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Vowed and disavowed: Religious, social, and political promises in "Measure for Measure"

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VOWED AND DISAVOWED: RELIGIOUS, SOCIAL, AND POLITICAL PROMISES IN *MEASURE FOR MEASURE*

by

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MOKRIS, MARY P., Ph.D. Vowed and Disavowed: Religious, Social, and Political Promises in *Measure for Measure.* (1992) Directed by Dr. Jean Buchert. 218pp.

This investigation identifies religious and political vows and promises of individual characters in *Measure for Measure* and examines how characters feign, fulfill, commute, or repudiate promises. Religious vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience, political oaths of office, societal marriage vows, and even mere promises between parties all result in contracts which demand trust. This dissertation focuses on promises as mental and verbal agreements which result in the exchange of one thing for another. The tension and disparity between intent and action become emblematic of opposing elements within and among the characters.

The dissertation begins with an overview of the play as a network of promises, and includes a structural analysis emphasizing opposing ideas and characters. A detailed examination of Isabella as novice and her commutation of religious vows for marriage vows includes observations regarding the contemporary situation in religious houses in England, the fulfillment of a vow within the Order of St. Clare, canon law, and the reasons for Isabella's decision not to take religious vows and instead to take marriage vows. The religious promises of the Duke in light of canon law, and the political transference and division of power in light of civil laws, are also

examined. The Duke's feigned vows as a religious call into question his ability to accept the importance of promises. Politically, the Duke learns the value of promises, and evolves into a ruler with the ability to aid others to acknowledge an appropriate promise or to reject an inappropriate state of life. Marriage vows are examined in light of their role as promises intended to be kept. In addition, canon laws pertaining to marriage, civil laws of *assumpsit*, and the particulars of the *sponsalia per verba de futuro* and *de praesenti* are discussed as contracts. Finally, this investigation delineates the political and social promises of characters other than the Duke, and discusses inequities in society. Angelo, Escalus, Elbow, the Provost, and even Abhorson and Barnardine reflect the state of justice in varying degrees, and represent the ability or inability of a character to rise above a station in life through a new promise.

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PREFACE

The main aim of this work is to offer a unified approach to the infrastructure of promises in *Measure for Measure*, in order to identify religious and political vows and promises of individual characters and to examine how characters feign, fulfill, commute, or repudiate vows and promises.

The agreements of God and man, of ruler and subjects, of civilians and society, of master and servants, and of engaged lovers, all combine to create a world of agreements based on trust. This study goes beyond other works on *Measure for Measure* in that there has been nothing written on the play as a representation of a comprehensive view of promises of all kinds. In the society which Shakespeare creates here, individuals first agree, then contract, swear or vow, and finally undertake to carry out some form of action. Whether or not the contractual obligations of both parties are kept depends upon the character and honor of the individuals. In *Measure for Measure*, Shakespeare presents a society built upon the premise that many of society's ills spring from promises broken. From the highest office to the lowliest position, individuals in Shakespeare's Vienna learn to recognize the importance and sometimes the inconvenience of promises, and find that success and reward become tied to honorably kept promises, whereas broken promises foster failure in all kinds of undertakings. But often individual

persons perceive promises, and even legal contracts, differently than intended. This results from the fact that promises originate first in the intent of the parties, and therefore in the mind, and next in spoken words. The intangible thought and word become the foundation for legally binding agreements, and this leads to problematic dealings between people. *Measure for Measure* begins *in medias res* regarding promise making and keeping; often promises have been made before the play actually starts, while a few promises are made during the course of the play.

This study concentrates on contractual agreements as legal, social, and sometimes religious imperatives which can be made, changed, or broken; Shakespeare represents all three options. Shakespeare also includes many varieties of agreements, and represents people in many stages of keeping, breaking or disavowing a promise. As a result, Shakespeare sets up a dichotomy of promises, wherein promises kept become the mainstay of society, whereas promises broken bring about the decay of society. When Shakespeare places apparent promises against real ones, he illuminates not only the difficulties in carrying out original intentions, but also the basic goodness or corruption in individuals who keep or do not keep promises. Through representing true religious vows and feigned religious vows, true love and marriage vows and then broken marriage vows, and even good officials and bad officials, Shakespeare sets up a world filled with honorable and dishonorable characters who look at promises in very different lights and

from very different perspectives.

Measure for Measure represents the idea of *quid pro quo*, of one thing standing for another, and even of one thing replacing another. All of these ideas meet in the great variety of contractual agreements. There is the judge, embodying justice and mercy and representing the state, who, though he must judge, must judge justly, lest he himself be judged harshly. There is the nun who will promise herself to God, and the monk who serves the Duke. There is also the novice who wishes to vow, but does not; and there is the friar who seems to vow, but does not. There are pairs of lovers who have promised to marry, and others who do not wish to promise at all. There is a ruler who does not rule at all, and a substitute who rules too strictly. In *Measure for Measure*, one side of the agreement must weigh equally with the other in order for justice to be served, and each individual must meet honor or dishonor resulting directly from promises kept or broken.

CHAPTER I

THE CONVERGENCE OF OPPOSITES: WEIGHING ONE MEASURE AGAINST ANOTHER

When God created the physical universe, he divided substance from its opposite. Darkness can only be understood when one recognizes light, and good can only be understood when balanced against evil. To contrast a substance with its opposite in order to define the substance begins a process first seen in the *antithemi* of Genesis, a process which defies analysis and produces much enigmatic food for thought. In his *Areopagitica*, Milton refers to this puzzle of forbidden fruit which results in a world of dichotomy, for "[i]t was from out the rind of one apple tasted, that the knowledge of good and evil, as two twins cleaving together, leaped forth into the world" (80). This binary world, where one thing must find meaning through its opposite, appears in writings from the beginning of recorded time, and Shakespeare embraced this opposition as one of the universalities of life. His plays encapsulate this duality on the microcosmic stage--in order to decide "to be", Hamlet must realize what it is "not to be," and accept "let be."

In *Measure for Measure*, characters exist side by side with their opposites, and as each draws its definition from its opposite, at moments

during the play the two move closer together and sometimes nearly touch, leaving two images somewhat like each other yet creating an inner space where the two collide and confuse, as when day and night meet at twilight, or as when the sea and the sky meet at the horizon. Mirror images of positive and negative mix, becoming intertwined in an unusual pattern of characters with religious, political, and personal vows kept and broken, of apparent promises meeting real promises. Such a metaphysical dialectic produces questions and answers at the same time; thus, dialectic makes *Measure for Measure* rich and complex, and Shakespeare's genius delighted in the rich and complex.

Viewing *Measure for Measure* as opposites converging, meeting, and separating is not an altogether new idea; over the years critics have recognized that the play embodies opposing philosophies, just as Angelo ironically embodies devilish tendencies. Therefore, critics have found it possible to embrace parts of the play, such as the comic elements, while rejecting others, such as the bed trick. The play has, in fact, alternately repelled and attracted audiences over the centuries, depending on prevailing social attitudes toward obvious sexual themes. The shifting perspectives in the play have always consciously or unconsciously irked critics, and as a result they place the play at opposite ends of the scale regarding its worth. In "*Measure for Measure* and the Critics: Towards a New Approach" Jonathan R. Price suggests that such differences result because the audience

has no firm point of reference in *Measure for Measure*--"Moment to moment, [the audience is] shifted from one 'plane of reality' to another. For this reason, watching the play 'becomes an activity of the whole mind'" (Price 197). Thus the unsettling nature of the play results in a new kind of experience: "Bethell calls this 'multiconsciousness'. For we shift our 'modes of attention' over and over again" (Price 197). Norman Holland points out that "'The special relation between opposites in *Measure for Measure* is that first we see one thing and then its opposite becomes visible" (qtd in Price 198). The duplicitous nature of the play becomes an element to be reckoned with from the outset.

Una Ellis-Fermor, one of the play's premier 20th century critics, sees a series of divided minds in the play, and thought it to be Shakespeare's "lowest point" (263):

> This is indeed the very type of that division of mind that beset the Jacobeans; the inseparable mingling of evil with good here is such as Middleton later did indeed perceive, though with him it is mainly a record of scientific observation, while with Shakespeare at the stage of *Measure for Measure* it constitutes the denial, not only of the nobility of man, but of the very laws which pretend to guide him. What seals our impression of a world-order ineradicably corrupted and given over to evil is the character of Isabella, where the same method is followed as in that of Angelo, but with a mingling of the elements so much deeper as to call in question the sanctity of religious, sex, marriage and even 'the holiness of the heart's affections'. (262-63)

Ellis-Fermor's disgust with the play continued a chain of criticism against its troublesome nature. One might point to the fact that a dissociation between the laws and the nature of man and man's relationship to nature is proleptic of Eliot's theory of the dissociation of the sensibility, which the literature of the centuries beyond the Renaissance bore out. With *Measure for Measure*, editors such as Quiller-Couch noted that "*something* is wrong" (xiii); and Harding lamented that "each new interpretation seems to have raised almost as many questions as it has answered" (126). For Lever, "*Measure for Measure* is made up of contrasts and antinomies juxtaposed and resolved" (lix) ending in a reaffirmation of the "*via media*" (lxii). Kittridge "grant[s] that it is a comedy of a highly intellectual kind" (xiv-xv), which "explores a complex moral issue in such a way that the audience is made to question its own moral certitudes and to respond sympathetically to contradictory aspects of the issue at the same time" (xiv). Gibbons saw opposites in the social strata: "In *Measure for Measure* there is a polarisation of social life into opposed extremes: on the one side serious and strict isolation . . . and on the other side promiscuous . . . crowding" (25). Such divergent opinions bring opposing critical ideas to bear on the play, resulting in a crowd of critics attempting to explain away inconsistencies through new avenues of understanding, and another crowd pointing to the inconsistencies as evidence of Shakespeare's (or a reviser's) lack of talent. [1]

[1]Whether or not Shakespeare wrote the play as it appeared has become a question. John Dover Wilson was the first to posit the theory that the text had been altered--"the text of *Measure for Measure* has come down to us

Criticism of the play generally breaks into two camps: criticism based on the realistic aspects of the play, and criticism based on the allegorical aspects of the play. In both cases, the opposing realistic and allegorical elements appear to vie for supremacy. Those critics who see merit in the play often find allegorical interpretations as solutions to questions of apparent incongruity. Those who think that Shakespeare failed in writing *Measure for Measure* point to the lack of justice in the Duke's final pronouncements

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stamped, as it were, with two dates: one in an abridged verse-scene, proving that the play was cut down shortly before Dec. 26, 1604; the other in an expanded prose-scene, proving that the play was lengthened sometime after November 11, 1606" (105). Questions of whether or not Ralph Crane took liberties with the work, or whether an unknown author took his pen to portions of *Measure for Measure* seem to me to be unresolvable; even E. K. Chambers in his *William Shakespeare: A Study of Facts and Problems* allows for the possibility of a reviser, yet says that the evidence "is hardly justifiable to assume a second hand," merely because sudden transitions occur from verse to prose (456). In fact, critics since Tillyard have attempted to reconcile movements in the play to the movements from verse to prose, with varying degrees of success. The words of Abraham Cowley on Shakespeare seem appropriate when applied to *Measure for Measure*:

> I began to reflect on the fortune of almost all *Writers*, and especially *Poets*, whose *Works* (commonly printed after their deaths) we finde stuffed out, either with *counterfeit pieces*, like *false Money* put in to fill up the *Bag*, though it adde nothing to the *sum*; or with such, which though of their own *Coyn*, they would have called in themselves, for the baseness of the *Allay*: whether this proceed from the indiscretion of their *Friends*, who think a vast *heap* of Stones or Rubbish a better *Monument*, than a little *Tomb* of *Marble*, or by the unworthy avarice of some *Stationers*, who are content to diminish the value of the *Author*, so they may encrease the price of the *Book*; and like *Vintners* with sophisticate mixtures, spoil the whole vessel of wine, to make it yield more *profit*. This has been the case with *Shakespear* .... (297)

as proof of legal and moral expectations unfulfilled. Sometimes a critic who does not particularly like the play looks for merit in *Measure for Measure* by drawing from elements outside the play to bring opposing forces together. For example, one cannot have an allegorical interpretation of *Measure for Measure* without drawing from the Bible, and one cannot have a legalistic interpretation of the marriages in *Measure for Measure* without calling for knowledge of the laws of the time. Bringing opposites together causes some critics to reach beyond the play for answers.

The allegorical critics, starting with Wilson Knight, believe that "[t]he ethical standards of the Gospels are rooted in the thought of *Measure for Measure*" (73), and continue to develop the relationship with similar ideas such as Battenhouse had regarding "the whole action of atonement [as] a work of love" (Battenhouse 1049), and the whole of *Measure for Measure* as an example of the "Christian Doctrine of Atonement." Tillyard goes beyond the atonement and includes even more biblical references:

> When in *Measure for Measure* Isabella speaks of the Atonement . . . she is indeed speaking in character, and the doctrine has been quite assimilated into the dramatic context; but there is so much theological lore elsewhere in the play on the relation of justice and mercy (and less assimilated into the dramatic context) that we need not doubt that the doctrine of the forfeit soul was present in Shakespeare's own mind at the time. (6)

Other critics like Tom McBride in his "*Measure for Measure* and the Unreconciled Virtues" adopt the theory that the play is a "Parliament of Heaven"--

> In its simplest form this allegory depicts the fallen Adam and Eve before God's throne, where the Four Daughters of God--Justice, Truth, Mercy, and Peace--debate in a law-court trial the punishment to befall the original sinners. (265)

Critics who do not adopt the allegory theory tend toward a legalistic interpretation, and indeed some have gone so far as to say that the play cannot be understood without an inherent knowledge of the laws of the time. In matters of justice, the play embodies questions of equity in law to such critics. In "Renaissance Equity and *Measure for Measure*", John W. Dickinson states:

> Surely an examination of the litigious Elizabethan scene would suffice to show the need for a court where principles of equity might be applied. (Dickinson 290)

Similarly, Wilbur Dunkel looks at the question of equity in his "Law and Equity in *Measure for Measure*", and indicates that "it would seem unnecessary to debate philosophic and religious concepts of mercy when equity is the point" (Dunkel 277). Law becomes a major focus of the

criticism, often specifically the marriage laws, though sometimes legalistic trends are also taken into account.

Using additional information from outside the play sometimes results in critics agreeing on one point only--that the play is about justice. Even though it appears that something akin to justice is meted out at the end, some critics believe that the Duke's justice does not correspond to real justice: Shakespeare pardons Angelo and they would not. Too, the character of Isabella seems to some an unlikely candidate for the sweet wife of the Duke. Both Isabella and the Duke bother the critics with their ambivalence and eagerness to do what appears evil. "Judge not" is something difficult for critics to do, and perhaps for all their efforts they get a measure of frustration for their measure of judgment of *Measure for Measure.* Criticism of the play must bring concord out of discord, coordinate opposites, and counterbalance its positive and negative elements.

In *Measure for Measure,* justice becomes a moral and legal imperative based upon physical and spiritual forces both in opposition and in conjunction in the person of the Duke. Justice and mercy rely upon law, and it is good to remember that "law in Shakespeare's plays is queer business" (Lawrence 97). Political and legal aspects of judgment are tied up in the Duke, and in Angelo and Escalus, his deputies, and through the Duke the religious aspects of morality and legal propriety infuse a thoroughly Christian ideal into the whole of Vienna. Yet in the play, the law is an

unpredictable and changeable master, and it seems that Shakespeare attempts to point out just this fact. He does this through a movement from civil to religious problems and their ideal solutions, but his Duke never manages to become an ideal ruler. The fact is that the Christian message of a measure repaid for a measure becomes a confusing one because of contradictory indications in the Gospels; these contradictions also blend into the unpredictable world of the play. As Harriet Hawkins points out, the mind-set of different Christian groups regarding sexuality resulted from "Christ's own teachings about sex and sin" which "seem contradictory" (25).

The name of the play itself brings up the idea of two measures changing places, both equal yet somehow opposite, a measure of evil lawlessness balanced with a measure of good punishment where justice is concerned. Biblically, there is the often-quoted line as the source for the title:

> Ivdge not, that ye be not ivdged.
> For with what ivdgment ye ivdge, ye shal be iudged: and with what measure ye mette, it shal be measured to you againe. (Matt. 7:1-2) [2]

Similar admonitions occur in Mark 4:24 and in Luke 6:38. The gloss in the 1602 edition of the Geneva Bible adds an interesting twist in light of

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[2]All further biblical references are to *The Geneva Bible: A Facsimile of the 1560 Edition* unless otherwise specified.

Angelo's behavior, as it adjures readers that "We ought to finde fault one with another, but we must beware we doe it not without cause, or to seem holier than they, or in hatred of them" (Matt. 7:1 n.1). The idea of measure for measure, however, is not solely a New Testament idea; the Old Testament justice of an "eie for eie" (Lev. 24:20) certainly reflects the same ideal. Thus a measure of sin weighs against a measure of punishment, and the Duke's punishment is such that it spares Angelo, like the biblical Jacob, from total annihilation.

The Duke gives Angelo the ability to "inforce, or qualifie the Lawes / As to [his] soule seemes Good" (1.1.66-67) [3]; therefore, Angelo has the authority to alter laws or to bring them to bear as he sees fit. The agreement between the Duke and Angelo is a hand-fast agreement--"Give me your hand" (1.1.67), the Duke says. Escalus is to help Angelo, although the power each has is something that must be found out through the course of the play--Escalus says that he and Angelo must seek to understand the "strength and nature" (1.1.79) of this division of power. The question to be resolved seems easily accessible to the characters, and it regards justice--i.e., just what is measure for measure? The question lies not only in the biblical ideal of justice tempered with mercy; it also embodies the qualities of one balanced against the qualities of another. The handwriting on the wall, "Thou art

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[3]All references to the text of *Measure for Measure* are from the MLA's *New Variorum Edition of Shakespeare:* Measure for Measure, edited by Mark Eccles.

wayed in the balance, and art founde to light" (Daniel 5:27), applies as easily to Angelo as does the more obvious admonition regarding measuring with a just measure toward others, and the same just measure will be measured to oneself. An ounce of feathers and an ounce of gold both weigh an ounce, but a comparison of the two results in many discrepancies and few similarities. When Angelo and Escalus are weighed in a balance, the scales may remain steady and not tilt, but that does not mean that Angelo and Escalus are equals. One Escalus might be made of sterner stuff than one Angelo, even though both have some kind of authority from the same source. The biblical ideal that one must use appropriate judgment in weighing one thing against other arises in the last book of Moses, Deuteronomy, which states:

> Thou shalt not haue in thy bagge two maner of weightes, a great and a small.
> Neither shalt thou haue in thine house diuerse measures, a great and a small:
> But thou shalt have a right & iust weight: a perfit & a iust measure shalt thou haue, that thy dayes may be lengthened in y^{e} land, which the Lord thy God giueth thee. (Deut. 25:13-15)

Biblically it is clear that the items to be weighed are not limited to goods; people weigh equally true or false, as did Belshazzar when the handwriting appeared on the wall.

To use bad judgment goes against God's law, for "False balances are an abominacion vnto the Lord: but a perfite weight pleaseth him" (Proverbs

11:1). That God recognizes judgment by justice is evident from Isaiah: "The way of the iuste is righteousnes: thou most upright wilt make equal the righteous path of the iust" (26:7). Shakespeare, in *Measure for Measure*, has the opportunity to examine carefully both religious and political questions of justice, and he does so in such a way that the promises of the individual characters end in a result which becomes evidence of their intent. Though outward appearance can deceive, the heart weighs either true or false. Thus *Measure for Measure* gives Shakespeare the unique opportunity to take seemingly opposing forces and to turn them at odds with one another in order to get to the truth.

I say seemingly opposing forces because, as with the feathers and the gold, different people, careers, offices or mysteries may weigh the same, but still have inherent incongruities. In effect, opposing forces and things have similar characteristics despite the fact that they are opposites. Those opposing characteristics continue to define the relationship of one force or object to another, just as a collapsed star becomes a black hole, producing an intensely dark area where only a short time before there had been enormous amounts of light. Such a situation invites attention to irony, and *Measure for Measure* has many instances where Shakespeare sets up ironic oppositions. The overly-strict deputy devilishly inverts himself immediately from his formerly angelic position, and hurls himself forcefully into a libertine lifestyle. The shy Duke who wishes to retreat from his people

instead involves himself intimately in their problems. Even the saintly novice cannot but help to utter the word she most "abhors" when she ironically utters simultaneously the one she does not wish to utter (whore). The entire play is rich with ironic oppositions as well as duplicitous language which betrays the speaker, leaving the audience with more knowledge than the characters, who do not know themselves as well as they think they do. The characters often deceive themselves, substituting a false image for a true one.

The substitution of *quid pro quo* in *Measure for Measure* begins at the start of the play, when Shakespeare sets up measure *against* measure. A short summary of the situation reveals the dichotomy quickly. The Duke, Vincentio, has allowed leniency, and therefore becomes the Duke who abdicates, albeit temporarily, in favor of his alter-ego, a strict disciplinarian assigned as Deputy to the Duke--his very image and reflection. Angelo-Justice who turns Iniquity becomes the Duke's opposite, enforcing strict laws which the Duke had allowed to lapse. This first splitting of one into two begins a chain reaction which spreads throughout the people of Vienna. The Duke has split his power between Escalus and Angelo, both of whom change during the course of the play. Escalus, who has always been a model Justice, will soon allow, for a time, the continuance of evil. Claudio and Juliet, a gentleman and lady who have promised marriage, have instead remained single and *acted* as if married. Lucio and his two gentlemen friends frequent

bars and brothels, and are quite ungentlemanly; they make up a group of rogues and pirates, despite the fact that Lucio manages to move in high circles. The Provost, who should be keeping the prison doors closed, ends up with a prison emptied of occupants. Even Elbow, the simple constable, brings unlawfulness instead of order to his small part of Vienna. Pompey, the bawd, who has a hand in bringing some unlawful children into the world as evidenced by Lucio's child, becomes one who will aid in the expediting of prisoner's journeys out of the world. Even such a minor character as Barnardine, the recalcitrant prisoner, shows himself to be a prisoner no one can imprison. Isabella, the crowning glory of the play, enters a cloistered nunnery at the start of the play only to leave it immediately for the worldly court, whereas her counterpart, Mariana, wishes marriage and yet because of her circumstances has removed herself to the moated grange, a convent-owned farm in this case surrounded by water, related to but even farther withdrawn from the world than the cloister to which Isabella applies for admission. [4] Nearly every character in the play has made some sort of promise or vow to uphold a certain condition or position in life, and nearly every character, by choice or by chance, must look hard at that position and stare into the face of what may be called its opposite.

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[4]Before the dissolution, a convent or monastery might have an alien priory, which is defined by the *Concise Oxford English Dictionary* as a priory "dependent on [an] abbey in another country." Such an alien priory usually was a farm [hence the term "grange"] which produced revenues and paid a certain amount of money yearly to the motherhouse (Midmer 16).

Significantly, the idea of one thing substituted for another, *quid pro quo*, calls for a contract at the start of the play between the Duke and his two Justices. One person agrees to exchange goods or a service for another piece of goods or another service. *Measure for Measure* means something for something, just as the legal term *quid pro quo* identifies a contract. All contracts begin with an agreement, and a person's word seals the agreement. From the time of the early pilgrimages, a person's word formed a binding agreement. In *Medieval Canon Law and the Crusader* James A. Brundage claims that a promise by medieval standards could be "morally binding, although it was not technically a vow at all" (52). Not only that, the most important element of any promise "was the intention of making a vow, not the form of words employed, which resulted in a binding obligation" (54). In *Measure for Measure*, rarely does the audience have the luxury of seeing a character actually agree to a promise or vow.

When both Angelo and Escalus assume their offices, the offices are more thrust upon them reluctantly than with any verbal acceptance on their part. However, they do accept the challenge. Others in the play have promised something, we know not exactly what, before the play has begun, and it is in this indefinable state of affairs that most of the characters appear, as Isabella does, having made some sort of promise without any external proof of it. Technically speaking, a vow "must be a promise of present action, not of a future undertaking, which would not be binding" (Brundage 58).

Such a religious vow encompasses a variety of kinds of promises, each one binding to some extent or another, and each one contingent upon the intent, not necessarily the spoken word, as well as the performance of some deed or the assumption of some state in life in the present. Religious promises were not the only kind which encompassed vows; a "simple promise" could be "made to God or to a public authority" and was as such "enforceable, although the means and techniques for so doing were only vaguely indicated" in the *Glossa ordinaria* of Joannes Teutonicus, a commentator on the 12th century decretals (Brundage 60-61). A political or social promise encompassed much the same thing as a religious promise did. One might promise to take an office, or to exchange certain goods or services, and after having agreed to a contract, one party must fulfill his duty or service, whatever that entailed, for another party.

In his structuralist work *Word as Bond in English Literature from the Middle Ages to the Restoration*, J. Douglas Canfield states that "[t]he Germanic unifying principle of *comitatus* combined with Roman contract law to produce a society based upon oaths of fealty, sanctioned first by pagan then by Christian gods" (xii). This translated into many kinds of promises between people:

> As society centralized, fealty also became centralized, attached to the person of the king. It is important to realize that this fealty was a personal affair, a bond between persons, modeled on the bond between fathers and sons and uttered as a word--an oath of allegiance. The pledge of betrothal is a domestic

> version of essentially the same relationship: a wife's pledge of fidelity to her lord-husband. Therefore, feudal literature, carrying out its encoding function, focuses repeatedly on the defining thesis of society, word and bond, and its antithesis, the ultimate transgression--betrayal. (xii)

The world of *Measure for Measure* rotates around a set of beliefs in the value of a promise, as well as the value of an *intent* to make a promise. And in *Measure for Measure* as in life, a promise in itself relies upon language, a thing untrustworthy as a vehicle for conveying what is actually the speaker's intent.

Contradictions in speech and character abound in *Measure for Measure.* A. P. Rossiter, in *Angel with Horns and Other Lectures on Shakespeare,* notes the apparent duality: "It is not only Isabella's character which is 'double'. The whole play is full of equivocal speeches, of a kind where there is no resolving the ambiguities, since both meanings 'belong' in the play-frame" (Rossiter 163). Rossiter also notes the "frequent use of *hendiadys*" (163), those couplings of words which enrich description through the conjunction of dissimilar ideas. Not only does the use of hendiadys indicate that Shakespeare is thinking quickly, but it also indicates that he forms two characteristics into one concept and reconciles them. Examples of hendiadys in *Measure for Measure* include the "fault and glimpse of newnes" (1.2.163), "a prone and speechless dialect" (1.2.188), "In hand, and hope of action" (1.4.52), "The wanton stings, and motions of the

sence" (1.4.59), the "sharpe and sulphurous bolt" which strikes the "vn-wedgeable and gnarled Oke" (2.2.115-116), and the violation "Of sacred Chastity, and of promise-breach" (5.1.411). If Shakespeare had had such two-sided reconciliation in mind, as indicated by the hendiadys as well as by the coining imagery, where two sides make a whole, he may have infused *Measure for Measure* with opposites from the start.

George Whetstone's *Promos and Cassandra,* the source play for *Measure for Measure,* does not deal in opposites and promises as this play does.[5] Whetstone's source, Cinthio's *Hecatommithi,* was also known to Shakespeare, and there may be echoes of Cinthio Giraldi's play *Epitia* in *Measure for Measure* as well.[6] All deal with the machinations of a corrupt judge, but *Measure for Measure* adds more folk elements, incorporating some from Whetstone, like the disguises, hidden identities, and a final anagnorisis. Northrop Frye points out that *Measure for Measure,* "as most critics recognize, has three well-known folk-tale themes in it: the disguised ruler, the corrupt judge and the bed trick" (141). It is possible, however, that

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[5]According to Eccles, Shakespeare "could have found the plot of *MM* in one or more of these sources: George Whetstone's play *Promos and Cassandra,* his novella in *An Heptameron of Ciuill Discourses,* Cinthio Giraldi's novella in *Hecatommithi,* and his play *Epitia*" (301).

[6]Although a controversy arose regarding whether or not *Epitia* might have been read by Shakespeare, the consensus seems to be that, although unlikely, indications do exist to suggest through both word choice and subject that Shakespeare *may* have known the play and used it as a source. As it is a highly subjective question, it seems unlikely that a satisfactory conclusion can be reached.

the entire story is not entirely fictional, but indeed fact-based, in that "a letter written in 1547 by a young Hungarian" (Lawrence 86), summarizes the elements of the tale as a historical occurrence:

> "In a town not far from Milan, one citizen was murdered by another. The guilty man was thrown in to prison, but his young and beautiful wife went 'before the chief-justice--who goes by the name of 'the Spanish count," who offered to pardon her husband at the price of her honor. After consulting her relatives, she acceded to his offer. Nevertheless her husband was beheaded. She reproached the justice bitterly, who only mocked her. She then went to Milan, and laid the matter before Don Ferdinando Gonzaga, 'the brother of the duke of Mantua, and his Imperial Majesty's vicegerent for that province.' He told her to say nothing of the affair, invited the justice to a banquet, and then suddenly reproached him for his offence, forced him to marry her immediately, and pay her three thousand ducats as a dowry. On the following day the justice was executed." (qtd in Lawrence 86)

The tragedy of the situation in which a woman has attempted to ransom her brother and the utter helplessness she feels when her loved one appears, beheaded and quite dead, when she expects him to return happily from his imprisonment, permeates all of the sources. With *Measure for Measure*, Shakespeare followed Whetstone, who took a tragedy and turned it into a comedy, but Shakespeare's play goes beyond Whetstone's. Richard P. Wheeler in his psychological analysis *Shakespeare's Development and the Problem Comedies: Turn and Counter-Turn*, sees this comedy as a failure on Shakespeare's part to complete what he had started:

> 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. . . . Characters who have been centers of deep conflict earlier are denied the dramatic reality they have acquired; psychological tensions their crises have expressed are neither resolved nor sustained but simply deprived of a location in the play world. Instead of clarifying, either positively or negatively, the relations between individual longings and the social order, or between comic art and experience, Shakespeare seeks unearned reassurance in a comic ending that cannot fully acknowledge previous developments in *Measure for Measure.* (Wheeler 12)

But in effect, Shakespeare did not adapt the story of the corrupt judge who does not keep his promise simply in following blindly Whetstone's change from a tragedy to a comedy; Shakespeare made sure that the sister did not have to submit to the unjust judge, and for this he had to provide the bed trick. Shakespeare did not have Isabella submit to the judge as a ransom for her brother, only then to have her brother presented to her dead on a bier, as Vico was presented to Epitia. Shakespeare did not have Claudio saved alive and then have Isabella presented the likeness of Claudio in the dead body of another man, for her to suffer all the sorrows "ioyned in one poore womans hearte" (qtd in Eccles 374), as Promos was presented to Cassandra. Shakespeare's Isabella instead was spared much of the pain of Claudio's supposed death; she did not even have to endure a scene where the body of Ragozine was brought in before her in Claudio's stead, whereas Cassandra

was forced to endure the substitution. Isabella is spared everything but the belief that her brother is dead, and for Shakespeare this in itself was enough tragedy for a comedy to bear. For some critics, it is too much; the Duke has been severely castigated for leaving Isabella in such a state for such a long time. Despite the fact that Isabella must suffer somewhat in Shakespeare's play, the innovation of the bed-trick, which Shakespeare may or may not have borrowed from *All's Well that End's Well,* [7] created a situation in which Isabella could preserve her virginity and avoid the fate of the heroine who has yielded to a wicked authority and must end up married to him in order to preserve her virtue. That Isabella is a novice becomes the impetus behind her adherence to her ideals, headstrong and idealistic as that adherence is. In adapting the *Promos and Cassandra* story for the plot of *Measure for Measure,* Shakespeare created rich possibilities for staging which did not exist in this source, simply because of the success of the bed trick and the plot change from tragedy to comedy.

