



**Shakespeare's Measure of Justice:
Isabella's Recusancy and Two Royal Couples**

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Abstract Shakespeare's Measure for Measure was planned and staged by the playwright and his sponsors to influence their sovereign on matters of state occupying the king and his government. The play sought to create an atmosphere favorable to those who, like Isabella, refuse, even at great loss to themselves and loved ones, to compromise religious principle for conscience-sake. Thus, the Catholic Isabella of the play is identifiable with the English Catholic recusants who for conscience-sake refused to participate in the ceremonies of the state church even at the loss of property and life at a time when the English government had harshly renewed the anti-recusant laws. Secondly, the play portrays sympathetically a Roman Catholic couple with the title and name Duke and Isabella that draws heavily upon the royal Roman Catholic couple across the channel with the title and name Archduke and Isabella. A few months earlier King James had signed a treaty of peace with them and with Spain. The playwright and his sponsors thus sought to advance favorable relations between the

two countries and their reigning couple. Responsible for these Catholic-oriented goals were Catholic sympathizers at Court.

Introduction: Shakespeare and Law's Measure

The state's application of law is a continuing theme in Shakespeare plays but for none is it so explicit and pervasive as in *Measure for Measure*. The Duke opens the drama, stating that his purpose is: "Of government the properties to unfold." Although the Duke modestly asserts his deputy Escalus knows more than he, the play is the Duke's "discourse" on governance and is rightly described as a "skeptical meditation on the nature, limits, and prerogative of legal power as well as on the ethics of justice."¹ It was no less than a lesson to a king, when it was performed for King James and his court at Whitehall Palace on 26 December 1604.² This article

¹ Andrew Barnaby & Joan Wry, "Authorized versions: *Measure for Measure* and the Politics of Biblical Translation," 51 *Renaissance Quarterly* 1225, 1226 (1998).

John Klause properly cautions that it is "not sufficiently appreciated that the fundamental conflict of principles in *Measure for Measure* is not between justice and mercy but between justice and the law." *Shakespeare, the Earl and the Jesuit* (2008), p. 241.

² This then is an historical essay of a type referred pejoratively to as "occasionalist" (the most particularized of the historical approaches, "where the play is viewed as a kind of private communication directed at a special audience, outside of the commercial theaters, at a special time and place.") by the Shakespeare critic Richard Levin, *New Readings vs. Old Plays: Recent Trends in the Reinterpretation of English Renaissance Drama* (1979), p. 147. He singles out as a test case *Measure for Measure* and derides the approach he refers to as 'The King James Version' of *Measure for Measure*. A prime example of the occasionalist approach to *Measure for Measure* is Josephine Waters Bennett *Measure for Measure as Royal Entertainment* (1966). See also Alvin Kernan, *Shakespeare, the king's Playwright: Theater in the Stuart Court, 1603-1613* (1995), and Leah Marcus, *Puzzling Shakespeare* (1988). Kernan breezily treats the play mostly as entertainment flattering to the king, no more, no less: "But whatever modern ingenuity has found in the play, on the night after Christmas at Whitehall in 1604 it must have seemed to most of the

presents evidence and argument that the playwright and his sponsor(s) planned and staged the drama to influence their sovereign on matters of state occupying the king and his government.³

Context: Court, State-imposed Morality and Religion in 1604

The setting of *Measure* is Vienna, where no other of Shakespeare's plays is set. Claudio has been arrested and sentenced to death for fornication, evidenced by the swelling pregnancy of Juliet before formal marriage. The sex was not entirely illicit, for they have entered a contract of marriage, known as *sponsalia per verba de*

audience a witty, fast-paced, and bawdy comedy, a romp almost, with lots of good low-humor scenes in brothel and jail, a wonderful malapropistic clown [Elbow] . . . a clever intrigue plot, and such sophisticated moral puzzles as whether the heroine's maidenhead was of greater value than her brother's life." p. 62.

A review of Levin's *New Readings* commented: "Levin derides the occasionalist fallacy, which tries to dignify plays by postulating special audiences and special performances. This goes against everything we know of Elizabethan stage practice." Maurice Charney, *Renaissance Quarterly*, vol. 33, no. 4 (Winter, 1980), pp. 808-811, at p. 810. Actually, little is known of Elizabethan (or early Jacobean) stage practice that would suggest this.

³ Many critics ignore the Court performance of *Measure* and many assume that the play must have been performed in the Globe before a common audience (for which no evidence exists). Huston Diehl, "'Infinite Space': Representation and Reformation in *Measure for Measure*," 49 *Shakespeare Quarterly* (Winter, 1998), pp. 393-410, 398 ("The spectators in the Globe of 1604"). Robert N. Watson, "False Immortality in *Measure for Measure*: Comic Means, Tragic Ends," 41 *Shakespeare Quarterly* 411, 412 (1990) ("Shakespeare's audience, who, in 1604, were watching the play in a theatre that had again been closed by epidemic plague the previous year, . . ."). Musa Gurnis, "'Most Ignorant of What He's Most Assured': The Hermeneutics of Predestination in *Measure for Measure*," *Shakespeare Studies*, Vol. 42 (2014) pp. 141-169 speaks of the "early modern theatergoers who comprised the play's original audiences" which will have included "many prostitutes soliciting clients during the performance," p. 147, n. 30.

præsenti, in anticipation of more formal ceremonies. The acting sovereign in Vienna in most of the play is Angelo, Deputy to the Duke Vicentio, who has placed Angelo in charge during his absence, while the Duke is supposedly traveling to Poland to compound with other dukes concerning the king of Hungary. The Duke, however, assumes the habit of a friar from Friar Thomas and says he will visit both prince and people, “as 'twere a brother of your order, like a true friar.” In this guise he will observe Angelo, and shall see, “If power change purpose, what our seemers be.” The female lead is Claudio’s sister, Isabella, who seeks to save Claudio from death by pleading to Angelo, who now holds the state’s power of life and death.

When we first meet Isabella she is a novice in a convent about to take vows. Her strong impression upon Angelo leads him to offer to trade Claudio’s freedom for her virtue. She refuses repeatedly and adamantly. The Duke, still in the guise of a friar, engineers a solution. Angelo had once made a pre-contract, a promise to marry (*sponsalia per verba de futuro*), with Mariana but had repudiated her when she lost her dowry. The Duke has Isabella return to Angelo with the promise that she will submit to his desire in exchange for her brother’s life. The Duke then has Mariana substitute for Isabella at the appointed hour (the bed trick). Angelo beds the woman but breaches his promise to Isabella; he does not suspend the execution of Claudio. Here the Duke again intervenes and a dead man’s head, that can appear to be Claudio’s, is taken to Angelo as proof of the execution (the head trick). Soon, the Duke reappears as himself: he rewards the good and punishes the wicked (but sparing the lives of all), with justice and wisdom. As the play ends, it appears that the erstwhile friar, the Duke, and the novice of the convent, Isabella, may wed.

In this brief summary, the play is a comedy celebrating at its end not only justice meted out to a hypocritical official but also the apparent joining of four couples, as ended the author's play written four years earlier, *As You Like It*. Two couples appear to be well-united, Claudio-Juliet and the Duke-Isabella, while the other two are comically forced into marriage as condign judgment and/or punishment for breach of promise to marry and are headed to wrangling: Angelo with Mariana, and the supercilious Lucio with the bawd, Kate Keepdown.

Were *Measure for Measure* no more than a meditation on the nature of justice in relation to sexual laws, norms and morality and on corruption of law by villainous officials, the play would serve its purpose.⁴ The same could be said of Shakespeare's sources, George

⁴ A worthy reading of the play can be given that "problems of marriage formation [are] at the center of the play" and that it is a well-informed exploration of Elizabethan/Jacobean social, legal and religious practices, and an answer to Puritan polemics. Victoria Hayne, "Performing Social Practice: The Example of *Measure for Measure*," 44 *Shakespeare Q.* I (1993), in Klaus (2012), p. 257.

Reading the play in light of the U. S. Supreme Court decision in *Bowers v. Hardwick* overturning state laws criminalizing homosexual acts, some critics happily see *Measure* to be of continuing interest about repressive sexual laws: "*Bowers v. Hardwick* thus offers an excellent vehicle for examining *Measure for Measure* as an effective prism refracting the white legal light of the play into a rainbow of its separate and colorful legal components." Daniel J. Kornstein, "A Comment on Prof. Halper's Reading of *Measure for Measure*," *Cardozo Studies in Law and Literature*, vol. 13, no. 2 (Fall 2001), pp. 265-269.

Meredith Skura, "New Interpretations for Interpretation in *Measure for Measure*," *boundary 2: a journal of postmodern literature and criticism*, 7 (1979), p. 51, comments on the "deadly side of sexuality" in the play: "The women risk losing only their honor (though this may be a soul-death for Isabel, it is not quite the same). For the man, sex is always a trap. It puts Claudio in prison and threatens his head, and Angelo seals his fate even as he embraces Isabel and gives Mariana the means to marry - and behead him. This

Whetstone's two-part play *Promos and Cassandra* (1578), and *Epitia* (1583), a play in Italian by Giraldi Cinthio. The surface of the story is similar to its sources: a legal system, maintained by hypocritical officials, treating harshly sexual acts out of state-approved wedlock. For that first audience at Whitehall, the play may have appeared cheeky, even audacious, as though it were shining a critical light upon the harshness of the late Queen to two members of the nobility who were now favored by the new king, James I. For almost certainly in the audience for that December performance were two Claudios and perhaps their Juliets. The audience would have recognized parallels of the play to the experiences of two earls, Southampton and Pembroke.

Shakespeare had dedicated two of his earliest works, *Venus and Adonis* (1593) and *Rape of Lucrece* (1594), to the Earl of Southampton, and he, like the courtiers in the 1604 audience, knew well that a Juliet (Elizabeth Vernon) and a Claudio (Southampton) were imprisoned in 1598 when Mistress Vernon's pregnancy appeared and Southampton returned from France to marry her in secret. Elizabeth released them but banished them from her Court.⁵

The audience could also discern in Claudio one of James's favorite young courtiers, William Herbert (3rd Earl of Pembroke), who years later would be dedicatee of the Shakespeare First Folio. In 1600, Mary Fitton had become pregnant with Herbert's child without the benefit of marriage, with the upshot that Queen

is the brutal measure for measure which the woman always threatens to extract: a head for a maidenhead."

⁵ Klaus (2008), p. 255, regards the parallel of Claudio with Southampton as a "minor coincidence." Southampton was condemned to death for his part in the Essex Rebellion of 1601 but lived in prison until released on James's accession; the new king restored his title and fortunes.

Elizabeth imprisoned him for a time.⁶ Indeed, it would have been difficult not to make the association as William Herbert's brother, Philip (created Earl of Montgomery five months later) was married the day after the performance of *Measure for Measure* in an elaborate ceremony in which James I played a prominent part.⁷

Just as visible as sexual mores is an unmistakable religious theme running through *Measure for Measure*.⁸ The female protagonist is

⁶ Mary Fitton was placed in the care of Lady Margaret Hawkins for the duration of her pregnancy. Pembroke refused to marry her. Their infant died at birth.

⁷ Could the rather mild treatment of the Earl of Pembroke be a source of the observation that Shakespeare puts in the mouth of Isabella?:

That in the captain's but a choleric word
Which in the soldier is flat blasphemy.

⁸ Peter Lake's essay, "Measure for Measure, Anti-Puritanism and 'Order' in Early Stuart England," in Peter Lake and Michael Questier, *The Antichrist's Lewd Hat: Protestants, Papists, and Players in Post-Reformation England* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2002), pp. 621-700, treats the play as a cautionary tale for the king against the extremes of puritanism/Calvinism and Catholicism:

At stake in all this, the play seems to argue, is a mistaken valuation of the sins of concupiscence as opposed to those of aversion, a narrow definition of virtue, order and reputation in terms of chastity and sexual honour that, when pursued with too much zeal, could only lead to social disunity and conflict. As the figure of Isabel and the work of John Bossy both remind us, this change in moral perspective was common in the period after the reformation to both reformed protestants and counter-reformation catholics; something figured in the play by the fact that the redefinition of marriage that catches Claudio and Juliet in its talons was common to both catholic and protestant reform.

Elsewhere, the Lake-Questier book makes clear that Catholics were being executed for their religion but seems to fault the martyrs for their "appropriations" of the gallows by their pre-execution "histrionics" such as singing the "Te Deum" and praying in Latin. Id. pp. 243-44.

Darryl J. Gless, *Measure for Measure, the Law, and the Convent* (Princeton,

found in a convent, a novice, though not yet an avowed nun. The principal male character assumes the habit of a friar and goes among the people doing what friars do, ministering to the service of humanity in the secular world. Isabella invokes God as the saviour

1979), p. 58, presents *Measure for Measure* as belonging to “the eclectic class of allegorical texts that declare, sometimes quite explicitly, their didactic designs.” For Gless, the design is a confirmation of the doctrine of redemption through faith alone (*sola fides*) and a rejection of the Old Faith’s emphasis on good works.

Debora Shuger, *Political Theologies in Shakespeare’s England* (London: Palgrave, 2001) has been described as an “important study of the play’s negotiation of competing puritan and ‘Anglican’ forms of Christian justice.” Musa Gurnis, “‘Most Ignorant of What He’s Most Assured’: The Hermeneutics of Predestination in *Measure for Measure*,” *Shakespeare Studies*, vol. 42 (2014), p. 163. Gless’s review of Shuger comments that “she has not set out to interpret *Measure for Measure*. Instead her goal is to use the play’s ‘obvious’ features (6) as a guide to understanding the now-unfamiliar terrain of political theology.” Darryl J. Gless, Review, *Political Theologies in Shakespeare’s England*, *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 54, (2003), pp. 330-333, p. 330. Curiously, there is almost no treatment of Catholicism as an aspect of political theology in Shuger’s book or as an aspect of the play despite all of the express and assumed Catholic features of *Measure* (as discussed below).

Others have seen different sorts of religious treatment in the play. Musa Gurnis says “*Measure for Measure* demonstrates a sustained preoccupation with the central, experiential challenge of predestination: the difficulty of knowing the preordained and unchangeable condition of souls, one’s own as well as others’.” Gurnis (2014), p. 141. Predestination is also taken up as a theme in Thomas Fulton, “Shakespeare’s Everyman: *Measure for Measure* and English Fundamentalism,” *Premodern Shakespeare: A special issue of Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 40.1 (2010): 119-47.

Watson finds the play anti-religious: “a potentially heretical, even blasphemous, meditation about the fate of the human individual.” Robert N. Watson, “False Immortality in *Measure for Measure*: Comic Means, Tragic Ends,” 41 *Shakespeare Quarterly* 411, 415 (1990). Other critics discussed below find the play religious, but Catholic or anti-Catholic.

of all forfeit souls, saving all from original sin through His mercy.⁹ The title itself is taken from the Bible, from the Sermon on the Mount, a passage that is a call for humility in dispensing justice, tempered by mercy.¹⁰

Judge not, that ye be not judged.
For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged:
and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you
again.
And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy
brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine
own eye?
Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out
the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine own
eye?
Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine
own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote

⁹ Why, all the souls that were were forfeit once,
And He that might the vantage best have took
Found out the remedy. How would you be,
If He, which is the top of judgment, should
But judge you as you are? [*Measure*, 2.2]

Christ's death on the cross in atonement for the sins of mankind is a defining doctrine of Christianity. Is this central to the play? The substitution of Christ for mankind in the atonement is consistent with the series of substitutions that run through the play, Angelo for the Duke, Mariana for Isabella, Ragozine for Barnardine, and so forth. Roy W. Battenhouse, "*Measure for Measure* and the Christian Doctrine of Atonement," *PMLA* 61 (1946): 1029–59 sees the play as Christian allegory. On the theme of pervasive substitution, see Alexander Leggatt, "Substitution in *Measure for Measure*" *Shakespeare Quarterly* 39 (1988): 342-59.

