed: much upon this riddle runs the wisdom of the world" (11. 219-22). This speech offers the play's most explicit statement about the represented condition of civilized life, the most direct glance at the disparity between what man fondly aspires to and what he is. To support this description of the play's power in more detail, however, we must go back to the scenes that dramatize this perception, and particularly to the details of design within scenes that control the sense of moral distress. We can then consider how the last act is designed to dispel it.

It is relevant, first, to look at two conspicuous loose ends in the pattern thus far described. The long scene involving Escalus, Froth, and Pompey in II.i plainly dramatizes the typical conflicting positions and plainly shows them to be irreconcilable; but surely we do not respond to this scene with anything like distress. And if we say that the famous scene between the Duke and Claudio generates a sense of distress, we must admit that in this instance the distress does not proceed from marked ills agreement. However consistent with the dramatic pattern thus far discerned, these scenes also deviate from it; and they deviate with good purpose.

The structural analogy between the Escalus-Pompey scene and the other interview scenes provides an important insight into the function of the low-life characters in the play. Actually, the analogy is hardly limited to this scene: throughout the play Pompey, Mistress Overdone, and Barnardine are at odds with law and morality. In other words, throughout the play they dramatize a conflict like that dramatized rather painfully in the scenes involving Angelo, Isabella, Claudio, and the Duke. Yet certainly we do not respond to the conflict as they dramatize it with feelings any more serious than a sense of exhilarating incongruity, perhaps even of exhilarating futility. By and large, we are in

sympathy with what they represent, however much we may resent it. They are the eternal yardbirds of civilized life, who, like Pompey Bum, will always muddle through to the easiest jobs- even in prison. They represent the intractability of human nature: its refusal to submit to laws and codes, indeed, in the case of Barnardine, its contemptuous defiance of them. Moreover, these low-life offenders have their counterpart among the representatives of law and order: Elbow, with his genius for getting things wrong side to, is unmistakably a comic variation on Escalus and Angelo. The scenes involving these characters provide a comic exhibition of the precariousness of civilized foundations that counterpoints the more serious dramatization of the other scenes. They furnish a kind of comic obbligato that prevents the feelings of distress aroused from becoming too intense, and tempers these feelings with complexity of outlook To put the matter another way, the low-life scenes control the quality of the other interview scenes by putting them in a framework that adds comic dimensions to otherwise serious exhibitions of moral disorder; they dramatize what must always be funny from the detached point of view of the comic muse: the hilarity of man's high designs.

The Duke's great scene with Claudio, on the other hand, is nothing if not serious. Traditionally, it has given critics trouble because it is almost too serious, because it expresses so gloomy a view of life as to be out of keeping with the long-range optimism of the Christian doctrine everywhere in evidence. But the scene also poses difficulties of a much less subtle kind. At this point in the play we have no evidence that Claudio, who has not appeared since Act I, will not face death courageously; and though we find it normal that a friar would console a condemned man, we are surprised to learn that so impressive a consolation comes to nought in the next scene, where Claudio seems to have forgotten everything the Duke as friar has said. Perhaps the first point to be made about this scene, accordingly, is that it has a very slight function in the chain of episodes: it ill no significant way advances the action. Its function, rather, seems to be to intensify the peculiar power of the scenes immediately preceding and following it. Coming just after Isabella's scenes with Angelo and just before her scene with Claudio, this scene, and especially the Duke's elaborate consolation, serve chiefly to focus the energies generated up to this point, to heighten the play's pervasive sense of the insecurity of human affairs.

Reason thus with life: If I do lose thee, I do lose a thing
That none but fools would keep: a breath
thou art,
Servile to all the skyey influences,
. . . Merely, thou art death's fool,
. . . Thou art not noble,
. . . Thou'rt by no means valiant,
. . . Thou art not thyself,
. . . Happy thou art not,
. . . Thou art not certain,
. . . If thou art rich, thou'rt poor,
. . . Friend hast thou none,
. . . Thou has nor youth nor age,
But as it were an after-dinner's sleep, Dreaming on both. . .

. . . and when thou art old and rich,
Thou hast neither heat, affection, limb, nor
beauty,
To make thy riches pleasant. What's yet in
this,
That beats the name of life? Yet in this life I.ie hid moer thousand deaths; yet death we fear, That makes these odds all even.
(III.i.6-41)

This is not a tragic perception of insecurity, qualified, as it is, by the low-life characters and seen, as it is, with considerable detachment. But it is the dominant perception, and one that emphasizes the detached sobriety rather than the gaiety of comedy.

In our inspection of other scenes, we need not deal here with the short scenes, like those met chiefly in Acts I and IV. They clearly have the main function of laying down the probabilities of action and character necessary to support the play's big scenes. Scenes as important as those involving Angelo and Isabella in Act II, however, require detailed examination. Both characters have prompted considerable comment, and perhaps no Shakespearean character has occasioned so much disagreement as Isabella. The traditional alternatives for her- that she is either an exalted ideal or a travesty on womanhood- seem violently extreme and dangerously simple. It is probable that Shakespeare's contemporaries found much to admire in her intensity of purpose, her quickness of mind and aptness of tongue, and her courage. It is doubtful, however, that even they were meant to warm to her decision to save her chastity by permitting her brother to die. On the contrary, apparently Shakespeare has consciously forced this dreadful choice on her- dreadful because neither alternative is satisfactory- and, in order to scale down her attractiveness somewhat, has made her .put this choice in unusually cold, succinct, almost painfully simple terms.

Better it were a brother died at once,
Than a sister, by redeeming him,
Shoulddie forever.
(II.iv.l06-108)
Then Isabel live chaste, and brother die; More than our brother is our chastity.
(II.iv.184-85)
Dost thou think, Claudio? If I would yield him my virginity, Thou mightst be freed.
(III.i.96-98)

Unquestionably, Shakespeare has very carefully scaled her down in other ways. Lucio's speeches in I.iv and II.ii help to adjust our attitude toward her. In the nunnery scene (I.iv) he begins with a parody, "Hail, virgin," and continues with tongue in Cheek. Despite all attempts to read his praise of her literally ("I hold you as a thing enskied and sainted"), there is nothing in his character or in his subsequent description of her to justify the reading. Obviously, he does not fool Isabella, who replies, "You do blaspheme the good, in mocking me" (I. 38). Then later, during Isabella's first interview with Angelo (II.it), Lucio's remarks, "You are too cold" (1l45, 56), serve unmistakably to underline this shortcoming in her. For all Isabella's admirable qualities. the truth is that she is out of

her element In the world of Lucio, Angelo, and even Claudio. Her most stirring quality is the cold fire she suggests when arguing law and morality.

Though we view her with sympathy and admiration, we do so with considerable detachment.

Angelo is a far simpler matter than Isabella. In Acts I and II we have every reason to believe reports that he is a man of strictest virtue. Indeed, Shakespeare carefully withholds all information about Mariana until late in III.i, so that we may believe these reports. In Act II we see him take a position on the question of Claudio and withstand firmly the successive assaults made on it by Escalus (II.i), the Provost (II.ii), and Isabella (II.ii). Up to this moment he is a kind of abstract extreme, a point of view with respect to the problems that have developed. After he has succumbed to Isabella's physical attractions, he is the only character whom we know through introspective soliloquies. (The Duke speaks soliloquies, but they consist of choral comments on the state of society.) Yet even this interest in Angelo's character is very carefully controlled: just when he is becoming most interesting, he drops out of the play for almost two acts, and our attention is whisked away to Claudio, Isabella, the Duke, and Mariana. I.ike Isabella, he is distinctly subordinate to a larger design that invites us to view him with fascination, but with a fairly detached, critical fascination.

When Isabella appears before Angelo in II.ii, both characters represent extremes: Isabella is as much as possible like a nun without actually being one, and Angelo (partly because Shakespeare has withheld all information about Mariana) is very like a monk. In this juxtaposition alone consists a great deal of the interest of this and their second interview, especially when toward the end of this scene their relations take so sensational a turn. The structural interest of the scene lies in the development of the conflict between them, a development that *Lucio* and the Provost very carefully accentuate. At the beginning of II.ii, Isabella takes the most difficult of positions for one pleading for Claudio's life: she admits that she hates Claudio's sin to the point of being reluctant to plead for him. Angelo, on the other hand, takes a position that even at the outset seems impregnable: he implies that he could do something, but he "will not do't" (l. 57). With these positions established, much of the suspense of the scene proceeds from the attempts to reconcile them. We hope that Isabella will win Angelo over; but she is only halfhearted and he immovable. Only gradually does she catch fire, and then, as she drives narrow wedges into his argument and their positions seem to draw together, the scene builds to the shocking disclosure that she has succeeded only in arousing his desire for her. This sensational turn throws open a whole new set of possibilities, and in the second interview Angelo and Isabella take entirely new positions, though every *bit* as irreconcilable as the first.

The second interview builds in much the same way, but rests on different devices. Here the suspense is produced and sustained first by Isabella's apparent failure to understand Angelo's proposal. When she has understood *it* and rejected *it,* tension continues to mount as he becomes firmer and finds that he can charge her with inconsistency, while she attacks him, with increasing heat, for baseness. The acceleration of tempo and excitement is again, we should notice, correspondent to the

intensifying antagonism between the points of view represented. At the end of the scene we are aware not only that they are farther apart than before, but also that there seems to be no satisfactory compromise for the conflict they have dramatized.

Following the next scene- the interview between the Duke and Claudio- the scene between Isabella and Claudio is in structure and effect very like the Angelo-Isabella interviews. Here the suspense is sustained by Isabella's reluctance to reveal Angelo's proposal and her decision. At this point she serves to develop in the audience a new apprehensiveness, in that she, too, has had her confidence shaken: she has come to fear for Claudio's sense of honor, for the genuineness of his commitment as a civilized man. Yet despite all her caution, the characteristic disparity of *positions* develops, to emerge clear in Claudio's declaration that "Death is a fearful thing" (l. 115).

Taken as a group, these scenes trace the dominant dramatic pattern of the first two-thirds of the play, and lead to the explicit impasse of the scene in Act IV where the Duke's first plan is upset by Angelo (IV.ii). In the main they convey a distinct perception of the flimsiness of civilized life: of the distressing inadequacy of man's efforts at civilization and of the *comic* incongruity of his pretensions to *it.* But our description of the play's dramatic pattern is hardly complete until we consider the Duke's role in all this, and the ways in which the long final scene dispels this serio-comic distress.

The Duke's role is sufficiently important to consider at some length. After his brief appearances in Acts I and II, he emerges in III.i to dominate the action. Thereafter, he is either eavesdropping from some dark corner or deliberately ordering events: making arrangements with Isabella, Mariana, the Provost, and Friar Peter. To see the importance of his presence in the scenes from III.i to the end, we need only consider what we know because of his disguise that the characters in the play, except for Friar Peter, do not know. Most significantly, we know that the Duke is in disguise, that he is observing everything, and that he is capable at any moment of averting disaster. Surely the chief result of this knowledge is our confidence that Angelo cannot succeed, that the action is destined for a favorable outcome. The Duke's disguise, then, serves chiefly to control the sense of distress aroused and to lead, with probability, to *its* dispersion in the last act. After his emergence in III.i, this sense of distress gradually diminishes as he takes an increasingly prominent hand in the action. As we are assured that he intends to avert catastrophe, our awareness of moral disorder gradually gives way to an awareness that the characters perceive moral disorder where, in fact, it does not have absolute sway. The emergence of this reassurance is very carefully controlled- particularly through the Duke- until in the last act the machinery of the plot is thrown into reverse: where in the first four acts the characters have continually met with worse developments than they- or we- have expected, in the last act they continually meet with better.

A corollary function of the Duke's disguise is that it also diminishes the long-range melodramatic suspense that could have proceeded from these otherwise very melodramatic scenes in favor of fixing our attention on the moral quality of the action. Suspense in this play is not built on such questions as "How will this turn out?" Because of the Duke, we know or, at least, are reasonably certain about how it will turn out.

Instead, we are invited to attend closely and critically to what is happening at the moment in scenes contrived to generate a short-range suspense of their own. The Duke's disguise, accordingly, is yet another part of the general pattern calculated to encourage us to view the separate events of the play critically.

Having quietly rearranged everything to his satisfaction, the Duke simply sits back in Act V to let the intrigue work itself out. Clearly the primary function of Act V is to cause our sense of distress to yield to a sense of reassurance, to supplement our perception of the precariousness of civilized foundations with the perception that with understanding man can regulate,' not remedy, his difficult situation; indeed, he can occasionally achieve the poetic justice that the Duke in his temporary omniscience manages at the end of the play. It is, finally, a sense of assurance that, however precarious the foundations of civilized life, man will somehow sustain it.

This reassurance proceeds from the last act in a number of ways, some of which involve solid evidence for it, others of which are little more than artifice. To begin with, it proceeds from the reversed pattern of developments already mentioned. More important, and more conspicuously, it proceeds from the leisurely exposure and punishment of Angelo and even of Lucio. If the last act is long for any reason, it is because the Duke is so unhurried about exposing Angelo. Instead of denouncing him immediately, as well he might, he permits him to extend himself as completely as possible. And after he has exposed him, he prolongs his anguish by permitting him to believe that he is to die for Claudio's death. This leisureliness is important. To relieve the intense antipathy that has been built up against Angelo and still conclude the play with forgiveness for him, Shakespeare had to dramatize his punishment. To do this, he had to entangle Angelo so profoundly in the Duke's web that at the moment of the Duke's unhooding Angelo disgraces himself publicly and completely. At this moment, Angelo's overwhelming sense of failure is almost adequate to expiate the crimes that he actually succeeded in committing.

Lucio, on the other hand, is a rather different matter. As many have observed, he is something of a scapegoat in the sense that, though he deserves his punishment, it seems in part contrived to relieve feelings of righteous indignation aroused in other quarters. However true this may be, Lucio serves chiefly at this point to support our growing assurance of the efficacy of law, not only by providing the Duke with an occasion to exercise it, but partly by providing him an opportunity to identify and punish its most serious enemy in the play. For all Lucio's lightheartedness, his is in many ways the low point of cynicism in the play: unlike Pompey and Barnardine, he is a man in whom we expect beliefs; yet he has none. He has no serious loyalties and no capacity for guilt or repentance because he is incapable of a serious commitment of any kind. There is, accordingly, a subtle justice in the Duke's active disapproval of him that has very little to do with the Duke's personal pique. In one sense Lucio's punishment represents the finest adjustment, though hardly the most important, that the just forces make toward the end of the play.

At any rate, the length of this final act is necessary to strengthen the sense of confidence and assurance we have felt all through it so that these feelings are

sufficiently strong to be dominant at the end. The marriages serve simply to support these feelings. That they do not produce the rejoicing produced by an *As You I.ike It* means no more than that Shakespeare did not intend them to. *Measure for Measure* is, throughout, a play in which our concern about the characters' fortunes is distinctly subordinate to our concern about the fortunes of civilization. It is civilization as it is at issue in the careers of Isabella, Claudio, Angelo, the Duke, Pompey, Barnardine, and others that chiefly enlists our attention and engages our feelings.

It is doubtless for this reason that so many critics have been drawn to an abstract analysis of the play's ideas. No one would deny that the play abounds in ideas. But however important, they do not alter the fact that, no less than *King Lear* or *Twelfth Night, Measure for Measure* is, structurally, a dramatic rather than an intellectual persuasion and that, as such, its capacity to move an audience to an enlightened state 0 feelings depends largely on the direction and control of its dramatic pattern. It is only this kind of pattern that can put the marriages at the end in a reasonable perspective, a perspective in which they are not required to complete a conceptual formulation, but serve quite simply and effectively to support the affirmation of faith in civilization on which the play closes. By viewing the play from this point of view we do not solve all problems, it is true, but we do eliminate many pseudo-problems by making dramatic *sense* of a play that never asked to be a dark intellectual puzzle.

Critical Essay #8

Source: "Physic That's Bitter to Sweet End: The Tragicomic Structure of *Measure for Measure,"* in *Essays* in *I.iterature,* Vol. XIV, No.1, Spring, 1987, pp. 15-36.

[Lanier disagrees with those critics who see Measure for Measure as a structural failure with an unsatisfying tacked an ending. By contrast, he contends that Shakespeare intentionally divided the play into halves, with the first wight tragic Scenes linked to the last eight comic scenes by one intermediary scene.

Lamer explains that Angelo's "transgressions" (displayed in his hypocritical behavior toward Claudio, Isabella, and Mariana) inform the play's tragic first half while Isabella's "tolerance" (displayed when she begs the Duke to spare Angelo's life is responsible far the play's comic second half Ultimately, Lamer argues that the split between tragic and comic is in fact what gives Measure for Measure the very unity that many scholars believe the play lacks.]

In 1949 E. M. W. Tillyard bisected *Measure for Measure* into potentially tragic verse and dissolutely comic prose; some years earlier G. Wilson Knight asserted that the symbolic sequence of transgression, judgment, and redeeming mercy provides an innate structural integrity. This polarity in critical responses has proved to be nearly as enduring as the play itself. Cynthia Lewis provides a short summary of this division in her recent article:

Readers who, like Harriett Hawkins, find the play's ending" not only aesthetically and intellectually unsatisfying, but personally infuriating," usually see *Measure for Measure* as split in tone, structure, and viewpoint. . . . On the other hand, many readers see *Measure for Measure* as unified. Arthur Kirsch, who sees *Measure* as a radically Christian play, concludes that the Duke's secret plotting represents the hidden workings of Providence. . . .

