

Current Forum: Measure for Measure

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Date: Sat Nov 8 2003 10:31 pm**Author:** Hemmingson, Sara <05sahemm@alma.edu>**Subject:** Measure for Measure = Eye for an Eye?[Remove](#)

Well, obviously this is a play out of justice. What exactly is justice made out to be? Is it possible? That's the main theme as far as I see it, but that doesn't rule out the possibility of humor within the play, either. I saw it at Alma last year, and still have vivid memories of Lucio annoying the Duke. Hysterical.

Speaking of Lucio, the list of characters in my book lists him as Lucio, a Fantastic. What the heck does that mean? Just that he's very elaborate and vivid? That he'd just too much to be believable? Is there some Elizabethan definition? It really interests me, since I think he's one of my favorite characters in Shakespeare. He reminds me far too much of a few people I know, and it's that that makes me laugh.

Some of the chief questions in the play. Well, I had a lot of trouble with the Duke's motivations, but I'll come back to that in a second. I think we really need to consider how much of theocracy we're dealing with in this play. Especially given the role religion had in WS's time, it can hardly be overlooked that one of the main characters here is training to be a nun, and that another character is going to be executed for a sin that has been translated into a crime. Where did this law come from, that lechery is a crime punishable by death? It sounds like one of those archaic laws that still exists in the US but no one has bothered to remove. Like the law forbidding sodomy that just got struck down a few months ago. Why suddenly start reinforcing it?

That brings me to wondering about the Duke. Why exactly does he leave and go into disguise, anyway? Yes, he says it was because he'd slacked off in enforcing some laws and if he lets Angelo start enforcing them instead he gets off easy. Very nice, Duke. Yet he must have some doubts, because he sticks around to see how things go in his "absense." His motives just don't make sense to me, especially when we're supposed to see him as a hero. And then he proposes to Isabella out of the blue at the end of the play. I find that even more unbelievable than all the match-ups in Twelfth Night!

So, my pre-discussion conclusion: yes this play is funny, but there seem to be some major problems with it, and it certainly has more obvious serious issues than some of WS's other comedies.

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Date: Sun Nov 9 2003 2:19 pm**Author:** Sarver, Alaina <04arsarv@alma.edu>**Subject:** Deceiving Duke[Remove](#)

As Sara said, one part of this play is about justice and the law. Some questions to think about are, what is Shakespeare saying about the laws of a country and what constitutes a crime, especially one that is punishable by death? How much should religion come into play with these laws. Is he trying to comment on, as we've said with other plays, that this is a new era, and the church shouldn't have as much control as they do.

Going along with the religious topic, would be the question of women and chastity. This seems to be a large theme throughout the play. You have Juliet, who is unmarried and pregnant, you have Isabella, who is going to be a nun, and you have Mariana, who was turned away because of supposed wantonness.

I also agree with Sara about the Duke. He is very questionable. He seems at once, to want to give justice, but he is also kind of cold hearted and uses his power to his advantage. What does this also say about, going along with religion, friars and nuns? The Duke disguises himself as a friar. What kind of image does this bring forth or what kind of image does it destroy?

I was also wondering about the significance of the title, Measure for Measure.

That's all of my questions for now.

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Date: Sun Nov 9 2003 11:24 pm

Author: Wagner, Corinne <04clwagn@alma.edu>

Subject: Initial Thoughts

Remove

Ok, so I have definitely not finished the whole play yet, but I just could not let some of these questions go any further. First question, which may be one of the more obvious... There is a significant amount of irony in the fact that Angelo is so strict on the sexual misconduct laws of Vienna, yet he remains sexually unlawful in his own desires. What was Shakespeare trying to say by this? It seems that there are a lot of options, but I will leave those to the "responders."

Second question... If Isabella is so very religious that she would not give up her own virginity to save her brother's life, then why is she so ok with the idea of having Mariana pretend to be her and have unlawful pre-marital sex with Mr. Slime-ball #2, Angelo? This doesn't make sense to me, but it could say a lot about people and how we work. I think it could say something about how selfish people truly are, because you know that Isabella surely isn't trying to set Mariana and Angelo back up... unless she really is dumb. She is breaking the law in order to help herself and her brother, at the expense of an already vulnerable woman... how selfish is that? I guess maybe Isabella is supposed to be good and all, but I think that makes me question her true character, as well as the Duke's, for he was the one to bring up the idea.