An overview of the history of the staging of the play indicates that ideas in *Measure for Measure* become compartmentalized as well as set

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[7]Whether or not Shakespeare wrote *All's Well* before or after *Measure for Measure,* it seems unlikely that he would choose the bed-trick merely as a patch for a play that had gone bad, as some critics indicate. I disagree with Tillyard, who says that the innovations ruined the play: "Shakespeare, by altering the plot and by recreating his heroine, however superb the immediate result, could only ruin the play as a whole" (Tillyard 139).

in opposition both visually and verbally. [8] The fact that the staging of the play permits and even encourages this kind of division into opposites seems to suggest that the play has at its basis the isolation of its elements into separate parts. This isolation encourages the comparison and contrast of opposing elements. The stage history of *Measure for Measure* provides ample evidence that its directors sensed contradictory tragic and comic elements at work from the start. Characters and scenes from the play have easily been compartmentalized using such techniques as dividing the stage or creating boxed sets. To have seen the manner in which Shakespeare himself pictured the play as properly staged in 1604 would indeed increase the knowledge of the critics and illuminate some areas of action which seem problematic. But the characters themselves have leant a certain amount of vision to the directors of the play in the past, and the director's vision has resulted in varying directorial interpretations of the play. The play is rarely

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[8]As far as one might conclude from the Revels Account entry, the play *Measure for Measure* had its first performance on December 26, 1604. The entire entry reads: "'By his Ma^{tis} plaiers: On S^{t} Stiuens Night in the Hall A Play called Mesur for Mesur: Shaxberd' (Public Record Office, Audit Office 3/908/13)" (qtd. in Eccles 467). Yet the Revels Account in itself appears to have had moments when it was called a forgery:

> "They were recovered by the Records Office as official papers, but an official of the British Museum attached a note to the papers throwing doubt on their authenticity" (Bennett 2).

Josephine Waters Bennett, in her *Measure for Measure as Royal Entertainment*, accepts the records as authentic nonetheless; in his Appendix D, E. K. Chambers quashed questions of inauthenticity regarding the Revels Account.

performed, although it has been chosen more often in the past few years than it had been performed in perhaps a hundred years before. *Text & Performance:* Measure for Measure, by Graham Nicholls, lends some insight into possibilities for staging the play. It is highly significant that the past stage history of the play has stressed the isolation and compartmentalization of key ideas and people, and thus has produced for the audience another dimension emphasizing the play of one idea against another. Staging a play filled with opposites takes some directorial talent, and its directors primarily have recognized the social divisions in Vienna, and have incorporated the divisions into coincidental visual divisions on stage.

There have been "four main productions" of the play recently, all of which deal with its intrinsic oppositions in some fashion. Twice it was performed by the Royal Shakespeare Company (in 1970 and 1978), once by the Open Space Theatre (1975), and lately by the BBC (Nicholls 49). Prior to these productions, many theatrical interpretations of *Measure for Measure* were allegorical in nature, which no doubt would have pleased a critic like Roy W. Battenhouse. It is significant that two of the directors saw a two-edged sword in the play. In the 1970 Royal Shakespeare Company production, the director saw a discrepancy between "reality and convention": "'that sense of reality breaking in on convention ... where a wry sense of what life's really like and what people are really like is at odds with what the story-

line dictates'" (qtd in Nicholls 56). The 1975 version by the Open Space Theatre was more interpretive, and the director insistent on bringing out the problem with legality--an interpretation that "is a plea for justice against law" (Nicholls 57). The BBC production emphasized differences between the court and the people, and especially focused on the gap between the Duke and his subjects (Nicholls 71). Both the Royal Shakespeare productions and the BBC production emphasized the "closed world" of Vienna versus the freedom of the lower classes. The first Royal Shakespeare production (1970) used "a clinical set made up of cubes over a parquet flooring", and the second employed a large "black box with numerous points of exit and entrance" (Nicholls 71). The emphasis with both the cubes and the black box was not only to highlight the stifling inclusiveness of the world of Vienna, but also to help reflect symmetrical ideas. Another possibility for staging may be drawn from the entrances and exits of the characters, and the following interpretation seems a plausible enough possibility.

Staging the play with opposites in mind would have certainly been feasible during Shakespeare's time. The play does have elements which hark back to the medieval moralities, though *Measure for Measure* need not necessarily perforce lend itself to allegorical interpretation. One would not stage *The Castle of Perseverance* without taking into account the allegorical implications of the *platea* as the position of the audience *vis à vis* heaven and hell. As with other morality plays, *Perseverance* is the

"dramatization of a spiritual crisis in the life of a representative mankind figure in which his spiritual struggle is portrayed as a conflict between personified abstractions representing good and evil" (Bevington 792). The balance of good and evil, of body and soul, of heaven and hell, all combine to create a world of opposites in morality plays. With *Measure for Measure*, there is no clear evidence of how the play was staged as there is for *Perseverance.* However, Shakespeare has produced mirror images on the stage from the outset--as the coining imagery suggests, there is one real, legal coined image and one counterfeit image. If the play were staged with the real (although not perfect) character on one side of the stage, and the counterfeit (flawed) character on the other, this pattern could persist through the entire first act, and with echoes of this beyond the first act. Such a staging technique might recall the debates between good and evil prevalent in morality plays, without forcing an allegorical interpretation. The presentation of opposites does not necessarily call the critic to begin to allegorize. Although a production emphasizing opposites might seem overly structured, it does not even approach the boxes and cubes of the Royal Shakespeare Company's productions, and such a production might easily have occurred in a theatre where the medieval influence was still strong; such staging would not be entirely out of the question.

Therefore, to stage the play in this way would result in the Duke's first action becoming more symbolically powerful, that action being the moment

when he divides his power between Angelo and Escalus. If Angelo were to take the left side of the stage, and Escalus the right, Shakespeare could draw a middle ground, with an opposite on each side--Shakespeare could draw his line, so to speak, from the start. In scene two, the two more seriously flawed Gentlemen (left), compare less favorably to Lucio (right). But Lucio is not a true gentleman either, and when Claudio appears, his morality makes Lucio look even less moral (hence he might move left), with the condemned Claudio on the right. When the Duke reappears in scene 4, he asks Friar Thomas (right) to help him to counterfeit a Friar (Duke at left). And at Isabella's first scene, a cloistered nun (right) and Isabella (left) speak of the rules of the votarists of St. Clare. Such a method of staging would indeed bring out the inherent opposites in the characters, and would, I think, reflect the structural scheme of the play.

If the staging of the play elicits the emphasis of opposites and helps to point toward irony, as does evidence from the characters and plot, the audience would realize from the outset that the commonwealth of Vienna is in an inverted state: instead of justice and liberty walking hand in hand, "liberty, plucks Iustice by the nose; The Baby beates the Nurse, and quite athwart / Goes all decorum" (1.3.29-31). The Duke wishes to cure the commonwealth of this excess, so he assigns Angelo to correct the problem "in the ambush" of the Duke's "name" (1.3.41). To assist Angelo is Escalus, his "secondary" (1.1.47), despite the fact that the Duke recognizes Escalus as the

preferred or more natural choice. Thus one figure of authority becomes two, and the trial of justice, the balance of measure against measure, begins.

When the Duke abdicates his throne temporarily, he makes a clear division of political power between Angelo and Escalus, and also asks each one to agree to carry out, in the Duke's stead, the particulars of the office to which they have been appointed. With two "Commission[s]" (1.1.14 for Escalus, 1.1.48 for Angelo), the Duke makes clear that Escalus will be the one who executes "Common Iustice" (1.1.14), whereas Angelo will be the one who executes justice upon cases of "Mortallitie and Mercie in Vienna" (1.1.45). Such a division, of one Duke into two Commissioners, reflects the same kind of division of justice that occurred in England. According to W. S. Holdsworth, in *A History of English Law*, the Court of Common Pleas and the Court of King's Bench vied for power from 1234 until "the latter part of the 17th century" (98). An indispensable volume for understanding the legal terms of the Jacobean era is *The Interpreter: Or Booke Containing the Signification of Words*, by John Cowell, Doctor, and Professor of Law at Cambridge. The book was published in 1607, and its definitions contain some interesting insight into exactly what happens in this first act of *Measure for Measure.* When the Duke speaks of common justice, he speaks of the "Iustice of common plees", who

> did heare and determine all causes at the common law, that is, all ciuil cases betweene common persons, as well personall as reall, for which cause it was called the court of common plees,

> in opposition to the plees of the Crowne or the Kings plees, which are speciall and appertaining to him onely. (Pp 1v)

Because Escalus takes on the cases which appertain to the common people, he hears only that kind of case. According to A. W. B. Simpson in *A History of the Common Law of Contract,* the term "common" referred to "such persons as hangmen, prostitutes, informers, serjeants, labourers, attorneys, innkeepers, carriers" and meant that these persons were "available to or for the public" (230). When one reads this list of "common" people, one can readily see how the play divides into those common people who fit into this category, and the others who move in the circle of the Duke, Angelo and Escalus--the gentlemen and ladies of the play.[9] In England, the court which handled questions of common law, the Court of Common Pleas, heard cases "between subject and subject" (Holdsworth 76), and did not handle suits involving more serious matters which pertained to the King (Holdsworth 81).

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[9]The *Oxford English Dictionary* lists a current (not obsolete) definition of "common" which relates to Simpson's: "In various semi-legal or statutory designation, as common alehouse, common brewer, common carrier, etc., the original meaning appears to be 'existing for the use of the public' as opposed to 'private,' recognized by the law as bound to serve the public; though other senses have become associated with this." The idea of "common law" is defined by the *Oxford English Dictionary* as: "The unwritten law of England, administered by the King's courts, which purports to be derived from ancient and universal usage, and is embodied in the older commentaries and the reports of adjudged cases."

Angelo, the other side of the Duke's new legal coin, became the Duke's substitute, a surrogate judge fulfilling the position as deputy Duke. Cowell defines a justice as one who has his "authority by deputation, as Delegates to the king, and not *iure magistratus*; and therefore cannot depute others in their steed" (Pp 1r). Because Angelo has the power of death, the Duke has placed him above Escalus. He will handle the felonies, in effect. If a case was considered an important one, the King's Bench would have "the jurisdiction [if a lower court had been] in error and the jurisdiction over criminal cases" (Holdsworth 79). In viewing Angelo and Escalus in their official positions, one must remember that in England, the power was divided between the justice who handled the common causes, and the justice who handled the King's business. The justice of the King's Bench, according to Cowell,

> is a Lord by his office, and the cheife [sic] of the rest wherefore he is also called Capitalis Iusticiarius Angliæ, his office especially is to heare and determine all plees of the crowne: that is, such as concerne offences committed against the crowne, dignitie, and peace of the King; as treasons, felonies, mayhems, and such like. (Pp 1r)

The name grew out of the King's initial presence at the court; naturally the King "sate as Iudge in it in his proper Person" at first (Pp 1v). It is extremely interesting that the Latin name of the position which Angelo has agreed to undertake puns on Angelo's name: Angliæ. It is equally intriguing that the

oppositions inherent in the workings of the common court and the King's court were coming to a head during Shakespeare's lifetime. [10] No conflict appears between the courts in the Vienna of *Measure for Measure*, for the Duke succeeded in dividing his judicial power between two strata of Vienna society--between the common people and the gentlefolk, and Angelo and Escalus will wield that divided power throughout the rest of the play.

The fact that Angelo will not handle the common causes is evident from his fleeing the scene in Act 2, when Pompey arrives and Escalus is put to the task of sorting out the problem. Angelo has been much derided for his inability to reach the "common" people, but that is just the point Shakespeare sets up for the audience, that Angelo should not, and does not, as a rule of his office, take upon himself the common causes. Hence Angelo's exit from the Pompey case has engendered more negative feelings from the critics than he may deserve. Northrop Frye says that "Angelo despises the people before

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[10]According to Sir David Lindsay Keir in *The Constitutional History of Modern Britain since 1485*, "English law was being fed from many sources. It was enacted by statute and proclamation, and created by judicial decision in numerous different courts. Parliament and the Common Law courts had no monopoly. The period can be regarded as one in which their ascendancy was in some danger. Beyond the area covered by statute, proclamations were laying down an intricate network of rules. Co-ordinately with the Common Law courts, the decisions of Prerogative courts were shaping large departments of judge-made law" (131-2). These statements apply to the period from the height of the Tudor government to the accession of the Stuart monarchs. Keir indicates that the "Tudor government had been highly successful in combining the principles of royal authority and popular consent. Both indeed were essential to the Tudor constitution. Yet neither contained within itself the whole system, or could assert ultimate superiority over the other, and in practice the two principles, antithetical though they were, seldom came into conflict."

him so much that he can't bother to listen to their meanderings" (145). Although Angelo's cold superiority may add some truth to this statement, Angelo leaves specifically because his position does not allow him to interfere with the problem at hand, and in fulfillment of the Duke's wishes, he rightfully bows to Escalus instead. Other critics have been harsher than Northrop Frye with Angelo's exit; for example, William Bache in Measure for Measure *as Dialectical Art* scolds him fiercely:

> When Angelo as Duke is presented with a moral problem demanding a just decision, he listens to Elbow's mistakings, to Froth's flightiness, and to Pompey's skipping chatter, and then he gives the problem to Escalus, and he, Angelo, departs. Sin has been ignored; justice will be subverted; guile and selfishness determine the end. (15)

Joseph Westlund, in *Shakespeare's Reparative Comedies*, likewise notes Angelo's reluctance to take the case, when "Angelo, maddened or bored by the wonderfully absurd complexities of the hearing, leaves [the case] to Escalus (which repeats the original pattern of the Duke leaving Vienna to his deputy)" (159). Speaking of Angelo's insecurity in governing Vienna, Richard P. Wheeler indicates that the scene with Escalus and Pompey foreshadows Angelo's future problems and his insecurity in his new position:

> This uneasiness is masked for a short time: it does not appear in the powerful defense of his severe measures that he offers Escalus, though it might be a factor in his irritability and

> impatience in hearing the case of Elbow vs. Pompey (II.i). (Wheeler 93)

But Angelo's behavior in actuality grows naturally from the office which he has assumed--his are the cases of "Mortallitie and Mercie in Vienna" (1.1.45), and therefore Escalus, the expert in "Common Iustice" (1.1.14), must take over where Angelo's office leaves off.

The question of legality put to the new deputy-Justice Angelo is similar to the one put to Escalus. Both cases deal with questions of morality; one is on a common level, and deals with Pompey the Bawd, brought to court by a constable, whereas the other concerns the gentleman Claudio, arrested under Angelo's direct orders. The problem of the play arises when Angelo, whose blood is "snow-broth" (1.4.58), decides to enforce an old statute against fornication which had "slept" (2.2.90) when the Duke was in power, but, thanks to Angelo's new appointment, "Now 'tis awake" (2.2.93). Claudio's sudden arrest and sentencing becomes the impetus which moves the play to focus on a question not only of legality, but also of religious vows and moral codes. In both medieval and Renaissance England, fornication fell under the province of the courts. [11] Court decisions were generally based

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[11]Vestiges of this idea still appear in England today. According to Chris Barton, LL.B., in his *Cohabitation Contracts*, the question of fornication sometimes, though rarely, falls under the category of sexual immorality: "[I]t is tentatively suggested that the present law would be slow to invoke the sexual immorality bar (in so far as it still holds sway at all) to invalidate a cohabitation contract" (42).

upon "the position taken by most canonists" (Helmholz 38), who naturally discouraged such unions:

> At Canterbury . . . the frequency of the allegation of sexual relations after a private [*de futuro*] contract is greater in the thirteenth century than in the fifteenth, perhaps suggesting that the requirement of solemnization before cohabitation was respected to a greater extent. (Helmholz n.36)

But according to Lawrence Stone, the incidence of such cases was on the increase during the Renaissance:

> In the half-century before the civil war, the Church courts had been more and more actively engaged in the struggle to control sexual behavior. Cases of sexual immorality more than doubled between 1595 and 1635, and comprised anything up to half of all the business with which the courts dealt. (631)

Church courts had little ability to enforce restrictions beyond spiritual ones such as excommunication, however. Stone indicates that the Church courts eventually were supplemented by the Justices, who,

> In the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries . . . did not hesitate to use their authority to punish mere fornication as well as bastardy. Particularly in the north of England, the woman convicted of fornication was often whipped in the nearest market town 'as a deterrent to others', while at the second offence she was often committed to the House of Correction for hard labour under the lash. (633-634)

But the question of fornication in *Measure for Measure* is of less importance than the fact that Claudio made a promise of marriage to Juliet. Breaking a promise has always been a serious legal question in England; anyone who has read *Pickwick Papers* knows that quite a sticky situation can occur despite one's actual intentions.

Claudio speaks of his promise to Juliet in detail during his first appearance. He speaks specifically of his promise and her agreement as a contract:

> upon a true contract
> I got possession of *Iulietas* bed,
> You know the Lady, she is fast my wife,
> Saue that we doe the denunciation lacke
> Of outward Order. This we came not to,
> Onely for propogation of a Dowre
> Remaining in the Coffer of her friends. . . . (1.2.149-55)

That there was a contract between Claudio and Juliet, there is no doubt. A contract "is a covenant or agreement with a lawfull consideration or cause" (S 3 v), according to Cowell. Now Juliet's pregnancy causes Claudio to be sentenced to death, and all "for a name" (1.2.173). As Claudio sees it, he has kept the spirit of the law, and let slip the letter of the law. Angelo is a literalist; he must have justice, and not make a "scar-crow" of the law (2.1.1.); therefore he wishes to enforce the long-stagnant statute against one who for

some "hath but as offended in a dreame" (2.2.4), in the Provost's words. Thus Claudio's promise to Juliet--not necessarily its wording, which the audience does not hear, but its intent--becomes another contract which apparently has not been kept. The next broken promise is that of Claudio to Lucio--he has said that he would meet Lucio "two howres since, and he was euer precise in promise keeping" (1.2.78-9). With a promise or a vow, it is not the future which matters; it is the intent behind the vow, and the way the person acts in the present regarding the vow.[12]

As a Duke, Vincentio has promised to guide Vienna, to be a father to his subjects. Instead, he has, at his own admission, allowed a law which should have been a rod of correction to be "More mock'd, then fear'd" (1.3.27) and all of Vienna's laws or "Decrees" have become "dead" (1.3.28). Vincentio therefore surrenders his power to the twin Justices. In a moment, Escalus, who has already acted like a judge in the past, according to the Duke, has little problem adapting to his role, and keeping his unspoken promise to uphold the law and to mete out justice to the common people. Angelo is not quite so eager, but the Duke could not allow Angelo to have "some more test, made of [his] mettle, / Before so noble and so great a figure

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[12] Although this idea is inherent in the difference between a *de futuro* (a betrothal with a general promise of marriage at some future, undesignated date) and *de praesenti* marriage contract (a betrothal with a specific promise that the marriage will be performed promptly), such agreements constitute but a small segment of the promises which rely upon the intent, the promise, and the execution in *Measure for Measure.* A detailed discussion of the marriage contracts in *Measure for Measure* appears in Chapter IV.

/ Be stamp'd vpon it" as Angelo requests; in the present, Angelo must tacitly accept without question and act as a judge. Despite the fact that Angelo and Escalus must accept their commissions because of the Duke's position and because of their fealty to him, there appears to be no reason why they could not have verbally approved of their new positions. Instead, Shakespeare does not have either speak a word of approval or acceptance; both remain silent. Silence may give consent, but it does not allow the audience to perceive the intent of any promise-maker in the play. This fact in itself causes problems for the audience; had Shakespeare included the Duke's promises to rule Vienna, Angelo's promise to be a just judge, Claudio's loving promise to Juliet, Isabella's personal vow to enter a convent, the Provost's promise to keep prisoners in the jail, or Elbow's promise to keep order as Constable, the audience would have had a frame of reference by which to judge the behavior of the characters, and therefore would have a better ability to judge the play. As it is, the audience has no frame of reference other than a foggy intent balanced upon an unspoken or previously spoken promise which must reflect what one should do in a certain office or state. Intent and speech can go crosswise, just as Angelo's prayers "crosse" (2.2.159). Even the pirate-gentlemen agree that one cannot accept and live by one set of rules which contradict one's primary mission; that is, a pirate cannot agree not to steal when one is a pirate--such an agreement would be absurd:

> Why? 'twas a commandement, to command the Captaine and all the rest from their functions: they put forth to steale:
> (1.2.12-14)

No less can Pompey at first object to pandering because a commandment crosses against committing adultery. One reason that certain critics such as Wheeler and Westlund prefer to cling to the seamier side of *Measure for Measure*, to the pirates, rogues, and bawds from the brothels, is because those people have promised only to be "wicked villaine[s]" (1.2.26-27), and they keep their promise. [13] Too, the only person who takes upon himself an office and promises to keep it well is Pompey--in the sole visible and verbal promise which occurs during the course of the play. Pompey agrees not silently, but loudly, to leave off pandering and "bee content to be a lawfull hangman" (4.2.15-16). He promises to learn, and he promises that when he

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[13]Wheeler and Westlund, both of whom examine *Measure for Measure* psychologically, have better things to say about the underclass than the rest: "In a play in which loyalty to principle, when not betrayed, is most often experienced in painful conflict with personal allegiances, the heartening assurance Pompey gives Mistress Overdone holds a special place" (Wheeler 103). Indeed, for Wheeler "Pompey is the character who has adapted most comfortably to the world Shakespeare creates in *Measure for Measure*" (103). For Westlund, "The bawdy characters do not implicate us in their situations; instead they neutralize our tendency to idealize or abase" (169), and "only Mistress Overdone has a heart of gold, and keeps the child" (Westlund 170). Westlund does not evidently consider what Mistress Overdone might do with a girl once she has got a bit older; according to Shugg (qtd. in Eccles 74): "The motherly solicitude shown by Mistress Overdone in caring for Kate Keepdown's bastard . . . may not have been entirely altruistic. The child, if female, could easily be prostituted at a very young age."

is called upon, his partner "shall finde [him] y'are" (4.2.59-60). The fact that he ends up having no prisoner to execute, and ultimately does not succeed at becoming a hangman, becomes part of the inability of characters to live up to their promise of a new position in life, despite all attempts at keeping a promise.

The characters other than the common people and the ladies and gentlemen, the monks and nuns concerned with religious and not political promises in *Measure for Measure*'s Vienna, are technically unable to make binding promises to other people; a promise to God supersedes a promise to an individual. During the fifteenth and early sixteenth century, religious, therefore, were considered beyond civil law:

> . . . a feoffment to a monk was void, and a monk could not be party to any form of contract. (Simpson 540)

That is, a monk or nun could not be prosecuted under civil law, nor was he or she subjected to civil law in any way. According to Simpson, "monks professed were civilly dead, as were friars, and as a general rule lacked all legal capacity" (539). Such civil laws "became obsolete under the Reformation" (540). But canon law, to which the monks and nuns were subject, was in itself spiritually intertwined with civil law:

> Even after the Reformation had struck a seemingly heavy blow at the canon law, its influence was still powerful, for . . .

> embod[ied] in their system of civil law [were] a good many ideas drawn from the canonists, and so the reception was often as much a reception of canon as of civil law. (Plucknett 305)

For the Duke to become a friar was not only abdication and abjuration of his political state; he was also declaring himself dead legally, albeit symbolically--both dead as the law and dead to the law. He substituted a set of religious laws for the political laws which he himself had affirmed through his office. The Duke-Friar appears to combine law and religion together in his disguise, yet in actuality his actions pertain little to either. He is, as Lucio says, "a medling Fryer" (5.1.128) and an "olde fantastical Duke of darke corners" (4.3.162-63), instead of a powerful personage. Even as a novice, Isabella manages to retain some sway of power under the law, simply because she has yet to take her final vows, "for in her youth / There is a prone and speechlesse dialect, such as moue men" (1.2.187-89). It is with this power that she has the ability to approach Angelo as Claudio's representative.

Whereas most of the characters in *Measure for Measure* have made promises, six characters in the play have taken some sort of religious vow. Canon law defines a vow as "a deliberate and free promise made to God concerning a possible and better good which must be fulfilled by reason of the virtue of religion" (Can. 1191). A vow may be public or private, that is, either "accepted in the name of the Church by a legitimate superior" (public)

or not (private). Friar Thomas, the friar who indoctrinates the Duke into the proper attitudes and actions of a friar, is truly a doubting Thomas who questions the authenticity of the Duke's motives. That this Thomas believes that the Duke has an ulterior motive--love--is obvious from the Duke's first line to him: "No: holy Father, throw away that thought, / Beleeue not that the dribling dart of Loue / Can pierce a compleat bosome" (1.3.290-2). The reluctant Friar Thomas instructs the Duke in how he must behave in order to appear the friar he will seem to be. The Duke requests special treatment of the Friar:

> Therefore I pre'thee
> Supply me with the habit, and instruct me
> How I may formally in person beare
> Like a true *Frier* (1.3.45-48)

Significantly, the Duke will appear to others as if he has taken vows, but the reality does not equal the fantasy which the Duke has adopted. The Duke here is strikingly contrasted to the Friar who has taken final vows. He is mere outward appearance. Friar Thomas is the genuine article. Friar Thomas's vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience were solemn ones, accepted by the church, and therefore public. The same is true of Friar Peter's vows.

Friar Peter enters as does the good friar in *Romeo and Juliet*, intervening with heavenly intentions for those involved. Unlike Friar

Thomas, Friar Peter eagerly follows the Duke's leadings; in fact, Friar Peter acts as if he has known the Duke all along: "I know him for a man diuine and holy" (5.1.145). Friar Lodowick manages to pose successfully as a friar without the benefit of having promised to follow the rules of the church regarding his behavior. But the distance between the Duke's promise to rule Vienna and his fraudulent adoption of the Friar's profession produces both a religious and political gap--a gap between the Duke's intentions and the end result he seeks, which is to restore order in Vienna.

Like the Duke, Isabella is juxtaposed with another nun who has already taken final vows. She is compared with Francisca, the nun of the Order of St. Clare who greets her. Francisca states clearly that she has taken final vows when she differentiates between herself and Isabella: "You are yet unsworne" (1.4.9), she emphasizes. Francisca has studied the practice of the rule, and she has succeeded in enclosing herself inside the convent. Sister Francisca's vows were public, solemn vows, which included not only poverty, chastity, and obedience, but also enclosure (hence her inability to answer Lucio's call). She has fulfilled the promise of her vows. Isabella, however, has not taken her final vows, but she has taken a step to enter a convent as a novice. The scene between Isabella and Francisca follows hard upon the scene between Friar Thomas and the Duke, and because of this juxtaposition, Shakespeare may be hinting, even at this early stage in the play, that Isabella's intentions will not come to fruition.

From the start, the Duke and Isabella are set apart from those characters who have taken final vows. This fact makes it possible for Shakespeare to show the change in direction which takes place in both the Duke's and Isabella's lives. Isabella attempts to take final vows and her wishes are apparently foiled; the Duke never intends final vows, but he does learn to take seriously the promise he has made regarding the rule of Vienna--his political promise.

CHAPTER II

INTERCHANGEABLE VOWS AND ISABELLA THE NOVICE: VOWS OF POVERTY, CHASTITY, OBEDIENCE, AND ENCLOSURE COMMUTED TO MARRIAGE VOWS

When one thinks of vows, the idea of a religious novice making solemn promises regarding poverty, chastity, and obedience comes to mind immediately. However, in *Measure for Measure*, civil, personal, and religious vows combine to create a pattern of obedience and disobedience, of positive and negative effects of vowing and disavowing, commuting, or repudiating a vow. The most obvious instance of someone about to take vows is Isabella, who attempts to cloister herself in the convent of St. Clare in order to become a "votarist" of that order (1.4.5).

The Second Order of Franciscans was originally founded in Italy by St. Clare, in obedience to the wishes of St. Francis. When St. Clare first desired to embrace the monastic life, she fled to the arms of "friendly Benedictine nuns", according to J. C. Dickinson, in *Monastic Life in Medieval England* (94). She "went on to found her own community which was originally housed at the little church of S. Damiano outside the city, which St. Francis had restored in his early days" (Dickinson 94). The fact that the

order had its roots in the Benedictine rule causes some confusion regarding whether or not the Second Order of St. Francis was a branch of the Benedictine order, but no persuasive argument has been made toward a final conclusion on either side. In England, this Second Order took the name of the Minoresses, and according to A.F.C. Bourdillon in *The Order of Minoresses in England*, the "controversy raised by this Benedictine theory has continued from the late sixteenth century until to-day" (Bourdillon 2). The idea that the order was in some way related to the Order of St. Benedict becomes more important when one considers that the Benedictine order in England managed to maintain some relationship to their former status even after the dissolution of the monasteries under Henry VIII. According to Philip Jebb and David M. Rogers in their chapter "Rebirth", in D. H. Turner's *The Benedictines in Britain*:

> ...there were English men who joined Benedictine monasteries in Italy and Spain, many with a strong urge to return to their native country to work for the survival and propagation of the old faith. (92)

These men may have returned secretly to evangelize England. However, there is evidence that both monks and nuns stayed in England, and actually survived the dissolution. A descendent of the last abbess at Denny, Elizabeth Throckmorton, indicated that

> when this lady 'was drove from her convent at Denny by that wretched monster of impurity and barbarity King Henry VIII, she retired to her family at Coughton in Warwickshire with 2 or 3 of her nuns where in a private chamber of the family seat, she ever after to her death in 1547 lived a conventual life and in their proper habits, hardly ever appearing in the family and never when company was there; but prescribed to themselves the Rules of the Order as far as it was possible in their present situation, where their whole employ was attendance in the Oratory and work at their needle.' (Bourdillon 83)

To be fair, it seems that Henry VIII in fact attempted to accommodate those religious who wished to maintain their lifestyle. According to G. W. O. Woodward, in *The Dissolution of the Monasteries*, though Henry seized holdings, the religious themselves "had not been debarred by any statute from attempting to continue to the best of their ability to follow the rules of their order" (152), and evidently many monks and nuns tooks their pensions and lived together in small communities. [14] According to Woodward, though few religious remained loyal to their initial calling during the sixteenth century, there were several "exceptions," such as:

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[14]Woodward gives a specific example of this: "Immediately after the surrender, William Browne, the prior, took a house in nearby Worsborough and retired thither in company with Thomas Frobisher the sub-prior, and two monks, Thomas Wilkinson and Richard Hinchcliffe. With them they took nearly 150 of the books from the priory library together with the recently compiled chartulary, or register of the priory's title deeds, and it is clear that their intention was to continue the common life to which they were accustomed. Their determination to preserve as much as possible of their library was in keeping with the care that they had beenwont to bestow upon their books in the days before the dissolution. In the last decade of the life of their house many of their books had been rebound and furnished with clasps made from the metal of an unwanted mazer, and a team of monks had been employed in copying all the priory deeds . . . " (152).

> the Carthusians, the Bridgettines and the Observant Franciscans who so boldly resisted the establishment of the royal supremacy and suffered savage persecution for their pains, and who counted in their ranks some real devotees who attempted to revive their communities in exile. (157)

Therefore the Minoresses, like the Franciscans, did not fade out of sight with the dissolution of the monasteries. In fact, Bourdillon says that

> interest in th[e] Order . . . , which from the beginning had so frequently shown itself amongst successive members of one family, continued in the same way into modern times. In 1609 a house of English Poor Clares was founded at Gravelines (on the coast about 12 miles east of Calais), and there, in 1742, was professed Sister Jana Throckmorton of Coughton co. Warwickshire, a collateral descendant of that faithful last abbess of Denny. (84)

Despite their ultimate demise in England, the Minoresses had been a significant branch of the whole order, and their presence was a prominent one during the time of Shakespeare and before.