¹⁰ Matthew vii, 1-5; see also Mark iv, 24 and Luke vi, 38. Critics have detected thirty or more biblical passages embedded in the play. Thomas Fulton, "Shakespeare's *Everyman*: *Measure for Measure* and English Fundamentalism," *Premodern Shakespeare: A special issue of Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 40.1 (2010): 119-47 p. 121.

out of
thy brother's eye.

The hypocrite portrayed in *Measure*, whose eye's beam is visible to all, is Angelo, who condemns Claudio for the same sexual offenses of which he is himself guilty. The 1604 audience would likely know that this passage is preceded by the admonition that also expresses like treatment of likes, a measure for a measure: "if you will forgive men their offences, your heavenly Father will forgive you also your offences, but if you will not forgive men, neither will your Father forgive you your offences."

Thus, we see a comedy with a religious theme, bearing kinship with *Merchant of Venice* (written by 1598 when it is mentioned by Francis Meres), also featuring a hypocrite demanding the strict letter of the law and the clever joining of mercy with justice by a disguised official:

Portia. The quality of mercy is not strain'd;
It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven
Upon the place beneath. It is twice blest:
It blesseth him that gives and him that takes.
'Tis mightiest in the mightiest; it becomes
The throned monarch better than his crown;
His sceptre shows the force of temporal power,
The attribute to awe and majesty,
Wherein doth sit the dread and fear of kings;
But mercy is above this sceptred sway,
It is enthroned in the hearts of kings,
It is an attribute to God himself;
And earthly power doth then show likest God's
When mercy seasons justice. [*Merchant*, 4.1]

A Broader Context: A New King and the English Catholic Question

When we read between the lines and place it in the context of time, place and audience, we may gain new understandings of what we see and read. *Measure for Measure* can be seen as a play designed to influence in particular directions King James (and his Court) who viewed the performance on 26 December 1604.¹¹

¹¹ Annabel Patterson has explored “reading between the lines” in a collection of essays bearing that title (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1993), and in her important work, *Censorship and Interpretation: The Conditions of Writing and Reading in Early Modern England*. (2nd ed. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991). She takes up the “hermeneutics of censorship”; writers of the period under consideration, she contends, adopted “oblique strategies of communication” to comment on important matters of public concern. Modern academic literary criticism, as she observes, has gone too far in separating text from context. Rather than presenting the detached artist, she sees authors intending political meanings that many in a contemporary audience of viewers or readers would understand. An earlier essay that draws attention to the possible relation of the performance of *Measure for Measure* and the executions of Catholics is James Ellison, “*Measure for Measure* and the Executions of Catholics in 1604,” *English Literary Renaissance* 33 (2003): 44 – 87. Ellison, p. 45, comments:

King James was directly involved in the blundering sequence of events which led to the short-lived Puritan campaign against Catholics, and this made it quite impossible for Shakespeare to represent these events directly; but by putting on stage a Puritan magistrate (Angelo) who attempts to enforce ancient laws for the execution of a Catholic (Claudio) rigidly, Shakespeare created a drama whose outline could be easily “applied” by a contemporary audience to the sudden renewal of persecution against Catholics in 1604.

Ellison tries to have the play be “Shakespeare’s anti-Catholic polemic” and at the same time a plea for toleration of Catholics. Id. p. 72. The play, he asserts, is “unshakably Protestant in its antipapalism, but simultaneously antagonistic toward Puritanism.” Id. p. 74.

See also, Thomas Fulton, “Shakespeare’s Everyman: *Measure for Measure* and English Fundamentalism,” *Premodern Shakespeare: A special issue of Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 40.1 (2010): 119-47 (“Shakespeare uses the medieval inheritance to challenge contemporary Protestant political

The king had been on the English throne for only a year-and-a-half, and the gravest question of the kingdom was the treatment to be given to English Catholics, identified as “recusants,” those who refused to participate even outwardly in state-mandated religious services and sacraments. The August 1604 treaty among England, Spain and the Habsburg Netherlands (the Somerset House Treaty) had settled the state of war that had existed since before the 1588 Armada, but it failed to address the status of Roman Catholics in England. Like Isabella, the English Catholic leaders pleaded for relief for their brethren from the letter of the strict laws. The state demanded that the Catholic recusants violate their consciences, as Angelo demands of Isabella, and engage in grave sin that would condemn their souls in eternity – a demand they refused, just as does Isabella. Twice in the year before the play, Catholics of England submitted supplications to the king seeking relief and toleration. Their supplications are re-presented in *Measure for Measure*’s plea for toleration for conscience-sake. A more specifically political aspect of the play, consistent with the Catholic goal of toleration, is the author’s careful delineation of the principal characters, so detailed and so great a departure from the play’s sources that coincidence is highly unlikely. King James and his court could not have failed to see the parallels between the Duke and Isabella and a royal couple just across the English Channel, two sovereigns whom James and his wife had sought to cultivate while

theology . . . [which came] “after several Catholics had been executed for heresy.” Id. p. 120 However, Fulton rejects any attempt to read Catholicism into the play: “Although there is much hidden here in the elusive recesses of theologically well-informed language and allusion, what is hidden does not carry a Catholic doctrinal commitment or a recusant agenda.” Id. p. 139 Paradoxically, his concluding sentence is: “And under the historically thin layer of Protestant controversy lies a substratum of Roman Catholicism whose continued presence, as cultural artifacts and as belief, adds to the fissures on the surface.” Id. p. 139.

they were yet in Scotland – a couple also bearing the title and name of Duke and Isabella. This couple were very concerned for the better treatment of English Catholics; warm relations between them and their English neighbors could help the cause of the English Catholics.

Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, written before James came to the English throne, is splendid precedent for the assertion that a courtier might use a play to influence a king and compel him to confront his own actions. *Hamlet* arranges for a performance of *The Murder of Gonzago*, a play which parallels Claudius's murder of *Hamlet's* father. *Hamlet* tells the audience:

The play's the thing
Wherein I'll catch the conscience of the King. [*Hamlet*, 2.2]

After telling Claudius that the play is called *The Mousetrap*, *Hamlet* dissembles, saying to the king, "Tis a knavish piece of work, but what of that? Your Majesty, and we that have free souls, it touches us not." The play within a play has the desired effect on Claudius.

With *Measure for Measure*, Shakespeare staged a play to catch the conscience of King James. In portraying the plight of the Catholics who refused to consent to the demands of the state that they commit the mortal sin of abandoning their faith, he expected the play to catch the conscience of the king, and open James to conclude that wisdom and justice lay in relaxing the strict enforcement of the recusant laws.

Shakespeare was aware of the Greek and Roman tradition of Sophocles and Seneca, playwrights at the seat of government, using their art to speak truth to power and to community, albeit with

indirection. As observed by Brian Arkins of Seneca's tragedies: "the Roman dramatist uses Greek material to comment obliquely on the outrages of Nero's court and describes a world that is radically evil."¹² Sophocles employed tales of Thebes and Troy to teach Athenians of the need for humility and wisdom in government and the dangers of strict interpretation of religious law.¹³ Shakespeare used his position as court playwright to comment on and critique contemporary controversies, albeit indirectly, setting them in different times and different environs.

The royal entertainments of the first eight years of James's rule were dominated by two playwrights: Ben Jonson for court masques and Shakespeare for court plays. In the court entertainment season of November 1604 to February 1605, no less than seven Shakespeare plays were performed for the Court and two plays and a masque by Jonson.¹⁴ More is known of the provenance of the masques and their performances than the plays, but management of the two forms of entertainment were probably similar.¹⁵ Masques were not

¹² Brian Arkins, "Heavy Seneca: his Influence on Shakespeare's Tragedies." *Classics Ireland* 2 (1995) 1-8.

¹³ The parallels between Sophocles *Antigone* and Shakespeare's *Measure* cannot be resisted. Like Sophocles's headstrong heroine who hurls angry epithets at her sibling (Ismene) for urging her to temporize with state authority, Shakespeare's Isabella defies the state's law to adhere to a higher law. Indeed, Seiden, *Measure for Measure: Casuistry and Artistry* (1990), pp. 166-178, calls Antigone "Isabella's tragic double" and devotes a chapter to comparing Isabella and Antigone.

¹⁴ In addition to *Measure for Measure* they were *Othello*, *Merry Wives of Windsor*, *Comedy of Errors*, *Henry V*, *Love's Labour's Lost*, and *Merchant of Venice*. For Jonson, the plays were *Every Man in his Humour* and *Every Man Out of his Humour* and the masque was the *Mask of Blackness*.

¹⁵ The exceptionally thorough researches of E. K. Chambers, *The Elizabethan Stage*, 4 vols. (London, 1923), J. T. Murray, *English Dramatic Companies 1558-1642* (1910), and Herford and Simpson, *Ben Jonson*, (1925-52) have been supplemented by more recent works, such as Andrew Gurr, *The Shakespearian Playing Companies* (Oxford, 1996) and *The Shakespearian*

first written by authors and then submitted for selection out of many competitors. Rather, an established author was commissioned and assigned a theme to work. Direction would come from a high ranking court official who enjoyed royal favor. He, not the author, controlled the substantial sums of money that had to be devoted to bringing a masque to production, with performers, musicians and staging. Royal plays written for and performed during the theater season could well have been similarly managed by the same officials. No doubt a court-connected author of a masque or play could propose subject and theme, but no performance could take place without thorough review and approval by persons with far more authority than an author. Courtiers in essential positions to bring *Measure for Measure* to the royal stage included persons who were very sympathetic to Catholic recusants and who were closely connected to the Archdukes of Brussels.

Isabella's Recusancy

The central conflict of *Measure for Measure* is Isabella's refusal to consent to have sex with Angelo. Without this refusal to submit to the sovereign, this recusancy, the story would not hold together. Claudio has already been condemned to death when Isabella goes to Angelo at Lucio's request. Before proposing an explicit exchange of sex for Claudio's life, Angelo poses a hypothetical choice to Isabella. The question is framed so that whatever she answers she will be sure to suffer for it, either in body or in soul:

[If] there were
No earthly mean to save him but that either

Stage, 1574—1642 (4th ed. 2009). See also the essays in David Bevington and Peter Holbrook, eds. *The Politics of the Stuart Court Masque* (Cambridge, Eng., 1991).

You must lay down the treasures of your body
To this supposed, or else to let him suffer-
What would you do? [Measure, 2.4]

Many in the audience would recognize Angelo as posing a variant of the “bloody questions” demanded of English Catholic prisoners by their prosecutors.¹⁶ Like them, she’s asked to do a thing she is forbidden by conscience and religion to do, and she refuses. She responds: “As much for my poor brother as myself.” She would take death. It is a choice between this life and eternity, as she soon relates to her brother.

Many critics go astray in failing to understand the dynamic between Isabella and Angelo. Critics speak of “Angelo’s attempted rape of Isabella”¹⁷ and thereby distort the play’s presentation of the issue of

¹⁶ As related by Fr. John Gerard of one such question, he was demanded to answer:

‘What would you do if the Pope were to send over an army and declare that his only object was to bring the kingdom back to its Catholic allegiance? And if he stated at the same time that there was no other way of re-establishing the Catholic faith; and commanded everyone by his apostolic authority to support him? Whose side would you be on then—the Pope’s or the Queen’s?’

Gerard commented, the official (Topcliffe) “had so framed his question that whatever I answered I would be sure to suffer for it, either in body or in soul.” Caraman (1951), pp. 98-9. For other “bloody questions” of a similar framing, see Peter Holmes, *Resistance and Compromise: The Political Thought of the Elizabethan Catholics* (1982), pp. 31-32, 44-46.

¹⁷ Seiden (1990), p. 14.

C.M.A. McCauliff, “The Bawd and the Bard: Mercy Tempers Strict Statutory Application in Shakespeare’s *Measure for Measure*,” 43 *Cath. Law.* 81 (2004), p. 104 (“Isabella could only have seen as a rape.”)

Martha Widmayer, “‘To Sin in Loving Virtue’: Angelo of *Measure for Measure*,” *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, vol. 49, no. 2 (Summer 2007), pp. 155-180, p. 157 (Claudio “begs his sister to endure virtual rape.”).

sex. True, there is a disparity of power, but the ethical issue is always one of consent, not force. What Angelo seeks is an exchange, a bargain in which Isabella must be complicit.¹⁸ If he physically forced sex upon her, her soul would not risk damnation. Only voluntary participation would damn her; only refusal would prevent loss of her soul in eternity. In contrast, the poet's Rape of Lucrece, where Tarquin "pens [Lucrece's] piteous clamors in her head" with "the nightly linen that she wears" as he rapes her, absolves Lucrece (despite her sense of sin) of guilt:

Let sin, alone committed, light alone
Upon his head that hath transgressed so;
Let guiltless souls be freed from guilty woe. [Rape, lines
1480-82]

When Lavinia is raped by Demetrius and Chiron in *Titus Andronicus*, it is clear that she is wholly innocent and victimized in losing her chastity. Though Lucrece and Lavinia die to prevent family shame, there is nothing but innocence about them, and this contributes to the tragedy. They may lose their lives, but Shakespeare's readers have no reason to suppose their souls.

Robert N. Watson, "False Immortality in *Measure for Measure*: Comic Means, Tragic Ends," 41 *Shakespeare Quarterly* 411, 412 (1990) ("a form of attempted rape").

Meredith Skura, "New Interpretations for Interpretation in *Measure for Measure*," *boundary 2: a journal of postmodern literature and criticism*, 7 (1979): 39-59, p. 51, ("For in the latent fantasy the two acts of violence which Angelo initiates (at least symbolically) are the same act. The sister is raped while the brother is beheaded, . . .").

¹⁸ Seiden (1990), p. 160, reveals the distance of the play from modern culture in recognizing that "Isabella could not make herself believe, as any reasonably intelligent, commonsensical and pragmatic modern woman might, that allowing Angelo to have her sexually (while she, emotionally and physically, withholds love from him) absolves her of sin, though he remains as rapist."

Isabella's refusal is the greatest departure of Shakespeare from his sources. Shakespeare's chief source was George Whetstone's play, *Promos and Cassandra* (1578). Its setting is the city of Julio under the King of Hungary, and the corrupt judge is Promos, administrator of Julio. The condemned man is Andrugio and his sister is Cassandra, who gives her chastity to Promos in response to her brother's piteous entreaties. Another source was Giraldi Cinthio's *Epitia*. In it, Emperor Maximilian appoints his friend Juriste to govern Innsbruck. Juriste assigns the mandatory sentence of death to one Vico who has in fact ravished a virgin, but now stands ready to marry the victim. Vico's virginal sister, Epitia, pleads for her brother and agrees to sleep with Juriste on his promise he will marry her and spare Vico. The morning after, Vico's execution is revealed. Upon Epitia's complaint against Juriste's treachery, the Emperor compels Juriste to marry her and then be beheaded but relents upon Epithia's pleas for Juriste. In neither of these sources does the sister of the condemned man refuse to render up her chastity.

In Shakespeare's most extended exercise in casuistry, Angelo and Isabella exchange views on forced consent and sin. Isabella tells him: "I had rather give my body than my soul." Angelo argues that compelled sins do not count as do those entered without compulsion. He suggests to her that she would be performing an act of charity for her brother:

Might there not be a charity in sin
To save this brother's life? [*Measure*, 2.4]

She rejects Angelo's offer, saying, "Better it were a brother died at once, Than that a sister, by redeeming him, Should die forever."