Lewis' argument, based on a consideration of "Duke Vincentio not as a plot device or a Providential figure, but as a human character," is a solid and welcome answer to a number of recent excoriations of *Measure for Measure.* Richard Wheeler's assessment is, perhaps, more indicative of the prevailing voice:

The ending of *Measure for Measure* does not "playout" earlier developments, it plays them down; it looks back to the previous action WIth an averted, mystifying gaze that has its emblem in V incentio's anxiety- denying movement from one character and one issue to another in the final scene. The failure of these characters (and these issues) to respond to him- as in Isabella's sIlence and the silence of Claudio and Angelo- mirrors Shakespeare's inability to find an ending that responds fully to the whole action. The kind of integration of inner impulse with external reality that is established in a successful play, and which provides a paradigm for the comic action of As You *I.ike It,* is not achieved in *Measure for Measure.* . . . Instead of clarifying either positively or negatively, the relations between comic art and experience, Shakespeare seeks

unearned reassurance in a comic ending that cannot fully acknowledge previous developments in *Measure for Measure.*

I strongly disagree with Wheeler's statement that Measure for Measure fails to provide an ending that "responds fully to the whole action," and I do not believe that the "integration of inner impulse with external reality" defines a successful play. Rather than judging this controversial play by noting its failure to fit into a preconceived notion of what it *should* be, I think it would be more fruitful to examine the play's disposition, to *see* what the structure of the play itself reveals. *Measure for Measure* is, structurally, a tragicomedy. It is a juxtaposition of two dramatic modes, tragedy and comedy, carefully poised to create a cohesive, resonant unity.

But we need not allegorize *Measure for Measure* into a redemptive pageant with the Duke as Christ-like regisseur to discover its unity. To do *so,* in fact, obscures the structural division fundamental to the play's essence. The structure of *Measure for Measure* is, indeed, sharply divided: eight tragic scenes cast the characters into catastrophe: a medial scene wrenches the action about; eight comic scenes restore social harmony. Moreover, as Tillyard noted, the shift from tragedy to comedy precisely coincides with a shift from verse to prose. Spatially, as Northrop *Frye* has said, *Measure for Measure* presents "a dramatic diptych of which the first part is a tragic and ironic action apparently heading for unmitigated disaster, and the second part an elaborate comic intrigue which ends by avoiding all the disasters." We should, then, approach *Measure fUr Measure* as we would approach a diptych altar painting: we should look for correspondence, balance, resonance, and continuity of theme between structural elements while comprehending the essential contrast between and separation of halves. The integrity of *Measure for Measure* is created through just such a correspondent balance of discontinuous parts. A careful equipoise of antithetical elements informs the play's intrinsic structure; contrast, not similarity, is the dominant mode. The tragic actions, textures, and themes that initiate the play find their measure and fulfillment in the inclusive comic denouement. A fundamental resonance binds tragic fragmentation to comic cohesion and achieves a unified balance through the correlation of contrasting parts, and the main element of that resonance is the temperance introduced into the play's action by the Duke.

The first half of *Measure for Measure* carefully establishes a tragic pattern- the conflict of inflexible wills that leads to the disintegration of social order. Claudio tenaciously clings to a "weary and loathed worldly life" regardless of the cost; Angelo indulges the tyrant of his "sensual race," assured of exploiting his office without retribution; Isabella, by steadfastly preserving her chastity, drives the play towards the tragic resolution of violation or violent death. But comedy lurks in the shadows. When Isabella, Claudio, and Angelo have locked themselves into tragic confrontation, the "mad fantastical Duke of dark comers" steps forward and conjures a comic ending. With" cold gradation and well-balanced form," the Duke tempers conflict into concord, thereby recreating stability in Vienna. Significantly, the Duke's method is recognizably comic. The disguises, deceptions, substitutions, and choreographed spectacles he employs are counterparts to Rosalind's festive manipulations, not Iago's vicious plots. The action and texture of the play invert once the Duke applies "Craft against vice." The play initially sweeps us

along with concern for the bloodshed, outrage, and death which threaten the characters but concludes with festive, ceremonial, and almost ritualistic marriages. And that emblematic inversion is the essence of Shakespearean tragicomedy. As the play progresses we should be aware that Shakespeare is gently coercing us to subordinate our engagement with the feelings of the characters to our comprehension of their emblematic movement within the larger pattern of the play's dramatic structure.

Claudio's arrest for his affair with Juliet- perhaps a benign form of sexual license but transgression nonetheless in Angelo's eyes- initiates the tragic movement. The opposition of liberty to restraint provides the pattern for succeeding tragic complications in the play:

Lucio Whence this restraint?
Cla From too much liberty, my Lucio. I.iberty, As surfeit, is the father of much fast;
So every scope by the immoderate use
Turns to restraint.
(I.ii 116-20)

Surfeit causes restraint with an almost binary exclusiveness. Claudio, unaware of moderation, expresses his dilemma in antithetical terms: surfeit vs. fast, scope vs. restraint. Further, the remainder of Claudio's speech implies that humans are naturally intemperate, unwilling and unable to control their appetites:

Our natures do pursue, I.ike rats that ravin down their proper bane, A thirsty evil; and when we drink, we die.
(I.ii.120-22)

Man is not merely frail but severely flawed, a slave to his rapaciousness and doomed to actively seek his "proper bane." Such a description, emphasizing both the appetite's abrogation of the reason and the inevitable destruction that results from that imbalance, presents man as a tragic figure, a life-long calamity who, fallen, can only fall further. Claudio's rhetoric establishes the tragic model followed not only by himself but by other characters in *Measure for Measure* In each case the character moves away from moderate actions towards excessive reactions, whether it be to excessive restraint (Isabella and, initially, Angelo) or excessive liberty (Claudio, Lucio, and the fallen Angelo). Without proper government to curb the pursuit of the "thirsty evil," disintegration on both the individual and social levels inexorably occurs.

A spreading dissolution of the Viennese community is evident quite early in the play, and it is firmly linked to Claudio's excessive libertinism. What appears to be on the periphery of the tragic concerns in *Measure for Measure,* the comedy of Lucio and his companions, contains a second pattern central to the play's tragedy:

Lucio Thou conclud'st like the sanctimonious pirate, that went to sea with the Ten Commandments, but scrap'd one out of
the table.
2 *Gent.* 'Thou shalt not steal'?

Lucio. Ay, that he raz'd.
1 *Gent.* Why, 'twas a commandment to command the captain and all the rest from their functions: they put forth to steal.
(I.ii.7-14)

The pirate captain proves an apt example for Lucio and Pompey, even for Claudio and Angelo. Each had a "function" to follow; each dismisses the law as his convenience (we may read appetite) demands. Lucio habitually flaunts the statutes prohibiting fornication and slander to pursue his moment's fancy. Pompey swears that pandering would be a lawful trade "If the law would but allow it" (II.i.224) and refuses correction, promising to follow Escalus' advice "as the flesh and fortune shall better determine" (II.i.250-51). Neither character will allow any law to impede the indulgence of their "flesh and fortune"; their resolute devotion to gratification demonstrates the accuracy of Claudio's simile comparing man to rats. Claudio also exhibits this disregard for the law, admitting that he lacked the denunciation of "outward order" when he took possession of Juliet's bed (I.ii.138). And, lest we are hastily inclined to exonerate that mutually committed offense, we must admit that Claudio and Juliet's sexual relationship parallels Lucio's escapade with Kate Keepdown. The more chilling resonance, however, links Pompey to Angelo. Pompey would have the law allow pandering; Angelo will have it allow rape. When Angelo determines to give his "sensual race the rein" (II.iv.159), he fulfills the pattern started by Lucio's joke about the sanctimonious pirate. Angelo is in the position to raze any law from the table; he can fulfill Pompey's wish and force the law to allow any transgression he fancies. No law alone sufficiently deters man's natural tendency to glut his appetite. In Pompey's words, "they will to't" unless one manages to "geld and splay all the youth of the city" (II.i.227-30). Again the language and logic are binary, entertaining only the extremes of indulgence or eradication. What began as comic by-play becomes a major tragic theme, an indication of the tightly conceived balance between comic and tragic elements. Man's innate impulses drive him to gratify his animalistic appetites, and his reason, the law over his body, is swept aside. Man's proper balance seeks a median between ascetic denial and unrestrained sensuality. Hence, proper government would seek to temper desires, to channel excess into appropriate vessels. "Firm abstinence," however, is as dangerous as "sharp appetite," and as Lucio and Claudio are guilty of excessive liberty, there are those guilty of excessive restraint- Angelo and Isabella.

An icy reserve cloaks Angelo from his first entrance. The Duke's famous "heaven and torches" (I.i.27-47) speech is less remarkable for its Biblical allusions than for its penetrating characterization of Angelo. The image distinguishes an outer, radiant charity from an occult self-absorption, and firmly links Angelo to those who inordinately husband their resources. The Duke later articulates this implied duality:

Lord Angelo is precise; Stands at a guard with Envy; scarce confesses That his blood flows; or that his appetite
Is more to bread than stone.
(I.iii.50-53)

Angelo's controlled appearance is the antithetical complement to Lucio's licentious behavior. Yet the Duke suggests a kinship between them, that stubborn self-control thinly covers the blood and appetite Angelo must possess. Unfortunately, Angelo remains blind to his hypocrisy, and, thinking himself the paragon of humanity, imposes his unnatural restraint on the inhabitants of Vienna.

Once he has assumed the Duke's position, Angelo governs with the inflexible severity of a self-appointed and self-righteous saint. The rigid standard of austerity becomes Angelo's measure of justice:

You may not so extenuate his offence
For I have had such faults; but rather tell me When I that censure him do so offend,
Let mine own judgement pattern out my
death,
And nothing come in partial.
(II.i.27-31)

Angelo's response to concupiscence is eradication, in Pompey's terms to "geld and splay all the youth of the city," including himself. This repression presents the antitype to Claudio and Lucio's pattern. Imposed restrictions based on inhuman self-denial cannot eliminate the offenses of sexual license since that desire is ingrained in man's nature. The infliction of "stricture and firm abstinence" (I.iii.12) only further emphasizes the opposition of license to restraint. Moderation is required, but Angelo's justice does not recognize a media.

Although the Duke has admonished Angelo to "enforce or qualify the laws / As to [his] soul [seemed] good" (I.i.65-66), Angelo wields strict enforcement, tyrannically demanding that all adhere to his personal asceticism. And Claudio rightly complains that Angelo's sword of justice cuts capriciously:

Thus can the demi-god, Authority,
Make us pay down for our offence by weight. The words of heaven; on whom it will, it Will;
On whom it will not, so; yet still 'tis just.
(I.li.112-15)

The conflation of just authority with the inscrutable, perhaps arbitrary, design of heaven is striking. It seems that Angelo, swollen in his power, elevates temporal and limited prerogatives to a level beyond their normal scope. Angelo *sees* himself as the "demi-god, Authority," a posture confirmed by Escalus:

. . . my brother justice have I found so severe that he hath forced me to tell him he is indeed Justice.
(III.ii.246-48)

The stringent puritanism Angelo professes allows him to tyrannize with a righteous indifference. Angelo claims to judge with an immaculate perception, mistakenly combining the immutable justice of providence with the petulant (and maybe

malevolent) authority of man. Significantly, Angelo betrays his limitations, seizing only "What's open to justice" (II.i.21)- Claudio's simple and benign case- while impatiently leaving Escalus to sort out matters with the obfuscating Pompey. Juxtaposed, these two judgments point up the haphazard nature of Angelo's oppression. The "words of heaven" do not fall where they will; only the whims of a self-deceived deputy do.

Angelo is not the only character whose self-deception unnaturally restrains the appetite. Isabella denies her humanity as well. Whereas Angelo assumes affected gravity and precise control to restrain his impulses, Isabella relies on the seclusion of the convent to avoid her sexuality. Immediately after the Duke laments the lapse of strict statutes in Vienna, we find Isabella about to embrace even stricter regulations. Moreover, though the rules of the convent are stringent, Isabella thinks them lax. This dissatisfaction seems over-zealous, and one may conclude that Isabella desires to proscribe the world, or perhaps just the male sex, with consecrated walls. Isabella, wishing for a "more strict restraint / Upon the sisterhood, the votarists of Saint Clare" (I.ivas), and Angelo, imposing his puritanic law without mitigation, pursue the same ideal. Both demand an unyielding and religiously based code that would prohibit all illicit (and most licit) sex. Both "rebate and blunt [their] natural edge / With profits of the mind, study, and fast" (I.iv.60-61), and expect the same from others. But neither the puritan's gown nor the nun's habit can unconditionally suppress the "wanton stings and motions of the sense" (I.iv.59). Their repressions are only momentary, and we should expect their sexual desires to erupt violently.

The Duke has previously hinted that Angelo's self deceptions may not last: "Hence shall we see / If power change purpose, what our seemers be" (I.iii.53-S4). We are not then surprised that Angelo succumbs to his blood's appetite When he meets Isabella. What should be emphasized, though, is how Shakespeare chooses to present this action. Shakespeare depicts Angelo's fall into concupiscence in explicitly tragic terms, signaled by the fragmented internal1andscape of the psychomachia. The calm smugness of Angelo's assertion, "'Tis one thing to be tempted, Escalus, / Another thing to fall" (II.ii.1617), markedly contrasts with the frantic search for identity a few lines later:

Can it be
That modesty may more betray our sense Than woman's lightness? Having waste ground enough,
Shall we desire to raze the sanctuary
And pitch our evils there? 0 fie, fie, fie! What dost thou, or what are thou, Angelo? Dost thou desire her foully for those things That make her good?
(II.ii.168-75)

The "strong and swelling evil" (II.iv.6) of Angelo's innate desires will no longer submit to restraint. Clearly, the rise of Angelo's blood indicates his position as the play's tragic protagonist, and we expect his fall from his false seeming to initiate a series of violent incidents. Indeed, by choosing to give "his sensual race the rein" (II.iv.1S9), Angelo converts tyrannous restraint into licensed tyranny. Angelo's attempt to extort sexual intercourse from Isabella fulfills Pompey's wish. As the "demi-god, Authority,"_ Angelo allows whatever transgression he desires, confident that the outward "austereness of

[his] life" (II.iv.154) shall overweigh Isabella's accusations. And as Angelo undergoes tragic fragmentation, so does his society: "Thieves for their robbery have authority, / When judges steal themselves" (II.ii.17 6-77). Angelo's attempt to restrain the world in his own image fails, and Vienna becomes a society where faults are still

. . . so countenanc'd that the strong statutes Stand like the forfeits in a barber's shop,
As much in mock as mark.
(V.i.318-20)

Though Angelo is determined not to make a "scarecrow of the law" (II.i.1), his repression does not eradicate license from Vienna.

As the play's action then shifts from the court to the prison, the play's tragic texture is distinctly felt. Angelo and Isabella now stand in diametric conflict: Angelo demands Isabella's chastity and Isabella will not yield. Yet the same obsession with sensuality that leads Angelo to give up his restraint leads Isabella to excessively restrain her sexuality, as her rejection of Angelo reveals:

. . . were I under the terms of
death,
Th' impression of keen whips I'd wear as
rubies,
And strip myself to death as to a bed
That longing have been sick for, ere I'd yield
My body up to shame.
(II.iv.100-04)

A noble sentiment, but couched in unfortunate images. Isabella has long safeguarded her chastity with inordinate compulsion, and when Claudio suggests she yield to Angelo, Isabella's response becomes a perverse sexual hysteria:

0, you beast!
0 faithless coward! 0 dishonest wretch!
Wilt thou be made a man out of my vice?
Is't not a kind of incest, to take life
From thine own sister's shame? What should
I think?
Heaven shield my mother play'd my father fair:
For such a warped slip of wilderness
Ne'er issued from his blood. Take my defiance,
Die, perish! Might but my bending down
Reprieve thee from thy fate, it should proceed.
I'll pray a thousand prayers for thy death,
No word to save thee.
(III.i.135-46)

No one, I think, condemns Isabella for resisting Angelo's immoral pressure. But the frenzied viciousness of those last four lines damns her. Isabella is in "probation of a sisterhood" (V.i.75); to pray for the death of her brother at the least contradicts the duty of her Christian charity. The last remaining social bond- between brother and sister- violently rips apart. The choices Angelo, Isabella, and Claudio have made create a series of forces moving inexorably towards tragic conflict. The only options are dilemmatic. Isabella either sacrifices her chastity and moral sanctity or Claudio dies. Since either action is irreversible, both would satisfy the logic of the play's tragic structure. The binary opposition that pervades the play leads to tragedy's brutal choice: rape or death. And lacking the necessary dramatic indications for a possible alternative, we can only ponder which shall occur.

Thus the tragic impetus of *Measure for Measure* swells, capped by Isabella's furious outburst. The elements of the play are precisely arrayed on either side of the gulf separating liberty from restraint, the increasing dismemberment of order demanding a violent and irrevocable action to complete the tragic structure. Comedy, however, ensues. The "old fantastical Duke of dark corners" (IV.iii.156) steps forth and assumes control of the play's action, converting tragedy into comedy.