The Second Order of Franciscans had many names on the continent, among them the Order of St. Clare, the Poor Clares, the Claresses, and the Sisters of the Order of Saint Damian. In England, the Minoresses first established themselves in Northampton under the wing of Henry III (Bourdillon 11). The difference between the Order of St. Clare and the Minoresses was a difference in the rule each followed. Although at one time

there were as many as six rules for nuns of the Second Order of St. Francis, by the time the Minoresses settled in England there were only two rules left--the Urbanist rule, which the nuns on the continent followed, and the Isabella rule, which originally had been "intended exclusively for the monastery of Longchamp, near Paris, founded in 1255 by B. Isabella, sister of Louis IX" (Bourdillon 3) but which was also followed by the nuns of the branch of the order in England ever since the observation of this rule was granted to them "by papal bull in 1296" (Bourdillon 3n). This distinction in rule may account for the closeness of the First and Second Orders of St. Francis in *Measure for Measure.* Unlike the Urbanists, who were left to fend for themselves regarding physical necessities and spiritual direction, the nuns who followed the Isabella rule, as those in England did, were dependent upon the beneficence of the Franciscan Friars, who were "to act as Confessors, Chaplains, and Visitors of the Sisters" (Bourdillon 8), not to mention "to provide for their material needs" (Bourdillon 7). Shakespeare presents a picture of the nuns whom he knew about because they had been faithful as well as close at hand in London, and even if he knew nothing of the difference between the convents in Vienna and those in England, he focuses his play specifically to reveal some important aspects of the day-to-day life of the nuns of London.

This new order in England began to flourish in popularity from its advantageous beginning with the good wishes and benevolent gifts of Henry

III. [15] The founding of the Minories Abbey outside Aldgate, London, brought the Minoresses in that particular house in contact with the elite of London, and they became the favorite beneficiary of not only aristocratic ladies and gentlemen, but also of other royal patrons after Henry III. The Minories had such an effect on the surrounding area that its former presence is evident even today, though nothing remains of the original convent. That area of London still goes by the name of the Minories, and "[a]t present only a four-foot tablet on the wall of a parish room and the name of the street--the Minories--off which it stands, remains to mark the place where the London Minoresses once lived" (Bourdillon 85). But in its time, the Minories held a special status as a "royal liberty" where "the parish priest was elected, marriages [were] celebrated without banns or licence, the parish had its own magistrate and licensed its own publican, [and] it even paid no taxes except such as were specially levied on such Liberties" (Bourdillon 85). This special status presented an interesting phenomenon for the people of London; it gave them a place where they might circumvent the civil and religious law with impunity, and thus the Minories held an important and powerful position.

The importance of the Minories grew out of the fact that people of high rank were involved from the beginning--the founder of the Minories was

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[15]He gave not only his permission, but his tangible gifts, "ordering the sheriff to provide [them] with five tunics of russet. This gift is repeated seven times within the next twenty years" (Bourdillon 11).

the Earl of Lancaster, the husband of Blanche of Navarre (Midmer 207). [16] Roy Midmer, in his *English Mediaeval Monasteries (1066-1540): A Summary*, indicates that the convent of the Minories was located "¼m. N[orth] of the Tower of London" (207), at the hub of the court scene. [17] The fact that royalty and aristocrats gave this particular house special treatment also allowed it to gain more revenues than was usually the case. Many nunneries floundered under conditions of extreme poverty and neglect, yet according to Eileen Power in her *Medieval English Nunneries: c. 1275 to 1535*, the Minories became not only an appropriate charity but also a popular refuge for the elite:

> The famous house of Minoresses without Aldgate illustrates the situation very clearly. It was always a special favourite of royalty; and the storm bird, Isabella, mother of Edward III, is by some supposed to have died in the order. She was certainly its constant benefactress as were Thomas of Woodstock, Duke of

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[16]Bourdillon names Blanche of Navarre as the Foundress, whereas Midmer says that the Founder was the Earl. Both are correct. Bourdillon says that the Earl's wife, Blanche of Navarre, also had connections to the order which seem to suggest her persuasive influence, as she "was the daughter of Robert, Count of Artois, and thus the niece of St. Louis and of Blessed Isabella, foundress of the whole Order of Minoresses. This fact alone might sufficiently explain her interest in introducing the Order into England; beyond this there was in her husband's family also a strong tradition of interest in the Order. Blanche's first husband was Henry le Gros, King of Navarre; his predecessor and elder brother Thibarut VII had shown much generosity to the house of Franciscan nuns at Provins, and at their death Thibaut and his wife had both been buried within the convent there" (Bourdillon 16-17).

[17]Midmer says that this was the "1st house of the Order" (207), but Bourdillon refutes this in favor of Northampton. Bourdillon's research on this point seems to have been more extensive than Midmer's.

> Gloucester and his wife, whose daughter Isabel was placed in the nunnery while only a child and eventually became its abbess. Katherine, widow of John de Ingham, and Eleanor Lady Scrope were other aristocratic women who took the veil at the Minories. (Power 12)

Too, the Minories was one of the few substantial houses to have been founded in the late middle ages and to have survived until the dissolution. [18] The Minories became a haven for the aristocratic women who wished to live "enskied and sainted," as Lucio would say, and gave them a place of refuge against the evils of the world of London.

Although it is true that the nuns theoretically should have emerged from all levels of society, Power indicates that this was not the case:

> It has indeed been insufficiently recognised that the medieval nunneries were recruited almost entirely from among the upper classes. They were essentially aristocratic institutions, the refuge of the gently born. (Power 4)

Certainly Shakespeare's Isabella must be perceived as having been born into an aristocratic family, and however sincere her intentions appear, one cannot ignore the possibility that Isabella might have been one of the aristocratic women not provided with a dowry due to some financial decisions on the part

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[18]"Very few sizeable houses were founded in the later Middle Ages but to this category belong Dartford, the only English house of Dominican nuns, and the Franciscan nunnery in London" (Dickinson 85).

of her family. Often such daughters "were given over to the life by their families, sometimes from childhood, because it was a reputable career for daughters who could not be dowered for marriage in a manner befitting their estate" (Power 437). Shakespeare recognizes in two instances in the play that the lack of a dowry was a tragic possibility for women: first, with the mere inclusion of the characters of Juliet, whose marriage has been delayed for lack of a dowry, and second, with the inclusion of Mariana, whose loss of brother and dowry brought her double hardship.

Despite the fact that the general trend favored the aristocracy, this did not deter members of other classes from entering the Minories. Several instances of girls entering the convent from the merchant class indicate that it is just as possible that Isabella might have come from a bourgeois family, as did

> Alice, sister of Richard Hale, fishmonger, Elizabeth, daughter of Thomas Padyngton, fishmonger, Marion, daughter of John Chartesey, baker, and Frideswida, daughter of John Reynewell, alderman of the City of London, girls drawn from the élite of the burgess class. (Power 12)

But the prevalent practice of admitting members of the aristocracy actually eliminated the chances for the poorest of women to choose the convent, for "nuns were drawn from no lower class; poor girls of the lowest rank--whether the daughters of artisans or of country labourers--seem never to have taken

the veil" (Power 13). Thus the Minories offered the elite a place of enclosure and retreat in London, and also offered another retreat even farther off which served as an additional revenue to the nuns.

A second parcel of land was attached to the Minories; an "alien priory of Appuldurcombe (I[sle] o[f] W[ight]) was granted to the nuns in 1414" which remained part of the abbey's holdings until the dissolution (Midmer 207). "After dissolution part of the [buildings was] used as a town house for the bishopric of Bath & Wells, and part as an armoury by the Tower" (Midmer 207). That the Minories held an alien priory is an important fact in the understanding of *Measure for Measure*, because despite the fact that the play is set in Vienna, Shakespeare surely drew upon the milieu of London and expected that the people in his audience would be able to recognize that the mother house was close at hand and that the Minories had its own "moated grange." A grange is defined as an agrarian tract of land held by a religious order, but the holdings are not "conventual at all, but . . . nothing more than manors (often with the local parish church attached) at which two or three [religious] would reside for short periods, largely to act as estate agents for their mother house" (Dickinson 121). In the case of the grange which the Minories held, not only was it "moated" with the channel waters surrounding the Isle of Wight, the Isle itself is, even today, a resort preferred for its balmy climate, pleasant surroundings and yacht races. Thus this particular moated grange was quite well known; and it appears that in

Measure for Measure the grange and the convent at which Isabella wished to profess should properly be thought of as a motherhouse and its holding, and thus both women should be understood as having chosen to retreat from the world into related places of enclosure, though Mariana's moated grange is understandably farther removed yet more worldly than the convent to which Isabella wishes to retreat. The worldliness of the grange emerges immediately in the boy's song to Mariana--both boy and song do not coincide with the strict rules of the convent, but the juxtaposition of the convent with the grange reveals an umbilical cord which reaches far yet still connects both spiritually.

The nuns of the Minories were thus granted the significant favors of the status as liberty and the income-producing grange. The gift of "custody" of this alien priory was not a small one financially, for it aided the nuns significantly:

> Henry IV granted the custody of the alien priory of Appuldurcombe in the Isle of Wight, to the London Minoresses within the first few months of his reign. Thirty years later the manor was granted to them in perpetuity and it remained in their hands until the dissolution. This gift was of very considerable value, for in 1539 it was bringing in £56 13*s.* 4*d.* for the year. (Bourdillon 46)

Henvy IV was also the monarch who had granted that even-more-surprising caveat which gave the Minories the standing to which I referred briefly

earlier as a place above the law--and that no one involved in any way with the law,

> 'no justice, mayor, bailiff, coroner, escheator, seargeant, etc.' should have any jurisdiction within the close and precinct of the London Minories, except in treason and felonies touching the Crown. It is curious that this privilege continued in force long after the Dissolution, so that the district became a 'Liberty,' and remained independent of the Corporation of London until within living memory. (Bourdillon 46)

The fact that this status persisted until recent times reflects the impact that this small order had on the inhabitants of London. These two significant favors from the Crown point to the importance of the order among the aristocracy as well, the attention being centered in the fact that the nuns had a reputation above reproach, and this saintly status attracted more benevolence from the people of London than did the more worldly convents. In other words, *simply because* they practiced enclosure, the nuns were favored.

Nuns who did not practice enclosure were often considered to be less serious about their vocation, and thus did not gain the same favors as those who actually practiced total removal from the perils of the world, the flesh, and the devil. In Power's words, the

> Medieval moralists were generally agreed that intercourse with the world was at the root of all those evils which dimmed the fair fame of the conventual system, by affording a constant

> temptation to frivolity and to grosser misconduct. Moreover the tongue of scandal was always busy and the nun's reputation was safe only if she could be placed beyond reproach. (343)

Thus the nuns of this particular order were considered to be "beyond reproach" and reaped rewards from the aristocracy because of this status. J. C. Dickinson makes this distinction between the nuns of other orders and those of the Second Order of St. Francis, and follows their decision toward utter poverty as it had emerged from St. Clare:

> The aim of the Second Order was completely contemplative, being to worship God and to intercede for man. This was done in a régime of great severity in which fasting and silence figured prominently. St. Clare was just as convinced as St. Francis of the importance of refusing endowments. The ecclesiastical authorities had understandable doubts about the wisdom of this for a community completely severed from the world, and thereby deprived of the facilities for obtaining alms open to the First Order. But St. Clare was sure of her ground and fought the opposition with a serene inflexibility, that finally levelled all resistance, so that the utmost poverty became the rule of the Order. The vocation of the 'poor Clares' or Second Order was a very specialised one, like that of the Carthusians, and there were only three houses of the order in England at the Dissolution. All were late foundations, that in London being the first major foundation (1293-4). (Dickinson 94)

Thus the Poor Clares differed from other orders of nuns not only in enclosure, but also in individual poverty which went beyond the usual vow of poverty taken by religious.

Nuns of this Second Order of St. Francis had not always been thought to be upright women, however. During the early days of the order in England, women would profess themselves to be members of the order and travel as such, seeking alms and remaining strictly mendicant rather than enclosed. This occurrence became so frequent that these ladies, who were bringing a bad name to the rest of the order, were labeled impostors by Innocent IV when he warned against these women "'*interius oneratae peccatis, foris tamen sanctitatis*' who wander about under the name of Sisters Minor" and who later were "forbidden the privileges and habit" traditional to nuns following St. Francis (Bourdillon 10). Chastity and enclosure were soon understood as intertwined branches. Thus the simple fact of enclosure was "a more vital necessity for the well being of the [nuns]; and the history of the enclosure movement is in effect the history of an effort to add a fourth vow of claustration to the three cardinal vows of the nun" (Power 342).

Yet the only order which actually did add such a vow was the one which Shakespeare chose for Isabella. Power notes that their "formula of profession actually contained a vow of perpetual enclosure . . ., under the second rule [the Urbanist] given to them by Urban IV in 1263, [and their entire profession] comprised obedience, poverty, chastity and enclosure" (Power 342n.) Such a tight rein on the freedom of nuns was thought to be required in order to maintain chastity and in order to keep the pure away

from the corruption of the world. Popes and administrators who maintained control over nuns generally attempted to restrain all nuns, not just the Poor Clares; however, these attempts usually failed:

> [T]he rule given by Urban IV to the Franciscan nuns (1263) went further than any previous enactments in binding them by a vow of perpetual enclosure, against which no plea of necessity might avail. Various synods and councils continued to repeat the order that nuns were not to leave their houses, except for reasonable cause, but it is plain from the evidence of ecclesiastics, moralists and episcopal visitations that the nuns all over Europe paid small heed to their words. (Power 344)

Specifically, the guidelines for keeping nuns from worldly contamination were presented in several documents, and "These three documents, the Constitutions of Ottobon and of Peckham and the Bull *Periculoso*, were the standard decrees on the subject of the claustration of nuns in England and were used as a model by visitors in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries" (Power 353). That the Poor Clares instituted and accepted enclosure of their own free will added markedly to their impact throughout Europe, but in England the idea of claustration as of utmost importance attached itself to the Minoresses as to no other order. Henry VIII declared that all nuns ought to be enclosed and has since been much censured because of that decree:

> The Dissolution of the monasteries by Henry VIII was preceded by an order to his commissioners, that they should enforce enclosure upon the nuns. The injunction met with the usual resistance at the time and later apologists of the monastic

> houses have blamed the King for undue and unreasonable harshness. (Power 393)

The idea of enclosure was thought to be an absolute imperative in addition to the other vows, and thus the ideal of chastity was upheld as something above and beyond the reach of ordinary people and even, in effect, beyond the reach of ordinary nuns.

That Henry VIII believed in the sanctity of enclosure should strike a chord with those who see Protestantism as having eliminated all such strictures as a matter of course. Such a view does not reflect the overwhelming opinion of the century, and, it seems to me, does not reflect what the play stresses about the importance of virginity and marriage as complementary lifestyles. In his *The Family, Sex and Marriage In England: 1500-1800,* Lawrence Stone indicates that this level of perfection arose in the separated environment of the nunneries, and that:

> The ideal of virginity so valued by the Catholic Church provided the theological and moral justification for the existence of nunneries, which contained considerable numbers of upper-class girls placed there by their fathers in order to get rid of them. (Stone 43)

Whether the residents of a convent were admitted willingly or not, the convents did provide an environment separated from the everyday world of

affairs wherein virginity might be held up as an ideal--an ideal difficult to achieve even in some nunneries.

Darryl J. Gless, in his Measure for Measure, *the Law, and the Convent*, dismisses such monastic ideals as enclosure as "somewhat hysterical and oppressive" (263) in their approach to the perils of social interaction between the nuns and male (or female) visitors. What Gless does do is to emphasize the importance of the religious aspects of the play:

> Many critics also overlook the related fact that Isabella first appears inside the convent of St. Clare, where a nun (named Francisca in the stage directions) relates for her novice and for us an excerpt of the rule under which St. Clare's votarists live (1.4.7-14). As a result of understandable scholarly inattention to such matters, Shakespeare's chosen visual effects fail to color our interpretation of the play's language and our sense of relative emphasis in ways he clearly intended. The obvious monastic materials I have mentioned are supported, furthermore, by numerous less obtrusive ones. But even taken by themselves, they indicate that monasticism receives insistent emphasis in *Measure for Measure.* Shakespeare's aim in giving this play its ostentatiously religious and specifically Roman Catholic aura therefore demands careful attention. (Gless 64-65)

That Gless attempts to integrate these aspects into his scholarly work reveals their importance--despite the fact that he does not study important aspects of what Shakespeare *does* do with the question of enclosure. Gless allows that "even if Shakespeare knew nothing of the London Minoresses' Isabella Rule, his nun Francisca imitates with considerable accuracy its actual tone"

(264). It seems contrary to a basic impulse in the play, which tends toward accuracy and validity regarding the day to day life of an enclosed nun, to accept Gless' idea that the play satirizes such a lifestyle as stifling. Gless sees Shakespeare as attacking monasticism as a whole, and specifically says that a nun who chooses claustration chooses "bondage":

> That Isabella's chosen vocation *is* bondage becomes clear not only from Shakespeare's use of symbolically charged diction. In act 1 scene 4, the poet makes it very plain the this portion of his play belongs to the genre of antimonastic satire. The restraint explicit in the language becomes visible in stage imagery that recalls Claudio's more familiar bondage, for the very sight of Isabella enfolded in her novice's robe and of Francisca enveloped in the Poor Clares' traditional white habit intensifies our sense of confining rigidity. (Gless 99)

Gless does in fact recognize that the convent takes an important role in the events of the play; however, he decides that Shakespeare, in fact, makes Isabella "a visible image of the restraints by which monastic vows can impede the true end of God's law" (102).

On the other hand, David N. Beauregard in "Isabella as Novice: Shakespeare's Use of Whetstone's *Heptameron*", indicates the opposite as more probable:

> it would be unlikely that the religious elements in the play, whether the Duke's disguise, his confessional ministrations, or Isabella's novicehood, with all their irregularities, are to be

> taken as potentially offensive theological statements. Quite obviously, they are dramatic devices subordinated to dramatic ends. (23)

To ignore that Isabella appears by most accounts as "enskied and sainted" as Lucio sees her, as she certainly appears so to the Duke, seems to me to ignore a basic element of the play.

Isabella is both beautiful and good, naive and intelligent, fiercely faithful and independently strong. She is a perfect representative of virginity in full bloom, and she may even be understood as the Mary figure of the play--both lovely and virginal, one who although she marries yet remains pure. J. C. Dickinson argues that for many people marriage becomes a worthier method of salvation, especially for women: "Certainly there was a widespread assumption, even in pious circles, that the woman's place was not the cloister but the home, and [she] was [in] a subordinate place even there" (Dickinson 84). But the fact that one way of life can be holy does not prevent another from being holy. To present Isabella as a pure wife to the Duke allows Shakespeare to address the other side of the coin of chastity, matrimony, in a way that presents a pure bride who must become a pure mother. [19]

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[19]See Norman Nathan's "The Marriage of Duke Vincentio and Isabella" for a discussion of why the Duke has shirked his duties as a monarch in avoiding matrimony. Specifically, Nathan says that early in the play, the Duke argues against love and "he is also displaying in words what he has shown in his conduct, that he has no interest in marriage or in providing an heir for the dukedom" (Nathan 43). Nathan believes that the Duke's remaining unmarried points to his "deficiency in preferring bachelorhood [which] would

Although the ideal of enclosed chastity would be exchanged in favor of the idea of an indissoluble marriage contract, Stone indicates that this change took time, but eventually "[t]he medieval Catholic ideal of chastity, as a legal obligation for priests, monks and nuns and as an ideal for all members of the community to aspire to, was replaced by the ideal of conjugal affection" (135). Before that change was to occur, however, centuries would pass, and in the meantime virginity and "holy" matrimony were upheld as different kinds of perfection. And during the time that matrimony remained inviolable, sexuality held a subordinate role to that of religion, quite unlike today: "Not only has Chastity herself lately taken a much lower place in the ranks of virtues, but the idea of wedded chastity, familiar to the Elizabethans, is considerably less obvious to us" (Mackay 111). The primary example of wedded chastity was the marriage of the Virgin Mary to Joseph, and Shakespeare gives Isabella many of the qualities that Mary had.

Power indicates that the Cult of the Virgin grew out of the monastic ideal of chastity and virginity, which was empowered through enclosure. Power notes that it was not the church, but the people who attached themselves to the Virgin, and

> In their hands this Mary worship became more than the worship of Christ's mother; it became almost a separate religion, a religion under which jongleurs and thieves, fighters and tournament-haunters and the great host of those who loved unwisely found a mercy often denied to them by the

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hardly escape notice" (Nathan 43) to a 17th century audience.

> ecclesiastical hierarchy. The people created a Virgin to whom justice was nothing and law less than nothing, but to whom love of herself was all. (513)

Here Power encapsulates many elements of the play which echo the elements of the Cult of the Virgin. In the play, Isabella, beautiful as she is, must stand only as a figure representing a much purer beauty. Not just *a* virgin, Isabella is *the virgin* of the play. The Mother of God, beautiful and pure, might be reflected in the face of the beautiful Isabella, for the Mother of God represented all beauty:

> It is not without significance that so great a stress was always laid upon her personal loveliness. Her cult became the expression of mankind's deep unconscious revolt against asceticism, their love of life, their passionate sense of 'beauty that must die'. (Power 514)

Isabella is both fair and beautiful. The word "fair" appears ten times in the play, and eight of those times it is applied to Isabella. In fact, Angelo becomes obsessed by both her beauty and her purity, and without both he would not have been attracted to her, for he complains that the devil's tactics work swiftly and well--"Oh cunning enemy, that to catch a Saint, / With Saints dost bait thy hooke" (2.2.180-81). The fact that Isabella has not yet professed as a nun gives Shakespeare the latitude necessary to create a figure both saintly and human, on the verge of heaven yet still walking on earth, at

once spiritual and physical. The fact that she has taken a step toward entering a convent puts her in a unique position, for in that position she has become one in the world, yet not of the world.

Isabella's moral certitude and its concomitant attractive force make her the ideal woman for the precise Angelo. The Duke observes this combination in Isabella as well, and he stresses its importance to her:

> The hand that hath made you faire, hath made you good: the goodnes that is cheape in beauty, makes beauty briefe in goodness; but grace, being the soule of your complexion, shall keepe the body of it euer fair: (3.1.183-186)

In her short note *"Measure for Measure"*, Eileen Mackay questions "it may well be asked, why then is Isabella a nun at all?" (Mackay 113). Mackay believes that the play becomes problematic because of Isabella's status as a nun, and believes that if one reads the play as if Isabella were not a nun, one might understand it more readily: "[L]et Isabella discard her burdensome habit, and the play becomes, I think, less difficult, less unsatisfactory" (Mackay 113). Saying *Measure for Measure* would have been a better play if Isabella had not been a nun is like saying that Hamlet would have had a happy life if only he had not been born a prince. The fact that Isabella is a nun is integral to the plot, just as it is integral to the plot that Angelo's blood runs cold as ice until he sees Isabella.

Shakespeare may have had personal reasons for choosing the name Isabella for his heroine. Many scholars have pointed to the fact that Shakespeare had an aunt who was a Benedictine abbess. [20] John Russell, in *Shakespeare's Country*, notes that Isabella Shakespeare was a prominent woman from a staunchly religious and well-respected family:

> Thus the Isabella Shakespeare who was prioress of Wroxall Benedictine nunnery in 1500 was a considerable person. When she held court in 1507, landowners as affluent as John Shakespeare came to her and rented a part of her land (in his case 'one messuage, four crofts, and a grove'). In 1525, a Jane Shakespeare, who died in 1576, was sub-prioress of this nunnery and it is therefore plain that Shakespeares owned and administered enough of the wealth and authority of Warwick to make them, not a set of labourers, but a sizeable yeoman force in the country. (Russell 25-26)

Thus the Shakespeare family had a history which the author himself would have known and kept in the back of his mind, and this could have been influential in his decision to name his nun Isabella.

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[20]In "Shakespeare, a Catholic?", William John Tucker states "Shakespeare's grand-aunt, Isabel, previous to the suppression of the monasteries, had been mother superior of a convent at Wroxhall" (Tucker 15). Tucker and others feel that Shakespeare's use of the identical name was not coincidental. Gless disagrees: "Isabella's name, which is first mentioned and twice repeated (1.4.7, 18, 23) in the setting of the convent, itself appears to suggest Catholicism, perhaps specifically Spanish Catholicism. It may even allude directly to the 'Isabella Rule' that governed the ascetic branch of the Poor Clares" (Gless 102). G. K. Hunter preceded Gless in his observation regarding the Isabella rule (1964).

But the name Isabella itself also carries certain connotations, both religious and social. According to Roy W. Battenhouse in "*Measure for Measure* and Christian Doctrine of the Atonement", "Isabella . . . declares by her name that she is 'devoted to God'" (Battenhouse 1035). The name Isabella was evidently a popular one for nuns of the Order of St. Clare, and especially of the Minoresses, from "the monastery of Longchamp, near Paris, founded in 1255 by B. Isabella, sister of Louis IX Blessed Isabella" (Bourdillon 3), to Queen Isabella, wife of Edward II and benefactress of the order,[21] the first to allow the convent at Waterbeach to collect monies.[22] Other less noteworthy nuns were also named Isabella, like Isabella, daughter of William Wynter, who is recorded as a beneficiary of a will in 1415, likewise Isabel Seyntour, and Isabel Wyne (Bourdillon 91). W. W. Lawrence in *Shakespeare's Problem Comedies* remarks that "Some details in Shakespeare's play were apparently derived from Whetstone's prose tale, particularly the name Isabella, who is in the *Heptameron* the teller of the tale ('Reported by Madam Isabella')" (89). However it seems that

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[21]Although it has been widely recorded that Queen Isabella died in the order at the Minories, Bourdillon discounts this: "Although the Queen may have entered one of the Minoress houses for a temporary stay, it is certain from her later history that she did not make her vows of profession as the chronicler's words at first suggest" (Bourdillon 44-5). Nevertheless, the Queen was a long-time benefactor of the order: "In 1346, the Queen . . . granted the appropriation of three churches to the London house with the proviso that the Sisters should 'pray for the souls of Edward II, and the present King, and their progenitors, the kings of England" (Bourdillon 44).

[22]See Bourdillon, Appendix III.

Shakespeare had several reasons beyond this one, though David N. Beauregard thought the Whetstone reference equally important in "Isabella as Novice: Shakespeare's Use of Whetstone's *Heptameron*":

> But if, as seems most likely, Shakespeare took the name Isabella from the frame of Whetstone's story, and not from less literary sources, he was also indebted to the body of the *Heptameron* for other names and for one other significant detail, the characterization of Isabella as a religious novice.
> (Beauregard 20)

Shakespeare's recognition that the name in the *Heptameron of Civil Discourses* linked several historical aspects into a single name--such as the popularity of the name in the Order, the Isabella rule in England, and the history of English nobility named Isabella who were benefactors of the order, not to mention Shakespeare's own abbess-aunt--these aspects linked in the name Isabella must have given Shakespeare a powerful reason to choose that name.

Isabella's first words, "And have you Nuns no farther priuiledges?" (1.4.1), have sometimes been taken as a sarcastic remark. In the note *"Measure for Measure"*, Eileen Mackay suggests that the nuns in Vienna might have had a lax convent, in which they could spend their time "entertaining smart visiting ladies and priests" (Mackay 111). Mackay goes on to question, "may not the foundation of the Poor Clares in Vienna have been like that?" (Mackay 111). Whatever Mackay believes of the nunneries

of the time, it is quite unlikely that any Poor Clare convent would have had the lax rule indicated by this quotation. It is true that nunneries, even among the Poor Clares, varied slightly and some would say even significantly in obligations and requirements [23]; however the fact that the London house maintained its enclosed status would prevent such comparisons. Shakespeare, it seems, would be unlikely to set up a convent in his play which was morally in diametrical opposition to the London Minories, a well-known and royally supported establishment; such a tactic would be illogical. [24] Not only that, Shakespeare would not have chosen the most strictly enclosed nuns to poke fun at; had he wanted to write monastic satire, he could have found

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[23]According to the abbess, Mother Amata Rose, P.C.C., at the Poor Clare convent in Cleveland, such a difference in degrees of enclosure would have existed from the inception of the order. She wrote in a personal letter to me that, "In the 1500s, enclosure was observed or not observed depending on many factors. There were many variations of observance in that period; you will find something similar in our own time."

[24]Bourdillon says, "Had the practice of their houses been slack and the reputation of the Sisters anything but good, patrons would not have been found amongst those who from their childhood would have heard of the Order and must have picked up its scandal, had there been any. A monastery with a bad name is in the position of a shop with a bad name--dependent on the ignorance of chance customers since it is hopeless of regular patrons" (50). It is true that the London convent was less conventional than others, however, as Bourdillon points out that "The London house not only had the most contact with the world through those who visited it, but it is also the only house whose sisters can be proved to have left their enclosures" (67-68). The London house also had harbored the infamous Mary Felton, whom the King ordered arrested in 1385 as "an apostate and vagabond sister" (69), known as "[t]he only English Minoress . . . whom enclosure suited so little that she fled from it altogether and found her way back into the world" (68). These are the noted exceptions; overall the London house was a well-respected religious enclave.

ample representation of more profane choices of nunneries in the orders which had not chosen enclosure. [25]

Isabella's first question regarding the privileges of the nuns seems to me to be a logical one on the first day of her life at the convent. The question not only fits the situation, it reveals Isabella's desire to present herself as one who has certain expectations which were or were not met by the tour which Sister Francisca has given her. The question is such that opposite renderings may be true: Isabella may have thought that the nuns did not have enough privileges, and her first response may have been one of surprise at the strictness of the convent. If this were the case, Isabella certainly would not reply with a statement that the convent was too severe a rule for her, although perhaps that would have been a more truthful reaction than the one which is more commonly understood--that Isabella anticipated to be allowed more freedom than she faced in reality. The other option is that Isabella actually desires an even sparser life than even the nuns are living. The second option seems to be the more idealistic one of the two, and although Isabella seems to desire a place apart from the world, the fact that she does not remain for even a day suggests that she is not ready to leave the world. Surely a nun of the strictest order would not run from the convent on the first

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[25]In fact, even other nuns who desired to escape the more worldly convents took refuge with the Poor Clares. "In 1364 the Pope granted permission to Margaret de Lancaster, an Augustinian Canoness of the same nunnery of Campsey, to transfer herself to the Order of St Clare, she having already caused herself to be enclosed at Campsey in order to avoid the number of nobles coming to the house" (Power 418).

day--it is more likely that she would have been admonished that to do so would be turning her back on the choice that she had already made, and that would in turn be a repudiation of her own intentions. [26]

Nevertheless, Isabella's intentions are not clearly known, especially because she is not a professed nun. She is one who appears at the convent on her first-day tour as she begins her new life. That women who lived in convents were not always professed nuns is commonly known; [27] but Isabella does not seem to be content to be one of them. She certainly indicates her willingness to adopt the lifestyle of a nun, and she gives every indication that she plans to take final vows, as her vocation is a serious one. Her very presence at the convent suggests that she may have made a simple vow of her own, and such vows, absenting the Church, were nevertheless considered binding to some degree. According to the *Summa* of Joannes Faventinus, written ca. 1171, "To set aside a desiderium . . . is slightly sinful, for there is an obligation, though a relatively minor one, to follow through the course of

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[26]Again, according to Mother Amata Rose, P.C.C., "It is difficult to say whether a novice in a given community would be permitted or counseled to return to her family in a crisis situation. Depending on the mentality of the abbess, either response would be possible."

