CHAPTER IV

"MEASURE"

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

(Act. V. Sc. I. 437-439)

Perhaps "Measure" is that play of Shakespeare, which next to "Hamlet", has given rise to extraordinary diversity of critical opinions and interpretations. Since the days of Dr. Johnson up to the eighties of the present century, the play has attracted the attention of eminent critics. And it appears that it has evoked mutually contradictory responses from the critics and the readers and there are many aspects of the play which are, still, the subject of hot controversy.

Looking at the various trends in criticism we may roughly infer that "Measure" is a great work of art though perhaps, not a perfect piece of dramatic craftsmanship, even if it is a product of Shakespeare's greatest creative period.
The overall reaction of the critics to the play seems to be ambivalent and it is interesting to note some famous critical comments made by some distinguishing scholar-critics of Shakespearean criticism.

To Dr. Johnson, "Of this play the light or the comic part is very natural and pleasing but the grave scenes if a few passage be excepted have more labour than elegance". Coleridge declared that "Measure" is the most painful of Shakespeare's works but to Hazlitt "this play is full of genius as it is full of wisdom". Swinburne called it a "great indefinable poem", while Walter Pater claimed that the play is an epitome of Shakespeare's moral judgements. Ulrici, another nineteenth century critic, discovered in "Measure" an inexhaustible source of joy in its Christian message; we are all sinners, children of wrath and in need of mercy.

---

2 Ibid., p. 45 (Original Source "The Table Talk" ed. T. Ashe 1888).
3 Ibid., p. 47 (Original Source "Characters of Shakespeare's Plays", 1817).
The twentieth century critical history of the play seems to be vexed and baffling but diverse. F.S. Boas and many others called "Troilus" "All's Well" and "Measure" problem plays, a term suggested by the new drama of Ibsen. To E.K. Chambers those plays were the utterances of a puzzled and disturbed spirit, full of questioning, sceptical of its own ideals.⁷ John Dover Wilson saw these plays as Shakespeare's dramatic expression of self-laceration, weariness and disgust⁸ and declared that when Shakespeare wrote "Measure" he quite obviously believed in nothing, he was as cynical as Iago as disillusioned as Macbeth.⁹ Against this autobiographical approach we find some historical critics who seem to have discovered in these plays the spiritual exhaustion of the Jacobean age, the dread of death and the horror of life and the touch of the lowest depths of Jacobean negation.¹⁰ C.J. Sisson did not find any "sorrow" of Shakespeare in these plays,¹¹ and R.W. Chambers found a

---

⁷ Ibid., (Original source - "The Red Letter Shakespeare" Introduction.


⁹ Quoted by William B. Toole in his "Shakespeare's Problem Plays" p. 159.

¹⁰ Una Ellis Fermor in "Jacobean Drama" (1936, pp. 259-260) has expressed the view that in "Measure" Shakespeare has touched the lowest depth of Jacobean negation.

¹¹ "The Mythical Sorrows of Shakespeare" British Academy Lecture 1934-35.
spirit of exalted Christianity in place of cynicism and world-weariness. G. Wilson Knight declared that the ethical standards of the Gospels are rooted in the thoughts of "Measure". And since the publication of R.W. Chambers and G. Wilson Knight's essay the Christian interpretation had gained momentum. Among the notable commentators in this line seem to be Roy Battenhouse and their followers, William B. Toole and R.G. Hunter. Following Nevill Coghill, William B. Toole seems to have argued that in form and meaning "Measure" was written in the Christian spirit of Dante's "Divine Comedy". According to R.G. Hunter "Measure" is strongly reminiscent of medieval Christian allegory though primarily a secular work.

But there is a large number of distinguished critics who strongly affirm that Shakespeare's concern was the portraiture of human nature and not to exalt the theological doctrines of Christianity. Clifford Leech has asserted that the Christian colouring it not more than intermittent, it wells up from Shakespeare's unconscious inheritance and it

13 "Shakespeare's Problem Plays", p. 35.
does not determine the play's characteristic effect.\textsuperscript{15} E.M.W. Tillyard also wrote the following:

"The simple and ineluctable fact is that the tone in the first half of the play is frankly and acutely human and quite hostile to the tone of allegory or symbol. And, however, much the tone changes in the second half, nothing in the world can make an allegorical interpretation poetically valid throughout".\textsuperscript{16} J.W. Lever's statement also seems to be quite convincing:

"Those who see the play as a religious fable or divine allegory are often blind to the complexities of the leading characters and the obstinate challenge to the doctrinal rigidity presented by the common erring humanity in the comic scenes. The Duke in dominating the action resorts to shifts and stratagems more in keeping with the expected behaviour of a seventeenth century ruler than of the Incarnate Lord".\textsuperscript{17}

And there are other critics who hold that "Measure"
is a great artistic success while there are others who

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{15} "The Meaning of 'Measure for Measure' 1950 (Case Book, Macmillan 1971, p. 155) (Original source — Shakespeare Survey III).
\item \textsuperscript{16} "Realism and Folklore" (Case Book, Macmillan 1971, p. 172) (Original source — Shakespeare's Problem Plays '1950).
\item \textsuperscript{17} Introduction to the Arden Edition 1965, (Methuen Paperback, 1971, p. iviii).
\end{itemize}
think that it is an artistic failure. The conflicting comments made by such great critics as L.C. Knights and F.R. Leavis are revealing and quite interesting. Knights begins his famous essay on the play by saying that "it is probably true to say that it is that play of Shakespeare which has caused most readers the greatest sense of strain and mental discomfort" and ends his essay by saying that "in this play the process of clarification is incomplete and one finds not paradox but genuine ambiguity". But to Leavis, "it is one of the very greatest of the plays and most consummate and convincing of Shakespeare's achievements". E.C. Pettet has expressed the following opinion:

"The cleavage between Shakespeare's mind and art which is a flaw running through all the three of the plays under present review stands out conspicuously in "Measure for Measure", a work which while it could only have been written by a great poet certainly falls short of great poetry and great drama".

Moreover, some critics tend to give paradoxical comments on the play. Philip Edwards is of the opinion

---


19 "The Greatness of 'Measure for Measure'" 1942 (Scrutiny x, p. 234).

that "Measure" contains some of the greatest things that Shakespeare ever did, yet it creaks horribly.²¹ And according to John W. Lever "Measure" might be described as a flawed masterpiece.²² And all these mutually contradictory opinions given by such distinguished critics seem to contain some truths which may be proved by some good textual evidence, and they may help us a great deal to understand such a complex play which evokes ambivalent responses and thereby puzzles and baffles the commentators.

We may, however, say that like the two other "problem comedies", "Measure" is a fine illustration of Shakespeare's ambivalent attitude towards the making of human nature, of his fondness of doing two things at once — especially in the intermingling of mutually contradictory genres, and of his love of putting forward opposite points of view in relation to a particular thing, idea or a human situation which well-accorded with the intellectual temper of the age. So a close observation of the important characters of the play seems to reveal the fact that "there is a soul of goodness in things evil" and a dram of ill in the best." And our imaginative response to them is meant to be not complete sympathy and admiration nor it is complete hatred and disgust.


Angelo, as we all know, is one of the most controversial characters of Shakespeare and in depicting his character, Shakespeare seems to have displayed his great creative skill and his deep knowledge of human nature. The majority of the eighteenth and nineteenth century critics seem to have expressed the view that in him Shakespeare has portrayed a hardened villain, and they find their sense of justice "buffeted" and "outraged" in Angelo's pardon and subsequent reunion with Mariana. But there are also critics who seem to claim that Angelo is a "humanum genus figure", a man with whom we must identify ourselves, a man who like us falls a victim to sexual temptation. Both of these contradictory views seem to contain some truth in them. Looking at Angelo's cruelty and inhumanity, his rigorous adherence to the letter of the law, his Pharisaical pride, his cynicism and calculated cunningness, his treachery and humorlessness, one is likely to support Una Ellis Fermor's view that Shakespeare has touched the lowest depths of Jacobean negation. On the other hand, since Shakespeare evokes sympathy for Angelo through the great soliloquies and his repentance at the end one may feel that Shakespeare is still an idealistic writer of the Renaissance. In fact, there are many dramatic occasions where it is evident that Shakespeare has painted Angelo in blackest colours but there

23 These bad traits of Angelo have already been pointed out by Ernest Schanzer.
are also some important dramatic moments where the dramatist has painted him in bright colours. This may be shown by quoting some of the speeches and opinions made by the sensible characters of the play in respect of Angelo.

In the opening scene, which is usually an important index for revelation of character in Shakespeare's plays, we may perceive something about the dramatist's technique as to how he is going to portray Angelo's character. On the appointment of Angelo as his deputy Escalus says to the Duke:

If any in Vienna be of worth
To undergo such an ample grace and honour
It is Lord Angelo. 24


And as soon as Angelo enters the stage, the Duke also says:

Angelo:
There is a character in thy life
That to the observer doth thy history
Fully unfold. Thyself and thy belongings
Are not thine own proper as to waste
Thyself upon thy virtues, they on thee.


24 All textual quotations are taken from the Arden Edition (Methuen 1971).
Here we may note that Escalus's statement is sincere even if we take the Duke's statement as equivocal considering his shifts and stratagems in the second half of the play. Another point is that Angelo himself, at first, is unwilling to take the commission:

Now, good my lord,
Let there be more test made of my metal,
Before so noble, and so great a figure
Be stamped on it.

(Act.I.Sc.I.48-51)

Here Angelo seems to have spoken sincerely and had he been an absolute villain he would have accepted the commission promptly and gladly. He consents to the Duke's proposal only when the Duke says that he has proceeded to Angelo with a "leavened and prepared choice". And this gives a reasonable ground to see that the action of the play has put Angelo on trial or Angelo is a victim of the Duke's experiment.  

In the second scene of the first act, we are given the first glimpse of Angelo's cruelty. When Lucio asks Claudio about the circumstances under which he is put in

---

25 These points have been made by H.B. Charlton 1938 "(Shakespearean Comedy," Methuen, 1955, p. 252) and F.R. Leavis ("Measure for Measure" Scrutiny, Vol. X (1941-42) p. 247)
restraint, Claudio tells him that "he is a victim of too much liberty" and also a victim of strict law enforced by the new Deputy who has put the "drowsy and neglected act freshly on him for a name". Angelo's cruelty seems to fall into sharper focus when Lucio says that he would be sorry for Claudio if the latter's life would be thus "foolishly lost at a game of tick-tack" (Act. I. Sc. ii. 180-181). In the next scene, the Duke tells Friar Thomas that Angelo is a "man of stricture and firm abstinence" who would be the fittest person to curb the lawlessness and sexual immorality in Vienna. But he expresses some doubt in Angelo's sincerity and integrity at the end of the scene:

Lord Angelo is precise;
Stands at a guard with Envy; scarce confesses
That his blood flows; or that his appetite
Is more to bread than stone. Hence shall we see
If power change purpose, what our seemers be.

(Act. I. Sc. iii. 50-54)

Hence we may be justified in assuming that Angelo has been portrayed both in bright and dark colours during the opening scenes. The Duke expresses the view that Angelo is virtuous and his virtues should be allowed to "go forth" for the benefit of others. But his cruelty and seeming virtue are also hinted by Lucio and the Duke.
There is sufficient evidence in the play to show that Shakespeare has painted Angelo in darkest colours and our sympathy and affection towards him seem to come to a freezing point on many occasions. In the fourth scene of the first act, Angelo's unnaturalness and his strict adherence to the letter of the law are made clear by Lucio when he tells Isabella the circumstances under which Claudio is arrested:

Upon his place,
And with full line of authority
Governs Lord Angelo; a man whose blood
Is very snow-broth; one who never feels
The wanton stings and motions of the sense;
But doth rebate and blunt his natural edge
With profits of the mind, study and fast.
He to give fear to use and liberty
Which have for long run by the hideous law
As mice by lions, hath picked out an act
Under whose heavy sense your brother's life
Falls into forfeit; he arrests him on it,
And fellows close the rigour of the statute
To make him an example.

(Act. I. Sc.iv. 55-68)

We can also discern Angelo's somewhat inhuman and rigorous legalism in the opening scene of the second act.
Ang. We must not make a scarecrow of the law
    Setting it up to fear the birds of prey,
    And let it keep one shape till custom make it
    Their perch, and not their terror.

Esc. Ay, but yet
    Let us be keen, and rather cut a little,
    Than fall, and bruise to death.

(Act. II. Sc. i. 1-7)

And then we see that Escalus especially implores Angelo to
deal with Claudio’s offence leniently because Angelo might
have committed the same offence “had time cohered with place,
and place with wishing”. Angelo does not seem to be
interested in the humanitarian suggestion of Escalus but only
proudly asserts:

    When I that censure him do so offend,
    Let mine own judgment pattern out my death,
    And nothing come in partial. Sir, he must die.

(Act. II. Sc. i. 29-31)

We also see that in the confused and complicated affairs of
Elbow, Pompey, Froth and Mistress Overdone, Escalus shows
his "infinite patience and tolerance" but Angelo only shows
impatience, intolerance and cruelty. He gives the entire
responsibility of judging the case to Escalus but he hopes
that Escalus would "find good cause to whip them" (Act. II, Sc. 1. 133-136).

Angelo's cruelty and judicial tyranny are again focussed in the following conversation between him and Provost:

Ang. Now what is the matter, Provost?

Pro. Is it your will Claudio should die tomorrow?

Ang. Did I not tell you thee yea?

Hadst thou not order?

Why dost thou ask again?

Prov. Lest I might be too rash.

Under your good correction, I have seen

When after execution, judgement hath

Repented over his doom.

Ang. Go to; let that be mine;

Do you your office, or give up your place,

And you shall be spared.

(Act. II. Sc. ii. 6-13)

His attitude towards groaning Juliet also seems to be unreasonably harsh and cruel as he tells Provost:

See you the fornicatress be removed;

Let her have the needful, but not lavish means

There shall be order for it.

(Act. II. Sc. ii. 24-26)
In this crucial scene, where Shakespeare has displayed his superb dramatic skill, Angelo is emphatically shown as a "fanatical worshipper of the letter of the law". In reply to Isabella's suggestion that faults should be condemned and not her brother, Angelo categorically tells that a judge's duty is to condemn the faults as well as to punish those who commit them. Then Isabella entreats Angelo to feel her remorse at the prospect of her dear brother's death and says that Angelo might have erred in the similar circumstances, and if in that case she were the judge she would have been merciful towards him. But Angelo throws cold water on such pleadings and remains adamant:

Your brother is the forfeit of the law,  
And you but waste your words.

(Act. II. Sc. ii. 71-72)

After the rejection of her humanitarian appeals, Isabella ultimately makes her most sublime and impassioned speech on the grounds of Christian mercy to move the heart of Angelo:

Alas, alas!  
Why all the souls that were, were forfeit once,  
And he that might the vantage best have took  
Found out the remedy. How would you be  
If He, which is the top of judgement, should  
But judge you as you are? O, think on that,
And mercy then will breathe within your lips
Like a man new made.

(Act. II. Sc. ii. 73-79)

But Angelo turns a deaf ear to such an eloquent and impassioned appeal by saying:

Be you content, fair maid,
It is the law, not I condemn your brother;
Were he my kinsman, brother, or my son
It should be thus with him. He must die tomorrow.

(Act. II. Sc. ii. 79-83)

Though Angelo is a "demigod authority" and he has the divine right to judge and condemn, and though his condemnation of Claudio is legal on the ground of fornication, still we are unlikely to feel sympathy and admiration towards him in these situations. W.W. Lawrence has made the point clear:

"Rigorous enforcement of the law is indeed no crime, but an audience would hardly see virtue in a man who insisted on sending a youth to death for a venial offence in the face of moving appeals for mercy uttered by a beautiful heroine." 26 Elizabeth Marie Pope has also expressed almost the same view:

"His treatment of Claudio is from the start inexcusable by the strict standard of the Renaissance. For clemency in this particular case would certainly have had a good foundation upon reason and equity: Claudio and Juliet are betrothed; they fully intend to marry, they are penitent; and the law was drowsy and neglected when they broke it. Furthermore, Claudio comes of a good family and his fault is, after all, very natural and Shakespeare very wisely leaves these points to be made by Escalus and Provost, both kind and sensible men who represent the normal point of view and whose support of Claudio is therefore significant." 27

In a way it is true that in Angelo, Shakespeare has portrayed a bad ruler of the Renaissance who had nothing in his mouth but "the law", "the law", "the law" and "justice", in the meantime forgetting that justice always shakes hands with mercy. 28 He is indeed a bad judge who does not remember mercy in cases of life and death and who does not cast a severe eye upon the example and merciful eye upon the offenders and who would only enquire into the fact but not the circumstances of the case. 29 On the whole, it may be

28 Ibid.
said that Angelo cannot enlist the sympathy and affection of any audience or reader by his flat refusal to show mercy to a young man whose offence is quite natural and therefore venial. But it is important to note that there seems to be a duality embodied in the complex situation of Claudio. When Angelo imposes the death penalty upon him for fornication in spite of his pre-contract, Claudio seems to be a victim of judicial tyranny which is made clear by his own statement that he has been condemned for a "name". On the other hand, we see that Claudio himself confesses his fault to Lucio and says that his "restraint" comes from "too much liberty" and "immoderate use" (Act.I.Sc.ii 117-120). We also know that even Isabella initially shares Angelo's attitude:

There is a vice that most I do abhor,  
And most desire should meet the blow of justice;  
For which I would not plead, but that I must;  
For which I must not plead, but that I am  
At war betwixt will and will not.  

(Act. II. Sc. ii. 29-33)

In this connection it is worth-while to remember the famous Knight-Leavis controversy. L.C. Knight holds that Shakespeare has an uncertainty of attitude in handling Claudio. F.R. Leavis holds that Claudio's self-disgust and self-condemnation are quite natural because he feels himself guilty in the eye of law as well as in his own eyes (Scrutiny X. 1942).
And there are many more dramatic moments when Angelo seems to arouse our indignation and strong disapproval. When Angelo wants to exploit Isabella sexually by using the privileges of his office he appears to be a typical corrupt magistrate\(^{31}\) and then we are unlikely to be very sympathetic towards him. The following conversation between Angelo and Isabella seems to depict Angelo as a corrupt magistrate who wants to exploit a woman who is in extreme need of help from him. It also seems to arouse our feeling of hatred towards Angelo:

Isab. I know your virtue hath a licence in it,
Which seems a little fouler than it is
To pluck on others.

Ang. Believe me, on mine honour,
My words express my purpose.

Isab. Ha? Little honour, to be much believed,
And most pernicious purpose;! Seeming seeming!
I will proclaim thee, Angelo, look for it.
Sign me a present pardon for my brother,
Or with an outstretched throat I will tell the world aloud
What man thou art.

\(^{31}\) That Angelo may be looked upon a corrupt magistrate of popular stories is suggested by some critics especially by J.W. Lever in his introduction to the Arden Edition 1965. Arden Paperback 1971, p. xxxvi.
Ang. Who will believe thee Isabel?
My unsoiled name, the austereness of my life,
My vouch against you, and my place in the state
Will so your acquisition overweigh
That you shall stifle in your own report
And smell of calumny.

(Act. II. Sc. iv.143-158)

It is also difficult for us to be sympathetic towards Angelo when we hear of his cruelty and perfidy towards Mariana. We are told by the Duke that Angelo was affianced to Mariana with an oath, and when her marriage dowry was lost at sea, Angelo had repudiated her. The following conversation between the Duke and Isabella on Angelo-Mariana affair seems to blacken Angelo's image considerably but creates extra sympathy towards Mariana:

Isab. Can this be so? Did Angelo so leave her?

Duke Left her in her tears, and dried not one of them with his comfort; swallowed his vows whole, pretending in her discoveries of dishonour: in few bestowed her on her own lamentation which she wears for his sake; and he, a marble to her tears is washed with them, but relents not.

Isab. What a merit were in death to take this poor maid from the world! What corruption in this life,
that it will let this man live. But how out of this can she avail?

(Act. III. Sc. 1. 224-234)

Of course, Angelo may repudiate Mariana if the plot of the play requires it, but his "pretended discoveries of dishonour" in her seems to be unforgivable. Because we see that Angelo repeats this false charge against gentle and innocent Mariana in the final scene when the Duke asks him whether he knows Mariana:

Angelo. My lord, I must confess I know this woman;
And five years since there was some speech of marriage
Betwixt myself and her; which was broke off,
Partly for that her promised proportions
Come short of composition; but in chief
For that her reputation was disvalued
In levity: since which time of five years
I never spoke with her, saw her, nor heard from her,
Upon my faith and honour.

(Act. V. Sc. 1. 215-223)

Again, we find in Angelo a "lecherous", "treacherous" and bloody villain when we see him ordering Claudio's immediate execution after the price of his safety has been exacted. He appears to be a promise-breaker and a virgin-violator whom nobody likes.
In the first part of the final scene, we see that Angelo leaves no stone unturned to deny the rightful accusations levelled against him. When his full villainy is exposed, Escalus, a noble and sensible man, expresses his sorrow and surprise;

I am sorry one so learned and so wise
As you, Lord Angelo, have still appeared,
Should sleep so grossly, both in the heat of blood
And lacked tempered judgment afterward.

(Act. V. sc. i. 467-471)

In a way, it may be argued with good logic that Shakespeare has done much to portray Angelo in dark colours and the critics seem to be justified when they condemn Angelo in both harsh and mild terms. It is very difficult to disapprove the following statement made by E.M. Pope:

"Although he has not actually succeeded in doing the worst he intended to do, there is still a heavy count against him: attempted seduction, abuse of authority, deception of the prince, and treachery of meanest kind."

Ernest Schanzer has drawn our attention to the fact that sometimes in the play Angelo has been referred to

---

as a "false coin", "an angel on the outward side" and a "devil" and has also made the following statement:

"That Angelo is a compendium of the human qualities which Shakespeare most disliked seems to me undeniable. Cruelty, ingratitude, perfidy, judicial tyranny, calculated cunningness, Pharisaism, humourlessness — the list could be easily prolonged".33

As we have discussed in most of the preceding paragraphs, Angelo appears to be an absolutely unsympathetic portrait because he has regarded law as a machine for punishing all proven offenders, and he has flatly refused to temper justice with mercy, and has used the privilege of his office for gratification of sexual lust and then after gratification with his desired lady (which he thought to be Isabella and not Mariana) he has treacherously ordered the immediate execution of Claudio and ultimately has taken resort to pretended discoveries of dishonour in Mariana in order to defend him when put in tight corner. But, we may be justified in thinking that this is only one facet of Angelo's double image.

If Shakespeare has done enough to make Angelo a detestable character on the one hand, he also seems to have

done a lot to explain his behaviour as, after all, not quite monstrous. For many of Angelo's characteristic traits such as his ingratitude, cruelty, lack of self-knowledge, strict adherence to the letter of the law, Shakespeare seemed to have found suggestion in his sources. But he seems to have made a significant departure from his source to make some of Angelo's activities credible and natural. It has already been noted that Angelo's condemnation of Claudio is based on legalistic grounds because the latter is guilty of fornication in the eye of contemporary law, however, contradictory it may be, and it is probable that, at least, a small section of Jacobean audience might have approved Angelo's insistence on the strict enforcement of the law especially in the context of unbridled lust and corruption that prevailed in the Venetian society, though a frail young man like Claudio falls a first victim to such a situation. Moreover, it is important to note that there are some outstanding critics who have suggested that Angelo is sketchily portrayed as a tragic character and if it is so, we are likely to feel some sympathy towards him, though we are unlikely to identify ourselves with him in the same way as we

---


35 Ibid., p. 75. Ernest Schanzer has assured us that the contemporary laws relating to marriage were complex and contradictory.