The Duke's emergence as the director of *Measure for Measures* action marks the shift from tragic to comic panel in the plays diptych structure. His appearances had been brief and intermittent; after he approaches Juliet his presence on stage is almost continuous. The metamorphosis of tragedy into comedy requires a catalyst, and the Duke alone possesses the freedom and authority to effect that change. The Duke's secular authority in Vienna stands without question. His "terror" is only lent to Angelo, and he resumes It with stunning elan during the comic reversal. Moreover, the Duke's adoption of a friar's robe, along with the clerical habits he appropriates (shriving Juliet, confessing Oaudio and Mariana), indicates at least a partial assumption of ecclesiastical authority as well. But more important than his ethical role as head of church and state is the Duke's freedom of movement, more exactly his freedom of influence. Only the Duke ranges across all the strata of Vienna's social levels, contacting (and manipulating) characters from Mistress Overdone and Abhorson to Escalus and Angelo. As we observe the Duke initiate his design, we become aware of his role as the play's chief manipulator, placing each piece in meticulous order to realize the conclusion he creates. To assert that the Duke envisions a comic ending, though, perhaps oversteps the boundaries of the direct evidence in the play. *Measure for Measure* lacks the number of revealing soliloquies *Haniet* conditions us to rely on for glimpses of motivation. The accumulated evidence of the Duke's actions must provide most of our insight. From the opening of the play the Duke seems to be striving to alter the tendencies of his subjects:

I say, bid come before us Angelo.
What figure of us, think you, he will bear?
For you must know, we have with special soul Elected him our absense to supply;
Lent him our terror, drest him with our love,
And given his deputation all the organs
Of our power.
(I.i.15-21)

Certainly the "special soul" that elects Angelo reveals a complex purpose m the Duke's mind, especially since he passes over the more reliable (and better suited) Escalus. The Duke may expect Angelo's renowned rigor to effectively check the license in Vienna (I.iii.35-43), yet he also suspects that rigor to be fallacious (I.iii.5354). By dressing Angelo in borrowed "terror" and "love," the Duke disguises Angelo in a manner analogous to the comic disguises of *As You I.ike It* and *Twelfth Night* where disguise becomes a means by which identity is discovered, not hidden. Viola's "man's attire" *(TN* I.i.SD) evokes the actual humanity hidden behind the refined facades Orsino and Olivia erect; Rosalind's "doublet and hose" *(A YL* III.ii.215) elicit a natural gentility from Orlando's tongue-tied rusticity. Further, the disguises allow Rosalind and Viola insight into their identities as well. Viola learns of her role in the play's concatenation of "place, time, and fortune" *(TN* V.i.250), and Rosalind learns that her feminity makes *As You I.ike Its* "doubts all even" *(A YL* V.iv.25). Similarly, Angelo's assumption of "absolute power and place" (I.iii.13), surrounded with inlages of dressing, provides the spark of self-awareness that leads to his recognition of the "strong and swelling evil *I* Of [his] conception" (II.iv.6-7). The consequence of Angelo's perception, the "monstrous ransom" proposed to Isabella, indicates a potentially tragic result from a comic motif. But the Duke's freedom to "Visit both prince and people" (I.iii.45) supplies the means to forestall tragic consequences if the Duke exercises sufficient ability and foresight.

By disguising himself as a friar, the Duke places himself in a position to direct the action covertly, subtly guiding Vienna's inhabitants towards proper government. This direction has two purposes: to avert Angelo's abuses, and to re-erect the true authority that lapsed fourteen years earlier. Importantly, the method the Duke adopts corresponds to the advice on ruling given by James I in the *Basiliron Darrm.* "I neede not to trouble you with the particular discourse of the foure Cardinall vertues, it is so ttoden a path; but I will shortly say vnto you; make one of them, whiche is Temperance, Queene of all the rest within you." To govern properly in Vienna or London is to exert temperance. Temperance supplies the means by which *Measure for Measure's* tragedy is converted mto comedy since it permits the binary oppositions that have informed the tragic structure to be avoided. The death sentence Angelo decrees for Oaudio appears tyrannous (and not just to us, but to Escalus and the Provost as well) because it lacks sensible moderation: "Vse lustice, but with suche moderation, as it turne not in Tyrannie: otherwaies *summum ZUS,* is *sumrrn inuria."* The strictures of the law must be tempered when the circumstances demand or else only dilemmatic options can occur, options which, as we have seen, have only tragic resolutions. We are certainly meant to contrast the rigor of Angelo's inflexible judgments and their inevitable tragic potential for both accused and accuser with the Duke's mitigation. Angelo informs Escalus:

You may not so extenuate his offence
For I have had such faults, but rather tell me,
When I that censure him do so offend,
Let mine own judgement pattern out my
death,
And nothing come in partial.
(II.i.27-31)

Again we hear Angelo's characteristic division of the problem. One either remains spotless and lives, or slips and dies: "'Tis one thing to be tempted, Escalus, / Another thing to fall." The Duke's perception of justice is strikingly different: "I find an apt remission in my self" (V.i.496). The Duke can afford to remit forfeits because he is a man of temperance. Escalus' appreciation for the Duke's moderate temper is, in fact, the most accurate evaluation of the Duke's nature in the play:

Duke. I pray you, Sir, of what disposition was
the Duke?
Esc One that, above all other strifes,
contended especially to know himself.
Duke. What pleasure was he given to?
Ese Rather rejoicing to see another merry,
than merry at anything which professed to make him rejoice. A gentleman of all temperance.
(III.ii.225-30)

As J. W. Lever notes, "the true ruler or judge was not the most holy or zealous of men, but he whose reason and moderation exalted him above mere pity and passion." Under the Duke's moderate direction the dilemmatic impasses created by Angelo are resolved. The Duke's temperate method provides the *peripeteia* which inverts the tragic oppositions into comic concordance. The Duke deflects the tragic possibilities of Isabella's rape or Claudio's death, and, by deflecting these possibilities, admits comic resolutions.

Only after he overhears Claudio and Isabella shriek to an impasse does the Duke begin to exert his influence and alter the direction of the play's action. For his first device the Duke pulls a convenient Mariana out of his cowl. Mariana's introduction marks a significant change in the play's dramatic architecture. The first two acts of *Measure for Measure* proceed with a smooth verisimilitude in presentation that rivals *Lear* or *Othello* or *Coridanus.* Shakespeare sculpts the action with an exact eye on the probability of event and character and refrains from staining the dramatic reality of the play. Angelo's tyrannous behavior arises naturally from the combination of his persona and circumstance, just as Isabella's fervid determination to stay chaste and Claudio's plaintive desire to stay alive arise naturally from theirs. But the precipitant introduction of a character who just happens to have a previous connection with Angelo, and who just might be willing to "stead up [Isabella's] appointment" (III.i.251) with Angelo, smacks of contrivance. I do not, however, think this mars the play. Rather, the introduction of elements without consideration to their plausibility (like the concurrent shift from verse to prose) indicates a transformation in the representational mode. In the second half of *Measure for Measure* Shakespeare abandons the careful causality he used to create the tragic tensions, choosing to allow fortuitous coincidence to establish the critical outlines of the structure. After the crisis in the prison- with Mariana suddenly materializing, then passing undetected in Angelo's bed, and with heaven itself providing a convenient head when no suitable substitute could be obtained- *Measure for Measure* reads much like *Cymbeline* or *Pericles.* The playwright's interest here lies not with psychological veracity, but with the movement of emblematic characters within the

denotative structure of the action. Shakespeare chooses to present a suggestive pattern rather than a realistic probability. As *Measure for Measure* progresses, characterization becomes subservient to form and each character's importance becomes a function of his position in the play's architectural pattern. Mariana, for example, inverts the established pattern of tragic excess into a new comic form. Mariana's love has lost its proper management: "[Angelo's] . . . unjust unkindness, that in all reason should have quenched her love, hath, like an impediment in the current, made it more violent and unruly" (III.i.240-43). The image of the flood exactly captures the indomitable violence of passion that staggered Angelo. Further, reason's inability to withstand or control sexual impulses indicates the severe need for proper direction. Mariana's state parallels Angelo's but lacks the potential for tragic results. More importantly, her presence provides the balance for Angelo's excess. The flows of desire that plague both characters are channeled; the impediments that augment their excessive tendencies are removed. Bringing Angelo and Mariana together curbs the intemperate license in both:

We shall advise this wronged maid to stead up your appointment, go in your place. If the encounter acknowledge itself hereafter, it may compel him to her recompense; and by this is . . . the poor Mariana advantaged, and the corrupt deputy scaled.
(III.i.250-56)

Thus Mariana measures (the primary sense of the Duke's "scaled") Angelo byfunctioning as Angelo's comic antithesis. Angelo's sexual imp ulses, consciously restrained, erupt without contro and force him to attempt a brutal crime. Conversely, Mariana's desires, though frustrated, emerge beneath the Duke's temperate guidance and are channeled toward the social balance implied by Shakespeare's favorite image of social harmony- marriage. Mariana's importance to the play's structure derives, therefore, from her pivotal position in the pattern. Her willingness to accept Angelo averts Isabella's tragic violation and anticipates the inclusive comic denouement.

We know that Mariana's presence can temper, perhaps even redeem Angelo; we are less certain about Isabella. Isabella's need for moderation, though, is certain. Her psychomachia is less overt than Angelo's, but the sensual imagery that creeps into her language indicates an inordinate sexual repression, and the vehement tirades she lashes Claudio with betray her quick temper. The Duke himself assumes the task of instructing Isabella in her own humanity. Although he could inform Isabella of Claudio's preservation from Angelo's treachery, the Duke chooses not to, preferring to

. . . keep her Ignorant of her good,
To make her heavenly comforts of despair When it is least expected.
(IV.iii.lO8-l0)

We first notice that the Duke defers the revelation until a more dramatic moment, just as he delays the public acknowledgement of Angelo's tryst with Mariana until the moment for proper recompense. This postponement is partly structural- Shakespeare desires to include as much as he can in the comic recognition for maximum theatrical effect. But another, perhaps more fundamental, reason remains. Isabella must be purged of the

tendency towards tragic excess, just like Angelo and everyone else. Isabella lacks the Christian charity, even the Christian reflection, a future votarist of St. Clare should habitually exhibit. Isabella's ire surfaces clearly when the Duke tells her that Claudio has been executed: "0, I will to him and pluck out his eyes!" (IV.iii.119). The Duke trenchantly replies: "This neither hurts him, nor profits you a jot. / Forbear it therefore: give your cause to heaven" (IV.iii.123-24). Heaven should have had Isabella's cause immediately. Her novice's habit notwithstanding, Isabella demonstrates neither temperance nor charity. Before the Duke gives her "heavenly comforts," she willleam both.

The most perspicuous indication of the Duke's desire to employ "cold gradation and well-balanc'd form" (IV.iii.99) is his single soliloquy. True authority and proper government emanate from the moderate balance of remission and repression:

He who the sword of heaven will bear Should be as holy as severe:
Pattern in himself to know,
Grace to stand, and virtue, go:
More nor less to others paying
than by self-offences weighing.
(III.ii.254-59)

These lines are the central expression of the "philosophy of balance and correspondence on which the play is founded." They speak of an equitable temperance, of the just measure of rigor and mercy, and of divine standards and human fraility. Extreme positions, either Angelo's repression or Lucio's license, fundamentally imbalance the social structure. And it remains imperative for the representative of heaven's authority to establish and maintain that balance. We notice that the poetry itself supports this conclusion. The octosyllabic couplets (the only verse in a goodly stretch of prose, a definite indication of its importance) are paired, signalling its formal symmetry. Further, the couplets contain carefully counterpoised units: severity and holiness, the individual and society, knowledge and the action springing from that knowledge. And if we follow the soliloquy through, we discover tragedy and comedy balanced in the same fashion:

Craft against vice I must apply.
With Angelo tonight shall he
His old betrothed, but despised:
So dIsgUISe shall by th' disguised
Pay with falsehood false exacting
And perform an old contracting.
(III.ii.270-75)

The craft of an artist employing devices counteracts the vices leading to tragedy. Beneath the comic motif of mistaken identity- which is the essence of Mariana's substitution for Isabella- we again find the pattern of tragic potentialities forestalled by a figure who creates comic possibilities. The "falsehood" of Mariana's disguise, by

consummating the "old contracting" of their betrothal, prepares for the marital festivities that conclude the play and that presage new birth, not death. Angelo's impulses continue to trap him into committing tragic actions (he sends the warrant for Claudio's death to hide his culpability), but he will be forced into a comic resolution by the pattern of the play, now firmly under the Duke's temperate control.

The comedy of *Measure for Measure* culminates in Act V. A "physic / That's bitter to sweet end" (IV.vi.7-8), the pageant functions as a purge and restorative, negating the consequences of the tragic impulses without eliminating the memory of them. This carefully plotted episode is the comic counterpart to the major action of Act II- Isabella's attempt to rescue Claudio from Angelo's decree, and Angelo's extortionary demand. The contiguity between the acts is furthered by the exact recurrence of theme: Angelo is guilty of Claudio's offense, and Angelo's sentence becomes the crucial focus of the pivot from tragedy to comedy. The contrast between locales is a less obvious but critical correlation between Acts II and V. Angelo and Isabella confer privately, within chambers; the Duke ensures his proceedings are both public and well attended. Act V is best regarded as a spectacle of justice, complete with actors (the Duke, Friar Peter, the Provost, and, to a point, Isabella) who have prepared parts. The Duke arranges the entire event so that the denouement becomes an emblematic performance of temperate government.

Speaking as if he were playing the part of a prologue, the Duke ceremoniously opens the pageant of justice in Act V. The painstaking formality echoes the careful protocol of the play's opening lines, thus signalling a completion of one cycle of the play's action: the Duke resumes the authority he lent Angelo and ends his surreptitious direction of events. Although Shakespeare's genius for characterization still obtains, this scene is the Structural antithesis to the plausible tragedy of Acts I and II. The characters' actions are subservient to the comic pattem, and though occasional moments of spontaneity indicate partially realistic events, complex psychological motivations are replaced by symbolic postures. The Duke even blocks the initial actions as if he were a stage manager. His gestures ("Give we our hand," and "cnme Escalus, / You must walk by us on our other hand" [V.i.17-is] lend a masquelike stateliness to the episode. Moreover, the Duke's language reveals a preoccupation with dramatic artifice:

0, but your desert speaks loud, and I should
wrong it
To lock it in the wards of covert bosom, When it deserves with characters of brass
A forted residence 'gainst the tooth of time And razure of oblivion. Give we our hand,
And let the subject see, to make them know That outward courtesies would fain
proclaim Favours that keep within.
(V.i.IO-17)

The language indulges in rich grandiloquence and vibrant imagery, qualities unknown in the Duke's pedestrian prose of the previous two acts. It is almost as if Act V metamorphoses into a royal entertainment staged for our edification and delight. Further, as we might expect in a royal masque, the elegant poetty contains a duality of purpose. The Duke extends courteous greetings and thanks but also darkly denounces

the hypocrisyof external appearance belying internal reality. We note the oppositions between a "covert bosom" and "characters of brass," between "outward courtesies" and inwardly kept "Favours." The Duke presages a revelation of Angelo's occult behavior which has become deadly only because of its need for secrecy. The entire pageant, indeed, is designed to "let the subject *see,* to make them know" of Angelo's duplicity. But the Duke intends only recognition of, not retribution for, that duplicity. The Duke's comic craft has averted the tragic impulse; to demand punishment for Angelo's transgressions would only revert comedy to tragedy. Moderation of actions remains the Duke's goal, and by publicly exposing Angelo's vicious and unrestrained disposition, the Duke may guide him (and his subjects) to conduct his life in a more temperate fashion.

The action of Act V unfolds reiteratively: previous scenes and textures, once tragic, are now recast as comedy. Isabella's histrionic demand for "Justice! Justice! Justice! Justice!" (V.i.26) inverts her previous plea for mercy before Angelo (II.ii.49ff). Although Angelo's treacherous behavior has ensured our approval of Isabella's fervent demand for redress, the scene communicates none of the deadly impact that surrounds the contest for Claudio's life. Act V's structure allows only a spurious and dramatic threat to Angelo's life, just as the structure of *The Merchant oj Venire* permits Shylock only to menace Antonio without ever placing him in danger of actual bloodshed. We know Claudio to be safe; Angelo, therefore, is safe. A second inversion maintains this comic perspective. Isabella has implored Angelo, and most eloquently, to show Claudio mercy:

Why, all the souls that were, were forfeit once, And He that might the vantage best have took Found out the remedy. How would you be If He, which is the top of judgement, should But judge you as you are? 0, think on that, And mercy then will breathe within your lips, I.ike man new made.
(II.ii.73-79)

The appeals to the elements that normally constitute the comic perspective- the common heritage of man and his shared suffering, the redemption and acceptance of the fallen, the general allusion to the reconstit uted man in St. Paul's "man new made" - increase the tragic pitch in the first acts because there they are denied. conversely, Isabella's desire for strict rigor-". . . for that I must speak / Must either punish me, not being believ'd / Or wring redress from you" (V.i.3l33)- increases our expectation of a festive resolution, since reprisals do not sort with our understanding of the comic structure here pertaining. As long as the Duke is present we realize that the intensity of these pre-arranged conflicts is undercut by our awareness of a larger pattern which contains and determines the particular actions. The subliminal comic structure tempers our reaction to momentary dynamics and prevents us from seriously considering a tragic resolution even though the urge to appraise events in dilemmatic terms recurs in Isabella's language:

'Tis not impossible But one, the wicked'st caitiff on the ground, May seem as shy, as grave, as just, as absolute, As Angelo; even so may Angelo,
In all his dressings, caracts, tides, forms,
Be an arch-villain.
(V.i.55-60)

But the antitheses here sound histrionic. The *ad ham inem* attack lacks the trenchant applicability of Claudio's assessment of man's condition. cnmparing Angelo to the "wicked'st caitiff on the ground" overstates; Isabella's virulence strains the credibility of the accusations. And, were her estimate accepted, it would lead only to the eradication of a single figure rather than the restoration of an entire society. If we accept Isabella's judgment that Angelo is unredeemable, then his execution is inevitable. But the Duke intends inclusion, and Angelo's death would forbid a concordant resolution.

The Duke's feigned rejection of Isabella's suit, Lucio's interjections, Mariana's tale of a night with her lawful husband, and the disguised Duke's charges of corruption all prepare for the comic reversal. Once Lucio unmasks him, the Duke firmly and finally assumes direct control over the comic resolution. In order to move from an extreme position to a medial, thereby establishing a pattern for temperate behavior, the Duke assumes the position of unwavering, strict justice:

The very mercy of the law cries out
Most audible, even from his proper tongue: 'An Angelo for Claudio; death for death.
Haste still pays haste, and leisure answers
leisure;
I.ike doth quit like, and Measure still for
Measure.' Then, Angelo, thy fault's thus manifested, Which, though thou would'st deny, denies
thee vantage. We do condemn thee to the very block Where Claudio stoop'd to death, and with
like haste.
Away with him.
(V.i.405-14)

The Duke's condemnation of Angelo resounds with the tragic textUres characteristic of Angelo's judgments. Again, and most clearly, we are confronted with an extreme solution: death for death; Angelo for Claudio. To exercise this *lex talionis* would return us to tragic themes. Man's faults manifested and condemned- and "We are all frail" (IIiv.121)-lead only to death. Or, to borrow Hamlet's piercing rejoinder to Polonius, "Use every man after his desert, and who shall scape whipping?" *(Harriet* II.ii.524-25). Angelo is guilty; just like Claudio, of the "violation / Of sacred chastity" (V.i.402 03), and though his conduct is more vicious than Claudio's, and I believe it is, still it is presented in this playas paradigmatic of the human condition. The majority of the characters in *Measure for Measure*- Lucio, Pompey, Mistress Overdone, Froth, Angelo, Claudio, Juliet, Mariana- exhibit this infirmity to various degrees. We, with the Duke, must remember the truth of Lucio's statement:

Yes, in good sooth, the vice is of a great kindred; it is well allied; but it is impossible to eXtrip it quite, friar, till eating and drinking be put down.
(III.ii.97-99)

If the vice cannot be eradicated, perhaps, as the Duke has just said, "severity" can "cure it" (III.ii.96), but surely all that can actually be done is that the vice can be controlled by temperance.