[27]See Power 26, who indicates that at times women who entered convents did not take final vows, and some refused altogether despite remaining in a convent for years. In addition, all enclosed convents had some sisters who did not take final vows in order to serve the rest of the sisters as a representative in the outside world. The *Catholic Encyclopedia* says of the Poor Clares that "Each monastery includes extern sisters, who, although an integral part of the community, do not make solemn vows, but attend to the public chapel and outside business of the monastery" (Aschmann 567).

action which has been tentatively decided upon" (qtd in Brundage 50). Such a tentative decision seems to be in accord with Isabella's plans, though she may even have gone farther than that and had her father agree to a personal vow of chastity at a younger age, since a woman's vows were subject to the wishes of the man who ruled her, either her father or her husband. The author of the anonymous commentary *Summa Parisiensis* (1160) specifies that

> [i]n dealing with vows made by women [one may draw] an interesting distinction between the power of a husband or father to quash a vow of abstinence or a pilgrimage vow, even if he had earlier given his consent, and his absolute inability to revoke a vow of continence once his consent had been given.
> (qtd in Brundage 49)

As Isabella appears to be the only recourse for her brother, she seems to be in an awkward position in society already--she is in charge of herself to some degree. Claudio does not send for a parent despite the fact that he is about to die, nor is there any mention of either parent except during Isabella's tirade wherein she questions Claudio's parentage, and she indicates that their father is dead--"there my fathers graue / Did vtter forth a voice" (3.1.86-7). Thus Shakespeare eliminates the question of whether or not Isabella has been coerced into a life in the convent. She evidently has chosen it on her own, and therefore must be considered serious in her pursuit of an enclosed life.

Lest it be thought that persons seeking a religious life in England had no recourse during the years following the dissolution of the monasteries, it seems in order to include an indication of what a young English woman who desired an enclosed life might do after 1539. A steady stream of religious visited from the continent, during the times that was possible, and represented to hopefuls the kind of life that awaited the novice. The continent therefore provided an appropriate course of action, according to *The Benedictines in Britain*:

> At first, individual men and women who felt the call entered monasteries abroad. For example, in 1580 Dame Joanna Berkeley, the daughter of an ancient Gloucestershire family, became a Benedictine nun at Rheims, and in 1597 was invited to become abbess of a new house at Brussels which was the first Benedictine foundation for English catholics since the dissolution of the monasteries. (Jebb & Rogers 92)

Perhaps Shakespeare placed his monastery in Vienna for precisely this reason. [28] The opportunity for enclosure, then, had shifted from nearby London to the continent, resulting in a drain of people who desired a strict,

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[28] Although the text is set in Vienna, there is little within the text to substantiate this other than some minor references, and especially one to "the dukes". J. W. Lever in "The Date of *Measure for Measure*" indicates that "[a]rchdukes or dukes were much in the news all summer (of 1604): hence probably Lucio's hitherto unexplained reference to 'the other dukes'; while the name of Isabella, joint ruler of Austria, may not be without relevance to Shakespeare's play" (387). According to Mark Eccles, "Crane probably added '*The Scene Vienna*' on the last page" (294). Nevertheless, the fact that the story originated in Vienna might have had some influence on Shakespeare.

holy life from England to monasteries and convents elsewhere. Men or women who desired to follow the monastic lifestyle still had the opportunity to do so in Shakespeare's time, and this choice of lifestyle began with some solemn promises.

The life of a Poor Clare is one of renunciation and denial. It begins with a divine calling, and this fact was recognized in the Rule of St. Clare, which states that "If, by divine inspiration, anyone should . . . desire to embrace this life, the Abbess is required to seek the consent of all the sisters" (St. Clare 211-212). After having been tested on certain rudiments of the Catholic faith, if found "acceptable" (St. Clare 212), and "if she has no husband" or has one "who has already entered religious life" (St. Clare 212), then she would be adjured to "go and sell all that she has" and give to the poor, in accordance with the Gospel and the teachings of Saint Francis. Once she has met all the requirements and sold all her possessions, she may be accepted into the abbey. Immediately she would have her hair cut off, as did Saint Clare, and she would dress in appropriate clothing. From this point on, she must remain in the monastery under the care of a Novice Mistress who will instruct her on the fine points of the rule, as Francisca seems to have instructed Isabella. The Novice Mistress must "form [the novices] in a holy manner of living and proper behavior according to the form of our

profession" (St. Clare 213). [29]

The fact that the Rule of Saint Clare clearly indicates that the Novice Mistress would take firm control over the welfare of the novice makes Francisca's actions difficult to interpret. Francisca has met Isabella and has led her around the abbey, instructing her in the fine points she must expect to follow there. This behavior lends credence to the idea that Shakespeare was knowledgeable regarding the behavior of the Novice Mistress, at least up

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[29]In D. H. Turner's *The Benedictines in Britain*, Rachel Stockdale's chapter entitled "'A School of The Lord's Service,'" summarizes the first day at St. Augustine's Abbey, Canterbury:

> "Three days before admission, the new entrants were invited to dine with the abbot and were introduced to their novice-master who was responsible for their material needs. During the preliminary days, he prepared them for confession and instructed them in the rudiments of liturgical ceremonial. The day of admission began with attendance at mass, until the elevation of the host when the novices were required to withdraw. After the service, they were taken to the chapter, and they prostrated themselves while the abbot made formal enquiry as to what they wanted. The prior answered on behalf of them all, 'We desire the grace of God.' The abbot then warned of the hardships and trials of monastic life and posed three conventional questions: were they free-born, were they in good health, and were they prepared to take the rough with the smooth, to sustain obedience and to endure abuse for the love of Christ and their own salvation? If the proper response was given, 'Yes, by the grace of God', the abbot proceeded with further questions: had they ever been professed in any other order, had they ever entered any marriage contract, had they any debts, and had they ever been guilty of any major breach of law? A negative answer was expected, 'No, by the grace of God'. With this proof of their sincerity and suitability the abbot granted their request for admission and commended them to God. As a symbol of their new status, the novices were shaved and dressed in a distinctive habit and they returned to their master for further instruction. (Turner 25).

to a point. However, Francisca does something that is questionable when she sends Isabella to answer the door. This action would be highly unlikely, as a novice would be kept under close watch and not be allowed to speak with an unknown male visitor. Francisca allows Isabella to open the door upon the pretext that Isabella has not yet taken vows:

> It is a mans voice: gentle Isabella
> Turne you the key, and know his businesse of him;
> You may; I may not: you are yet vnsworne:
> When you have vowd, you must not speake with men,
> But in the presence of the Prioresse;
> Then if you speake, you must not show your face;
> Or if you show your face, you must not speake.
> He cals againe: I pray you answere him. (1.4.7-14)

Enclosed nuns even today do not remove themselves from their enclosure to speak to outsiders. Instead, the abbey has at least one extern sister, i.e., a sister who has not taken vows whose job it is to attend to the business of answering the telephone or the door and handling the outside affairs. Gless points to the fact that Francisca's language reiterates the rule almost exactly on the behavior of nuns at the door. "Francisca's excerpt from her rule emphasizes, too, that one of its special purposes is to enforce the vow of chastity. What it aims specifically to imprison are the natural inclinations that Claudio has described" (Gless 101). Although Gless seems to have added somewhat to Francisca's speech, his interpretation of the conduct of nuns at the door correctly pinpoints one of the chief reasons for restricting

entry of outsiders to the convent. But Francisca's speech differs from the rule regarding some points while affirming others. The rule states:

> The sisters may not speak in the parlor or at the grille without the permission of the Abbess or her Vicar. And those who have permission should not dare to speak in the parlor unless they are in the presence and hearing of two sisters. Moreover, they should not presume to go to the grille unless there are at least three sisters present [who have been] appointed by the Abbess or her Vicar from the eight discreets who were elected by all the sisters as the council of the Abbess. . . . [The sisters should speak] very rarely at the grille and, by all means, never at the door. (St. Clare 217)

From this section of the rule one may see how Shakespeare has appropriated portions of the rule regarding when a nun may speak, yet he has also incorporated additions which do not appear in the original rule such as the revealing or concealing of the face, which does not appear in the rule. [30]

When Francisca sends Isabella to answer Lucio's call at the door, her action is highly unusual. According to Mother Amata Rose, P.C.C., "Ordinarily the portress would never be a novice, but a mature religious of proven virtue and a 'discreet' or councilor. If a novice were sent, it would have been in most exceptional circumstances." It is true that Francisca must have remained nearby: J. W. Lever notes in his introduction to the Arden

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[30]Gless interprets the additional precautions which Shakespeare adds as part of the satire which he sees in the play. It is, however, quite likely that such behavior had become traditional even though the strictures do not appear in the rule, as St. Francis of Assisi observed such a tradition himself.

Shakespeare edition that "In I. iv Francisca the nun surely does not leave the novice Isabella alone with Lucio: she will retire to the door until the interview is over, and the two women will then make a joint exit" (xxvi). Francisca thus remains nearby to hear the conversation of the two. Regardless of the position of Francisca, the audience of the play must assume that Lucio's speech comes from off-stage. [31] This indicates that Shakespeare recognized that Lucio must appear on the other side of the grille, thus keeping enclosure intact. However, every convent usually has its portress, who must be "mature in her manners and prudent" (St. Clare 223), and who would be sure to keep out visitors. In effect, the portress was someone who made sure that the door was locked--"well secured by two different iron locks, with bars and bolts, so that, especially at night, it may be locked with two keys, one of which the portress is to have, the other the Abbess" (St. Clare 223). Lucio therefore never enters the convent. The rule forbids his entry, for the door "by no means shall . . . be opened to anyone who wishes to enter, except to those who have been granted permission by the Supreme Pontiff or by our Lord Cardinal" (St. Clare 223).

Lucio's arrival brings Isabella's first decision to the forefront, when she chooses to leave immediately in order to defend Claudio and to help arrange for his pardon:

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[31] Eccles notes Howard-Hill (1972, p.123): "Crane's practice with 'within' directions was to write 'within' after the speech-prefix when the dialogue was to be spoken off-stage (49n).

I will about it strait;
No longer staying, but to giue the Mother
Notice of my affaire: (1.4.84-86)

That Isabella does not indicate in any way that she will ask "the Mother" whether or not it is permissible for her to leave is an important point: she has already taken it upon herself to decide what course she will take. According to the rule, the liberty she grants herself might be considered excessive, even under the circumstances. The rule allows for little venturing out; in fact, it explicitly states that "she may not go outside the monastery except for some useful, reasonable, evident, and approved purpose" (St. Clare 212). Although this portion of the rule may have been interpreted differently by various abbesses, it is quite clear that the rule is strict upon the point of leaving the monastery. The original rule of Cardinal Hugolino was so strict, in fact, that Innocent IV attempted to compensate by adding permission to leave "for the reforming of some monastery, or for the sake of governing, or correction, or to avoid some grave expense" (qtd in St. Clare 212n). Of course, Isabella's case is an extreme one. Her brother's life hangs in the balance, and she alone can "[a]ssay the powre" she has on his behalf, as Lucio says (1.4.76). Nevertheless, the juxtaposition of her desire to remove herself from the world into a cloistered environment, and the alacrity with which she leaves it, must have struck Shakespeare's audiences as

significant. Being a novice meant turning one's back on the world, and "[T]he lesser nuns were never to be given licence to go out, except for some fit cause and in the company of another nun" (Power 347). Their days were to be filled instead with going to and from prayer:

> They were allowed to enter the chapel, chapter, dorter and frater at due and fixed times; otherwise they were to remain in the cloister; and none of these places were to be entered by seculars, save very seldom and for some sufficient reason. No nun was to converse with any man, except seriously and in a public place, and at least one other nun was always to be present at such conversations. (Power 347)

But Lucio adjures Isabella to leave immediately to "Goe to Lord Angelo / And let him learne to know, when Maidens sue / Men giue like gods" (1.4.80-82). She quickly accedes, and indicates that she expects the matter to be settled quickly, indeed that she will notify her brother "soone at night" (1.4.88).

Because it was not uncommon for a nun to be called upon to attend a law court for reasons such as to represent the convent or for personal family business, specific precepts were adopted in order to avoid that occasion as well as to regulate what occurred at court:

> [I]n order to prevent nuns being forced to attend lawcourts in person, [the Bull *Periculoso*] requires all secular and ecclesiastic authorities to allow them to plead by proctors in their courts; but if an Abbess or Prioress has to do personal homage to a secular lord for any fief and it cannot be done by

> a proctor, she may leave her house with honest and fit companions and do the homage, returning home immediately. (Power 345)

Of course, had the abbess sent a proctor for Isabella, the plot would not exist; however, Shakespeare appears knowingly to send Isabella to a law court despite the practice of enclosed nuns remaining in the convent. This points to a decision on Isabella's part that makes her much more independent regarding religious matters than Gless allows. In fact, her decision to leave may indicate that she does not yet have the commitment needed to back up her vow. Whether or not she would develop the commitment after she had been in the convent for a period of time is a moot point--she leaves, and that is the point. Thus Shakespeare sets up a paradox in Isabella, for her inability to commit to her vow contradicts her apparent desire to withdraw from the world.

The next discrepancy between what Isabella does and what she ought to do occurs when Lucio appears with Isabella at the audiences with Angelo. The fact that the two make an unlikely pair is an understatement--a nun would not associate with the likes of Lucio, regardless of the fact that her brother had ties to him. For Bennett, "The aim is not realism, but theater; not pathos, but paradox in making Lucio, the libertine, the coach of Isabella, the virgin, in a plea for mercy for a fornicator, a plea which arouses the judge's lust!" (33). It is an especially powerful scene when one realizes that

Isabella has traded a nun's companionship for that of Lucio. The tableau of Lucio juxtaposed with Isabella is an odd one--the nun's habit contrasts highly with the fantastic's. In addition, although the rule does not require that Isabella have a nun accompany her, Power notes that it seems unlikely that a nun in such a situation would be permitted to leave the convent alone (as it seems Isabella has done in order to meet Lucio), and it is obvious from act 2 scene 2 that she has done just that[32], and that she does so again in act 2 scene 4. In itself, the action of leaving the convent alone does not impugn Isabella's character in the least, but her association with Lucio does call her actions into question. The rule does require that she "zealously avoid all meetings or dealings that could be called into question" (St. Clare 221).

Isabella does present herself to Angelo in a way that meets the requirements of the rule regarding a nun speaking outside the convent. She remembers to "conduct [herself] virtuously and speak little, so that those who see [her] may always be edified" (St. Clare 221)--hence the religiously charged language of her speeches on mercy. She enters Angelo's presence introduced as "a very vertuous maid, / And to be shortlie of a Sister-hood, /

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[32]I agree with Power that a nun, especially a novice, venturing out on her own seems unlikely. However, since the rule does not forbid such action, it must be allowed that she has the freedom to choose to leave on her own. Mother Amata Rose indicates that "It is difficult to say whether a novice in a given community would be permitted or counseled to return to her family in a crisis situation. Depending on the mentality of the abbess, either response would be possible. Whether [a nun in Isabella's situation] would have left alone would also depend on the local situation. Probably she would have been alone."

If not alreadie" (2.2.20-22), according to the Provost. At first, her ambivalent appeal denounces the "fault" (2.2.35) while affirming that she is "At warre, twixt will, and will not" (2.2.33) in arguing in Claudio's defense. When Angelo flatly refuses, she quickly acquiesces--"Oh iust, but seuere Law! I had a brother then" (2.2.41-42). The whole introductory interview takes a mere seventeen lines, covering 2.2.26 to 2.2.42, before Isabella takes it up again at Lucio's request. The brevity of the introductory interview comes from the suggestion of the rule as well, for a nun outside the convent must keep her speeches to a minimum. But Isabella does not stop with a few words to Angelo; had she, Claudio likely would have died. Instead, Lucio intervenes, and as the old Ambidexter did,[33] incites Isabella to go beyond what she had intended. Mathew Winston, in "'Craft Against Vice': Morality Play Elements in *Measure for Measure*" indicates that "For Shakespeare's audience, Lucio would fit the pattern of just such an ambidexter. He helps and betrays, slanders the Duke to Friar Lodowick and then defames the Friar to the Duke" (238). Lucio himself exhibits a plethora of iniquities, and he does have the ability to sway Isabella to do things which she should not, however slight her indiscretions may appear. One must recall that Isabella should act as a "thing en-skied and sainted" (1.4.34), and not succumb to temptation. As a tempter, Lucio succeeds here. Winstone notes that "[t]he

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[33]According to the *Concise Oxford English Dictionary*, the word ambidextrous itself indicates the ability to work "in either of two media"--and for Lucio, that would be the physical and the spiritual worlds. Too, to be ambidextrous can indicate a "deceitful" personality.

name of Lucio recalls that of Lucifer, and the crime for which Lucio is punished at the play's conclusion, slander, may remind us that the devil is the prince of lies, or even that the word *diabolos* means 'slanderer'" (Winston 235). With Isabella, Lucio manages to turn her towards a more vehement and passionate appeal to Angelo, an appeal which eventually will pull Isabella close to an affair that is morally questionable at best. It might arguably be said that Lucio tempts Isabella to "assay the powre" (1.4.76) she has, for he points out immediately that should "hang vpon [Angelo's] gowne" (2.2.44); she is "too cold" (2.2.45) to sway him.

However, Isabella's interview with Angelo also has merit. She purposely words her responses to Angelo's inquiries in order to edify Angelo, reminding him that mercy is above all, that no other quality would "Become [a ruler] with one halfe so good a grace / As mercie does" (2.2.62-3). Thus Isabella is truly at war between will and will not--she attempts both a passionate and a spiritual appeal, at once assaying physical entreaties by touching Angelo and spiritual ones by offering prayers for him. Such a dichotomy appears contradictory in a nun, and Isabella's actions with Angelo have always engendered contradictory responses from the critics. Battenhouse's early work on "*Measure for Measure* and Christian Doctrine of the Atonement" notes Isabella's dilemma as something akin to a passion play of a different sort---"in an ambiguous sense, . . . analogous on the one hand to Christ's Passion, on the other to human passion" (1046).

Battenhouse, however, sees Isabella as having circumvented any indiscretions by adhering to the rule:

> She withstands temptation because she obeys the *precepts* binding on a votarist of the Order of St. Clare; more than that, she frees a sinner, because she follows the *counsels* of one who wears the garb of St. Francis. (Battenhouse 1046)

Others see her as altogether too naive to understand her own argument, among them Lawrence Sargent Hall in "Isabella's Angry Ape":

> The diatribe begins precisely at the middle of the middle line of this speech (a speech so precociously balanced poetically and rhetorically that it is stylistically incompatible with the suit of a girl so inexperienced that she requires moment-to-moment prompting by Lucio). (158)

To Hall, Isabella's behavior accentuates her withdrawal from the human race, and does not in any way indicate her own feelings of ambivalence regarding the position she has found herself because of Claudio's behavior:

> The speech is not in spirit or inflection a special and concrete plea at all, but a broad and casing animadversion on the pretentiousness of the human race, *after* the fact which in Isabella's young life has not yet taken place! (Hall 158)

But Isabella in actuality appears to combine two seemingly disparate qualities--and this is her specialty, that she can combine them so completely.

For example, it seems difficult for some critics to reconcile the fact that such a pure and innocent novice could have such a profound effect on Angelo. Critics for years have been vacillating between naming Isabella "a monstrous hypocrite" (Mackay 111) because of her refusal to offer herself in exchange for Claudio and her castigation of his fear of death, and seeing her as the object of Angelo's "perversity": "It is as if [Angelo] discovered that he was a pervert who could be stimulated only by manifest goodness in another person" (Nuttall 242). Such a statement disallows Angelo's judgment--should he be attracted only by "the strumpet / With all her double vigor, art and nature"? Neither Isabella nor Mariana fits such a mold, and both attracted Angelo. In "The Ironic Hierarchy in *Measure for Measure*", David K. Weiser says of Isabella's dealing with the court and with Angelo:

> Joining the order of St. Clare presumably would have prevented any such entanglement, but her actions in the play lead her into a deepening contact with the base side of human nature. The gap between her theoretical knowledge of good and evil and her actual inexperience is gradually closed. (Weiser 331)

The very fact that Isabella's identity becomes entangled in these contradictory impulses causes contradictory interpretations of her character,

and whether or not she moves from naivete to knowledge, she does struggle between the two impulses.

Characters like Angelo and Claudio fall into the category of "husbands worth winning once they have repented of their earlier errors," according to Catherine Belsey in *The Subject of Tragedy: Identity and Difference in Renaissance Drama*, yet Isabella does not have need of repentance per se. Such "female parallels" do not occur "in the period", for "women's innocence, once lost, is gone for ever" (Belsey 170). Isabella's character development is antipodal--she moves from absolute innocence to intimate (albeit vicarious) knowledge of good and evil. Some critics see Isabella as being as guilty as Angelo, or they see at the least that she and the Duke share a sin. W. L. Godshalk in "Measure for Measure: Freedom and Restraint" states, "Although they remain physically pure, both the Duke and Isabel symbolically share the sin of Angelo and Mariana in the illicit bed, as they recapitulate the act of Claudio and Juliet" ("Freedom" 146). But at least one critic, Mrs. Charlotte Lennox, said of Isabella that she has "the manners of an affected prude" (qtd in Smith 213). Isabella does learn, though, and this fact brings Kittredge to say that "Both Angelo and Isabella must, in fact, be educated at the hands of the Duke in the relation of abstract moral principles to the facts of human life" (xvi-xvii).

The scene between Angelo and Isabella, her first scene outside the convent, and their concurrent interview, indicate her unwillingness to

commit to her vow to remove herself from the world, despite her attempts at remaining intent on achieving her goal of edifying Angelo. This is true simply because she fails at restraining her sensuality, and because she willingly acquiesces to Lucio's suggestions, she reveals the extent to which she can be swayed by her physical side. In fact, he is most swayed when she admits she is of the female sex, when she says that "we are soft, as our complexions are / And credulous to false prints" (2.4.129-30). Angelo immediately says "I do arrest your words" (2.4.134), and points out Isabella's dilemma succinctly and exactly:

> Be that you are,
> That is a woman; if you be more, you'r none.
> If you be one (as you are well exprest
> By all externall warrants) shew it now,
> By putting on the destin'd Liuerie. (2.4.134-38)

In Angelo's eyes, Isabella's choice of a cloistered life denies her outward appearance, despite her religious garb. If appearance matches reality, then to Angelo, Isabella deceives by her appearance. Though appearance rarely mirrors reality, in Isabella's case, the reality of her appearance, evidenced in her ability to stir emotions, contradicts the profession she makes. Claudio recognizes this skill inherent in her; Lucio helps her develop it. Tillyard sees this particular scene as a pivotal one for Isabella, "in which she gradually discards the drawing in of herself into cloistral concentration and reaches

out again into a worldly observation she has newly renounced" (143). She goes beyond mere worldly observation, however; her words, which should soon form final vows, form statements contrary to her underlying belief in the efficacy of promises. When Angelo says that it is too late to call back his words, Isabella affirms the fleeting nature of language:

> Too late? why no: I that doe speak a word
> May call it againe (2.2.57-8)

It is true that, for the time being Isabella as a novice may withdraw or deny a simple vow; yet once she speaks her final vows, the words cannot be called back again. Others see an inherent problem in Isabella's desire to enter the convent, but Isabella must recognize her human side and acknowledge it.

Isabella's sensuality does have a strict limit. When I speak of her sensuality, I refer to that art which she has plied upon Angelo at Lucio's request, and those characteristics which bring her beauty and femininity to the forefront. She couches her religious argument in terms quite sensual. She says, "I would to heauen I had your potencie" (2.2.67). Lucio incites her to "touch him" (2.2.70), as if she parries a sword before him and can outwit him with a fencing move of good logic. Yet her ultimate victory comes from her persistence. During her speech she moves in Lucio's eyes from "maiden" (1.4.80) to "wench" (2.2.124), to "Girle" (2.2.129). The movement parallels the increasing sensual imagery of her speech. She speaks of mercy which

"will breathe within [Angelo's] lips" (2.2.78), and finishes with references to his "bosome" (2.2.136) "heart" (2.2.137), and "tongue" (2.2.140). Lucio notices this movement toward the sensual, too, and quickly interprets Angelo's reaction in highly charged language: "Hee's comming: I perceiue't" (2.2.125). This denotes not only Lucio's own interest in the sexual conquest, but also his acute involvement in the scene. [34]

Isabella herself does not appear to realize the power that she has; Lucio must tell her what she must do to succeed. However, when her attempts to appeal for Claudio's release backfire in Angelo's allowing his "sensual race the rein" (2.4.160), he unbridles a lust which Isabella cannot and will not curb. Her vow forbids it; his own vows, to Mariana and to Vienna, supersede it. Isabella abhors his suggestions; such a response indicates her ability to restrain her own sensuality--and that ability prevents her from completely giving over her intention to take vows, and it also prevents her from what she considers to be serious sin. The awakening of her sensual side via Lucio's intervention, along with her increased understanding of the knowledge of good and evil through her contact with the world, place Isabella in the position where her former intention to take religious vows and to enter a convent becomes commuted or interchanged for a set of marriage vows, which fits both her physical and spiritual sides better than her first

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[34]The *Oxford English Dictionary* uses this exact quote as an example of its definition number 16 of the verb "to come": that is "of persons: to yield, be favorably moved," along with a similar quote from Volpone.

intention would have. In effect, Isabella must learn to know herself, and she does this with the help of the Duke in disguise as Friar Lodowick. As a result, it is in no way Isabella's fault that she does not enter the convent; it is Isabella's essence that leads her another way.

Isabella's inability to move into the convent and to accept its strictures as appropriate to her own life in no way diminishes her character. In fact, the movement helps to illuminate her ability to understand the importance of vows. She must understand first the promise that she will make and all its implications. The fact that Isabella fits the prototypical virgin who marries indicates that Shakespeare knowingly incorporated Isabella's desire for poverty, chastity, obedience and enclosure into her personality, and showed how her passionate, sensual, and simply human side needed more balance than the convent could offer her. Too, the similarities between Mariana and Isabella outnumber their differences--Shakespeare certainly mirrors one with the other, and Mariana would not make a good nun either. Isabella, as a woman caught in a paradigmatic portrayal of sexual harrassment, has few avenues through which she can achieve justice. She allows herself to be ruled by the Duke, and therefore she also exchanges one ruler for another. She does so without the specific verbal recognition which would have made Isabella a heroine unparalleled in Shakespeare's works--one who self-consciously grows significantly from her first appearance to her last. The fact that Isabella instead silently acquiesces to the Duke's marriage proposal

troubles some critics, but her growth has been so monumental that she may have been shocked at her own recognition that she would prefer marriage to the convent, and thus remained silent.

Silence as a dramatic technique is nothing out of place in Shakespeare; Cordelia's death and the silence which follows it echoes in Lear's words, "Look on her! Look her lips" (5.3.311-12), and underlines the speech in silence. Claudio has said that Isabella has a "speechlesse dialect" (1.2.188), and there is nothing to indicate that she has not moved from the art of her former persuasive speeches to a more subtle, speechless persuasion, that speechless dialect that affects through impressive silence. Silence grows naturally out of the problems inherent in language throughout the play, such as Isabella's inability to keep her word, or even her intent, to enter the convent. The inability to make a promise results in an inability to speak any word, because words betray, as they did with Romeo & Juliet. Romeo's and Juliet's statues stand for their new and pure language of silence which cannot betray through a name. The "nothing" of Cordelia and the quiet acceptance of Isabella may be one and the same kind of dramatic device. Unspoken love may be a more powerful thing than love that can be reduced to words.

For Philip C. McGuire, in *Speechless Dialect: Shakespeare's Open Silences*, "*Measure for Measure* provides the most challenging and complex example of Shakespeare's use of open silence. During the final moment of the play six characters fall silent" (63). Thus, Isabella is not alone

in her silence. McGuire notes that "The six open silences of the final scene of *Measure for Measure* and the groupings that can emerge as a result of the links among them give the play an extraordinary freedom, a capacity for contingency and change unmatched by any other Shakespearean play with the possible exception of *King Lear*" (63). Some critics feel that Isabella's silence permits opposing interpretations of her response to the Duke. McGuire repeats a list of performances which end in opposing results--the Duke is accepted in one performance, but rejected by Isabella in another; Angelo prefers death to life and directly contradicts Mariana and Isabella's attempts to win his freedom; the Duke is portrayed as less than powerful in his final judgment scene, whereas often he is portrayed as omnipotent in the last act. The differences in production, according to McGuire, grow out of the silences inherent in the work. Nothing, according to McGuire, gives any indication that one performance is preferable to another, as "the open silences that abound during [the play's] final moments ensure that its generic identity is not fixed and cannot be definitively specified" (96). This is true specifically because the play is able "to move beyond and float free of its verbal elements" (96). That plays ended in either comedy or tragedy in different productions was a common occurrence; more than once Romeo got his Juliet and all worked out well in the end. But in those cases, the play itself was substantially changed. With *Measure for Measure,* both endings appear to coexist. Northrop Frye feels that the comedy overweighs

the tragedy, and thus the audience-member may assure himself that "It'll all work out just fine, so don't you worry" (Frye 149). But the reason for the lack of verbal elements in this last scene is inherent in the problem with promises and vows which the characters face. Isabella's last words, before the Duke asks for her hand, focus specifically on the problematic relationship between intent and performance, and therefore on the problem of words as promises:

> For *Angelo*, his Act did not ore-take his bad intent
> And must be buried but as an intent
> That perish'd by the way: thoughts are no subiects
> Intents, but meerely thoughts. (5.1.458-9)

To be bound by a thought or intent is to be bound by a strong force; however, Isabella says that an intent and a thought are one in the same, hence to change an intent is nothing more than to change one's mind. This is a radical speech for a novice to make--intent and vows are supposed to be interchangeable; however, in the real world of *Measure for Measure*, it is sometimes preferable for an intent to undergo change in order for a more profitable promise to be kept.

Without Isabella's words to confirm her thoughts, the critic is left to deduce what she might do from her previous actions. However, despite her silence she evidently gives the Duke her hand when he asks for it (5.1.497). Her innocence has combined with her new-found knowledge to create a stronger personality; therefore her commutation of one vow for another

highlights the importance of her ability to avoid repudiation and instead to commit to keeping a vow.

Canon law permits Isabella to change her mind, although the practice of approaching and then of turning away from solemn religious vows was frowned upon by even the laity before and during the Renaissance. Canon 1194 specifically states:

> A vow ceases when the time appointed for the fulfillment of its obligation has passed, when there is a substantial change in the matter promised or when the condition on which the vow depends or the purpose for which it was made no longer exists; it also ceases through dispensation or commutation. (431)

Isabella's promise to become a nun was not yet final; it was an intent which she might lay aside, and she had every right to leave the convent if she so desired. W. W. Lawrence recognized this as well:

> The marriage of Isabella to the Duke, which appears to be impending at the close of the play, must be accepted as proper, since she had not yet taken vows, and since the retirement of a novice from an order and her subsequent marriage was, and still is, in complete accord with Roman Catholic custom. (120)

Specifically, Canon 653, states that a "novice can freely leave an institute" at any time before professing final vows. Therefore, despite the fact that Isabella may appear hypocritical to some in turning away from the novitiate,

she in fact has merely begun to understand herself better. For Isabella, I believe the play suggests that it is better for her to marry. One of Isabella's greatest defenders, R. W. Chambers, also sees Isabella married, yet wisely includes this disclaimer:

> Yet Isabel is a novice, and her business as a novice is to learn her Creator's intentions for her future. Whether she ought to return to the cloister from which she has been so urgently summoned rests with her creator--William Shakespeare. And he leaves her silent, and us guessing. For myself, I am satisfied that Isabel will do her duty in that state of life unto which it shall please William Shakespeare to call her, whether as abbess or duchess. (55)

CHAPTER III

THE DUKE'S DARK DEEDS: THOUGH HE MIGHT "STEALE FROM THE STATE", STILL *CUCULLUS NON FACIT MONACHUM*

The enigmatic Vincentio, Duke of Vienna, has been vexing critics for years by stubbornly hiding his identity in corners, appearing now a Duke, now a friar, and almost always being judged badly in either office. Shakespeare's Duke is an intriguing mix of philosophical, religious, and political convictions; his participation in the instigation of the bed trick continues to draw negative commentary, not only because of its apparent immorality, but also because of the number of lies the Duke must relate in order to pull off his scheme. The Duke's actions present an enigmatic challenge if one attempts to reconcile his position as moral leader with his ultimate position as ruler of Vienna. The Duke is a character who must undergo the process of discovering himself, and in the end he must understand how he can keep his promise regarding ruling Vienna, which includes a promise of holding the office, representing himself as a good and stable leader, ruling his subjects wisely, and judging them justly.