36 Ibid., p. 93.
do with Hamlet, Othello or Macbeth.\footnote{R.A. Foakes, "The Dark Comedies to the Last Plays." Foakes holds that Shakespeare is distancing his audience from the characters and preventing identification with them in a way an audience identifies with Hamlet.}

Arthur Quiller Couch, referring to Angelo's soliloquies, says that Angelo may be regarded as an understudy to King Claudius of 'Hamlet.\footnote{Introduction to the Cambridge Edition, 1922 (Paperback, 1969, p. xii).} H.B. Charlton is of the opinion that though Angelo plays the villain's part, he is not primarily shaped for evil-doing and that he does not seek villainy; it overtakes and conquers him, and that the way of Angelo's fall almost seems to be a conspiracy of nature against his calculated probity.\footnote{"Shakespearean Comedy" 1938 (Methuen 1955, edition, pp. 249-251).} According to E.C. Pettet at times Angelo's unbridled lust is impressive and convincing, a disruptive elemental force that threatened to destroy Angelo himself and spread misery and suffering around him, and at least in the first part of the play Angelo is a convincing character in whom Shakespeare has represented a subtle, complicated working of lust.\footnote{"Shakespeare and the Romance Tradition" 1949 (Methuen, 1970, pp. 157-158).} On the whole, one may be justified in saying that Shakespeare has
Created some measure of sympathy towards Angelo in a superb and subtle manner especially by putting into his mouth the three moving soliloquies saturated with grand poetry written with a tone of high seriousness. In these soliloquies Angelo appears to us a Weak-willed and fallible mortal who suffers and struggles against an overwhelming sexual temptation. He is greatly shocked and surprised at the sudden explosion of a devastating lust towards a saintly and a snow-pure maiden like Isabella. He is also disillusioned with his own self.\footnote{Ernest Schanzer, "The Problem Plays of Shakespeare" (London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1963, p. 93).}

A character who utters such moving words as the following cannot be wholly regarded as a strong and fastened villain:

\begin{quote}
O fie, fie, fie!
What dost thou, or what art thou, Angelo?
Dost thou desire her foully for these things
That make her good? O, let her brother live
Thieves for their robbery have authority
When judges steal themselves. What, do I love her,
That I desire to hear her speak again?
And feast upon her eyes? What is it I dream on?
O cunning enemy, that, to catch a saint
With saints dost bait they hook!
\end{quote}

(Act. II. Sc. ii. 172-181)
Again, we are unlikely to castigate a man who frankly confesses his own devilish intention and expresses his helplessness at the sudden explosion of uncontrollable sexual passion:

When I would pray and think, I think and pray
To several subjects: Heaven hath my empty words
Whilst my invention, hearing not my tongue,
Anchors on Isabel: Heaven in my mouth
As if I did but only chew his name,
And in my heart the strong and swelling evil
Of my conception.

Blood, thou art blood
Let us write good angel on the devil's horn
It is not the devil's crest.

(Act. II. Sc. iv.1-7,15-18)

Furthermore, it is highly significant to note that after hitting upon the plan of enjoying Isabella sexually (who would actually be Mariana due to the bedtrick) and ordering the instantaneous death of Claudio for his future safety, Angelo seems to be much more of a troubled conscience and tormented soul than before which finds clear expression in his last soliloquy:
This deed unshapes me quite, makes me unpregnant
And dull to all proceedings. A deflowered maid;
And by an eminent body, that enforced
The law against it! But that her tender shame
Will not proclaim against her maiden loss,
How might she tongue me! yet reason dares her no,
For my authority bears so credent bulk
That no particular scandal once can touch,
But confounds the breather.

... .

Alack, when once our grace we have forget,
Nothing goes right; we would, and we would not.

(Act. IV. Sc. iv.18-26, 31-32)

Had he been a remorseless and hardened villain, we might have found him a highly satisfied and self-complacent man under the above circumstances.

Here, in this connection, it is worthwhile to remember that Shakespeare's great characters reveal themselves and they speak sincerely and truly in their soliloquies. Such characters seem to be mainly tragic as Hamlet, Othello, Lear and Macbeth. In the same way one should not try to ignore the soliloquies of Angelo in "Measure" and thereby say that Angelo is an incarnation of pure evil, a sketch rather than
a developed character. In fact, it appears that it would be an imperfect estimate of Angelo's character if we only dwell on his evil impulses and ignoble actions. As Ernest Schanzer has made the point clear:

"But, in spite of all this, we feel a measure of sympathy towards him even before his repentance at the end and it seems largely due to the way, in which, in his three soliloquies we are allowed to see him suffer and struggle so that we feel towards him more as we do towards Macbeth and Claudius than towards Iago and Edmund".

And it may be a reasonable conjecture that Angelo's soliloquies spoken by the gifted actors of the Elizabethan stage would have evoked a sympathetic response from the contemporary audience.

It may also be stated here that in more than one occasions Angelo has been said to be a virtuous, learned and wise man by the other characters of the play. In the opening scene the Duke says that Angelo has virtues and wishes that his virtues should go for the good of others which we have already mentioned. The Duke also thinks that Angelo may be a

---


Knights holds that Angelo is a sketch rather than a developed character but admits that Angelo's character is the success of the play.

fit person to enforce laws strictly on Vienna where people
had made a "scarecrow of the law" and we see that the Duke
has been readily supported by Escalus. "Angelo is a man
of stricture and firm abstinence" as the Duke calls him,
and Angelo's pride in his gravity seems to have some justifi-
cation because he is not a brothel-goer like Lucio.
Lucio also says that Angelo is a man:

Who never feels
The wanton stings and motions of the sense;
But doth rebate and blunt his natural edge
With profits of the mind, study and fast.

(Act. I. sc. iv. 58-61)

Escalus has also called him a "learned" and "wise" man. As
in "Troilus" Shakespeare has taken enough care to make
Cressida appear before us as a victim of onslaught of Time,
so in "Measure" he seems to have been very much interested
to create such an impression that in one way Angelo is a
frail creature falling a victim to sudden outburst of sexual
passion. And he seems to have done this fairly well with
the help of the soliloquies.

In the final scene also, attempts have been made so
that Angelo may appear before us both as a good and a bad
fellow, a lovable and a hateful creature. In the first part
of the scene it is true that the Duke seems to take resort
to so many lies and tricks in order to expose the full
villainy of Angelo. But it is not shown that Angelo is totally incapable of any good impulse. It may be suggested that when we look at Angelo through the eyes of Mariana our antipathy towards him may be considerably minimised. When the Duke asks Angelo whether he knows Mariana, Angelo brings the charge of levity against her. Then the Duke expresses his strong resolve to punish Angelo:

For his possessions,
Although by confiscation they are ours,
We do instate and widow you withal,
To buy a better husband. (Act. V. Sc. 1. 420-423)

But to Mariana Angelo is a good man and therefore she implores the Duke:

O my dear lord,
I crave no other, nor no better man.

(Act. V. Sc. 1. 423-424)

Being unable to persuade the Duke for favour of Angelo's life Mariana solicits Isabella's help:

Isabel!
Sweet Isabel, do yet but kneel my me;
Hold up your hands, say nothing; I'll speak all.
They say best men are moulded out of faults,
And, for the most, become much more the better
For being a little bad. So may my husband.
O Isabel! will you not lend a knee?

(Act.V.Sc.1.435–440)

Isabella, who seems to have grown matured and experienced at this final stage of the dramatic action readily extends her helping hand to Mariana by making a timely request to the Duke:

_Most bounteous sir:_

Look if at please you, on this man condemned
As if my brother lived. I partly think
A due sincerity governed his deeds
Till he did look on me.

(Act. V. Sc. 1. 442–445)

These two speeches made by Mariana and Isabella seem to be very significant and revealing because they are their final speeches and it is desirable that they should guide us in our attitude towards Angelo. The last two lines of Isabella's final speech may imply that Isabella was at least partially responsible for Angelo's fall because we know that Isabella had "prone and speechless dialect" as Lucio has once stated, which might have tantalized Angelo.

A great deal has been said about the following lines in which Angelo seems to be remorseful. When the
Duke is unhooded by Lucio, Angelo comes to know the actual situation and he says:

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

(Act. V. Sc.1. 364-372)

Again, when Escalus expresses shock and surprise knowing Angelo's downfall, Angelo confesses:

I am sorry that such sorrow I procure,
And so deep sticks it in my penitent heart
That I crave death more willingly than mercy;
It is my deserving, and I do entreat it.

(Act. V.Sc. 1.472-475)

There are many critics who think that Angelo's repentance is sincere and genuine while there are others who think that Angelo's repentance is a perfunctory affair demanded by the exigencies of a comic plot. The Christian interpreters
want to exploit these lines as a strong evidence to prove their contention. To them Angelo is Everyman, a "humanum genus figure" who sincerely repents his sins and is forgiven by the Duke who stands for Divine Providence. However, by leaving aside such a purely Christian approach, we may say with some confidence that Angelo's repentance looks genuine and convincing simply because it is in keeping with his inward behaviour expressed in his soliloquies and hence it cannot be summarily dismissed as a theatrical necessity. And as soon as Angelo expresses his remorse and confesses his faults some amount of sympathy seems to have been restored to him. Moreover, the way in which Angelo begs "immediate death" from the Duke seems to be something heroic and honourable. When he finds that he is guilty of so many crimes, perhaps, he does not want to live with "ignominy and shame". And this seems to be in accordance with his former emphatic declaration made before Escalus:

> When I that censure him do so offend,  
> Let mine own judgment pattern out my death,  
> And nothing come in partial.  

* (Act. II. Sc. 1. 29-31) 

Some of Angelo's lovable and attractive traits are his remarkable gift of speech and brilliant argumentative
power which seem to have been overlooked by the commentators. In many of his speeches, Angelo seems to be a very fine conversationalist. When the Duke proposes to make Angelo the administration in Vienna in his absence, Angelo makes the following speech which is highly impressive:

Now, good my lord,
Let there be some more test made of my metal,
Before so noble and so great figure
Be stamped upon it.

(Act. I.sc. i. 47-50)

Sometimes his faculty of reasoning is superb and arguments infallible spoken in a magnificently eloquent language. When Escalus tells Angelo that the latter should be very careful before executing Claudio because he (Angelo) might have been tempted under similar circumstances, Angelo aptly answers:

It is one thing to be tempted, Escalus,
Another thing to fall. I not deny
The jury passing on prisoner's life
May in the sworn twelve have a thief, or two,
Guiltier than him they try. What is open made to justice,
That justice seizes. What knows the laws
That thieves do pass on thieves? It is very pregnant,
The jewel that we find, we stoop and take it
Because we see it; but what we do not see,
We tread upon, and never think of it
You may not so extenuate his offence
For I have had such faults; but rather tell me
When I that censure him do so offend,
Let mine own judgement pattern out my death
And nothing come in partial.

(Act. II. Sc. 1. 17-31)

And it seems very difficult for Escalus to refute the arguments of Angelo and so he seems to have succumbed:

Be it as your wisdom will.

(Act. II. Sc. 1. 33)

Even Isabella, in spite of her marvellous persuasive eloquence, seems to have been outwitted by Angelo at the initial stages of her conversation with Angelo:

Ang. Well: the matter?

Isab. I have a brother is condemned to die;
     I do beseech you, let it be his fault,
     And not my brother.

Provost: (aside) Heaven give the moving graces!

Ang. Condemn the fault and not the actor of it?
     Why, every fault is condemned are it be done:
     Mine were the very cipher of a function


To fine the faults, whose fine stands in record, And let go by the actor.

(Act. II. Sc. ii. 33-41)

We see that Isabella finds Angelo irrefutable and becomes ready to give up her objective:

O just but severe law!

I had a brother, then: heaven keep your honour.

(Going)

(Act. II. Sc. ii. 42-43)

And perhaps without Lucio's timely promptings Isabella would not have proceeded further. Even in her pleading with Angelo it is only Lucio's reproach that makes her put more spirit in her pleading. We must note here that Angelo seems to gain the upper-hand in these debates not through his calculated cunningness but through brilliant faculty of reasoning and argumentative skill. On the whole, we may say that Angelo's art of reasoning and faculty of speech are superb, and these were the distinguishing qualities of educated and cultured men of Shakespeare's time. After all, we may be assured that at least to some extent Angelo appeared to be a dignified and attractive personality to the contemporary audience and this is an exemplary way in which Shakespeare has whitewashed Angelo's character.

To sum up, our discussion on both the unlovely and lovely aspects of Angelo's character, we may say that the life history of Angelo as presented by Shakespeare in "Measure" illustrate the Renaissance concept of man according to which man is sinful by nature, capable of repentance and worthy of redemption. He is "noble in reason" in the sense that he has wit, intellect, argumentative power and eloquence and, he has the capacity to realise his own mistakes and repent his misdeeds, and therefore, capable of obtaining self-knowledge. He is a "quintessence of dust" in the sense that in spite of his austerity, self-control, "study and fast" he is helpless and defenceless in the face of an overwhelming sexual temptation. In terms of Christian symbolism, if we take it for granted, he is an Everyman but also a Lucifer. The most important point about him is that he is a man of flesh and blood and his words and actions seem to be explicable in terms of naturalism and realistic psychology. He seems to have too much vitality and humanity to be reduced to an allegory and a symbol. His life seems to be a complex web of good and evil instincts, impulses and qualities, and, that is why, he is both hateful and lovable, sublime and ridiculous, attractive and repulsive, angelic and devilish. Shakespeare's overall attitude towards him seems to be ambivalent and due to this he is mercilessly exposed but ultimately pardoned and rewarded.

There seems to be no doubt that Isabella is one of the most controversial female characters of Shakespeare. It is almost a consensus of the critics that she is a complex portrait and now at the mid-eighties of the twentieth century it has become an extremely difficult proposition to pass judgment on her. As Ernest Schanzer has put it some years ago:

"Isabel, like other main characters of the play, is complex while her critics all too simple".  

The critical opinion regarding her since the eighteenth century up to the eighties of the present century seems to have been diverse and varied, and mutually contradictory. Critics have shown violent disagreement about her and it seems that very often they praise and blame her according to their own way of interpretation. In fact, there seems to have been many good and bright aspects in her which we cannot but praise. But there are some other aspects too which are not attractive. The mutually contradictory opinions given by many intelligent critics make us realize that Isabella is not a paragon of virtue nor is she the only "bright particular star" in a dark comedy. Most of the critics have rightly observed that Isabella is a living personality, a vigorously animated young woman, and this seems to be one of the strongest points about her.

---

character. In fact, she is a credible human being, having some outstanding virtues which are worthy of high praise and great admiration, and some glaring faults worthy of our disapproval. Arthur Quiller Couch has blamed Shakespeare for creating such a character whom critics can praise and blame and concludes that the play misses clearness in portraying its most important character. But we may argue with good reason that the character of Isabella does not represent a failure of the author's creative imagination or dramatic skill. Rather, Shakespeare seemed to have shown his superlative creative skill in making Isabella a psychologically credible character to the Jacobean audience as well as to critics and readers. The fact that the character of Isabella has evoked contradictory responses from the critics can be shown by quoting some of the famous statements made by some great critics.

Mrs. Jameson, an important woman critic of the nineteenth century has compared her with Portia and said:

"Isabella is distinguished from Portia and strongly individualized by a certain moral grandeur, a saintly grace, something of vestal dignity and purity which render her less

---

But Mrs. Lennox found Isabella almost inexecusible for her bitter reproach to her brother, Claudio when the latter implored her to save his life by yielding to Angelo's infamous proposal and wrote the following:

"From her character, her profession, and degree of relation to the unhappy youth, one might have expected mild expostulations, wise reasonings, and gentle rebukes; his desire of life, though purchased by methods he could not approve, was a natural frailty which a sister might have pitied and excused, and have made use of her superior understanding to reason down his fears, recall nobler ideas to his mind, teach him what was due to her honour and his own, and reconcile him to his approaching death by arguments drawn from that religion and virtue of which she has made so high a profession; but that torrent of abusive language, these coarse and unwomanly reflections on the virtue of her mother, her exulting cruelty to the dying youth, are the manners of an affected prude, outrageous in her seeming virtues; not of a pious, innocent and tender mind." 49

According to Furnivall, Isabella is the first of the three splendid women who illumine the dark "Third Period" and the


49 Ibid., pp. xxviii-xxix.
other two are Cordelia and Volumnia. But Sir George Greenwood's observation seems to be quite opposite:

"Let Isabella be a paragon of virtue, let her chastity be as ice that no warmth of affection can raise above the freezing point, even though a dear brother's life may depend upon it, let her be saintlike, and virginal, and holy. But surely she might reprove a wretched brother, lying in the valley of the shadow of death, in restrained and measured language "more in sorrow than in anger", and not with the abuse and vituperation of a termagant."

And he preferred the character of Cassandra of Whetstone's story to the rigid inflexible virtue of Isabella. To Schlegel Isabella is an "angel of light" and Dowden speaks of her "pure Zeal" "virgin sanctity" "saintliness" and "holiness" Coleridge called her unamiable while Hazlitt could not approve of her rigid chastity. Arthur Quiller Couch seems to deplore her vehemently in the following words:

51 Ibid.
52 Ibid. p. xxxi.
54 Ibid., p. 60 (Source - "Shakespeare - His Mind and Art" 1875).
55 Ibid., p. 47 (Source "Table Talk" ed. T. Ashe, London, 1888, p. 48)
56 Ibid., p. 47 (Source - "Characters of Shakespeare's Plays" 1817).
"An exemplar of chastity should at all events be consistent or at all events consistent in chastity, that most definite of virtues. But in fact one never knows where to take this paragon. She will plead Claudio's lapse a venial sin: at the first suggestion of her sinning it is 'O' you beast but by-and-by, to escape this, she is mating the pair without wedlock while at the end we are left to suppose that for herself mating is mainly a question of marriage-lines, and that for a Duke, she will throw her novitiate head-dress over the mill. She can be eloquent so eloquent she will plead to Angelo for clemency, for mercy, in words that melt the heart: yet when it comes to her own turn to pity and forgive, she casts her own brother from her remorselessly, and never speaks to him again—no, not when he is returned to her from the tomb." Even a sober critic like H.B. Charlton complains of lack of humanity in her for denouncing Claudio:

"Nor is there a spark of humanity in the pause of utter contempt she assumes when she declares herself unwilling to do the slightest thing to save her brother". E.C. Pettet thinks that her "mercy" speech is incompatible with her innate nature.

---


58 'Shakespearean Comedy' 1938 (Methuen 1955, p. 255).
"Could such a shallow, cold-blooded creature as Isabella aware of an abstract and formal vice ever conceivably utter lines like those so warm, pitiful and extensive in vision.\textsuperscript{59} Una Ellis Fermor has declared that Isabella is inhuman, pitiless, unimaginative, and self-absorbed virtue sustained her.\textsuperscript{60} L.C. Knight thinks that one cannot be so sure of Isabella:

"What, to take an example, are we think of Isabella? Is she the embodiment of a chaste serenity? Is she like Angelo an illustration of the frosty lack of a sympathy of a self-regarding Puritanism":\textsuperscript{61}

Even the Christian interpreters seem to vacillate in their reactions towards Isabella. Most of them extravagantly praise her and look upon her as an embodiment of Christian Mercy or Holiness or Chastity while some of them condemn her lack of charity in her refusal to sacrifice her honour to save her brother and her vituperative language towards him. G. Wilson Knight who looks upon the play as a Christian parable finds many faults with Isabella. He has


\textsuperscript{60} Quoted by Ernest Schanzer in his "The Problem Plays of Shakespeare" (London Routledge and Kegan Paul 1963)p.96.

\textsuperscript{61} "The Ambiguity of Measure for Measure" 1942 (Case Book, Macmillan 1971, p. 138).
(Source - Scrutiny x. 1942).
complained of her lack of warmth and human feeling and "self-centred saintliness" and condemns her by saying that she behaves to Claudio who hints for her sacrifice, like a friend. R.G. Hunter also sees lack of charity in her harsh judgement of the human weakness of Claudio. John Vyvyan says that like Angelo she is a searmer and the chief deficiency of her character is that she is unloving. On the other hand, R.W. Chambers speaks of her "marvellous and impassioned pleadings" based on Christian faith for her brother's life to Angelo and Shakespeare's complete identification with her. He seems to be especially interested in the nobility of Isabella:

"If we fail to see that nobility of Isabel we cannot see the story as we should."

F.R. Leavis suggests that Isabella is subtle portrait and the respect paid to her by the lewd, irreverent Lucio on her entry is a significant pointer to the understanding of her character.

63 "Shakespeare and the Comedy of Forgiveness" Columbia Univ. Press 1965, p. 218
64 "A Shakespearean Ethic" London Chatto and Windus, 1959, p. 78.
Even more recent critics seem to give mutually contradictory opinions. Eileen Mackay is of the opinion that Isabella's white figure shines out against a carefully drawn background of unscrupulous lust and sex, of ecclesiastical corruption and degradation, and suggests that she is an idealist and her Christian faith is deep-rooted. On the other hand, D.R.C. March is of the view that like other characters of the play Isabella is not at all admirable; like Angelo and the Duke, she is also proud, and she also lives in the moral world of her own making tailored to fit her own desires and prejudices and, consequently she is insulated from the realities of life. A.C. Kirsch calls her response to her brother's appeal for life "a hysterical outburst" and criticises her:

"She shows no understanding of his feelings, no sympathy to his fear, no compassion. She has argued movingly of Christ's example of the need for mercy, but at the moment of trial, for her own brother she finds none". It may be said here that almost every observation made by every critic contains some truth which can be proved by good

---


evidence from the play itself and it seems quite clear that the character of Isabella displays aspects which evoke mutually opposed responses from the readers and the critics. And, therefore, it is likely that one can both love and hate her, praise and blame her, and malign and whitewash her.

The text of the play shows that Isabella has some noble traits for which critics may call her a "dazzling white and saintly figure". And we can form our opinion on her by taking some of the remarks of other characters on her and some of her own speeches. In her Shakespeare seems to have portrayed a female idealist slightly comparable to Hamlet. Like Hamlet she is an intensely religious-minded character. Moreover, it is significant to note that Shakespeare has departed from the Cinthio-Whetstone story in making Isabella a nun in the sisterhood of St. Clare.70

The maiden speech of Isabella seems to reveal the fact that she has the mental make-up of an idealist:

Isab. And have you nuns farther privileges?
Nun. Are not these large enough?
Isab. Yes truly, I speak not as desiring more, but rather wishing more restraint upon the sisterhood, the votarists of St. Clare.