Isabella's reaction to Angelo's sentence provides the archetype for the comic resolution of *Measure for Measure.* Stability and order are achieved through forgiveness and moderation, through controlling the impulses that lead man to ravin down his proper bane. The Duke's caution to Mariana indicates the impulses that Isabella must control:

Against all sense you do importune her.
Should she kneel down in mercy of this fact,
Her brother's ghost his paved bed would
break,
And take her hence in horror.
(V.i.431-34)

But the anger and desire for revenge that had governed Isabella earlier gives way to temperance and the capacious redemption characteristic 0 Shakespearean comedy. Isabella's request that Angelo receive mercy crystalizes the dramatic nature of tragic-comedy, the structure in which tragedy can become comedy. Just as Angelo's transgressions are paradigmatic of the iniquities in Vienna, so must Isabella's tolerance be of comic temperance:

Look, if it please you, on this man condemn'd
As if my brother liv'd.
(V.i.442-43)

In that instant Isabella overcomes the binary options that had propelled the characters in *Measure jar Measure* towards tragedy. Isabella bridges the opposition between Claudio's death and Angelo's life with the inclusive possibility "as if," the fountainhead of simultaneous conceivability from which temperance springs. If one can contemplate the consequences of both extremes, one also discovers the path of moderation between. Mercy extended to one who "should slip so grossly, both in the heat of blood / And lack of temper'd judgment afterward" (V.iA70-71) forms the example of moderate conduct for a world much too predisposed to thrust itself heedlessly into the harsh and deadly shocks that the flesh is heir to. To convert potential tragedy into comedy requires the momentary temperance needed to deter the impulse leading to death and disintegration. Isabella illustrates that temperance and demonstrates its virtue to the characters and audience.

And though it may be identified as such, that temperance is not exactly mercy. Mercy freely pardons; temperance instructs and corrects. As the Duke remarks with regard to Pompey, "correction and instruction must both work / Ere this rude beast will profit" (III.ii.3132). Those who are sufficiently wise take the emblematic action of Act V as instruction; those who are not (Pompey, Mistress Overdone, Lucio) receive correction. Pompey and Mistress Overdone are removed from their salacious occupations. Lucio is checked, like Angelo, with marriage even though no one expects Lucio to settle into

blissful domesticity with Kate Keepdown. Perhaps the humiliation will serve the place of "pressing to death, / Whipping, and hanging" (V.i.520-21). His marriage, like the remission of the "other forfeits," is emblematic. Lucio represents that portion of humanity "on whose nature / NurtUre can never stick" *(The Tempest* IV.i.188-89). Shakespeare seems acutely aware that a darkness unredeemable lurks in the human soul: all men possess Calibans which they must acknowledge theirs. Fortunately, admitting their existence often leads to the ability to control them.

I cannot overstate the importance of the concluding marriages to the structure of *Measure for Measure.* Marriage isShakespeare's most pervasive and most hopeful symbol of concordant social integration. By closing *Measure for Measure* with a recessional of betrothed and married couples Shakespeare appeals to our recognition of the denotation of this forceful dramatic device. What had begun as tragedy concludes with the comic ctyStalization of a new society, best described by Frye:

. . . a new social unit is fonned on the stage, and the moment that this social unit crystalizes is the moment of the comic resolution. In the last scene, when the dramatist usually tries to get all his characters on the stage at once, the audience witnesses the birth of a renewed sense of social integration. In comedy as in life, the regular expression of this is a festival, whether a marriage, a dance, or a feast.

Shakespeare repeatedly relies on marriages to represent the triumph over divisive forces in his plays. We only need to remember the endings of *A Midsummer Night's Dream, The Two Gentlemen of Verona, The Merchant of* Venice, *Much Ado About Nothing As You I.ike It,* and *Twelfth Night* to conclusively demonstrate that argument. And like the marriages in those plays, the marriages in *Measure for Measure* are less important as psychological realities than as emblematic pairings. Lucio and Kate indicate libidinous impulses momentarily checked. Claudio and Juliet, perhaps the most believable of the pairings, signal the danger of unrestrained and excessive impulses, and how the stability of marriage may rectify the previous intemperance. The marriages of Mariana to Angelo and Isabella to the Duke reinforce that same lesson. I suspect that Shakespeare meant his audience to recognize the social harmony multiple marriages suggest, and I suspect that Shakespeare meant his audience to recognize the attendant triumph of comedy over tragedy as well.

Measure for Measure divides into two strucrural units that can be described as the progression of locales: the descent from the Duke's chambers to the prison, and the corresponding ascent from the prison to the street. The descent, marked by an increasing polarization that results, finally, in fragmentation, contains the recognizable motifs of tragic conflict. An affair that should signal pastoral harmony is unexpectedly pulled towards untimely death:

Your brother and his lover have embrac'd; As those that feed grow full, as blossoming time
That from the seedness the bare fallow brings
To teeming foison, even so her plenteous
womb

Expresseth his full tilth and husbandry.
(I.iv.4O-44)

But Angelo's machinations promise the unnatural truncation of that cycle, not its natural completion:

[Angelo], to give fear to use and liberty,
Which have for long run by the hideous law
As mice by lions, hath pick'd out an act
Under whose heavy sense [Claudio's] life
Falls into forfeit: he arrests him on it,
And follows close the rigour of the statute
To make him an example.
(I.iv.62-68)

The profit of Claudio's "full tilth and husbandry" is that his life "Falls into forfeit." Thus procreation begets death. But the tragedy of this movement must be circumvented. A second assignation and its "blossoming time" averts the earlier tragedy. The description of Mariana's meeting place is the comic counterpart to the tragic panel:

He hath a garden circummur'd with brick, Whose western side is with a vineyard back'd; And to that vineyard is a planched gate, That makes his opening with this bigger key.
(IV.i.28-31)

The overtones of this *tryst* are antithetical to Claudio and Juliet's affair- Angelo contemplates rape. The result, however inverts that potential and establishes comic stability. The substitution of Mariana for Isabella preserves the comic resolution from Angelo's deadly intentions. Mariana's contact with Angelo, in a setting of hushed fecundity that links their encounter to the fertility of Claudio and Juliet's love, is the seed of comic structure. Mariana craves "no other, nor no better man" (V.i.424), and accepts Angelo without qualification:

They say best men are moulded out of faults, And, for the most, become much more the better '
For being a little bad. So may my husband.
(V.i.437-39)

That acceptance is the essence of the comedy of *Measure far Measure,* just as Angelo's admission, "Blood, thou art blood" (lI.iv.15), is the essence of its tragedy. But the two parts stand in concordant correspondence, not isolation, and are joined by strong and pervading resonances. *Measure for Measure* is divided, but Tillyard, and later Wheeler, failed to consider how that very division gives the play structural unity. And, I believe, few playwrights have ever created a tragicomedy of *Measure for Measure's* unified magnificence, the perfect balance of tragedy's "bitter physic" and comedy's "sweet end."

Critical Essay #9

Numerous critics have evaluated the dual nature of Angelo- how it is reflected in the play's structure and how it represents the concerns of Renaissance society. Leo Kirschbaum goes so far as to observe that *Measure for Measure* presents us with "two strikingly disparate characterizations" of Angelo that cannot easily be combined to form a single, unified character. At the beginning of the play, Kirschbaum observes, Angelo "is a keen if hard protector of orderly society" whose fall from grace after meeting Isabella is in keeping with the downfall of such tragic figures as Othello or Macbeth. However Kirschbaum points out that after Act II, the Angelo we see is a grasping, "small-minded" man no longer capable of tragic actions but instead reduced to jilting his fiancée over a lost dowry. In light of this discrepancy, Kirschbaum speculates that, for Shakespeare, the overall impression that the play makes was more important than the continuity of anyone character; Shakespeare, Kirschbaum contends, wanted the closing act of *Measure for Measure* to be theatrical rather than tragic.

Harold Fisch, Darryl F. Gless, and Rolf Soellner also discuss the change in Angelo's character, but they regard it as the direct result of his own behavior. Fisch observes that Angelo has a Puritanical personality that causes him to adhere rigidly to the laws pledged to his care as well as to employ ruthlessly the power that the laws afford him; Angelo's personality undergoes a change when his possession of power turns to the abuse of power and he tries to rape Isabella. Fisch suggests that Angelo is transformed a final time when he is forced to acknowledge his transgression and do "penance" by fulfilling his pledge of marriage to Mariana. Gless and Soellner stress that the change in Angelo's character occurs when he gains self-knowledge: ill other words, when he learns that he is as sinful as those on whom he passes judgment.

Source: "The Two Angelos," in *Character and Characterization in Shakespeare,* Wayne State University Press, 1962, pp. 119-26.

[Kirschbaum suggests that the change in the structure of Mea sure for Measure *is the result of a change in the characterization of Angelo. At the beginning of the play, Kirschbaum notes, Angelo is crud and inflexible, but this is tempered Somewhat by the fact that he is also noble in his consistent adherence to the law Kirschbaum contends that, in order to shift the play awry from tragedy, Shakespeare was obliged to recreate Angelo far the final half of the play, turning him into a character who is no longer noble but who is instead "small- minded, mean, calculating (and) vindictive "]*

Not even Mary Lascelles' *Shakespeare's Measure for Measure* (1953), which is an almost word-for-word perception and analysis of the play, handles, or for that matter even recognizes, the problem I intend to deal with now, that of two strikingly disparate characterizations of the same character.

That Shakespeare, for the sake of the whole, for the sake of the entire impression which he wants a play to make, for the sake of the particular impression which he wants a play to make at a particular moment, could introduce a new motive for a particular

character's actions, even at a relatively late or very late stage of the drama's progress, is proved by the clear insertion of Hamlet's ambition in the last act of his play. And that critics have noticed the phenomenon, whether they have brought good evidence to support their claims or not, is indicated by certain pages of L. L. Schucking's *Character Problem; in Shakespeare,* wherein he attempts to substantiate his hypotheses that there are two Julius Caesars and two Cleopatras out of which no unified character analysis in the Bradleyan manner can be extracted. The example of Angelo, however, is definitive. It is impossible to bring the two divergent portrayals together. And one must assume that Shakespeare's change of the well-known story because of which the sister's virtue is not sacrificed forced the shift in Angelo's character, which is so well concealed that- to my great astonishment!- not even perceptive auditors and critics have noticed it.

Up to his exit at the end of 2.4, Angelo is a character who might vie with Macbeth in the split between his compulsive desires and his conscience. Frightening he is, even sadistic- as is implied by his treatment of Claudio, his blunt assertiveness to the decent and human-hearted Provost, and his abrupt dismissal of Elbow's "criminals," hoping they will all be whipped- contrast this last with the understanding tolerance of his fellow magistrate, Escalus. But Angelo here in these scenes is by no means an ignoble figure. He may lack empathy, but his view of law and justice is not despicable. This is a difficult play; Shakespeare does everything he can to show that a harsh attitude toward concupiscence may exist in heaven but not on earth. And determination is even further muddled by the friar Duke's harshness towards Juliet for the same "sin" which he later encourages Mariana to commit and Isabella to aid. Nevertheless, it would be impossible for an enlightened jurist to impugn Angelo's statements to Escalus or to Isabella. Let us look at some of these. Escalus says in 2.1:

Ay, but yet
Let us be keen and rather cut a little,
Than fall and bruise to death. Alas, this
gentleman
Whom I would save had a most noble
father.
Let but your honor know,
Whom I believe to be most strait in virtue, That in the working of your own affections,
Had time cohered with place or place with
wishing,
Or that the resolute acting of your blood Could have attained th' effect of your own purpose,
Whether you had not sometime in your life Erred in this point which now you censure him,
And pulled the law upon you.
To which Angelo replies:
'TIS one thing to be tempted, Escalus,
Another thing to fall. I not deny
The jury passing on the prisoner's life
May in the sworn twelve have a thief or two Guiltier than him they try; what's open made

to justice,
That justice seizes; what knows the laws That thieves do pass on thieves? 'Tis very pregnant
The jewel that we find, we stoop and take't Because we see it; but what we do not see We tread upon, and never think of it.
You may not so extenuate his offense
For I have had such faults; but rather tell me, When I that censure him do so offend,
Let mine own judgment pattern out my
death
And nothing come in partial. Sir, he must
die.

Angelo's speech not only defends the integrity of the law but even admits the possible defalcation of the lawmaker and law enforcer. This is great utterance, and there is nothing in the least pernicious about it. Similarly, although our hearts go out wholly to Isabella in mercy in 2.2, yet the Angelo who says

The law hath not been dead, though it hath
slept.
Those many had not dared to do that evil If that the first that did th' edict infringe Had answered for his deed. Now 'tis awake, Takes note of what is done, and like a prophet
Looks in a glass that shows what future evils, Either new, or by remissness new-conceived, And so in progress to be hatched and born, Are now to have no successive degrees,
But, ere they live, to end.

is a keen if hard protector of orderly society. We should remember that a merciful God is also an all-knowing One: man in his hopes and fears for the future must perforce be, fortunately or unfortunately, legalistic.

When and as Angelo falls, he falls as a great man. He is tempted not as a Lucio, to engage in momentary sport, but as a noble victim of a completely uncontrollable emotion. This is not lechery; this is the complement of the strong rigidity that has hitherto guided him. He like his counterparts Coriolanus, Othello, Lear, and Macbeth is swept on to irresponsibility by a force that in its strength shows that it is outside reason. The essence of the situation is magnificently phrased by Angelo himself when in an aside he states that he is "that way going to temptation / Where prayers cross." Consider the word lure in the following soliloquy that ends 2.2:

From thee: even from thy virtue.
What's this? what's this? is this her fault or
mine?
The tempter, or the tempted, who sins
most?
Ha!
Not she, nor doth she tempt; but it is I That, lying by the violet in the sun,

Do as the carrion does, not as the flower, Corrupt with virtuous season. Can it be That modesty may more betray our sense Than woman's lightness? Having waste ground enough,
Shall we desire to raze the sanctuary
And pitch our evils there? 0 fie, fie, fie! What dost thou? or what art thou, Angelo? Dost thou desire her foully for those things That make her good? 0, let her brother live:
Thieves for their robbery have authoriry When judges steal themselves. What, do I love her,
That I desire to hear her speak again,
And feast upon her eyes? what iS't I dream on?
0 cunning enemy that, to catch a saint, With saints dost bait thy hook: most dangerous
Is that temptation that doth goad us on To sin in loving virtue. Never could the strumpet
With all her double vigor, art and nature, Once stir my temper; but this virtuous maid
Subdues me quite. Ever till now,
When men were fond, I smiled and wondered how.

Angelo does not say merely that he lusts after Claudio's sister; he says that he *loves* her. The appetite here is the opposite of momentary lust. It is the ruthless compulsion that makes of Maugham's *of Human Bondage* and even sometimes of the cheapest opera an artifact that has disturbing credibility. This is what drives Romeo and Juliet together.

Seized by this emotion Angelo confronts Isabella in 2.4. His admissions are illuminating. "We are all frail,"_ he says; "Plainly conceive, I love you"; and again, your brother "shall not [die], Isabel, if you give me love." (It is the sublimity of Shakespeare's irony that not until this moment of intimate non-intimacy do the two call each other by their names!) The very beat and tautness of his lines show a ruthless but not small, a savage but not cheap, villain:

Answer me tomorrow,
Or, by the affection that now guides me most,
I'll prove a tyrant to him. As for you,
Say what you can, my false o'erweighs your true.

After 2.4 Angelo makes no appearance until two full acts later, until4.4, which is just upon the beginning of the last scene and act. Already as we know he is in the grip of the plot which will expose him. And the Angelo of the last scene is by no means the caught figure of Macbeth or Othello. He is there because he has to be the pawn of the theatricality that Shakespeare has invented. He has neither bulk nor credence. He is

there to be exposed and then married and then freed. One might truly say that after 2.4 the great Angelo whom I have tried to describe in the first two acts has no part in the play. And I think one of the reasons why is not far to seek. Beginning with 3.1.204 the former Angelo disappears and a new Angelo replaces him:

Duke: . . . Have you not heard speak of Manana, the sister of Frederick, the great soldier who miscarried at sea?
Isabella: I have heard of the lady, and good words went with her name.
Duke: She should this Angelo have married, was affianced by her oath, and the nuptial appointed: between which time of the contract and limit of the solemnity, her brother Frederick was wracked at sea, having in that perished vessel the dowry of his sister. But mark how heavily this befell to the poor gentlewoman: there she lost a noble and renowned brother, in his love toward her ever most kind and natural; with him the portion and sinew of her fortune, her marriage dowry; with both, her combinate husband, this well-seeming Angelo.
Isabella: Can this be *so?* Did Angelo so leave her?
Duke: Left her in her tears, and dried not one of them with his comfort; swallowed his vows whole, pretending in her discoveries of dIShonor; in few, bestowed her on her own lamentation, which she yet wears for his sake; and he, a marble to her tears, is washed with them but relents not.

Let us hazard reasons why the second Angelo- small-minded, mean, calculating, vindictive- has to enter the play.