Speaking of the Duke, I am also questioning his purpose in the play. It seems that he is the kind of guy who wants things to happen, but doesn't want to be the one to make them happen... those are the WORST! So, if this is how we feel about him, then what can we say that Shakespeare was trying to do by characterizing him in such a way, and in the same regard... why did he give up his position? I understand that things were not going well in Vienna, because he had been too lax with the law enforcement, but how often did Duke's really give up their power because of that?

AHHHH... too many thoughts... See you in class!

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Date: Mon Nov 10 2003 11:03 am

Author: Sova, Alice <04aesova@alma.edu>

Subject: Re: Initial Thoughts

Remove

Where was Shakespeare going with the idea of Angelo enforcing sexual misconduct laws, and then breaking them himself? My only reply would be to show the corruption of the State. This was a time of transition when the Church was beginning to have less and less authority over the State. However, priests and other such figures still had great influence over what went on. Plus, laws regarding sin still existed. (This is what I'm taking from the play and previous things that we've read. If I'm off base, please correct me.) So, what I see going on here is a classic struggle between Church and State. Angelo is trying to be the perfect representation of the State in the Duke's absence, perhaps even going too far in enforcing laws. He wants to show off the fact that he can be effective as a leader, perhaps more so even than the Duke. But, what happens is complete hypocrisy. Angelo, representing the State, decides that he must also uphold the values of the Church. Because he sees himself above the Church though, he does not abide by the same laws that he is enforcing. He is separating himself and his power from the rules that apply to his people. Perhaps Shakespeare saw this in some nobility at the time and wanted to show his audiences what could and did happen behind the scenes.

I can completely understand Isabella's justification for what she does in refusing to sleep with Angelo and putting Mariana in her place. First of all, she was becoming a nun. Her virginity was not just something she was proud of; it was something she gave up to God to show her submission to Him and His will for her. By giving that up to Angelo, even if it meant saving her brother, she would be giving up her tie with God. (It would be like cheating on her husband in a sense.) Plus, in one passage she sums up exactly what she was thinking: "Better it were a brother die at once / Than that a sister, by redeeming him, / Should die for ever." (2.4.107-109) You see, by giving herself up to Angelo, she fears that it will cost her more than her reputation on earth. She could be damned to live in hell, instead of going to heaven.

When she agrees to let Mariana take her place with Angelo, she is not simply giving her up to be damned instead of herself. Mariana was once betrothed to Angelo and confesses to the Friar (the Duke) that she wanted nothing else than to be married to him. So, she was not agreeing to some casual affair with the man she loved. She was agreeing to a consummation of the marriage that she once was told would happen. Sex outside of marriage in this context was not considered unholy, as was any casual affair. So, they were replacing what would have been an awful deed with one that would not be considered unclean, especially with the idea that they could be married later.

I don't know why, but I liked the Duke in the play. I did not quite understand why he left, but I thought it could be part of a scheme to see exactly how trustworthy Angelo and Escalus were. So, he left them in charge and stuck around to make sure things didn't get screwed up too badly. Dressing up as a Friar could say a lot of things about him. For one, what better way to get the inside scoop on everything that goes on and be able to trust that most people (we won't even go into Lucio here) would tell him the truth. Plus, it is a good disguise in the fact that the habit would cover his entire body and face. It could also say that the Duke was a much better character as far as enforcing laws and ruling was. He showed more mercy than Angelo, which would be considered a holy thing. So, there are my thoughts in response to Corrie. I hope this helps!

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Date: Mon Nov 10 2003 2:40 pm

Author: Druskinis, Stephanie <05sadrus@alma.edu>

Subject: Re: Initial Thoughts

Remove

Cori, you've got a great question in here - what WAS Shakespeare trying to say when he wrote Angelo the way that he did? I think that the answer to this is kind of simple - he had to have SOME kind of villain in the play, didn't he? And, every villain has to have a weakness...apparently, his weakness is the opportunity to take a woman to bed. He definitely plays the part of hypocrite rather well in my opinion, and this could be Shakespeare's way of showing that he's not the good guy in this play. I'm sure that there are other options, and hopefully the other 'responder' will come up with a few, also.

Okay, onto your question number two...Isabella was definitely going to become a nun. This means that she probably had a fairly strict mind-set when it came to herself - she didn't want to have sex, she was about to take an oath to never have sex at all. She was probably used to other women following their own rules, and thus thought that it would be okay for someone else to fornicate, as long as it wasn't her. While she really does seem selfish in some parts of the play, I think that her sticking to her virtues shows a certain kind of strength in her that Shakespeare hasn't written in many of his other plays.