(Act. I. Sc. iv. 1-5)

We can also know something about Isabella from Lucio's praise of her. The importance of the following speech of Lucio in respect of Isabella's character has been rightly noted by F.R. Leavis which we have already mentioned. When Isabella wants to know of her brother's plight from Lucio the latter praises her:

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

(Act. I. Sc. iv. 34-37)

The speech cannot be totally dismissed as the "sentimental homage which vice pays to virtue". Of course, there may be some exaggeration as it is made by a libertine and a talkative person like Lucio, but it may be taken as an "exaggeration of a vital truth" about Isabella. Because Lucio himself has said that he is speaking sincerely and it is obvious that Lucio should behave responsibly at this moment because he has been seriously concerned with Claudio's fate. But it seems important to note here that the dramatist is not going to portray a Christian saint embodying some theological doctrines who is much above the standard of Lucio. That Isabella shares common humanity with Lucio may be seen in her own words to Lucio;

Isab. You do blaspheme the good, in mocking me.

On the whole, it may be said that the first impression created by Isabella through her first appearance on the stage is that she is not going to be an unamiable and detestable character. And her subsequent performance in the next scenes where she pleads to Angelo for Claudio's life on the grounds of Christian mercy, makes her a saintly and imposing figure who commands our respect and admiration and these speeches seem to bring some sublimity and loftiness to this "merry bawdy play".

There are many other comments made on Isabella by the other characters which may also help us a lot to form our estimate of her character. The Provost, a good and sensible man, introduces her to Angelo in a respectable way:

Servant. Here is the sister of the man condemned, Desires access to you.

Ang. Hath he a sister?

Prov. Ay, my good lord, a virtuous maid;
And to be shortly of a sisterhood, If not already.

(Act. II. Sc. ii. 18-23)

Even Angelo, whose attitude towards Claudio and Juliet is excessively cruel, admits that Isabella is a virtuous maid (Act. II. Sc. ii. 185). The Duke addresses her in
affectionate and respectable terms:

The hand that hath made you fair hath made you good. The goodness that is cheap in beauty makes beauty brief in goodness; but grace, being the soul of your complexion, shall keep the body of it ever fair.

(Act. III.Sc.i. 179-183)

And her response to the Duke's stratagem with its multiple benefits seems to indicate her purity of mind:

I have a spirit to do anything that appears not foul in the truth of my spirit.

(Act. III.Sc.i. 205-206)

And the above speeches spoken by the gifted actors of the contemporary stage might have made Isabella a lovable and sympathetic character to the audience.

It is almost a consensus of the critics that the scene in which Isabella pleads to Angelo for her brother's life is one of the most brilliant scenes in all Shakespeare. Here we may easily feel that great poetry and great drama go well together. There seems to be no doubt that critics and audiences of all ages would be enthralled by this magnificent scene full of great speeches that are sublimely good and intellectually brilliant. Here Isabella makes her
"marvellous and impassioned" pleadings with the same persuasive eloquence of Portia which command our complete sympathy and unqualified admiration for her at this point of the dramatic action. Though Isabella starts with some sort of initial nervousness, she speaks eloquently being encouraged by Lucio to move the heart of Angelo. When Angelo says that it is too late to save her brother she speaks:

Too late? why, no. I that do speak a word
May call it again — well, believe this;
No ceremony that to great once longs,
Not the king's crown, nor the deputed sword,
The marshall's truncheon, nor the judges robe,
Become them with one half so good a grace
As mercy does.

(Act. II. Sc. 11. 57-63)

Angelo remains unmoved but Isabella persists in her appeal using the great Christian argument:

Alas, alas!.

Why all the souls that were, were for feit once,
And He That might the vantage best have took
Found out the remedy. How would you be
If He, which is the top of judgement, should
But judge you as you are? O, think on that,
And mercy then will breathe within your lips,
Like man new made.

(Act. II. Sc. 11. 72-78)
Angelo also turns down this great appeal by saying that law has taken its course and so Claudio must die in the next day. Isabella puts forward another argument:

Tomorrow? O, that is sudden.
Spare him, spare him!
He is not prepared for death. Even for our kitchens we kill the fowl of season: shall we serve heaven with less respect than we do minister to our gross selves? Good, good my lord, bethink you:
Who is that hath died for this offence?
There's many have committed it.

(Act. II. Sc. iii. 83-89)

When Angelo declares that guilty people must be punished for the good of future generations, Isabella seems to be angry. And she reproaches Angelo but her language is highly elevated:

So you must be the first that gives this sentence,
And he that suffers, O, it is excellent
To have a giant's strength, but it is tyrannous
To use it like a giant.

(Act. II. Sc. ii. 107-110)

And her indignation at Angelo's abuse of power rings with universal meanings:
But man, proud man,
Dressed in a little brief authority,
Most ignorant of what he is most assured —
His glassy essonce — like an angry ape
Plays such fantastic tricks, before high heaven
As makes the angels weep; who, with our spleens,
Would all themselves laugh mortal.

(Act. II. Sc. ii. 118-124)

She ends her appeal by saying:

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

(Act. II. Sc. ii. 137-142)

Though Angelo cannot be moved to Claudio's pardon her golden speech does not go totally in vain;

Ang. (aside) She speaks, and it is such sense
That my sense brends with it — Fare you well

(Going)

(Act. II. Sc. ii. 143-144)

And, ultimately, Angelo seems to be moved and he invites Isabella to come to him. next day. Isabella becomes hopeful
and wants to give Angelo a "bribe of prayer".

This scene is a fine example of how Shakespeare makes stories of human passion and emotion rise to sublime heights and become universally appealing. Throughout the scene Isabella's speeches are profound and extensive in vision, full of human warmth and sympathy which would have moved everyone to Claudio's pardon except Angelo. And it seems to be no exaggeration to say that Isabella is carrying our sympathy and admiration with her throughout the scene.

Isabella seems to reveal herself as an idealist also in her second interview with Angelo. When Isabella was offered the infamous proposal of Angelo that she must sleep with Angelo to save her brother, her decision seems to be immediate and spontaneous:

Isab. As much for my poor brother as myself;
That is, were under the terms of death,
The impression of keen whips I would wear
as rubies,
And strip myself to death as to a bed
That longing have been sick for, ere I
should yield
My body up to shame.

Ang. Then must your brother die.
Isab. And it were the cheaper way.
Better it were a brother died at once,
Than that a sister, by redeeming him,
Should die for ever.

(Act. II. Sc. iv. 99-108)

Isabella sincerely believes that the sacrifice of her honour
or chastity would lead to the eternal damnation of her soul,
so she unhesitatingly prefers the sacrifice of her brother
and having come to such a decision, she has nothing to fear
to Angelo, "the demi-God authority". And, Angelo knowing
fully well her uncompromising attitude tells her more than
once to give her consent to the proposal and give her love to
him. Then Isabella shows her ferocity and demands immediate
pardon of her brother:

Isab. Ha? Little honour, to be much believed,
And most pernicious purpose! Seeming, seeming!
I will proclaim thee, Angelo look for it.
Sign me a present pardon for my brother,
Or with an outstretched throat I will tell the
world aloud
What man thou art.

(Act. II. Sc. iv. 148-153)

Of course, Isabella appears to be somewhat unnatural when she
desires for more "strict restraint upon the sisterhood of
St. Clare" and decides to sacrifice her brother. But we know
that many great characters in Shakespeare behave a little unnaturally and extravagantly. After all Isabella seems to be an admirable character for her marvellously eloquent speech on mercy and her "death-before-dishonour" approach in her exalted decision to sacrifice her brother's life rather than her chastity. And considering this point one may say that Isabella is an idealist like young Hamlet yearning for absolute purity of mind and soul which is a bit divorced from the stern realities of social life in which they lived. The contemporary audience perhaps could not but admire and love such a fascinating female character created by their favourite dramatist.

But the statement that the character of Isabella evoked admiration and respect in the minds of the contemporary audience seems to need some qualification. It seems a bit doubtful whether all sections of the Jacobean audience wholeheartedly applauded her decision to sacrifice her brother rather than her chastity. Of course, there seems to be no doubt that the ideal of chastity was much more honoured in Shakespeare's age than in the modern age. But we may think that those contemporaries of Shakespeare who approved the reformative ideas of Puritan thinkers much have welcomed her decision but those who approved the ideals of liberal humanists would have questioned her decision at the cost of the life of her brother, who is a young man. If we claim that Isabella's decision appeared absolutely correct
to the contemporary audience, we are giving a consistency of texture to the age which it actually lacked. We have already mentioned in the introductory chapter how historical criticism has assured us that in moral, theological and political matters, it was an age of conflicting and contradictory ideas and beliefs and it may be a reasonable conjecture that uncertain and divided responses were possible. As Ernest Schanzer has rightly observed:

"We find in it a concern with a moral problem which is central to it, presented in such a manner that we are unsure of our moral bearings". 71

We have already noted that quite a few critics have debunked Isabella, some in harsh and some in mild terms for her behaviour towards Claudio, who being obsessed with the fear of death desperately begs her to let him live at the cost of her honour thinking that a sin committed under such circumstances would be "no sin" or "of the deadly seven it is the least". Though some critics defend Isabella, still we may say that the angelic or divine glow of Isabella is considerably dimmed in this scene. And this seems to give us a strong evidence that in Isabella Shakespeare is not going to portray a Christian saint or a paragon of virtue. She appears before us as a young woman of flesh and blood

---

capable of tempestuous passion and anger in baffling and complex situations of life.

We know that Isabella is in a desperately complex situation after she has failed to move the heart of Angelo for favour of her dear brother's pardon. She has also known it quite well that Angelo has a devilish intention to exploit her. But, still, she feels confident that her brother would fully approve her decision and help her:

I will to my brother.
Though he had fallen by prompture of blood,
Yet hath he in him such a mind of honour,
That hath he twenty heads to tender down
On twenty bloody blocks, he would yield them up
Before his sister should her body stoop
To such abhorred pollution.

(Act.II. Sc. iv. 176-182)

With a hopeful mind she tells everything to her brother and implores him to be ready to die the next day. And as desired by Isabella Claudio at first seems to be willing to die:

If I must die,
I will encounter darkness as a bride
And hug it in mine arms.

(Act. III. Sc. i. 82-84)

And Isabella praises him:

There spake my brother: there is my father's grave
Did utter forth a voice. Yes, thou must die.
Thou art too noble to conserve a life
In base appliances.

(Act III.Sc. i. 85-86)

But Claudio is a frail, weak-willed young man for which he has already fallen into the temptations of the flesh, and so he falters in the next moment. His mind is obsessed with the fear of death and he feels totally incapable of enduring the pangs of death and therefore, comes to the immediate conclusion that the worst of life is preferable to death. He entreats Isabella to save him by consenting to Angelo's proposal which would not be a deadly sin but a virtue under the circumstances. Then Isabella violently reproaches him in an outburst of anger:

0, you beast!
0 faithless coward! 0 dishonest wretch!
Will thou be made a man out of my vice?
Is it not a kind of incest, to take life
From thine own sister's shame? What should I think?
Heaven shield my mother played my father fair:  
For such a warped slip of wilderness  
Never issued from his blood. Take my defiance,  
Die, perish ! Might but my bending down  
Reprieve thee from thy fate, it should proceed.  
I will pray a thousand prayers for thy death;  
No word to save thee.

Cla. Nay hear me, Isabel.

Isab. O fie, fie, fie !  
Thy sin is not accidental, but a trade;  
Mercy to thee would prove itself a bawd ;  
It is best thou diest quickly.

(Act.III. Sec.1. 135-148)

Critics have called her angry words "unladylike",  
"hysterical", the "vituperation of a termagant". There  
is no doubt that she has received a great shock when she  
finds that her brother has thrown cold water on her long  
-cherished expectations about him. But to question her  
mother's honesty in begetting Claudio is too much, it is  
excessively cruel, hateful and indecent remarks totally  
unbecoming of a saintly character. Moreover, her words  
display her terrible lack of understanding and love  
towards her own vacillating brother unnerved by the fear  
of death. Critics may be justified to some extent in  
saying that these are the agonized and desperate words of
a frustrated idealist expressing the ferocity of a martyr.\footnote{72 R.W. Chambers has suggested that Isabella has the ferocity of a martyr in his essay, "Measure for Measure" [Shakespeare Criticism 1935–1960, Oxford Univ. Press, p.15]}

But one may also throw back Isabella's own words at her that she is like "a proud woman dressed in a little brief authority behaving like an angry ape". Here it is important to note that in the "problem comedies" Shakespeare's handling of the characters is like this — two contradictory and opposite explanations are often possible and probable regarding the behaviour of a particular character in a particular complex situation.

Many critics have stated that Shakespeare could have made Isabella a much more lovable and sympathetic figure by putting into her mouth "mild expostulations"; "wise reasonings" and "gentle rebukes" towards her wretched brother and since Shakespeare has not done this it illustrates a failure in handling the character. But we may say that Shakespeare's creative mind, when writing these plays, was caught between the two possibilities; it was still filled in optimistic idealistic thought, but at the same time it was disturbed by some sort of cynical bitterness...which we have stated more than once. Very often we are provided with mixture of two opposites. On the one hand, we are shown the "true sources of nobility in man", and on the
other, the "horrible, revolting, perplexing and grotesque" aspects of human nature are presented before us. And it may be one of the plausible reasons why this "dazzling white and saintly Isabella" collapses at times into a merciless termagant and a mostly villainous Angelo behaves like a genuinely suffering soul at least in his soliloquies. Therefore, Arthur Quiller Couch seems to be at least partially justified when he says:

"We tell ourselves this; anon, as we read, we repent having said it; and a page or so later, we say it again — or at least that we do not love thee, Isabel. The reason why we cannot tell".  

On the other hand R.W. Chambers seems to be justified to a great extent in saying:

"Never does Shakespeare more passionately identify himself with any of his characters than he does with Isabel".

"If we fail to find the nobility of Isabel we cannot see the story as we should".  

On the whole, in this particular scene when Isabella has decided not to speak a single word to save her brother, she

---


seems to behave like an extremist and she does not seem to carry our sympathy and affection completely with her.

As some critics have noted here and there, like Angelo Isabella seems to be a whimsical and eccentric personality. She wants to live in her own peculiar world of ideas. Her ideas on God's mercy seem to be immature and whimsical. Because in her appeal to Angelo for her brother's life she has sincerely and confidently argued that God is merciful and that He has shown mercy to all sinning mortals and so, Angelo, similarly, should show mercy to an erring mortal like Claudio. But when Claudio implores her in such words,

"Sweet sister let me live"

(Act.III,Sec. i. 131)

Her answer is:

Mercy to thee would prove itself a bawd;

It is best that than diest quickly.

(Act.III,Sc.1,148-149)

Here, at this point, she has not taken care to think that God might have been merciful to her sin committed under extreme necessity to save a brother's life. Though chastity seems to be a fundamental principle in her life as has

been noted by some critics, her Puritan attitude and temperament have not gone unnoticed. Though her Puritanism is splendid and terrible \(^{76}\) unlike that of Angelo, we know that the "virtuous" Puritans were not favourably looked upon by the people who flocked to the theatres. So again, it appears doubtful whether the Jacobean audience wholeheartedly admired Isabella's decision to preserve her chastity at the cost of her brother's life. Moreover, we find that in the first half of the play there is a persistent emphasis on the fact that justice should be tempered with mercy and Angelo is made to appear as a thoroughly unlovable ruler because he has refused to temper justice with mercy. But there is no such insistence on the ideal of chastity as a cardinal virtue. Only Isabella seems to feel pride and joy in her chastity:

"More than our brother is our chastity"

(Act. II. Sec. IV. 184)

Some critics tend to argue that as Isabella has appealed to Angelo so sincerely to show mercy to her brother,

\(^{76}\) Lascelles Abercrombie's famous statement in British Academy Lecture (1930) that there is splendid and terrible Puritanism in Isabella" is quoted by Ernest Schanzer in his ("The Problem Plays of Shakespeare", p. 104.)
and as she has refused to show mercy to her own brother, she is a hypocrite. But Isabella is not a hypocrite. She is an idealist, immature and whimsical, sometimes unthinking and without understanding. Her character seems to display amazing contradictions. She is sublime and ridiculous, tolerant and intolerant, vehemently outspoken and excessively modest, idealistic and realistic. Her character displays inconsistencies and contraries which are natural to a human being. And we know that human beings cease to be human beings when they are not inconsistent. And Isabella shows such inconsistencies which give depth to her character.78

Apart from her decision to preserve her chastity at the cost of her brother's life, there are two actions of Isabella which have aroused much controversy among the critics. One of them is her immediate consent to the Duke's substitution plot according to which Mariana would go to Angelo's bed in place of her. Those who ignore marriage laws during Shakespeare's time have castigated her violently. Arthur Quiller Couch has condemned her because

77 Lytton Strachey's famous statement that "human beings cease to be human beings unless they were inconsistent" has been mentioned by W.W. Lawrence in his "Shakespeare's Problem Comedies" 1931 (second Edition, F.U.P., New York, p. 74).

78 The point that in consistency gives depth to characterization is made by Walter N. King in "Shakespeare's Mingled Yarn" (Modern Language Quarterly, Vol. 21, 1960 p. 39).
she is mating a pair without wedlock. Others think that Isabella is selfish because she is only concerned with her own chastity and not Mariana’s. Even a critic like G. Wilson Knight wrote:

"It is significant that she readily involves Mariana in illicit love; it is always her own and only her own chastity that assumes, in her heart, universal importance."  

But there are other critics who defend Isabella by taking into account the Elizabethan marriage laws. Notable among them are R.W. Chambers, O.J. Campbell and Ernest Schanzer. On this point R.W. Chambers wrote:

"She is a sensible Elizabethan girl with nonsense about her and she knows that it is no sin to bring husband and wife together".

O.J. Campbell wrote the following:

"In arranging the substitution, she is no wanton procress but a friend helping the rejected Mariana to

---


consummate a union which the authorities of both Church and State in Shakespeare's day recognized as legally valid”. 82 Ernest Schanzer has also made it clear that the Angelo-Mariana contract was "de futuro" where co-habitation was necessary to make the marriage legally valid. 83 But we may add something else in defence of Isabella. Shakespeare, being a child of his age has portrayed Isabella as a sensible Elizabethan girl as R.W. Chambers has stated, and we have already noted that though she is an idealist, she is also a realist, and she is a religious-minded girl though her religious ideas are sometimes strange and immature. As the substitution device was improvised by a friar whom Isabella should respect (she, being religious-minded) and as the scheme has multiple benefits, she does not find much difficulty in consenting to it. And we all know that Isabella has a spirit to do something that appears not foul in the truth of her spirit as she has said to the Duke. (Act III. Sc. 205-206). When she came to know her brother's sorry state of affairs she rose to the occasion in spite of her "betwixt will and will not" and "doubts", and has left no stone unturned to move the heart of a stern, legalistic


83 "The Marriage contract in "Measure for Measure"
judge like Angelo in her own idealistic way. This time she is going to do something for her friend, Mariana whom Angelo has left so cruelly and later on, in the fifth act, she again pleads to the Duke for Mariana's sake. Of course, it is true that the bedtrick is too crude a device to the sophisticated taste of the modern critics. But, as we have already noted, it was a popular fictional convention during Shakespeare's time and it had its occurrence in real life also, and Shakespeare probably had tasted its success already in "All's Well" written before "Measure". Moreover, in her consent to the Duke's plan Isabella appears to be realistic and business-like and in being so, she is not unlike other Shakespearean heroines, who in spite of their romantic nature behave realistically on many occasions.

Critics also seem to make heavy weather of the Duke's proposed marriage with Isabella. Arthur Quiller Couch seems to be vehemently critical of Isabella:

..."for a Duke she will throw her novitiate headdress to a windmill". 84

Even a distinguished critic like Bradley found in this a "scandalous proceeding". Many critics have said many things for and against this proceeding. But we may say that

Shakespeare has his own method of dramatic art. He decided to end the play with the prospect of marriage, reconciliation and reunion. By making the Duke the groom of Isabella Shakespeare seems to have made the Duke an earthly figure, an active member of the social world of Vienna and not a Divine Providence. Though Isabella has not been given anything to speak regarding her consent, her silence is significant and it may imply her consent. We should also note that Shakespeare’s characters are changing and developing during the course of the dramatic action. So it is not unperceivable that the idealistic Isabella may be changed into a realistic and pragmatic Isabella. So by giving her silent approval (which may be only acted on the stage but not allowed to be spoken) to the Duke’s proposal, she has cast off her fantastic idealism and has embraced the practical realities of a secular life which is the true destiny of a "sensible Elizabethan girl".

Another controversial point about Isabella’s character is her slightly inconsistent behaviour during the two halves of the play. Many critics voice the opinion

---

85 Many distinguished critics are of the opinion that Shakespeare’s characters are changing, growing and developing during the course of the dramatic action. Especially notable among them are G. Wilson Knight, E. M. W. Tillyard, S. C. Sengupta, Anne Righter and J. W. Lever.

86 Tillyard had conveniently divided the play into two halves the first half goes to III, i.151 and the rest is the second ("Realism and Folklore": Case Book, Macmillan 1971 p. 172).
that Isabella's behaviour in the first half of the play is acutely human and psychologically credible but in the second half her character loses much of its individuality and humanity. E.M.W. Tillyard has stated that in the second half Isabella becomes the well-trained confidential secretary of the Duke.\(^{87}\) O.J. Campbell is of the opinion that she is a mere pawn in the elaborate plan improvised by the Duke against Angelo.\(^{88}\) Of course, it is true that the second half of the play is much more prosaic as Tillyard has observed and the exigencies of the plot seem to overshadow the independent volition of the characters but only slightly. And we know that this happens very often in a drama though not in a novel. Anyway, if we take Tillyard and Campbell's views as absolutely correct, we must also think that the dramatist has failed to be quite clear in portraying the most important character of the play. But, Shakespeare, already a master-playwright at this stage, is unlikely to commit such mistakes as to make Isabella completely a stage puppet in the second half of the play. Even Tillyard has to admit that in the last scene, she does indeed bear some part in the action.\(^{89}\) So we may say that the


\(^{88}\) "Shakespeare's Satire"
p. 138

observation that Isabella loses her vitality and individuality since (Act. III. Sc. i 151) her first meeting with the Duke seems to have been based on insufficient textual evidence. We have already noted that in Isabella Shakespeare seems to have portrayed a "sensible Elizabethan girl" with enough common sense though, of course, she also seems to be an idealist with a little bit of immature and eccentric ideas. There is some good textual evidence that sometimes Isabella faces her problems from a commonsense point of view. This seems to be clear in her talk with Lucio regarding the Claudio-Juliet affair:

Isab. Some one with child by him? My cousin Juliet?

Lucio. Is she your cousin?

Isab. Adoptedly, as schoolmaids change their names by vain though apt affection.

Lucio. She it is.

Isab. O, let him marry her!

(Act. Sc. iv. 45-50)

Her immediate solution of the problem is the marriage between Claudio and Juliet when she has not known the nature of the new Deputy who had revived a "drowsy and neglected act" for punishing all sexual offenders. Ernest Schanzer claims that Isabella did not know about the marriage contract between Claudio and Juliet as Lucio has failed to mention it to her,
and in order to justify his contention Schanzar says that had she known the contract, she would have appealed to Angelo on legal circumstances. But we see that as soon as Lucio tells her "Her brother and his lover had embraced" she instinctively asks:

Isab. Some one with child by him?

My cousin Juliet?