In order to get Isabella off the hook Shakespeare has to employ "the bed-trick." Somebody else must substitute for Isabella in the garden that night. Since the coming together of Mariana and Angelo has to be legally and religiously acceptable, the bed-trick has to be advised by a friar. This can only come about by having had Angelo break a betrothal contract. One cause for breaking the contract could have been Angelo's finding a new love. But although Shakespeare can add demeaning traits to the old Angelo, he cannot without peril totally contradict the old Angelo. Now one of the most marked characteristics of the former Angelo was his initial non-amorous nature. Thus the only recourse for Shakespeare was to have the Angelo-Mariana betrothal broken because Angelo did not get the dowry he expected. The motive, in other words, for the rupture was avarice. But there is nothing in the early Angelo that prepares us for this miserliness. Furthermore, although his refusing Mariana comfort goes along with the sadism which I have remarked, his pretence that Mariana was dishonorable is, I think, also denied by our impression of the original Angelo. That he would be thus cheap and mean does not seem possible. This avaricious and small-minded creature, a jilting Angelo, is a far cry from the noble, if too noble for his own good, character who inhabits the play in the first two acts.

When Angelo changes, the play changes. What has been hitherto almost a deterministic sequence of events between a man and a woman becomes a theatrical trickery the virtues of which I would not deny. Nevertheless these are easier virtues than those which possess the great tragedies, effective as they too are on the stage.

Hence I do not think I am wrong in assuming that the shift that most people feel in *Measure for Measure* from a great drama to a great theatrical and ideological drama is occasioned as much as anything by the fact of the two Angelos.

Critical Essay #10

Darryl F. Gless describes Duke Vincentio as a godlike figure who, thanks to his use of disguise, appears omniscient to the other characters of the play and who closes the play by administering justice to all and awarding "troe praise where it is due." Carolyn E. Brown and Robin Grove see the Duke in a negative light. Brown, for instance, turns to the relationship between Vincentio and the dissipated but perceptive Lucio for evidence supporting *Measure for Measure's* designation as a "problem" play. Brown explains that although the Duke appears superficially to be virtuous, and although his manipulations of Isabella, Mariana, and Angelo end happily, nevertheless his conversations with and harsh sentencing of Lucio reveal a troubled and sublimated personality. Grove criticizes the Duke for the lack of self-perception he reveals in believing that he is capable of judging others. Grove also describes the Duke's manipulations at the close of the play as cruel.

By contrast, William A Freedman views Duke Vincentio as a benign character and "moral spokesman" who succeeds at his ultimate goal which is to guide Vienna back toward merciful justice. I.ike Gless, Freedman contends that the Duke displays godlike abilities but Freedman insists that the character nevertheless retains his humanity; Melvin Seiden sees a somewhat different duality in Vincentio's characterization. Seiden describes the Duke as shy and scholarly on the one hand and splendidly manipulative on the other, but argues that these differences only add to the entertainment value of Shakespeare's play. Richard A. Levin tries to put the debate concerning the Duke's inconsistent na *ture* to rest by looking at the character from a psychological point of view. Levin suggests that Vincentio appears to be inconsistent because "his conscience is troubled": after all, he has instructed Mariana in the morally dubious bed-trick and is therefore, as Carolyn E. Brown has pointed out, sensitive to Lucio's perceptive barbs. Unlike Brown, however, Levin concludes that the Duke's moral ambiguity fulfills Shakespeare's purpose for the play, which is to reserve judgment on others even if his characters do not.

Source: "The Duke in *Measure for Measure:* Another Interpretation," in *Tennessee Studies in I.iterature,* Vol. IX, 1964, pp. 31-38.

[Freedman refutes the commonly held view if the Duke as incons istent am inhuman, countering this viewpoint with the argument that Vincentio\ is in fact consistently "concerned with . . . his reputation and pub/x image" Freedman remarks that reputation Series as an important theme in the play dong with mercy am justice, so that appropriately, as the most powerful character in the play, the Duke brings these themes to the forefront at the close if Measure for Measure by displaying a very human concern for his reputation and authority in Vienna even Wile he teaches his subjects the importance if tempering justice with mercy.]

Undoubtedly one of, if not the, most enigmatic of all Shakespeare's so-called "problem plays" is *Measure for Measure.* Much ink has been spent over the very intention of the play and over the related question of the abundance of the tragic element in this

supposed comedy. Perhaps, however, one of the most controversial aspects of the play is the character of the Duke. Vincentio is commonly written off by many critics as an egregiously inconsistent, even non-human, character. Professor Mark Parrott describes the controversy and offers a not unpopular solution, as follows:

Pages have been written. . . about the Duke. He has been blamed as derelict in duty; he has been extolled as an earthly Providence watching over wayward children. All this is beating the wind; the Duke is not a living man at all, but a *deus ex machina* devised by Shakespeare to steer the action through storm and stress into the final heaven. He is a mere bundle of inconsistencies; he does not like to stage himself in people's eyes, yet he indulges in a most spectacular bit of self-revelation; he preaches a long sermon to Claudio to prepare him for death when he is fully purposed to save the boy's life. If we cease to analyze his character we may overlook its inconsistency and admire the art with which Shakespeare makes him serve the end for which he was designed.

Patrott's analysis, it seems to me, is correct in everything but its two major points: that the Duke's character is beset with inconsistencies, and that he is in fact not a living man at all. So far as I know, no analysis of the Duke thus far has satisfactorily reconciled the problems he presents, and it will therefore be the purpose of this paper to offer a resolution to the question of the Duke's character. I shall try to show, to be more specific, that the Duke, if we try to understand him as a man who is concerned with, nay solicitous after, his reputation and public image, emerges as a quite consistent, quite human delineation, and one reflects in this aspect of his character one of the principal themes of *Measure for Measure.*

Much of the difficulty about the Duke arises from the fact that he, of all the characters lifted from Shakespeare's source- Whetstone's *Promus and Cassandra*- undergoes the most radical alteration. He appears in the Whetstone play, and in the Cinthio novel from which it was first derived, only towards the end. The earlier character does not, as the Duke does, permeate the entire work. In Whetstone, the Duke, there a king, merely sends his delegate to the city of Julio for the purpose of administering justice. The King himself is not seen until the latter part of the play, where he is told of the delegate's abuses of authority and metes out merciful justice. The fact that the Duke in *Measure for Measure* is a far more active participant in the drama, that he in fact manipulates the action to a considerable degree, has given rise to the conviction that he is the *deus* in Shakespeare's machine. His presence throughout assures us that despite the tragic appearance of events, all will work out well. The Duke thus abates the seriousness found in the sources and makes *Measure for Measure* more palatable as comedy. But by means of his enlargement of the Duke's role, Shakespeare has done far more to hIS source than this. He has magnified a latent theme in Whetstone's drama, namely that of reputation, and has made the Duke contribute out of his humanity toward the evocation not only of the theme of mercy, but to this secondary theme as well.

The theme of reputation, implicit in the dramatic Situation, but made explicit in Whetstone only in Cassandra's (here Isabella's) case, touches crucially in *Measure for Measure* virtually every major character. Angelo is of course virtue untested; and his reputation, about which everyone has something to remark, proves undeserved. Angelo

admits to taking pride in his gravity, an index of his own consciousness of his public image; and he bases his trust in Isabella's secrecy in his supposed violation of her chastity on the grounds first, that his reputation for rectitude will render incredible any accusations to the contrary, and second, that Isabella will not wish to undermine her own repute. Isabella is naturally thinking largely of her reputation as well as her soul when she rejects Angelo's proposition. And in his substitution of Mariana for Isabella in the controversial "bed trick," Shakespeare not only lightens the play's tragic load, but places Isabella in direct contrast with Angelo as virtue tested and proved and reputation deserved. In fact, the putative Puritanism of Angelo and the genuine chastity of Isabella are greatly magnified from the Whetstone play (Cassandra is no novice in Whetstone) to heighten this contrast.

Similarly, the reputations of Claudio "who was worth five thousand 0 you all," and Juliet, for the violation of whose chastity Angelo has condemned him, are likewise considered. Juliet, observes the prison provost, "falling in the flames of her own youth, / Hath blistered her report." Too, the reputation of Mariana is examined and guaranteed before she consents to the substitution. And Angelo confesses at the end to having "disvalued" her reputation by breaking off his earlier engagement to her.

The comic figures also contribute richly to the theme of reputation and respectability in their characteristic medium of malapropism. In a nineteen-line comic sequence involving Pompey and Elbow, and concerning the repute of the latter's wife, the word "respected" appears no fewer than eight times, consistently misused for, among other things, "suspected" or "ill-reputed."

Elb. First, an It like you, the house is a respected house; next, this is a respected fellow; and his mistress is a respected woman.
Pam By this hand, sir, his wife is a more respected person than any of us all.
Elb. Varlet, thou liest! Thou liest, wicked varlet! The time is yet to come that she was ever respected with man, woman, or child.
Pam Sir, she was respected with him before he married with her.
Escal Which is the wiser here, Justice or Iniquity? Is this true?
Elb. 0 thou caitiff! 0 thou varlet! 0 thou wicked Hannibal! I respected with her before I was married to her! If ever I was respected with her, or she with me, let not your worship think me the poor Duke's officer. Prove this, thou wicked Hannibal, or I'll have mine action of battery on thee.
(Act II, Sc. 1, 11. 170-188)

The Duke's extraordinary consciousness of and concern for reputation, his own and that of others, is first made clear in Act I, Scene 3, where he explains to the friar his motives for delegating his power to Angelo and assuming a friar's habit to observe the consequences. As ruler of Verona he has, in his leniency, allowed the statutes of the city to go unheeded, the result being a somewhat anarchic wantonness. "I.iberty plucks justice by the nose." Yet when the friar suggests that it is the Duke's responsibility to remedy the situation himself, his answer is twofold- both revelatory of this aspect of his character. First,

Sith 't was my fault to give the people scope, 'T would be my tyranny to strike and gall them
For what I bid them do; for we bid this be
done,
When evil deeds have their permissive pass
And not the punishment. Therefore indeed,
my father,
I have on Angelo impos'd the office;
Who may, in th' ambush of my name, strike
home,
And yet my nature never in the fight
To do it slander.
(Act I, Sc. 3, 11. 35-43)

And second,

. . . Lord Angelo is precise,
Stands at a guard with envy, scarce confesses That his blood flows, or that his appetite Is more to bread than stone; hence shall we see, If power change purpose, what our seemers be.
(Act I, Sc. 3, 11. 50-54)

In the first place, then, the Duke seems to regret his current reputation, but at the same time is concerned that his name not be stained in the process of restoring order to his city. Secondly, he is interested in discovering whether Angelo's reputation for staunch rectitude, so much stronger than his own, be truly deserved. If we keep in mind the Duke's dissatisfaction with the public image he has thus far created of himself along with his desire to restore order without injuring his name, we may have a key to many of his otherwise quite puzzling actions.

The Duke's expressed concern for reputation, far from ending with his explanation to the friar, underscores and in fact accounts for almost everything he speaks and does. It is he who, in the guise of the friar, assures Mariana that her reputation will not suffer in the substitution. Als0 in the friar's habit he asks after himself of Escalus, his second deputy, for no reason, it would seem, other than that he simply wants to know how he is regarded. The very disguise he has chosen, it is well worth noting, is relevant to the Duke's character. In assuming the guise of a friar, he takes one not only well suited to his function as dispenser of mercy and the play's moral spokesman, but one which at the same time commands the veneration he desires. Further, the Duke's insistence to both Claudio and Isabella that Angelo's proposition was merely a deliberate testing of the latter's virtue ties the theme of reputation to another of the play's central questions, that of life *versus* honor. This latter is the real question posed to both Isabella and Claudio by Angelo's heinous offer. But the Duke, attempting to relieve them of the burden of their decision, mitigates the importance of their choice, tells them that Angelo would have executed Claudio anyway, and characteristically puts the questions in terms of the testing of reputation.

As with most of Shakespeare's characters, however, Vincentio is most self-revelatory in his soliloquies. The Duke has only three such speeches, and it is crucial to the understanding of his character that two of them concern themselves exclusively with the problem of repute and that it is a significant part of the third. The first of these, in Act III, Scene 2, follows the departure of Lucio, a wanton and a "fantastick," who has just left off a slanderous denunciation of the Duke thinking he addressed but an ordinary friar. He has berated the Duke as a lecher, a drunkard, and a "very superficial, ignorant, unweighing fellow," and when he leaves, the Duke reflects:

No might nor greatness in mortality
Can censure scape; back-wounding calumny The whitest virtue. What king so strong
Can tie the gall up in the slanderous tongue?
(Act III, Sc. 2, 11. 196-199)

It is interesting in this context to note that the Duke here implicitly associates himself with considerable "might" and "greatness," with the "whitest virtue," and with a "king." This is fully in character, for the Duke was careful to refute in its turn each of Lucio's calumnies and to defend himself as a "scholar, a statesman, and a soldier" (the virtues of the Renaissance man and, as Horatio tells us, of Hamlet). In the same way, he is certain to inform all of the recipients of his benevolence that that is exactly what they are receiving. He is but a friar now, but he is already planning his great unveiling, and he is careful to plant the seeds of proper gratitude and respect.

The second of the Duke's soliloquies closes out the same scene and comes when he is in full possession of the scope of Angelo's inhumanity. The soliloquy outlines the nature of the lesson the Duke has learned in the course of the play and is concerned primarily with the doctrines of mercy and measure for measure- that he who would administer justice should be "more nor less to others paying / Than by self-offences weighing." But located neatly in the middle of this twenty-two line monologue are eight lines integrally related to the question of public versus true image:

Twice treble shame on Angelo,
To weed my vice and let his grow!
0, what may man within him hide,
Though angel on the outward side!
How may likeness made in crimes,
Making practice on the times,
To draw with Idle spiders' strings
Most ponderous and substantial things!
(Act III, Sc 2, 11. 283-290)

The Duke's final soliloquy occurs in the very next scene, Act IV, Scene I. It is spoken while Isabel has gone off with Mariana to advise her of the proposed substitution. The speech, however, seems to have no immediate provocation, a fact which only serves to emphasize still more the Duke's preoccupation with the subject of reputation, most particularly his own. Isabella and Mariana having made their exits, he repines:

O place and greatness' millions of false eyes Are stuck upon thee: volumes of report
Run with these false and most contrarious
quests
Upon thy doings; thousand escapes of wit Make thee the father of theIr idle dream
And rack thee in their fancies.
(Act IV, Sc. 1, 11 60-65)

In the light of this major aspect of the Duke's character, two of the play's major problems may be cleared up: first, the Duke's seeming inconsistency of character, and second the rancor with which he regards the calumnies of Lucio.

As for Lucio, the Duke finds, even amid all his bestowals of mercy, including one to Antonio, a would- be executioner, that,

. . . here's one in place I cannot pardon You sirrah, that knew me for a fool, a coward,
One all of luxury, an ass, a madman, Wherein have I so deserv'd of you,
That you extol me thus?
(Act V, Sc. 1, 11. 504-508)

Ultimately, Lucio too is pardoned and relieved of his sentence of whipping first and hanging after, but the Duke does compel him to marry a punk he has gotten with child. Marrying a punk, Lucio complains, is "pressing to death, whipping, and hanging." "Slandering a prince deserves it," answers Vincentio. I.ittle, I think, need be said in explanation of this verdict. One so sensitive of his name and so concerned with improving it as the Duke has revealed himself to be could hardly be expected to react otherwise.

The seeming inconsistencies in the Duke's character, when looked at in the light of the interpretation I have been suggesting, actually represent little difficulty. The two inconsistencies named by Parrott, and I think the two most likely to appear irreconcilable are: "he does not like to stage himself in people's eyes, yet he indulges in a most spectacular bit of self-revelation; he preaches a long sermon to Claudio to prepare him for death when he is fully purposed to save the poor boy's life. Both of these seeming contradictions, and indeed virtually all of the questionable activities in which the Duke engages throughout the course of the play, can be explained in the light of the same concern for public image and reputation. His statement that "I love the people but do not love to stage me to their eyes" is easily explained. The remark is offered to Angelo as an account for his delegation of power, and it follows his insistence that he is in a hurry so urgent that it "leaves unquestioned matters of needful value." This insistence is of course, as we later discover, quite untrue-there is no such urgency; and on the same grounds, we may place as little credence in the statement in question: he can hardly be expected to provide Angelo with the true account which he gives the friar. The second inconsistency is reconciled if we consider that almost from the start, the Duke has been planning, to put it bluntly, to shine in the big final scene. This explains in large part his allowing Claudio to persist in his belief in his impending execution. It is also largely responsible for his soliciting the Provost's secrecy about the substitution of another's head for Claudio's, his decision to leave Isabella in the dark

about the fact that her brother actually lives, his advice as the friar to Isabella to accuse Angelo before the Duke, his pre-arranged publicly announced rerum to Vienna, and finally his letter to Angelo and Escalus to "proclaim it in an hour before his entering, that if any crave redress of injustice, they should exhibit their petitions in the street." (Act IV, Sc. 4, 11. 912.) The Duke simply postpones all revelation of his good news for the final moment when he, as Duke and in plain view of his subjects, can make all known. Angelo having failed, the Duke must restore order and obedience to Vienna. But as he earlier told the friar, his reputation for laxity would have made sudden rigourousness seem tyrannical. A public device, such as the final scene is, represents the Duke's attempt to restore order to his subjects on the basis of an increased respect for their sovereign as well as an increased understanding of the nature of true justice. Only this, it seems to me, can account in full for the Duke's manipulation of the final scene in such a way as to make himself the public administrator of mercy in seven consecutive instances: Escalus, Isabella, Bernardine (a murderer), Claudio, Angelo, Lucio, and the Provost. This last, it should be noted, he himself accuses with full knowledge of his subject's innocency and to no apparent end other than its allowing him to grant a further pardon.