I also questioned the Duke's purpose in the play. He seems as though he would be an important character - he is, after all, the Duke! - but...how important can a character be when he's dressed up as someone else for most of the play? The more I thought about this, the more confused I got...but I'm coming up with some ideas. He was a lax ruler, and he wanted to see how his community would run if it had a harsher ruler. That makes sense to me; when he came back he could change his own policies. But...why did he just sit around and watch as all this happened? I'm confused also. What are the different ways that the Duke can be characterized? There seems like there are so many different angles to look at the character...I think that this would be a good topic to discuss in class.

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Date: Mon Nov 10 2003 3:09 pm

Author: Hemmingson, Sara <05sahemm@alma.edu>

Subject: Re: Initial Thoughts

Remove

I wanted to respond to your paragraph on why Isabella would have let Mariana take her place in having sex with Angelo. Overall I think you answered the question really well, but there's one little thing I have issue with. You said "By giving that up to Angelo, even if it meant saving her brother, she would be giving up her tie with God. (It would be like cheating on her husband in a sense.)" Then, what does that make her when she consents to marry the Duke at the end of the play? Granted, that is MARRIAGE, but if she's already committed to G-d, as you suggested, wouldn't it amount to the same thing? I think it's acceptable because she was only just starting to become a nun, and no real commitments were yet made. Or is it because we're supposed to want the Duke to get what he wants?

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Date: Mon Nov 10 2003 4:21 pm

Author: Ottenhoff, John <ottenhoff@alma.edu>

Subject: Re: Initial Thoughts

Modify

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Of course, one of the big questions about this play is whether or not Isabella accepts the offer of marriage at the end of the play. She says nothing! Here's a very juicy tidbit that I pulled off the SHAKSPER list:

"As a young graduate student in 1981, I stage-managed a production of *Measure for Measure* at Southern Methodist University. Director Jack Clay gave his Isabella the option of ending the play each night according to her feelings at the moment, instructing her only that her choice to 1.) accept, 2.) reject, or 3.) refuse to respond to the Duke must be unambiguous enough that we in the booth could execute one of three different cue sequences based on her choice.

Consulting my old notes, I count that in twelve performances she chose to accept him six times, reject him four, and stand mute (forcing the Lady or the Tiger ending) twice.

Predictably, the audience response was very different depending on which ending was chosen. My recollection is that on nights where the Duke was unquestioningly accepted the show seemed rather glib, with Isabella's response having little connection (in the audience's mind at least) to her journey through the play. She chose to accept him so many times, not because it worked best, but because we all generally felt that was the *right* ending and kept trying to make it pay off, but it didn't.

Outright rejection proved more interesting, because it received greater audience approval, but it highlighted the modernity of this pseudo-modern dress production in ways that stayed in the background all other nights. It seemed to me at the time that what was being approved was not Shakespeare, but the comment on Shakespeare.

The nights where Isabella did not choose were the *best* performances. Audiences were a bit shaken by not knowing how it ended, a few members of the audience openly expressing anger, but on the whole these audiences found the play much more profound. These were the only nights on which the *production* (as opposed to the play) was clearly a critical success.

This is, of course, only anecdotal evidence and personal opinion about one production, but it struck me at the time (and has stuck with me) that the ambiguity of the text, however much it cries out for resolution, cannot be resolved without seeming too quick and trivial. I respect the historical argument that the play couldn't have *just ended* in Shakespeare's time, because the stage had to be cleared without benefit of blackout, curtain or other device, but my experience tells me the firm options don't play very well.

For whatever it was worth...
Kurt Daw"

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Date: Mon Nov 10 2003 4:40 pm

Author: Ottenhoff, John <ottenhoff@alma.edu>

Subject: Re: title

Modify

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One explanation of the title comes from this passage in Luke 6; v. 38 seems especially relevant

27 But I say unto you which hear, Love your enemies, do good to them which hate you,
28 Bless them that curse you, and pray for them which despitefully use you.
29 And unto him that smiteth thee on the one cheek offer also the other; and him that taketh away thy cloak forbid not to take thy coat also.
30 Give to every man that asketh of thee; and of him that taketh away thy goods ask them not again.
31 And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise.
32 For if ye love them which love you, what thank have ye? for sinners also love those that love them.
33 And if ye do good to them which do good to you, what thank have ye? for sinners also do even the same.
34 And if ye lend to them of whom ye hope to receive, what thank have ye? for sinners also lend to sinners, to receive as much again.
35 But love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest: for he is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil.
36 Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful.
37 Judge not, and ye shall not be judged: condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned: forgive, and ye shall be forgiven:
38 Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again.
39 And he spake a parable unto them, Can the blind lead the blind? shall they not both fall into the ditch?
40 The disciple is not above his master: but every one that is perfect shall be as his master.
41 And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but perceivest not the beam that is in thine own eye?