(Act. I. Sc. iv. 45)

This shows that Isabella had some knowledge of Claudio-Juliet relation prior to this meeting of her with Lucio. And her suggestion to Lucio that Claudio be married to Juliet seems quite sensible. Because Isabella seems to have thought that as Claudio and Juliet had lived in a state of matrimony without the formal declaration of marriage, which was permissible according to contemporary marriage law, so, now, they should have it. But, of course, there was another law which regarded such secret marriages as sinful and therefore punishable. So, under such circumstances, the formal declaration of marriage between Claudio and Juliet would be the easy solution of the problem which Isabella seemed to have suggested to Lucio. But her solution becomes impractical in the context of

---

90 "The Problem Plays of Shakespeare". p. 110.
91 Ibid., p. 76.
Angelo's imposition of the new law. Now the question arises why Isabella has not based her arguments and appeals on the legal circumstances of the case. In reply, we may say that Isabella is a Renaissance subject of a Renaissance ruler and she knows it quite well that Angelo is a person in authority with a divine prerogative to judge and condemn as well as to temper justice with mercy. And, moreover, law as an institution could not be criticised and challenged during Shakespeare's time by an ordinary woman like Isabella. So whether or not Isabella knew of Claudio's marriage contract, perhaps she would not have appealed to Angelo by pointing out the arbitrariness of contemporary law and legal circumstances.

There seems to be enough textual evidence to suggest that Isabella had a common sense approach towards life and its problems. When Lucio tells Isabella that she can do something to save Claudio, Isabella is not confident that she will be able to do that:

Isab. Alas, what poor ability is in me
To do him good!

Lucio. Assay the power you have.


(Act. I. Sc. iv. 75-78)

Only when Lucio says that

"Our doubts are traitors
And makes us lose the good we oft might win
By fearing to attempt"
(Act. I. sc. iv. 79-81).

she seems to gather up some courage and says:

'I will see what I can do'.
(Act. I. Sc. iv. 83)

Here Isabella seems to be a simple-minded and sensible girl who knows her own limitations. Again when Isabella starts her plea for her brother's life she seems to take common sense as her guide. She acknowledges her brother's fault and her words imply that Angelo is not unjustified in arresting him and giving him death penalty:

There is a vice that most I do abhor,
And most desire should meet the blow of justice,
(Act. II.Sc. ii. 29-30).

Moreover, when she finds herself unable to refute the argument of Angelo that all wrong-doers should be punished to protect the society she is about to give up her mission which we have already mentioned.

And we may say that Isabella does not lose this type of individuality completely after Act. III. Sc. 1 (151). As we have already noted, she has given her immediate consent to the Duke's plan, realizing its multiple benefits and
thinking it to be the most pragmatic in solving her baffling problem, which up till now, by her own idealistic and honourable means she has failed to solve. There is another point to be noted here. During the first half we can easily observe that Isabella is a vigorously animated character, she has a fiery nature, and she is capable of expressing tempestuous passions when her expectations are frustrated. And this nature of hers does not seem to leave her completely in the second half. For example, when the Duke tells her that her brother had been executed by Angelo even after the gratification of his sensual pleasures she bursts into fury and behaves like a desperate woman and she does not appear to be a character losing her independent volition.

Duke. Good morning to you, fair and gracious daughter.

Isab. The better, given me by so holy a man.

Hath yet the deputy sent my brother's pardon?

Duke. He hath released him, Isabel,—from the world His head is off, and sent to Angelo.

Isab. Nay but it is not so!

Duke. It is no other. Show your wisdom, daughter. In your close patience.

Isab. 0, I will to him and pluck out his eyes!

Duke. You shall not be admitted to his sight.
Isab. Unhappy Claudio! wretched Isabel!

Injurious world! most damned Angelo!

(Act.IV.Sc.iii.111-122)

She becomes pacified only when the Duke advises her more than once to have patience and forbearance. We should also remember that she has also displayed her fiery and impassioned nature when she came to know the sad story of Angelo’s cruelty towards Mariana (Act. II.Sc. 1.231-234).

Even in the first part of the fifth act, though Isabella has acted according to the instructions of the Friar-Duke her behaviour is not thoroughly incompatible with her previous behaviour reflected in the first half and her behaviour does not seem to be that of a stage puppet. For example, when Isabella demands justice from the Duke her words are passionate and forceful:

Isab. Justice, O royal Duke! vail your regard
Upon a wronged — I would fain have said, a maid.
O worthy prince, dishonour not your eye
By throwing at on any other object,
Till you have heard me in my true complaint,
And given me justice! Justice! Justice!
Justice!

(Act.V. Sc.1. 21-26)
And when Angelo tries to defame her by saying:

"And she will speak most bitterly and strange;"

(Act. V. Sc. 1. 39)

she retorts in a forceful language:

Most strange: but yet most truly will I speak.
That Angelo is forsworn, is it not strange?
That Angelo is a murderer, is it not strange?
That Angelo is an adulterous thief,
An hypocrite, a virgin violator,
Is it not strange, and strange?

(Act. Sc. I. (39-44)

Then the Duke tells her that "she speaks in the infirmity of sense" and "her madness hath the oddest frame of sense."

She applies her persuasive eloquence to convince the Duke:

O gracious Duke,
Harp not on that; nor do not banish reason
For inequality; but let your reason serve
To make the truth appear where it seems hid,
And hide the false seems true.

(Act. V. Sc. 1. 67-69)

Here Isabella seems to have displayed her uncompromising attitude of mind, her undaunted nature, fierceness and persuasive eloquence, though to a lesser extent, which we
observed in her during the first half of the play. Of course, it is true that during the second half Isabella seems to be a bit more modest and sober, and she is very submissive to the Friar Duke because the latter is a "holy man" to her. But the fact remains that her individuality and humanity have been retained to some extent even in the second half. We may also state here that Isabella's original sensible nature and common sense are again revealed when she appeals to the Duke for Angelo's life on legalistic grounds (Act. V. Sc. I. 446-452).

There seems to be disagreement among the critics as to whether Isabella is a static or dynamic character. Ernest Schanzer, who has otherwise given an admirable analysis of "Measure" believes that Isabella is essentially a static character. But G. Wilson Knight, E.M.W. Tillyard, Anne Righter and many others believe that her character is in the process of growth during the course of the dramatic action. The majority view seems to be true. We may say that even within a single scene she shows an appreciable development in her argumentative power and persuasive eloquence. We can easily see that during her first interview with Angelo she starts her objective of saving her brother's life half-heartedly. At first, she fumbles again and again for which Lucio tells her more than once, "you are too cold". But as

92 "The Problem Plays of Shakespeare". p. 111-112.
the scene progresses she puts forward her marvellous and impassioned arguments which brought her universal praise and admiration, though, of course, she is timely prompted by Lucio. Even Lucio expresses his satisfaction by saying, "Ay well said".

In fact, like other prominent characters of the "problem comedies" Isabella also seems to display amazing contradictions. On certain occasions Isabella seems to be vehemently outspoken, fiery and aggressive but at times she seems to be excessively modest and intolerably silent. R.W. Chambers, one of the ablest critics of Isabella, wrote the following:

"It is precisely the alternation of vehemence and silence which gives her individuality".93

She seems to be kind and unkind, sympathetic and unsympathetic towards her wretched brother, Claudio. She seems to be also capable of sublime and trivial thoughts.

As many critics have already noted, Isabella seems to be an extremist. At the beginning of the dramatic action, she seems to have possessed the Puritan frame of mind and her desire for more strict restraint in the sisterhood of St. Clare is excessive. And it is also interesting to note that

whenever she praises or blames somebody she goes to extremes. For example, when Claudio seems to have endorsed her decision to sacrifice her brother rather than her honour she is full of praise:

There spake my brother: there my father's grave
Did utter forth such a voice.

(Act. III. Sc. i. 85-86)

But when Claudio requests her to let him live by consenting to Angelo's dishonourable proposal, her denunciation is that of an extremist:

O, you beast!
O faithless coward! O dishonest wretch!
Wilt thou be made a man out of my vice?
Is it not a kind of incest, to take life
From thine own sister's shame? What should I think?
Heaven shield my mother played my father fair:
For such a warped slip of wilderness
Never issued from his blood.

(Act. III. Sc. i. 135-142)

Her detestation of libertinism is also excessive and extreme because after Angelo she is the only other person in the play who thinks that the death penalty is a just punishment for fornication and her devotion to legalism is also excessive like that of Angelo.\textsuperscript{94} M.B. Smith has also suggested that

\textsuperscript{94} "The Problem Plays of Shakespeare"
p. 100.
symbolically Isabella stands for extremes of restraint.  

So, for manifold reasons, the character of Isabella cannot carry our unequivocal admiration and whole-hearted sympathy with her all the time. She is a complex and subtle portrait having many fascinating traits and some repulsive traits. Her character displays amazing contradictions and glaring inconsistencies which seem to be intensely human. We cannot fully understand and appreciate her character if we see her only as an embodiment of chastity or Holiness or Christian Mercy. After all, she is slightly an extraordinary girl having virtues and faults of ordinary human nature. Ernest Schanzer seems to be quite justified when he wrote:  

"Throughout the play Shakespeare plays with affections for Isabel alternately arousing and chilling it".  

As for Claudio, critics seem to agree that among all the characters of "Measure" he is most sympathetically portrayed by the dramatist. Of course, it is a mistake to think that Claudio's character has not evoked contradictory responses from the critics. Hazlitt's famous statement that our sympathies are repulsed and defeated in all

---

95 "Dualities in Shakespeare" (Univ. of Toranto Press,1966, p. 137).

96 "The Problem Plays of Shakespeare", p. 97.
directions definitely includes Claudio and we know that Coleridge found him detestable. But D.R.C. March, who does not feel much sympathy and admiration for Angelo, Isabella and Mistress Overdone, acknowledges that Claudio can enlist our sympathies at certain times.

One interesting point about Claudio is that he seems to be a befitting character in a problem play if we want to give the term "problem play" some of its Ibsentite connotation. The predicament of Claudio, which seems to be the central issue of the play reminds us of William Falder, a character of Galsworthy's "Justice" which is a modern problem play. Claudio, like Falder, seems to be an unfortunate victim of strict and rigid law as Angelo has stated to Isabella:

It is the law, not I, that condemn your brother;

(Act. II. Sc. ii. 80)

In a way, he seems to be a tragic character because we cannot but feel sympathy for him when we see him languishing in Angelo's prison desperately hoping to live relaying on the capacity of his sister to move the heart of a rigorous

97 Case Book, Macmillan 1971,p.47 (Original source, "Characters of Shakespeare's plays" 1815)

98 Ibid.

ruler like Angelo. Claudio himself has felt that his predicament is his own making because he has indulged himself in "too much liberty" and "immoderate use". If he had not been incontinent, Angelo would not have the chance to condemn him. As he describes the situation to Lucio:

Cla. From too much liberty, my Lucio, Liberty,
As surfeit, is the father of much fast;
So every scope by immoderate use
Turns to restraint. Our natures do pursue,
Like rats that ravin down their proper bane,
A thirsty evil; and when we drink, we die.

(Act.I. Sc. ii. 117-122)

Then Claudio justifies his position by saying that his cohabitation with Juliet had some legal sanction because "upon a true contract he got possession to Julietta's bed" though he lacked the denunciation of outward order due to the propagation of a dower remaining in the coffer of her friends. He also expresses his feeling that he has been that first victim of a newly revived law:

.......... and for a name
Now puts the drowsy and neglected act
Freshly on me : it is surely for a name.


L.C. Knights found in these lines a slight uncertainty of attitude in Shakespeare's handling of Claudio which partially
explains the play's disturbing effect. F.R. Leavis finds no ambiguity here and holds that Claudio's behaviour is quite natural:

"And that he should be bitterly self-reproachful and self-condemnatory and impute a heavier guilt on himself than anyone else is surely natural."

He is not a libertine, true (though a pal of Lucio) but as he now sees the case, he has recklessly courted temptation, has succumbed to uncontrollable appetite so engendered, as a result brought death upon himself and upon Juliet disgrace and misery. Ernest Schanzer explains the situation in terms of contradictory marriage laws prevailing in Shakespeare's time which both encouraged and condemned secret marriages. On the whole, it seems quite true that Shakespeare being one of the most representative writers of his age must have exploited the contraries and arbitrariness of contemporary marriage laws for his own purpose in a play like "Measure" which thematically deals with the administration of law and justice.


101 "The Greatness of "Measure for Measure", Scrutiny x, 1942, p. 236.

102 "The Problem Plays of Shakespeare", p. 78.
It may be a reasonable conjecture that Claudio is a slightly conceived ambivalent character. He wants both to live and die. As he himself has said to the Friar Duke:

I have hope to live, and am prepared to die.

(Act. III. sc. 1, 4)

After realizing the worthlessness of human life from the Duke's death speech, he seems to be ready to welcome death as he tells the Duke:

I humbly thank you.
To sue to live, I find I seek to die,
And seeking death, find life. Let it come on.

(Act. III. Sc. 1. 42-44)

On Isabella's arrival after her unsuccessful mission with Angelo, Claudio hopefully asks her whether there was any remedy and we see that Isabella discourages him:

... Darest thou die?
The sense of death is most in apprehension;
And the poor beetle that we tread upon
In corporal sufferance finds a pang as great
As when a giant dies.

(Act. III. Sc. 1. 76-80)

And Claudio's reply seems to be spirited and brave;
Why give you me this shame?
Think you I can a resolution fetch
From flowery tenderness? If I must die,
I will encounter darkness as a bride
An hug it in mine arms.

(Act. III. Sc.1.80-84)

Again when Isabella says:

"If I would yield my virginity
Thou mightst be freed ",

(Act. III. Sc.1 96-97)

Claudio's reply is immediate:

O heavens, it cannot be!

(Act. III. Sc. 1 98)

But immediately afterwards, his mind is completely overpowered with the fear of death and then entreats Isabella to let him live by sacrificing her honour saying to her that compelled sins are no sins. He seems to be too much afraid of death and so he has no other alternative than to live:

The weariest and most loathed worldly life
That age, ache, penury and imprisonment
Can lay on nature, is a paradise
To what we fear of death.

(Act.III,Sc.1.128-131)
Here we are presented with a complex situation of life and death where a young man like Claudio, who is a frail creature, cannot take a clear decision. That is why he wants and does not want his sister to yield her body to Angelo's will. He wants both an honourable death and a dishonourable life. And we have already noted his dual attitude to his offence and how he felt himself guilty and not guilty.

There seems to be no doubt that Claudio is mostly a sympathetic portrait. The whole of our sympathy and affection seems to be engaged with him when we find him the victim of Angelo's newly-revived law. Moreover, if we turn our attention to some statements made on Claudio by such wise and kind-hearted characters like Escalus and the Provost, we are likely to be much more sympathetic and affectionate towards him. Escalus, in reference to Claudio's offence says the following to Angelo:

Ay, but yet
Let us be keen, and rather cut a little,
Thou fall, and bruise to death. Alas, this gentleman,
Whom I would save, had a most noble father.

(Act. II. Sc. i. 4-6)

The Provost calls him "gentle Claudio" and feels pity for him:

Alas,
He hath but as offended in a dream;
All sects, all ages smack of this vice, and he
To die for it!

(Act. II. Sc. ii. 3.6)

Even disreputable characters like Lucio, Pompey and Mistress Overdone sympathise with Claudio's predicament in affectionate words. Mistress Overdone, giving the information of Claudio's arrest to the two Gentlemen, says the following:

Well, well! There is one yonder arrested and carried to prison, was worth five thousand of you all.

(Act. I. Sc. ii. 56-57)

When Claudio seeks Lucio's help and requests him to take Isabella to Angelo for his life, Lucio at once agrees and says:

I pray she may! as well for the encouragement of the like, which else would stand under grievous imposition, as for enjoying of thy life, who I would be sorry should be thus foolishly lost at a game of tick-tack— I'll to her

(Act. I. Sc. ii. 177-180).

And when Isabella wants to know from Lucio for what reason Claudio has been put into prison, Lucio says:

For that which, if myself might be his judge,
He should receive his punishment in thanks:
He hath got his friend with child.

(Act. I. Sc. iv. 27-29)
Hearing or reading such statements made on Claudio by both the respectable and disreputable characters alike, we are likely to see Claudio, as E.M.W. Tillyard has so admirably stated, as an unfortunate young deeply to be pitied.

But there are other statements made on Claudio which run counter to the above, and which diminish our sympathy and admiration towards Claudio to a great extent. Such comments are made by Claudio himself, Angelo, the Duke and even Isabella. Claudio himself has confessed to Lucio that he has made too much use of "liberty" and his "immoderate use" of sexual appetite is responsible for his present "restraint" imposed upon him by Angelo. Angelo has also emphatically said more than once that Claudio has committed a "filthy vice" "a foul wrong". Even Isabella has started her plea to Angelo admitting that the vice committed by Claudio is abhorrent to her and in the final scene also, she has said:

My brother had but justice,
In that he did the thing for which he died:

(Act. V. Sc. i. 446–447)

The Duke also says that Claudio and Juliet have committed a "sin" a "most offenceful act". Moreover, our sympathy and

---

admiration towards Claudio may suffer a serious setback when we see him desperately willing to live at the cost of her sister's chastity. When he says to Isabella "0 heavens it cannot be" (III.i. 98) and "Thou shalt not do it" (III. i. 103) he seems to command our full sympathy and admiration. But, in the next moment, he changes his mind:

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

(Act.III.Sc. i.131-134)

We are surprised and shocked, and we are unlikely to exonerate his cowardice, and do not think that Isabella is absolutely cruel in her savage tirade to him. So critics have some justification to call him "detestable", meanminded and cowardlike. So it seems quite clear that Claudio cannot carry our full sympathy at this particular point of the dramatic action. Because Isabella's decision to sacrifice her brother's life does not appear to be all that unnatural though it is inhuman and Claudio's desire for life at the cost of her chastity appears dishonourable and detestable though it is human.

The Duke, as stated by many critics, is a much more complex figure than Angelo, Isabella and Claudio, and obviously, his character has also called forth a remarkable diversity of critical opinions and interpretations. As compared with
Angelo, Isabella or Claudio or even Lucio, the Duke does not seem to be a vividly realized individual, and there seems to be something enigmatic and extra-human about him. In a way, his character is a puzzle and it has aroused both strong aversion and profound reverence in the minds of the critics. One of the popular views was given by W.W. Lawrence:

"The ruler of the degenerate city of Vienna is to be regarded as a conventional and romantic figure whose actions are mainly determined by the theatrical exigencies and effectiveness, he is a stage Duke not a real person".\(^{104}\) On the other hand, Christian interpreters like G. Wilson Knight, F.R. Leavis, R.W. Chambers and many others tend to see him as an embodiment of Divine Providence, Divine Justice or Grace or Jesus Christ. And there are many who see him as a purely human figure but they are repelled by his disguises and secret strategems and telling of lies. As E.M.W. Tillyard has stated:

"He is an eavesdroper, he chooses as his deputy a man whom he knows to have behaved shabbily to his betrothed lady, and he displayed the utmost cruelty in concealing from Isabella for a longer time than was strictly necessary the news that her brother still lived. Certainly as a real

---

person he is the most unsympathetic character.\textsuperscript{105}  
O.J. Campbell thinks that the Duke is a conventional satiric commentator in the satiric anatomy of "Measure" and there are some similar characters in the plays of John Marston.\textsuperscript{106}  
One of the more plausible suggestions was initiated by E.M. Pope who said that the Duke is an image of a Renaissance ruler who was allowed to use extraordinary means for his administrative purposes\textsuperscript{107} and this has been supported by Ernest Schanzer, J.W. Lever and many others. The most recent hypothesis about the Duke's character is that Shakespeare has drawn the Duke as an idealised image of James I in whose court the play was first acted. Taking the hints from Scottish antiquarian Chalmers, Louis Albrect and D.L. Stevenson, Ernest Schanzer has developed the thesis that the Duke is an idealized portrait of James I, made up of qualities in a ruler which James in his writings and particularly praised.\textsuperscript{108} And this view is more or less supported by J.W. Lever.\textsuperscript{109}  
\textsuperscript{106} "Shakespeare's Satire" - p. 124, 127.  
\textsuperscript{108} "The Problem Plays of Shakespeare", pp. 121-124.  
All these above interpretations have a great deal of plausibility and hence it appears that the Duke's character is a complex web, a "dome of many coloured glass" which embraces diversified interpretations. W.W. Lawrence's contention that the Duke is essentially a stage-puppet and that all his actions are irrational cannot be the whole truth about the Duke's character. The view of the Christian interpreters that the Duke is an embodiment of Jesus Christ or Divine Providence seems to have an extremely limited validity because the Duke's behaviour and activities are so inconsistent and contradictory and his character so complex and human that he cannot be looked upon as an embodiment of some absolute Christian ideas or beliefs. One simple way of looking at the Duke may be that we should take him as a real human being, in some ways a ruler in the Renaissance context, somewhat an idealized portrait of James I, but, after all, a man having some whims and eccentricities and idiosyncracies, a slightly enigmatic personality, a philosopher made out of Christian and Pagan beliefs having both faults and virtues of ordinary human nature.

To the tradition of legends and stories the Duke may have owed the habit of a disguised ruler who loved to see the conditions of his subjects with his own eyes. But Shakespeare seems to have suitably adjusted the character to the contemporary environment. J.W. Lever has suggested that
Shakespeare took emperor Maximian and the Roman emperor Alexander Severus as his models in creating the character of the Duke. Maximian and Severus were considered to be paragons of rulers, the former was noted for his courtesy and magnanimity and blending of justice with mercy and the latter was famous for stamping out vice and corruption by intrigues and devious methods. And if we consider the Duke's character in this context which has a historical and traditional foundation, our discontentment towards the Duke for his love of intrigues and disguises may be considerably diminished.

At the beginning of the play the Duke's action of handing over the administration to Angelo seems natural and plausible. The Duke had been extravagantly lenient in enforcing the law, and as a result there had been extreme disorder:

Duke. We have strict statutes and most biting laws, The needful bits and curbs to headstrong jades, Which for this fourteen years we have let slip; Even like an overgrown lion in a cave That goes not out to prey. (Act.I.Sc.iii.19-23)

And due to this over lax administration:

Liberty plucks Justice by the nose,

---

The baby beats the nurse, and quite athwart
Goes all decorum.

(Act.I.Sc. iii.29-31)

As the Duke feels guilty for giving people "scope", he is now not in a position to reinforce strict laws because in that role he would appear tyrannical. So he thinks that Angelo is the fittest person as he had been popularly known as a man of iron self-control and austerity to stamp out the prevailing corruption and sexual licence in Vienna. Of course, he knows that Angelo has treated his betrothed lady shabbily, but still he chooses Angelo because Escalus would be too lenient and noble an administrator in Vienna where "corruption boils and bubbles". It is important to note here that the Duke seems to be a thoughtful man with a philosophical bent of mind. And like many other important characters of the "problem comedies", he seems to have had both doubt and faith about a person with whom he is intimately related. He has expressed his faith in Angelo in the very first scene when he tells Angelo that he (Angelo) has some virtues and he should try to use his virtues for the good of the society. And, now, he expresses his doubt as he tells the Friar that Angelo might be "a seerer" and wants to observe him:

Lord Angelo is precise;
Stands at a guard with Envy; scarce confesses
That his blood flows; or that his appetite
Is more to bread than stone. Hence shall we see
If power change purpose, what our seemers be.