In spite of all this, I am not trying to make of the Duke a petty miscreant. I am not trying to deprive him of his status as the play's moral spokesman nor of the quality of mercy in which he so richly abounds. That is why I have said that his concern for his reputation only partly accounts for these manipulations. They can also be accounted for by his desire to make public the arch injustice of Angelo and to provoke both him and his victims to an understanding of the necessity of mercy. This latter, however, is hardly a satisfactory account if it is forced to stand alone. The Duke, it would seem, has gone to lengths too unsavory even for such a noble purpose. Nevertheless, the play retains its moral; it retains its lessons of measure for measure, and the need for a justice tempered by mercy. But this moral achieves greater substance from the fact that it is delivered not by an inconsistent, inhuman, mechanical *deus,* but by a man led by his weaknesses as well as his virtues to proclaim it aloud.

The Duke is, as everyone has said, a *deus ex machina* at least in that he manipulates in large part the action of the play. But he manipulates the action as he does, not as a mechanical device, but as a particular kind of individual character with particular kinds of needs and desires. The Duke is a consistent human being who adds out of his humanity a substance to the theme of reputation and to the moral and drama of *Measure for Measure.*

Critical Essay #11

Source: "The Duke As Politician,"_ in Measure for Measure: *Casuistry and Artistry,* The Catholic University of America Press, 1990, pp. 16-24.

[Seiden identifies two different and contradictory personalities of the Duke: one, a "shy and diffident" scholar who shuns contract with his people; and the other, a "man who relishes both the hidden power of the dramatist and the excitement of acting," Seiden asserts, however, that since these two conflicting roles are treated separately in the play and with equal authority by Shakespeare, neither undercuts the Duke's ultimate ability to bring merciful justice to Vienna, nor does either diminish the power of Shakespeare's play to entertain us- particularly in the second half, where the action is effectively stage-managed by the Duke]

If by its title *Measure for Measure* implies a quantified equality, a moderate and orderly apportioning of whatever it is that is going to be measured out, it delivers on that promise: the play does indeed arrive at a series of carefully considered and symmetrical resolutions that are cut to measure. In still another sense, the fifth act is about the kind of measuring that adds up to tit for tat: old scores are settled and just dessertss earned. But in the process of arriving at the moral symmetry that emerges in the final moments, virtually everything and everyone has been unbalanced, unmeasured, unsettled. Besides, so many variables enter into the calculations into the measuring that seeks to make legal, moral, and political judgments- that even wise Duke Vincentio may have forgotten some of them.

From the beginning this duke of dark comers takes extreme and radically incompatible positions. It is one thing to delegate a monarch's authority to a trusted and honored deputy precisely because one trusts him and believes in his virtues:
Angelo, There is a kind of character in thy life,
That to th' observer doth thy history
Fully unfold.
(I.i.28ff.)

It is quite another to endow an underling with power because his virtues are not credible and there are good reasons for not trusting this paragon of rectitude. If the duke's words in this ambiguous speech are not the panegyric they appear to be but hint at an intention to expose Angelo's shamming of virtue, then Vincentio is playing a duplicitous game. Here, at the outset, perhaps, is what we might call homeopathic measuring: if Angelo's imminent evil is disguised behind a show of virtue, then the duke will camouflage his hostile intentions behind a display of admiration.

And yet, when the duke ends his eulogy of Angelo with the words "But I do bend my speech / To one that can my part in him advertise," we are as likely as Angelo to take them at face value. Nothing hints at insincerity and deviousness; the praise sounds genuine and we have no reason at this point to suspect Vincentio of underhanded

tactics. Which is it, then, trust or mistrust that accounts for the way in which the duke speaks to his deputy in the opening colloquies?

As the action progresses and the duke offers more explanations for his abrupt abdication and delegation of power to Angelo, each new piece of evidence conflicts in some way with one of the previous motives, and as we try to reconcile one with the other, we begin to suspect that each of the duke's postures is independent of the other. When in the opening lines of the play he tells Angelo, "your own science [expertise in government] / Exceeds. . . all advice / My strength can give you" (I.i.5ff.), he means what he says; when he seems to be praising Angelo, he must again be taken to mean what he says; but when, later, he is doubtful and suspicious (in I.iii) and introduces a new and contradictory motive- "Hence shall we see, / If power change purpose, what our seemers be" (11. 53-54)-that dubiety is neither more nor less important an intention than any of the others; each of the duke's explanations stands in discrete integrity, and none negates any of the others. In the world of *Measure for Measure* rigid and exagger ated attitudes- trust, admiration, mistrust, and contempt- are not modified or tempered. They are abandoned and others, no less intense or extreme, replace them.

In the third scene the duke explains to Friar Thomas why he has been negligent in enforcing the laws of the realm. He admits that because "'twas my fault to give the people scope, / 'Twould be my tyranny to strike and gall them" (II. 35-36). Angelo, as the duke's surrogate, can accomplish the task of reawakening the sleeping law without damaging the dulke's good name. To this argument a stem moralist might reply that the duke's desire to avoid the role of tyrant by a belated revival of the ant fornication law only compounds the error of allowing the law to be "like an o'ergrown lion in a cave, / That goes not out to prey" (11. 22-23). Vincentio expresses himself here in a revealing way: "I have on Angelo imposed the office," he says, "Who may in the ambush of my name, strike home. . ." (11. 40-41). We may suspect that it is, however, Angelo who is being ambushed; when in the closing lines he gives us a glimpse of the future that sounds like a threat "Hence shall we see, / If power change purpose, what our seemers be" - we may infer that Angelo is being entrapped. We may want to see Vincentio as finally and truly tipping his hand when he ends the third scene with these portentous words and then read back into his earlier speeches a Machiavellian duplicity.

The Vincentio of the third scene is dubious; he mistrusts someone who "scarce confesses / That his blood flows, or that his appetite / Is more to bread than stone" (I.iii.51ff.). He seems duplicitous. How strange that the duke, in the course of explaining to Angelo (I.i.65ff.) the reasons for making Angelo his surrogate, should describe himself as a reluctant ruler, someone who was not cut out for the hurly-burly of public life.

I love the people,
But do not like to stage me to their eyes. Though it do well, I do not relish well Their loud applause and Aves vehement. . . .
(I.i.68ff.)

If we think of the vivid Americanism "pressing flesh," the sort of mixing with and being swallowed up by the crowd that politicians like Hubert Humphrey and Lyndon Johnson

seemed to revel in, we get a good picture of what is abhorrent to Vincentio. Again, to Friar Thomas, he makes virtually the same point- "I have ever loved the life removed" (I.iii.8)- so the distaste for the noise and crowds of politics must be genuine. Vincentio's is a point of view closely associated with the contempt for the political mob expressed most notably by Coriolanus but also found in *Julius Caesar.*

Angelo, surprisingly, shares his master's refined distaste for the multitude. He expresses his political- but we might call it a visceral- repugnance while in the throes of a violent epiphany of self-hatred. He has asked Isabella to rerun for a second meeting in which she will have an opportunity to plead for her brother's life. Angelo, for his part, will have a chance to tell her without equivocation or euphemism that he wants her sexually and is willing to barter away Claudio's death sentence for her favors. Here, in act 2, scene 4, Angelo echoes Vincentio's patrician politics. Hearing that Isabella has arrived, Angelo describes the rush of "blood [that] thus muster[s] to my heart"; by association, he leaps from the idea of breathlessness to the idea of suffocation in a tableau in which "foolish throngs" huddle around the "one that swoons" and thus, in their well intentioned solicitude, cut off the air needed by the one who has fainted. And from this image of a crowd, ignorant and undisciplined, however kind its collective heart, Angelo moves to the political example:

And even so The general subject to a well-wished king Qui\t their own pan, and in obsequious
fondness
Crowd to his presence, where their untaught
love
Must needs appear offense.
(II.iv.26ff.)

Leaving aside the glancing allusion to King James, the purpose of this passage is to reinforce the duke's aristocratic principles. If for Angelo these are principles, they are entertained as intensely as feelings; if they are prejudices, they are expressed with all the sobriety and thoughtfulness of principles. A wise ruler refuses to be a crowd pleaser, and one good reason for eschewing popularity is given here: the crowd one panders to may, in all its "obsequious fondness," do harm even when it does not intend to do so. It is not just that Angelo, like the duke, has a delicate political stomach that cannot abide the "stinking breaths" of the rabble, a phrase attributed, predictably, to Caius Marcius Coriolanus, archenemy of the people. The People is a dangerous sociopolitical animal, always potentially a hydra-headed mob, even when it has good intentions.

When the duke voices his diffident and qualified "love [of] the people" and his dislike of "Their loud applause," lie connects his diffidence to the empowering of Angelo, assuring the somewhat reluctant deputy, "Your scope is as mine own, / So to enforce or qualify the laws / As to your soul seems good" (I.i.65ff.). When Angelo, later, expresses his more censorious version of the duke's political diffidence, he reinforces the bond between Vincentio and himself. Angelo is the duke's man; his job is the duke's neglected job; his sexual, legal, and political principles are the duke's- at least at the outset. We may find it easier to see Angelo as a perverter of everything that Vincentio

stands for, but that stark opposition between the beneficent ruler and his delinquent underling is too simple and too melodramatic even for this splendidly melodramatic play. If Angelo were the democrat his principles do not allow him to be, he might not be so assiduous an enforcer of the ant fornication law. If Angelo's sexual morality allowed him to take an easygoing- we might call it a Lucio-like-view of fornication, he might not have espoused the politics of a Coriolanus; Angelo's sexual morality and his political ideas are all of a piece; and that perfectionist, absolutist point of view, that contemptuous scorn of collective and individual folly, is also Vincentio's. It is more intense in Angelo, more a violent and self-destructive passion in the surrogate than in the man who may have been his mentor. Nevertheless, there can be no evading the fact that the duke and his deputy are bonded by a set of shared moral assumptions. Angelo's echoing of Vincentio's political attitudes makes the point overtly.

Later in the play Vincentio's political fastidiousness is connected to his personal morality. To the disguised Vincentio, Escalus describes this "gentleman of all temperance" as "One that, above all other strifes, contended especially to know himself" (Ill.ii.245ff.). This glimpse of the duke's high standards suggests that he aspires nobly to the status of philosopher-kin!?;. The duke seems to be more philosopher than king. Mas (we may be tempted to say) for Vienna, for poor Claudio, the victim of the punitive regime inaugurated by Angelo; alas for Vincentio, who would rather study than rule, would rather be the stem judge of his own merits and failings than applauded by an ignorant and "vehement" crowd. Such sympathy is misdirected. The duke's unwillingness to be soiled by popularity-which is to say, his distaste for the politics of democracy- is not a defect but a virtue. We may want to blame Vienna's endemic corruption on the negligence, even the self-indulgence of a monarch who seeks Socratic wisdom at the expense of public duties, but the play does not come to that severe judgment. On the contrary, Vincentio demonstrates the goodness of his character as a man by the austerity of his private and political principles.

It is not difficult to debunk- shall we say *deconstruct?* the character of the duke. His every motive and move, peered into with a cold, analytical eye, raises suspicions about him. The bed trick whereby Vincentio, disguised as a friar, arranges for the jilted bride Mariana rather than Isabella to sleep with Angelo is only one, though the most notorious, case in which our everyday morality does not square with that of the duke. We shall have more to say about the interplay between morality and opportunism in a later discussion. At this point it is necessary to state a simple, dogmatic, but neverthe less inescapable principle: *One cannot deconstruct the char acter if the duke without also deconstructing the play.*

In *Richard II* a stage image is used by the duke of York to describe the fall of Richard and the rise of the new king, Bolingbroke:

As in a theatre the eyes of men
After a well-graced actor leaves the stage
Are idly bent on him that enters next, Thinking his prattle to be tedious,
Even so, or with much more contempt,
men's eyes

Did scowl on gentle Richard.
(V.ii.23ff.)

The fickle mob of the streets becomes the capricious audience in a theater. Bolingbroke then, like a shrewd and calculating actor, knows how to use the streets as a stage, how to "upstage" poor Richard and thus steal the affection and popularity that once belonged to him.

Mounted upon a hot and fiery steed. . .
Bareheaded, lower than his proud steed's neck, [Bolingbroke] Bespake them thus; "I thank you, countrymen.»
(V.ii.8ff.)

In the pseudo-humble Bolingbroke Shakespeare gives us a picture of the politician as actor, the horse has become a prop, a visual effect to heighten the "impact" of all this feigned modesty. In politics appearance is more potent than reality; it is better to be thought humble than to possess that virtue genuinely but not be judged to be so by public opinion, an idea that Shakespeare might have found voiced in *The Republic* by Socrates' shrewd antagonist Thrasymachus or by Machiavelli, except that Elizabethan and Jacobean England did not read Old Nick, as we know, but only his philosophical and religious enemies.

Vincentio tells Angelo, even though "I love the people, / [I] do not like to stage me to their eyes." We must, of course, accept this as self-insight, as a simple truth. However, there is an antithetical truth, which is that the whole of the fifth act is a staged play in which Vincentio, the anonymous playwright, plays the lead in the role that might be called "The Gullible Judge"; he is director as well in the minidrama he has enacted in front of the city gate by actors who will eventually understand that Vincentio, like Shakespeare, has been manipulating them for his own artful purposes.

We want to unify the shy and diffident Vincentio who retreats from the public arena with the man who relishes both the hidden power of the dramatIst and the excitement of acting. We would like to be able to reconcile what almost seems two antithetical Vincentios, one modest and uncertain, the other bold, manipulative, and full of the confidence that comes with the catbird seat. Can we? Not easily, and not without doing violence to the integrity of each of the elements in the makeup of the duke. And so we must accept the contradictIon, understand that there are two (and possibly more) Vincentios. Insofar as he is to be seen as a monarch who finds the contemplative life more appealing than the active, Vincentio's first role in the play is that of the decent and honorable man who should not be taxed for the degeneracy that afflicts his dukedom. He has been negligent, yes, but in a good cause, spiritual enlightenment, and we must not be any harder on Vincentio than he is on himself. Insofar as it is given that Vienna's disease must be cured by almost any judicial or social medicine that can be found, Vincentio assumes a role quite different from that of the shy fellow who "ever loved the life removed" (I.lli.S). In the role of improvising physician, he devises one ad hoc stratagem after the other in his effort to purge Vienna. Beneath the disguise of the friar there 15 the disguise of the good doctor, and beneath that, the most potent and

determining of Vincentio's many personae, the dramatist who acts a role in a play of his own devising. Each role, each persona, each identIty has its own authenticity, must command our uncynical assent, but cannot be made to fit into a smoothly "realistic" portrait.

Is Duke Vincentio too scrupulous to be a successful ruler? Yes. Is he too unscrupulous to be the ideal man Escalus takes him to be? Yes. Must we decide-more important, must Shakespeare decide- which is the authentic Vincentio? No. Vincentio's scruples are admirable in themselves, and thus we should not give too much importance to the admittedly bad consequences of these praiseworthy scruples. On the other hand, Vincentio's clever but unscrupulous manipulations, like those of his only begetter, William Shakespeare, give us so much pleasure, divert and astound us so consistently, that the delight they afford is indeed an end that justifies the means.

A duke who, as Sir Thomas Browne expressed it in speaking of Christian faith, lives "in divided and distinguished worlds" is part of the pattern in which unequivocal and even radical values are asserted but then jettisoned so that new ideas, equally powerful but incompatible with those they replace, may be given their brief moment.

Critical Essay #12

Carolyn E. Brown evaluates the conflicting critical attitudes to Isabella's character, noting that while some scholars regard Isabella as "saintly," others condemn her as shrewish. Brown asserts that a psychological assessment of Isabella reveals that she is a complex character who unconsciously harbors incestuous feelings for her brother and a fascination with sexual masochism. Bernice Kliman describes Isabella as youthfully innocent; further, Kliman observes that Isabella is a "poor debater" and an inexperienced rhetorician who must depend on the Duke for a resolution to her troubles. By contrast, Amy Lechter-Siegel and Marcia Riefer consider Isabella to be highly articulate. However, both Lechter-Siegel and Riefer remark that be cause the novice's speeches pose a threat to the established male authority, they become fewer and less persuasive until Isabella is at last reduced to what Riefer regards as a powerless silence at the close of the play. Barbara J. Baines directly refutes Riefer's argument, contending that Isabella remains a powerful force throughout thanks to her chastity. Baines argues that in a "diseased state" such as Vienna, where sexual license is rampant, chastity is regarded as a formidable cure, and one that is respected by characters as different as the Duke and Lucio.

Critics disagree about the significance of Isabella's silence in response to the Duke's proposal of marriage at the close of the play. Baines and Lechter-Siegel suggest that it is a mute sign of passive resistance to the Duke's offer. Laura Lunger Knoppers observes that Isabella's silence has traditionally been regarded as "happy consent" to marriage but that it may in fact sIgnal the Duke's success at remodeling the novice into an "obedient" and "ideal wife." Karl F. Zender suggests that since the play closes as a conventional comedy should- with several couples either married or betrothed, then it is likely that Isabella's silence indicates assent. On the other hand, Zender also observes that the end of *Measure for Measure* is hardly festive: none of the couples speaks affectionately to one an other, and one of the couples- Juliet and Claudio doesn't interact at all. Therefore, Zender notes, Isabella's own silence may not be as acquiescent as it seems. Maureen Connolly McFeely puts Isabella's silence within its historical context. She argues that while modern audiences would probably interpret Isabella's unresponsiveness as an indication that she has chosen to remain celibate, Renaissance comic conventions and Renaissance social standards (which preferred silent obedience in women) called for Isabella's mute acceptance of the Duke's offer.

Source: "Isabella's Silence: The Consolidation of Power in *Measure for Measure,"* in *Reconsidering the Renaissance: Papers from the Twenty-First Annual Conference,* edited by Mario A Di Cesare, Medieval & Renaissance Texts & Studies, 1992, pp. 371-80.