"[I]t is vertuous to be constant in any vndertaking" (3.2.238-9), says the Duke. [35] To undertake a contract, and then to invalidate that contract through lack of action or improper action, results in the utter abolition of everything for which the contract stood. The Duke himself recognizes that the foundation of society rests upon honor between parties:

> There is scarse truth enough aliue to make Societies secure, but Securitie enough to make Fellowships accurst: Much vpon this riddle runs the wisedome of the world: This newes is old enough, yet it is euerie daies newes. (3.2.235-43)

Therefore societal organization rests upon an agreement between one person and another, between several employees and an employer, and between many citizens and one ruling office. After Shakespeare, Rousseau would emphasize that such agreements remove man from a purely natural state to a civilized one wherein promises become mutually beneficial. But Shakespeare's Duke attempts to point out a similar truth--that agreements are built upon a truth tenuous enough to permit to false agreements, those which "make Fellowships accurst", and sometimes the truth becomes only barely sufficient to maintain "Societies secure." That the Duke himself has not set a good example in keeping agreements suggests that he, too, has something to learn about maintaining security in his own society. The Duke

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[35]For a discussion of the legal term "undertaking" and the English law of *assumpsit*, see Chapter 4.

must, in effect, learn how to keep the agreement between himself and his people. Such an agreement must be defined from both the Duke's perspective as well as from the perspective of the people; the Duke expects his subjects to obey, and his subjects expect him to rule.

The person of the Duke becomes the focus of the judgments of critics, who heap upon the play either condemnation or praise based on his actions. For W. W. Lawrence in *Shakespeare's Problem Comedies*, "The Duke in *Measure for Measure* combines the functions of State and Church in his person" (Lawrence 103); and though Lawrence sees the Duke as "an important personage in the action, and in the characterization and the moral implications of the play" (91), yet he also sees the Duke as an insufficient character, as

> essentially a puppet, cleverly painted and adroitly manipulated, but revealing, in the thinness of his coloring and in the artificiality of his movements, the wood and pasteboard of his composition. (Lawrence 112)

Whereas Lawrence defines the Duke as an important yet cardboard figure, some critics go much further in dehumanizing the Duke. Indeed, this kind of thinking about the character easily devolves into an opinion like that of Rosalind Miles, who wrote *The Problem of Measure for Measure: A Historical Investigation.* Miles has an intrinsic distaste for the play

which must perforce show itself in her criticisms; and her criticism of the Duke includes a criticism of Shakespeare as well, whose

> lack of conviction in his Duke as a satisfactory agent of what he is trying to do, coupled with his awareness of the strains inherent in the original material, results in this strangely unrounded and undeveloped character. (Miles 196)

This approach makes the character of the Duke a scapegoat for any perceived ills, both in the play and in Vienna, and directly opposes those critics who see the Duke as a powerful and benevolent manipulator of lives.

The critical understanding of the character of the Duke has generally been built upon the various interpretations of Duke-ruler, Duke-King James, and Duke-director. Some like Knight, Battenhouse, and their followers, base their interpretation upon the reader's preference for allegorization, and indicate that the Duke is a sovereign redeemer or even a Christ figure. For Knight, the play's and the Duke's moral and ethical boundaries are identical:

> The Duke, lord of this play in the exact sense that Prospero is lord of *The Tempest*, is the prophet of an enlightened ethic. He controls the action from start to finish, he allots, as it were, praise and blame, he is lit at moments with divine suggestion comparable with his almost divine power of fore-knowledge, and control, and wisdom. There is an enigmatic, other-worldly, mystery suffusing his figure and the meaning of his acts: their results, however, in each case justify their initiation; wherein we see the allegorical nature of the play, since the plot is so arranged that each person receives his deserts in the light of the Duke's--which is really the Gospel--ethic. (Knight 74)

The idea that the Duke represents an allegory of a Christ-figure may be more or less amplified; Mary Lascelles chose to follow it when she adopted the paradigm of the benevolent ruler, whom she sees as revealing himself through his grand design of intrigue on behalf of his citizens:

> Accepting I. iii, then, as a scene in which the Duke discloses some part of his purpose to an interlocutor whom he holds worthy of confidence, we gain this assurance: all that he says and does relates to some design at least partly framed. As to its scope, we know enough if we recognize that it follows one of the oldest patterns of myth, folk-tale and romance, associated time out of mind with a happy ending: the story of the good prince who, unseen, will see for himself, and set all to rights.
> (Lascelles 56)

But such an idea, namely that the Duke has a grand design and the will to carry it out, does not necessarily mean that the Duke actually represents perfection in office and out. He may not represent a "good" Duke at the start of the play, and this question plagues critics as well. Some believe that the Duke should be considered as a representative of a nearly all-powerful good, hovering over and watching all to ensure the success of the production. Such an idea might mean that Shakespeare intended to portray Vincentio as the benevolent Duke-director of a play within the play.

Interpretations based on the theatrical import of the Duke's character result in the belief that the Duke is in fact a Prospero-like figure--in other

words, that, as a good and positive embodiment of his creator, the Duke moves among his actors and characters ordering people and events to a specific end. Such a view appeals to critics like Josephine Waters Bennett, who in *Measure for Measure as Royal Entertainment* observes Shakespeare's reflection in the Duke's movements, and believes that Shakespeare himself may have played the part of the Duke:

> It has long been assumed that Shakespeare had something to say about the production of his plays; and that he wrote, especially in the comic parts, with particular actors in mind, but here he is, writing a part for himself--dramatizing himself as playwright, director, and actor. (Bennett 149)

Bennett sees the play as combining Shakespeare as producer, director, and actor with a model of the perfect political ruler. To adopt such a stance is highly controversial and calls for more information to refute it than it does to propound it; yet, the idea that Shakespeare may have played the Duke is an appealing one. That the Duke himself represents an authority figure is unquestionable; the question becomes whether or not the authority of his office remains in his private person, and whether or not he represents a positive or negative image in and out of office.

For Bennett, this ideal political ruler exemplifies not only good government, but a perfect balance of power and familiarity, of legality and compassion:

> He is the King's scholar, his puppet, and in the last act he becomes the King's playwright, producing a play which exemplifies the highest ideals of justice and mercy which King James had prescribed for 'myself and mine.' Seen in this light, the play fits together like a nest of boxes, with Shakespeare, the master-dramatist, directing it as well as acting in it. (148-49)

Such interpretations of the Duke in his official status draw similarities in his portrait and the character of King James, either from personal and political ideals or directly from the King's own writing, the *Basilikon Doron.* For some critics, the Duke may or may not be a clear or flattering portrayal of the King. J. W. Lever indicates that this "politic Duke" in *Measure for Measure* "in so many ways resemble[s] James I" (Lever 388); whereas Richard Levin, in "The King James Version of *Measure for Measure*", discounts this by saying that "Shakespeare and his contemporaries would have been very unlikely to write a play for a special audience or event" (Levin 159), and hence would not necessarily attempt to flatter the King merely because he was in the audience. Nor does Levin see echoes of the King's writing, but rather the reiteration in both *Measure for Measure* and *Basilikon Doron* of "platitudes of traditional wisdom" (137). According to W. W. Lawrence, Shakespeare may have removed his Duke even farther from the realm of reality, as he argues that "[The Duke's] state policies and his moral reforms must be viewed as belonging in the realm of story-telling, not as serious discussion of moral issues, or as a transcript of life" (120).

Therefore, whether one interprets the Duke's political prowess as derived from platitude or myth, it seems unlikely that Shakespeare would have attempted to portray the Duke as a shadow of King James; it seems to me, in fact, that the Duke's actions would be too questionable to have been considered a flattering portrayal of the King--after all, what King would want to be implicated in the machinations of the bed trick?

That something is wrong and therefore unflattering about the character of the Duke appears in much criticism; some critics believe that the Duke must change from a bad duke to a good one, whereas others do not see any redeeming qualities in the Duke. Joseph Westlund, in his *Shakespeare's Reparative Comedies* indicates that

> Since turning his power over to a deputy hardly makes things less tyrannous, we are at a loss to know what motivates the Duke--especially since he then announces that, despite his having claimed to love 'the life removed,' he will at once return to Vienna in disguise 'to behold [Angelo's] sway'.
> (Westlund 153)

The fact that the Duke has promised to rule Vienna and then immediately abdicated has been mentioned only rarely; Westlund says that "The Duke first presents governance as a going forth of the ruler's virtue, then he abandons his state" (Westlund 153). This sudden abdication certainly indicates a lack of commitment to his office, which in itself raises questions. The Duke's abdication demonstrates his apparent disinterest in showing his

own authority without resorting to the appointment of a deputy, but his further actions seem more appropriate in fostering a paternal image toward his people. Some critics more optimistic than Westlund therefore believe that the Duke changes throughout the course of the play. William Bache, in *Measure for Measure as Dialectical Art*, suggests that the Duke makes a "complete progress ... from seeming Duke to seeming Friar to real Duke" (Bache 20). Similarly, Northrop Frye feels that the Duke draws the audience along with him, from the heights of his office to the lower levels of society:

> 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. (Frye 141)

Frye ultimately argues that the Duke manipulates and orchestrates his own elaborate play in the second half of *Measure for Measure.* [36]

Most critics agree that, at least, the importance of the Duke's character increases during the course of the play. E. M. W. Tillyard, in his

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[36]According to Northrop Frye, the second half of the play is the Duke's: "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" (148-49).

Shakespeare's Problem Plays, says that "Up to [3.1.151] the Duke, far from being guide and controller, has been a mere conventional piece of dramatic convenience for creating the setting for the human conflicts. Beyond that he is just an onlooker" (130). The Duke goes "From being a minor character in the first half, with no influence on the way human motives are presented, [to the] dominant character in the second half and the one through whose mind human motives are judged" (Tillyard 132). The audience shares knowledge with the Duke alone, who, in his disguise as friar departs secretly and hides among his own people. But the Duke becomes emblematic of the problem with Vienna as well; his character has abandoned the law which requires him to keep the state, just as Vienna has abandoned the old law against fornication. The Duke himself has chosen to exercise liberty, and to excuse himself from office, just as the people have abandoned themselves to a surfeit of liberty.

If a critic ultimately abandons the possibility of understanding the Duke's motives he might agree with A. P. Rossiter's assessment that the play merely "goes thin" (169) at the end, specifically due to the character of the Duke:

> If what we make of the ending depends on what we make of the Duke, then all I can say is that the Duke (like everybody except Barnardine) is ambiguous: therefore the ending is ambiguous too. (Rossiter 168)

If Shakespeare makes his Duke ambiguous, then he has made the entire play ambiguous, and this ambiguity throughout does shape the world of *Measure for Measure* with its abundance of opposing forces. But Shakespeare's Duke does not act ambiguously at the very end of the play; he moves swiftly and accurately after he has been revealed as himself. The difference in the Duke at the beginning of the play, and the Duke at the end of the play, displays a growth in character like that of Isabella. The Duke learns to accept his own destiny and to adapt himself to what he must do. He learns, in effect, to keep his promise to rule Vienna and to adopt the personage of Duke as his own. This fact alone motivates and molds the character of the Duke throughout the play.

The Duke is, in actuality, a Duke who abandons his first promise to govern his people and keep the state in favor of a counterfeit one. The Duke's counterfeit promise is that he will give up all possessions and live in poverty as a friar, aiding those he meets along his path to Heaven. This counterfeit promise diverts the Duke from his primary purpose and results in not only justice delayed but nearly justice denied. In effect, what Bache says rings true--the Duke does move from "seeming Duke" to "real Duke" but the movement occurs because he starts to take seriously his promise to govern Vienna toward the end of the play. Up to a point, Vincentio plays at being a Duke, just as he plays at being a friar. He has not assayed the power he has, and therefore others must attempt to create a just state in the midst

of what amounts to anarchy. The Duke's actions throughout the play reveal that his power is not his own--that the power, in fact, lies in the office, not the person. The usurped friar's habit serves as an outward sign of the Duke's abandonment of his state, his people, and his promise. Lucio says this succinctly when he states that it was a

> mad fantasticall trick of him to steale from the State, and vsurpe the beggerie hee was neuer borne to. (3.2.98-99)

Whether or not Lucio knows that the Duke has absconded from the commonwealth *and returned* does not matter--what might go on in Lucio's mind is anyone's guess--but Lucio does realize that to leave Vienna means that the Duke has left his people, and therefore means that he has abandoned his estate in life and taken upon himself another, lower, estate.

The Duke has admitted that he has neglected his state in the past; now he has deserted it. When he takes upon himself the lifestyle of a friar, he returns to his people, but he returns powerless to help in any but the most superficial way. Even Lucio becomes more powerful than the Duke in action, despite the Duke's superior knowledge:

> Indeed, the paradoxes of speech and situation are pervasive from the opening scene to the last, where Lucio, the most hoodwinked of them all, is the one who pulls the hood from the head of the Duke, the one person who is unhoodwinked (that is, has full knowledge). (Bennett 49-50)

In his person as friar, someone as powerless as Lucio can unhood him and make a Duke; in his person as Duke, Vincentio has his own political power. In his person as Friar, he has the mere appearance of religious power without any actual power. In his person as Duke, religious and political power may join hand in hand, for he can apply mercy to justice.

In fact, the Duke is a curious character who combines an earthly authority in his dukedom with a heavenly authority in the guise of a Franciscan friar, yet as either Duke or Friar he lacks something which is completed by the other personality, a fact that he realizes by the end of the play. The Duke's knowledge of both earthly and heavenly laws should give him an authority above all others around him; yet he is constantly subjected to problems which he can only attempt to overcome, and he continuously scrambles to overcome the hurdles which Angelo throws in his way without resorting to revealing his identity. The Duke's powers, both earthly and heavenly, have distinct limits, and in the end he must rely on a higher authority than himself for the *deus ex machina* of the dead Ragozine, the only truly serendipitous occurrence in the play (for everyone but Ragozine), and the one that ensures that everything turns out well. Though the Duke loves to help others "in doing good" (3.1.204), and attempts to use a quasi-divine power to order events so that in the end justice will prevail, yet the end result of his justice seems to many critics to be injustice. No stronger cry of

injustice could be heard than in the voice of Samuel Johnson, who lamented that

> Angelo's crimes were such, as must sufficiently justify punishment, whether its end be to secure the innocent from wrong, or to deter guilt by example; and I believe every reader feels some indignation when he finds him spared. From what extenuation of his crime can Isabel, who yet supposes her brother dead, form any plea in his favour. (88-89)

Because of the operation of the Duke's mercy, the guilty are rewarded with spouses; not one person is whipped, hanged, or flogged, and even the murderer Barnardine merely becomes remanded into the custody of a friar to undergo instruction. Too, the innocent seem to suffer more than they ought. Isabella must suffer the reality of her brother's death until the Duke deems the time right to tell her that Claudio has not died. To a number of critics, something seems to go wrong with the judgment scene, yet justice and mercy do meet there in the elaborate and dramatic denouement. The idea that the Duke could treat even the most serious offenses with mercy becomes a point of contention. Whereas the Duke integrates his character and assumes his role as giver of justice tempered with mercy, the power of that justice seems to disappear when held up against the light of mercy. But the duality of justice combined with mercy creates a double-perspective, just as the Duke-Friar is two persons in one. Shakespeare keeps the audience squinting at the Duke-Friar, and in the end reveals the Duke as an integrated

person, but only through disguise of the Friar can the real character of the Duke become visible--both to the audience and to the Duke himself.

Measure for Measure appears to have been set up with the ideal of the Aristotelian double plot for comedy, "such as we find in the *Odyssey*, where, at the end, the good are rewarded and the bad punished" (*Poetics* 25). But instead of Aristotle's ideal of the good rewarded and the evil punished, the audience is faced at the end with a wish that "Correction, and Instruction [should have] both worke[d]" (3.2.33) through the person of the Duke. Yet after Act 5, the audience may feel that neither instruction nor correction worked, and therefore may feel cheated. Religion seems powerless, for despite the Duke's entreaties as friar, nothing brings about a better state in the souls of his subjects; in the end the pure force of his own jurisdiction over his subjects, through his own speech, gives weight to what must be justice through grace, "despight of all controuersy" (1.2.25-26). Significantly, all other speech but the Duke's becomes not unnecessary but superfluous--the Duke (by official letter) has himself given Claudio a reprieve; the requests of Mariana and Isabella, though genuine, nevertheless can have no real effect in the world of Vienna except upon themselves. The difference between what the audience expects to be the final judgment of a powerful Duke and what the Duke actually does as a representative of mercy bridges the gap between the powerful Duke and the powerless Friar. The Duke becomes neither all-powerful nor completely powerless. It seems that

neither the Duke's politics nor the Friar's philosophies become the basis of judgment at the end; rather power emanates from the office, whereas mercy emanates from the individual. Hence the duality of Duke-Friar becomes a duality of the office versus the person. His final success comes from the recognition that the true Duke must eclipse the Friar-Duke. So that Shakespeare might represent clearly the progress in the Duke's understanding of himself, the author employs the Friar disguise, which allows the audience to follow the Duke's progress toward keeping his promise to rule effectively. The Duke at first engages Friar Thomas's advice in the necessary preliminary to his appearance as a friar. The Duke quickly quashes Friar Thomas's belief that the motive behind his absconding from the state is love. He continues to impress Friar Thomas with some words on his own character, wherein he notes that he has "euer lou'd the life remoued" (1.3.8) and tells him that he has appointed Angelo specifically because he wishes the laws to be enforced, and that Angelo will "in th'ambush of [the Duke's] name, strike home" (1.3.41). He then asks Friar Thomas specifically for instruction in the duties of a friar:

> Therefore I pre'thee
> Supply me with the habit, and instruct me
> How I may formally in person beare
> Like a true *Frier* (1.3.45-49)

The audience does not, of course, get to hear Friar Thomas's instructions to the Duke; just as the audience does not hear much of the instruction given Isabella by Francisca. The instruction of the Duke by Friar Thomas occurs offstage during the Duke's longest period of absence; six hundred and four lines pass before the Duke reappears as Friar, and therefore the audience must assume that the training he undergoes is rather extensive. [37] After his training, the Duke's activities and his movements among the characters must serve as the example of what he has learned from Friar Thomas.

The Duke's first appearance in his disguise as Friar occurs when the Duke reappears calling himself Friar Lodowick at 2.3.1. His first act is to greet the Provost at a jail; that the Friar and the Provost appear together highlights an important element of the history of the Franciscans in England. During the early years when friars were first beginning to evangelize England, their buildings were relatively poor, as were the friars themselves. The fact that the Duke-Friar meets the Provost at a jail is interesting in light of the fact that some of those early English friars "took up residence in the

[37] Although it is true that the Duke had begun the play in his formal attire as head of state and must exit for a costume change, the length of time needed for a change between these particular costumes must have been short indeed. At the end of the play, there are a mere twenty four lines between the Duke's appearance as Friar and his return as Duke. Therefore, the time off-stage which the Duke spends at the beginning of the play must be written in by Shakespeare purposely; it helps not only to allow time on stage to develop the Isabella-Angelo plot, but also to provide an appropriate and obvious time lapse between the time that the character leaves as Duke Vincentio and the time that he appears as Friar Lodowick.

slums", according to J. C. Dickinson, and at one time had a problem with the proximity of the jail to their home:

> Their first living accommodations were simple dwelling-houses which in England were almost all of wood. The early buildings they added were equally mostly of wood, like the chapel constructed for the Franciscans at Cambridge which a contemporary described as 'so very poor that a carpenter in one day made and set up fifteen pairs of beams' (by which letter phrase is evidently meant the whole of the chapel rafters). Whilst the fact that here the house was next to the jail and that there was but one entrance for jailers and friars very understandably proved 'intolerable.' (Dickinson 45)

This striking scene of jailer and friar in *Measure for Measure* so reminiscent of the situation in Cambridge must have recalled such early days. On their arrival in England the Franciscans set up several houses, including this one at Cambridge and three more at London, Oxford, and Northampton (Dickinson 89). Thus, the friars had been in London since 1224; the Minoresses arrived afterward in 1293. Neither order disappeared completely after the dissolution. Despite this fact, some critics like Rosalind Miles adopt the idea that "[v]ery few of Shakespeare's 1604 audience could possibly have recalled the existence of friars as part of the daily life of the country" (Miles 167). Whereas on the one hand Miles insists that a 1604 audience would not have any first-hand knowledge of a friar, yet she allows that "it is clear that [Shakespeare] expected an audience of 1604 to grasp the inference" regarding the fact that Isabella's choice of the Votarists of Saint

Clare was the choice of "an order noted for its stern rules of poverty and austerity" (Miles 222). It seems to me that it would have been likely for people at the time to have known what friars and nuns were like; they surely would have heard stories about them and possibly seen several plays with either nuns or friars as characters; and nuns or friars might have visited surreptitiously from the continent. [38] Indeed, Escalus questions the Duke as to what news of other countries he might have--"What news abroad i'th World?" (3.2.235). And in Lucio's first conversation with the Duke-Friar upon seeing him, Lucio immediately asks, "What newes abroad *Frier?* What newes?" (3.2.86-7). Yet, the fact that the Duke does not present a formally-

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[38] A summary of the past literary tradition regarding the friar disguise may be found in Rosalind Miles's *The Problem of Measure for Measure: A Historical Investigation.* Although Miles presents some parallels between other plays with friar characters and *Measure for Measure,* her attempt fails to argue conclusively that specific trends in negative representation exist. She begins with the premise that the friar is a comic device and not a serious one. Although at first Miles indicates that "One immediate source of interest lies in the fact that the friar disguise is relatively rare in the extant drama of the period" (Miles 167), she goes on to discount this: "The mass of contemporary material works actively against such an interpretation. The friar or priest in this drama is so generally treated as comic, or at least negligible, that the friar disguise could hardly have carried over the associations of a loved and revered figure. With this background, it is inconceivable that a disguised friar would have been received as God in 1604" (Miles 172). She continues to discuss the role of the friar disguise in the play, and although she never says that Shakespeare's friar is of a different ilk, only that he is "inconsistently" handled, she must concede much: "throughout *Measure for Measure* Shakespeare resists the strong comic and contemptuous overtones which this disguise had carried for centuries" (Miles 172-73); and again, "This is probably the most surprising feature of Shakespeare's friar disguise, that it is *not* comic" (Miles 173). In the end, Miles argues that the play presents "a surprisingly neutral handling of the friar disguise" (Miles 173).

vowed, religious-friar figures prominently in Shakespeare's plan. Although the Duke is not a true friar, he is not presenting the caricature of a friar, either, in the same way that Isabella does not satirize a Minoress novice. Shakespeare manipulates his characters to reveal individual personalities through the course of the play, and in the end the true character emerges.

The Duke moves among his people with a discreet and undiscovered power, and the audience must begin to ascertain what power the Friar has and how he uses that power. Although the audience knows the Duke has been instructed, with which rules Friar Thomas might have instructed the Duke the audience does not know. The Franciscan rule, however, gives some insight into what a proper friar might do in certain situations. The Earlier Rule of Saint Francis [39] (ca. 1209) quotes the biblical injunction regarding selling everything one has and giving to the poor, but it also adds:

> And, *If anyone wishes to come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me* (Mt 16:24). 4. Again: *If anyone wishes to come to me and does not hate father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple* (Lk 14:26). 5. And: *Everyone who has left* father or mother, brothers or sisters, wife or children, houses or lands because of me, shall receive a hundredfold and *shall possess eternal life* (cf. Mt 19:29; Mk 10:29, Lk 18:30).

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[39]The Earlier Rule (the *Regula non Bullata*) is a more detailed account of the lifestyle of the Franciscans than is the Later Rule (the *Regula Bullata*); the Earlier Rule has been studied as "one of the richest spiritual documents of the Franciscan tradition" which "provides innumerable insights into the ideals of Saint Francis, as well as indications of the tensions and forces that shaped the brotherhood gathered around him" (Armstrong 108).

(St. Francis 109)

Therefore, the Duke has already left everything he had, and has specifically spread rumors and "strewd it in the common eare" (1.3.15) that he has left his land for Poland, but he has merely given the appearance of leaving when he has in actuality returned to Vienna. This same process is echoed in Isabella's movement from the convent back to the world. The Franciscan rule itself quotes Luke 9:62, that "*no one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God*" (St. Francis 111). But here we have an earthly, not a heavenly kingdom, and to judge the Duke too harshly because he has left Vienna and returned to his kingdom disguised is to ignore the fact that he has come to help his own. Too, the rule recalls that "the Lord says: I have *not* come *to be served, but to serve* (Mt 20:28)", and that those entrusted to the care of the individual friar must be served as well as kept safe:

> because the care of the souls of the brothers has been entrusted to them, if anyone of them should be lost because of [his] fault or bad example . . . [he] will have to *render an account* before the Lord Jesus Christ *on the day of judgment* (cf. Mt 12:36). (St. Francis 112-13)

So, Shakespeare sets up a Duke who abandons yet does not abandon his people. Though contradictory, this is an excellent way for Shakespeare to bring out the inconsistencies in Vincentio's character.

That the Duke becomes a friar and takes care of his people does not in any way indicate that Shakespeare was forcing the character of the Duke to take upon itself Christ-like characteristics: in the literature of the time such echoes were almost unavoidable. Yet the Duke's person embodies these elements, and he does abandon his high place to go among his people. If Shakespeare did not intend allegory, then he seems to be echoing it strongly, and Battenhouse believes that *Measure for Measure* is pure allegory. But another option might cause Shakespeare to create a play something like *Measure for Measure*, where the Duke manages to embody more than at first appears evident. Shakespeare was painting an accurate picture of a friar, and an accurate picture of a ruler, and painting neither as perfect. The balancing of religious with political ideals in the Duke at the end of the play would not necessitate a good Duke at the start in order for him to become better. The ideal Duke does not exist in *Measure for Measure*, but neither does the satiric Friar.

The Duke-Friar has been given instruction; his instruction surely would have included the Franciscan rule, which calls for the hooded *caperone* that he must wear (Armstrong 110n), as well as for his need to preach and convert others. The Friar must be the physician that heals the ills of his diseased Vienna:

> To feed on love in *Measure for Measure* is to experience it as an internally corrupting agency, like Claudio's 'proper bane,' or

> even to be eaten by it: 'Thy bones are hollow; impiety has made a feast of thee'. (Wheeler 108)

And if there has been too much liberty in Vienna, the Duke must curb the prevalent trend and cure the disease somehow. If Shakespeare's Friar should have conjured up pictures of luxurious living and debauchery, as the model of a comic friar might, then Shakespeare certainly failed. But the fact is that the poverty of the early days of the order in England had lapsed for a time and friars had begun "a long and careful training with much theological study" which ended in the loss of "a good deal of their primitive concern for the poor" (Dickinson 89). However, immediately before the dissolution of the monasteries, and afterward in Western Europe, a time of a rebirth began:

> It had lain behind the foundation of the friars, which explains why orders like the Franciscans and Dominicans passed from the medieval to the modern world with only minimal readjustments. But in a sense the friars came too late, and at the end of the fifteenth century in England, as elsewhere in the West, the monastic institution was heavily weighted in favour of the strongly contemplative régime of early centuries. It was this now excessive conservative strain in the monastic ideal which inspired such lopsided criticisms as that of Bishop Oldham, and provided a certain discontent with the monastic set-up .... (Dickinson 119)

If the Franciscans were to make the transition more easily than other monastic orders, then they might be paradigmatic of the good qualities of religious life. The Franciscans had freedom of movement, in that they were

not tied to one home but to the order as a whole; their vows were to a mendicant order, and they had the ability to travel wherever they wished. Therefore, the life of a friar was one of going out and visiting the poor, the sick, and the prisoner, and attempting to preach conversion. The Duke, appropriately, visits prisoners when the audience sees him again in his new role as friar.

The Duke speaks his first line as Friar to the Provost:

> Haile to you, *Prouost*, so I thinke you are. (2.2.188)

Such a greeting does not immediately seem unusual, but a friar would not enter a room without bidding the occupants peace, as he would be required to do by the rule:

> 1. When the brothers go about through the world, they should carry *nothing* for the journey, *neither* (cf. Lk 9:3) *a knapsack* (cf. Lk 10:4), *nor a purse, nor bread, nor money* (Lk 9:3), *nor a staff* (cf. Mt. 10:10). 2. And *into whatever house they enter*, let them *first say: Peace to this house* (cf. Lk 10:5). (St. Francis 120)

So, the Duke should have greeted the Provost with "Peace" or "Peace be with you" when he first met him. One might argue that the new Friar might not have learned that rule, despite the fact that it is one of the chief rules in a chapter entitled, "The Manner of the Brothers' Conduct in the World" (St.

Francis 120), with which presumably the Duke, as a friar conducting himself in the world, would be quite concerned. Yet even Lucio, who is not a friar at all, manages first to bid peace to the occupants of the convent (1.4.5). Too, the Duke-Friar knows this rule himself, as he bids Claudio peace when Isabella believes that he is dead (5.1.396). More significantly, however, is the fact that the Duke did not greet the Provost with peace at the beginning of the intrigue he sets up at the jail, but instead greets Escalus with the phrase at the very end of his plotting at the jail, at 3.2.260. There he begins the archaic speech which some critics delight in dividing and deriding, sometimes dismissing as un-Shakespearean. This speech along with the placement of "Peace be with you" at its beginning becomes quite dramatically forceful. The Duke-Friar has inverted what he should have done by eliminating the appropriate greeting at his first appearance and instead saying the words of greeting upon his departure.

As Friar Lodowick speaks to those in prison, he attempts to convert them from their evil ways, and to point them to better things. In doing so, he follows another chapter of the rule regarding preaching:

> . . . in the love which is God (cf. 1 Jn 4:16), I beg all my brothers--those who preach, pray, work, whether cleric or lay--to strive to humble themselves in all things . . . not to take pride in themselves or to delight in themselves or be puffed up interiorly about their good works and deeds--in fact, about any good thing that God does or says or sometimes works in them and through them . . . in keeping with what the Lord says: *Yet do not rejoice in this: that the spirits are subject to you* (Lk

10:20). (St. Francis 123)

As Duke, all of Vienna is subject to him. As Friar, he takes upon himself those in prison, to discover "the nature of their crimes" (2.3.7) and thereafter "minister / To them accordingly" (2.3.7-8). When he does attempt to minister to those in prison, he falls into what the rule tells its adherents to rejoice in: "*various trials* (Jas 1:2)". The Rule adjures that as Friar he must "endure every sort of anguish of soul and body or ordeals in this world for the sake of eternal life" (St. Francis 123). The Duke's problems begin with his comforting words to Juliet, Claudio, and Isabella, which pull him into the predicament at hand, but his ensuing actions lay him open to harsh judgment.