Isabella assumes her brother would prefer death to her dishonor, but she is mistaken:

I'll to my brother.
Though he hath fall'n by prompture of the blood,
Yet hath he in him such a mind of honour
That, had he twenty heads to tender down
On twenty bloody blocks, he'd yield them up
Before his sister should her body stoop
To such abhorr'd pollution.
Then, Isabel, live chaste, and, brother, die:
More than our brother is our chastity.
I'll tell him yet of Angelo's request,
And fit his mind to death, for his soul's rest. [Measure, 2.4]

When she informs Claudio that if she would yield Angelo her virginity, “Thou mightst be freed!” he urges her to take the deal. He suggests, alluding to Angelo’s wisdom, that the “momentary trick,” the trifle of sex, would not be a mortal sin resulting in permanent damnation. Claudio tries to persuade Isabella of innocence in compelled consent, echoing Angelo himself:

Sweet sister, let me live.
What sin you do to save a brother's life,
Nature dispenses with the deed so far
That it becomes a virtue. [Measure, 3.1]

She insists she would give her life but not her honor. She reacts strongly, telling Claudio:¹⁹

¹⁹ With Isabella, Shakespeare has created a figure defiant of authority as powerful and as memorable as Sophocles’s Antigone and he apparently patterns

O you beast!
 O faithless coward! O dishonest wretch!
 Wilt thou be made a man out of my vice?
 Is't not a kind of incest, to take life
 From thine own sister's shame? What should I think?
 Heaven shield my mother play'd my father fair!
 For such a warped slip of wilderness
 Ne'er issu'd from his blood. Take my defiance,
 Die, perish! Might but my bending down
 Reprieve thee from thy fate, it should proceed.
 I'll pray a thousand prayers for thy death,
 No word to save thee. [Measure, 3.1].

Many critics of the play have found Isabella harsh, selfish, even hypocritical. Arthur Quiller-Couch describes Isabella as “somewhat rancid in her chastity . . . all for saving her own soul, and she saves it by turning, of a sudden, into a bare procuress,” referring to her part in the bed trick.²⁰ Josephine Waters Bennett is off-put by “her

his heroine upon her. Both reject their siblings' weakness and both prefer death to dishonor, as seen in this exchange between Ismene and Antigone:

Ismene: Antigone! The law is strong, we must give in to the law in this thing, and in worse. I beg the dead to forgive me, but I am helpless: I must yield to those in authority.

Antigone. If that is what you think, I should not want you, even if you asked to come. You have made your choice, you can be what you want to be..... You may do as you like, since apparently the laws of the gods mean nothing to you.

Go away, Ismene: I shall be hating you soon, and the dead will too, for your words are hateful. Leave me my foolish plan: I am not afraid of the danger; if it means death, it will not be the worst of deaths—death without honor.

²⁰ From his “Introduction” to the *New Cambridge Edition*, p. xxx, quoted in Josephine Waters Bennett *Measure for Measure as Royal Entertainment* (1966) p. 63.

prudery and her self-righteousness.”²¹ She notes Isabella’s lack of charity: “She does not love her brother as herself.”²² Anne Barton describes Isabella as “a narrow-minded but passionate girl afflicted with an irrational terror of sex”²³ A. P. Rossiter treats Isabella as scared and selfish: “Scared souls are small souls; . . . Isabella’s soul is scared—to a tiny rod of iron principle which is all she can think.”²⁴ Anne Scott writes of the “flawed” sexual morality in the “aloof chastity of Isabella who refuses to place love for her brother before personal integrity.”²⁵ The modern critic does not take seriously Isabella’s concern over mortal sin: she is “a woman who perverts a minor ethical good, chastity, into a rationale for acquiescing to a judicial murder.”²⁶ Such critics do not like her for her unwillingness to submit her virginity to Angelo to save her brother. They must discount Isabella’s other words to Claudio, “were it but my life! I’d throw it down for your deliverance.” Mere rhetoric, says Rossiter, “unless you achieve your end by dying.”

²¹ Bennett (1966), p 64.

²² Id. p 71.

²³ Anne Barton, “Introduction to *Measure for Measure*” in *The Riverside Shakespeare* (G. Blakemore Evans, ed., 2d ed. 1997), p. 580.

²⁴ A. P. Rossiter, “*Measure for Measure*,” in *William Shakespeare’s Measure for Measure* (Bloom, ed. 1987), p. 52. Rossiter finds Claudio and Isabella a disordered family, lacking “sympathetic insight”; they are “akin in selfishness; or in self-preservation, without insight into the cost—to another.”

²⁵ Anne Scott, “Discourses of Kingship in *Measure for Measure* and the Works of James I,” *Parergon*, vol. 15 (1998), pp. 71-93, p. 82. Later Scott speaks of Isabella’s “fierce horror of defiling her own body with unchastity . . . [and her] almost fanatical fear of losing her virginity,” that make her difficult for a modern reader to understand. Id. p. 89.

²⁶ Seiden (1990), p. 167. (emphasis added). Anna Kamaralli notes that many critics write of Isabella’s repressed sexuality and comments that “Underlying this perspective is an assumption that principle is an inadequate reason for Isabella to preserve her chastity; that here must be some other, concealed motive.” “Writing about Motive: Isabella, the Duke and Moral Authority,” *Shakespeare Survey* 58 (2005), 48-59, in Klause (2012), p. 291.

What's the harm in a short embrace of Angelo if she save her brother's life?

Peter Lake dismisses much of Isabella's expressed concern about her immortal soul, treating it as a false-consciousness that arises from a socially constructed sense of honor: ²⁷

Isabel's motivations and concerns, . . . seem intensely social, concerned with those socially constructed and experienced categories of honour, shame and nobility. . . . not so much of spiritual worry about the condition of her soul as of an intensely social concern over her own honour and that of her family. Isabel's performance in these scenes enacts a contemporary spiritual, moral and social calculus of honour and shame, vice and virtue, sin and purity, the self-evident rightness of which the play operates consistently to interrogate, if not to subvert.

Despite such psychologizing of motive, Shakespeare gives Isabella an unshakeable belief that she has been asked to violate an exceptionless moral rule.²⁸ The choice she is given is not between "love for her brother" and her "personal integrity"; rather it is a choice between love for her brother and her love of God. If she saves Claudio, she transgresses the law of God and relinquishes her immortal soul. Acting voluntarily for a good purpose will not excuse the breach of the rule.²⁹

²⁷ Lake (2002), pp. 653-54.

²⁸ King James had his own list of "horrible crimes that yee are bound in conscience never to forgive: such as Witch-craft, wilfull murder, Incest, (especially within the degrees of consanguinitie) Sodomie, poisoning, and false coine." *The Political Works of James I* (Charles Howard McIlwain, ed., 1918, 2002 reprint) p. 20.

²⁹ To this day, the Catholic Church reinforces the principle by teaching the young the story of the Italian saint Maria Goretti (October 16, 1890 – July 6,

The choice presented to Isabella reflects the dilemma facing England's Catholic recusants in 1604. Her refusal to give in to the demand of the state that she commit a mortal sin reflected Roman Catholic teaching to its English Catholics. They were prohibited from attending Protestant worship and partaking Protestant communion, even at the risk of capital crime. They were expected to hear Mass even if it meant death should they be captured. Numerous English Catholics gave their lives rather than renounce their faith, including Anne Line and Margaret Clitheroe. The priests who were executed were generally given the choice to live by converting to the state religion, as were many laity; but, in the view of their church this would be apostasy and they would lose eternal life.³⁰ English men and women were not executed for fornication, but they were for recusancy.

The question of recusancy had been taken up early in the Persons-Campion mission of 1580-81. In his biography of Edmund Campion, Richard Simpson discusses the most important point taken up by a group of English Catholics at a London meeting (often called the Synod of Southwark) in 1580 at the beginning of the Persons-Campion mission. Simpson most clearly expresses the issue:³¹

1902, canonized in 1950), who gave up her life rather than consent to sex because it would be mortal sin.

³⁰ See the discussions of Fr. Sugar and Grissold (a layman) below. Many other instances could be cited. Although the English government often asserted the executions were not for religious belief, the fact that pardon was generally available for those renouncing the Catholic religion makes it clear that recusancy was the ultimate factor.

³¹ Richard Simpson, *Edmund Campion: A Biography*, (London, 1867), pp. 131-32 (emphasis added). Holmes, *Resistance and Compromise*, p. 85, notes that the call for recusancy preceded Campion/Persons: "Nicholas Sander

How far could it ever be lawful to go to Protestant churches, especially if the persecution should increase? Several pleas were alleged, and it was said that a man might go if he justly feared or knew that going was the one way to save his goods or person, or to redeem himself from intolerable vexation; that he would go only for external obedience to the prince and her laws, without respect to religion, just as he would go to any other profane place if commanded by the same authority, not to pray with or among the Protestants, but to repair thither only for temporal obedience. Or, if this was unlawful or not permissible, might not certain principal men, who were not likely to be hurt or infected, go thither at certain times, with protestation at their entering the churches that they went not for the sake of religion, but only by commandment of the prince, and no otherwise? Or lastly, if none of these ways were allowed, might not dispensation be had from the Pope to permit it, either generally in England, considering the difficulties and dangers that might beset such as refused, or at least to certain principal men who might have more urgent cause to ask such permission?

A negative answer was given to all these questions, and it was determined that nothing could ever justify a Catholic in attending Protestant worship in England. The religions, it was said, were different; the most learned foreign Catholics had been consulted; the Council of Trent had appointed a committee to deliberate, who had considered all the circumstances, and had come to this conclusion. The Pope was of the same mind, and would never grant a dispensation in so notorious a case, where men were called upon openly to confess or deny God's true religion by an evident and distinctive sign, and by the public act of attending an alien worship

wrote in 1567 forbidding Catholics to have 'fellowship' with Protestants 'in marriage, in prayer and in all the service of God'."

where the truth is impugned, and the Catholic Church defaced, calumniated, and ridiculed,— an iniquity in which no Catholic could acquiesce without damning his soul. The Catholic, therefore, however pressed to conform externally, ought to resist, at any peril or cost, and even to thank God for so honourable an occasion of confessing Him, remembering that there is no dispensation from the law, "Whoever shall deny Me before men, him will I also deny before My Father."

A number of the English missionaries ordained on the Continent, though perhaps not all, instructed their followers that they must abjure the protestant ceremonies on pain of mortal sin. This refusal to attend those services became a dividing line among the English Catholics.³² Many wavered, as did Claudio regarding Isabella. Some English Catholics, "church-papists," compromised and outwardly conformed, reasoning much like Claudio (and as urged by Angelo) that nature dispenses with the deed (outward consent/conformity) so far that it becomes a virtue.

Recent historians have treated recusancy as a foreign doctrine, essentially an un-English import that was unduly provocative to the Protestant government. Caroline Hibbard, for example, writes: "Catholics were argued out of their traditionalist attitudes and into a sectarian one; but those who did the persuading came as emissaries of a centralized hierarchical church. It is a strange sect indeed whose central act of self-definition is reluctantly adopted at the behest of the pope."³³ Not the recusants, she indicates, quoting

³² John Bossy, *The English Catholic Community, 1570-1850* (London, 1975), p. 124. John Bossy, "The English Catholic Community, 1603-1625," in *The Reign of James VI and I*, ed. A. G. R. Smith (London, 1973), pp. 91-105.

³³ Caroline Hibbard, "Early Stuart Catholicism: Revisions and Re-Revisions," *The Journal of Modern History*, vol. 52, no. 1 (Mar., 1980), p. 17.

Aveling, but the Church-papists who saved the Catholic community.

Measure: A Catholic Play?

Catholic writers such as Peter Milward have described *Measure for Measure* as “the most Catholic of all [Shakespeare’s] plays.”³⁴ Christopher Devlin, for example, writes that:

[I]t is a great Christian play worked out in terms of explicitly Roman Catholic, Papist symbols: the proscribed habits of St Francis and St Clare, and the proscribed Sacrament of Confession and Absolution. There were also for those who cared to hear them, many echoes of approval for Catholic casuistry and of reproach for the penal laws and their hypocritical administrators.

Richard Simpson says: “To the Catholic, Isabella represents the noblest ideal, the brightest, most blessed of Shakespeare's heroines,

See also M. C. Questier, “What Happened to English Catholicism after the English Reformation?” *History*, vol. 85, 28-47 (“seminarist Catholicism entered what may fairly be called a quasi-‘puritan’ phase. . . . the seminary priests inflected all the language of religion and religious division, particularly nonconformity or recusancy, with new, heavily politicized evangelical emphases which were not present before.”) p. 38.

³⁴ Peter Milward, *Shakespeare the Papist* (2005) p 180. Critics of a Catholic interpretation, like Darryl Gless, see *Measure for Measure* as a rejection of Catholic doctrine. For example, when Lucio describes Isabella as a “thing enskied and sainted,” Gless (1979), p. 101, sees another rejection of salvation through works: Lucio’s “rhetorical exaggeration strengthens the literal sense of the words—that Isabella has made herself a saint by renouncing the secular world. The false ‘works ethic’ doctrine contemporaries normally attributed to Catholicism is as precise here as the sarcasm is patent.”

as the type of supernatural charity or of the highest sacrificial love.”³⁵

Peter Milward portrays Isabella as a Catholic heroine in terms similar to Simpson. What her critics, he says, have failed to understand is that “in yielding to Angelo's demand to commit the sexual sin of fornication with him she would, according to Catholic teaching – as repeated by St. Ignatius in his meditation on Hell in the first week of the Spiritual Exercises – be committing a mortal sin, and death in a state of unrepented mortal sin would consign the sinner to eternal punishment in hell.”³⁶ No wonder, he continues, that an innocent girl would feel betrayed by her brother, losing her temper and abusing him with such vehement words. Critics who would equate such a loss of temper with the cold, calculating solicitation of her by Angelo reveal a “strange lack of moral sense or sense of proportion.” Milward rejects the critics who find Isabella contradictory in seeking mercy for her brother but insisting on harsh justice from the Duke against Angelo. He finds the highlight of the play in Isabella's shift to pleading mercy upon Angelo once he repents of his sin: “Then, in spite of all that her critics say against her, Isabella stands out as an incarnation of mercy, personified as one of the four daughters of God . . .”³⁷

Catholic writers often see the entire setting of *Measure for Measure* as Catholic. The leading figures are Catholic, the country is Catholic, and the language is Catholic. Doctrines of the Roman Catholic church rejected by the state church are alluded to. The sacrament of penance (confession) is shown when the Duke/Friar

³⁵ Richard Simpson and H. S. Bowden, *The Religion of Shakespeare* (1899), p. 26.

³⁶ Milward (2005) p. 185.

³⁷ Milward (2005) p. 187.

tells Juliet he will teach her how to arraign her conscience and try her penitence and when Angelo instructs the Provost “Bring [Claudio] his confessor; let him be prepared.”³⁸ The state church generally regarded “the Romish doctrine concerning Purgatory . . . [as] repugnant to the word of God.”³⁹ Yet Claudio in *Measure* speaks recognizably of purgatory after death when the spirit goes to

bathe in fiery floods or to reside
In thrilling region of thick-ribbed ice. [*Measure*, 3.1]

The same Protestant article against Purgatory provided that “Invocation of Saint, is a fond thing vainly invented, and grounded upon no warranty of Scripture” and also was “repugnant to the word of God.” The Duke pointedly invokes his own patron saint in another scene: “If anything fall to you upon this more than thanks and good fortune, by the saint whom I profess, I will plead against it with my life.” The friars Thomas and Peter are presented most favorably as they help the Duke expose the misdeeds of Angelo, and the nun Francisca is a quiet and understanding figure, a model of modesty and virtue.⁴⁰ The villain of the play, the hypocritical

³⁸ The English state church recognized only the sacraments of baptism and the Lord’s supper (communion) and rejected the Catholic belief of the real presence of Christ in the latter.