(Act. I. Sc. III. 50-54)

Another important point about the Duke's character is that he seems to be intellectually and emotionally superior to the other characters of the play. Lucio's description of him as a "fantastical Duke of dark corners" seems to contain a great deal of truth. We can also get a glimpse of his character from the following remark of Escalus who seems to speak sensibly almost all the time. When the Friar Duke asks about the Duke's disposition, Escalus says:

Escalus: One that, above all strifes, contended especially to know himself.

Duke: What pleasure was he given to?

Escalus: Rather rejoicing to see another merry that merry at anything which professed to make him rejoice — A gentleman of all temperance.

(Act.III.Sc. ii.226-231)

Again, when Lucio makes slanderous remarks on the absent Duke, the Friar Duke protests which also gives us a peep into the character of the Duke:

Lucio: A very superficial, ignorant, unweighing follow —

Duke: Either this is envy in you, folly or mistaking.
The very stream of his life, and the business he had helmed, must upon a warranted need give him a better proclamation. Let him be testified in his own bringings-forth, and he shall appear to the envious a scholar, a statesman, and a soldier. Therefore, you speak unskillfully: or, if your knowledge be more it is much darkened in your malice.

(Act.III.Sc.II. 136-144)

With the help of such bold strokes, Shakespeare has made the Duke appear before us a respectable and lovable gentleman.

The Duke's decision to intervene directly in the affairs of Vienna after Act. III. Sc. I-151, seems to be logically motivated. When he observes that Angelo has almost become a diabolical villain, he meets Isabella and proposes his stratagem to check Angelo. Of course, the Duke has not said anything to anybody about why he is intervening now, it is simply because he is rather a "shy fellow", "a man of dark corners", and it may be a part of his disguise. It is not as W.W. Lawrence has stated:

"The picture of the Duke at the very beginning, his retirement and the appointment of a deputy are natural and plausible but what follows is a story-book business".111

Here we may propose to explain the point in the following way. As we have already stated the Duke perhaps thought that the strict enforcement of law, which was possible on the part of Angelo, would be the best possible means to root out the sexual licence in Vienna. But Angelo's cruel and inhuman imposition of the rigid law and his own downfall and his decision to exploit his office to satisfy his evil desires made the Duke come for direct intervention because the social situation of Vienna became much worse than it was under his lax rule.

It is a known fact in the criticism of "Measure" that many critics have strongly resented the Duke's application of "craft against vice" to prevent Angelo's designs. We have already noted in the previous chapter that the bedtrick was a popular fictional convention which had few occurrences in real life. But one noteworthy point about the Duke is that he seems to be a transcript of a Renaissance ruler who has the privilege of using extraordinary means to gain his ends. As E.M. Pope has made it clear:

"Hence, the Duke in 'Measure for Measure' is quite justified in using disguise, applying craft against vice (III. ii. 291) and secretly watching Angelo much as King James advises his son in the "Basilikon Doron" to watch his
subordinates". 112

Another point to be noted here is that the Duke seems to be justified in applying a "tit for tat" method in the particular social milieu of Vienna which is even worse than that of "All's Well". As the Duke himself has emphatically stated, "corruption has boiled and bubbled over Vienna" and "there is a great fever of goodness" and Angelo, whom the Duke, most probably thought to be the fittest person to "strike home", has almost become a Machiavellian using his office to satisfy his sexual desires. Even after enjoying his sex with the desired lady, he is almost ready to break his former promise, thinking that Isabella had no power to expose him publicly. Under such circumstances the Duke has to employ Machiavellian strategems to trap a Machiavellian villain. In a way, in a degenerate and demoralized city of Vienna, the Duke's indecent means for good ends cannot be totally blamed.

Many critics have already acknowledged that the Duke's "death" speech is magnificent for its nobility of diction, and beautiful and thoughtful similes which seem

to emphasize the meaninglessness of life. In fact, the Duke seems to command our respect and admiration when he advises Juliet to repent and Claudio to be prepared to die. As soon as we hear or read such a speech we are under the spell of high poetry written with sublimity and grandeur:

Be absolute for death: either death or life
Shall thereby be sweeter. Reason thus with life:
If I do lose thee, I do lose a thing
That none but fools would keep. A breath thou art,
Servile to all skyey influences
That dost this habitation where thou keep'st
Hourly afflict.

(Act.III. Sc. I. 5-11)

Though in reality the Duke does not allow Claudio to die, he seems to act like a moral teacher or a spiritual guide to both Juliet and Claudio and thereby becomes a dignified personality who evokes reverence on such occasions.

Furthermore, the Duke perhaps appeared to be a lovable and respectable gentleman to the Jacobean audience.
for his tempering of justice with mercy in dealing with Isabella, Mariana, Angelo and Lucio in the final scene. Because the tempering of justice with mercy in matters of life and death was a persistent demand of the Renaissance humanist writers and thinkers. Of course, the Duke’s action is too subtle and sophisticated. It cannot be simply said that he gives divine justice to everybody, as God had forgiven all sinners.

On the other hand, there are some aspects ingrained in the Duke’s character which have aroused a lot of dissatisfaction in the minds of the critics. Some of his actions seem to be inexplicable, eccentric and enigmatic. As a Renaissance ruler, of course, he has the privilege of using extraordinary means to achieve his ends, but he goes too far. He has been telling a number of lies, mystifying his subjects and misleading them, and he is sometimes enjoying a stage-manager’s thrill showing “supreme indifference to human feeling”. He is not letting Isabella know that her brother has been saved and thereby heaping more suffering on Isabella who has already suffered a lot. At the beginning of the fifth act, his activities seem to be theatrical which offends good taste. We may say here that the Duke has told so many lies and done so many strange things to satisfy his own fantastic whims and eccentricities and such a character, whether in drama or in real life cannot claim so much respect and sympathy from us. We have already referred to the most recent hypothesis about
the Duke's character that Shakespeare has drawn an image of James I in the Duke, and so it is likely that the Duke would obviously show a lack of accord between his words and actions for which James I was well-known. And we know that James I was equally praised and blamed for his strange and contradictory activities and so he was popularly known as the "wisest fool in Christendom". We may also do the same thing in case of the Duke. One glaring example of the discrepancy between the Duke's words and actions may be seen in the way in which he pardons Angelo. At first he threatens Angelo:

Haste still pays haste, and leisure answers leisure;
Like doth quit like, and Measure still for Measure.
Then, Angelo, thy fault's thus manifested,
Which, thou thou would'st deny, denies thee vantage.
We do condemn thee to the very block
where Claudio stooped to death, and with like haste.
Away with him.


Then after hearing the appeals of Mariana and Isabella he revokes his former sentence rather abruptly:

Well, Angelo, your evil quits you well
Look that you love your wife; her worth, worth yours.

(Act. V. Sc. I. 494–495)

Of course, one may say here that these are the pretensions of
a "stage Duke" but we may also be justified in saying that
the discrepancy remains.

On the whole, it seems safe to say that we should
see the Duke as a real human being who has some whims and
eccentricities, idiosyncrasies and predilections. Of course,
it is very likely that many complex things went into the
making of his character. In a way, he seems to be a
disguised ruler of the popular stories, a Renaissance ruler
being both idealist and realist, an image of James I, and,
slightly a conventional stage figure. We have already
stated that the Christian commentators with their laboured
arguments persuade us to believe that the Duke is a super-
human figure, an embodiment of Divine Providence or Jesus
Christ, and they seem to give excessive importance on
Angelo's following speech to the Duke when the former found
himself defenceless and surrenders:

  O my dread lord,
  I should be guiltier than my guiltiness
  To think I can be undiscernible,
  When I perceive your Grace, like power divine,
  Hath looked upon my passes.

  (Act. V. Sc. I. 364-368)

Here, of course, Angelo compares the Duke with a "power
divine" who had looked upon his "passes". But he is also
expressing his loyalty to the Duke who is a Renaissance
ruler having the divinely delegated task of judging his subjects. The Duke is like a "power divine" in Angelo's imagination because Angelo had not known the shifts and tricks of the Duke. So we may say that this speech should not be the criterion for judging the Duke as a Divine Providence. Even if we take it for granted that in the last scene the Duke is giving God's mercy to all the sinning mortals, we may equally see that he is also extending them judicial pardon or secular justice.

It is true that the Duke is not a vividly realized individual like Angelo, Isabella and Lucio, but it is not reasonable to claim that the Duke belongs to another level of dramatic representation and say that Shakespeare has totally failed to make the character naturalistic and psychologically credible. We may say with some confidence that within certain limitations imposed by dramatic conventions, Shakespeare has done enough to make the Duke an individual human being. Lucio has called him a "fantastical Duke" "a shy fellow" and we know that the Duke has the "makings of a philosopher, statesman and a scholar." As J.W. Lever has rightly stated:

"Some individual traits are allowed to him, he is modest, retiring and scholarly, capable of certain wry humour and even given to occasional petulance".¹¹⁴

The Duke's sensitiveness to slander is one of the important facets of his personality which makes him a human being rather than a Divine Providence. The Duke seems to be very much concerned after hearing the back-biting and slanderous remarks of Lucio and bursts into soliloquy:

No might nor greatness in mortality
Can censure escape. Back-wounding calumny
The whitest virtue strikes. What king so strong
Can tie the gall up in the slanderous tongue

(Act.III. Sc. ii,179-183)

The Duke also derides Lucio vehemently in the final scene for slandering a prince and compels him to marry his punk which Lucio did not want. In fact, the Duke's sensitiveness to slander, dislike of crowds, discrepancy between words and actions make him as an image of James I and at the same time an individual human being.

It is difficult to endorse the view expressed by many critics that the Duke is a static figure, a stage puppet and his character does not show any inner development. But, as we have already noted, the Duke is a subtle and complex portrait and it may be that his development is also subtle and complex. It may be said that at the beginning the Duke has started as idealist and as a philosopher. He has been extravagantly lenient, kindhearted, loved a
"life removed" and hesitated to enforce strict laws. But, some time after, he seems to have developed a pragmatic approach towards life and its problems. We see that he takes timely action to throw cold water on Angelo's nefarious design and rights the wrongs done to his subjects. In fact, Shakespeare seems to have made the Duke an active member of the human society comprising Angelo and Mariana, Claudio and Juliet and Lucio and Miss. Kate Keepdown. And at the final stage of the dramatic action, we may note that the Duke has given up his former desire for a "life removed" and Isabella has also given up her former desire for monastic life. In other words, the two idealists of the first two acts have adapted themselves to the conditions of real life in the last act.

To sum up, it may be said that much of our general dissatisfaction about the Duke's character comes from the fact that we are very often fond of comparing him with other characters of the play. Compared with the ebullient humanity and intense vitality of the lowlife characters, and the psychological insight and passionate intensity with which the three major characters are created (namely Isabella, Angelo and Claudio) the Duke appears to be somewhat a dual figure
—standing midway between real personality and type. But this seems to illustrate the complexity of the character and not the failure of Shakespeare's art of character portrayal. W.W. Lawrence's view that the Duke in a stage-character is plausible to a certain extent especially in the second half of the play and the more recent view that the Duke is an image of James I has a great deal of plausibility but the hypothesis that the Duke is an embodiment of Divine Providence seems to have an extremely limited validity. As J.W. Lever has rightly stated:

"His infallibility is taxed by his own admission of fault in giving people "scope"; his omniscience by the unforeseen arrival of Angelo's messenger in IV.ii. with orders for the execution of Claudio; his omnipotence by Barnardine's dogged refusal to die at anyone's bidding. Moreover, it may be said that the majesty and dignity of the so-called divine Duke is taken away to some extent by the slanderous remarks of Lucio on the absent Duke.

115 Here I am a bit indebted to J.W. Lever. But Lever's full statement is "At the same time the Duke himself, a prisoner of his own exemplary image failed as an authentic human being and remained as a stage device midway between personality and type". (Introduction to the Arden Edition 1965, Methuen Paperback, 1971, p. xcvxi)

Of course, one may retort that as the Duke has not given capital punishment to such hardened criminals as Angelo and Barnardine, he has bestowed God's mercy on the sinners. But from another viewpoint, it may be stated that the Duke, while bidding Angelo to love his wife Mariana, making Lucio marry Kate Keepdown, putting Barnardine into the safe custody of Friar Peter and himself deciding to marry Isabella seems to have done yeoman's service as a ruler to his subjects. And in doing so, the Duke seems to be much more concerned with the social welfare and material bliss of his subjects rather than their spiritual salvation. On the whole, the Duke is not indefensible as a man and ruler, which his detractors would like us to believe.

As has been noted by many outstanding critics, the special highlight of "Measure" is the immense vitality and exuberance with which the low-life characters are portrayed. In fact, in depicting the characters of Lucio, Pompey and Mistress Overdone, Shakespeare seems to have displayed his extraordinary keenness of observation and his remarkable insight into the dual nature of man sharing both good and evil traits. It is interesting to note that Lucio is Shakespeare's original creation and his creative energy seems to have been deeply engaged in portraying this lively and interesting character. Though a "masterly and vivid creation", like other major characters Lucio is a complex character who also evokes more or less contradictory
responses from the critics. Though most critics seem to be very much impressed by Lucio's exuberant vitality and zest for life, there are many who castigate him for being morally vicious. Arthur Quiller Couch has found fault with Shakespeare for giving too much attention to Lucio's character:

"But again it is one of the puzzles of the play that the Jackanapes Lucio should take so much of the limelight while Isabella and Claudio — the two that most count stand silent in the background".117

The Christian allegorizers who think that the disguised Duke is the Incarnate Lord are of the view that Lucio is Satan or Eternal Adversary.118 But it seems quite absurd to see Lucio as an allegorical representation of Satan because we can easily perceive that Lucio is a vividly conceived individual, he has a tremendous vitality and warmth of humanity. Though a conventional comic character, he is after all a man whose character shows "amazing contradictions". He seems to be a typical Jacobean gallant, a comic character created in the tradition of Falstaff and Parolles. Though he is a whore-monger, "a butterfly of the brothel", he also has many lovable and attractive traits. He seems to have both devilish

vices and angelic virtues whom we can hate and love.

When we go on looking at Lucio throughout the play, we find that sometimes Lucio appears to be a virtuous person and sometimes vicious though his vitality as a comic character always remains intact with him. When Lucio is seen for the first time on the stage conversing with the two Gentlemen and cracking jokes with them, we immediately become aware that we are in a comic but bawdy underworld and that we are not going to have a fine gentleman in Lucio whom we would love and respect unequivocally. At first, he seems to create an unfavourable impression. As soon as Mistress Overdone enters, Lucio indulges in a contemptuous remark:

Lucio. Behold, behold where Madam Mitigation comes! I have purchased as many diseases under her roof as come to —

(Act. I. Sc. ii. 41-43)

Here we come to know that Lucio is a brothel-goer whom we are likely to despise. But in the same scene we find that though Lucio is a morally vicious man, he is not totally devoid of the milk of human kindness. When Lucio meets his friend, Claudio, as he is being taken to prison by the provost he becomes seriously concerned and wants to know the circumstances under which Claudio has been arrested and so he asks a volley of questions:
Why, how now, Claudio?
Whence comes this restraint?
What is it murder?
Lechery?  

(Act. I. Sc.ii.116-129, 131)

And when Claudio requests him to hear one word Lucio spontaneously consents:

A hundred - if they will do you any good.

(Act. I. sc. ii. 132)

Having found out the circumstances under which Claudio is arrested and going to be executed, he gives his immediate advice in the following words:

I warrant it is: and thy head stands so tickle on the shoulders, that a milkmaid, if she be in love, may sigh it off. Send after the Duke, and appeal to him.

(Act. I. sc. II. 161-164)

Then Claudio bids Lucio to go to his sister, Isabella, who (according to Claudio) would be able to move the heart of the strict deputy. We see that Lucio is ready to go and expresses his sympathy in the following words:

I pray she may: as well for the encouragement of the like, which else would stand under grievous imposition, as for the enjoying of thy life, who I would be sorry should be thus
foolishly lost at a game of tick-tack — I will to her.
(Act. I. sc. ii. 177-181)

The nunnery scene in which Isabella is persuaded by Lucio to plead to Angelo for Claudio's life presents Lucio in even brighter colours. Lucio informs Isabella that her brother is in prison but does not forget to express his opinion that "he should receive punishments in thanks for getting his friend with child". Isabella cannot understand him properly and says:

Sir, make me not your story.
(Act. I. sc. IV. 29)

Then he expresses his admiration for Isabella which betrays his ability to appreciate the virtue of others and his frank confession about his own nature:

It is true.
I would not, though it is my familiar in,
With maids to seem the lapwing, and to jest
Tongue from the heart, play with all virgins so,
I hold you as a thing enskied and sainted
By your renouncement, and immortal spirit,
And to be talked with in sincerity
As with a saint.
(Act. I. sc. iv. 30-37)

Lucio's attitude towards Claudio's offence is quite clear,
he has repeatedly said that it is a natural activity without any touch of criminality and his description of the Claudio-Juliet affair to Isabella is highly interesting, and suffused with vivid imagery:

Your brother and his lover have embraced;
As those that feed grow full, as blossoming time
That from the seediness that bare fallow brings
To teeming foison, even so her plenteous womb
Expresseth his full tilth and husbandry.

(Act. I.sc.iv. 40–44)

Lucio's famous description of Angelo (Act. I.sc.iv.57–61) seems to be quite penetrating. His opinion that Angelo is an unnatural man and that Claudio is a victim of the rigour of Angelo's statute are commendable and we share his compassion towards Claudio and agree with him when he tells that Angelo had

...... hath picked out an act
Under whose heavy sense your brothers life
Falls into forfeit; he arrests him on it,
And follows close the rigour of the statute
To make him an example. (Act. I. sc.iv. 64–68)

Lucio then inspires Isabella, with authentic words full of worldly wisdom, and Isabella, who had her initial hesitations and doubts, is roused to action which is clear
from the following conversation:

Lucio. Assay the power you have.


Lucio. Over doubts are traitors,
And makes us lose the good we oft might win
By fearing to attempt. Go to Lord Angelo,
And let him learn to know, when maidens sue,
Men give like gods; but when they weep and kneel,
All their petitions are as freely theirs
As they themselves would owe them.

(Act.I.sc. iv. 76-83)

And Isabella seems to gain confidence and says:

I will see what I can do.

(Act. I.sc. iv. 84)

In the second scene of the second act when Isabella is appealing to Angelo for her brother's life she seems to be very much dependent Lucio's promptings and inspirations. When Isabella is about to give up her objective, rebuffed by the legalistic arguments of Angelo, Lucio gives her timely encouragement:

Give it not over so — To him again,
Entreat him,
Kneel down before him, hang upon his gown;
You are too cold. It you should need a pin,
You could not with more tame a tongue desire it
To him, I say.

(Act.II.sc. ii.43–47)

When Isabella fumbles he is ever-ready to inspire her with such words:

Ay, touch him: there is the vain,

(Act.II. sc.ii 70)

O, to him, to him, wench! He will relent;
He is coming: I perceive it.

(Act.II. sc.ii. 125–126)

Repeatedly prompted and encouraged by Lucio we see that Isabella goes from strength to strength and puts forward her magnificently persuasive arguments one after another to Angelo, which make the latter falter and say:

She speaks, and it is such sense
That my sense breeds with it — Fare you well.

(Act.II.sc.ii.143–144)

He then invites Isabella next day and though his motive is bad, yet it is equally clear that he is moved by Isabella's speeches a great deal.

Though Lucio is a libertine and a foulmouthed lecher, Shakespeare has engaged our sympathies with him by making him
a "spokesman of nature". To him lechery is something like a joke and a game and rulers should be lenient to it because it is a natural function like eating and drinking. He has said that Angelo, who was not made "by man and woman after the down-right way of creation", is "taking away the life of a man for the rebellion of a codpiece" and Claudio is dying "for filling a bottle with a tundish". Such statements with their bawdy humour produces merriment on the stage and it is important to note that sometimes they also drive home universal truths. For these reasons it becomes extremely difficult to detest a character like Lucio.

But there are some vicious aspects of Lucio's character which invite our strong aversion. So far as Claudio–Isabella affair is concerned his attitude is quite sensible and his service highly commendable, and his description of Angelo seems to be a downright truth. But his attitude towards his libertine associates and his calumnious remarks on the absent Duke and his nasty design to avoid the responsibility for Mistress Kate Keepdown are highly objectionable and somewhat inhuman. In the second scene of the third act we are shown that Pompey is sentenced to imprisonment for his bawdy trade and he looks hopefully at Lucio on the latter's arrival. And it is important to note Lucio's attitude towards Pompey:

Pom. I spy comfort, I cry bail, Here is a gentleman, and
a friend of mine.

Lucio. How now, noble Pompey; what, at the wheels of Caesar? Art thou led in triumph? What, is there none of Pygmalion's images newly made woman to be had now, for putting the hand in the pocket and extracting clutched? What reply, ha? What say'st thou to this tune, matter and method? Is it not drowned in the last rain? Ha? What say'st thou, trot? Is the world as it was, man? Which is the way? As it sad, and few words? Or how? Or how? The trick of it?

(Act. III. sc. ii. 40-50)

Here we see that Lucio does not show any sympathy towards Pompey; rather, he scoffs at the latter. Moreover, he tells Pompey to his face that since he (Pompey) is corrupt, immoral and a bawd he must suffer the punishment for it. But Pompey does not give up hope:

I hope, sir, your good worship will be my bail

(Act. III. sc. ii. 70)

But, again, Lucio throws cold water on his hope:

Lucio. No, indeed will I not, Pompey; at is not the wear. I will, pray, Pompey, to increase your bondage; if you take it not patiently, why, your mettle is the more! Adieu, trusty Pompey — Bless you, friar.
In the same scene, we find that Lucio is a loose-tongued, foulmouthed fellow who feels pride in denigrating the virtues of the absent Duke. In his conversation with the Friar Duke he boastfully remarks that the Duke would have shown leniency to Claudio because he himself inclined towards sexual vice:

Duke. You are pleasant, sir, and speak space.

Lucio. Why, what a ruthless thing is this in him, for the rebellion of a codpiece to take away the life of a man! Would the Duke that is absent have done this? Ere he would have hanged a man for the getting a hundred bastards, he would have paid for the nursing a thousand. He had some feeling of the sport; he knew the service; and that instructed him to mercy.

Duke. I have never heard the absent Duke much detected for woman; he was not inclined that way.

Lucio. O Sir, you are deceived.

Duke. It is not possible.

Lucio. Who, not the Duke? Yes, your beggar of fifty; and his use was put a ducat in her clack-dish; the Duke had crotchets in him. He would be drunk too that let me inform you.

(Act.III.sc.ii. 109-126)
Though Lucio admits that the Duke was a "shy fellow" and that "the greater file of the subject held the Duke to be wise", he emphatically declares that the Duke was a "very superficial ignorant, unwavering fellow".