[Lechter-Siegel observes that scholarly assessments of Isabella as morally rigid and therefore fortunate to haw been "sawi" from the convent through "moral education" and by the Duke's marriage proposal are inaccurate because they stem from each critic's personal "value judgments" rather than from Renaissance history or the play itself By contrast, Lechter-Siegel argues that Isabella does not in fad change her moral views,

nor does she agree to many the Duke Instead, Lechter-Siegel as serts that Isabella's articulate speeches in the first half of the play threaten the Duke's absolutist control of the state and that the Duke himself represents England's absolutist monarch, James I. Because they pose a threat to the fictional state represented in the drama as well as to the actual state of England, Isabella's subversive comments must be "contained" through marriage at the close of the play; however, Lechter-Siegel, argues that Isabella's resulting silence does not indicate that she has necessarily abandoned these Subversive views.]

In act 1 of *Measure for Measure,* the novice Isabella first appears on stage in obedience before a religious authority of whom she requests a life of severe asceti *cism.* In Isabella's first major speech, she makes closely reasoned pleas for the Christian principle of mercy. By contrast, in act 5 Isabella appears in supplication before a secular authority and first makes emotional and then poorly reasoned pleas for the secular principles of justice and equity. In the final scene, the novice, who had requested a cloistered life of chastity and severe simplicity, anticipates a public life of marriage and courtly opulence. A character who is first described to the audience as an eloquent and persuasive speaker *is,* in the final moment of the play, silent.

What transpires between acts 1 and 5 to bring about this reversal? Can we view Isabella as a developing dramatic character whose desires change from the beginning to the end of the play? Many critics imply that we can and argue that this alteration is a happy development brought about under the Duke/Friar's tutelage and tesring. Some critics argue that Isabella receives a "moral education": she realizes that she was too severe at the start in refusing so resolutely to show mercy for her brother by sacrificing her chastity. Other critics argue that Isabella receives a sexual education: Anne Barton, for example, argues that "beneath the habit of the nun is a passionate girl afflicted with an irrational fear of sex which she has never admitted to herself." Similarly, many *see* the Duke's marriage proposition as a felicitous ending: [Geoffrey] Bullough notes [in *Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare],* "Isabella yields and thereby proves herself too valuable to the world to immure herself in a convent."_

The problem with all these views, it seems to me, is that they are value judgments imposed from outside based on the critic's assessment of moral, or sexually healthy, or socially beneficial behavior and that they do not consider the ending in terms of Isabella's own behavior and expressed desires. If we consider these, there seems to be nothing in the play which leads us to conclude that she gains a new moral or psychic awareness or that her desires change from the beginning to the end. She never considered the concept of mercy to require that she commit a mortal sin, nor does her final plea for mercy at the end encompass that idea. And there is no hint, in word or deed, that Isabella develops any burgeoning awareness of her own sexuality. Finally, in the end, she does not willfully "yield" to the proposition of marriage; rather, in the face of command masquerading as a proposal, Isabella is silent.

Thus, if we cannot see Isabella as a developing dramatic character for whom the ending is a satisfactory resolution, we must look for the function of her character and the significance of the resolution elsewhere. I suggest that we see Isabella less as a

character than as a representative of certain ideas. I am in agreement with Marcia Riefer, who has traced the process by which Isabella becomes increasingly directed by the patriarchal control of the Duke until her voice is "literally" lost. Riefer persuasively argues that the anomalous ending represents "the incompatibility of sexual subjugation with successful comic dramaturgy."' I would like both to build on and to shift significantly the focus of that position by arguing that the Duke/Friar represents not generalized patriarchal control, but rather historically specific Jamesian-style control as James I outlines his concept of absolutist authority in the *Basilikon Doron.* In this context, Isabella can be understood to represent two specific challenges to Vincentio's absolutist position. First, in her adherence to religious authority, Isabella resists the secular control of the state; and second, in her adherence to virginity, she resists the social control of the Duke as both a private and public patriarch. Further, as a highly articulate spokesperson of these ideas, her rhetoric is especially threatening to the state. If we understand Isabella in this way, we can understand her "development" as a process of containment whereby the challenges she represents are eliminated in the play's resolution.

Such a reading is based on already extensive scholarship which argues for the interrelationship of *Measure for Measure,* the *Basilikon Doron,* and James I and which maintains an identification of the Duke/Friar with King James. First, I wish to add to this scholarship by arguing that the *Basilikon Doron* can be read as James's program for consolidating religious, secular political, and social power and that *Measure* can be read as a parallel text in which the same program is reproduced. Second, I wish to show how the process of containment is reflected in the Duke's ability to transform and to control Isabella's speech.

James opens the *Basilikon Doron* with a sonnet which defines his divine right style of rule. It begins:

God. giues not Kings the stile of Gods in
vaine,
For on his Throne his Scepter doe they swey

This idea is echoed again when he urges his son "to know and love that God. . . for that he made you as a little God that sit on his Throne, and rule ouer other men."

James's program for the consolidation of religious, secular political, and social power in a divine right monarch is benignly couched as advice to his son on the proper behavior of a king in his three roles of good Christian, of good ruler, and of model virtuous social being- roles which correlate to the three areas of monarchal power. I would argue that it is by the consolidation of power through the use of these three roles that James attempts to establish his absolutist position, and it is further by the elimination of all challenges to this consolidation that James seeks to sustain this position. The treatise also reflects James's perception of the obstacles to this consolidation and his extreme anxiety over these.

Because the Renaissance notion of sovereignty demanded that all people must obey the sovereign without question *unless* his demands directly contradicted God's orders, it is natural that it was the power of the church (whether Anglican, Protestant, or Catholic) which would pose the greatest threat to a monarch who saw a special divinity in his rule. In the *Basilikon Doron,* James seems to perceive the challenge to his divine right position coming from two sources: the first threat comes from those who would accuse him of insufficient religiousness; and the second comes from religious leaders who would assert the priority of their authority over the monarch's.

His greatest anxiety is over the Anabaptists who show"contempt for the civil Magistrate," and who advocate that "Christian Princes. . . be resisted." These kind of men, James writes, "I wishe my Sonne to punish, incase they refuse to obey the Law, and will not cease to sturre up rebellion." The divisiveness created by the Anabaptists furthermore increases the power of the Catholics (Papists) to challenge the authority of the state. James exhorts his son to suppress the power of church leaders in a language which dramatically conveys both the extent of his anxiety and his absolutist stance: "as well as yee represse the vain Puritaine, so not to suffer proude Papall Bishops. . . so *chatne them with such bondes* as may preserve that estate from creeping to corruption" [emphasis mine].

James begins the second book of the *Basilikon Doron* with an image which marvelously suggests the consolidation of religious and secular control in the person of the king: "But as ye are clothed with two callings so must ye be alike careful for the dIScharge of them both: that yee are a good Christian so yee may be a good King." "Clothed with two callings" describes the Friar/Duke of *Measure* who is literally so clothed, and thus by his person contains both appeals to independent religious authority (made by Isabella) and claims of independent secular authority (made by Angelo). The Duke/Friar has not only to contain these competing elements, but also to reintegrate them into society through marriage, and he arranges these marriages through the third role James describes in the *Basilikon Doron*- his social role as both private and public patriarch of the realm.

In the *Basilikon Doron* James notes that a good king acts, in relationship to his subjects, "as their naturall father, and kindley Master." In this role, James would undertake the arrangement of marriages as an absolutist strategy of social control in order to consolidate his political position. In *Measure,* Duke Vincentio *is,* of course, the quintessential arranger of marriages. Also, James's remarks on marriage and the choice of a wife in the *Basilikon Doron* reflect how the double-edged quality of the new Protestant conception of marriage allowed the private and public patriarch to assume more direct power over women than he previously had. The Protestant marriage gave for the first time in history priority to married chastity over Catholic asceticism and virginity. While many have seen this as a happy development for women, others have realized that, to the degree that the power of the priest was diminished, to an equal degree, the power of the family patriarch was increased. In the Duke's proposal to Isabella after his dramatic unhooding by Lucio, Shakespeare provides a compelling *mud* representation of this very transformation from the priority of virginity to the priority of married chastity and of the quite literal transference of power from the priest (or friar) to the husband.

As a natural father, James could claim to be a Father to the realm more convincingly than could Elizabeth claim an analogous personal leadership role before him. The Duke in *Measure for Measure* uses marriage in the end to contain all subversive elements in the society, to suppress any challenges to his divine right position, and, in good comedic fashion, to reintegrate everyone back into his society- creating a union directed by a monarch who has gained control through the consolidation of his secular political, religious, and social roles.

Finally, I would like to suggest that in the *Basilikon Doron,* James perceives the threat to his control expressed through "slander." Those who would accuse him of irreligiousness or question his religious authority he accuses of "famous libels," "iniurious speaches," and dishonorable "inuectiue" against all Christian princes and maintains that the "malicious lying tongues of some haue traduced me." His anxiety is so great that he advises his son, again in absolutist language, that the "remedie" for "vnreuerent speakers" is to "stop their mouthes from all such idle and vnreuerent speeches." Although it is Lucio who most persistently represents the threat of slander, and it is Lucio's mouth which most obviously will not be stopped, Isabella too threatens and eventually does slander Angelo. Because her rhetoric challenges the power of the state, the Friar first directs, then effectively stops, her speech.

To reiterate, I have argued that Isabella challenges the Duke/Friar's absolutist position in two ways. First, by invoking religious authority over secular (in her arguments to the Duke's representative, Angelo), she challenges the secular political control of the state; second, by choosing virginity, she resists the social control of the monarch as patriarch of the realm. Now, I would like to argue that the play enacts the containment of those challenges and that the process of containment can be traced by following Isabella's changing discourse: first, Isabella generates reasoned arguments which challenge the state; next, under the Duke/Friar, her language is directed by the state; and finally, her speech is contained by the state.

In the early scenes of the play, Claudio says of his sister, "she hath prosperous art / When she will play with reason and discourse / And well she can persuade" (1.2.184). The first time we see Isabella she stands before a nun of whom she requires not a lesser, but a stricter restraint within the already strictly ascetic order of St. Clare. Further, we learn in this scene that once Isabella enters the order she must take a vow of silence forbidding her to speak to and be looked upon by men at the same time. Interestingly, while Isabella will *freely admit* to the imposition of silence in obeisance to religious authority, she will, in the meantime, use her arts of language brilliantly in the next scenes to challenge and inadvertently threaten secular authority.

In her first encounter with Angelo, Isabella challenges his secular authority by using logical appeals which show proficiency in close reasoning and the ability to make clear distinctions. She presses her case by making eight reasoned pleas. Each time she makes an argument based on Christian principles, Angelo counters with an argument based on secular legal authority. Thus, a dialectic movement is set up between these two sources of power. Finally, Isabella audaciously challenges Angelo's position by daring to project herself (woman and novice) into the role of the head of state: "I would

to heaven I had your potency, And you were Isabel" (2.2.71). This bold assertion is based on her sense of power as a follower- and perhaps to a certain extent as a representative- of religious authority. In her final pleas, Isabella challenges the very legitimacy of secular authority itself, deploring the tyrannous exercise of power by "proud men dressed in a little brief authority" (2.2.118). Having reminded him that his authority is not absolute (an argument that implicitly interrogates the Jamesian absolutist position), she tells him to look inside himself. This argument inadvertently leads to Angelo's realization that her words have compelled him to love her and to his (quite liberal) loss of control. There is thus a correlation suggested here between loss of sexual control and loss of political control. Both the content and manner of Isabella's speech threatens the control of the representative of the state, and the rest of the play is concerned with containing that threat. Importantly, between Isabella's and Angelo's first and second meetings the Duke/Friar makes a brief appearance which seems to have little dramatic purpose. However, his appearance can function as a visual synthesis of the religious/ secular dialectic, and thus it rehearses the ultimate consolidation of religious and secular power in the person of the monarch at the end of the play.

In her second meeting with Angelo, Isabella is forced from the offensive position of challenging secular authority to the rhetorically weaker defensive position of resisting that authority's attempts to possess her sexually. Again, the dialectic is resumed with Angelo invoking the authority of the state in order to propose that Isabella exchange her virginity for her brother's life, while she invokes the religious principle that death is better than eternal damnation. Her integrity of speech is maintained when Angelo suggests she respond in a more "womanly" way; she answers, "I have no tongue but one. . ." (2.4.139). When Angelo presses further, she threatens slander: "Sign me a present pardon. . . / Or . . . I'll tell the world aloud / What man thou art" (2.4.152-85). But Angelo's retort that no one will believe her suggests that the punishment for the slanderer is rhetorical powerlessness: "you will stifle in your own report and smell of calumny" (2.4.158-59). This scene signals the beginning of the process by which Isabella's strength of speech is undermined.

When in the next scene the brother whom she trusts implies that she should submit, her rhetoric breaks down to a vituperative and aggressive hurling of epithets. This change suggests a breakdown of what one critic has called that" strong self" constituted by her rhetoric. We might assume that Isabella, fleeing from Claudio, is rushing back to the convent when the Duke/Friar suddenly appears before her and bids a word. She responds, "What is your will?" (3.1.152). Humiliated by the forces of secular authority, she is anxious to cleave to religious authority, and when the Friar suggests a .elan, she consents: "Show me how good father" (3.3.238). At this point in the play we see not a development of Isabella's personality but a shift in her position from one of powerful and articulate resistance to secular authority to (though unbeknownst to her) submission to it. From now on the Duke/Friar maintains control over Isabella by making her believe Claudio is dead and then by scripting a scenario which requires her to announce publicly that she is a violated virgin a remarkable request considering both her integrity of speech ("I have no tongue but one") and her vocation of chastity. As Riefer points out, despite Isabella's reluctance "to speak so indirectly" (4.6.1), she gives over rhetorical control when she vows to the Duke/Friar, "I am directed by you" (4.3.137).

In act 5, Isabella's rhetoric demonstrates a changed relationship to the state. Whereas the use of close reasoning in support of mercy describes her first encounter with Angelo, here she is making a pathetic appeal for justice- the secular principle she renounced in act 1. Regaining her capacity for reasoned argument, however, she presses her charges against Angelo with careful distinctions and analogies once again: "'tis not impossible / But one, the wicked'st caitiff on the ground, / May seem as shy, as grave, as just, as absolute, as Angelo. . ." (5.1.52-55). Ironically, her strong discourse constitutes slander, and the Duke- consistent with the Jamesian absolutist position- must contain the slander by imprisoning Isabella. This is a very interesting moment, for here we see the Duke constructig a threat to secular authority (in the role consigned to Isabella), and then through his consolidated secular/religious authority containing that threat. It will be marriage, not imprisonment, that is the final mode of containment; but, I would argue, the imprisonment of Isabella makes the final solution of marriage seem benevolent by contrast.

This same process of constructing the threat in order to contain it occurs again when Vincentio re-presents himself on stage as the Friar who slanders the Duke. Here he constructs a challenge by religious authority, not only to secular authority (as was the case with Isabella's challenge), but to divine right monarchy. Again a dialectic is played out between the "Friar" and Escalus (5.1.305) in which the Friar claims religious authority is not subject to monarchy ("The Duke / Dare no more stretch this finger of mine than he / Dare rack his own. His subject I am not" [5.1.313-15]). The Friar's challenge, which so compellingly echoes the threats James perceives from churchmen in the *Basilikon Doron,* is once again contained by Escalus, who accuses the Friar of "slander to the state" and orders his imprisonment.

At this point, Lucio unhoods the Friar to expose the Duke. At last, the consolidation of religious and secular power in the person of the Jamesian divine right monarch is visually represented in this brilliant coup de theatre. Angelo confirms his divinity: "I perceive your Grace, like power divine" (5.1.369). But what of Isabella to whom he entreats, "Come hither, Isabel, / Your friar is now your prince"? When secular power (embodied in Angelo) was re-presented as religious power (embodied in the Friar) Isabella bent to its will. But after she cleaved unto religious authority, that authority represented itself once again as divine right absolutist authority. This visual transformation, suggestive of a magician's sleight, brilliantly conveys *haw* Isabella comes under the sway of the state. *That* she comes under its sway is demonstrated in her final plea for Angelo.

In this plea, Isabella argues for mercy, but instead of grounding this argument on Christian principles as she had earlier, she now grounds it on the secular principle of equity: "His act did not o'ertake his bad intent / And must be buried but as an intent / That perish'd by the way" (5.1.450-54). While secular law makes a dis tinction between intent and action, theological law *does not;* an argument by Christ would see Angelo's transgression as a serious violation of God's law. Furthermore, Isabella's argument is illogical, for Angelo did not only intend to engage in illicit sex, but, in sleeping with his fiancée, he actually did the very same thing Claudio did. Isabella's inability to make that

distinction, when her forte all along has been the ability to perceive distinctions, represents the final dissolution of that "strong self" constituted by her rhetoric.

In the final consolidation of power, the Duke uses the Jamesian social role of patriarch in order to reintegrate his citizens into society through marriage. But the Duke's use of marriage is an absolutist strategy which can be at variance with individual desire. Lucio makes this clear when he tells the Duke, who directs him to marry a whore, that he'd rather be whipped: "Marrying a punk, my lord, is pressing to death, whipping, and hanging" (5.1.522-23). The Duke replies, "Slandering a prince deserves *it"* (5.2.524). That the imposition of marriage is an absolutist strategy in this play, in contrast to most Shakespearean comedies, is suggested by the fact that of those who are married off in the end, fully half Angelo, Lucio, and Isabella- do not desire it.

The problematic "deus ex machina" ending which troubles many critics becomes singularly appropriate if the play is understood as one about "ideas" more than about "characters" and about specifically Jamesian ideas- as these are articulated in *Basilikon Doron*- of consolidating secular political, religious, and social power by ruling (as the Duke/Friar does) in "the stile of *Gods."* The very contrivance of the ending, wherein the events do not seem to evolve naturally and dramatically from the desires of the individual characters, but rather are imposed from without (by a kind of god from a machine), suggests the very style of authoritarianism and absolutism which, I have maintained, the play is "about."