Measure seems to allude to the issue of the real presence in the Eucharist when a troubled Angelo, struggling with his temptation, says:

Heaven in my mouth,
As if I did but only chew His name. [*Measure*, 2.4]

³⁹ Article XXII Purgatory of the 39 Articles of the Church of England that were adhered to after 1571.

⁴⁰ Burton Raffel, “Shakespeare and the Catholic Question,” *Religion & Literature*, vol. 30, no. 1 (Spring, 1998), pp. 35-51, with extended treatment of *Measure for Measure*, comments that in it the friars as well as “in plays like *Romeo and Juliet* or *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* are portrayed as unequivocally just, virtuous men, holy, even sanctified.” p. 48. He notes:

“Shakespeare never in fact expresses the sort of anti-Catholic attitudes to be found in the plays of his contemporaries.”

Gless (1979), pp. 61-89, on the other hand, sees a strong anti-monasticism in *Measure for Measure*, drawing on the antimonastic writings of Guillaume de Saint-Amour, Chaucer, Spenser, Erasmus, Melancthon, Luther, Calvin, Tyndale and St. Paul (!) to establish the hostility of Shakespeare to friars, nuns, monasteries and convents, suggesting the “hypocritical friars reincarnate a timeless breed. . . a new race of Pharisees.” Monks, for Shakespeare as for Chaucer “represent a “new race of [legalistic] Jews and these Jews are metaphors for legalists who seek salvation through external works of the law rather than through faith in Christ and the charity that manifests faith.” Id. p. 80.

Peter Lake (2002), pp. 674-75 speaks of Isabella’s “spiritual presumption . . . born of the pharisaical works righteousness of the would-be nun” and “the *savage* spiritual and physical disciplines of the Clares,” (emphasis added). Later he refers to “her false, unbending and catholicising equation of female virtue and chastity with sexual abstinence, a form of extreme and false pharisaical godliness . . .” Id. p. 688.

Houston Diehl, “‘Infinite Space’: Representation and Reformation in *Measure for Measure*,” *Shakespeare Quarterly* 49, no. 4 (Winter 1998): 393–410, p. 395 (“By using the clerical habit of the friar as a disguise that the Duke puts on and off and eventually discards, the play also demystifies monasticism, perhaps even reinforcing Protestant associations of friars with a fraudulent theatricality, their ‘humblest habits’ with ‘a false disguise.’”)

David Beauregard expressly counters Gless and Diehl in “Shakespeare on Monastic Life: The Nuns and Friars in *Measure for Measure*.” *Religion and the Arts* 30 (2000), p. 254, where he states: “Isabella and the Duke (with the help of the other friars) operate successfully in the world by bringing their virtue to bear on its problems. . . . Shakespeare reverses the main dramatic devices by which Reformed dramatists attacked Franciscan cloistered life, namely, by portraying them in the role of the Vice, by depicting their violation of vows (particularly chastity), and by showing them in flight from the world. With the monastic figures in *Measure for Measure*, however, there is no serious transgression of a vow, nor is there a flight from the world.” In a similar vein, see Jessica Slights and Michael Morgan Holmes, “Isabella’s Order: Religious Acts and Personal Desires in ‘Measure for Measure,’” *Studies in Philology*, Vol. 95, No. 3 (Summer, 1998), pp. 263-292, p. 264, (“the sympathetic portrayal of Clarist life reflected in Isabella’s determined support for ‘fasting maids, whose minds are dedicate /To nothing temporal.’ Shakespeare, we argue, sets the volitional restraints of convent life in stark opposition to the coercive regulations of public morality practiced by Vienna’s

Angelo is described several times by the term used as a synonym of Puritan: precise. The Duke says “Lord Angelo is precise.”⁴¹ Claudio likewise exclaims: “The precise Angelo!” In contrasting Measure for Measure once again with the Whetstone and Cinthio sources, the religious elements are absent from both: nothing corresponds to Isabella being a nun nor to the ruler assuming the guise of a man of holy orders.

Several characters in the play suggest that Isabella is a saint, a term that would draw on Catholicism rather than Protestant doctrine of the period. Lucio exclaims to her:

I hold you as a thing enskied [in heaven] and sainted
By your renouncement, an immortal spirit
And to be talked with in sincerity
As with a saint. [Measure, I.4]

secular authorities, thereby drawing attention to the positive aspects of monastic life.”)

⁴¹ I.3. Judith Rosenheim, “The Stoic Meaning of the Friar in Measure for Measure,” *Shakespeare Studies* 15 (1982) 171-215, p. 172, (“In calling Angelo ‘precise’ (I.iii.50), the Duke identifies him as a Puritan; and this term, while not exclusively connected with Calvin, was yet notably associated with the Genevan faith.) Levin (1979), pp. 182-83, on the other hand, thinks Shakespeare would have made a frontal attack on Angelo if he meant him to represent Puritanism: “There was certainly no need to be coy about it, since the Puritans were fair game in the drama of the period, and were openly attacked by Jonson and Middleton, among others. Shakespeare, therefore, would have had no reason to conceal Angelo’s Puritanism and every reason to exploit it, so it is safe to assume that, since he did not identify him with this sect, he did not expect the audience—royal or otherwise—to do so either.” Of course, there would be a jarring inconsistency calling Angelo a Puritan in the setting of Vienna or having a Catholic Duke of Vienna appoint a precisely identified Puritan in his place. An artist has constraints that a critic does not have to fret over. The anti-occasionalist, anti-historicist need not trouble himself over the political and religious concerns of the period of the plays for they are irrelevant.

More significantly, Angelo describes Isabella as a saint who has been sent to tempt him:

Oh, cunning enemy that, to catch a saint,
With saints dost bait thy hook! Most dangerous
Is that temptation that doth goad us on
To sin in loving virtue. [Measure, 2.2]

With this passage, Angelo identifies himself as saint, which is in keeping with Puritan doctrine of God electing certain living humans for salvation (without respect of good works), who are thus the “visible saints” among the faithful. But he also identifies Isabella as a saint who is a temptress. The most common charge against Catholics, both priests and laity, by the government magistrates was that they were “seducers.”

The identification of Catholics as seducers was well-established in Elizabeth’s reign. In a letter he sent to Oxford University in January 1582, the Earl of Leicester, the University’s Chancellor, wrote to the University expressing his and the Privy Council’s complaint about the toleration of “secret and lurking Papists among you, which seduce your youth and carry them over by flockes to the Seminaries beyond Seas.”⁴² It continued into the reign of James I, and often struck at people close to the Court.

Four months before the performance of Measure, a commission to banish priests and Jesuits was set up. James himself wrote to his Council on September 1 lamenting that, despite his hopes that clemency might induce the reformation of the Catholics, still Jesuits

⁴² Anthony à Wood, *History and Antiquities of the University of Oxford*, vol. 2 (ed. John Gutch, Oxford 1796), p. 212.

and seminary priests were continuing into England. This resulted in a document of September 5, 1604 that declared:⁴³

[M]any of these jesuits, seminary priests, and other priests and persons abovesaid, being at large, but also divers of them, being so in prison, desist not, as much as in them lieth, from the seducing of divers of our subjects . . .

The language of seduction was used in proceedings against both men and women Catholics as reflected in the charges against both William Byrd, the great English composer, and his wife in May 1605 as part of the crackdown on Catholics in 1604-1605. His Catholicism was well-known and largely ignored by Queen Elizabeth and King James. A document from the Court of Archdeaconry of Essex from May 1605 reflects the allegations of seduction:⁴⁴

William Byrd and Helen his wife praesentantur for popish recusants. He is a gentleman of [the] King's Majesty's Chapel and as the minister and churchwardens do hear Byrd, with the assistance of one Gabriel Colford who is now at Antwerp, hath been the Chief and principal seducer of John Wright son and heir of John Wright of Kelvedon in Essex gent and of Anne Wright the daughter of the said John Wright the elder. And the said Ellen Byrd as it is reported and as her servants have confessed have appointed business on the Sabbath day for her servants of purpose to keep them from Church and hath also done her best endeavour to seduce Thoda Pigbone her now maid servant to draw her to poperie as the maid hath confessed.

⁴³ M.A. Tierney, *Dodd's Church History of England*, 5 vols. (London, 1840), 4: lxxxvii.

⁴⁴ John Morris, *The Troubles of our Catholic Forefathers, second series, "The Life of Father William Weston, S.J."* (London 1875), pp. 143-44.

Less than a year later, similar allegations of being a seducer were made against the Court favorite in masques, Ben Jonson. An entry in the Consistory Court of London for the Parish of St. Anne's, Blackfriars, for Friday, January 10, 1606, cited Ben Jonson and his wife for repeated failures to attend divine services. The complaint stated that "as far as we can learn ever since the King came in [i.e. 1603] he is a poet and is by fame a seducer of youth to the popish religion."⁴⁵

The seduction charges and proceedings by lower level Protestants against Catholic figures who were prominent in Court entertainments suggests a fear that the "seducers" at Court might be targeting the king and queen themselves. Both complaints seem to call attention to the king's apparent tolerance of Byrd and Jonson. The reading that *Measure for Measure* is a play presenting sympathetically the plight of Catholic recusants suggests that such contemporary fears were not without foundation.

Some critics have found problematic the Duke-as-Friar's statements regarding confession. Objection can be made that he reveals Mariana's confession first on grounds that, as one posing as a priest, he should not have heard confession and secondly on his apparent violating the secrecy of confession.

Love her, Angelo.

I have confessed her, and I know her virtue. [*Measure*, 5.1]

Milward shows concern that this statement "is either a lie or, if true, a sacrilege."⁴⁶ But does the Duke-as-Friar actually indicate

⁴⁵ Reprinted in Hereford & Simpson (1925), I: 220-22.

⁴⁶ Milward, *Shakespeare the Papist* (2005), p. 181. Milward dismisses it as a "minor item in the characterization of the duke-turned-friar . . . that the

what she has confessed? He only implies that because he has confessed her he knows the state of her virtue. As with so many passages in Shakespeare, it is an equivocal statement – he knows her virtue or equally he knows the lack thereof. In context, it would by implication confirm her virtue. A careful parsing of the words makes clear that the Duke-as-Friar is making two statements, each of which can be true and independent. He has confessed Mariana. He knows her virtue. His knowledge of her virtue need not be based on the confession, and the statement is thus neither lie nor sacrilege. Similarly problematic is the Duke's statement about Angelo at confession:

Angelo had never the purpose to corrupt her; only he hath made an assay of her virtue to practise his judgment with the disposition of natures. She, having the truth of honour in her, hath made him that gracious denial which he is most glad to receive. I am confessor to Angelo, and I know this to be true; [Measure, 3.1]

This seems to be a lie, for there seems to have been no meeting between Angelo and the Duke-as-Friar prior to Act 5 when Angelo hears the Duke-as-Friar and asks Lucio of him, "Is this the man that you did tell us of?" But, again, we have perhaps two statements, each independent.

If the Duke is equivocal, his statements relating to the confessional have been defended as legitimate equivocation. The Jesuit practice and defence of equivocation on moral grounds, particularly in response to the government's "bloody questions," was well known from the 1580s on and figured prominently in the trials of priests. Shakespeare referred to and had characters employ equivocation in

Catholic spectators or readers would have had no difficulty in accepting his disguise with a willing 'suspension of disbelief.'

plays. He expressly defends the practice in *Measure for Measure* when he has the Duke say: "So disguise shall, by the disguis'd/Pay with falsehood false exacting."⁴⁷ Milward believes that the Duke-as-Friar was practising acceptable equivocation in relating a confessional role. The Duke-as-Friar tells only a "white lie" that was prompted by Shakespeare thinking of the Duke as a "Jesuit priest."⁴⁸ Thus, too, does Milward note that the Duke-as-Friar "seems to excuse his plan [the bed trick] by the notorious Jesuit doctrine of equivocation."⁴⁹ It is striking that Fr. Henry Garnet's use of a marriage vow to give an example of equivocation in his *Treatise on Equivocation* finds an echo in *Measure for Measure*:⁵⁰

In like manner, one beyng convented in the Bishopps courte because he refuses to take such a one to his wyfe as he had contracted wth per verba de praesenti, having contracted with an other privly before, so that he cannot be husband to her that claymeth hym, may answere that he never contracted with her per verba de praesenti, understanding that he did not so contract that it was a marriage; for that is the fynal intention of the judge to knowe whether there were a sufficient marriage between them or no, that so he may give true sentence. And otherwise the judge would geve sentence that he should be wth that woman which is not his wife, and so there

⁴⁷ 3.2. Simpson, *The Religion of Shakespeare*, p. 37: "Similarly, the lawfulness of the use of equivocation, when the truth is unjustly demanded, is laid down by the Duke in " *Measure for Measure* " in precise terms: 'Pay with falsehood false exacting.'"

⁴⁸ Milward (2005), p. 182.

⁴⁹ Id. p. 186. Others commenting on the bed trick have agreed with the Duke/Friar's counsel to Mariana: "'tis no sin," for Mariana to have intercourse with Angelo because he is her "husband on a pre-contract." [*Measure*, 4.I]. See Frank Kermode, "Justice and Mercy in Shakespeare," 33 *Hous. L. Rev.* 1155, 1166 (1996): "When [Angelo] is tricked into bed with Mariana, . . . , the pre-contract is revalidated."

⁵⁰ David Jardine, (ed.), *Treatise on Equivocation* (1851).

shoulde be an error in the judgement. Even so may one in this case answere to the remote intention of the lawe and of the judge

While the parallel is not exact, Garnet's instancing of equivocation in relation to the type of marriage contract at issue in *Measure for Measure* may have provided stimulus for Shakespeare's thoughts. It roughly corresponds to Angelo's denial of a marriage contract with Mariana, a matter on which the Duke must judge.

Another play, *Othello*, performed at Court shortly before *Measure for Measure*, similarly appears to draw directly upon Garnet's unpublished *Treatise*. Garnet explains how "we may use some equivocall word wch hath many significations, and we understand it in one sense, wch is trewe, although the hearer conceave the other, wch is false."⁵¹ He gives, as his example, the ambiguity that may be found in the word "lie." "[If] one should be asked whether such a straunger lodgeth in my house, and I should aunswere, 'he lyeth not in my house,' meaning that he doth not tell a lie there, although he lodge there." *Othello, the Moor of Venice*, was performed at Court November 1, 1604, and it, too, may have been written expressly for the 1604-05 entertainment season. The Clown uses Garnet's very words to equivocate to Desdemona as to the location of Lieutenant Cassio:⁵²

⁵¹ Id. p. 48.

⁵² Many scholars have noted the apparent allusion to Fr. Garnet in *Macbeth* [2.3]:

Faith, here's an equivocator, that could
swear in both the scales against either scale, who
committed treason enough for God's sake, yet could
not equivocate to heaven. Oh, come in, equivocator.

Shakespeare's *Phoenix and Turtle* memorializes the martyrdom of Garnet's assistant, St. Anne Line, and Shakespeare devotes a stanza to Fr. Garnet:

Desdemona. Do you know, sirrah, where Lieutenant Cassio lies?

Clown. I dare not say he lies anywhere.

Desdemona. Why, man?

Clown. He's a soldier; and for one to say a soldier lies, is stabbing.