During his interviews with the prisoners at the jail, the Duke appears to hear confessions, and then to break the confessional seal soon afterwards. His ministration and subsequent revelation of his conversations with prisoners caused H. C. Hart to say: "At III.i.167 does he not transgress against the confessional?" (qtd in Lawrence 83), to which W. W. Lawrence replied that "It really does seem a little absurd to accuse the Duke of 'transgressing against the confessional'" (Lawrence 105). In fact, Canon law forbids the transmission of information gleaned from a confession:

> The sacramental seal is inviolable; therefore, it is a crime for a confessor in any way to betray a penitent by word or in any other

manner or for any reason. (Can. 983)

Howard McCord, in "Law and Equity in *Measure for Measure*", insists that the Duke violates several canons and as a result should be excommunicated:

> By hearing the confessions of Claudio, Angelo, and Mariana, and presumably absolving them, he incurs irregularity under canon 985, n. 7, concerned with those who presume to exercise an act of Orders without having received Orders. For the same act he also incurs excommunication specially reserved to the Holy See, under canon 2322, concerned with those priests who hear sacramental confessions. His *maxima culpa*, however, lies in his breaking the seal of confession, which he does three times, once each in the cases of Angelo, Claudio, and Mariana. (McCord 68)

However, the question persists--Does the Friar officially hear confession at all, and if so, does he violate the seal? If he does not break the seal of the confessional, then Shakespeare must have something else in mind, and in fact the Friar continues to follow the Franciscan rule and abide by canon law as well. But an additional option, that the Duke's office conferred certain religious rights, must be considered briefly as a possibility.

The Duke has stated overtly that he will apply "craft against vice" (3.2.260) in order to bring about the justice which the commonwealth has desperately needed but has not had under his own reign. A cure for an illness may be a painful thing in itself, and the illness may be passed from one person to the next unknowingly. But the Duke decides that if he merely

applies mercy to justice, things will in the end work out for the best. He attempts to establish a balance between justice and mercy, and decides that in order to judge justly he must use the power he has over others to effect changes within individuals, and in the end, the commonwealth, too, will change. Thus *Measure for Measure*'s Duke has a two-fold occupation--he must change morals as well as laws, and he must do it through a combination of justice and mercy. The fact that moral laws can clash with religious and civil laws appears to be part of the problem in Vienna; if the people had only one set of rules to live by, things would go much better for them. If Claudio and Juliet could get by with a future-promise of marriage, and the church agreed to that, then the two would have no religious problems. But they do have a problem with the state; and the state itself is changeable. What happens in *Measure for Measure* is that the Duke relinquishes his political power, and trades it for mere appearance. Although the appearance helps him to understand his subjects better, it does not help him to rule them better. The Duke must *be* Duke, not a fantastic friar instead.

Although the Duke seems nearly omniscient, and sometimes seems nearly omnipresent as well, these qualities can be understood as elements of a director's task. But there is something else present which results in the same kind of ordering of lives and characters to add to the credibility that Shakespeare may have seen the Duke as an even God-like figure; to Tillyard

and others he is surely Christ-like. The Duke has the ability to be present anywhere an important incident occurs, and soon characters work themselves out of seemingly impossible situations, although often success is not due directly to the Duke-Friar's actions. He is now the Duke of dark corners, always lurking just out of view, but hovering about all the action. He is, in a sense, like the laws Vienna has--they are there in spirit, even when they are not enforced. But when the Duke begins with the problem that the commonwealth has indulged in too much liberty, and he believes that it needs more justice, especially where sexual matters are concerned, he runs into a problem because of his relinquishing of political power. When Angelo and Escalus split the Duke's power, with Angelo taking the heavier hand, the immediate arrest of Claudio sets the Duke's mind reeling with anticipation at what will occur as a result of his own abdication. When he takes upon himself the disguise of a friar, he manages to do something that Henry VIII did in 1535--that is, to combine for the audience the appearance of political and religious power in a single person.

The Duke-Friar appropriates to himself as much religious power as possible; he seems to act as a priest, and has been called in answer to Angelo's request for a priest. Angelo tells the Provost to be sure that Claudio is "prepar'd" (2.1.35) by a "Confessor" (2.1.35). The Duke-Friar applies the word "Confessor" to himself again after this scene, specifically calling himself "Confessor to *Angelo*" (3.1.167). In addition to Confessor,

he also acquires the title "Father", which indicates that he is taken for a priest by several of the characters (by Juliet at 2.3.29, by the Provost at 3.1.179, by Isabella at 3.1.249, by Escalus at 3.2.225, and by Abhorson at 4.3.52). The emphasis placed upon the Duke's function as Friar suggests that as Friar the Duke must hold some kind of religious power, especially because Claudio's confession before death would seem to hinge upon the Friar having the power to forgive sins, and his final confession would be considered a serious necessity. Technically, if Friar Thomas had local authority, he might give the Duke this right for a specific period of time. But the Duke would have to become a priest because "[o]nly a priest is the minister of the sacrament of penance" (Can. 965). According to Canon law, a friar does not necessarily automatically have the faculty to hear confession:

> The local ordinary alone is competent to confer upon any presbyters [priests] whatsoever the faculty to hear the confessions of any of the faithful; however, presbyters who are members of religious institutes should not use such a faculty without at least the presumed permission of their superior. (Can. 969 §1)

Friar Thomas would need to make a test of the Duke's character, and to find him "qualified by means of an examination" (Can. 970) in order for the right to hear confessions to be conferred. If Friar Thomas found the Duke worthy of this right, then the Duke might validly hear confessions, especially in the case of Claudio, who would be a "penitent who is in danger of death" (Can.

976). Thus one might circumvent some of the difficulties regarding whether or not the Duke could validly hear confessions and grant absolution; yet other possibilities than having this right actually conferred exist. The Duke-Friar may have only the appearance of religious power, and that appearance itself may be deceptive.

That the scope of the Duke's powers remains unknown makes it difficult to judge the Duke-as-Friar's actions. If he is the head of the church in this fictional Vienna, just as the King or Queen is the head of the Church of England, and Defender of the Faith, then the Duke may represent a religious leader who has actual titular authority but no ability to hear confessions or to perform other sacraments. Jacobean playwrights other than Shakespeare have included hidden commentaries on the Anglican church in Catholic disguise in a play. To accuse a Defender of the Faith of something that requires excommunication is unthinkable; yet some critics do just that with the Duke. That law is a queer business in Shakespeare is one thing; in *Measure for Measure* religion is a bit of a queer thing, too. One must assume that the Duke has some sort of ability to take upon himself the person of a friar, yet even if he is the head of the church in this fictional Vienna (which he never says that he is), he still has hidden his own identity in the identity of one of less worth religiously and of no worth legally.

That the Duke merely plays the part of Friar, that he does not live up to a flattering portrayal of a holy lifestyle, can be seen in what appears to be

his inability to keep the seal of the confessional, as well as his inability to keep clear of the appearance of evil, both of which critics have commented on in the past. In his disguise as a friar, the Duke watches the affairs of state deteriorate to a point where little he does has the desired effect. But as a brother-friar, [40] he must follow the Rule of Saint Francis, and although the rule forbids a Friar who is not a priest from such things as saying mass and hearing confession, because he is not a priest, the rule does allow for the mutual confessing of sins:

> 1. And my blessed brother, both the clerics as well as the lay, should confess their sins to priests of our order. 2. And if they should not be able to do so, they should confess to other prudent and Catholic priests, knowing full well that when they have received penance and absolution from any Catholic priests, they are without doubt absolved from their sins, provided they have humbly and faithfully fulfilled the penance imposed upon them. 3. But if they have not been able to find a priest, they may confess to their brother, as the apostle James says: *Confess your sins to one another* (Jas 5:16). 4. Despite this let them not fail to have recourse to a priest, since the power of binding and loosing is granted only to priests. (St. Francis 125)

This opens up another possibility for the Friar--that he is not nor ever intended to be taken for a priest. Thus when the Duke-Friar addresses the prison inmates and Isabella, he addresses them not as a Franciscan priest, but as a Franciscan friar. This distinction is a subtle one in the play, but the

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[40]When Elbow calls the Duke "good Father Frier" (3.2.11-12) he may be mistaking the Duke-Friar for something more than just a brother; in fact, he may think that this Friar is actually a priest, which is not the case.

argument may be made that it definitely exists. The Friar does not perform any absolving or handing out of penances; he merely comforts and admonishes Juliet, Claudio, and Isabella in a way that a holy man should. The fact that one might confess one's sins to another without receiving absolution seems to be foremost in the Duke's mind. In such a situation, he would not be bound by the seal of the confessional, specifically because he is not a priest. This seems to be a more likely possibility than that Friar Thomas conferred religious rights upon the Duke. For this Duke-Friar, his religious powers are ultimately like those of any other lay person; he never states that he will do anything but play the part of a cleric.

The Duke speaks first to Juliet, and follows a tactic which is quite opposite to the usual judgment in Vienna. He confesses her and says that her sin is "of heauier kinde" (2.3.28), thus making Claudio's sin lesser, though a sin of "mortalitie" in the eyes of the law of Vienna. The Duke, significantly, exhorts Juliet with the knowledge that her sin because mutually committed was greater than Claudio's, something which contradicts Angelo's pronouncement. But whereas Bennett says "the plot is based on the paradox of a law that punishes the man rather than the woman for adultery" (Bennett 48), Cutts believes that Shakespeare actually represents the trend of the time accurately:

> Juliet's confession to the greater guilt is in conformity with the then current moral belief that in respect of this particular sin

> committed by mutual agreement it is *only* by woman's *consent* that man sins. (Cutts 417)

The audience can judge from Juliet's contrition that whichever of the two ideas became more commonly accepted, Juliet feels that her part was not a minor one. When the Friar asks her if she repents "of the sin [she] carr[ies]" (2.3.20), he does not mean the child, despite the fact that the child resulted from sin. The duality of good and evil exists in Juliet's very person. The Friar merely attempts to persuade Juliet to look at her past life and to do better.

The Duke-Friar next speaks to Claudio in order to make him accept punishment and death, although he does not succeed in giving a speech in the Christian *consolatio* tradition; indeed contradictorily he succeeds with secular arguments, and therefore Shakespeare has been criticized for the Duke's speeches:

> The Friar, a 'holy' man, gives pagan consolation to Claudio phrased paradoxically as contempt for life, and Claudio renders paradoxical thanks. (Bennett 49-50)

The Duke soon learns of Angelo's evil plot, and how he has transformed himself from the appearance of angel into the darkest devil. The Duke therefore must attempt to deal with the preservation of Isabella's chastity, and he also must somehow manage to bring mercy into Claudio's situation.

Friar Lodowick attempts to ensure that both Claudio and later Angelo are "absolute for death" (3.1.5) by teaching both to desire death over life. He explains that life is something "none but fooles would keepe" (3.1.8), but in essence the Duke-Friar merely repeats trite phrases which have no lasting effect. When he tells Isabella that "life is better life past fearing death / Then that which liues to feare" (5.401-2), the audience knows that Claudio would heartily disagree, and has. And from the start, the Duke had already undermined his own authority as a representative of the law-abiding citizen by his lackadaisical attitudes toward the justice inherent in the laws of Vienna. Having eliminated justice by embracing mercy alone, he soon found that the final condemnation of justice makes the offender desire death; to look for mercy has no such lasting effect. If through rhetoric the Duke had convinced Claudio to be "so out of love with life that [he] will sue to be rid of it" (3.1.170), then why does Claudio immediately beg Isabella to save his life? If because of the Duke's speech Claudio sought "death, and seeking death, f[ound] life" (3.1.43), then why would he have an immediate change of heart? Later Angelo, too, will appear to repent so sincerely that he will "crave death more willingly than mercy" (5.1.472), yet the "quickning in his eye" (5.1.500) at his reprieve contradicts his previous words. So, the penitents at the Duke-Friar's knees tend to be less penitent than they appear, and the Duke's speeches, despite coming from the deep recesses of a friar's robe, seem to be less religious than they sound.

Friar Lodowick's bed trick itself seems less than holy; its end is more advantageous for patching up problems regarding broken promises than for producing spiritual rewards. The bed trick certainly is not a plan in which a pious cleric ought to engage his sheep. But from his first advance toward Isabella, he defends himself regarding his intentions, as he asks the Provost to leave him alone

> a while with the Maid, my minde promises with my habit, no losse shall touch her by my company. (3.1.179-181)

The Duke promises here to guard Isabella's purity while he is with her. In fact, the entire bed trick, which the Duke shortly reveals to Isabella, is a practice in arranging promises to be kept by unwilling participants. Davis P. Harding, in "Elizabethan Betrothals and 'Measure for Measure'", sees the shift to the bed trick as a shift away from the perfection of ideals:

> The trouble is that, whereas in *The Tempest* the idealism is all of a piece, in *Measure for Measure*, the ideal and the real exist side by side until, in the bed-trick business, Shakespeare is obliged to dispense with the former altogether. (Harding 157)

But ideals and the bed trick do meet where promises are concerned--Friar Lodowick merely orchestrates the keeping of Angelo's original promise to Mariana, while keeping his own promise to protect Isabella while she is in his

presence. Jacques Lezra, in "Pirating Reading: The Appearance of History in *Measure for Measure*", presents an excellent summary of images of pirating, which includes many instances in the play of the replacement of one thing or person by an inferior or mirrored version:

> From Duke Vincentio's concluding 'an Angelo for Claudio, death for death' to the title itself, *Measure for Measure* seeks to take the measure of the many uses of *for*--linguistic, aesthetic, juridical, and sexual--that arise when an absence needs, as the Duke will put it, to be supplied (1.1.18). (Lezra 257)

This idea of one substituted for another carries over into the substitution of Mariana for Isabella. For Northrop Frye, the substitution of the bed trick becomes a simple trick which supplies the most appropriate woman at the moment--that whereas "Angelo's lust tells him that he wants Isabella and doesn't want Mariana ... 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" (Frye 151). But the substitution is not a simple one; Friar Lodowick needed prior knowledge of Angelo's and Mariana's contract, as well as current knowledge of Mariana's whereabouts. He has both. Too, the echoes prevalent in the actions and words of Mariana in Isabella's place take on special meaning. The Duke wishes to "Pay with falsehood, false exacting / And performe an olde contracting" (3.2.295-6), and he does so with the substitution of Mariana for Isabella.

When the Duke greets Mariana at the moated grange, he comes as one who belongs in this removed place, apart from the court yet somehow still connected through the convent to the world of Vienna. The fact that the grange is a holding of the convent house I have mentioned before; in this scene, the grange becomes the appointed meeting place of the Duke and Isabella, for they had "promis'd here to meete" (4.1.17). That the Duke already has met Mariana on occasion is immediately evident, for she says that his "aduice / Hath often still'd [her] brawling discontent" (4.1.6-7). When Isabella arrives, the Duke learns of the circumstances under which Isabella should meet Angelo:

> He hath a Garden circummur'd with Bricke,
> Whose western side is with a Vineyard back't;
> And to that Vineyard is a planched gate,
> That makes his opening with this bigger Key:
> This other doth command a little doore,
> Which from the Vineyard to the Garden leades,
> There haue I made my promise, vpon the
> Heauy midle of the night, to call vpon him. (4.1.28-36)

This description recalls the double-door of the convent itself, which had two keys as well. The mention of the double-walled garden, as well as the tableau of Friar and Novice meeting at the moated grange, all suggest a renewed emphasis on the religious elements in the play. In essence, what happens in this particular scene at the beginning of Act 4 is not a partnership between

Isabella and the Friar, but a novice following the orders of one to whom she must be obedient. According to Bourdillon:

> by the end of the thirteenth century all the spiritual descendants of St. Clare enjoyed by papal grant the spiritual guidance and practical control of the Friars Minor. As a natural and inevitable corollary to this privilege, each of the English Minoress houses had received exemption from episcopal jurisdiction; the nuns were under the governance of the friars intermediary to the pope alone; even the Archbishop of Canterbury could interfere in Minoress affairs by special papal mandate only. (55)

Because the Franciscans wielded great sway over the Minoresses, and indeed held "very extensive powers in . . . [their] hands" (Bourdillon 55), it is therefore unfair to judge Isabella as one who blindly follows advice:

> As a novice in one of the strictest of women's orders, the Poor Clares, Isabella was firmly aware of the virtue of obedience. She could thus accept the word of her ecclesiastical superior as morally binding and act in good conscience. (McCord 70)

For a Minoress, only the Pope himself was more powerful than her Friar-Counselor. Thus Isabella must agree to allow Mariana to substitute for her.

Isabella indicates that she has told Angelo that she will bring a servant with her to the assignation, "whose perswasion is, / [she] come[s] about [her] Brother" (4.1.49). But when Mariana takes Isabella's place, the words which

Isabella tells her to speak "soft and low" (4.1.70), "Remember now my brother" (4.1.71), take on added significance:

> In the night, Angelo will of course think that it is Isabella that speaks the directed words and that he is being reminded to remember his promise concerning Claudio. But since the 'known' person will really be Mariana, we are given to understand that the brother that Mariana must mean is Frederick, the great soldier, whose death at sea prompted Angelo to break off the engagement to Mariana. (Bache 28)

Therefore, the lives of two brothers hang in the balance--that of both Claudio and Frederick. With these words on Mariana's lips, Angelo's promise comes full circle, and the Duke succeeds in orchestrating the important substitution of one maidenhead for another. Isabella's part in the bed trick must be considered minimal at best; even her brief instructions to Mariana merely reflect the Duke's design.

As the Duke's entire stratagem begins to fall apart, he soon realizes that he must become Duke again to save the day. That the Duke must constantly move from one person to the next, solving one problem after the next, becomes evident in the alacrity with which he works--at one moment, he attempts to prepare Barnardine for death; not long after the pirate Ragozine provides by his death the appropriate substitution. That the Friar must begin to draw from his power as Duke significantly alters his personality in the play. Whereas before the Duke merely spoke philosophically and

attempted to prepare souls for that undiscovered country, using his wits to bridge gaps in promises which should have been kept, now the Duke leaves nothing to chance. The Duke recognizes Angelo's sudden panic in his attempt to execute Claudio before his time; yet the Duke succeeds, through letters written and sealed by his own hand, to convince the Provost to keep Claudio alive. In order to do so, the Duke must remind the Provost that "the hande and Seale of the Duke" (4.2.208) represent the power to which he has promised fealty. The Duke also begins his program of disinformation to Angelo and Escalus, by letters so confusing that both question his sanity (4.4.4-5).

The Duke's ability to reveal all previously hidden evils, and to breach the broken promises--his own and others--results in a last act where the movement toward justice is swift. When the Duke arrives at the "consecrated Fount, / A League below the Citie" (4.3.102-3), he begins a parade which progresses into the city. Arriving in his stately official garb as Duke, he speaks first of having heard of the "goodnesse of [the] Iustice" (5.1.6) of both Angelo and Escalus, and he takes one on each side of him, as his "supporters" (5.1.18). This tableau presents the Duke as Vienna; he becomes his own as well as Vienna's heraldic shield, and its supporters, Angelo and Escalus, stand at his side. His entrance as Duke recalls his departure at the beginning of the play, but this time he enters with the power of his office. Isabella immediately demands "Iustice, Iustice, Iustice, Iustice" (5.1.26), and the

Duke hears the strange tale told over again. The Duke demands that she "Confesse the truth" (5.1.113). When the Duke decides to absent himself again from the proceedings, the audience cannot help wondering how his return in the power of his official self could be helped by his return to his former disguise. According to Mary Lascelles:

> The Duke's appearance before Angelo and Escalus in the character of Friar Lodowick is charged with more significance than this. It makes intelligible the symbolism of the trial's opening, by opposing its image reversed. On his first appearance, in state, accompanied by his deputies, the Duke had been a symbol of power without knowledge; now he reappears as knowledge without power. (126)

But as Friar Lodowick, he admits that "The Duke's vniust" (5.1.302), and after unhooded, he quickly manages to mete out justice first by the letter of the law, and then afterward with mercy. The delay between justice and mercy results in a delay in relief for those involved; yet even with that brief delay, and despite the administration of mercy and justice, critics span the extremes from being dissatisfied with his harshness to being affronted by his leniency. As Duke, Vincentio attempts to remain faithful to protecting Vienna, through recognition of the laws and the penalties for breaking them. He still, however, manages to bring mercy in to his judgments, as has been discussed many times in the past.

According to the Duke as judge, the machinations of the two women were too intricate for them to think of on their own. He says, indeed, "This needs must be a practise"--a stratagem, and "someone hath set [them] on" (5.1.112), though he knows full well he instigated the trick himself. Significantly, whereas at the start of the play the Duke had thought that ignoring the law was a form of mercy toward his subjects, that freedom was better than too-hard restraint, now he sees the law itself as containing mercy:

> The very mercy of the Law cried out
> Most audible, euen from his proper tongue,
> An *Angelo* for *Claudio*, death for death:
> Haste still paies haste, and leasure, answers leasure;
> Like doth quit like, and *Measure* still for *Measure*. (5.1.412-416)

In this the most important judgment over which the Duke presides, he finds Angelo guilty not only of "violation / Of sacred Chastitie" (5.1.409-10), but also of "promise-breach" (5.1.410). The Duke himself has, only lines before, renewed his own promise to keep Isabella from harm:

> Your *Frier* is now your Prince: As I was then
> Aduertysing, and holy to your businesse,
> (Not changing heart with habit) I am still,
> Atturnied at your seruice. (5.1.387-88)

Thus the Duke retains the emotions he experienced as Friar, but his "hidden powre" (5.1.397) has become evident in his ability to judge and to wield his power justly. Too, his interest in Isabella helps his interest in the state, in that the two may soon provide Vienna a hereditary prince to continue the stability of governance.

The words of the Duke become the most powerful spoken--they are instantaneous and potent proof that the Duke has returned. People summoned by the Duke appear "instantly" (5.1.254); some are married "instantly" (5.1.382), and the action proceeds swiftly in this final judgment scene. Mariana and Isabella must plead for Angelo's life together, yet the Duke's words remain the driving force of the action. The Duke's first judgment, "He dies for *Claudio's* death" (5.1.447) cannot be altered or unsaid; the Duke insists that such a request is "vnprofitable" (5.1.461). With the condemnation of Barnardine to a life of tutelage at the hands of a Friar, and the pardon of his "earthly faults" (5.1.488), the muffled Claudio appears and the Duke may now commute Angelo's sentence justly, and he does so immediately. Though the Duke recoils at the idea that Lucio should be pardoned as well, yet he pardons the one he "cannot pardon" (5.1.504) with the words "Thy slanders I forgiue" (5.1.528). With the marriages of Lucio and Kate Keepdowne, of Mariana and Angelo, of Claudio and Juliet, and of the Duke and Isabella, stability brings a resolution affirming promise-keeping in Vienna, which replaces the former promise-breaching.

The movement in the play becomes a movement not merely accentuated by the change from verse to prose, but one which highlights the Duke's recognition of his own duty to Vienna. His servitude to his people he never forgets, but an abandonment of power does not achieve the looked-for resolution in implementing justice. It is only in his official status as Duke that he may recognize that the law in itself brings a merciful truth to those who must submit to it; it is only in deference to the mercy of the law that true mercy may emerge through the heart of the Duke.

CHAPTER IV

"A TRUE CONTRACT": PROMISES OF MARRIAGE IN VIENNA

One of the most profound promises in *Measure for Measure* is the promise of marriage, the plighting of troth which results in betrothal or engagement, the contract resulting in the future ceremony of the giving of the woman and her taking by the man into the mutual condition of matrimony, an "honorable estate." For critics of *Measure for Measure*, its marriage contracts seem enmeshed in tortuous legalistic rules; in the years since the 1960s the question of which kind of promise a couple might have made in *Measure for Measure* has been answered with a variety of often confusing and ultimately unsatisfying interpretations, usually of little help in clarifying the play for a modern audience. The Renaissance had two specific terms to define the kind of contract undertaken at the moment of espousal--*de praesenti* and *de futuro.* A loose interpretation of a definition for each promise, the *de praesenti* and the *de futuro*, might be that the *de praesenti* vows bound the two to marry at some time soon, whereas the *de futuro* vows were less strictly binding and therefore easier to abandon, because they only promised marriage at an undesignated future time.

Certain critics have made it a guessing game as to which kind of vows Angelo and Mariana or Claudio and Juliet swore. Both couples had some sort of marriage agreement; both agreements involved dowries, though possibly dowries of different kinds. Mariana's dowry was lost at sea with her brother; it was the kind of dowry that "the wife bringeth to her husband in mariage, otherwise called *maritagiu*, marriage good" (Cowell Aa 1 r). It is likely that Juliet's dowry, which had not yet been raised by "friends," is of the same kind, but it may be of another kind--"that which she hath of her husband, after the mariage determined, if she out-liue him" (Cowell Aa 1 r). The fact that Juliet's friends are the ones raising the dowry, and that they must be persuaded that the marriage is a good one before they present it to Claudio, seems to suggest that hers is in fact the traditional *dot*. The lack of each woman's dowry has resulted in the apparent breach of the marriage contract, and therefore in the absence of the outward "denunciation"--or public ceremony--of which Claudio speaks (1.2.152).

But what makes the marriage vows important in *Measure for Measure* is not that they differentiate degrees of guilt or innocence, as when a critic might say that because Angelo and Mariana's contract was evidently a *de praesenti* one, Angelo is not guilty of breaking the law when he sleeps with his wife, whereas Claudio remains guilty, because his and Juliet's agreement was a *de futuro* one. Such an argument actually hinders the understanding of the play rather than helps it. The differentiation lies only

in the Duke's eyes, who attempts to legalize the illegal. The Duke does not see the bringing together of Angelo and Mariana as problematic; he says that "To bring [them] thus together 'tis no sinne" (4.1.73). Despite this fact, one cannot deny that the similarities between the contracts of Angelo and Claudio result in a general condemnation of their guiltiness at the end of the play. The question lies, as it does with so many other promises in the play, not in the degree, but in the willingness of a character to make or break a promise--in essence, to commit to a new way of life and not to waver. In *Measure for Measure*, civil and religious promises meet in the marriage contract, and whereas the marriage ceremony itself may be a religious one, the promises legally bind the parties under the civil laws of Vienna. As a result, the quality of a promise becomes the important element in assessing honor and morality. In effect, the intention behind the promise becomes an important gauge of the character of each individual involved.

When speaking of promises, I have focused on such ideas as the legality of the *quid pro quo*, the duty of one to keep one's word in a matter of agreement, and the dishonor involved in breaking one's word. The alternative to breaking a promise completely--to exchange one promise for another--is good only if the first promise was never appropriate for either individual and was never actually solemnized. No promise of marriage in *Measure for Measure* becomes solemnized until the last act. Before then, the intent to finalize marriage vows becomes the sticking point. A. W. B.

Simpson, in his English Law book *A History of the Common Law of Contract: The Rise of the Action of Assumpsit* speaks of the contract of marriage as one which lies under assumpsit

--an agreement wherein there is a mutual exchange based upon certain understood terms. For Simpson, the word *assumpsit* has a technical and detailed definition in English law:

> An 'assumpsit' is normally thought of as an undertaking, in the sense of an assurance, and for many purposes this is no doubt accurate enough to catch the sense of the word in the early cases. But simply to translate the word in this way, and leave the matter at that, fails to bring out the full range of the possible nuances of the word, for the modern word 'undertaking' does not carry with it the same overtones. (215)

Although the religious and civil matters become intertwined, clearly the Renaissance ideal of a marriage contract followed religious norms, as

> it was universally admitted that matrimony was a spiritual matter; hence (although there was some doubt on the point) it was never held that debt lay to recover marriage money (i.e. dowries). Since the cause of such grants was spiritual the common law ought not to be concerned with them.
> (Simpson 144-5)

Thus the marriage contract, and marriage itself, tended to draw its strength from biblical precepts and teachings. These biblical ideals were built upon specific verses, including the notion in Genesis that the two, having been

joined by God, become one flesh. Equally important, especially to the world of *Measure for Measure*, is St. Paul's idea that "it is better to marry than to burn" (1 Cor. 7:1). Thus the spiritual aspect included encompassing sexual appetites under the confines of the yoke of marriage. Lawrence Stone notes that this thinking continued into the 16th century:

> By 'matrimonial chastity' was meant moderation of sexual passion, something which had been advocated not only by the Catholic Fathers but also by both Calvin and foreign humanists of the early sixteenth century, like Vives and Guazzo. (Stone 314)

Marriage, at least theoretically, gave its members the ability to maintain a degree of sanctity in the midst of sensuality, and therefore its promises belong first under the heading of religious promises.

Catholic Canon law lists 110 canons pertaining to the sacrament of marriage. Marriage in canon law is a "covenant" between the man and the woman, which

> establish[es] between themselves a partnership of the whole life, is by its nature ordered toward the good of the spouses and the procreation and education of offspring; this covenant between baptized persons has been raised by Christ the Lord to the dignity of a sacrament. (Can. 1055 §1)

The Catholic Church consequently sees canon law as superseding civil law in matters of this kind. The marriage covenant is built upon "unity and indissolubility" (Can. 1056). Such a covenant is "irrevocable" (Can. 1057 §2), and is "brought about through the consent of the parties" (Can. 1057 §1). That canon law supersedes civil law for the Catholic Church is evident from Canon 1059, which relegates the one to the other, making the marriage a valid one "even if only one party is baptised," and all marriages "regulated not only by divine law but also by canon law, with due regard for the competence of civil authority concerning the merely civil effects of such a marriage" (Can. 1059). Although canon law allows that civil law may forbid certain marriages, overall the canons pertaining to marriage point to its importance sacramentally as superseding any secondary civil implications.

In reality, the common law did become concerned with marriage contracts, and especially with what made them valid or invalid. Contracts in themselves were built upon a verbal promise, and this specific promise of *assumpsit* was

> a voluntarie [one] made by word, whereby a man assumeth or taketh upon him to performe or pay any thing vnto another. This word containeth any verball promise made vpon consideration, which the Civilians expresse by divers words, according to the nature of the promise, calling it sometime *pactum*, sometime *sponsione*, sometime *promissionem*, *policitationem* or *constitutum*. (Cowell F2 v)

Such varying terms defining the contractual agreement itself add to the confusion regarding all contracts, including betrothal. Simpson argues that, as with other matters of *assumpsit* based upon the spoken word, the contract becomes a problematic one:

> In the informal agreement reached by parole it will seldom be at all clear whether the promises are mutually dependent or not. Not only will it usually be difficult to find out both what the parties said and what the parties intended; very frequently there will be no intention on the matter one way or the other; hence the distinctions which the law seeks to draw here make little sense when applied to many informal agreements.
> (Simpson 464-5)

The rules governing *assumpsit* envelop a great deal of promise-making, and, interestingly enough, involve nearly all the kinds of promises made in *Measure for Measure.* The idea of *assumpsit* has to do not only with making a promise, but with actually undertaking to perform some action. The important aspect of *assumpsit* which applies specifically to *Measure for Measure* is the idea that one cannot read the minds of the parties involved in making an agreement. If only spoken words were involved, then the words themselves become important signals which form the thoughts of the parties and which help each to interpret the symbolic language of the argument itself. In essence, words form the contract again in the mind. The mental contract is the culmination of the process of an ultimately intangible agreement expressed in final form through language:

> This is a very common phenomenon in the law--a so-called 'test' requires lawyers to search for intentions, wishes, states of mind, and the like which unfortunately are only rarely to be come across, and in any event inherently difficult to prove. The consequence is that the problem which is supposed to be solved by prying into the minds of the parties is in fact solved by a set of more or less arbitrary rules, or the decision is left to the court and not determined by rules at all. (Simpson 464-5)

Therefore the qualities of promises in themselves, from their beginning as mere thought, to the spoken words of the promise, to the specific actions of the participants in the carrying out of the promise, all become part of the legal tangle involved in the word *assumpsit.* Although thinking of marriage in these terms seems hardly acceptable, and excessively unromantic, Simpson states that such thinking must indeed apply to marital situations nonetheless:

> In legal contexts [the word *assumpsit*] came to be used commonly in such actions. In legal contexts it had earlier been used in connection with entry into a religious order--one who did so *habitum religionis assumpsit.* (Simpson 215)

The image of a friar or nun undertaking the religious life, then, relates to the idea that two have agreed to begin married life, or to the knowledge that an officer has, by oath, promised to give his life in service of his Duke. All promises include the idea of *assumpsit* in one form or another, and all are important to the world of *Measure for Measure* from the start.