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Date: Mon Nov 10 2003 9:25 pm

Author: White, Heather <04hlwhit@alma.edu>

Subject: Re: Initial Thoughts

Remove

Who else saw this play last year when the Theatre Department did it? I did, so that has colored by interpretation somewhat. I see some parallels between the Duke and my beloved Henry V, in that he disguised himself and went among the common people, although what frustrated me is that he did not reveal himself sooner and correct the injustices being done.

Did it bug anyone else that poor Claudio (what is with Shakespeare constantly repeating names?) was thrown in jail for trying to marry the girl he well...a... Does that seem just a little backward to anyone else? Wouldn't the other way around be a little more logical?

So what does everyone think of the ending? My interpretation was colored by the production I saw so I cannot shake that impression and the text offered me little as an alternative. It seemed like she agreed to marry him, but I remember that it did not sit well with me. I mean she goes through all this effort to keep her virginity and to become a nun, and then she would just give all that up and marry the Duke? It seems a touch against character.

Well, lets see what comes up tomorrow.

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Date: Mon Nov 10 2003 10:53 pm

Author: Ryan, Colin <05cwryan@alma.edu>

Subject: Well now...

Remove

I'm going to get the mandate of the leader out of the way by proposing new answers to some of the questions that the rest of you asked.

What is this play about? Moderation. This play is about moderation. We talked about Aaron in Titus as being the epitomy of evil. Well, what happens when someone tries to be the epitomy of good? Surely it is not possible. Not for me, and not for any one of you.

Several of you seem rather forcibly locked into the idea that Angelo is somehow the villain. He is not. There is no villain. This is not truly a comedy. This is not a truly tragedy. This is one of the most difficult to categorize of all of WS's plays. Angelo is an upstanding and moral man. Aside from his past behavior with Mariana, which is emotionally terrible, but as far as society goes, perfectly acceptable. He is a man so concerned with morality that he feels that it is his duty to help raise the moral standards of his ward. His goals are admirable, albeit severe, and his reasoning is sound. You must admit that first examples are the strongest. If he shows a seemingly harsh show of force right from the outset, he will be less likely to have to resort to such force later on. I think Angelo works as a case study for those of you who want to discuss repressed sexual urges and desires, but that doesn't make him a bad person.

As far as setting Mariana up with Angelo we must come to the understanding that a betrothal was not lightly broken off. A couple that was betrothed was considered more or less married, in all but name. Granted, that makes Angelo look like an asshole for breaking with her, but it was something that would have been acceptable in society's eyes given that her dowry was lost. Back to the point, they were *almost* married, so any union between the two would not have been a sin. Furthermore, Angelo simply stopped speaking with her and refused to carry on any further notions of marriage. Seeing as there was no mention of a formal divorce, we can assume that the engagement still stands, at least on paper.

Now as to why Isabella would do that.....do any of you have siblings? She loved her brother and would have given her life for his. She did not want her brother to die, she loved him. But she could not bear, as was said earlier, to break with her promise to God. She was presented with an option to save her brother, and she took it. The plan had the veneer of legitimacy, due to the arrangement between Angelo and Mariana, though I don't think either Isabella or Mariana were fooled. They knew they were skirting moral impurity here, but both of their feelings were strong enough to warrant it.

"...how important can a character be when he's dressed up as someone else for most of the play?" Ummmm, Viola? Rosalind? Celia? I think we've already set a precedent for disguised characters.

The Duke had several reasons for leaving and going into disguise. I think you guys caught on to the "lax enforcement of laws" one, but you seemed to have missed the judgement of Angelo. He was testing Angelo. He knew how moral the man claimed to be, but knew also that there was no way anyone could actually be so perfect. Like I said this play is about moderation, which Angelo did not yet show. The Duke gave him a chance to show him this, or rather, he was trying to teach Angelo this lesson. Do not miss that he had been in conference with Mariana for months. He knew about Mariana, and I believe it entirely possible that he had a soft spot in his heart and wanted to help her out.