Desdemona. Go to! Where lodges he?

Clown. To tell you where he lodges, is to tell you where I lie.

Desdemona. Can anything be made of this?

Clown. I know not where he lodges, and for me to devise a lodging,

and say he lies here or he lies there, were to lie in mine own throat. [Othello, 3.4]

David Beauregard takes up other instances of equivocation in *Measure for Measure*, where Isabella is technically guilty of lying and false testimony (3.1; 5.1), and Friar Peter pretends that the Duke is sick (5.1). If, he notes, the matter must be considered from a moral standpoint, “this insouciance about lying and deception would seem to best accord with the remarks of Aquinas”: “if the end intended be not contrary to charity, neither will the lie, considered under this aspect, be a mortal sin, as in the case of a jocose lie, where some pleasure is innocent, or in an officious lie,

And thou treble-dated Crow,
That thy sable gender mak'st
With the breath thou giv'st and tak'st,
'Mongst our mourners shalt thou go.

Garnet was born in a year of treble 5s, 1555, and was “crow-like for the black soutanes the Jesuits wore in Catholic safe houses. Garnet generated new members for the Society by a unique licence to receive and grant requests for admission to it. See Finnis & Martin, “Shakespeare’s Intercession for Love’s Martyr,” *Times Literary Supplement*, April 18 2003, pp. 12-14, n. 69.

Noted below is the connection of the executed layman Robert Grissold to Fr. Garnet through his brother, John Grissold.

where the good of one's neighbor is intended."⁵³ On the bed trick, Beauregard comments similarly that it is "clear that what is morally paramount is not the deceit but the consideration of the benefits to be achieved."⁵⁴

The Recusants' Supplications

Viewed from the Catholic recusant perspective, Isabella's pleas to Angelo for mercy are the artistic presentation of their supplications to King James for toleration in the months between his accession and the performance of *Measure for Measure*. The state demanded they commit mortal sin in exchange for self-preservation, similar to the demands made on Isabella. The Catholic recusants' petition of 1604 underscored their dilemma, which was found in:⁵⁵

[T]he undissembled profession of our inward faith, in refusing to go to the protestant church; a necessity which, under guilt of deadly sin and breach of our church's unity, all are bound unto, that believe the verity of the catholic religion, and purpose still to keep themselves her children.

The supplicants in this, as well as a 1603 petition, complained that other dissenters in religion were treated less severely. In the first, "we beseech your majesty to yield us as much favour, as others of contrary religion to that, which shall be publicly professed in England, shall obtain at your hands. For, if our faults be like, or less, or none at all, in equity our punishment ought to be like, or

⁵³ Beauregard (2000), p. 255.

⁵⁴ Id. p. 255. For an extended discussion of casuistry in *Measure for Measure* and in other Shakespeare plays, see Klause (2008), pp. 244-51.

⁵⁵ Tierney (1840), 4:lxv.

less, or none at all.”⁵⁶ In the second, they offered themselves as sureties, they would “stand bound, life for life,” for the performance of their allegiance.⁵⁷ As Isabella puts it:

Who is it that hath died for this offense?
There’s many have committed it. [Measure, 2.2]

How should a wise sovereign respond to a plea such as Isabella’s, or to the supplications of the Popish recusants? What would a clement sovereign do?

The Character of the Duke

The play’s early scenes mark the Duke as a thoughtful, well-intentioned ruler, one who is concerned that his realm has become disordered.⁵⁸ He is later described by his devoted follower Escalus as: “One that, above all other strifes, contended especially to know himself. . . . a gentleman of all temperance.” [Measure, 3.2]. He has been indulgent. Leniency has resulted in rampant vice. There is laxity in the law and corruption. The Duke sees a need for stern measures, as he explains to Friar Thomas, “strict statutes and most biting laws, The needful bits and curbs to headstrong steeds.” Unwilling to undertake these actions himself, he takes leave of his

⁵⁶ Id. 4: lxxiii. The supplication of 1604 called attention to the toleration of puritanism, which “is neither suppressed with penalties, nor oppressed with indignities.” Id. 4: lxxxv.

⁵⁷ Id. 4: lxxxvi.

⁵⁸ The disorder of the law is reflected comically through the corruption of language in a constable of the law, Elbow, who inverts words and meaning. Elbow identifies two malefactors to Angelo as “two notorious benefactors,” who are “void of all profanation” (when he means profession). Elbow speaks of his wife “whom I detest before heaven” but meaning to signify he believes her an honest woman. Of a whorehouse and its owner and procurer, he says they are all “respected,” when the proper word he intends is “suspected.”

office and has Angelo act in his place. The Duke suggests the basis for his reluctance:

I love the people
But do not like to stage me to their eyes;
Though it do well, I do not relish well
Their loud applause and 'aves' vehement,
Nor do I think the man of safe discretion
That does affect it. [Measure, 1.2]

Another reason for the appointment is given when the Duke's apparent confessor, Friar Thomas, says that it is good to appoint Angelo, for reforms coming from the Duke would have seemed more dreadful than coming from Angelo. The Duke agrees:

'twas my fault to give the people scope,
'Twould be my tyranny to strike and gall them
For what I bid them do; [Measure, 1.3]

He now, however, begins a series of deceptions. He is not actually leaving Vienna but instead takes up the habit of a brother. He shows himself to be a dissembler.⁵⁹

⁵⁹ Many critics react to the Duke very negatively. Bevington describes the Duke as "a highly manipulative character, the one most responsible in the play for the ethically dubious solutions through which craft must be employed against vice." *Complete Works*, p. 415. Louise Halper, "Measure for Measure: Law, Prerogative, Subversion," 13 *Cardozo Stud. L. & Literature* 221 (2001), p. 240, asserts that the Duke "is not the person to carry the play's need for a figure representing the divine within the institution of the monarchy, given his dubious plots, disguises, lapses and laxity. Perhaps he represents the other side of Elizabeth, who left things in rather a mess when she disappeared (or so at least James might have thought)." Klause (2008), pp. 240-41, notes that "lying is [Duke Vincentio's] *modus operandi*, a way of keeping his true plans secret

Many English Catholics in 1604 would have identified James as a Duke transformed into an Angelo. James had come to his majority of 18 in 1584 and assumed his responsibilities as King of Scotland. For the 19 years between then and 1603 (corresponding to the 19 zodiacs of laxity by the Duke, 1.2) when he acceded to the crown of England, he led many people to believe he was inclined to tolerance in religion, that he might even profess Catholicism. James described himself in *Basilikon Doron* as lax in enforcement from the beginning of his reign in Scotland in terms applicable to the Duke:⁶⁰

I confesse, where I thought (by being gracious at the beginning) to win all mens hearts to a loving and willing obedience, I by the contrary found, the disorder of the countrie, and the losse of my thanks to be all my reward.

James's relaxed attitude towards enforcement of laws against Catholic practices changed shortly after entering his new kingdom.⁶¹

so as to give himself the greatest possible freedom of maneuver. . . . Vincentio is primarily a comic character”

⁶⁰ *The Political Works of James I* (Charles Howard McIlwain, ed., 1918, 2002 reprint) p 20. Anne Scott has noted “There are so many similarities between what the Duke says and what James had written in the *Trew Law* and *Basilikon Doron* that it is hard to avoid the conclusion that Shakespeare was paying his king the compliment of modeling the Duke's philosophy on James's own.” Anne Scott, “Discourses of Kingship in *Measure for Measure* and the Works of James I,” *Parergon*, vol. 15 (1998), pp. 71-93, p. 91.

James advised his son not to be like Angelo - “a Tyran would enter like a Saint while he found himselfe fast vnder-foot, and then would suffer his vnrule affections to burst foorth.” p. 20

⁶¹ Ellison portrays a James sympathetic to Catholics who are being persecuted by Puritans, contrary to the real wishes of James. Noting that the new religious liberty allowed by James led to a massive influx of Catholic missionary priests, 140 in 1603 alone, accompanied by an appreciable rise in the recusancy numbers, “the opening of the play perfectly describes James's situation in 1604: he had let the controls upon Catholics slip, and was panicked by their

He is famously quoted as saying "'Na, na, gud fayth, wee's not need the Papists now."⁶² To their great disappointment, the "recusants still believed that James had promised them toleration . . ." ⁶³ By 1604, the stringent recusancy laws were more strictly enforced and were expanded by additional legislation and decrees. With concern over potential obstacles to the multilateral treaty of August 1604 out of the way, the government of James undertook greater enforcement. The Tierney/Dodd Church History of England observed that James "proceeded at once to let loose the whole fury of the persecution" and includes among the catalog of actions (with supporting evidence) the following lengthy summary:⁶⁴

new-found boldness into reenacting all the 'old laws' against recusants." Ellison (2005), p. 55. Ellison seem to want to have it both ways -- James is at times determined to enforce and strengthen ancient laws but simultaneously is against the enforcement of those laws.

⁶² Tierney (1840), 4: app. I.

⁶³ John LaRocca, "'Who Can't Pray With Me Can't Love Me': Toleration and Early Jacobean Recusant Policy", *Journal of British Studies* 23 (1984), p. 27

⁶⁴ Tierney (1840), 4: 40-41.

Recent studies have downplayed anti-Catholic sentiment and enforcement in the reigns of Elizabeth and James. Hibbard for example argues that county studies "demonstrate in detail how mistaken this picture [of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries as an era of persecution] was, and how normal, even uneventful, was the life led by many English Catholics." Caroline Hibbard, "Early Stuart Catholicism: Revisions and Re-Revisions," *The Journal of Modern History*, vol. 52, no. 1 (Mar., 1980), p. 4. She also submits that "the legislation devised to deal with Catholics was largely 'prudential' in character--intended for occasional use rather than continuous application." Id. p. 20.

John LaRocca, "'Who Can't Pray With Me Can't Love Me': Toleration and Early Jacobean Recusant Policy," *Journal of British Studies* 23 (1984): James's "policy was based on his firm belief that the human conscience was inviolable and that 'force never helped in religious matters and that gallant men should not be forced to die as martyrs.' These beliefs led James to attempt to introduce religious toleration in England."

For additional in-depth studies, see J. C. H. Aveling, *The Handle and the Axe: The Catholic Recusants in England from Reformation to Emancipation*

On the fourteenth of August, a new proclamation was published, admonishing the judges and magistrates to be rigorous in enforcing the penal laws.

A few weeks later, a commission was appointed, for the banishment of the catholic missionaries; while a canon, framed by the convocation which had just separated, commanded every officiating clergyman, under pain of suspension, to make a return of the names of all recusants above the age of thirteen years, residing within his parish.

Courts were then ordered to be held every six weeks, to receive informations, and to pronounce on the guilt of the accused. The usual fines were levied with redoubled rigour. The rich were impoverished, the poor were imprisoned, the middle classes saw their goods sold, their leases seized, their cattle driven away; while the clergy, and those who ventured to relieve them, again abandoned to the mercy of the pursuivants, were again doomed to witness the revival of all the sanguinary horrors of the preceding reign. So early as July the sixteenth, only nine days after the rising of parliament, Sugar, a priest, and Grissold, a layman, the former for his clerical character, the latter for "accompanying and assisting him," were executed at Warwick.

In September, another layman named Bailey, for an offence similar to that of Grissold, shared the same fate at Lancaster: twenty-one priests and three laics were taken from different prisons, and shipped off into perpetual banishment.

(London, 1976); John Bossy, *The English Catholic Community, 1570-1850* (London, 1975).

Fr. John Sugar and Robert Grissold were both offered the opportunity to live if they would only conform to the outward signs of the state religion. Both refused. When the Privy Council inquired of the assize judges as to the reason for the executions, one explained: “we offered, if they would come to the church, pray for the King, and conform, to labour to the King for them. But they, as they had done divers times before, refused so to do.”⁶⁵

On the scaffold, Fr. Sugar declared he was being executed for conscience-sake, not treason.⁶⁶ Like Fr. Sugar, whose bloody drawing and quartering he beheld, Grissold told the spectators that he died for conscience.⁶⁷ Did such martyrs, whose recusancy for conscience brought their executions, inspire Measure for Measure?⁶⁸

⁶⁵ Calendar of the Cecil Papers in Hatfield House, vol. 16, 1604, (London, 1933), pp. 174-195, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/cal-cecil-papers/vol16/pp.174-195> [accessed 22 December 2014].

This report confirms the account given by a witness to the proceedings collected in Richard Challoner, *Memoirs of Missionary Priests* (Philadelphia 1839), p. 11

a justice of peace said to him, Grissold, Grissold, go to church, or ellse, God judge me, thou shalt be hanged. Then God’s will be done, quoth he. After that, the judge asked him again, If he would go to church? I have answered you, my lord, enough for that matter, I will not. Then thou shalt be hanged, said the judge.

⁶⁶ Challoner (1839), p. 10: “Be it known unto you, good people, that I come hither to die for my conscience. The undersheriff answered, Thou diest, not for thy conscience, but for treason. To which he replied, You do me wrong, there is none can touch me for treason; it is for conscience I die.”

⁶⁷ Id. p. 12: “Bear witness, good people. that I die here not for theft, nor for felony; but for my conscience.”

⁶⁸ As indicated earlier, Ellison believes that these executions were in mind with the play. However, Ellison indicates that the playwright was showing the extremism of the Catholic Church (in part through Isabella in “her famous display of inhumanity”). Ellison (2003), p. 70, states that Shakespeare:

could have personally witnessed the lengths to which Catholic spirituality could be taken. The Catholic Church during this

A likely allusion may be found in 4.2 to the execution of a priest three years earlier. Fr. Mark Barkworth was executed in 1601 with Anne Line, for whose memory Shakespeare composed *Phoenix and Turtle*.⁶⁹ In this scene, the Friar/Duke wills that one prisoner's head be substituted for Claudio's. When the Provost objects that the substitution will be discovered by Angelo, the Friar/Duke responds:

Duke: Oh, death's a great disguiser, and you may add to it. Shave the head, and tie the beard, and say it was the desire of the penitent to be so bared before his death. You know the course is common. If anything fall to you upon this more than thanks and good fortune, by the saint whom I profess, I will plead against it with my life.
[*Measure*, 4.2]

It was an uncommon course for men in England or Vienna about to be executed to have their heads shaved – unless the “penitent” were a Catholic priest. Accounts of the execution establish that Fr. Barkworth had his head shaved before he was hauled to bloody Tyburn in 1601. A letter of Fr. Henry Garnet to the Father General of the Jesuits reports: “Father Mark had shorn his head after the manner of a monk, with a crown, because the Order of the Benedictines in Flanders used to receive the tonsure when the

period was actively exalting martyrdom and preparing its missionary priests to face a bloody end, either in Protestant Europe or the Far East (one unexpected result of this was an outpouring of studies of martyrdom in the visual arts of the Italian Renaissance, which were a way of preparing and encouraging young Catholic priests along the martyr's path). In Shakespeare's characterization of Isabella in *Measure for Measure* there is a deep and critical understanding of this cast of mind which reaches its climax in her famous display of inhumanity: “More than our brother is our chastity.”

⁶⁹ Finnis & Martin (2003), pp. 12-14.

moment of death was near at hand . . .”⁷⁰ The reference seems likely to be directed at Mark Barkworth by a poet/playwright who was so moved by the execution of Barkworth’s fellow martyr Anne Line that he dared write and publish a poem about her shortly after her death.⁷¹ An earlier martyr who similarly shaved his head as a mark of his religion was Alexander Briant.⁷²

Another reference to a martyred priest perhaps is found in Angelo’s retort to Isabella’s plea for Claudio:

It were as good
To pardon him that hath from nature stolen
A man already made, as to remit
Their saucy sweetness that do coin heaven's image
In stamps that are forbid. [Measure, 2.4]

⁷⁰ Henry Foley (ed.), *Records of the English Province of the Society of Jesus*, (London, 1877). 7: 1362, (March 11, 1601). On the scaffold, Barkworth called out: “I come here to die, being a Catholic, a Priest, and a religious man, belonging to the Order of St Benedict, by which Order this Kingdom of England was first converted.” Id. p. 1365.