Assumpsit suggests several possibilities, each one important to the play-world of *Measure for Measure.* Although Simpson's book is a legal one which says nothing of *Measure for Measure* per se, the categories he gives for cases of *assumpsit* fit many of the situations of the play. For example, if the Provost agrees to make sure that all of his prisoners remain in jail, then this promise would appear to fall under the category which "suggest[s] that the defendant had made himself strictly responsible for bringing something to pass, with the consequence that he was still answerable even if it was not his fault that the event did not occur" (Simpson 215-216). Or, as is the case of Elbow, he may have taken upon himself certain responsibilities without realizing what they might have entailed regarding his own actions, and therefore could "suggest only the idea that the defendant had made himself responsible or answerable, though not necessarily *strictly* responsible" (Simpson 216). Another possibility occurs when the Duke undertakes to keep Isabella safe from harm, and this could "suggest the idea that the defendant had made himself responsible in a particular way, viz. by taking something (or some person) into his custody or control" (Simpson 217). The same is true for the Duke as Duke of Vienna as well--he has promised to take custody of all of his subjects, not only Isabella. However, the Duke's handling of Isabella recalls similar situations in "early assumpsit cases [where] the defendant [had] always taken the plaintiff's person or property into his custody, and *thereby* made himself responsible"

(Simpson 217). The marriage contracts, of Angelo and Mariana and of Claudio and Juliet, might also be considered under the category of *assumpsit*, where each party simply agrees with another to be married. But in these cases Simpson hedges slightly regarding holding tightly to legalistic terminology, in that he believes that those espousing such thinking

> should be very cautious. . . . We may agree to marry our girlfriends, or promise to marry them, but there is something slightly offensive about undertaking to marry them, whilst to make oneself responsible for marrying a young lady is plain rude. (Simpson 218)

However, one would tend to disagree that under the circumstances the Duke is rude when, through his position of power, he enforces the responsibility of marriage on some unwilling participants. Rather, the Duke believes he acts in all the parties' best interests.

Whether or not the play is involved in the legal quandary of *assumpsit* or with *de futuro* or *de praesenti* marriage contracts, the play is certainly concerned with marriage vows in some fashion, as is logical since the play has been concerned throughout with promises of all kinds. The marriage contracts have burst to the forefront of criticism most forcefully with Ernest Schanzer's work on "The Marriage-Contracts in *Measure for Measure*", wherein he views a lack of knowledge of the two contracts as detrimental to an understanding of the play:

> But so far as the modern playgoer or reader is concerned, there can be little doubt that of all Shakespeare's plays *Measure for Measure* is the one where an ignorance of Elizabethan moral tenets and edicts is likely to lead him farthest astray. (Schanzer 88)

Schanzer is convinced that there exists a profound difference between the spousals of Angelo and of Claudio. Claudio's promises were hidden, whereas Angelo's were open. Thus to Schanzer, Claudio's vows were not only inferior, but ultimately led to sin, and therefore Claudio's condemnation can be understood as a normal reaction of Angelo's authority in the face of blatant corruption:

> [T]o counteract the obvious evils to which such laws were bound to give rise, the Church also insisted that, though valid and binding, such secret marriages were sinful and forbidden, and that, if they took place, the offenders were to be punished and forced to solemnize their marriage *in facie ecclesiae.* (Schanzer 83)

But whereas Claudio's vows were secretly sworn, he wished to honor them. Angelo's were sworn openly; afterwards he did not wish to honor them. Yet Schanzer insists that Angelo's and Mariana's vows sanctioned their actions: "Theirs were *sponsalia iurata,* sworn spousals, as we are told repeatedly: 'was affianced to her by oath' (III, i, 222)" (85). Schanzer's interpretation presents logistical problems, in that the play never mentions either legal

term for sworn spousals. The play does differentiate between the contracts of the two couples, but that differentiation seems to be more evident in the lapse of the contracts rather than in their ultimate culmination.

S. Nagarajan in her "*Measure for Measure* and Elizabethan Betrothals," reacts to Schanzer, suggesting that one need not take such an "unnecessarily desparate" (115) stance on the marriage vows. Unfortunately, Nagarajan comes to a conclusion opposite to Schanzer's, and one might find it equally desparate. Nagarajan says that whereas Claudio and Juliet at one time had a *de futuro* agreement, it has since been altered to a *de praesenti* agreement due to their intimacy:

> From the ready way [Isabella] guesses that it is Juliet who is her brother's 'lover', and proposes that matters could be set right by means of marriage, I think it is permissible to infer that she knows of her brother's contract, and knows also that their sexual union has now converted their *de futuro* betrothal into an irregular marriage, *sponsalia per verba de praesenti*, in which everything is complete except a formal ceremony. (Nagarajan 119)

Thus it is possible to "infer" that both couples had similar contracts at the start of the play. Yet this thinking does not look to the end of the play, when Angelo is condemned for his actions and Mariana feels for a moment merely "mocke[d]" with a husband (5.1.422). One must keep in mind that Angelo's real crime is his abandonment of Mariana; this underlying idea prompts the

Duke's actions, and much of his effort goes toward mending this broken pledge. Through the righting of this wrong, Isabella remains saintly.

Yet, in "Marriage Contracts in Measure For Measure," J. Birje-Patil notes the "confusion" in understanding the legality of the different marriage contracts, and adds that

> It is this confusion resulting from the lack of a clearly defined marriage code that is dramatized by Shakespeare and not the legal strands which make up the confusion. (Birje-Patil 109)

Birje-Patil looks for answers not outside the play in the marriage contracts of the Renaissance, but inside the play itself. He disagrees with Nagarajan but agrees with Schanzer regarding the fact that Angelo's contract was the more valid of the two:

> [T]he difference between Claudio's and Angelo's contracts boils down to a simple fact that the former's was a clandestine contract and the latter's perfect matrimony minus solemnization. (Birje-Patil 111)

Thus the play allows Birje-Patil to stand firm with Schanzer, yet Angelo and Claudio still come out on different levels regarding their ethical behavior. It is difficult to believe that Angelo, who is the more heinous criminal, should be considered better because his marriage contract appears more

valid. Claudio seems much more sincere, yet he is castigated because his vows were postponed temporarily.

More recently, critics such as Karl P. Wentersdorf have also clung to the belief that the difference between Angelo's open and Claudio's hidden vows emphasized different degrees of commitment. For Wentersdorf, Claudio's intimacy with Juliet was both illegal and immoral. In his "The Marriage Contracts in 'Measure for Measure': A Reconsideration," Wentersdorf states that

> Any attempted marriage violating [certain] requirements would not constitute a valid union; and so after 1564, in the Catholic parts of Europe, clandestine unions that had been consummated were *ipso facto* fornicatory relationships. (Wentersdorf 133)

Yet Wentersdorf indicates that the common belief was that such a union was not sinful if a public marriage would follow afterward, for "[t]he majority of the Christian faithful felt that clandestine marriages, while unlawful, were not objectionable in a sexual sense" (135). Wentersdorf sees Shakespeare as a dramatist toying with the legality and humanity of the situation, and illuminating problems created when the civil and religious laws contain "ambiguities and imperfections" (Wentersdorf 143).

The latest foray into the quagmire of marriage contracts came from Margaret Scott, who examined the idea of changing laws in the Renaissance as well as the idea of foreign despots. In "'Our City's Institutions': Some

Further Reflections on the Marriage Contracts in *Measure for Measure*," Scott states that:

> In a Catholic city after 1563, neither Claudio's union with Julietta nor Angelo's pre-contract with Mariana would have been accepted as valid marriage. (Scott 795)

Because neither couple had a final marriage ceremony sanctioned by both the civil and religious authorities, neither couple should be considered less guilty than the other. Scott's emphasis lies in the fact that the audience would continually compare the Catholic Vienna to the Protestant England in which they lived, and come up with an unfavorable picture of a foreign despotic government with overly harsh rules:

> Here is a Catholic state in which hand-fast marriage is no longer accepted as valid, but an awareness that Claudio could not in England have been punished for fornication flows in under our recognition of foreign difference to deepen our disapprobation of Angelo's severity. (Scott 797)

Although I agree that the two couples should be looked upon as equally culpable regarding the lack of a valid matrimonial union, I do not feel that the play necessarily emphasizes foreign versus domestic differences in marriage law. The difference, in fact, lies in the intent of the individuals, and that intent is elusive. Yet with Angelo and Claudio, the audience gets

the clearest idea regarding the intent to keep or breach a promise--Angelo obviously wishes to breach his promise, whereas Claudio intends to keep his promise. At the start of the play, neither promise has yet been kept. At the end of the play, both are kept. That the marriage promises are easiest to recognize is evident in the mere fact that critics have latched on to them as the cornerstone of the play; in fact, they are but a small portion of the promises in *Measure for Measure.* Because of their apparent prominence, however, the marriage contracts are the easiest ones to follow through from initial intent to final action.

The four couples who are married at the end illustrate a wide range of emotional attachment and distance, of honor and dishonor, of religious and profane. An examination of each couple reveals the breadth of Shakespeare's ability to encapsulate in microcosm the world around him. In the coupling of Angelo and Mariana, severe abstinence and doting love combine. In the coupling of Claudio and Juliet, imminent death meets the promise of newborn life. In the coupling of Lucio and Kate Keepdown--two emotionally distant people--the braggart-fop of a gentleman is forced to recognize his own proclivities and face his meretricious wife. In the coupling of the Duke and Isabella, the Duke completes his promise to keep Isabella safe and they create a married couple who combine high religious ideals with pragmatic common sense. All four cases round out a world where people like Angelo can ignore a promise; where those like Claudio become trapped,

helpless in the moments immediately before he can keep his promise; where those like Lucio desire never to make a promise; and where those like the Duke and Isabella must have the foresight to understand and accept an appropriate promise.

To undertake an agreement of any kind and to proceed with the agreement, ultimately keeping it and prospering because of it, becomes an almost chivalric duty under certain circumstances. As such, a contract can guide the participants to attain the ultimate goal of the contract, and bring honor to each individual. The opposite, to break a contract or a promise, was to be untrustworthy:

> This notion was related to the persistent idea that a man who breaks his promise is some sort of liar, and to the further idea that if he never intended to be bound, or never intended to perform, he has not been involved in any sort of lying. For example, in the *Summa Pisana* in the title *Promissio* it is noted that a promisor who never intends to perform is not a liar, but failure to perform, Bartholomeus of Pisa says, means that he seems to have acted unfaithfully, because he has changed his mind. This is taken verbatim from Aquinas's *Summa Theologica,* and the analysis turns upon the notion that a promise is a statement of intention, and breach of promise a sort of retrospective act of falsification. If the promisor never intended to perform, failure to perform tells the truth about his intention. (Simpson 386)

Thus the honor of the individual, as well as the intention which the individual held at the moment a promise was made, becomes evident when that person keeps or breaks a promise. In the world of *Measure for Measure,*

promises represent crucial evidence as to the moral character of the individual. When one speaks of a promise or a contract, the words might be used interchangeably, because in the writings of the time

> . . . it is clear that there is no real difference between a pact and a promise . . . and that the distinction between a *stipulatio* and a pact or promise, though a real one, is totally unworkable in terms of real life except in a world in which some sort of formal question and answer are actually used to make agreements. (Simpson 382)

Therefore it seems plausible to discuss promises and agreements (legal or religious) as contracts, whether or not they were written or merely spoken. The written or spoken word can convey the intent of those involved. Yet, if one cannot make and keep a promise, such a person cannot validly enter into a contract. If one makes a promise and then reneges, that person risks not only his honor but whatever goods or benefit he might have received. If one never intended to promise, but is understood by another to have promised, then the former risks a damaged reputation if he does not uphold his end of the contract.

Measure for Measure is filled with people who make promises and then keep them only under duress; the special characters who make promises and keep them are indeed few and far between in the world of Vienna. Someone like Angelo, who attempts to prove that he never promised marriage to Mariana, and that, even if he did, she broke the

contract because of the lack of a dowry, falls into the category of those trying to wheedle out of a contract. Such a person might attempt by various legal means to prove that the intent to promise did not enter his mind. Simpson describes the tactics often employed in such cases:

> Thus it was possible to give in evidence matter showing that the defendant never promised at all, did not promise in the terms averred, that there was no consideration, or that the consideration was unlawful, that he was an infant or within the coverture, that the promise was made under duress, that the promise itself was unlawful or had been discharged before breach. In seventeenth-century law (though the position later changed) in actions of special assumpsit a defence which involved conceding that there had once been liability, though liability which had later been discharged, had to be specially pleaded. (Simpson 579)

A kind of legal chicanery becomes possible when justice must look for intent--and this kind of chicanery is what Angelo attempts during the last act:

> My Lord, I must confesse, I know this woman,
> And fiue yeres since there was some speech of marriage
> Betwixt my selfe, and her: which was broke off,
> Partly for that her promis'd proportions
> Came short of Composition: But in chiefe
> For that her reputation was dis-valued
> In leuitie: Since which time of fiue yeres
> I neuer spake with her, saw her, nor heard from her
> Vpon my faith, and honor. (5.1.216-24)

The charge of lightness leveled against Mariana is, of course, a false one which disregards her as-yet secret assignation with her husband-to-be. Too, for Angelo to swear upon his own honor seems ridiculous. Mariana has, in fact, kept her end of the contract by which she promised love to Angelo. According to Angelo, the breach of contract became viable because their contract was never in itself finalized--rather, the "speech of marriage" was "broke off." Since such speech has been banished from Angelo's vocabulary, he has taken to denying his own sensuality, and has lately taken to attempting to extinguish that of others through legal means. The logic of Angelo's thinking fails, however; he has thought that the lack of a dowry was reason enough to abandon Mariana, but he actually has no valid reason to dishonor her by abandoning her.

The fact that Mariana escapes from the world to the deserted grange indicates that she wishes no other husband than Angelo; but this fact, too, shows her unwillingness to pursue her own promise to its ultimate fruition. Angelo himself says that she has neither talked to him nor has she written him regarding their contract. Her silence, however, does not allow Angelo to forget his former promise. The Duke seems to remember it clearly; he states that Mariana suffered at the loss of her brother as well as her dowry, and that since the shipwreck, [41] Angelo's hardness against her has been doubly

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[41]Laws governing shipwreck in England (if I understand the laws correctly) strictly limited the ability of someone like Angelo to hold Mariana liable for the shipwrecked goods. In fact, it seems that such goods, if they were to turn up on shore again after the shipwreck, which evidently occurred quite frequently, would have become the possession of the reigning sovreign.

wounding, as he has forgotten and ultimately denied that he

> was affianced to her oath, and the nuptiall appointed: between which time of the contract, and limit of the solemnitie, her brother *Fredericke* was wrackt at Sea, hauing in that perished vessell, the dowry of his sister: but marke how heauily this befell to the poore Gentlewoman, there she lost a noble and renowned brother, in his loue toward her, euer most kinde and naturall: with him the portion and sinew of her fortune, her marriage dowry: with both, her combynate-husband, this well-seeming *Angelo.* (3.1.222-31)

Thus the Duke remembers the contract as well as the subsequent period of time which lapsed without its fulfillment. Angelo, in the Duke's opinion, "Swallowed his vowes whole" (3.1.236), and "[l]eft [Mariana] in her teares" (3.1.235). Mariana's emotions do matter to the Duke; they make a difference; for in a court of law, her emotions would not be overlooked,

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According to Cowell, a "wreck" is defined as "the losse of a shippe and the goods therein conteined by tempest, or other mischaunce at the sea. The Ciuilians call it (Naufragium). This wreck being made, the goods that were in the shippe, being brought to land by the waues, belong to the king by his prerogatiue. And therevpon in many bookes of our common lawe the very goods, so brought to land, are called wreck. And wreck is defined to be those goods which are so brought to land. . . . Whereby it appeareth that the King hath them, or such as haue by graunt this libertie or priiuledge of him. And that this statute doth but affirme the auncient lawe of the land . . . ". (Cccc2 v). In other lands, it seems that "some sorts of their pretious Merchandise doe by their lawe appertaine to the Duke by his prerogatiue, though a iust challenge of the goods be made within the years and day" (Cccc 3 r). It seems interesting that the possibility exists for the Duke in *Measure for Measure* to have appropriated Frederick's goods lost at sea under the law; however all such speculation is pure conjecture as the text does not necessarily suggest such an occurrence.

despite her lack of a dowry. Simpson indicates that marriage by definition is built upon emotions:

> Where marriage was the cause of an agreement, the courts . . . introduced an exception to the general rule that natural love and affection was irrelevant in assumpsit, and in consequence most family agreements involving payment of money were as effectively sanctioned by assumpsit as were family agreements involving land. (Simpson 435)

Mariana's emotional state suggests that she has continued to love Angelo despite all of his protests, and her love is quite evident to the Duke as proof of the vows he knows Angelo made.

Neither has Mariana herself forgotten Angelo's spoken vows. She mentions several times that Angelo and she promised mutually to marry, and she insists that Angelo once "swor[e]" that her face "was worth the looking on" (5.1.208), and that they had joined hands [42] to agree on the match:

> This is the hand, which with a vowd contract
> Was fast belockt in thine: (5.1.209-10)

Mariana perceived the promise to be a strong one, an unmistakable pledge from Angelo's mouth, supported by his words as well as his actions:

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[42]Significantly, the Duke later asks for Isabella's hand at the end of the play, which indicates that he is proferring himself in the same kind of hand-fast agreement. Her silence, as I have mentioned previously, indicates that she must take his hand in hers.

> As there comes light from heauen, and words
> form breath,
> As there is sence in truth, and truth in vertue,
> I am affianced this mans wife, as strongly
> As words could make vp vowes: (5.1.224-27)

Thus Angelo's words suggested "as strongly as words" can that he would marry Mariana. In Mariana's eyes, Angelo's lack of commitment to their relationship was a breach of contract. The fact that her dowry was lost at sea comes into play only as an excuse which helps to dehumanize Angelo further through his insensitivity.

Angelo, instead of remembering his promise to Mariana, intends to substitute a false contract for a true one. In a particularly theatrical turn, Shakespeare masterfully interweaves the false against the true once again. With Angelo's and Mariana's true contract known, Shakespeare reveals a darker, more sinister side to Angelo, as Angelo attempts to create an illegal contract with Isabella. In the scene where Angelo first courts and later more forcefully argues to coerce her to submit through extortion, Angelo couches his proposal in terms of a contract. Such a contract, he says, will be mutually beneficial to both parties: Isabella will have her brother safe, and Angelo shall have his "sweet vncleannesse" (2.4.54), this according to a *quid pro quo* agreement, wherein she "redeeme[s]" (2.4.53) Claudio from death by substituting herself to that other kind of "little death":

Redeeme thy brother,
By yeelding vp thy bodie to my will .... (2.4.163)

In other words, Shakespeare creates a situation which has two sides, and certain actions of the characters will fulfill the contractual agreement under the terms of "Angelo's request" (2.4.186). The contractual tone has been perceived by other critics as well; Maxwell states that

> It is one of the brilliant things about Shakespeare's handling of the matter, in comparison with earlier versions, that we feel that it is intrinsic to the action, and not just an arbitrary piece of mechanism, that the price demanded should be a sexual one. (Maxwell 17)

But Angelo's request is not only the basis of an immoral contract, but an illegal one as well, under the laws of Vienna. To set out to seduce a nun represents in itself a dangerous enterprise.

In England, the laws governing the seduction of a nun historically were quite strict, and the act itself was considered one of the most heinous a man could commit (Power 446). In effect, when Shakespeare shows Angelo attempting to corrupt the innocence of a novice, the action triggers the utter revulsion of the audience at such a crime. Despite the fact that Isabella's beauty betrays her own sensuality, Angelo's lust, inexcusable as it is, remains the driving force behind the scene of their conversation. But he has

attempted to bring his lust under the terms of a contract, wherein an exchange of goods calls for fair dealing on both sides--and neither side deals fairly in this case.

In reality, his contract would, of course, have been void from the start, because it broke civil and moral laws, and was therefore illegal in and of itself. Simpson recounts the governing ideas regarding illegal contracts, specifically those involving spiritual questions:

> The unlawful character of the promise could arise in various ways. It could derive from statute; thus by statute usurious contracts were made unlawful, though here the statute affirmed a common law principle. Alternatively the source of illegality might be the common law. . . . Illegality at common law was in fact fairly widely extended. Thus simoniacal contracts were covered, although the offence here was spiritual and might be regarded as outside lay jurisdiction. So too were fraudulent or covinous agreements, or agreements involving sexual immorality. (Simpson 509)

Such illegal contracts are paralleled in this particular agreement between Angelo and Isabella in *Measure for Measure.* Without a doubt, Angelo's crime is a serious one, not only because it breaks civil law, but also because it breaks the religious laws in a most heinous fashion:

> In the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the convents of France and Italy were the haunts of young gallants, *monachini,* who specialised in intrigues with nuns. But the seduction of a *Sponsa Dei* was not a fashionable pursuit in . . . England, and it was not as a rule lords and gentlemen who hung

about the precincts. (Power 446)

When Angelo attempts to commit this crime, he has indeed given his "sensuall race, the reine" (2.4.160). Such a seduction would practically put him in the ninth circle of Dante's Hell according to the philosophy of the time. In the following quotation, Power illuminates the steps taken against someone accused of committing this crime. I quote the entire passage because of its obvious applicability to the situation in *Measure for Measure*:

> The crime of seducing a nun was always considered an extremely serious one; she was *Sponsa Dei*, inviolable, sacrosanct. Anglo-Saxon law fined the ravisher heavily, and a law of Edward I declared him liable to three years imprisonment, besides satisfaction made to the convent. There is, however, no evidence that the State imprisoned or otherwise punished persons guilty of this crime, though it was always ready to issue the writ *De apostata capiendo*, for the recovery of a monk or nun who had fled. Whenever the lover of a nun is found undergoing punishment, it is always a punishment inflicted by the Church. If a man had abducted a nun, or were accused of seducing her, he was summoned before the Bishop or Archdeacon and required to purge himself of the charge. If he pleaded "Not guilty" a day was appointed, on which he had to clear himself by the oath of a number of compurgators. Thus the Prioress of Catesby's lover, the priest William Taylour, was summoned before Bishop Alnwick in the church of Brampton; there he denied the crime and was told to bring five chaplains, of good report, who had knowledge of his behaviour, in a few days' time to the parish church of Rothwell. The result of his attempt to find compurgators is not known, but the Prioress had already failed to get four of her nuns to support her and had been pronounced guilty. One wonders what happened when the man produced compurgators and the lady failed to do so: for

> these misdemeanours *à deux* the compurgatorial system would seem a little uncertain. (Power 462-63)

In the case of Angelo and Isabella, of course, only Angelo would actually be considered guilty: he even says so himself, for Isabella's sin would be "compel'd" (2.4.57). If Angelo were found guilty of having seduced a nun, his punishment would be stiff indeed:

> The obdurate were excommunicated until such time as they submitted. The penitent were adjudged a penance. There is abundant evidence that the penance given by the church was always a severe one. (Power 463)

Therefore, Angelo's substitute contract has at its roots an evil which Angelo later could not deny. The "promise" (4.1.34) which Isabella makes to Angelo cannot in any way be considered worth keeping. The substitution gives the Duke a safe way to reinstate Angelo's first promise and in the place of "falsehood, false exacting" (3.2.295), to bring about the "olde contracting" (3.2.296).

Therefore, despite the fact that Angelo wishes to disavow his former contract, the Duke does not allow him to do so. Even with his new false contract, Angelo has trouble keeping his word and he quickly careens toward destruction with his sudden and unusual haste in commanding Claudio's untimely execution "by foure of the clocke" (4.2.124). Had the fantastical

Duke of dark corners not been lurking just beyond Angelo's reach, Angelo might, indeed, have succeeded in breaking not only the first contract with Mariana, but his substitute contract with Isabella as well. That Isabella did not hold up her end of the bargain becomes irrelevant, especially because the entire play pushes toward the resolution of original, pure and true promises which ought to be kept. Thus the Duke becomes the moving force behind rearranging events to ensure that Angelo's true contract with Mariana remains enforced, whereas his false contract is recognized as illegal. [43]

Angelo's false contracting with Isabella creates a situation in which the Duke must use all of his resources in order to set things right again. The fact that the Duke manages to seal all of the marriage contracts results in a stronger Vienna. He seals some which were not true contracts at the start but became true contracts as a result of the intimacy of the couple involved, and the Duke sanctioned all of the final contracts with his own words. But some critics feel that the enforced marriages at the end of the play only detract from the happiness:

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[43]Robert H. Wilson believes that the entire Mariana substitution plot was added by Shakespeare after he had already worked on the play and completed it without it in some fashion. It seems unlikely that Wilson argues correctly in his "The Mariana Plot of *Measure for Measure.*" Wilson states that "if the Mariana plot existed in Shakespeare's first writing of the play, it was in all likelihood the only large variation from *Promos and Cassandra*" (Wilson 344). However, he concludes that the Mariana substitution plot was merely an afterthought: "These disturbances of time and plot are possible in an original writing, but their occurrence would be much easier if the Mariana plot were an insertion, composed in slight forgetfullness of the main story, and losing its own connections when patched into the older narrative here and there" (Wilson 346).

> There is little to suggest that the social institution of marriage can, like Lear's apothecary, sweeten the sexual imagination expressed in this play. *Measure for Measure* makes the problem of illicit sexuality the focus for anxieties seemingly based on the whole of man's sexual nature. (Wheeler 104)

Thus Richard Wheeler sees the four marriages as extremely sterile solutions to the problem of sexuality. Wheeler suggests that the silences at the end of the play indicate no pleasure at the thought of marriage, and that all are unhappy, chief of all Angelo, who "gives no indication that he has shifted from his earlier scorn for Mariana, or that he is now ready to move beyond the shame that has led him to beg for immediate death" (Wheeler 127). And Lucio's comments regarding his enforced marriage, needless to say, are not positive ones; hence Wheeler's assertion that the marriage of Lucio to Kate Keepdown, "conducted in prison, is an appropriately debased culmination of the play's unpurged tension between sexuality and the moral order" (Wheeler 153). Wheeler, I think, judges harshly when he chooses to omit the legitimacy and orderliness of marriage when imposed on a disorderly, and, in Lucio's case, especially lascivious lifestyle. In all Vienna, from the Duke to Lucio, the cure for misconduct seems to be marriage. The fact that marriage is a contract, too, reinforces the honor and duty of its members to uphold each part of the bargain.

In essence, what Shakespeare does with marriages in *Measure for Measure* is to emphasize their importance in the world as contracts worthy to be kept--or, at the very least, the *appearance* of marriage is better than the *appearance* of wild abandon to base instincts. Lawrence Stone notes that during this period, the movement regarding the sanctity and importance of the married state as a calling became emphasized in the church, and throughout the world, as a new fashion--"the ethical norm" from which society might be reinforced, rather than from the asceticism of the middle ages:

> The married state now became the ethical norm for the virtuous Christian, its purpose being more than what Milton described contemptuously, referring to the Pauline view, as 'the prescribed satisfaction of an irrational heat.' (Stone 101)

Thus the married state actually supersedes the state of chastity, at least in the world of *Measure for Measure.* Even the Duke must submit under the yoke of matrimony, and because he does submit, he will have the ability to lead his people by example, as well as through his strength in the laws of the land.

Thus when one examines the Duke's words regarding each marriage, one can see the progression from disorder to order. The first marriage which occurs is that of Angelo to Mariana, and appropriately the Duke asks Angelo:

Say: was't thou ere contracted to this woman? (5.1.380)

Angelo answers, "I was my Lord" (5.1.381). The Provost serves as witness, and Friar Peter officiates at the off-stage wedding. After Angelo realizes that Claudio was not executed, the Duke adjures him to "Looke that [he] loue [his] wife" (5.1.502). Angelo and Mariana's contract is thus finalized--and Angelo must learn that Mariana was the woman he wanted all along.

The next wedding which the Duke commands, between Lucio and Kate Keepdown, also has at least one unwilling participant. Their mutual entertainment has resulted in a child, and Lucio objects greatly to being cuckolded before he is even married: "Good my Lord do not recompence me, in making me a Cuckold" (5.1.524), to which the Duke replies that Lucio shall "marrie her" upon the Duke's "honor" (5.1.525). But the Duke's honor has become bound up with Lucio's, as well as the rest of Vienna's honor. Lucio had, in fact "promis'd her marriage" (3.2.213). Thus, the Duke must command what Lucio will not undertake willingly. [44] Interestingly, in the case of Claudio and Juliet, the Duke does not enforce marriage; he merely adjures

[44]In fact, Lucio's appeal to the audience may be rooted in this unwillingness to commit a relationship to the strictures of marriage. Lucio delights in avoiding responsibility for anything he does, and he actually organizes his attempts to avoid being associated with his own actions--including the words he speaks against the Duke. The avoidance of responsibility for his own actions compel him to "change persons" (5.1.340) with the Duke as Friar when put on the spot.

Claudio to "restore" the one he has "wrong'd" (5.1.531). Though Juliet does not speak, she presumably is happy at the prospect of her marriage.

The movement, then, tends from unwilling to willing participants in marriage contracts of their own making. For the final marriage the Duke orchestrates, his own, he asks only "a willing eare" (5.1.542) of his Isabella, which, as I have argued previously, she seems to give. No words are spoken which cannot be fulfilled; no person is given and then rejected; no promise is spoken only to be forgotten. In this final scene, a promise of marriage comes under the civil and religious authority--the Duke and Friar Peter work together to bring about a state of matrimony which touches and affects all stages of society, from the Duke himself to the prostitutes in the brothels. The Church, too, has its own job to do in the new Vienna, and that is to follow the lead of the Duke in confirming mutually beneficial partnerships.

Thus a marriage contract in *Measure for Measure* becomes the easiest kind of promise to trace in the actions of the characters. Marriage contracts are spoken of as valid, legal, and moral obligations, indeed, ending in terms of compulsion to action under certain circumstances. Shakespeare's emphasis on marriage vows, however, does not indicate a necessarily doomed view of marriage in general, as sometimes is suggested because of the apparent hopelessness that Lucio and even Angelo appear to bring to marriage--despite the fact that they had at first agreed to their marriage contracts. Rather, *Measure for Measure* emphasizes a realistic view of

marriage from several different social and economic strata of Vienna. When one recalls that marriage in England was always a contractual agreement, often involving money or land, one can see that the pragmatic approach which Shakespeare takes at least includes a modicum of romantic affection between the two parties, and such might not necessarily have been the case regarding many such contracts. If one recalls Shakespeare's own situation, one might find that marriage to him was little more than an enforced arrangement--his new bride and he were, after all, greeted at the start of their marriage with "an injunction taken out by her kinsman to ensure that Shakespeare could not elude the match" (Russell 36). One can hardly argue that Shakespeare's own actions impact on the play itself, except to suggest that one might, as the saying goes, "marry and grow tame" in a world like the Vienna of *Measure for Measure.*

CHAPTER V

OATHS OF OFFICE AND MYSTERIES OF PROFESSION: THE DUKE'S SERVANTS AND PROMISES OF FEALTY

In *Measure for Measure*, one's place in society is affected by many factors: birth and position, profession, personal qualities such as honor, intellect, and appearance, all culminate in the particular way the society of Vienna perceives the individual. Thus, all things being equal, a minor change in the chemistry moves a person toward or away from an ideal. The "function" (1.2.13) of an individual allows or does not allow certain behavior on the part of that individual. Instead, Shakespeare's society dictates standards of behavior for certain people and professions, standards which must be followed in order for a Duke to remain a Duke, or a soldier to remain a soldier. To some extent, a character becomes defined by his occupation, and much of the surrounding society begins to expect that person to remain in the same position. In *Measure for Measure*, characters become defined by the position they hold, and it becomes difficult for a person to shift from an initial position to a new one. Any promise, or even tacit acceptance, by a person continuing in a certain position or office is taken quite seriously by

the society of Vienna.