In these dramatic moments Lucio does not appear in bright colours, and his vivacity and bawdy humour cannot be sufficient safeguard against our strong sense of dissatisfaction and disapproval. Again, in the same scene, we know more about Lucio's perfidy and moral vice. When Mistress Overdone comes to request Escalus to show mercy to her, Escalus expresses his inability to do so because she had been warned several times but she still persists in her immoral traffic. Then Mistress Overdone makes Lucio responsible for her fate whose illegitimate child she has brought up:

Mis. O. My lord, this is one Lucio's information against me, Mistress Kate Keepdown was with child by him in the Duke's time, he promised her marriage. His child is a year and a quarter old come Philip and Jacob. I have kept it myself; and see how he goes about to abuse me.

Escalus. That fellow is a fellow of much license. Let him be called before us. Away with her to prison.
— Go to no more words.

(Act.III.sc.ii. 192-200)
The third scene of the fourth act again depicts Lucio both as a lovable and a detestable figure. As soon as Lucio appears before the Duke he expresses his deep compassion for Isabella and Claudio in the following words:

O pretty Isabella, I am pale at mine heart to see thine eyes so red: thou must be patient — I am fain to dine and sup with water and bran: I dare not for my head fill my belly: one fruitful meal would set me to it — But they say the Duke will be here tomorrow. By my troth, Isabel, I loved thy brother; if the old fantastical duke of dark corners had been at home, he had lived.

(Act. IV sc. iii. 150-157)

Then he indulges in slandering the absent Duke telling the Friar-Duke that the absent Duke was a womaniser. And when the Friar-Duke tries to avoid him, he makes him wait and expresses his pride in getting a wench with child:

Lucio. Nay tarry, I will go along with thee; I can tell thee pretty tales of the Duke.

Duke. You have told me too many of them already, sir, if they be true: if not true, none were enough.

Lucio. I was once before him for getting a wench with child.

Duke. Did you such a thing?

Lucio. Yes, marry, did I; but I was fain to forswear it;
they would else have married me to the rotten medlar.

(Act. IV. sc. iii. 163-171)

In a way, we may say that like other important characters of the play Lucio seems to be a proud man, a whimsical and eccentric fellow who wants to live in the world of his own making. To him lechery is a natural and universal human phenomenon and it should not come under the jurisdiction of strict legal administration. In fact, as a spokesman of nature Lucio's point of view cannot be totally discredited. But he seems to go to extremes in his advocacy of natural functions. He has gratified his sensual desires with Kate Keepdown and produced a child but is loath to marry her nor willing to take any responsibility. To him "marrying a punk is pressing to death, whipping and hanging". In the final scene the Duke finds it extremely difficult to deal with Lucio and takes a somewhat stern action by compelling him to marry his punk. And we feel that the play ends in Lucio's discomfiture though the other characters seem to share the spirit of reconciliation and reunion.

It is almost a consensus of the critics that the most redeeming feature of Lucio's character is his immense vitality and zest for life. He seems to provide an inexhaustible stream of joy in this "dark", "sombre" and
"serious" comedy. The audience and the readers are made so spellbound by his comic ebullience that they are very likely to ignore his morally vicious nature. Another significant point to be noted is that Lucio wants to exploit each and every situation that comes before him for raising a laugh. He is marvellously witty though his wit is very often irreverent. In the last scene when Mariana says to the Duke that she is neither a maid, a widow nor a wife Lucio interferes and promptly says:

My lord, she may be a punk: for many of them are neither maid, widow nor wife.

(Act. V. sc. i. 180-181)

Then, again, when the Duke leaves for a while and Escalus wants to talk secretly with Isabella, Lucio says:

That is the way; for women are light at midnight.

(Act. V. sc. i. 279)

Though such conversations are bawdy, they were enough to provide merriment to the youthful audience of Shakespeare whose dramatic taste was, most probably, simple and unsophisticated.

To sum up, it may be said that Lucio's character is made up of such stuff that it provokes contradictory and mutually opposed responses from the audience and the readers so one may endorse the following statement of Ernest Schanzer:
"His frivolities do not claim his entire being; they are partly a cloak for a nobler self which comes out in his conversations with Isabel, above all in his "by my troth Isabel, I loved thy brother" (4.3.153)\textsuperscript{119}.

On the other hand, one finds it quite difficult to refute the observation made by D.R.C. March:

"Earlier in the play, Lucio together with Pompey, seemed to have something of the warmth and humanity that the Duke, Angelo and Isabella so noticeably lack. As the play progresses the cynicism he professes is shown to be increasingly vicious. He abandons Pompey. For the no other reason than his desire to boast he slanders the Duke. Like Claudio he has got a woman with child but unlike him he has abandoned her."\textsuperscript{120}

In fact, the portraiture of Lucio's character seems to illustrate Shakespeare's persistent search for the "soul of goodness in things evil" and "a dram of evil in the best".

The character of Pompey also shows Shakespeare's intense interest in depicting the nature of the low-life

\textsuperscript{119} "The Problem Plays of Shakespeare"

people. Though most of the critics are fascinated by the exuberance and vitality of Pompey's character, there are some who castigate him for his immorality. E.C. Pettet calls him "obnoxious professional Pompey" and G.Wilson Knight suggests that Pompey represents professional immorality. However, after Lucio, Pompey seems to be the most important comic character who keeps the comic interest of the play alive. Though professionally a pimp who lives on the vices of others, Pompey scatters many home-truths in his remarks which display his worldly wisdom and practical knowledge of human affairs.

Like Lucio, Pompey is a perpetual entertainer and as soon as he appears on the stage the audience is likely to be thrilled by his scintillating wit and bawdy humour. One is greatly amused by the following statement of Pompey by which he encourages Mistress Overdone on the closure of her brothel:

Mis. O. Why here is a change indeed in the commonwealth! What shall become of me?

Pom. Come: fear you not: good counsellors lack no clients: though you change your place, you need


not change your trade: I will be your tapstor
still; courage, there will be pity taken on
you; you that have worn you eyes almost out in
the service, you will be considered.

(Act. I. sc. ii. 95-103)

And when Escalus asks Pompey about his profession, Pompey
frankly tells everything, and though we do not approve
his indecent profession, we are unlikely to be repulsed
with his bawdy humour:

Esc. Troth, and your bum is the greatest thing about
you; so that, in the beastliest sense, you are
Pompey the Great. Pompey, you are partly a bawd,
Pompey, howsoever you colour it in being a tapster
are you not? Come, tell me true, it shall be
better for you.

Pom. Truly, sir, I am a poor fellow that would live.

Esc. How would you live, Pompey? By being a bawd?

Pom. If the law will allow it sir.

Esc. But the law will not allow it, Pompey; nor it
shall not be allowed in Vienna.

Pom. Does your worship mean to geld and splay all the
youth in the city?

Esc. No, Pompey.
Pom.  Truly sir, in my opinion, they will to it then. If your worship will take order for the drabs and the knaves, you need not fear the bawds.

Esc.  There is pretty orders beginning, I can tell you.
      It is but heading and hanging.

(Act. II. sc. I. 214-234)

Pompey then good-humouredly declares that the entire city of Vienna will be depopulated if such a strict law is imposed on lechery.

Like Lucio, Pompey seems to create fun and humour in every occasion and situation in which he finds himself. When Provost asks him whether he would be able to cut off a man’s head, Pompey says with his usual, genial but bawdy humour:

If the man be a bachelor, sir, I can; but if he be a married man, he is his wife’s head; and I never cut off a woman’s head.

(Act. IV. sc. II. 2-4)

Pompey is also such a man who is absolutely happy and satisfied in his professions and in all circumstances of life. We know that he was happy in his former profession of a bawd and now in the prison house also, he seems to be elated with joy to find his old friends:

Pom.  I am as well acquainted here as I was in our house of profession: One would think it were Mistress
Overdone's own house, for here be many of her old customers.

(Act. IV. sc. III. 1-4)

Though we are fascinated by Pompey's genial humour and exuberant vitality we are also made aware of the fact that he is a notorious bawd who wants to carry on his immoral and illegal profession by hook or by crook. We know that he is badly involved in the affairs of Froth and Elbow's wife. Elbow, a simple and unsophisticated constable calls him a "notorious benefactor" and when he introduces Pompey to Escalus, he says:

Elbow. He, sir, A tapster, sir; parcel bawd; one that serves a bad woman; whose house, sir, was a they say, plucked down in the suburbs; and now she professes a hot house; which I think is a very ill house too.

(Act. II. sc. i. 62-65)

Even Pompey is rebuked by the respectable and sensible characters like the Duke and the Provost. Hearing Elbow's report regarding Pompey's immoral profession the Duke exclaims:

O heavens, what stuff is here!

(Act. III. sc. II. 5)

He also castigates him for carrying a filthy vice as a
means to live:

Duke. Fie, sirrah, a bawd, a wicked bawd;
The evil that thou causest to be done
That is they means to live. Do thou but think
What it is to cram a maw or clothe a back
From such a filthy vice.

(Act.III.sc.II. 18-22)

Escalus has also given him a stern warning:

Esc. Thank you, good Pompey; and, requital of your prophecy hark you: I advise you, let me not find you, before me again upon any complaint whatsoever; no not for dwelling Where you do. If I do, Pompey, I shall beat you to your tent, and prove a shrewd Caesar to you: in plain dealing, Pompey, I shall have you whipped. So far this time, Pompey, fare you well.

(Act.II. sc.1. 242-247)

Even the gentle Provost also threatens Pompey if the latter fails to discharge his function as a hangman:

Provost. Come, sir, leave me your snatches, and yield me a direct answer. Tomorrow morning are to die Claudio and Barnardine. Here is in our prison a common executioner, who in his office lacks a helper, if you will take it on
you to assist him it shall have your full time of imprisonment, and your deliverance with an unpitied whipping; for you have been a notorious bawd.

(Act. IV sc. ii. 5-12)

On these occasions, Pompey, in spite of his liveliness and humour, appears to be a detestable fellow. And it is significant that though the three important characters, Angelo, Isabella and Claudio are slightly dwarfed by the exigencies of the plot during the second half of the play, the comic characters like Lucio and Pompey do not seem to lose their independent volition. Their lighthearted approach to the serious situations of life, their philosophy of joy and merrymaking remain intact with them. On the whole, it may be said that so far as the main plot is concerned, complicated interrelations are treated in a spirit of high seriousness, but at the same time we can easily perceive that the comic characters like Lucio and Pompey with their rapturous jubilation make us aware all the time that we are in a comic world. This is how Shakespeare has made the world of "Measure" a complex web of joy and sorrow, good and evil, love and hatred which embraces both optimism and pessimism, idealism and cynicism.

123 W.W. Lawrence, "Shakespeare's Problem Comedies" 1931 (F.U.P. Co, New York, 1960 Edition) p.4. Lawrence has rightly observed that in the 'Problem Comedies' complicated interrelations of character are treated in a spirit of high seriousness.
The character of Mistress Overdone also seems to be another classic example of Shakespeare's finding "a soul of goodness in things evil". We are shown that Mistress Overdone is a notorious woman who wants to carry on her evil trade ignoring repeated warnings of the ruling authority. But though she wants to live on the vices of others, she is not without touch of humanity. We know that she has been bringing up the illegitimate child of Lucio for more than a year. Moreover, we have seen that she has expressed her wholehearted sympathy towards Claudio.

Most of the critics are of the opinion that the characters of Mariana, the Provost and Escalus are most sympathetically portrayed by the dramatist and they seem to be justified a great deal. There seems to be a good reason to believe that the depiction of such characters manifest Shakespeare's fondness for showing "how a good deed shines in a naughty world". When we see that gentle Mariana becoming an unfortunate victim of luck and of Angelo's cruelty we are likely to be deeply sympathetic towards her. But a close look at her seems to reveal the fact that she has a sentimental weakness for Angelo, who had so cruelly jilted her and blamed her so viciously when she unveiled herself in the final scene, she says:

This is the face, though cruel Angelo,

(Act.V.sc.1. 206)
But when the Duke poses to give Angelo capital punishment Mariana says:

O my dear lord,
I crave no other, nor better man.

(Act. V. sc.1. 423–424)

Even the Provost, who has been called "gentle" a respectable epithet during Shakespeare's time, seems to be capricious, at least, at a particular point of the drama. Though we are likely to identify with him and share his views regarding Claudio's fate, we cannot wholeheartedly approve him for his attitude towards Barnardine "who had crept his way into the Duke's sympathy" and who had not executed him but only given him some words of consolation. So the Provost also seems to be a bit whimsical and prejudicial when he compares Claudio with Barnardine:

The one has my pity; not a jot the other,
Being a murderer, though he were my brother.

(Act. V. sc. II. 59–60)

Escalus, whose character is a proper mixture of leniency and severity, who has shown infinite tolerance and sympathy towards suffering Claudio seem to be intolerant and capricious towards Friar-Lodowick. Being misled by Lucio he seems to be unnecessarily harsh towards the friar:
Esc. Why thou unrevere\textsuperscript{nd} and unhallowed friar!
Is it not enough thou hast suborned these women
To accuse this worthy man, but in foul mouth,
And in the witness of his proper ear,
To call him villain?

\textit{(Act. V. sc. i. 303-307)}

He also brings the charge of slander to the state against
the friar and sends him to prison by saying:

Esc. Such a fellow is not to be talked withal. Away with
him to prison! Where is the Provost? Away with
him to prison; Lay bolts enough upon him; let him
speak no more. Away with those giglets too, and
with the other confederate companion!

\textit{(Act. V. sc. i. 341-346)}

Here, Escalus behaves like a fallible mortal and he seems to
lose some part of our sympathy and admiration when the Duke
pardons him. \textit{(Act. V. sc. i. 359-360).}

"Measure" also shows a duality in mixing the genres
of tragedy and comedy. Numerous critics from time to time
have spoken of its tragic potential and some of them had
blamed Shakespeare for juxtaposing the tragic and the comic
elements without full integration. Here in this context we
can easily remember the celebrated statement of S.A. Brooke
that the play has the body of a tragedy and the tail of a
comedy. There seems to be no doubt that after "The Merchant"
"Measure" has a strong tragic knot. And "Measure" seems to be much more tragic in the sense that its female characters never come near to Portia and Nerissa in sprightliness, humour and charm. In fact, in the first half of the play, as we have already stated, the complicated interrelations of the characters, Claudio and Isabella are treated in a spirit of high seriousness. Though in its ultimate analysis "Measure" remains a comedy it seems to possess some solid touch of depth, seriousness and sombreness which we generally find in the great tragedies like "Hamlet" and "Othello".

As we have already noted, the "problem comedies" are the products of the most experimental period of Shakespeare's dramatic career. It was predominantly a tragic period, the period of the sunniest and purest comedies was already over. Hence it is not strange that some of the tragic sentiments may be echoed in these plays for the sake of novelty and freshness. And Shakespeare seems to have found Cinthio's play "Epithea" and Whelstone's two-part play, "Promoe and Cassandra" very convenient sources to suit his experimental mood. Cinthio's play deals with a potential tragic story steered to a happy conclusion and Whetstone's play is a doggerel tragicomedy. Though Shakespeare was a

125 Kenneth Muir, "The Sources of Shakespeare's Plays", p. 177.
king, not a beggar in his borrowings, it would not be surprising if some aspects of the tragi-comic nature of the sources were found present in "Measure". Moreover, J.W. Lever's suggestion that Shakespeare has designed "Measure" after the manner of Guarini's theory of tragic-comedy seems to have some plausibility. As he says:

"Whether or not Shakespeare had read Guarini's treatise, its ideas were in the air after 1602 and may well have prompted the design of "Measure for Measure", with its blend of serious and comic, extreme peril and happy solution, mixed characters and well-tied knot". 126

But Lever has also pointed out the difference between Shakespeare and Guarini's formula. He has rightly observed that in "Measure" conflicts and dilemmas are explored with a terrible insight and the attractions of the comic scenes which are maintained throughout is elemental rather that modest. 127 After all, this suggestion cannot be totally overlooked because at this most experimental stage Shakespeare might have drawn something from the new theory of drama.

Now, it will be quite in order to say something about the tragic aspects of some of the major characters to

127 Ibid.
discuss the tragi-comic duality of "Measure". It is important to note that its three prominent characters Angelo, Isabella and Claudio seem to be tragic if one ignores their ultimate destiny. In the first half of the play and even up to the fourth scene of the fourth act, Angelo appears before us as a suffering soul who is undergoing some kind of tragic experience. We have already observed how in his soliloquies Angelo appear to be an uneasy man blaming and criticizing himself for falling a victim to the temptations of the flesh step by step and like a tragic hero; he seems to have the realization of horror and reach a point of no return when he has decided to give his "sensual race the reign". His soliloquies as we have already mentioned, seem to have a strong resemblance with that of King Claudius, another important tragic figure of "Hamlet". And his tragic flaw seems to be his surrender to sexual impulse which was strongly aroused in him by the personality of Isabella. It is significant to note that Angelo himself has confessed it, "Blood thou art blood". Here Angelo appears to be a slave of passion like many other tragic characters of Shakespearean canon. Moreover, Angelo seems to have suffered a kind of tragic disillusionment. He is disillusioned with his own self which he so long believed to be impervious and invulnerable to sexual temptation, and for which he had hitherto


129 Ernest Schanzer, "The Problem Plays of Shakespeare". p. 93.
enjoyed a good social reputation. In a way, it may be said that with such supersubtlety Shakespeare has made Angelo a small edition of a tragic character and has reserved some sympathy for him. And we may not be absolutely unjustified if we say like some other critics that Angelo is a slightly realized "villain-hero" like Macbeth - set in a comic framework.

Though the character of Isabella bears some striking resemblance to Portia especially in her persuasive eloquence and in the famous "mercy" speech, Isabella seems to be a quite different woman from Portia so far as sprightliness and humour are concerned. In fact, Isabella seems to be too serious a figure to be the heroine of a comedy. Her problem seems to have the essence of a tragic drama. Though she is not given many soliloquies to unlock her heart to us, we are likely to feel that her mind is torn between the "conflicting demands of honour and affection" when she is faced with the infamous proposal of Angelo and her brother's desire to live. Even, when she begins her appeal for her brother's life, she is "betwixt will and will not". Her mind is obsessed with doubt whether she would be able to do anything for her brother's life. We know that many famous critics have commented on the tragic nature of Isabella's character. O.J. Campbell who suggests that "Measure" is Shakespeare's second attempt to write a comical satyre in the manner of Jonson and Marston, has to admit that the play has a tragic potential:
"The nature of Isabella and her problems on the other hand have carried us to the deepest springs of human conduct. They have all along trembled on the verge of tragedy".  

C.K. Stead has expressed the view that Isabella is neither a saint nor a hypocrite but a girl overwhelmed by an appalling dilemma. Like Angelo, Isabella also seems to undergo a kind of tragic disillusionment. As Ernest Schanzer has put it:

"The object of her disillusion is Claudio, the person she loves most in the world an experience which vents in her terrible outburst".

It is also important to note that some of her speeches which express her agony and despair sound like the words of a tragic heroine. Seeing Angelo's fanatical devotion to the letter of the law and his unwillingness to show pity towards Claudio, she condemns all human authorities in the following words which might have come from the

130 "Shakespeare's Satire", p. 125

131 Introduction to the Case Book Series "Measure for Measure" (Macmillan 1971).

132 "The Problem Plays of Shakespeare", p. 94.
mouth of a tragic character:

Merciful Heaven,
Thou rather with thy sharp and sulphurous bolt
Splits the unwedgeable and gnarled oak,
Than the soft myrtle. But man, proud man,
Dressed in a little brief authority,
Most ignorant of what he is most assured —
His glassy essence — like an angry ape
Plays such fantastic tricks before high heaven
As make the angels weep; who, with our splees
Would all themselves laugh mortal.

(Act.II. sc.II. 115-124)

When Angelo categorically tells her that she has no other alternative than "yielding her body to his will" to redeem her brother, she expresses her feelings in a soliloquy which shows her helplessness because nobody will believe her in the face of Angelo's "unsoiled name", the "austereness" of his life and "his place in the state".

To whom should I complain? Did I tell this,
Who would believe me? O perilous mouths,
That bear in them one and the self-same tongue
Either of condemnation or approof,
Bidding the law make curtsey to their will,
Hooking both right and wrong to the appetite,
To follow as it draws! I will to my brother.

(Act.II.sc.iv. 170-176)
And the character who speaks such words of deepest despair facing an insoluble problem of life would have been very much suitable for a high tragedy.

To a great extent, Claudio also appears to be a tragic character. Many critics have already pointed out that Claudio is a Hamlet-like character and in order to prove their contention they point out towards Claudio's following speech:

Cla. Ay, but to die, and go we not where;
To lie in cold obstruction, and to rot;
This sensible warm motion to become
A kneaded clod; and the delighted spirit
To bath in fiery floods, or to reside
In thrilling region of thick-ribbed ice;
To be imprisoned in the viewless winds
And blown with restless violence round about
The pendant world: or to be worse than worst
Of those that lawless and incertain thought
Imagine howling — it is too horrible.
The weariest and most loathed worthy life
That age, ache, penury and imprisonment
Can lay on nature, is a paradise
To what we fear of death.

(Act. III. sc. 1. 117-131)

In this crucial scene where Isabella comes to Claudio to make him "absolute for death" Claudio appears to be a weak,
vacillating and irresolute soul like the Prince of Denmark. To die or not to die seems to be his question. One the one hand, he thinks that he should die because his sister should not be pushed into fornication. On the other hand, he desires life because death is a fearful thing and the terrors of after-life would be beyond his endurance. In fact, the central situation of "Measure" is the predicament of Claudio which seems to be potentially tragic. Claudio seems to be victim of sexual lust. He is a weak-willed man falling a prey to "too much liberty". Secondly, he seems to be an unfortunate victim of the arbitrary law. The law has allowed him to live with his beloved Juliet as man and wife but now the same law is condemning him on the charge of fornication. Here Claudio appears to be a tragic character like those of Ibsen and Galsworthy. According to Ernest Schanzer Shakespeare has embodied in Claudio something of the conflicting emotions which the contemporary marriage laws must have aroused in many couples who had consummated an unsolemnized 'de praesenti' contract. Furthermore, a sense of death, a feeling of social waste and devastation which we normally find in tragedies, is created at least in the first half of the play. It has been repeatedly stated that a young man like Claudio must die for his "offenceful act" and there seems to be not a ray of hope for Claudio's

133 "The Problem Plays of Shakespeare", p. 79.
life because Angelo is determined to use law as "a machine for punishing all proven offenders". We see that sensible and respectable characters like the Provost and Escalus are lamenting on the unfortunate situation of Claudio off and on. For instance, we should note what Escalus says:

Alas, this gentleman,
Whom I would save, had a most noble father.

(Act.II. sc.i. 6-7)

It grieves me for the death of Claudio,
But there is no remedy.

(Act.II. sc.i. 277-288)

Such words evoke our deep compassion and pity towards Claudio. The following words of the Provost are also heart-touching:

Alas,
He hath but offended in a dream;
All seats, all ages smack of this vice, and he
To die for it!

(Act. II. sc.ii. 3-6)

Even Pompey, normally a libertine and a humorous character tells Escalus that if strict law on lechery is going to be imposed, the entire city of Vienna will be depopulated:

If you head and hang all that offend that way but for ten year together, you will be glad to give out a
commission for more heads: if this law hold in Vienna ten year, I will rent the fairest house in it after three pence a bay. If you live to see this come to pass, say Pompey told you so (Act. II. sc. i. 235-240).