⁷¹ Other Shakespeare plays appear to refer to martyr priests. In *William Shakespeare Adapts a Hanging* (Princeton, 1931), Thomas Whitfield Baldwin suggested that the *Comedy of Errors* refers to the “place of death and sorry execution” of several Catholic priests in October 1588 in reprisal for the Spanish Armada’s attempted invasion of England, among them were Frs William Hartley and William Gunter. An allusion to the martyr Edmund Campion appears to be found in *Twelfth Night*, Richard Desper, “Allusions to Edmund Campion in *Twelfth Night*,” *The Elizabethan Review*, vol. 3, no. 1, 1995, pp.37-47.

⁷² Peter Lake and Michael Questier have argued that such head-shaving by Catholic martyrs were part of the “histrionics” and “essentially theatrical process in which the state’s victims sought to appropriate and appeal to the judicial procedures and audiences through and before which the regime was trying to turn them into traitors.” Lake (2002), p. 243.

Most critics take this as stating that a magistrate might as well pardon the murderer of a man already alive as pardon the wanton pleasures of those persons who produce illegitimate offspring, like counterfeit coiners.⁷³ In this reading, Angelo shows a moral equivalence of murder and bastardy. Another reading would have Angelo drawing a moral equivalence between murder and the Elizabethan crime of distributing an Agnus Dei, which was a wax disk stamped with a cross and the figure of a lamb and blessed by the Pope. It symbolizes Christ, the Lamb of the New Testament. It is usually worn like a medal around the neck. Elizabethan statute made it an act of treason to bring into England or give to others an Agnus Dei or other articles blessed by the pope.⁷⁴ The first Catholic seminarian priest executed, in 1577, was Cuthbert Mayne, “who was wearing the waxen Agnus Dei, prohibited under Elizabethan law.”⁷⁵ The charges for which he was executed included his delivering Agnus Deis to Catholic recusants. The records are silent as to whether the charges against Fr. John Sugar in 1604 included possession and distribution of the forbidden Agnus Deis; many of the seminary priests carried and wore them.⁷⁶ But the quote in 2.4 above can be identified with Fr. Sugar: his name is synonymous with “sweetness” and the alias he adopted was “Sweet.”⁷⁷ In dealing with the magistrates, he appears to have been very “saucy” in the same sense that term is almost uniformly used in Shakespeare’s

⁷³ Bevington’s explanation is that “*Heaven’s image* is humankind, made in God’s likeness.” *Complete Works* p 431. The *Riverside Shakespeare* explains, “i.e. beget children unlawfully. The image is of counterfeiting coins (*stamps*.” p 597. Klause (2012), p. 99.

⁷⁴ 13 Eliz. c. 2.

⁷⁵ “Mayne, Cuthbert” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.

⁷⁶ Fr. Gerard related that priest/prisoners’ cells were frequently searched for *Agnus Deis* – “From time to time our cells were entered and a search made for altar plate, *Agnus Deis*, and relics.” Caraman (1951), p. 5.

⁷⁷ Anstruther, *The Seminary Priests* (1968), p. 341.

plays, viz. insolent.⁷⁸ Thus, in 1604 English statute treated coining heaven's image in an Agnus Dei as the equivalent of murder but did not so equate bastardy. Was Shakespeare not questioning an actual state of law rather than a fictive one?

Critics of Isabella have seen one speech of hers as infused with sexuality, as a beating fantasy growing from her repressed sexuality.⁷⁹ Isabella tells Angelo:

were I under the terms of death,
Th'impression of keen whips I'd wear as rubies,
And strip myself to death as to a bed. [Measure, 2.4]

A better reading would be that Shakespeare alludes to the whippings that were actually administered to the Catholic recusants, often when they were stripped naked. The Jesuit poet and missionary, Robert Southwell, wrote a petition to Queen Elizabeth attesting to the torture of many priests, who are "whipped naked so long and with such excess that our enemies, unwilling to give constancy the right name, said that no man without the help of the devil could with such undauntedness suffer so much."⁸⁰ Fr. Robert Persons, writing to Rome, related Bishop Aylmer's mistreatment of a 16-year-old Catholic maiden who, for defending the papacy under

⁷⁸ In 5.1 Lucio refers to the Friar/Duke as "A saucy friar, A very scurvy fellow" with the meaning of "insolent."

⁷⁹ Anna Kamaralli discusses such views, "Writing about Motive: Isabella, the Duke and Moral Authority," *Shakespeare Survey* 58 (2005), 48-59, in Klaus (2012), pp. 291-92.

⁸⁰ R. C. Bald (ed.), *An Humble Supplication to Her Maiestie* by Robert Southwell (Cambridge, 1953), p. 34.

his interrogation, was sent for whipping in a house of correction for prostitutes.⁸¹

Catholics who were probably well-known to Shakespeare or even close friends of his were arrested and indicted for their recusancy around the time of the performance of *Measure for Measure*. Among these can be included Thomas Lodge, whose tale *Rosalynde* Shakespeare had adapted for *As You Like It* four years earlier, and Hugh Holland, a London poet who composed a dedicatory poem included in Shakespeare's *First Folio*.⁸² Shakespeare grew up neighbors with the Grissold (Griswold) family of Rowington, Warwickshire, very near Stratford. If, as likely, Shakespeare knew Anne Line well, he would have known John Grissold, Robert's brother who was the caretaker of White Webbs, a home of Anne Vaux where Fr. Henry Garnet generally resided. Both Anne Line and John Grissold served Fr. Garnet.

Viewing *Measure for Measure*, would James have seen himself in the role of the Duke or as Angelo (or as unleashing Angelo)? Critics have often written of similarities of James to the Duke.⁸³ Several

⁸¹ Leo Hicks (ed.), *Letters and Memorials of Father Robert Persons SJ*, vol. I (Catholic Record Society no. 39), 81 (Latin), 89 (English translation); for the *virgo* sent to the brothel see also letter of Persons dated November 17, 1580, pp. 53, 60); Anthony Kenny, "Reform and Reaction in Elizabethan Balliol, 1559-1588," in John Prest (ed.), *Balliol Studies* (1982), 17-52 at 40-41.

⁸² List of "Popish Recusants as were indicted at the sessions holden for London and Middlesex, Feb. 15, 1604 [1605], Tierney (1840), 4: xcii-xciii.

⁸³ James himself had stayed the execution of Cobham and Raleigh at the last minute, no less theatrically than the Duke does for Angelo. Halper (2001), pp. 223-24, describes the similarities in detail. Stephen Greenblatt has written of James's actions as producing "salutary anxiety" in onlookers; they are made aware of their own status as subjects of the king and of the king's repressive power. Stephen Greenblatt, *Shakespearean Negotiations: The Circulation of Social Energy in Renaissance England* (Berkeley: University of California Press,

have suggested that Shakespeare was pandering to the king to advance his own standing as court playwright.⁸⁴ Kernan comes close to this when he observes:⁸⁵

Measure for Measure puts onstage, through exaggerations of the comic lens, a justification of the king's justice Only the king's justice, coming from an absolute ruler like the Duke or James, who operates above the law, penetrates all pretenses, is concerned for all the people, and is able to temper strictness with mercy, can turn leaden law into something that vaguely resembles golden justice.

Yet, it is equally observable that the Duke and Angelo are two aspects of the same figure of Authority.⁸⁶ True, there are two

1988), pp. 136-137.

⁸⁴ Halper (2001), p. 242: ("It seems believable, though not perhaps very creditable to the playwright. Shakespeare, who writes for the king, writes what pleases the king. He aligns himself with monarchy, divine right, royal prerogative, and against parliament, representative government, and law."). Halper goes on to indicate that Shakespeare was more likely very subversive with *Measure for Measure*, identifying himself with the "revolutionary left" and showing that the "rule of law "masked class rule through parliamentary sovereignty." Id. p. 252.

Anne Scott (1998), p. 92, comments that though it was unlikely, it was not beyond the bounds of possibility "he was seeking to improve himself by becoming a royal apologist."

⁸⁵ Kernan, (1995), p. 67. Michael Wood, *Shakespeare* (2003), p. 271, who is sympathetic to the "pronounced Catholic colour" of *Measure for Measure* observes that the play "had ridden the euphoria surrounding the arrival of the scholar king who would usher in a new religious age." Id. p. 286.

⁸⁶ Carolyn Brown, "The Homoeroticism of Duke Vincentio: 'Some feeling of the sport,'" 94 *Studies in Philology* 187, 188 (1997): "Angelo and the Duke, in fact, betray so many similarities that they have been viewed as doubles."

Jonathan Goossen, in "'Tis set down so in heaven, but not in earth': Reconsidering Political Theology in Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure*." *Christianity and Literature* 61.2 (2012): 209-31, p. 237, writes: "the play consistently demonstrates that the Friar-Duke's efforts to bring about the spiritual salvation of sinners are based on the same political theology as

sovereigns portrayed: the true sovereign, Duke Vincentio, and the acting sovereign, Angelo.⁸⁷ Both possess authority to dispense justice. Both can condemn or save. But it is the Duke who sets up Angelo to enforce the law; as Friar Thomas tells him, it is he who “unloose[d] this tied-up justice.” Angelo is the agent of the Duke and thus simply an extension of him. As Melvin Seiden puts it, “Angelo is the duke’s man; his job is the duke’s neglected job; his sexual, legal, and political principles are the duke’s—at least at the outset. . . there can be no evading the fact that the duke and his deputy are bonded by a set of shared moral assumptions.”⁸⁸

Angelo's attempts to exterminate them. While the Duke's intentions are certainly held up as more honorable than Angelo's, the success of both is distinctly ambiguous, indicating that the state's ministers can deal only crudely or approximately with the soul, no matter how compassionate their intent.”

⁸⁷ Ellison (2003), p. 71, divides the Duke into two persons: the sinister Friar whose actions and powers confirm the worst Protestant fears and the ecumenical Duke who, as James I, tries to steer a middle course. “In Shakespeare’s play, donning the Friar’s costume gives the Duke new power over men’s souls which, ironically, he had previously lacked. The Duke revels in the access to privileged information he can now claim through a spy network . . . Merely by using the Friar’s costume to spy and plot on those around him, the Duke was confirming the worst Protestant fears.” When he is in Friar’s garb, the Duke is a symbol of the Pope: “Friar Lodowick reminds the audience of the claimed supremacy of the Roman Catholic church and the Pope over the monarchical states of Europe.” Id. p. 72. Once out of the Friar’s habit, Ellison assures us that the Duke stands “between the extremes of Angelo and Isabella . . . “a gentleman of all temperance,” as Escalus says of him; “the Duke’s abandonment of the Friar’s costume and marriage to a candidate for the sisterhood is an unmistakably Reformation gesture. The Duke may have flirted with Roman Catholicism, as many Englishmen feared James I was doing, but this play reassures us of his solidly Protestant credentials.” Id. p. 77 Ellison concludes, “Like James I, the Duke’s goal is religious reconciliation and reunification, and in this ecumenical context, the betrothal of Angelo and Mariana which the Duke resurrects takes on a special meaning. I believe this marriage symbolizes the reunion of Puritan and Catholic which was one of James I’s major policy goals.” Id. p. 77.

⁸⁸ Seiden (1990), pp. 20-21.

The play seems to ask the king, “Would you prefer to be seen as Angelo, or as the Duke?” If James sees himself as Angelo, he will see a portrayal that he is harsh and unmerciful. He is un-Christian. If he sees himself in this light, he has been given a public reproof. If James sees himself as the Duke, he can gain a distance from the laws of his land being strictly enforced; he can see that the harsh justice of the magistrate is excessive and tainted by corruption. A king observing a play about a sovereign’s exercise of his God-given authority cannot avoid reflecting on his own exercise of power. King James himself could have set the scene, describing a king as an actor on a stage in his book on governance, *Basilikon Doron*: “A king is as one set on stage, whose smallest actions and gestures, all the people gazingly do behold.”⁸⁹

Thus framed, the soliloquy of the actor playing the Duke on the stage can be seen as an instruction, a cautionary sermon to a king on wise governance. James will have “gazingly beheld” a sovereign declaim:

He who the sword of heaven will bear
Should be as holy as severe;
Pattern in himself to know,
Grace to stand, and virtue go;
More nor less to others paying
Than by self-offenses weighing.
Shame to him whose cruel striking
Kills for faults of his own liking!
Twice treble shame on Angelo,
To weed my vice and let his grow!
Oh, what may man within him hide,

⁸⁹ *The Political Works of James I* (Charles Howard McIlwain, ed., 1918, 2002 reprint), p. 43.

Though angel on the outward side!
How may likeness made in crimes,
Making practice on the times,
To draw with idle spiders' strings
Most ponderous and substantial things! [Measure, 3.2]

What sovereign would not prefer to be the Duke rather than Angelo? In subsequent acts, the Duke applies craft against vice, to bring both justice and mercy to the parties of the drama. Wrongs are righted, the afflicted are comforted, the mighty are afflicted, and punishment is meted but with a more gentle hand than the law provides expressly. The play ends with four marriages or potential marriages. Left enigmatic is whether Isabella will accept the Duke's proposal, which has been made twice. The playwright seems to be asking, will the King and the Catholic recusants be joined in spouse-like union?

The Habsburg Duke and Isabella of Brussels

James could well have imagined himself sharing characteristics of the Duke, but he and his queen must have been struck by the close parallels between the Duke and Isabella and another couple very well known to both King James and Queen Anne, a couple whose magnificent, larger-than-life portraits then hung at the king's residence at Woodstock. Their title and name were identical to the players on the stage: Duke and Isabella. They, too, were Catholic and both were closely identified with Vienna, the resident city of the Habsburg dynasty, of which they were a part.

The play can be taken as a graceful portrayal of the couple who were the new rulers of the Habsburg Netherlands.⁹⁰ The playwright left no room for doubt as to the identity of the Duke when he begins Scene 2 of Act I with Lucio's comment: "If the Duke, with the other dukes, come not to composition with the King of Hungary, why then all the dukes fall upon the King." This statement accurately described a controversy among the Habsburgs at that time. The Archduke Albert, one of the younger sons of the Holy Roman emperor Maximilian II, was a Habsburg. Albert's brothers who were alive in 1604 were Rudolf II, Matthias and Maximilian. Rudolf was Holy Roman Emperor and King of Hungary in 1604 but was mentally unstable. In 1604 Rudolf's brothers were struggling to remove him from control of Hungary, and they succeeded in having the authority granted to Matthias in 1605.⁹¹ Thus the play was correct in assessing Habsburg political

⁹⁰ Largely ignoring the fact that the August 1604 Treaty had brought new relations with the representatives of the Habsburgs, some critics have said references to Vienna would have stirred fears in *Measure's* audience: "in 1604 Vienna would have been most strongly 'associated ... by [the original English] viewers with fears of Catholic invasion and repression, with the dread specter of Habsburg rule, [and with] a return to the Inquisition and to the bloody persecutions of Philip and Mary'." Andrew Barnaby & Joan Wry, "Authorized versions: *Measure for Measure* and the Politics of Biblical Translation," 51 *Renaissance Quarterly* 1225, 1250 (1998), quoting Leah Marcus, *Puzzling Shakespeare: Local Reading and Its Discontents* (1988), p. 164.