Well, that's enough for now
-Token out

Reply

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Date: Mon Nov 10 2003 11:08 pm

Author: Thayer, Shannon <04sjthay@alma.edu>

Subject: who's who...

Remove

So, in a lot of the other plays, there is so much deception and disguises. When I read this play, I thought to myself, "wow, there were

only TWO people that disguise themselves!" There was the Duke and then Mariana. Then I realized that although there were only two disguises, there was a lot of deception going on. It's interesting how Shakespeare uses deception as a main theme in a lot of his plays. I wonder why he does that. There are plenty of other themes and things that one can go on without using deception everytime.

Also, another thing I was wondering about is why they decided to bring in Mariana to act as Isabella in bed. What was the point of having history between Mariana and Angelo?

I was also thinking about something I don't usually think about...why did he make it span out as long or as short as he did? I don't mean in just this play. I mean in any of his plays, how does he figure out how long of time span all these things should happen in?

When I first started reading the play, it reminded me of Antigone. Antigone's brother was already dead but his burial was in question and the emperor said he couldn't have a proper burial. . . so she took things into her own hands and buried him herself. Her actions were a big issue with the people. But Isabella fighting for her brother reminded me of that story.

I'll have to admit, when I first read of Angelo's offer to Isabella, I thought that if she said yes he might arrest her for saying yes to something against the law. Anyone else have that thought?

Well, see ya'll in class...I'm sure class will get many more questions out of me =o)

Reply

Current Forum: Measure for Measure

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Date: Tue Nov 11 2003 12:03 pm

Author: Wagner, Corinne <04clwagn@alma.edu>

Subject: Re: Initial Thoughts

Remove

So...I was thinking about your response about the Duke and it made me wonder...Viola/Cesario was dressed as someone else throughout all of Twelfth Night and s/he was a very important character too...Why does Shakespeare do this?

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Date: Tue Nov 11 2003 12:35 pm

Author: Hemmingson, Sara <05sahemm@alma.edu>

Subject: Re: Well now...

Remove

I'm glad you responded like that, Colin. As someone who's actually been in a production of the play, you'll be coming into it with a much fuller perspective than the rest of us will. And you're right, I had missed the part about the Duke testing Angelo because, especially considering how perfect Angelo was considered and that he (the Duke) had a soft spot in his heart for Mariana. That helps to see the Duke's choices in a much kinder light, at least for me. Looking forward to talking more in class.

Reply

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Date: Wed Nov 12 2003 2:40 pm

Author: Thayer, Shannon <04sjthay@alma.edu>

Subject: who's the bad guy here?

Remove

Well, yesterday was a very active conversation =o) I still am unsure about how I feel about Isabella. I think Shakespeare was really sneaky by not giving us a for sure ending. If Isabella married him, I would see her as totally hypocritical. She can marry a man and not continue her nun-life but she can't do not-so-good things to save her brother? What would that be all about. If she didn't marry the Duke, I would see why she didn't try to save her brother immediately by committing that grotesque act. She is a little shady no matter what. I definitely do not see her in a convent, haha.

Angelo is still a character I dislike. I think he is hypocritical. And in thinking about my American Lit class (it's close enough to liberal arts thursday) I remember talking about the Puritans. They were so uptight, but you really do see a lot of hypocrisy in their words versus their actions. So I guess I do see some Puritan actions in Angelo. Maybe he thought he was saved, so he could get away with doing these bad things and still be reformed at the end to go to Heaven. Who knows where Angelo's head was.

I wish I heard more out of Claudio. I know he spoke some in the play, but I wish we knew what he thought of some of this stuff going on. Or Juliet for this matter, let's hear what she has to say! I wonder how the society back then saw Juliet...an unwed mother. You can't say that it mattered that they were "going" to get married...that excuse doesn't even work in the present. They were still doin' it w/out the wedding bands.

Hm...who else...I guess I kind of like the duke although there are some not so appealing ideas about him. I think he had good intentions when you look at the big picture. He caught bad Angelo in the act, ended up helping Mariana (which I don't think was his initial intention), and got to propose =o) Plus he saved Claudio's life. In spite of all the confusion, I think he came out on top.