Though it is a prophecy made with good humour, it seems to generate a feeling of waste, a sense of devastation which might befall Vienna. Even such sad speeches as the following made by Juliet and Mariana seem to come from the tragedies. Juliet, knowing the certain death of Claudio exclaims with sorrow and despair:

Must die to-morrow! O injurious love,
That respites me a life, whose very comfort
Is still a dying horror!

(Act. II. sc. iii. 40-42)

Mariana is unable to entertain herself with song sung by a boy:

Mariana. Break off thy song, and haste thee quick away;
Here comes a man of comfort, whose advice
Hath often stilled my brawling discontent.

(Act. IV. sc. i. 7-9)

These speeches seem to possess the touch of sombreness and seriousness which is generally observable in the tragedies. And though the tragic tone changes to a great extent in the affairs of Claudio and Isabella, the threatenings to
Claudio's life still remain here and there. In the second scene of the fourth act the Provost informs Claudio about his death warrant:

Look, here is the warrant, Claudio, for thy death;
It is now dead midnight, and by eight tomorrow
Thou must be made immortal.

(Act. IV. sc. ii. 61-63)

Some lines after when a messenger appears, the Duke hopefully thinks "here comes Claudio's pardon", but contrary to such expectations there is an order from Angelo directing the Provost for the immediate execution of Claudio:

Whatsoever you may have to the contrary, let Claudio be executed by four of the clock, and in the afternoon, Barnardine. For my better satisfaction, let me have Claudio's head sent me by five. Let this be performed, with a thought that more depends on it than we must yet deliver. Thus fail not to do your office, as you will answer it at your peril.

(Act. IV. sc. ii. 118-124)

The Duke's exhortations to Claudio to be "absolute for death" which are written in a grand manner seem to express a pessimistic philosophy of life which also contribute to the tragic tone of the play. The following lines which deal with meaninglessness and worthlessness of life seem to be very much suitable for a tragic play:

425
A breath thou art,  
Servile to all the skyey influences  
That dost this habitation where thou keepest  
Hourly afflict. Merely thou art Death's fool;  
For him thou labourest by thy flight to shun,  
And yet runnest toward him still. Thou art not noble;  
For all the accomodations that thou bearest  
Are nursed by baseness.  

(Act. III. sc.i. 8-15)

Moreover, we know that Shakespeare's tragic characters very often tend to generalize their individual situations and experiences in terms of universal human life. When Claudio is arrested by Angelo on the charge of fornication, Claudio is blaming himself in terms of general human experience when he explains his situation to Lucio:

From too much liberty, my Lucio, Liberty,  
As surfeit is the father of much fast;  
So every scope by immoderate use  
Turns to restraint. Our natures do pursue,  
Like rats that ravin down their proper bane,  
A thirsty evil, and we drink, we die.  

(Act.I. sc.II. 116-122)

And when Angelo bids Isabella to come to him next day and feels infatuated with her just after his first interview with Isabella he also seems to universalize his experience:
What is it I dream on?

O 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.

(Act. II. sc. II. 179-183)

Even Isabella, after taking her great decision to sacrifice her brother rather than her chastity, tells us:

Then, Isabel live chaste, and brother, die;
More than our brother is our chastity.

(Act. II. sc. IV. 183-184)

On the whole, it may be said that so far as the main plot comprising of Claudio, Isabella and Angelo is concerned, an atmosphere quite appropriate for a tragedy seems to have been created by the dramatist especially in the first half of the play. We are given the impression that there is no way out for Claudio. Angelo, having been corrupted absolutely by absolute power, is determined to violate Isabella, and Isabella, to whom chastity is a matter of fundamental principle in life, is not going to yield to Angelo in spite of her brother's death, and in this way, the events of the play seem to advance steadily towards an unavoidable tragedy. And it seems to be obvious reason why some critics still prefer the term "dark comedy" to
"problem comedy" for "Measure". Another noteworthy feature of "Measure" is that the tragic complication seems to have been presented in a much more naturalistic way. The intensity of human passion and emotion is brilliantly interfused with the intensity of great poetry and great drama. And there seems to be no doubt that the tragic nature of the three major characters Angelo, Isabella and Claudio makes us much more sympathetic towards them and though we may not completely identify ourselves with them in their predicaments, partial identification is undoubtedly possible and probable because we feel more sympathy towards a tragic character than towards a comic character.

On the contrary, the weight of the comic elements in "Measure" can never be underestimated. Almost all the critics seem to agree to the fact that Shakespeare's superlative creative energy is deeply engaged in portraying such low-life characters Lucio, Pompey, Mistress Overdone and Elbow. On their appearance, we immediately feel that we are entering the comic world of Falstaff, Dogberry and Parolles. As we have already noted, their humour, though, often bawdy, their wit, and their genial and lighthearted approach to the difficult problems of life provide us an unending source of delight. All along, they keep the comic interest alive by creating mirth and laughter. The tragic gloom associated with the affairs of Claudio, Isabella even of Angelo has been overshadowed at times by the comic ebullience of Lucio
and Pompey. Even if the major characters appear somewhat lifeless in the final moments of dramatic action, the comic characters do not lose their human warmth, vitality and charm. There seems to be no doubt that they are morally careless and even vicious but they are not devoid of human sympathy and kindness. All of them accept life with all its dirt and filth, ignominy and shame. To them life, in spite of its manifold serious problems, is a mystery, a fantastic merry-making game. It is also noteworthy that Shakespeare has displayed extraordinary keenness of realistic observation to give us interesting sidelights on some unlovely aspects of contemporary London life. We have already noted that Lucio has some striking resemblances with Falstaff and it is also interesting to note that the Constable Elbow has the unsophisticated charm of Dogberry. In fact, in ultimate analysis "Measure" remains a comedy in spite of its strong tragic elements. We generally judge a play tragic or comic on the basis of the happenings in the final scene. And we also know that a "pervasive comic mood" is an essential requirement of a comic play. It is crystal clear that the hilarious atmosphere proper for a comedy is created by such characters like Lucio and Pompey. Then at the end of the play, we are provided with a comic resolution though Shakespeare has used conventional means to achieve it for which he has been blamed by many critics. However, at the end of the play we find that nobody is allowed to die,
Claudio, in a spite of dire threats, is not dead, Mariana is reunited with Angelo, and there appears to be a good prospect of marriage between the Duke and Isabella, and Lucio too, is to marry Kate Keppdown. Anyway, Shakespeare finally made the play a comedy though his ending is not aesthetically satisfying to many critics. We may call this intermingling of tragic and comic elements a "tragi-comic duality". Almost all the critics have noticed potentially tragic elements in "Measure" and their interfusion with the comic elements provided by the low-life comic stuff and Shakespeare's application of the bed-trick to achieve the comic resolution. Here, in this context, A.P. Rossiter's observation seems to be interesting and revealing. According to him "Measure" is tragi-comic in two senses—first, the potential tragic situation is knocked on the head by a "coup de theatre", second the tragic sex plot of Angelo and Isabella is co-mingled with low life comic stuff involving Pompey, Mistress Overdone and Lucio. One of the most important characteristics of "Measure" as noted earlier, seems to be that its tragic complication is presented in a much more naturalistic way and it is highly convincing from the standpoint of realistic psychology but its comic resolution seems to be somewhat deliberately achieved and therefore, appears to be artificial. Here, of course, one of the

chief defects of the play appears before us though the Jacobean audience probably did not bother about it. Another important point to remember is that despite its interfusion of equally strong tragic and comic elements, we should not call "Measure" a tragi-comedy. Because a tragi-comedy, as some critics have already told us, seems to neglect the portrayal of human character on the basis of psychological credibility. And, as we have already emphasized, Shakespeare's acute interest in the portraiture of human nature seems to be one of the highlights of "Measure".

It may be said that "Measure" also shows Shakespeare's love of doing two things at once in yet another way, for which critics can call it a romantic comedy or a satirical comedy with some plausible and convincing arguments. Many critics have noticed strong satirical elements in "Measure" even a Christian interpreter like G. Wilson Knight admits the presence of satire in it.135 O.J. Campbell claims that perhaps one can best understand "Measure" if one regards it as a form of "comical satyre" designed for a popular audience.136 But it seems unsafe to hold that Shakespeare has thoroughly imitated Jonson and Marston in writing "Measure" which would imply that his creative power is too


136 Campbell, "Shakespeare's Satire".
passive. We have already echoed the view of many great critics more than once that Shakespeare's creative skill in the portraiture of human nature has not diminished in the "problem comedies". Rather it seems that it has appreciably increased. However, one cannot afford to ignore the satirical elements in order to have a complete and thorough understanding of "Measure".

It seems reasonable to assume that Shakespeare had in mind the two conventional theories of comedy prevalent in his time, which appeared mutually opposed in nature, when he was writing the "problem comedies" which were to a great extent experimental. In a way, "Measure" may be said to be a subtle and complex compromise between a romantic comedy and a satirical comedy. The play begins in sadness in the sense that there was no hope for Claudio's life as Angelo was determined to give him death penalty unless Isabella consented to sacrifice her chastity to his will, and Isabella was also firm in her decision that she would sacrifice her brother rather than her chastity. But the play ends in happiness in the sense that Claudio is saved and reunited with Juliet. Angelo is reconciled with Mariana and Isabella is going to be the

137 Nevill Coghill has comprehensively discussed the opposed conventions of comedy prevalent during Shakespeare's time which we have already noted in the previous chapters.
Duchess of Vienna. The play has been given the traditional ending of a romantic comedy where there is a spirit of forgiveness, reconciliation and reunion. On the other hand, the hypocrisy, cruelty and unnaturalness of Angelo, and his destructive legalism are presented and exposed in a way which is quite different from the sunny comedies, and which comes near to scorn and ridicule. Of course, it is to be remembered that the harsh and savage spirit of satire which is distinctly observable in "Troilus" seems to be considerably toned down in "Measure". In fact, Shakespeare's satiric exposure of Angelo seems to be too delicate and refined and at times extremely sophisticated. The objectionable qualities and unnatural aspects of Angelo's nature are genially exposed and mildly ridiculed but not violently condemned or ruthlessly derided. O.J. Campbell in his satirical interpretation of "Measure" has expressed the view that Angelo was first designed to serve as an object of ridicule, and the Duke and Lucio are two conventional satiric commentators, and Isabella's first duty was to serve as the main agent in the exposure and derision of Angelo.138 But O.J. Campbell's observation seems to be only partially correct because we know that the Duke, Angelo, Isabella and even Lucio are complex and subtle portraits and their personalities cannot fully be interpreted within the limited

perspectives of a particular satirical play. Of course, it is true that the Duke and Lucio seem to be observer characters to some extent who are sometimes seen making comments on Angelo's unnatural activities and the demoralized social milieu of Vienna. And through their statements Angelo is mildly exposed.

In the first place, we see that the Duke has some curiosity about Angelo's real nature which was also the motive behind his handing over the administration to Angelo. As he tells Friar Thomas:

Moe reasons for the action
At our more leisure shall I render you;
Only this one; Lord Angelo is precise;
Stands at a guard with Envy, scarce confesses
That his blood flows; or that his appetite
Is more to bread than stone. Hence shall we see,
If power change purpose, what our seemers be.

(Act. I. sc. iii. 48-54)

Time and again, Angelo's unnatural behaviour is exposed by Lucio in a mild satirical vein to the amusement of the audience. This seems to be clear when Lucio is describing the circumstances to Isabella under which Claudio is put under restraint:

Upon his place,
And with full line of authority,
Governs Lord Angelo; a man whose blood
Is very snow-broth; one who never feels
The wanton stings and motions of the sense;
But doth rebate and blunt his natural edge
With profits of the minds, study and fast.

(Act. I. sc. iv. 55-61)

Again, in the second scene of the third act Lucio tells the disguised Duke about Angelo's unnaturalness as a man and as a ruler which seems to be a mild exposure:

Lucio. A little more to lenity to lechery would do no harm in him. Something too crabbed that way, friar.

Duke. It is too general a vice, and severity must cure it.

Lucio. Yes, in good smooth, the vice is of a great kindred; it is well-allied; but it is impossible to extirp it quite, friar, till eating and drinking be put down. — They say this Angelo was not made by man and woman, after this downright way of creation: it is true, think you?

Duke. How should he be made, then?

Lucio. Some report a sea-maid spawned him. Some, that he was begot between two stockfishes. But it is certain that when he makes water, his urine is congealed ice; that I know to be true. And he is a motion ungenerative; that is infallible.

(Act. III. sc. ii. 94-107).
Angelo's cruelty is also laid bare by such a statement as
the following:

Why, what a ruthless thing is this in him, for the
rebellion of a codpiece to take away the life of
a man!

(Act. III. sc. 11. 110-112)

Such statements made by Lucio with their bawdy humour
evoke hilarity on the stage while exposing Angelo's
unnatural and whimsical behaviour with a touch of genial
satire and mild ridicule. Angelo's imposition of an
inhuman law on lechery in Vienna is referred to by Lucio
in a genial satirical vein in the following conversation
between Lucio and the Duke:

Duke. Why should he die, sir?

Lucio Why? For filling a bottle with a tun-dish, I
would the Duke we talk of were returned again:
this ungenitured agent will unpeople the province
with continency. Sparrows must not build in his
house eaves because they are lecherous.

(Act. III. sc. 11. 165-170)

The inward diabolical nature of Angelo under the cover of
an outward good appearance is driven home by the following
words contained in the Duke's soliloquy:

Shame to him whose cruel striking
Kills for faults of his own liking!
Twice treble shame on Angelo,
To weed my vice, and let him grow!
O what may man within him hide,
Though angel on the outward side!

(Act.III.sc.ii.260-265)

In the final scene of the play, it appears that much more attention has been paid to the exposure of Angelo. The Duke, controlling the events of the play at this stage, has made an elaborate and well-thought out plan for the public exposure and humiliation of Angelo. Prior to this scene, the Duke has told Friar Peter to invite Valencious, Rowland, Crassus and Flavius, who are the leading citizens to come to a public place near the city gate. The Duke had also sent information to Angelo that he should be publicly received at the city gate and, if there were petitioners, they should also be made to come there with their complaints. To Angelo this kind of peculiar arrangement was surprising though Escalus found some good reasons for it.

Accordingly, the scene opens in a public place in presence of all the leading characters of the play and some of the citizens of Vienna. The Duke's summoning of the citizens is significant because without them Angelo's exposure would not be public because formerly Angelo had a good social reputation as a man of self-control and austerity, and a strict follower of law. Then we are shown
that as soon as the Duke enters, he is very cordially and courteously greeted by Angelo and Escalus. The Duke thanks them for having governed his state so well in his absence. The Duke offers Angelo some good words of praise which seems to be ironical:

Duke. 0, but your desert speaks loud, and I should wrong it
To lock it in the words of covert bosom,
When it deserves with characters of brass
A forted residence against the tooth of time
And razure of oblivion. Give we our hand,
And let the subject see, to make them know
That outward courtsies would faint proclaim
Favours that keep within.

(Act.V. sec.I. 10-17)

Then Isabella comes forward and demands justice from the Duke but the latter tells her:

Here is Lord Angelo shall give you justice,
Reveal yourself to him.

(Act.V. sec.I. 27-28)

And Isabella contemptuously retorts:

O worthy Duke,
You bid me seek redemption of the devil.

(Act.V. sec.I. 29-30)
Then Angelo defends himself by saying that her wits are not "firm" and she is speaking most bitterly and strangely. Isabella now speaks aloud with a strongly denunciatory language which badly exposes Angelo:

Isabella. Most strange: but yet most truly will I speak.
That Angelo is forsworn, is it not strange?
That Angelo is a murderer, is it not strange?
That Angelo is an adulterous thief,
And hypocrite, a virgin violater,
Is it not strange, and strange?

Duke. Nay, it is ten times strange!

(Act. V. sec.I. 39-45)

When the Duke poses to believe in Angelo's words saying that Isabella is speaking in the infirmity of sense, Isabella tries to convince the Duke which again exposes Angelo:

Make not impossible
That which but seems unlike. It is not impossible
But one, the wicked caitiff on the ground,
May seem as shy, as grave, as just, as absolute,
As Angelo; even, so may Angelo,
In all his dressings, caracts, titles, forms,
Be an arch-villain.

(Act. V. sec. I. 54-60)

Isabella again calls Angelo "a pernicious caitiff deputy"
even a gentle lady like Mariana calls him "thou cruel Angelo".
Then, again, Angelo exposes himself when he falsely charges Mariana that "her reputation was disvalued in levity". After that, when Isabella brings her charge against Angelo of exploiting her virginity and of treacherous murder of her brother, the Duke pretends not to believe her and his statement is again an ironical exposure of Angelo's nature;

Duke. By heaven, fond wretch, thou knowest not what thou speakest, Or else thou art suborned, against his honour In hateful practice, First, his integrity Stands without blemish, next, it imports no reason That with such vehemency he should pursue Faults proper to himself. If he had so offended, He would have weighed thy brother by himself, And not have cut him off someone hath set you on: Confess the truth, and say by whose advice Thou can'st here to complain.

(Act. V. sec. I. 108-117)

In this way, Angelo's hypocrisy, meanness, cruelty and treachery are exposed publicly by the intrigues of the Duke which of course appears theatrical and which offends good taste. Then we see the last phase of Angelo's exposure. When Friar Lodowick is unhooded by Lucio and Duke Vincentio is discovered, Angelo realises that his defence by falsehood is of no avail and he begs immediate death:
Then, good prince,
No longer session hold upon my shame,
But let my trial be mine own confession.
Immediate sentence, then, and sequent death
Is all the grace I beg.

(Act. V. sec. I. 368-372)

Then the Duke orders marriage between Angelo and Mariana
and after the solemnization of the marriage, he again
proceeds to give his final verdict and threatens Angelo with
death:

For this new-married man approaching here,
whose salt imagination yet hath wronged
Your well-defended honour, you must pardon
For Mariana's sake: but as he adjudged your brother,
Being criminal in double violation
Of sacred chastity and of promise-breach
There on dependent, for your brother's life,
The very mercy of the law cries out
Most audible, even from his proper tongue;
"An Angelo for Claudio; death for death."

(Act. V. sec. I. 397-407)

Even a sensible man like Escalus laments Angelo's fall:
I am sorry, one so learned and so wise
As you, Lord Angelo, have still appeared,
Should slip so grossly, both in the heat of blood
And lack of tempered judgement afterward.

(Act. V. sec. I. 468-471)
In a way, Angelo may be called a satirical portrait. He has often been mildly ridiculed but, by and large, mercilessly exposed. On the other hand, he seems to be an idealized character in a romantic comedy in the sense that Mariana loves him deeply; because, to her a "best man is moulded out of faults", and also in the sense that he is forgiven and reunited with Mariana.

It may also be added here that Angelo is Puritan character.\textsuperscript{139} and we know that the literary writers at the turn of the century directed their satiric onslaught against some of the objectionable traits of the contemporary Puritans. And it is quite possible that Shakespeare might have a satirical attitude towards the Puritans who were hostile to theatre. We see that Angelo has been called "precise Angelo", "prenzie Angelo" and these terms were used for Puritans during Shakespeare's time. So it is quite likely that Angelo was a target of Shakespeare's satire to a certain extent.

On the whole, it may be said that as for Angelo like most of the characters of the "problem comedies", there is a double process at work: on the one hand, we

\textsuperscript{139} That Angelo is a Puritan character is emphasized by many distinguished critics especially by Ernest Schanzer ("The Problem Plays of Shakespeare" p. 86) and Peter Milward ("Shakespeare's Religious Background" 1972, p. 152).
perceive that a great deal of sympathy has been created for him through the media of his great soliloquies where he appears to be a tragic figure, and then we feel that he is, after all, a sympathetic portrait placed within the framework of a romantic comedy; on the other hand, we see that his follies and vices are elaborately exposed and stressed. And, on account of the first process, our sympathy and affection are deeply engaged with him; and on account of the second, they are alienated from him; rather, we are likely to feel a sense of cynical contempt towards him. We may, therefore, be justified in thinking that Shakespeare's overall attitude towards Angelo is ambivalent and our response to him is also meant to be ambivalent. Furthermore, it is interesting to note that though Lucio has served as an active agent in exposing Angelo, he, himself, appears to be an object of satiric exposure. We find that in the final scene, Lucio's ugly vices as "slandering a prince", and getting Mistress Kate Keepdown with child and his notorious refusal to marry her and to take and responsibility of the child, fall into sharper focus in public. And we see that this "careless cynic and a liar" is compelled to marry his punk whom he wanted to avoid. As O.J. Campbell has made the point clear:

"The Duke leads Lucio on to the amusement of the audience with the clear purpose of exposing him. When
Lucio plucks off the Friar's hood and discovers the Duke, the impudent buffoon also accomplishes his own exposure. He then tries to sneak unobtrusively away, but is arrested and held before the Duke for sentence. Although threatening Lucio with whipping and hanging after he has married his punk whom he had got with child, the Duke relents and remits all the forfeits except his marriage with the courtesan. This deflation of the careless cynic and a liar is in exactly the right key. So our sympathies seems to be "defeated and repulsed" in this particular direction of Lucio's exposure. But we must note that this is only one facet of Lucio's double image, the other image as we all know, is most fascinating and lovable which comprises of his sincere and kind help towards his distressed friend, Claudio, his Falstaffian idealism, his vivacity, wit, humour and comic charm. And it may be suggested that by presenting such a double image of single characters like Angelo and Lucio with superb dramatic skill and subtlety Shakespeare is seeking a reconciliation between a comical satire and a romantic comedy in his experimental plays like "All's Well" and "Measure".

140 Campbell, "Shakespeare's Satire", p. 130.

141 R.A. Foakes has suggested this point that in "All's Well" and "Measure" Shakespeare is seeking a reconciliation of comical satire and romantic comedy in his book, "Shakespeare: The Dark Comedies to the Last Plays" p. 61.
There are many other mutually opposite aspects presented side by side in the play which may also illustrate Shakespeare's fondness of doing two things at once. The prevailing atmosphere of the play, as has been already observed by many critics, is both religious and secular, sacred and profane, attractive and repulsive, which again shows Shakespeare's love of painting both lovely and unlovely sides of human life in these group of plays. This dual atmosphere which is both repulsive and attractive is very well described by H.B. Charlton:

"Its very setting is a hot bed of immorality: Vienna and its suburbs stink. Lucio and Froth, Pompey and Mistreg Overdone are its sewage. Their talk is a scurvy bawdry, their jests are mere syphilitic hysteria. And above them is a Duke who lacks the backbone to govern and a deputy whose Puritanism collapses into sheer bestiality and crime. Its hero franziedly implores his sister to save his neck by sacrificing her virginity, and the sister, the unsullied heroine, after permitting herself a scornful vituperation of her brother which appears to convict her of inhuman callousness, relapses without a word into circumstances which seem to be making for a conventional ending in the peal of marriage bells. It is no wonder if one's first impression is that the painter of such a repulsive picture of life must have been almost frantic"
with the thought of life's worthlessness". 142

The other side of the picture is also noted by Charlton. To quote his own words:

"Yet there also matter which seems irreconcilable with this. "Measure for Measure" may be an eye for an eye, tooth for a tooth, an Angelo for a Claudio. But look at the plot and its outcome. There is almost intolerable insistence on meting out reward to the virtuous and punishment to the guilty".