When the Duke temporarily abdicates, he makes a simple change of appearance, and without altering any other factor, manages to change society's perception of him. Though he holds the same office, yet he cannot exercise its power openly because of his new appearance. In the absence of the true and genuine Duke, the citizens must keep faith with the office itself or with the deputies of the Duke. This fact emphasizes the importance of the relationship between the Duke as an individual and the dukedom as an office, as well as the relationship between the subjects and Vincentio as the dual Duke--official and personal. The Duke becomes not only the person of Vincentio, but a combination of the personal Duke with all the laws that form the office of Duke. His change in appearance, and therefore in official identity, creates a rift between two parts of one person, and this rift must be repaired for the Duke to meet the expectations of his people.

In many ways, *Measure for Measure* exemplifies a shifting of one state of life to another when the Duke leaves his office. But even more importantly, all of the characters in *Measure for Measure* are tied inextricably to their occupations and to their status at birth. For the audience, an individual becomes very much identified with what society expects of such a person in such an occupation. As William Bache indicates in his Measure for Measure *as Dialectical Art*, "Roles are readily assigned: *the* true man is the duke; *the* thief is Angelo; *the* hangman is Abhorson; *the*

bawd is Pompey; *the* brother is Claudio; *the* murderer is Barnardine" (Bache 38). But roles maintain a status-quo in the play, and any variation from the status-quo becomes a significant attempt toward what eventually amounts to anarchy. Therefore, when the audience's expectations of a specific character do not meet squarely with the character's subsequent actions, the resulting shift unsettles the order which should be evident in the society of Vienna.

A specific occupation seems sufficient to define an individual's place in Shakespeare's Viennese society, but Shakespeare also appears intent on proving that an individual must succeed in an office while retaining his own personality--in effect, that the individual and the office should become a blend of human emotions and morals with a societal or cultural position held, rather than the individual being subsumed by the office or position. In *Measure for Measure*, the occurrence of this combinate blend of individual and office is rare; by this I mean that in the Duke's Vienna, a disjunction between the person and the job exists. Even the Duke must abandon his office before he can reconcile his emotional side with his official duties. Too, the characters themselves seem unable to accept the possibility that appearance and reality are not one and the same--a judge must be just; a friar must be holy. [45]

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[45]For example, no character is able to look beyond the Duke's disguise, and none is willing to believe that Mistress Overdone can actually change her trade; even Escalus remains unable to separate the real Angelo from his former prudish appearance. Many critics have observed that a startling difference exists between appearance and reality in *Measure for Measure.* Although an important element in the play, it is beyond the scope of this work. But it is worth noting that the incongruity of a misleading appearance

As a result, in order to succeed in an initial occupation one must become the ideal, which seems difficult and sometimes even undesirable depending upon the social worth of the initial occupation. People in the Duke's Vienna may exchange high offices, as when Angelo becomes embued with the Duke's power, or they may exchange one bad career for another, as Pompey does. These place-changes occur in the hope that some good will come out of abandoning a former occupation; however, success at an initial occupation *without abandoning one's worth or one's destiny* is the key to fulfillment on both the personal and the official level in *Measure for*

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and the essential reality hidden behind the appearance results in a tension which only disappears after the dramatic suspense disappears, that is, when the play ends and all appearance becomes reality. Wheeler finds this a disappointing conclusion:

> The conflicted inner worlds of the characters are not clarified either by bringing them to resolution or by dramatizing their continued irresolution; they are simply sacrificed to the effort to create the theatrical appearance of an outer social order. After dramatizing instances of greatly intensified conflict within an expanded comic action, *Measure for Measure* retreats from the force of such conflict into a kind of theatrical simulation of mastery. (8)

In another article, "Measure for Measure: Freedom and Restraint", Godshalk notes that "[a]ppearance may be seen as a restraint on truth, while reality is a freedom from falsehood" ("Freedom" 137). Lawrence Sargent Hall sums up this duality of truth versus falsehood, appearance versus reality succinctly by saying that

> The modernity--it may be best to call it timelessness--of Shakespeare's view of the human condition is evident. In this view, itself perhaps as much a fantasy as its expression in the magic art of Prospero or of his creator, the two superintending themes of identity and authority flicker and fade in the primary ambiguity of appearance and reality. (164-5)

Measure. Therefore, true success results from two forces working in conjunction. The first is morality, which drives the person to do what is right no matter what the circumstances; and the second is the tested allegiance between the Duke and the subject, resulting from both moral and legal obligations which have been met. Often, the moral and legal implications become reduced to a simple oath of office; in such cases the agreement is both morally and legally binding.

The only person who truly remains steadfastly faithful to the Duke and the Duke's office--despite any controversy which might ensue--is the Provost, who keeps his own office well, and molds that office to his own personality. The Provost allows emotion to touch him; he perceives individuals as individuals, not just as prisoners. Escalus, like the Provost, also has adapted himself to his office to some extent, but unlike the Provost, Escalus never rises above his office, nor does he perceive others apart from their offices or positions in society. [46] Therefore, the Provost alone fulfills completely his

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[46]Escalus speaks of Claudio and positions him in society as the son of a "most noble father" (2.1.8). Later on, Escalus can only perceive Angelo through his office, despite the fact that Angelo has injected his own personal vendetta into his itinerary. To the Duke, Escalus can only say: My lord, I am more amaz'd at his dishonor, / Then at the strangenesse of it" (5.1.385). And to Angelo, Escalus says:

> I am sorry, one so learned and so wise
> As you, Lord *Angelo*, haue stil appear'd,
> Should slip so grosselie, both in the heat of bloud
> And lack of temper'd iudgement afterward.

Unlike the Provost, Escalus does not grow or change at all throughout the play--he remains what he always was, that is, a good justice with a merciful heart toward the common people.

official duties, and in addition fulfills his own perception of honor. In effect, the Provost keeps his oath of office loyally and conscientiously. Other characters, such as Pompey and Mistress Overdone, Elbow, Abhorson, and even Barnardine, all grow out of society's perception of a situation or profession, and change little during the course of the play.

When the audience first sees a character in *Measure for Measure*, Shakespeare has included all of the criteria for placing that character in the society of Vienna. Through language, appearance, family history, and wealth, Shakespeare places everyone from the Duke to Mistress Overdone in a specific social stratum. In a world just beginning to question the Divine Right of Kings, the hierarchical nature of society was becoming a source of intellectual inquiry for Renaissance audiences. In *Troilus and Cressida*, Shakespeare's Ulysees makes an often-quoted speech on order in nature, and other writings such as Richard Hooker's *Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity* prevail on the masses to maintain the preservation of the heirarchical system as evidenced in all of nature:

> Now if Nature should intermit her course, and leave altogether, though it were but for a while, the observation of her own laws: if those principall and mother elements of the world, whereof all things in this lower world are made, should loose the qualities which they now have; if the frame of that heavenly arch erected over our heads should loosen and dissolve it selfe; if celestiall spheres should forget their wonted motions and by irregular volubilitie, turne themselves any way as it might happen; if the prince of the lightes of heaven which now as a Giant doth runne his unwearied course, should as it were through a languishing faintnes begin to stand an to rest himselfe; if the Moone should

> wander from her beaten way, the times and seasons of the year blend themselves by disordered and confused mixture, the winds breathe out their last gaspe, the clouds yeeld no rayne, the earth be defeated of heavenly influence, the fruites of the earth pine away as children at the withered breasts of their mother no longer able to yield them reliefe, what would become of man himself, whom these things now do all serve? See we not plainly that obedience of creatures unto the lawe of nature is the stay of the whole world? (65-66)

Hooker soon expands this logic to apply to the order of the church as well as to individuals in society, and argues that the only rational conclusion one can draw from the examples in nature is that one must remain in the position in society which nature intended. To upset the balance would be to allow society to succumb to horrendous disaster. According to Hooker:

> the due observation of this law which reason teacheth us cannot but be effectual unto their great good that observe the same. For we see the whole world and each part thereof so compacted that as long as each thing performeth only that work which is natural unto it, it thereby preserveth both other things and also itself. (391)

Therefore, if one takes this to the logical conclusion, all of society could suffer if one person attempted to shift position, however slightly, and as a result upset the societal organization by changing position or even profession. Such a hierarchical system includes the idea that "as long as each thing performeth only that worke which is naturall unto it, it thereby preserveth both other things, and also it self" (Hooker 93).

For example, it becomes increasingly difficult to reconcile a bawd-Pompey with an executioner-Pompey; Lucio sees him as nothing but a bawd--"Baud borne" (3.2.70), in fact, despite that he tries earnestly to make a good executioner. He will not through his own volition be forced out of his trade; he cannot even be persuaded by force that his first and natural profession does not suit him:

> Whip me? no, no, let Carman whip his Iade,
> The valiant heart's not whipt out of his trade. (2.1.268-9)

Some critics, though, continue to see Pompey as the "stinkingly depending" (3.2.28) bawd even after he changes his trade; Bennett notes that

> [i]n scene ii, Pompey is persuaded to change his calling from pimp to headsman's assistant, acting out the pun on *headsman* and *maidenhead* in a bit of very masculine humor. The Provost sends Pompey to call up Claudio and Barnardine to be executed (that is, serve as pimp to the headsman). (41)

Thus poor Pompey may not better himself in the eyes of this critic; instead the critic tends merely to shift the emphasis from one kind of head to another. Cook, too, sees the shift as maintaining a sexual connotation despite the obvious change in career:

> [Pompey] finds that many of his best customers are in jail for one crime or another, and in discussing the 'mystery' (in a

> religious sense) of the hangman's trade with the Hangman Abhorson (abortion, abhor, whoreson), he puns on cutting off a man's head in the double sense of execution and sexual satisfaction (equivalent to the metaphysical pun 'die'). (Cook 125)

Although Pompey's chosen career caters to sexuality, Wheeler believes that "Pompey is the character who has adapted most comfortably to the world Shakespeare creates in *Measure for Measure*" (103). But in the play Pompey never manages to rise above his former profession seriously; he cannot adapt. In fact, all indications are that he will soon return to his former trade.

His job as executioner is, after all, only a temporary one. Pompey has received explicit instructions on his new position from the Provost:

> To morrow are to die *Claudio* and *Barnardine*: heere is in our prison a common executioner, who in his office lacks a helper, if you will take it on you to assist him, it shall redeeme you from your Gyues: if not, you shall haue your full time of imprisonment, and your deliuerance with an vnpittied whipping; for you haue beene a notorious bawd. (4.2.7-13)

Pompey admits that he has been a bawd "time out of minde" (4.2.14-15), a criterion of experience to which Abhorson objects. His objection, that Pompey will "discredit our mysterie" (4.2.31), indicates an unwillingness to allow someone whom Abhorson perceives as beneath him to rise above his former position. The impetus for the change in level comes evidently from

the Provost, who has put Pompey under the care of Abhorson. Because Abhorson consciously undertook his own position, he feels that Pompey should not be allowed to change his own from bawd to executioner. That the Provost sees both as weighing "equallie," that just "a feather will turne the Scale" (4.2.33), suggests an insight on his part that goes beyond all other characters but the Duke. The society of Vienna, however, embraces change with less enthusiasm; even Pompey says that "euerie true mans apparrell fits your Theefe" (4.2.50). And one may be a thief of more than clothes in *Measure for Measure*; one may steal from the state as the Duke does, or one may steal away from one's former life. But in the end, no change occurs of any substance despite transitory outward appearances. Abhorson knows his vocation; he knows that to prepare for the upcoming executions he must have the "Axe vpon the blocke" (4.3.39), the "Warrant" (4.3.44) in hand, and the prisoner ready for death. He teaches Pompey briefly, and in fact, Pompey does learn some elements of the trade, but that does not necessarily indicate that Pompey will change. Pompey may only serve for the next day, as Abhorson has the option to "vse him for the present, and dismisse him" (4.2.28-9), or to hire him "by the yeere" (4.2.27). As neither Claudio nor Barnardine dies in the end, it seems unlikely that Pompey would continue to be an executioner with no one to execute. Shakespeare does not overtly indicate what becomes of Pompey in the end, but Pompey does seem to be primarily interested in saving himself from a whipping. Interestingly, his last

words in the play are to Barnardine, and, as a bawd characteristically would, Pompey speaks of drinking and sleeping (4.2.48-9).

Class-shifting, in essence, becomes an uncommon feat in *Measure for Measure*; indeed it is nearly impossible in the Duke's Vienna. The inability to shift classes is evident especially in those who are guilty of what Wilson Knight calls "professional immorality" (74). Changing society's perception of an individual becomes extremely difficult for such people in *Measure for Measure*. Mistress Overdone, though evidently compassionate and not without common sense, finds herself quite inconsolable at the thought that she might not work again at her own trade; she has, after all, appeared before Escalus several times in the past without any change of lifestyle since--a lifestyle she has kept for at least "eleven years" (3.2.184), according to the informant Lucio. Escalus laments such a status-quo:

> Double and treble admonition, and still forfeit in the same kind!
> This would make mercy swear, and play the tyrant. (3.2.182-3)

Despite the fact that she was "*Ouer-don* by [her] last" husband (2.1.213), Mistress Overdone wishes to continue in her profession; her profession, in effect, defines her understanding of herself. Mistress Overdone seems to be the only one the Duke (or Shakespeare) forgot about pardoning, for she of all the other characters evidently has been left in prison alone at the end of

the play. She is mentioned for the last time by Pompey, who compares the jail to the brothel because the inhabitants of both were the same people (4.3.1-21). That Overdone must be punished is not mentioned by the Duke; she merely disappears from the play. Therefore, the fact that Overdone does not wish to change reinforces the inability of the characters to shift their positions, even when the law decrees that they must.

Whereas some people are required by law to change their trade, others have taken upon themselves inappropriate professions for which they are unsuited. As a representative of the law himself, Elbow's inefficiency creates an interesting paradox. Justice and injustice become nearly allied, and ignorance seems to be the quality that the people in Elbow's district like their constables to have. Escalus attempts to get to the bottom of the problem, and sees immediately that Elbow, as "the poore Dukes Constable" (2.1.47-8) who "leane[s] vpon Iustice" (2.1.48) is the very opposite of "a wise officer" (2.1.58). Though Elbow has held his office already for "seuen yeere, and a halfe" (2.1.273), he has taken the office "for some peece of money" (2.1.284) rather than because he has been appointed to the office on merit. Escalus remedies the situation by asking Elbow to deliver to him the names of "some sixe or seuen" who are "the most sufficient of your parish" (2.1.256-7) so that Elbow may lose his office in favor of a better replacement who may restore order. In effect, Escalus indicates that Elbow cannot work well in the office because he lacks the ability; Elbow thinks that he discharges his office

well, even with "wit" (2.1.283). Escalus demands nonetheless that the imbalance must be balanced again:

> Alas, it hath beene great paines to you:
> they do you wrong to put you so oft vpon't. (2.1.280-81)

That Elbow cannot function as a Constable is evident by his "misplac[ing]s" (2.1.91); his malapropisms (if I might use the term anachronistically) indicate that he not only misplaces but is misplaced. He even has society itself out of joint because he himself has transgressed his natural inclination toward whatever it is that Elbow does well. Unlike Albert Cook, I do not believe that Elbow has serious ulterior motives in his ineffectual and naive treatment of justice in his district. In his "Metaphysical Poetry and 'Measure for Measure'", Cook states:

> Elbow, whose self-extension of his constable's term expresses supposedly his civic responsibility but actually his obscene pride and curiousity in being an official superego, reveals this in his malapropisms (the Renaissance vice *cacozelia*): public thing, a debasement of true civic virtue. (Cook 124-5)

Rather, Elbow simply has been given an office which he cannot fulfil. Elbow can easily be recognized as one whose rank does not match his wit; his difficulty in controlling language in a place where language and words form binding contracts displays his inefficiency because of this very ineptitude. The scene results in a comic pause to the dramatic tension of the moment, but it also serves to point out that an imbalance at one level of society can directly affect another. Elbow, truly, is "out at Elbow" (2.1.62); he does not belong, either as Constable or as a person, in the Vienna of the Duke--and his charm therefore is similar to that of the recalcitrant prisoner Barnardine. Neither Elbow nor Barnardine is suited to his present place in society.

Barnardine remains a loveable character to many people; a famous observation comes from R. W. Chambers, who said that "his creator came to love him so much that he had not the heart to decapitate him, although Barnardine was only created to be decapitated" (53). Bennett, likewise, seems attached to the character, stating that "Barnardine is the lost sheep, evidence and symbol of the ultimate extent of the Divine mercy" (Bennett 28). Northrop Frye suggests that only the hard-hearted would disagree with the statement that "Barnardine['s] . . . vitality makes it pleasant that he gets away with his refusal to be beheaded" (Frye 148). Barnardine's ability to stick to his purpose endears him to Rossiter, who says that "In this world of tottering values and disordered will, Barnardine stands out as admirable. His will is single: mere will-to-live" (166). This makes Barnardine loveable,

single-minded, and pure in intent; a difficult description to reconcile with Barnardine's conviction of murder. Lascelles suggests strongly that Barnardine's character seems to evoke more from the audience than perhaps Shakespeare intended:

> That Barnardine was never intended to die in the play, I am certain. But whether the qualities that have made him deathless in the imagination of many readers were part of Shakespeare's design, or came from that bounty which he could hardly deny any of his creatures--here lies no certainty, nor the hope of any. (Lascelles 113)

For a character who speaks a mere sixteen lines of prose, he strikes critics strongly and creates an endearing image among the many characters in the play. I believe that the fact that Barnardine is well-loved grows out of his inability to accept society's pressures upon him.

Interestingly, Barnardine's strength of character comes from his very nature, which not only seems untouched by societal influences, but refuses to recognize their presence at all. Bache sees Barnardine as a provocative character dramatically, for "Imagistically, Barnardine is from the barnyard; he is the rat from the grange" (4). But Barnardine's inability to fit into his own situation as a prisoner, to be absolutely defiant in the face of reality, represents another aspect of the society of Vienna which Shakespeare presents as humorous even while it is tragic. In "A Note on Barnardine in *Measure for Measure*", J. Allison Gaw states that "Barnardine, like

Pompey, is part of the necessary grim comedy with which the prison scenes are relieved and lightened" (94). I believe Barnardine's presence goes beyond this view, however; it is a much richer presentation of the human spirit unwilling to submit to societal influences than any other in the play. In effect, Barnardine represents the freedom within. Thoreau later wrote of this freedom when he said that society had an intrinsic inability to capture him, despite its ability to imprison him. Thoreau's situation in prison could serve as a summary for Barnardine's as well, though Barnardine would sum it up more succinctly. Thoreau states:

> [A]s I stood considering the walls of solid stone, two or three feet thick, the door of wood and iron, a foot thick, and the iron grating which strained the light, I could not help being struck with the foolishness of that institution which treated me as if I were mere flesh and blood and bones, to be locked up. I wondered that it should have concluded at length that this was the best use it could put me to and had never thought to avail itself of my services in some way. I saw that, if there was a wall of stone between me and my townsmen, there was a still more difficult one to climb or break through, before they could be as free as I was. I did not for a moment feel confined, and the walls seemed a great waste of stone and mortar. (80)

Like Thoreau's, Barnardine's spirit stubbornly will not submit to imprisonment; Barnardine goes beyond and even refuses to submit to death, despite the fact that the law demands it; indeed, he will not even submit to the Duke, and therefore Barnardine effectively nullifies the Duke's power in the prison.

Barnardine's situation from the start is clouded by insufficient information. Barnardine was technically charged with murder, but "[h]is friends" have "wrought Repreeues for him" (4.2.140), and it has only been since Angelo has taken office that his case "came . . . to an vndoubtfull proofe" (4.2.142). Barnardine is, according to the Provost:

> A man that apprehends death no more dreadfully, but as a drunken sleepe, carelesse, wreaklesse, and fearelesse of what's past, present, or to come: insensible of mortality, and desperately mortall. (4.2.150-53)

Barnardine represents pure spirit, unfettered by any of society's restraints. Somehow, Barnardine even manages to ignore time and space constraints. Rather than fleeing from prison he remains there, even when he could escape:

> [H]e hath euermore had the liberty of the prison: giue him leaue to escape hence, hee would not. Drunke many times a day, if not many daies entirely drunke. (4.2.155-58)

When the Duke finally pardons Barnardine, the pardon comes not *in spite of* the prisoner's natural inclination away from society's strictures, but *because of* his ability to circumvent them in his own mind.

The Duke realizes that Barnardine lacks civilization's influence, and so the Duke instructs the Friar to teach him. Rossiter finds this action

inappropriate: "He is sent off to learn to live--from a Friar. Ridiculous" (167). The Duke says that Barnardine is

> a stubborne soule
> That apprehends no further then this world,
> And squar'st [his] life according. (5.1.85-88)

Barnardine therefore represents someone whose standards by which he judges life--that is, the tools he uses to square himself to society--appear inadequate. Barnardine does not have any profession; his position seems to be outside of society rather than in it. To the Duke, Barnardine needs instruction in the ways of society, especially in order that he might learn to follow society's laws. However, the thought of a rehabilitated Barnardine seems to me somehow unlikely. The Duke evidently realizes that some people cannot be governed by him; despite the fact that he pardons Barnardine's faults, the Duke must leave Barnardine "to [the] hand" (5.1.491) of the friar.

In such a society, promotion--or even mere betterment of any kind--for an individual is rare, and it is significant that the Provost alone profits from all of the machinations of the Duke and gains a new office because of his good performance. When the Duke asks the Provost to forgo Angelo's orders for Claudio's death, the Provost protests. He has taken an oath of office; and to do anything but what Angelo orders would be a breach of that

oath. The Provost begs the Duke-Friar:

> Pardon me, good Father, it is against my oath. (4.2.193)

But the Duke does not relent; he asks the Provost whether he was "sworne to the Duke, or to the Deputie?" (4.2.194-5). When the Provost answers "To him, and to his Substitutes" (4.2.196), the Duke knows that the Provost takes his oath of allegiance as well as his office seriously.

The Provost has met the requirements of his office from the first time he appeared on stage, as he led Claudio to prison (1.2.117-8). Too, like the handy servant, the Provost is consistently nearby at the slightest notice; whenever Angelo or the Duke calls, the Provost answers immediately, even at the next line, "Here, if it like your honour" (2.1.33). The fastidious fashion in which the Provost operates indicates that he has a pride in his position.

In addition to his diligent attention to the particulars of his office, the Provost expresses emotion quite uncharacteristic of a jailer. The kind character of the Provost becomes evident at the first words he speaks. He does not happily lead people to prison who do not belong there, yet he follows Angelo's orders:

> I do it not in euill disposition,
> But from Lord *Angelo* by speciall charge. (1.2.122-3)

Lucio later says that the Provost, in fact, had "a warrant / For[Claudio]'s execution" (1.4.73-4). In his compassion for Claudio, the Provost carefully tests Angelo to see if he might change his mind, because in the years he has been in office he has seen "When after execution, Iudgement hath / Repented ore his doome" (2.2.11-12). He attempts to help Angelo change his mind, but Angelo insists that the Provost must keep his office and follow Angelo's directions:

> Doe you your office, or giue vp your Place,
> And you shall well be spar'd. (2.2.13-14).

Angelo's insistence on the carrying out of any command by the Provost continues until the very end of the play. The Provost diligently maintains his compassion for humanity despite Angelo's harshness; the Provost serves as a foil to those who are less concerned with compassion, as he keeps alive the Duke's presence in Vienna through his devotion to him:

> The Provost, with his asides, is there as Lucio's opposite, for the Provost is concerned with others, with a higher law: he serves the true Duke. (Bache 7)

Thus the Provost represents the person and character of the Duke as well. The Provost is not only the Duke's jailer; he is representative of the Duke's conscience. When Isabella attempts to persuade Angelo to free Claudio, the

Provost whispers the audience's silent wish that "Heauen give [her] mouing graces" (2.2.37). The Duke perceives this gentleness in the Provost, and finds it unusual:

> This is a gentle Prouost; sildome when
> The steeled Gaoler is the friend of men: (4.2.89-90)

But the gentle jailer does not waiver from his office to undertake Claudio's pardon on his own. The Provost continually repeats that he has a "Warrant" for Claudio's "death" (4.2.66), and continues to keep Claudio apprised of the time throughout the night:

> 'Tis now dead midnight, and by eight to morrow
> Thou must be made immortall. (4.2.68)

The impression of being "made immortall" must soothe more than another repetition of the word "death" might. Though Claudio gets no comfort from the Provost, neither does he get disapprobation. When the Duke speaks with Claudio, he speaks of death, and of life as something none would want to keep. When the Provost speaks, he speaks of immortality. Despite his emotions, the Provost stands firm in his belief that whatever he is commanded, however abhorrent to himself, he will do. He says specifically of Angelo that he "shall obey him" (4.2.110)--despite his own feelings.

Though the Duke at first believes that Angelo will indeed pardon Claudio as he had promised, Angelo's past history indicates otherwise. The Provost realizes that Claudio will probably die, and the letter from Angelo emphasizes again that the Provost must do whatever is required of him:

> Whatsoever you may heare to the contrary, let Claudio be executed by foure of the clock, and in the afternoone Bernardine: For my better satisfaction, let mee haue Claudios head sent me by fiue. Let this be duely performed with a thought the more depends on it, then we must yet deliuer. Thus faile not to doe your Office, as you will answere it at your perill. (4.2.123-29)

Angelo has discovered that the Provost will not swerve from his duties; therefore, he has effectively admonished him to recall the oath he has taken to uphold the decision of the Duke's deputy. But the Duke, too, has tested the Provost's honesty and sincerity, and has found him to be good and trustworthy. To persuade the Provost to follow his own advice, the Duke must reveal himself to the Provost to some degree. When the Duke-Friar insists that what he suggests will be accepted by the Duke, he relays to the Provost that the Duke would "auouch the iustice of [the] dealing" (4.2.203). The Duke may, in fact, reveal himself completely to the Provost; the text is not necessarily clear upon this point:

> yet since I see you fearfull, that neither my coate, integrity, nor perswasion, can with ease attempt you, I wil go further then I meante, to plucke all feares out of you. Looke you Sir, heere is

> the hand and Seale of the Duke: you know the Character I doubt not, and the signet is not strange to you? (4.2.204-10)

Probably the Duke presents a letter to the Provost, signed and sealed with his own hand. Perhaps the Duke reveals himself to the Provost by removing his hood. In either case, the Provost admits that he knows "both" (4.2.211) the hand and the seal of the Duke, and he immediately consents to the Duke's request. Significantly, he does not consent to his request *in spoken words*; he consents by his actions, for after the Duke reveals his hand and seal, the Provost is yet "amaz'd" (4.2.225). The Duke then reminds the Provost that everything may not be as it seems:

> [P]ut not your selfe into amazement, how these things should be;
> all difficulties are but easie vvhen they are knowne.
> (4.2.220-24)

Because the Provost follows the Duke's promptings, as well as maintains the duties of his office at the same time, the Duke sees fit to advance his stature.

At the end of the play, the Provost alone moves up in rank:

> Thanks, provost, for thy care and secrecy;
> We shall employ thee in a worthier place. (5.1.536-7)

The dutiful service which the Provost performed resulted in his own aggrandizement. Such an outcome seems only proper for the Provost, whose sympathies continually lie with the audience regarding the foibles of the other characters. The Provost exemplifies the faithful servant in many ways, but his importance lies in the fact that he was able and willing to keep his office well, and to keep his oath from the first day to the last.

Thus, the Duke's subjects maintain their offices as best they can. "*Some rise by sinne, and some by vertue fall*" (2.1.38), as Escalus says. But the oath of office makes up another important contract which must not be broken; if the promise to serve is broken, then the Duke does not rule Vienna, and "quite athwart / Goes all decorum" (1.3.30-31). The fact that the Provost remains faithful without question to the Duke suggests that the Duke has not utterly failed in guiding Vienna in the past. To maintain order, there must be more people like the Provost, and the Duke must be more like himself. The Duke, too, maintains his position by reasserting his authority. Without the Duke's apparent and real authority bearing down upon the situation, the Provost could not have acted against Angelo. As it was, the Provost managed to appear to serve both the Duke and Angelo, despite the fact that he did not follow Angelo's requests. As a result, the Duke managed to reassert his own authority while undermining that of the false deputy.

The Provost's loyalty and his oath of office went hand in hand. The Duke, too, must remember his oath of office, and he has "aboue all other

strifes / Contended especially to know himselfe" (3.2.245-6). Over the course of the play, the Duke learns who among his subjects serves him well, and who does not. He also learns that promises have a negative effect on all of society when they are not kept; when they are kept, they have a positive effect on all of society. Each character of *Measure for Measure* has a particular place in life, and each one manages to maintain a status quo which even the Duke's manipulations cannot circumvent. However unfair, the Duke's Vienna is built upon certain people maintaining certain ways of life. Offices must be attended by the ones who belong there. Even Angelo must learn how to keep his promises. That most of the people of Vienna do not have an opportunity to move from one stratum of society to another is not unusual; even Shakespeare was thought to be an "upstart crow" for his ambitions.

Despite societal tendencies, Shakespeare does not indicate that one must keep one's place in order for Renaissance and Jacobean society to function properly, as Hooker argues. Rather, he attempts to present a variety of degrees of commitment to certain social positions and professions, and he presents a realistic prediction for the time. Whether one makes a promise to uphold a specific kind of life, such as married life, or a religious life, or whether one makes an oath of fealty to a specific person, or whether one undertakes to protect and keep an entire commonwealth, one must consider the fact that a promise must not be broken, no matter what the cost.

The Provost managed to execute his oath and his office without detracting from his own personal pride; so does the Duke. The Duke realistically manages his subjects, and, in the end, rewards those who have kept promises, admonishes those who have made them to begin to keep them, and forces those who will not make a necessary promise to make it. Thus the Duke becomes the law of honor. The chivalric code, though a bit tarnished, does fit quite nicely over the shoulders of the Duke's robes of state. The Duke necessarily looks to others to replace him temporarily; he must remove himself in order to understand himself. As Friar Lodowick, the Duke tends to accept occurrences as they happen and to work on the assumption that he can correct them, but he soon finds that his own powers become limited by the perceptions of those around him. His office becomes more powerful than his religious personage simply because society expects such power in the office, and therefore the Duke learns to empower his personal feelings through his political office. In effect, the Duke learns to become both Duke and Friar, and takes his promise to rule Vienna seriously in order to provide continuity in his reign. When he realizes his own position, he can recognize his duty to the state and the need for his representing married life above single life, and the need for producing an heir to continue to rule Vienna. Isabella and the Duke, therefore, create the ideal couple who may rule as examples of perfection over their unruly, imperfect citizens. The two have the ability to perceive individuals justly and to judge mercifully, to enforce

promises and to keep them. Their own marriage promises, too, will serve as an example to the Mistress Overdones and Pompeys of Vienna, who nevertheless will probably remain happily "in the seruice" (1.2.116).

CONCLUSION

Justice has for centuries been represented as a blindfolded woman holding two scales which tilt in her left hand and the sword of justice in her right. In *Measure for Measure*, Shakespeare examines the idea of justice and finds simple contractual agreement as the basis of this idea. Shakespeare represents a wide variety of promises, from the spoken vows of the religious entering a new life, to legal promises of *assumpsit*, to marriage agreements, to the oath of allegiance. Even the simple social agreement that a citizen does not break the laws of the city becomes part of the infrastructure. Shakespeare bases his society of Vienna upon the logic of promises; the very existence of the society hinges on the fact that an agreement binds individuals irrevocably. The force of inequality brings to bear many difficulties in this society, but in the end the Duke is adamant about righting the scales. The concept of inequality, that one thing does not appear to weigh equally in value with another, or that one person does not appear to weigh in worth with another, becomes questionable. Contractual obligations create equality; equality brought about because of the promise itself, which includes the initial intent, the verbal promise, and the subsequent actions of the parties. Honor embraces only right action; promises kept become the mainstay of the society of *Measure for Measure.*

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