Hm...see ya'll in class!!! =o)

Reply

Current Forum: Measure for Measure

Read 15 times

Date: Wed Nov 12 2003 6:31 pm

Author: Sarver, Alaina <04arsarv@alma.edu>

Subject: Larger issues

Remove

As I said in my earlier post and in class, I think there are larger issues in this play. I can see the discussion about each character and there motives, but what is this all really trying to say. I definitely think that this play is a critique of society and that we need to question some things. The main issue for me is that there is a thin line between obeying the law and doing what is right. In my philosophy class I have to do a paper on Civil Disobedience. The main moral question with this is are we morally obligated to obey even unjust laws. With this play, I can see this questioning of the laws of society. Angelo is so fixed in obeying the law to the fullest, that he forgets to look at the situation. Each case has it's circumstances, and I don't think it is something, in Claudio's case, to put a man to death over.

Reply

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Date: Thu Nov 13 2003 9:12 pm

Author: Wagner, Corinne <04clwagn@alma.edu>

Subject: sexual harassment

Remove

Ok, so we never did get to discuss the issues of sexual harassment that, if this play had taken place in our time, would be clearly worth. It is hard for us to really know how people in Shakespeare's time handled sexual harassment, especially considering the very different roles that women had then, as compared to now. Here is some basic information, as well as definitions so you know by what means I am making the following claims about the relationship between Isabella and Angelo, and Isabella and the Duke.

"Unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature constitutes sexual harassment when submission to or rejection of this conduct explicitly or implicitly affects an individual's employment, unreasonably interferes with an individual's work performance or creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive work environment.

Sexual harassment can occur in a variety of circumstances, including but not limited to the following:

- The victim as well as the harasser may be a woman or a man. The victim does not have to be of the opposite sex.
- The harasser can be the victim's supervisor, an agent of the employer, a supervisor in another area, a co-worker, or a non-employee.
- The victim does not have to be the person harassed but could be anyone affected by the offensive conduct.
- Unlawful sexual harassment may occur without economic injury to or discharge of the victim.
- The harasser's conduct must be unwelcome.

It is helpful for the victim to directly inform the harasser that the conduct is unwelcome and must stop. The victim should use any employer complaint mechanism or grievance system available." *(information from <http://www.eeoc.gov/facts/fs-sex.html>)

Based on this information, I will lay out the ways that I see situations in the play as potential for being termed sexual harassment. First, Isabella vs Angelo...it is hard to deny the fact that he, as a figure of power over her, (comparable to an employer) did attempt to use her for sexual purposes in order to save her brother, clearly an issue of harassment. However, my question then remains, does the fact that she, by saying "she would see what she could do," make it seem as though she was considering the offer and then make the conduct less than "not welcome?" I am not sure that we can justify this, but it is just a thought I had. I am sure that sexual bribery is

probably in a far more severe category than harassment anyways...My other slightly far-fetched idea comes from the third bulleted point in this list. If the victim does not have to be the person harassed, than how many other people in the story were affected by the conduct of Angelo and the Duke for that matter? Just some thoughts for the weekend...let me know what you think...bye:)

Reply

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Date: Thu Nov 13 2003 10:01 pm

Author: Sarver, Alainna <04arsarv@alma.edu>

Subject: Re: sexual harassment

Remove

Well, if she thought that that was her only choice in the matter, since it is a life or death thing, I think that her saying that she would see what she could do is still sexual harassment. It's the fact that the offer from Angelo seemed like the only way out.

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Current Forum: Measure for Measure

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Date: Sun Nov 16 2003 10:55 pm

Author: White, Heather <04hlwhit@alma.edu>

Subject: So what exactly was the point?

Remove

So, what did we decide the play was about? Moderation? Deception? What is technically marriage? The dangers of Puritanism? Did we ever really say? I think more than any other play Measure left me with a blah feeling. Even if I hated another play at least I felt something. To me this seems like one of Shakespeare's weaker plays, it has all these things going on and then all of a sudden at the end the Duke puts it right. Do we know why Shakespeare fell into this pattern of writing during this part of his career? Was it cynicism or was he just sick of writing happy go lucky comedies? If this is the sort of stuff I have to look forward to for the rest of the term I don't know if I can deal with it. Did the amount of people coming to see the plays drop off at all during this period and later? Some of these later plays don't seem to exactly be crowd pleasers.

Well, on to Lear.

Oh, and I'll have my Measure article up as soon as I can. I have been fighting with the computers around campus for almost a week to get the darn thing printed.

Reply

Current Forum: Measure for Measure

Read 14 times

Date: Sun Nov 16 2003 11:00 pm

Author: Sarver, Alainna <04arsarv@alma.edu>

Subject: Final ideas

Remove

As we said on Thursday, this play left me just as perplexed as when I started it. I still have no concluding thoughts on much with regards to this play. I do have to say that this play is very different from any of the others that could be placed into the same genre. I felt as though Shakespeare was trying to comment and criticize more on society than he did with his other comedies. With each one, he went further and further into a critique of relationships and how society molds or constrains them.