⁹¹ Bennett (1966), p. 10, attempts to identify the King of Hungary as Stephen Bocskai (István Bocskai) who was in rebellion against Rudolph II. She then suggests that an "attempt to rally the German Protestant archdukes against the emperor may be the basis of Lucio's reference to 'the Duke and the other dukes.'"

Ellison (2003), p. 65, too, makes this fundamental error in an attempt to show a sort of ecumenism and tolerance in Shakespeare: "The King of Hungary was a Protestant leader in open revolt against the Catholic Habsburgs who controlled the Holy Roman Empire: in a spectacular piece of *realpolitik*, the Hungarian Protestants had allied themselves with the Ottomans in an attempt to win freedom of worship (the Ottomans operated a system of religious

circumstances that if the Archduke Albert did not reach agreement with Rudolf (the King of Hungary) then all the dukes would fall upon the King. By setting the play in Vienna, Austria, by using the Archduchess's own Spanish name and by identifying others in the Archduke's family, the author left little question that he intended the play to identify the Archdukes to anyone aware of dynastic affairs. Critics have paid little attention to a following reference:

First Gentleman: Heaven grant us its peace, but not the King of Hungary's!

Second Gentleman: Amen.

Lucio: Thou conclud'st like the sanctimonious pirate that went to sea with the Ten Commandments but scraped one out of the table. [Measure, I.2].

The jesting Lucio goes on to identify the razed commandment as "Thou shalt not steal," but this was not the thrust of the First Gentleman's prayer: it sought peace, but not with regard to the King of Hungary. The inference it seems to invite is that the Protestants should defeat the (Catholic) King of Hungary. What Lucio has called attention to thus is the inconsistency of the First

toleration within their domains which was anathema to Roman Catholic thinking)."

However, Rudolf II remained King of Hungary throughout 1604 and the only other relevant archdukes were Rudolf's brothers Matthias, Maximilian and Albert, who were seeking in 1604 to overcome the mad rule of Rudolf. See Duerloo (2012), p. 252: "Fearing that his condition would develop into lasting madness, the Archdukes Matthias, Maximilian and Ferdinand met in Schottwien in November 1600 in order to prepare for all eventualities." . . . "During the following years further insults were piled upon even more injuries. In April 1604 Rudolf gave orders to prepare for the election of Matthias as his successor in Bohemia. The Diet of the kingdom subsequently met, but parted without deciding the succession." Id., pp. 257-58.

Gentleman making an exception to a prayer for peace to exclude Hungary. Lucio then rejects the First Gentleman's exception:

Lucio: Ay, why not? Grace is grace, despite of all controversy; as, for example, thou thyself art a wicked villain, despite of all grace. [Measure, I.2].

Has not Shakespeare in effect endorsed peace for the Catholic Habsburg Hungary? Just as the law had slipped in Measure's Vienna and the Duke wishes to restore order, so, too, did Albert and Isabella bring good order to the Habsburg Netherlands. Jonathan Israel has said "it seemed as if theirs was a model instance of a princely court restoring unity and harmony to a torn and divided society."⁹² On Albert's death, one of the Spanish king's council commented that his loss "has been a great one, for his rule was such that having found the three estates [the nobles, church and towns] of those provinces utterly corrupted he reduced them to proper order and obedience."⁹³

The absolute authority of Archduke Albert within his jurisdiction was essentially as depicted for the Duke and Angelo. As described by Hugo de Schepper and Geoffrey Parker, "in the Habsburg Netherlands the executive and the judiciary were one and the same."⁹⁴ They note that the Privy Council, which was only required to clothe the archdukes' commands in legal language, "could issue letters of abolitie (pardon), gratie ende remissie (which saved

⁹² Jonathan Israel, *Conflicts of Empires: Spain, the Low Countries and the Struggle for World Supremacy* (2003) p. 2.

⁹³ Id.

⁹⁴ Hugo de Schepper and Geoffrey Parker, "The Formation of Government Policy in the Catholic Netherlands under 'The Archdukes', 1596-1621," *The English Historical Review*, vol. 91, no. 359 (Apr., 1976), pp. 241-254, at p. 244.

sentenced murderers from execution), or rehabilitative (which reversed a previous sentence). All were freely and frequently used.”⁹⁵

Other details about Albert’s background and authority offer striking similarities to the Duke. Shakespeare suggests that the Duke is not pretending priestly status but instead that of a friar, “as ’twere a brother of your order.” When Lucio refers to the Duke in disguise, he calls him “Goodman Baldpate,” even though the friar seems to be hooded, as noted by editors of the play. Baldpate refers to the tonsure given upon taking of minor orders. As Albert had taken lower orders, he had been tonsured by the papal nuncio in May 1577. Three months later he became a subdeacon and the next year a deacon. Although his ordination was planned, he was never ordained a priest. However, he was elevated to status of “cardinal priest,” rather than cardinal-deacon. This made him priest of a named church, Santa Croce in Gerusalemme, one of the seven principal churches in Rome.⁹⁶

Although he could not hear confessions as an ordained priest, Albert had strong powers of the church and heard confessions in another sense. Albert was appointed by his uncle, King Philip II, as first viceroy of Portugal in 1583. Also in 1583, the Pope, Gregory XIII, made Albert papal legate for Portugal. He “was almost as much the alter ego of the pope as he was the alter-ego of the king.”⁹⁷ He was invested with a vast share of the spiritual jurisdiction of the papacy; he could *inter alia* “judge a wide range of cases, hand out or remit penalties, give dispensations and indulgences . . .”⁹⁸ Significantly, in 1586, the new Pope, Sixtus V, named Albert

⁹⁵ de Schepper and Parker (1976), p. 246.

⁹⁶ Duerloo (2012), p. 23.

⁹⁷ Id.

⁹⁸ Id.

inquisitor-general, giving him control of the Portuguese Inquisition. The portrayal of Duke Vincentio by Shakespeare has led one critic to describe him as a “grand inquisitor.”⁹⁹

Other markers identifying Isabella with the Archduchess Isabella are equally strong. Several critics have noticed that Isabella is a Spanish name. Gless comments “Isabella’s name . . . itself appears to suggest Catholicism, specifically Spanish Catholicism.”¹⁰⁰ It is not a name that one would normally associate with Vienna. The Isabella of the play is an especially pious woman who is visiting in a nunnery, but not yet a member. She is “in probation of a sisterhood,” among the votarists of the order of Saint Clare. To remove any doubt that the Franciscan order of Poor Clares is intended, the playwright gives the nun who accompanies Isabella the name Francisca. The nun’s name is never spoken in the play. Is the playwright’s choice of the order of the Clares a gracious allusion to the name of Isabella Clara Eugenia, the Archduchess? Or is it more? The playwright’s knowledge of Isabella, the Infanta, was apparently such that he knew she had ties to the Franciscan order of Poor Clares all her life. She had close contact with the order as a girl, in the Poor Clares’ convent of the Descalzas Reales – the Royal Convent of the Unshod at Madrid.¹⁰¹ This was a community for noble ladies,

⁹⁹ M. C. Bradbrook, “Authority, Truth, and Justice in *Measure for Measure*” in Bloom (1987), p. 9: “The Duke, who is as ruthlessly efficient in his means as he is benevolent in his ends, proceeds to apply the third degree with the skill of a grand inquisitor . . .”

¹⁰⁰ Gless (1979), p. 102. Halper (2001), p. 239 notes Isabella is the Spanish version of Elizabeth.

¹⁰¹ See N. de Poorter, *The Eucharist Series*, 2 vols. (London and Philadelphia, 1978), I: 23-26.

Ellison (2003), p. 69, is struck by Shakespeare’s “surprising level of knowledge about the Poor Clares.” But Ellison says Shakespeare uses this knowledge for “gentle mockery of the lengths to which some Catholics were prepared to go in pursuit of total retirement from the world.”

founded in 1556 by the Infanta Juana, youngest daughter of the Emperor Charles V. It was within the curtilage of the royal palace in which she grew up. The church of the Descalzas functioned more or less as a court chapel. The Infanta's mother, Isabella (Elizabeth) of Valois, was buried in the convent church. In the 1580s, two of Isabella's close relations became members of the community, Empress Maria, who was sister of Philip II, widow of the Emperor Maximilian II, and mother of Archduke Albert; and her daughter Margarita, sister of Archduke Albert, who in 1584 took her vows in the convent church, escorted to the altar by Philip and the Infanta Isabella. After her father's death in 1598, Isabella stayed eight months at the Descalzas, with Maria and Margarita, until her marriage to Albert was consummated at Valencia in April 1599. Thus, just as the play's Isabella is at a nunnery of Saint Clare in the period immediately before her anticipated marriage to the Duke, so, too, was Isabella in a nunnery of Saint Clare in the period just before her marriage to the Archduke.¹⁰²

As the marriage plans for Albert and Isabella were made in 1596, the Spanish Court (including Isabella) was in one of its periodic stays at Toledo. This was the seat for which Cardinal Albert had been appointed. Measure for Measure makes allusion to the shift of the Duke from religious leader in Spain to spouse of Isabella as they prepare for marriage in a way that would be perfectly applicable to Cardinal priest Albert and his intended spouse:

¹⁰² After her husband died in 1621, Isabella exchanged her courtly robes for the dress of a Poor Clare, although she continued as governor of the Netherlands. In October 1621, she became a member of the Franciscan Third Order, and after a year's novitiate she made her profession in 1622. She was also a generous patron of the Poor Clares at Ghent. Michael G. Brennan, ed., *The Travel Diary (1611-1612) of an English Catholic Sir Charles Somerset* (Leeds, 1993) 288; N. de Poorter, *The Eucharist Series*, 2 vols. (London and Philadelphia, 1978), I: 23-26.

Duke. Come hither, Isabel.
Your friar is now your prince. As I was then
Advertising and holy to your business,
Not changing heart with habit, I am still
Attorney'd at your service. [Measure, 5.1]

The Cardinal Archduke was given dispensation by the Pope to wed Isabella, so that the two could rule the Habsburg Netherlands. It would be accurate for Archduke Albert coming to his quasi-sovereignty of the Habsburg Netherlands to say of himself as the Duke of Measure for Measure says of himself:

Escalus. Of whence are you?
Duke. Not of this country, though my chance is now
To use it for my time. I am a brother
Of gracious order, late come from the See
In special business from his Holiness [the Pope]. [Measure,
3.2]

The “special business” from the Pope is doubly true for Archduke Albert, for he had remained the papal legate and inquisitor-general for Portugal after he left Lisbon in 1593.¹⁰³ Indeed, the phrase “to use it for my time” was especially apt for Albert, for the title he and Isabella received as sovereigns was conditional; if they had no children, the sovereignty reverted to Spain.

Albert shared certain other characteristics with Duke Vicentio. Just as the latter was shy of crowds, secretive, and a dissembler, so, too, was Archduke Albert. As described by the most recent historian of the Archdukes’ reign, “Albert spoke little and in a soft voice. His demeanour was grave and composed. In fact his studied appearance

¹⁰³ Duerloo (2012), p. 29.

hid a very shy man, who hated crowds and found it difficult not to blush in the presence of women.” The papal nuncio, Guido Cardinal Bentivoglio, observed: “he is a prince of impenetrable secrecy, and no less with his face than with his words.”¹⁰⁴ Bentivoglio compared him to Trajanus, the first Roman emperor born in Spain: “of all his good faculties, there is none in which the two are as alike as in dissimulation.”

The Duke’s resort to and relation with Friar Thomas has a close parallel to Archduke Albert and his confessor, the Dominican Fray Iñigo de Brizuela, an advisor of “*mucha discreción y prudencia*.”¹⁰⁵ Albert looked to him for spiritual and political guidance and sent him on diplomatic missions. The counterpart to Isabella’s nun, Francisca, was the Infanta Isabella’s confessor Padre Fray Andrés de Soto, of the order of Saint Francis.¹⁰⁶

King James and Relations with the Habsburg Netherlands

James, as King of Scotland, was acutely aware of the change in government in the Spanish Netherlands. Perhaps he saw it in the light of recent historians who have described it “a supreme gesture of conciliation” by King Philip II: “He decided that the Netherlands should be handed over, not to his son the future Philip III, but to his daughter Isabella, who was to marry her cousin Albert, archduke of Austria and (since 1596) the king's governor-

¹⁰⁴ Duerloo (2012), p. 32.

¹⁰⁵ Israel (2003), p. 5. Brizuela later became Bishop of Segovia and president of the Council of Flanders because of his knowledge of the personalities and affairs of the Spanish Netherlands.

¹⁰⁶ Cordula van Wyhe, “Court and Convent: The Infanta Isabella and Her Franciscan Confessor, Andrés de Soto,” *The Sixteenth Century Journal* (2004), 35: 411–45.

general in Brussels.”¹⁰⁷ James, still in Scotland, sent an envoy in November 1600 to congratulate the Archdukes upon their accession. Cordial relations followed between the two royal couples.¹⁰⁸ Queen Anne was known to be inwardly Catholic,¹⁰⁹ and she admired her pious sister sovereign, Isabella, in the Low Countries. Queen Anne had multiple reasons to identify closely with the Infanta Isabella. Both were daughters of European kings who had been disappointed initially by the birth of female offspring. For reasons of dynastic politics, both were transplanted from the land of their birth to a distant capital where their native tongue was foreign. Each had a younger brother who had recently become king; Isabella’s brother was Philip III (crowned king of Spain 1598), while Anne’s was Christian IV of Denmark (crowned 1596).

James was also aware that Isabella had a claim to the throne of England. Catholic exiles had put forth Isabella’s candidacy in The Conference on the Next Succession.¹¹⁰ The Spanish Council of Philip III toyed with the possibility of her installation in London and removal from Brussels. But all such possibilities were rejected as improbable by realists of the period. Thomas Wilson (one of the Cecil Secretariat), for example, ranked her twelfth among candidates, her number “may well be the last because it is the least

¹⁰⁷ de Schepper and Parker (1976), p. 241.

¹⁰⁸ A. J. Loomie, “Philip III and the Stuart Succession in England, 1600-1603,” *Revue Belge de Philologie et d’Histoire*, xliii (1965), 492-514, p. 507.

¹⁰⁹ A. J. Loomie, “King James I’s Catholic consort,” *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 34 (Aug. 1971), pp. 303–16.

¹¹⁰ The title page, bearing the date 1594, attributed authorship to “Robert Doleman”; the dedication was to the Earl of Essex. The authorship of the political tract has been hotly contested for centuries, see for example, Peter Holmes, “The Authorship and Early Reception of a Conference about the Next Succession to the Crown of England,” *Historical Journal*, vol. 23 (1980), pp. 415-29.

to be reckned of and furthest of[f].”¹¹¹ Most importantly, the Archdukes themselves had no ambition or desire to challenge James or to rule England. When James became king of England early in 1603, the Archdukes immediately showed their acceptance of his legitimacy. They sent Charles de Ligne, Count Arenberg, to London with letters of credence recognizing James’s lawful status. Without Spanish approval, Albert allowed English ships into the ports he controlled and released English prisoners of war. In response, James unilaterally declared a ceasefire between England and the Low Countries.¹¹²

Charles della Faille, Secretary to Count Arenberg at the Archdukes’ legation in London, was entrusted with a large parcel to carry from Brussels to England in September 1603.¹¹³ It held large portraits of Archduke Albert and Isabella. These were presented to Queen Anne by Count Arenberg at Woodstock Palace late in September 1603. The stunning portrait of Isabella is now in the English Royal Collection Trust and measures 7 feet tall by 4 feet wide (217.5 x 131.0 cm). When Queen Anne asked how she could reciprocate, Arenberg expressed hoped she would promote peace with the Habsburgs and help to diminish the aid that was being sent to the Dutch who were fighting against the Archdukes.¹¹⁴

Negotiations for a treaty among Spain, England and the Habsburg Netherlands began in May 1604. Meeting with representatives of the Archdukes, Queen Anne once again expressed her high regard for Isabella. She promised she would never cease wearing a miniature portrait of the Infanta Isabella she had received, “until

¹¹¹ Thomas Wilson, ‘The state of England anno dom. 1600’, ed. F. J. Fisher, *Camden miscellany*, XVI, CS, 3rd ser., 52 (1936), p. 5.