...

"Its rulers are enjoined to remember that whilst it is excellent to have a giant's strength, it is tyrannus to use it like a giant". 143

G. Wilson Knight has found a sacred atmosphere in the play which according to his opinion is suitable for the illustration of the Gospel ethic:

"The poetic atmosphere is one of religion and critical morality. The religious colouring is orthodox as in "Hamlet". Isabella is a novice among the votarists of St. Clare (I.IV 6): the Duke disguised himself as a Friar,


143 Ibid.
exercising the divine privileges of his office towards Juliet, Barnardine, Claudio. We hear of "the conserated fount a league below the city".\textsuperscript{144} (IV.iii. 102). He also found the thought of death's eternal damnation which is prominent in "Hamlet" recurred in Claudio's speech (III.i. 118-130).\textsuperscript{145}

Contrary to this, many critics have rightly noted that there is a realistic and secular atmosphere like that of Shakespearean London in the degenerate city of Vienna. In fact, the mixed world of Vienna as presented in "Measure" with its dukes, nuns and friars, and bawds and pimps seems very much like that of London where there was at that time the "oppressive atmosphere of the prison" and "the foul breath of the brothel". The following description of the demoralized picture of Vienna given by Mark Van Doren is vivid and very apt:

"The city stews in its vices, bawds and pimps swarm in the streets, the prisons are crowded with moral vermin and the gentlefolk have lost their goodness. Goodness exists: Isabella if one likes is a saint; but it is forced to unwholesomely conscious of itself and the universal consciousness of evil puts a certain bitter perplexity into

\textsuperscript{144} "Measure for Measure and the Gospels" (Case Book, Macmillan 1971, p. 93) (Original source "The Wheel of Fire, 1930). 

\textsuperscript{145} Ibid.
everyone's voice". 146

So we can easily observe the two kinds of atmosphere which are mutually opposite and which may clearly show Shakespeare's penetrating insight into the duality of things.

Furthermore, the speeches of the characters are solemn and elevated at times and bawdy and indecent on other occasions. One glaring instance of such a phenomenon may be found in the two oft-quoted speeches made by Isabella; in one she is appealing to Angelo to show mercy on her brother, and in the other she is condemning her brother who wants to live at the cost of his sister's honour. The following is a beautifully written sacred speech based on Christian redemption:

Alas, alas!

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? O think on that,
And mercy then will breathe within your lips,
Like man new-made.

(Act. II. Sc. ii. 71-78)

146 Van Doren's statement is quoted by O.J. Campbell in his "Shakespeare's Satire", p. 126.
But it is interesting to see the same Isabella abusing her frail brother in a language which is vituperative and profane and quite in contrast with the former speech which has something like a Dantesque grandeur:

O, you beast!
O faithless coward! O dishonest wretch!
Wilt thou be a man out of my vice?
Is it not a kind of incest, to take life
From thine own sisters shame? What should I think?
Heaven shield my mother played my father fair:
For such a warped slip of wilderness
Never issued from his blood.

(Act.III. Sc. i. 135-142)

Almost all critics have condemned Isabella for such a violently abusive speech made to a frail young man on the point of death, and it seems deplorably unsuitable for a saintly character.

In the second scene of the first act, we see Lucio and the two Gentleman are discussing such religious matters as Ten Commandments and grace, Lucio says the following pious words to the first Gentleman:

Ay, why not? Grace is grace, despite of all controversy;
as for example, thou thyself act a wicked villain, despite of all grace.

(Act.I. Sc. ii. 24-26).
And when Mistress Overdone comes, Lucio draws the attention of the two Gentlemen towards her rather indecently:

**Behold, behold, where Madam Mitigation comes!**

I have purchased as many diseases under her roof as come to —

(Act.I.Sc. ii. 41-42)

Immediately afterwards, their discussion is shifted towards sexual diseases:

**1st Gent.** Thou art always figuring diseases in me;

But thou art full of error; I am sound.

**Lucio.** Nay, not, as one would say, healthy: but so sound as things that are follow; they bones are hollow;

impiety has made a feast of thee.

**1st Gent.** How now, which of your hips has the most profound sciatica?

**Mis. O.** Well, well: There is one yonder arrested and carried to prison, was worth five thousand of you all.

(Act.I sc.II. 49-57)

Here it is important to remember that Shakespeare is behaving like a Renaissance humanist writer who is aiming at reconciliation of contradictory things like the sacred and the profane, and we have already noted that this inter-mixture is a characteristic feature of the “problem comedies.”
Another noteworthy point about "Measure" like that of "All's Well" is that as a play on administration of law and justice it seems to reflect two senses of justice — divine and retributive or poetic. While the critics can easily discern the tempering of justice with mercy at the end of the play (which one may call "divine" if one likes) they can discern with little ingenuity and effort the working out of retributive or poetic justice. When Angelo is let off by the Duke with such words, "Look that you love your wife!", a critic like O.J. Campbell seems to be justified when he says:

"Angelo does not receive 'measure for measure' an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, It is not carefully calculated justice that is measured out to him but mercy and forgiveness". 147

And in this connection the Christian interpreters claim that as Angelo has expressed his repentance, he has been granted divine forgiveness by the Duke, who is an embodiment of Divine Justice. But, we have already noted how Angelo has been publicly exposed and humiliated in the first part of the last scene which seems to be befitting

---

punishment for his nasty intentions. The following statement made by Paul N. Siegel seems to be very much appropriate here:

"The abasement and contrition of the once proudly self-righteous deputy satisfy dramatic justice". One important point to note about the Duke's pardon to Angelo is that it is explicable from a purely common sense point of view. Practically the Duke cannot do more than Angelo's public exposure and subsequent pardon. Because the Duke has put Angelo in power in spite of Angelo's unwillingness and then absolute power has corrupted Angelo absolutely. And F.R. Leavis has rightly said that he is a victim of the Duke's experiment. So we may say that Angelo is getting retributive justice by way of public humiliation and exposure, and he is also getting judicial pardon in the sense that he is guilty in intentions only and not in act. Even Lucio and Pompey, though not given capital punishments for their unlawful activities, also seem to suffer some kind of retribution. Pompey has been strongly rebuked by the Duke and Escalus and he has been made to change his unlawful trade as a bawd and is made a lawful hangman. Lucio is publicly castigated by the Duke and is compelled to marry his punk which was to

him "pressing to death whipping and hanging". So far as Barnardine is concerned, Duke seems to have displayed that finer sense of justice advocated by Escalus that "the true function of law is to cure not to destroy; to rather cut a little than fall and bruise to death".

Because we are told that Barnardine is a man who is unfit to live or die and so we can visualise that if he is put into the custody of a friar there is a possibility that he would be reformed. So it may be a reasonable conjecture that though the play gives us a strong impression that justice is suitably tempered with mercy, it does not imply the total absence of retaliation, or in other words, it does not ignore the retributive justice or poetic justice altogether. As H.B. Charlton has made the point clear:

"There is almost an intolerable insistence on meting out reward to the virtuous and punishment to the guilty." 150

Even a Christian interpreter like William B. Toole has to acknowledge that though the idea of mercy of a benevolent providence govern the framework of Shakespearean comedy, retributive justice which has been associated with Jonsonian comedy may be contained within the Shakespearean structure. 151

150 Charlton, "The Shakespearean Comedy" (1938, Methuen 1955, p. 213.
151 "Shakespeare's Problem Plays", p. 35.
Elizabeth Marie Pope has rightly pointed out that unlike many other plays "Measure" has a highly significant title. And it is interesting to note that there seems to be a duality embodied in the significance of the title of the play. The play seems to illustrate both the affirmation and negation of "measure for measure" in the sense of a "tooth for a tooth", "death for death", "an Angelo for a Claudio". We see that Angelo, who is a hardened villain in a sense, comes to use his power to satisfy his lust and wants to compass the death of Claudio for his future safety. Against this double stratagem, the Duke improvises his double measure — the substitution of Mariana and the beheading of the dead body of Maggiozine. The Duke seems to employ a Machiavellian strategy to counter Machiavellian Angelo. This is a tit for tat, a measure for a measure, and Angelo has been entrapped by the Duke who has applied "craft against vice". On the other hand, the play also seems to illustrate the negation of the title in the sense of 'an eye for an eye'. After solemnizing the marriage of Angelo and Mariana, the Duke only threatens Angelo:

> We do condemn thee to thee very block  
> Where Claudio stooped to death, and with like haste.  
> Away with him.  
>  
> (Act.V.sc.1. 412-415)

Then after hearing the appeal of Mariana and Isabella, the Duke grants pardon to Angelo:

    By this Lord Angelo perceives he is safe;
    Methinks I see a quickening in his eye.
    Well, Angelo, your evil quits you well.
    Look that you love your wife: her worth, worth yours.

    (Act. V. sc.1. 492-495)

Taking this point into consideration, O.J. Campbell suggests that the title is ironical. But this seems to be too simple an interpretation for a complex title.

Shakespeare's fondness of presenting two mutually opposed and contradictory things and his remarkable insight into the duality of things may also be observable in his use of many types of contrast in the play. The extreme libertine Lucio is set against extreme Puritan Angelo, humane and moderate judge, Escalus is set against the inhuman legalistic judge, Angelo. The unnatural and destructive attitude of Angelo towards the frailty of human flesh is countered by Lucio's healthy naturalism towards sexual relations. The over-lax rule of the Duke in the earlier part of his reign is immediately succeeded by over-severe curb, employed by Angelo to root out sexual corruptions. As a whole, the Puritanical zeal of Isabella
and Angelo is being contrasted with the amoral attitude represented by Lucio and Pompey. Then we see, on the one hand, the most "loathsome creature" Abhorson whose duty is to cut life off, and on the other, the gentle and kindly Provost who wants to protect life. Besides, these brilliantly contrasted characters we are presented with contradictory and mutually opposed situations and ideas:

"Accordingly, lust was set over against abstinence, brothel against convent, nature against spirit with the life of a young husband and father in the balance."\(^{153}\)

The most significant presentation of contradictory and mutually opposed points of view which are easily observable in the play is in respect of illegal sexual relations or lechery. Regarding Claudio's sexual offence, we find that two opposite points of view are sincerely put forward by the characters and it becomes extremely difficult to determine what is the right attitude. To Angelo, Isabella and even to Claudio himself, a premarital sexual relation is something which is vicious and sinful and, therefore punishable by strict law. To Angelo it is a vice which is unforgivable.

Ha? Fie, these filthy vices! 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.

(Act. II. sc. iv. 42-45)

Isabella also expresses the same opinion as she begins her plea to save Claudio from the clutches of law enforced by Angelo:

There is a vice that most I do abhor,
And most desire should meet the blow of justice;

(Act. II. sc. II, 29-30)

Then, again, in appealing to save Angelo's life from the death penalty she puts forward the same point of view:

My brother had but justice,
In that he did the thing for which he died:

(Act. V. sc. i. 446-447)

Claudio, who feels himself partly a judicial victim of a tyrannical ruler, admits before Lucio that his "restraint" is the outcome of "immoderate use" and he is going to die for drinking that "thirsty evil":

Our natures do pursue,
Like rats that ravin down their proper bane,
A thirsty evil; and when we drink, we die.

(Act. I. sc. ii. 120-123)
Contrary to this, we find Lucio's attitude which implies that such a sexual relationship as between Claudio and Juliet is something which is natural, creative and desirable. As he describes the Claudio-Juliet affair to Isabella:

Your brother and his lover have embraced,
As those that feed grow full, as blossoming time
That from the seedness to bare fallow brings
To teeming foison, even so her plenteous womb
Expresseth his full tilth and husbandry.

(Act. I. sc. iv. 40–44)

And this view is also expressed by Pompey, the other "spokesman of nature". Moreover, we can easily notice that questions are raised as to whether total eradication of the sins of the flesh is possible by strict enforcement of law. Here, also, we can easily perceive that there is a perpetual clash between two mutually opposed points of view. The ruling class of Vienna comprising of the Duke, Escalus and notably Angelo seem to believe that strict legislation can stamp out sexual vices from society. We know that the Duke has said more than once that corruption of all kinds (which also includes sex) have been running rampant in Vienna due to his extremely lenient administration at the start of his rule. Escalus, also seems to believe that strict legislation is necessary to stop the bawdy trade in Vienna. He warns Pompey that he should not carry on his
unlawful trade because:

There is pretty orders beginning, I can tell you
It is but heading and hanging.

(Act.II. sc.I. 233-234)

The Friar-Luke speaks to Lucio on the necessity of severe law to stamp out lechery from Vienna:

It is too general a vice, and severity must cure it.

(Act.III. sc. II. 96)

And Angelo's attitude is clearly expressed when he tells Escalus the necessity of the strict enforcement of law. Otherwise people would not care it:

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

(Act.II. sc. I. 1-4)

Contrary to this, the low-life characters, Lucio and Pompey sincerely believe that it is impossible to stop lechery in Vienna by legislation. Pompey has told Escalus that the strict enforcement of law on lechery in Vienna will mean "gelding and splaying all the youth of the city and city will be depopulated if it is done. Lucio has also told the
Friar-Duke that it is not possible to eradicate sexual vices by strict law:

Duke. It is too general a vice, and severity must cure it.

Lucio. Yes, in good smooth, the vice is of a good kindred; it is well allied; but it is impossible to extrip it quite friar, till eating and drinking be put down.

(Act.III.sc.ii. 97-99)

It is clear that these two points of view put forward by the rulers and the ruled are mutually contradictory, and it may be said that one cannot be sure of Shakespeare's own point of view in this perspective. But we may say that these are the ideas of a Renaissance humanist thinker and a writer, who flourished in an extremely controversial age in matters of religion, philosophy, and ethics. And this shows Shakespeare's characteristic exploitation of a duality inherent in a particular human situation which also rises from the particular to the universal.

Similarly, two opposite points of view are put forward regarding sins committed under compulsion and questions are raised as to whether such sins are punishable or not both according to human and divine law. It is important to note that in the different kinds of sources of "Measure" which were popular stories, the wife's surrender in the given circumstances was considered blameless.154

In "Measure" we see that Angelo in trying to get Isabella's consent to sleep with him, tells Isabella more than once that compelled sins are no sins and even if it is regarded as a sin, it is equally compensated by charity.

Ang. I talk not of your soul: our compelled sins.

Stand more for number that for accompt.

Isab. How say you?

Ang. Nay, I will not warrant that: for I can speak

Against the thing I say. Answer to this:

I now the voice of the recorded law—

Pronounce a sentence on your brother's life:

Might there not be a charity in sin

To save this brother's life?

(Act. II. sc. iv. 57-64)

However, in this matter, one may argue that here Angelo is trying to befool the innocent Isabella. But we must remember that Angelo is here uttering a Christian commonplace idea. Later on, this same view is also expressed by Claudio when he desperately implores Isabella to save his life:

— Sure, it is no sin;

Or of the deadly seven it is the least.

(Act. III. sc. i. 109-110)

Ang again:  

_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._  

_(Act.III.sc.i.130-134)_

In contrast to this, Isabella has the firm conviction that if she commits fornication to save even her dear brother's life, it would be _eternal death of her spirit_ and she thinks that it is a kind of "foul redemption" "rank offence" and an "abhorred pollution" and this is why, she has no difficulty at all to come to her exalted decision:

_Then, Isabel live chaste, and brother, die:_  
_More than our brother is our chastity._  

_(Act.II.sc. IV.183-184)_

Here it is difficult to say that Shakespeare disapproves of the point of view expressed by Angelo and Claudio and approves of the point of view expressed by Isabella. And our responses to these matters are likely to be equivocal. On the whole, it may be said that the perpetual conflict between two contrasted ideas or beliefs gives "Measure" an _Ibsentite flavour_ and the term "problem play" seems to be more appropriate for "Measure" because in many ways it
seems to present the problems without providing the answer. Moreover, Isabella behaves like a heroine of a modern problem play as she cries before the Duke:

"Justice, O royal Duke! Vail your regard
Upon a wronged — I would fain have said, a maid.
O worthy prince, dishonour not your eye
By throwing it on any other object,
Till you have heard me in my true complaint,
And given me justice! Justice! Justice! Justice!

(V.sc. i. 20-25)

There seems to have been other kinds of dualities underlined by Shakespeare for his own dramatic purpose. Marion Bodwell Smith, in her thought-provoking analysis of the play, has suggested that "Measure" is a kind of double allegory on both the Christian concept of justice and the Aristotelian concept of equity and she has expressed the view that the Aristotelian elements do not diminish the significance of the Christian elements. One can easily see that the thoughts of Isabella's great speeches by which she tried to move the heart of Angelo in favour of her brother are rooted in the Christian ideas. On the other

156 H.B.Charlton also suggests that a Shakespearean a problem play presents the problem and does not provide the answer ("Shakespearian Comedy" 1938, Methuen 1955, p. 245).

157 "Dualities in Shakespeare" (Univ. of Toronto Press 1966) pp. 126-129.

158 Ibid., p. 124.
hand, one can easily observe that the Duke's famous speech on the worthlessness of human life and Claudio's speech on death were derived from commonplace ideas of Renaissance which were based a Pagan philosophy and Christian doctrine. Moreover, we cannot totally ignore the symbolic or allegorical nature of the characters. Angelo as we have already noted, first and foremost a complex individual but he also seems to be, at least, partially an incarnation of rigid law or justice (Act. II. sc. ii. 79-82). Even Angelo himself claims that he is the "voice of the recorded law" (Act. II. sc. iv. 61). Similarly when Isabella delivers her great speeches on the qualities of mercy we are likely to see her, at least partially during the two great scenes, as an embodiment of the Christian concept of mercy. So this "character-symbol" duality which is observable in many other Shakespearean plays may be traced easily in "Measure".

The ending of this play like that of "Troilus" and "All's Well", has aroused sharp controversy among the critics. We have already mentioned the dissatisfaction felt by many critics concerning the proposed marriage between

Isabella and the Duke. In defence of it we have already stated that Isabella has changed a lot as the dramatic action has progressed. The case with the Duke seems to be similar. Observing the maladministration of Vienna which deteriorated very fast during Angelo's rule, the Duke has decided to come back to his original post giving up his former desire for a "life removed" and he wants to turn over a new leaf with Isabella as his bride. Isabella, too, has given up her impractical and valueless ideals and seems to be mentally prepared to start a fresh, secular life. Of course, it is true that there is little romantic love-making between the Duke and Isabella, neither of them is allowed to make a romantic love speech by which we can know about their mutual affection. It may be that in a play like "Measure," Shakespeare seems to be much more concerned with the appalling dilemmas of Claudio, Isabella and even Angelo than with romantic love-making between the characters. And we have already mentioned that Shakespeare had developed a "positive-negative" attitude towards romantic love and romantic courtship when he wrote the "problem comedies." Furthermore, he seems to be a bit more concerned with sex, lust and lechery than with love and romance. But we must not totally ignore what the Duke has said to Isabella when he meets her for the first time:

The hand that hath made you fair hath made you good
The goodness that is cheap in beauty makes beauty
brief in goodness; but grace, being the soul of your
complexion, shall keep the body of it ever fair.

(Act.III.sc. i.179-183)

This speech may serve as a slight clue to the prospect of
mutual affection between the Duke and Isabella in the later
acts and scenes considering the reserved and modest nature
of both of them. Anyway, this matrimonial affair cannot be
simply explained by saying that every Jack finds a Jill or
every eligible bachelor finds his bride at the end of a
Shakespearean comedy nor by applying the hypothesis of the
Christian commentators, "Forgiveness and Mercy have met
together". Moreover, the ending of "Measure" seems to have
been the aroma of a folktale romance or a popular story like
that of "All's Well" and so similar kinds of explanations
can be given regarding the nature of the ending of both
these plays. It is important to remember that the story of
"Measure" seems to have been made up of three traditional
plot-components — the story of the Corrupt Magistrate, the
legend of the Disguised Ruler and the story of the Substitu-
ted Bedmate. 160 And, therefore, Shakespeare perhaps did not
hesitate to make his ending romantic and poetically
suggestive. The poetic-minded Shakespearean audience might
have visualized that the Duke and Isabella should marry.

(Methuen Paperback, 1971, p. xxxvi).
Of course this type of folktale or poetically suggestive ending appears odd compared with the "down to earth realism" of the preceding scenes but such disharmony was most probably, not unpalatable to the contemporary audience. Furthermore, like the ending of "All's Well" it is dramatic in its sense of suddenness. Critics may also have a feeling of greater satisfaction when they look upon the Duke as a dispenser of "finer" justice to his subjects keeping strictly in view of their temporal well-being which we have already discussed.

The themes of the play like those of "Troilus" and "All's Well" may be very well associated with the following pair of words — honour and affection, appearance and reality, justice and mercy, creation and death, licence and restraint, and the ruler and the ruled. We have seen that J.W. Lever has studied the themes of the play in terms of "Justice and Mercy" "Grace and Nature" and "Creation and Death". Another important point is that in the first half of the play, the plot serves to illustrate character.\footnote{We all know Coleridge's famous dictum that "the interest in the plot is always in fact on account of the characters and not vice versa as in almost all other writers; the plot is a mere canvas and no more".} We feel as if we are deeply involved in the
crises of the three major characters — Claudio, Isabella and Angelo who are depicted with tremendous psychological insight and passionate intensity. But, in the second half, we may find the opposite process at work. Here the plot seems to condition the characters because we find that Claudio is not allowed to speak at all in the final scene; even the character of Isabella, as we have already noted seems to have been a bit dwarfed though she does not deteriorate so much as to become the Duke's "confidential secretary" or a "pawn". In other words, the play appears to be a comedy of intrigue rather than of character during the closing scenes. This double process of character-emphasis and plot-emphasis in the two halves of the play seems to be the peculiar strength and weakness of it which may also account for the ambivalent response of the critics.

To sum up, it may be said that the characters of "Measure" live and breathe in mostly a tragi-comic world, and partially in a romantic-satiric world where we find idealism and optimism, and pessimism and cynicism. And it seems clear that the lives of the characters are of mingled yarns. We find that Escalus, one of the noblest men in Shakespeare, is "whipped by one or two faults" and even

---

162 John Palmer in his "Shakespeare's Comic Characters" (133–135) maintains that while Shakespeare's plots serve to illustrate character they also condition it. These famous observations are referred to by N.C. Pettet in his "Shakespeare and the Romance Tradition" 1949. (Methuen Paperback,1970, p. 165).
saintly Isabella behaves "like an angry ape" on certain occasions, and the crimes of Angelo would have despaired us if they were not cherished by his virtues. The play seems to be a complex fusion of tragedy and comedy, and romantic comedy and satirical comedy where characters have both angelic virtues and devilish vices. And, Shakespeare in trying to effect reconciliation between these distinctly opposite genres, does not seem to lose his intense interest in depicting the complex web of human nature. Of course, to have a perfect harmony between "down-to-earth realism" and "extreme romantic convention" is an extremely difficult task and almost impossible to achieve for any dramatist; but Shakespeare, perhaps, did not bother much about it having absolute confidence in his audience for which he wrote "Measure".