This play, for me, had more of a larger picture to it than the others. Some of the plays were more character based, like trying to understand character motives and character representation. But with Measure for Measure, while we do have that character development, I don't think it was as much of an emphasis. I felt that, instead of the characters representing humanity and human beings so much, they represented society and social constraints, religion, and had a lot to do with the issues that Shakespeare's society was dealing with at the time. With this, I do agree with the Puritan idea, that Angelo represented the Puritans and that this play was a social commentary on the Puritans of the time and how they were gaining control.

To end, I think this is the most complex comedy we've read so far. Twelfth Night was complex, but I felt even more confused and

perplexed after reading Measure for Measure than reading that play. I think it shows how Shakespeare grew as an author over the years. Some could argue, though, that Shakespeare was just getting cynical in his old age, but I want to believe that art and literature, take time to grow and perfect. Only prodigies can attain greatness in youth.

Reply

Current Forum: Measure for Measure

Read 13 times

Date: Sun Nov 16 2003 11:45 pm

Author: White, Heather <04hlwhit@alma.edu>

Subject: article

Remove

Well, the article I picked was "Substitution in 'Measure for Measure'" by Alexander Leggatt in Shakespeare Quarterly in 1988. It was not the original article I planned to do but once I finally wrestled that one from the library computers it proved not to be nearly as helpful as I had initially thought.

So, on to this one instead. One of the first things the author mentions is how close all the names are in the people involved in substitutions. (i.e. Isabella, Mariana; Barnardine and Ragozine; Friar Thomas, Friar Peter; and when Isabella asks Angelo to put himself in Claudio's shoes--Angelo and Claudio). The author does not seem to hold the Duke in very high esteem. Leggatt also makes the interesting comparison that to Angelo Claudio and Barnardine are no different even though that Claudio's crime was "fornication" and Barnardine's was murder. To me this just seems rather odd since Claudio is bringing someone into the world while Barnardine took someone out of it. About half way through the article got a little long winded, and was harder to follow. Although, it does make some historical connections to the Duke and James I's grandfather James V who used to disguise himself and go out among the people. Overall it was interesting, honestly, it seems like most of these academic articles could be a lot shorter. I have yet to read one that actually filled the pages with solid material and not some "stuff" to meet some unknown minimum length.

Oh, and I was thinking about it, and I think the only character I actually sort of like after reading the play was the Provost. He actually made sense and used logic things some of the other characters seemed to go without.

Reply

Current Forum: Measure for Measure

Read 14 times

Date: Mon Nov 17 2003 8:59 am

Author: Ottenhoff, John <ottenhoff@alma.edu>

Subject: Leaving Measure

Modify

Remove

I think the response of "what in the world was that?" upon finishing our discussion of M4M is understandable and even appropriate. In fact, maybe we should first of all see it as a play in which WS takes the genre of comedy and puts it through the wringer: something like "so you want a comedy? well, try this out and see if you can still laugh!" You want some happy marriages to finish off our jolly comedy? I don't think one has to make the play into the rancid and bitter piece that Harold Bloom does, but I appreciate it as a radical experiment and a bitter commentary on the forces that were threatening to rip England apart. At the very least, I think we can agree that the play shows what happens when the quest for justice--justice without a tempering sense of mercy and understanding--becomes absolute. That also makes me think about the theme of revenge and what can follow the search for "justice" in that context.

Oh, and here's a variation of Cori's ego/id/superego perspective from an article about Falstaff (which I posted back in the H4 discussion): "There are those who have argued that the "Henry IV" characters anticipated Freud's threefold division of the mind into id, ego and superego: Falstaff the embodiment of id and appetite, the honor-obsessed Hotspur embodying the superego, and Hal (or sometimes his stern and guilt-ridden father, Henry IV) the ego struggling to negotiate between appetite and restraint." Here's to Barnardine!

Reply

Current Forum: Measure for Measure

Read 12 times

Date: Mon Nov 17 2003 1:25 pm

Author: Druskinis, Stephanie <05sadrus@alma.edu>

Subject: Wow...

Remove

I have never been so confused about a play AFTER we have talked about it. There were so many different ideas that we went over, that I'm not sure which ones I like the most. I also thought it was interesting that we could not answer my question of exactly WHO was the most important person in the play. So many different characters were important in different aspects...