Isabella's silence at the end of *Measure for Measure* has provided a challenge for theatrical directors of the play. Jonathan Miller's National Theatre production had Isabella turn away in horror at the Duke's proposal of marriage; by extreme contrast, another recent production had Isabella throw off her veil in a celebratory and liberating gesture. While Miller's interpretation is consistent with Isabella's "dramatic character," it contradicts the play's movement toward comic resolution. On the other hand, the second interpretation, while true to the play's movement towards resolution, is so totally contrary to Isabella's character that it altogether lacks dramatic veracity. Shakespeare gives us neither Miller's nor any other response from Isabella. He gives us silence. It is "silence," argues Pierre Macherey, that "the critic must make speak." Isabella's silence speaks most convincingly, I believe, as an expression of the Jamesian Duke/Friar's successful containment of voices which challenge his absolutist claims to authority. However, containment does not imply any simple or comfortable acquiescence by those voices. Rather, speechlessness can also be interpreted as a *refusal* to assent positively to the control of an "other." It is for this reason, I believe, that Isabella's silence reverberates in our minds long after the play is done.

Further Study

Literary Commentary

Bache, William B. "The Ethic of Love and Duty." In *"Measure far Measure" as Dialectical Art,* pp. 1-12. Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Studies, 1969.

Argues that *Measure for Measure* is a realistic play about the "brutality" of life. Bache focuses on the religious overtones in the play and the manner ill which its central characters struggle to find the right way to live in the face of life's difficulties.

Bames, Barbara J. "Assaying the Power of Chastity in *Measure for Measure." Studies in English Literature* 30, No.2 (Spring 1990): 283-301.

Asserts that the character Isabella is not as powerless as numerous critics believe she is. Baines observes that chastity is a unique instrument of power in a society that has become as corrupt as the Duke's Vienna has, so that the chaste novice Isabella is someone whom the other characters cannot afford to ignore.

Brown, Carolyn E. *"Measure for Measure:* Isabella's Beating Fantasies." *American Imago* 43, No.1 (Spring 1986): 67-80. Suggests that Isabella provokes sharply conflicting reactions from scholars- some of whom regard her as a positive character whIle others *see* her as unpleasantly negative. Brown approaches Isabella's character from a psychological point of view as an ambivalent, "complex character" who subconsciouslyentertains masochistic and incestuous sexual fantasies even while she" aspires to a saintly life."

- - -. *"Measure for Measure:* Duke Vincentio's 'Crabbed' Desires." *LzteratureandPsychoology XXXV,* Nos. 1 &2 (1989): 66-88. .

Focuses on the Duke's interview with Lucio ill Act II, Scene ii. Brown observes that this short meeting reveals much about Vincentio's problematical character- including the fact that this superficially virtuous ruler has a cruel streak, which he hides from himself.

Cacicedo, Alberto. "'She is Fast My Wife': Sex, Marriage, and Ducal Authority in *Measure for Measure." Shakespeare Studies* XXII (1995): 187-209.

Emphasizes gender issues and the role of women in Shakespeare's time. Cacicedo examines the play in light of Renaissance society's ambivalent feelings toward women and the Renaissance view of marriage as a necessary evil.

Dunkel, Wilbur. "Law and Equity in *Measure Jar Measure." Shakespeare Quarterly* XIII, No.3 (Summer 1962): 275-85.

Examines the play from the point of view of its Renaissance audience and the highly theatrical King James 1. Dunkel argues that justice (that is, the rule of law) tempered

with equity (that is, mercy) was an important concern for Shakespeare's England and that audiences would be sensitive to the fact that until the final act of this comedy, the Duke dispenses mercy without Justice and his deputy, Angelo, dispenses justice without mercy.

Dusinberre, Juliet. "Introduction." In *Shakespeare and the Nature of Women,* pp. 1-76. London: The Macmillan Press Ltd., 1975.

Provides an overview of Renaissance feminism as it is reflected in the literature of the time- particularly in Shakespeare's works. Dusinberre argues that in *Measure for Measure,* Shakespeare made clear his objection to the sexual double-standard that demanded that women bear most of the blame for being unchaste.

Fisch, Harold. "Shakespeare and the Puritan Dynamic." *Shakespeare Survey* 27 (1974): 81-92.

Looks at the nature of Puritanism in three of Shakespeare's plays, including *Measure for Measure.* Fisch contends that as a Puritan, Angelo is corrupted by his love of power even as he acknowledges that his religion is at odds with earthly power.

Gless, Darryl F. "Duke Vincentio: The Intermittent Immanence of Godhead." In *"Measure for Measure," the Law, and the Convent,* pp. 214-55. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1979.

Analyzes the character of the Duke in terms of the tests he imposes on the other characters in the play. Gless describes Vincentio as "a little image of God" who dispenses divine justice, resolves Vienna's failings, and engineers the play's conclusion.

Grove, Robin. "A Measure for Magistrates." *The Critical Review,* No. 19 (1977): 3-23.

General discussion of character in Shakespeare's plays. Grove includes a particular focus on Duke Vincentio and his role in shaping the outcome of the action in *Measure for Measure;* Grove *sees* the Duke as self-important and insensitive.

Hawkins, Harriett. "'The Devil's Party': Virtues and Vices in *Measure for Measure."* *Shakespeare Survey* 31 (1978): 105-113.

Focuses on the religious *issues* that contribute to the status of *Measure jar Measure* as a "problem play." Hawkins asserts that applying a religious interpretation to the play does not resolve its ambiguities since religious disagreement, ambiguity, and debate existed during Shakespeare's time; further, Hawkins suggests that Shakespeare purposely filled the play with "unanswered questions and unsolved problems," and that these questions themselves are more important than any answers to them would be.

Hunter, Robert Grams. "Measure for Measure." In *Shakespeare and the Comedy if Forgiveness,* pp. 204-26. New York: Columbia University Press, 1965.

Defines the relationship between humanity and justice as it is presented in *Measure for Measure.* Hunter argues that in the play, rigid "Justice must learn from Iniquity" (in the same way that the overly strict Angelo learns from hIS own weaknesses) in order to understand the virtue of charity.

Jaffa, Harty V. "Chastity as a Political Principle: An Interpre tation of Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure."* In *Shakespeare as Political Thinker,* edited by John Alvis and Thomas G. West, pp. 181-213. Durham, NC: Carolina Academic Press, 1981.

Examines the thematic concerns of *Measure for Measure.* Jaffa points out that at the beginning of the play, there exist two extremes in Vienna- celibacy and lechery-- and that the action of the play is resolved when marriage becomes a viable force in the city.

Kirsch, Arthur C. "The Integrity of *Measure for Measure." Shakespeare Survey* 28 (1975): 89-105.

Defends *Measure for Measure* against those critics who consider it a failure. Kirsch asserts that the play in fact achieves unity through its religious themes and biblical references.

Kliman, Bernice W. "Isabella in *Measure for Measure." Shakespeare Studies* XV (1982): 137-48.

Discusses the problematical nature of Isabella's characterization. Kliman departs from most critics when she describes Isabella as "a poor debater," and explains that this flaw in Isabella serves to focus the audience's attention on the importance of the Duke's role in the play.

Knoppers, Laura Lunger. "(En)gendering Shame: *Measurefar Measure* and the Spectacles of Power." *English Literary Renaissance* 23, No.3 (Autumn 1993): 450-71.

Focuses on the role of women in *Measure for Measure.* Specifically, Knoppers argues that Isabella's silence at the end of the play indicates that she has been coerced into obedIence but not into approbation by the Duke's proposal of marriage, and that thus the play remains problematical as a comedy.

Levin, Richard A "Duke Vincentio and Angelo: Would 'A Feather Turn the Scale'?" *Studies in English* 22 (1982): 257-70.

Examines Duke Vincentio in relation to the other, morally rigid, characters in the play- Angelo and Isabella. Levin suggests that if we look at the Duke "as a psychologically plausible character" rather than as a symbol or instrument for dispensing final judgment, then we will understand that he possesses very human, contradictory traits: those of goodness and moral weakness.

McFeely, Maureen Connolly. "'This Day My Sister Should the Cloister Enter': The Convent as Refuge in *Measure for Measure."* In *Subjects an the World's Stage: Essays*

an British Literature if the Middle Ages am the Renaissance, edited by David G. Allen and Robert A White, pp. 200-16. Newark: The University of Delaware Press, 1995.

Speculates on how Renaissance audiences reacted and how modern audiences should react to Isabella's silence in response to the Duke's proposal of marriage at the end of the play. McFeely concludes that Since "Renaissance society idealized silence and obedience" in women, then Isabella's lack of a response would have been regarded as acquiescence; modern audiences, on the other hand, would be influenced by Isabella's insistent refusal throughout the play to give up her virginity.

Pinciss, G. M. "The 'Heavenly Comforts of Despair' and *Measure for Measure." Studies in English Literature* 30, No.2 (Spring 1990): 303-13.

Applies Protestant theology to *Measure for Measure.* Pinciss demonstrates how the central characters in the play each undergo self-despair as a necessary prerequisite to spiritual understanding.

Reifer, Marcia. "Instruments of Some More Mightier Member': The Constriction of Female Power in *Measure jar Measure." Shakespeare Quarterly* 35, No.2 (Summer 1984): 157-69.

Examines the role of Isabella in the play. Reifer sees Isabella as an important transitional character in Shakespeare's body of plays, appearing as she does- articulate but restricted- between the self-reliant female characters of Shakespeare's comedies and the female "victims" of his tragedies.

Soellner, Rolf. "Measure for Measure: Looking into Oneself." In *Shakespeare's Patterns if Self-knowledge,* pp. 215-36. Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1972.

Discusses the themes of justice and mercy in the playas well as the role of Angelo. Soellner argues that the behavior of the character Angelo demonstrates that people do not function effectively or fairly as judges until they have been forced to judge themselves.

Thatcher, David. "Mercy and 'Natural Guiltiness' in *Measure for Measure." Texas Studies inLiteratureamLanguage37,* No. 3 (Fall 1995): 264-84.

Examines *Measure for Measure* as a "problem play" and discusses the issue of justice versus mercy. Thatcher argues that Angelo is right in asserting that "natural guiltiness" - that is, the fact that the judge of someone else's crime might well have committed the crime him or herself- is not a valid argument in favor of acquittal.

Zender, Karl F. "Isabella's Choice." *Philological Quarterly* 73, No.1 (Winter 1994): 77-93.

Discusses Isabella's options concerning Angelo's proposition and the Duke's proposal. Zender suggests that Isabella's decision not to test her word against Angelo's by revealing his hypocrisy is the result of her own preference for silence. On the other

hand, Zender observes that Isabella's silence at the end of the play when presented with the Duke's marriage proposal and when she would in all probability prefer to remain celibate is required by the play's designation as a comedy.

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Introduction

Purpose of the Book

The purpose of Shakespeare for Students (SfS) is to provide readers with a guide to understanding, enjoying, and studying novels by giving them easy access to information about the work. Part of Gale's□For Students□ Literature line, SfS is specifically designed to meet the curricular needs of high school and undergraduate college students and their teachers, as well as the interests of general readers and researchers considering specific novels. While each volume contains entries on □classic□ novels

frequently studied in classrooms, there are also entries containing hard-to-find information on contemporary novels, including works by multicultural, international, and women novelists.

The information covered in each entry includes an introduction to the novel and the novel's author; a plot summary, to help readers unravel and understand the events in a novel; descriptions of important characters, including explanation of a given character's role in the novel as well as discussion about that character's relationship to other characters in the novel; analysis of important themes in the novel; and an explanation of important literary techniques and movements as they are demonstrated in the novel.

In addition to this material, which helps the readers analyze the novel itself, students are also provided with important information on the literary and historical background informing each work. This includes a historical context essay, a box comparing the time or place the novel was written to modern Western culture, a critical overview essay, and excerpts from critical essays on the novel. A unique feature of SfS is a specially commissioned critical essay on each novel, targeted toward the student reader.

To further aid the student in studying and enjoying each novel, information on media adaptations is provided, as well as reading suggestions for works of fiction and nonfiction on similar themes and topics. Classroom aids include ideas for research papers and lists of critical sources that provide additional material on the novel.

Selection Criteria

The titles for each volume of SfS were selected by surveying numerous sources on teaching literature and analyzing course curricula for various school districts. Some of the sources surveyed included: literature anthologies; Reading Lists for College-Bound Students: The Books Most Recommended by America's Top Colleges; textbooks on teaching the novel; a College Board survey of novels commonly studied in high schools; a National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) survey of novels commonly studied in high schools; the NCTE's Teaching Literature in High School: The Novel;and the Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA) list of best books for young adults of the past twenty-five years. Input was also solicited from our advisory board, as well as educators from various areas. From these discussions, it was determined that each volume should have a mix of □classic□ novels (those works commonly taught in literature classes) and contemporary novels for which information is often hard to find. Because of the interest in expanding the canon of literature, an emphasis was also placed on including works by international, multicultural, and women authors. Our advisory board members□educational professionals□ helped pare down the list for each volume. If a work was not selected for the present volume, it was often noted as a possibility for a future volume. As always, the editor welcomes suggestions for titles to be included in future volumes.

How Each Entry Is Organized

Each entry, or chapter, in SfS focuses on one novel. Each entry heading lists the full name of the novel, the author's name, and the date of the novel's publication. The following elements are contained in each entry:

- Introduction: a brief overview of the novel which provides information about its first appearance, its literary standing, any controversies surrounding the work, and major conflicts or themes within the work.
- Author Biography: this section includes basic facts about the author's life, and focuses on events and times in the author's life that inspired the novel in question.
- Plot Summary: a factual description of the major events in the novel. Lengthy summaries are broken down with subheads.
- Characters: an alphabetical listing of major characters in the novel. Each character name is followed by a brief to an extensive description of the character's role in the novel, as well as discussion of the character's actions, relationships, and possible motivation. Characters are listed alphabetically by last name. If a character is unnamed□for instance, the narrator in Invisible Man-the character is listed as □The Narrator□ and alphabetized as □Narrator.□ If a character's first name is the only one given, the name will appear alphabetically by that name. □ Variant names are also included for each character. Thus, the full name □Jean Louise Finch□ would head the listing for the narrator of To Kill a Mockingbird, but listed in a separate cross-reference would be the nickname □Scout Finch.□
- Themes: a thorough overview of how the major topics, themes, and issues are addressed within the novel. Each theme discussed appears in a separate subhead, and is easily accessed through the boldface entries in the Subject/Theme Index.
- Style: this section addresses important style elements of the novel, such as setting, point of view, and narration; important literary devices used, such as imagery, foreshadowing, symbolism; and, if applicable, genres to which the work might have belonged, such as Gothicism or Romanticism. Literary terms are explained within the entry, but can also be found in the Glossary.
- Historical Context: This section outlines the social, political, and cultural climate in which the author lived and the novel was created. This section may include descriptions of related historical events, pertinent aspects of daily life in the culture, and the artistic and literary sensibilities of the time in which the work was written. If the novel is a historical work, information regarding the time in which the novel is set is also included. Each section is broken down with helpful subheads.
- Critical Overview: this section provides background on the critical reputation of the novel, including bannings or any other public controversies surrounding the work. For older works, this section includes a history of how the novel was first received and how perceptions of it may have changed over the years; for more recent novels, direct quotes from early reviews may also be included.
- Criticism: an essay commissioned by SfS which specifically deals with the novel and is written specifically for the student audience, as well as excerpts from previously published criticism on the work (if available).

- Sources: an alphabetical list of critical material quoted in the entry, with full bibliographical information.
- Further Reading: an alphabetical list of other critical sources which may prove useful for the student. Includes full bibliographical information and a brief annotation.

In addition, each entry contains the following highlighted sections, set apart from the main text as sidebars:

- Media Adaptations: a list of important film and television adaptations of the novel, including source information. The list also includes stage adaptations, audio recordings, musical adaptations, etc.
- Topics for Further Study: a list of potential study questions or research topics dealing with the novel. This section includes questions related to other disciplines the student may be studying, such as American history, world history, science, math, government, business, geography, economics, psychology, etc.
- Compare and Contrast Box: an □at-a-glance□ comparison of the cultural and historical differences between the author's time and culture and late twentieth century/early twenty-first century Western culture. This box includes pertinent parallels between the major scientific, political, and cultural movements of the time or place the novel was written, the time or place the novel was set (if a historical work), and modern Western culture. Works written after 1990 may not have this box.
- What Do I Read Next?: a list of works that might complement the featured novel or serve as a contrast to it. This includes works by the same author and others, works of fiction and nonfiction, and works from various genres, cultures, and eras.

Other Features

SfS includes □The Informed Dialogue: Interacting with Literature,□ a foreword by Anne Devereaux Jordan, Senior Editor for Teaching and Learning Literature (TALL), and a founder of the Children's Literature Association. This essay provides an enlightening look at how readers interact with literature and how Shakespeare for Students can help teachers show students how to enrich their own reading experiences.

A Cumulative Author/Title Index lists the authors and titles covered in each volume of the SfS series.

A Cumulative Nationality/Ethnicity Index breaks down the authors and titles covered in each volume of the SfS series by nationality and ethnicity.

A Subject/Theme Index, specific to each volume, provides easy reference for users who may be studying a particular subject or theme rather than a single work. Significant subjects from events to broad themes are included, and the entries pointing to the specific theme discussions in each entry are indicated in boldface.

Each entry has several illustrations, including photos of the author, stills from film adaptations (if available), maps, and/or photos of key historical events.

Citing Shakespeare for Students

When writing papers, students who quote directly from any volume of Shakespeare for Students may use the following general forms. These examples are based on MLA style; teachers may request that students adhere to a different style, so the following examples may be adapted as needed. When citing text from SfS that is not attributed to a particular author (i.e., the Themes, Style, Historical Context sections, etc.), the following format should be used in the bibliography section:

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Malak, Amin. □Margaret Atwood's □The Handmaid's Tale and the Dystopian Tradition,□ Canadian Literature No. 112 (Spring, 1987), 9-16; excerpted and reprinted in Shakespeare for Students, Vol. 4, ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski (Detroit: Gale, 1998), pp. 133-36.

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Adams, Timothy Dow. □Richard Wright: □Wearing the Mask,□ in Telling Lies in Modern American Autobiography (University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 69-83; excerpted and reprinted in Novels for Students, Vol. 1, ed. Diane Telgen (Detroit: Gale, 1997), pp. 59-61.

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