¹¹² Duerloo (2012), p. 166.

¹¹³ Duerloo (2012), pp. 143-145.

¹¹⁴ Duerloo (2012), p. 168.

she died, being convinced that Her Highness was wearing hers and that their friendship was as indissoluble as a knot and as strong as a rock.” And knowing that Isabella's livery was red, white and blue, England's queen continued that “the colours red and white are mine and for the love I bear to the Infanta I shall add blue.”¹¹⁵

At the time of the performance of *Measure for Measure*, the Court of the Archdukes in Brussels was one of the chief diplomatic centers of Europe. As a recent historian has noted, “one can not perhaps call the age of Albert and Isabella a ‘Golden Age’. But there can be no doubt that it was an era of glittering cultural achievement centred round a princely court which itself stood at the centre of the European stage.”¹¹⁶ But there were also dynastic reasons for the strong cordiality between the English royalty and the Habsburg royalty in Brussels. James and Anne were parents and were expecting another child as *Measure for Measure* was performed. They were thinking about to whom their children should be married. The sovereignty of the Archdukes would become complete when they bore children, as they sought to do. A report of May, 1603 was to the import that James was considering “to visit the Archduke and the Infanta there [Flanders] himself, to treat of a marriage between the Prince and the Princess which the Infanta now goes withal.”¹¹⁷ At the time of the negotiations for the Anglo-Spanish-Netherlands treaty of 1604 the king took the Archdukes' ambassador aside and, pointing to his three children, said he wished

¹¹⁵ Duerloo (2012), p. 174.

¹¹⁶ Jonathan (2003) p. 2.

¹¹⁷ Hatfield Papers, I6: 237; Duerloo (2012), p. 74. Isabella seems to have been pregnant at the time. The couple, however, never were able to have a child.

'with all his heart his cousins, your masters, to have just as many'. Queen Anne more directly asked if they still had no children.¹¹⁸

Before discussing the play's likely sponsors, the argument thus far can be summarized: *Measure for Measure* can coherently and persuasively be read as soliciting the King of England for merciful limitation of the harsh penalties experienced by English Catholic recusants, laity and priests. As well, the play pays gracious homage to a pious royal Catholic couple with whom close diplomatic and personal ties might produce more lenient treatment of English Catholics. The Somerset House Treaty had left unresolved multiple economic and diplomatic issues between England and the Habsburg Netherlands that would be negotiated in coming years, and the question of the English Catholics could be part of those discussions.

Management of James's Court Entertainment

Who was responsible for choosing *Measure for Measure* for a Court performance? In this instance, it must have been someone or several persons who were sympathetic to the Catholic cause. The explanation requires a more complete discussion than can be compassed here except to call attention to the persons at James's Court responsible for the plays and masques that constituted the principal Court entertainments, men and women who were well disposed towards the Roman Catholic recusants and the Archdukes.

Edmund Tilney remained Master of Revels under James, but George Buc was appointed to his position in the summer of 1603, to take effect upon Tilney's retirement, which occurred about 1610. According to some historians, Buc in the meantime assumed

¹¹⁸ Duerloo (2012), p. 76.

substantial responsibility for the office as deputy Master of Revels. Buc's brother Robert, described by Buc as his "beloved brother," was a seminarian, ordained in 1600, and later became a Jesuit. He may have been a priest in England when Buc was appointed to the Revels position in 1603. Tilney's nephew (or cousin), Charles Tilney, was executed in the Babington Plot (a Catholic plot to put Mary Queen of Scots on the English throne) in 1586. Charles Tilney was also a cousin of George Buc.

The Lord Chamberlain was Thomas Howard, Earl of Suffolk, whose wife, Katherine Howard, Countess of Suffolk, was a lively figure in Court entertainments, and a Catholic. She was also a secret agent, whose code name was Roldan, of the Spanish. Thomas Howard's father was the Duke of Norfolk, executed in 1572 as a traitor. One brother, Philip Howard, had died while in prison for his Catholicism. Thomas's sister-in-law, the Countess of Arundel, was a very strong Catholic whose servant Robert Spiller did much work for the Jesuits (especially for Fr. Henry Garnet) and was a courier for secret intelligences to the Archdukes' court. Thomas's other brother, Lord William Howard, was imprisoned for his religion in the 1580s and remained an ardent Catholic throughout his life. During the negotiations for the August 1604 peace treaty, the Spanish ambassador, Tassis, corresponded with Suffolk and his wife through Dr. Robert Taylor, an English lawyer who was a servant of the Archdukes and who taught at the Catholic university of Douay, where so many of the seminary priests had been trained.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁹ A. J. Loomie, *Toleration and Diplomacy* (Transactions of the American Philosophical Society, New Series, vol. 53, Part 6, September 1963), p. 54. Tassis wrote the King of Spain in June 1604 "Since my arrival here from the Court of His Majesty [Archduke Albert], Taylor has served me reliably on every occasion. Through his hands I exchange letters with the Countess [of

Thus, the Lord Chamberlain, his wife, Edmund Tilney, and George Buc, were all very sympathetic to the sufferings of the English Catholics and had experienced such sufferings in their own immediate families. Suffolk and his uncle, the Earl of Northampton (brother of the executed Duke of Norfolk), were advising King James to be lenient to the Catholics in the period immediately before the performance of *Measure for Measure*. In a meeting at Hampton Court on September 14, 1604, called by James to discuss a complaint by Catholics over the illegal imprisonment of recusants after they had paid their fines, Northampton opened the discussion by begging the King to follow his merciful inclination "and not to wash your hands in the blood of Catholics."¹²⁰ Suffolk joined his uncle and several others in advising moderation in the Catholic question.

Probably more important than the Revels officers and the Lord Chamberlain was the Fourth Earl of Worcester, Edward Somerset. Worcester had become Master of the Horse (April 1601) and a member of Elizabeth's Privy Council (June 1601) following the execution of the Earl of Essex. By December he was made joint commissioner of Essex's former office of earl marshal. Almost immediately, Worcester used his new positions aggressively to advance his acting company. Worcester for decades had sponsored an acting company, even before he inherited Worcester's Men from his father. For an extended period, the Privy Council had limited the number of acting companies in London to two. On March 31, 1602 the Privy Council allowed a third company to perform: Worcester's company after it had absorbed Oxford's men, subject to the restriction that the company perform only at the Boar's

Suffolk] and her husband [Lord Chamberlain Suffolk], and Northampton [uncle of Suffolk], for they trust him."

¹²⁰ Id., p. 38.

Head, an inn-yard theater that could hold a small audience.¹²¹ Worcester's Men sealed an agreement with the Elizabethan theatre entrepreneur Philip Henslowe in a meeting at the Mermaid Tavern on August 21, 1602.¹²² With or without leave from the Privy Council the deal apparently allowed Worcester's Men to use Henslowe's Rose Theater, a much larger, multi-level theater situated in Bankside, Southwark.

When he first became King of England, James continued Worcester as Master of the Horse and Privy Councilor, but also gave him a special role in approving and financing court masques and entertainments. As the historian of the Elizabethan stage and Shakespeare scholar, E. K. Chambers, explains: "the organization of the masks, in which Jacobean Court extravagance centred, was not entrusted to the Revels at all, but to some nominated officer, under the direct supervision of the Lord Chamberlain and the Master of the Horse, who received funds direct from the Treasury for any expenditure which did not fall within the provinces of the Wardrobe or the Office of Works."¹²³ In recounting some of the authorizations given by the Earls of Suffolk (Lord Chamberlain) and Worcester, Chambers observed: "These Lords, one as Lord Chamberlain, the other as Master of the Horse, seem regularly to have had the supervision of emptions and provisions for masks given at the royal expense."¹²⁴ Chambers seems to have inferred the special role of Suffolk and Worcester from the financial accounts of the masques rather than a formal appointment by the king. It is

¹²¹ Chambers (1923), 2: 225; 4: 334-35.

¹²² Henslowe's Diary (Greg, ed.) p. 180. Twelve pages of the printed Diary list all the advances and outlays of Henslowe to Worcester's company 17 August 1602 through 9 May 1603, pp. 179-190. See also Chambers (1923), 2: 220-240.

¹²³ Chambers (1923), 1: 100.

¹²⁴ Id. 1: 209.

no stretch of supposition to infer these two Earls were similarly responsible for management of court plays, Worcester more even than Suffolk. Worcester was Earl Marshal for Elizabeth's funeral ceremonies and was likewise responsible for King James's coronation. Worcester was the king's constant hunting companion and the natural choice for oversight of court plays as well as masques.

Worcester's substantial influence in the new king's entertainment activities is seen in actions that James took almost as soon as he arrived from Scotland in London on May 7, 1603. Although the staging of plays was halted with Queen Elizabeth's death, by May 9 James had granted Worcester's acting company a license to perform, Philip Henslowe recording in his Diary: "Begininge to playe agayne by the kynges licence & layd owt sense for my lord of worsters men."¹²⁵ This was again at the Rose Theater. Subsequent to this, Worcester arranged (with the king's authority) for his company to become Queen Anne's Company, placing it officially as the second Court company.¹²⁶ Worcester's son Thomas was Queen Anne's Master of the Horse and thus her frequent companion.

Worcester had arranged for his principal assistant, William Sterrell, to be appointed landlord of the palace housing the Office of Revels by King James on the same date that the Lord Chamberlain's Men (Shakespeare's company) were made the King's Men.¹²⁷ This was

¹²⁵ Henslowe's Diary (Greg, ed.) p. 190.

¹²⁶ A draft of the king's patent is reproduced in Chambers (1923), 2: 229-30.

¹²⁷ The King's licence of Lawrence Fletcher, William Shakespeare, seven other named associates, and others, to be in effect the King's Men or playing company is dated 19 May 1603: *Patent Rolls I James I, pars 2, membr. 4*; there are drafts of May 17 and 18; the lease to William Sterrell of the Palace of St. John of Jerusalem is undated but issued in May 1603. In the Signet docquet book, the entry for Sterrell's grant is just after the entries for grants to

where the Office of Revels had its seat and where year after year, the King's Men must have spent almost as much rehearsal and preparation time as they did at the Globe.¹²⁸ Sterrell was one of the "nominated officers" who can be identified who was under the direct supervision of Suffolk and Worcester. Not only was Sterrell Worcester's secretary and assistant for many years, he was also a long-time intelligencer for the Archdukes. His role in Court entertainments is shadowy but doubtless substantial.¹²⁹ For example, in 1610, Sterrell was made impresario or supervisor for the year's

William Broderick and John Norton that were dated May 17, 1603 and just before a grant to Robert Wrothe that was dated May 22. PRO Docquet pages for May 1603 (SO 2.2). In the Index for the Bills of Privy Signet, which are indexed alphabetically in chronological order, the entries for Southampton, Sterrell and Shakespeare are in that order and show their grants are for May 1603. W. P. W. Phillimore (ed.), *An Index to the Bills of Privy Signet* (London, 1890), p. 62. Southampton's pardon was granted May 16, 1603, and the Shakespeare license grant was May 17-19. Most likely, the grant to Sterrell was May 17, 1603. Gurr (1996), pp. 112-3, rightly remarks that "what happened in May 1603 was unique both in its timing among the great flurry of activities that attended James's accession, and in the history of company patronage. Who prompted the patent to be issued so early in James's frenetic round of decision-making and new appointments it is impossible to say. . . . the matter must have been surprisingly high on the agenda either of James himself or of one of his senior advisers at the English court." Gurr (1996), p. 113 n. 10, notes without assent or comment that J. Leeds Barroll has suggested for this role "young William Herbert, 3rd earl of Pembroke." The contiguity in the official records of the licence and the lease suggests that behind both was one and the same figure, vastly more senior and influential in James's court: Edward, Earl of Worcester.

¹²⁸ See also Thomas Heywood, *An Apology for Actors* ([1607] 1612) (dedicated to the Earl of Worcester), p. 40: "the palace of S. Johnes . . . hath belonged to . . . the Office of the Revels, where our court playes have been in late daies yearley rehearsed, perfected, and corrected before they come to the publicke view of the prince and the nobility." St John's ceased to be used for these purposes, and Sterrell's lease was terminated, in or about February 1608.

¹²⁹ Sterrell's career working with English Catholic recusants and Jesuits from 1581 through the reign of King James, including details of his associations with Court entertainments, is taken up in the author's forthcoming *Elizabethan Subversives: Plotters, Papists and Spies*.

Court masque, *Love Freed from Ignorance and Folly*. The performance was designed and timed to influence Anglo-French diplomacy at a crucial shift in European diplomatic relations following the assassination of King Henry IV of France. In recognition of his role, King James gave Sterrell a special grant, greater than the payment allocated the masque's author, Ben Jonson, or his collaborator, Inigo Jones.

Conclusion

Did Measure have the effects its sponsors hoped for? Did it move a king to reconsider his role in bearing the sword of heaven against the recusant Catholics? Perhaps. According to Ellison, "in early 1605 James did indeed make public his intention that the executions were to stop altogether."¹³⁰ Were ties between the Stuarts and the Habsburgs of Brussels strengthened? Unfortunately, we know that subsequent events set back the hopes of toleration for England's Catholic recusants, her Isabellas, for a century, and relations of England and the Habsburg Netherlands were soured. Less than a year after Measure's performance, the Gunpowder Plot was revealed, and it was linked to Englishmen sheltered at the Archdukes' Court. Catholic conspirators sought to blow up the royal family along with the entire Parliament. The plotters were given the form of justice they had sought for their persecutors, measure for measure.

Only a month after Measure's 1604 performance, the King's principal minister, Robert Cecil, was personally interrogating Worcester's confidante, William Sterrell, over his correspondence with the Archdukes' intelligencers. Sterrell's fellow correspondent with the Archdukes, Thomas Phelippes, was confined in prison for

¹³⁰ Ellison (2003), p. 55.

his role. Worcester himself faced a test of his loyalty only months later when an apparent Catholic uprising in Wales involving his own son-in-law led to Worcester's dispatch to the area to quell the revolt.

Relations between King James and the Archdukes became strained when the notorious figurehead of the Powder Treason, Guy Fawkes, named Hugh Owen, the English fugitive adviser to the Archdukes, as having guilt in the Plot. The Archdukes refused to extradite Owen or William Stanley and Fr. William Baldwin, or turn over Owens's correspondence with his associates in England. Robert Cecil unsuccessfully attempted to kidnap Owen to return to England.¹³¹ It would be another decade before negotiations would resolve differences between England and the Habsburg Netherlands that had been put over from the 1604 treaty. The aspirations of Measure for merciful treatment of English Catholics and warm relations with the Catholic sovereigns in the neighboring Spanish Netherlands were superseded by events outside the control of those sponsoring the play. Could these events be responsible for the dark period of the playwright – and the plays performed at Court – that followed the Gunpowder Plot? A treatment of this possibility must come later.

¹³¹ Francis Edwards, SJ, "The First Earl Of Salisbury's Pursuit of Hugh Owen," *Recusant History* 26 (2002) 2-38.

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