Cori's explanation of the id, ego, and superego were really interesting. I had not really thought about that before, and still have a little trouble discerning which is which and why, but it really made me think. Good job, Cori :)

Reply

Current Forum: Measure for Measure

Read 16 times

Date: Mon Nov 17 2003 4:15 pm

Author: Hemmingson, Sara <05sahemm@alma.edu>

Subject: Did I really miss anything?

Remove

Well, I was sick on Thursday and sadly had to miss the second part of our discussion on M4M. But everyone's closing comments make it sound as though I didn't miss a thing!

To contradict that, though, I'm sure I missed a lot of great discussion. The thing about this play is, I don't think you're MEANT to have any final answers. You can talk about possibilities and what does this mean and what does that mean until the cows come home, but you can never really get anywhere! That's one of the issues that makes the play most interesting to me: it really truly makes you think. It doesn't give a canned happy ending, it leaves you wondering. It IS a hard play to categorize. It seems as if a lot of the class is upset with M4M for not giving them any real answers or conclusions, but maybe we should be praising it for those exact same reasons.

The other thing I really got out of our discussion was a better picture of the Duke. Since he was certainly communicating with Mariana before the start of the play, it seems much more likely to me that the Duke had good and decent motives for going undercover and carrying out the whole thing. I'm still left with some real concerns about his actions, though: I mean, how do we feel about a man who's not really a priest giving people their last rights under religious pretense, that sort of thing? Oh well, nobody's perfect. (Hey, maybe THAT was WS's message?) Anyway, I think it's a very interesting play, and it was nice to see how eager everyone was to talk about it, especially at the start of class on Tuesday!

Reply

Current Forum: Measure for Measure

Read 11 times

Date: Mon Nov 17 2003 7:25 pm

Author: Ryan, Colin <05cwryan@alma.edu>

Subject: Not Really

Remove

I don't think that our discussion on Thursday was one of our better ones. We had a few good ideas floating around as a result of having "Liberal Arts Thursdays", but for the most part, we rehashed a lot of what we discussed on Tuesday.

I just want to say that for those of you who don't know what to think, you are not alone. This is classified as a "difficulty" play. Drama critics don't always know what to think about this play. Those of you who that are no longer confused...help the rest of us. ;)

Most of my interpretation comes from the discussion I partook in during our production of it last year. I realize that this colors some of my arguments with that perspective, but I believe it works. I believe that there is no villain, that Isabella is a coward, and that overall, the play is about moderation. A measure towards one end, and a measure towards the other, but the extreme of neither.

-Token out

Reply

Current Forum: Measure for Measure

Read 11 times

Date: Mon Nov 17 2003 9:21 pm

Author: Thayer, Shannon <04sjthay@alma.edu>

Subject: onto new things...

Remove

I definitely enjoyed Tuesdays discussion, but Thursday was a bit of a downer. I agree that having our discussions in the new scene of the library is a great improvement. Not having to go into SAC makes me feel like I'm going to a nice group meeting instead of class.

Measure for Measure was quite the play. I think there was a lot more confliction in opinion in this play. Most of the time we can usually agree on motives and characters and how we feel about the play, but this was so off the wall that I feel like the conversation was so colored.

Onto King Lear...

Reply

Current Forum: Measure for Measure

Read 11 times

Date: Mon Nov 17 2003 11:41 pm

Author: Sova, Alice <04aesova@alma.edu>

Subject: Thoughts

Remove

My response after Thursday is a mixture of Alainna and Sara's. I believe that Shakespeare did not want us to walk away from this play with all of our questions answered. That is what makes him great. He found in this play a way to write to make people think about social issues that perhaps bothered him. This is obvious from our perplexed responses. We came up with many arguments for both sides of the coin on Tuesday and on Thursday. I can say that on Tuesday I did not think it would be possible for me to see the Duke the way most of you had--as a sneaky, evil type. I saw his deeds as noble and honest. I felt the same way about Isabella. But, after Thursday's discussion in looking at other interpretations, especially that of Bloom in saying that Lucio was the only honest character, I could see this play in other lights. Again, that is what made it good. I would rather read something that baffles me and think about it, talk about it, challenge some ideas, and still have unanswered questions than have the answers spoon fed to me.

Okay, so I didn't respond much about the play, but from the discussion, you all know how I responded. This is one I will not forget though, because of the questions that still remain.

Reply

OK