

TDK

"To have what we would have, we speak not what we mean"

Visual and Verbal Disguise in *Measure for Measure*

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1. Introduction

Isabella is certainly one of the most ambiguous characters in the whole of Shakespearian plays. That is only understandable, since the play in which she serves as a protagonist, is one of - if not the most - problematic work of The Bard. Scholars rarely call it anything but inconsistent, illogical and dubious, yet this paper aims to find coherent logical patterns by tracing Isabella's journey into the world of Vienna. I will attempt to do that via tracing her verbal-rhetorical strategies¹ chronologically from the perspective of the dichotomy of "seeming" and "truth". In other words I will attempt to show how she can cope with the principles that are part of her intended vow as a nun, especially those that concern the mode a nun can speak to men.

When you have vow'd, you must not speak with men

But in the presence of the prioress:

Then, if you speak, you must not show your face,

*Or, if you show your face, you must not speak*² (1. 4. 10-14)

Though "veil" here is not specifically named, -it will be mentioned in later scenes; thrice- it can be presumed that Francesca, the nun heeding Isabel refers to a veil. Given these and the very fact that seeming/falsity and truth are major themes in the play, we can deem the abstract and concrete connected.

Isabella will struggle in the play how to veil her face when she talks and how to stay silent when not covering her face. Her journey can be seen as a journey thus from veiling inwardness, when communicating with men, to the end, when all veils are removed, and she is not allowed, she cannot or she does not speak. This journey is significant as *Measure for Measure* is a play in which relative frequency of the words "veil", "face" and "truth" are high, furthermore the words "glass" and "mirror" appear also. I am going to explore her communicative strategies through analysing some of her speeches and also their visual aspect with regards to contemporary emblem books.

When talking about hiding-seeming, these works will offer us a wide range of interpretation of what Isabella represents or wants to accomplish in this play. When searching for clues to Isabella's character, I used mainly the first method and looked for pictures specifically depicting veiled

¹ I used *The Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms* (1979) by J.A. Cuddon; if not indicated otherwise.

² Italics here and in the rest of the quotations are mine if not indicated otherwise -V.N. All references to *Measure for Measure* are based on the Arden edition, J.W. Lever, ed. (London: Methuen, 1965).

woman figures³ because it is the veil that forms a transition to "seeming" and "truth". Veil is the visual manifestation of Isabella's smoke-screen language and it furthermore evokes the idea of her role as a nun.

Determining what exactly we mean by an emblem is rather difficult, so I decided to use Schopenhauer's definition: "Emblem is usually given to simple allegorical designs accompanied by an explanatory motto and destined to teach in an intuitive form a moral truth. They form a transition to poetical allegory." (50)⁴

Beginning with Andrea Alciato, the supposed creator, in 1531 emblems are not simply abstract pictures – *pictura*-, but they are labelled with a motto – an *inscriptio*- and expanded with an explanatory poem, a *subscriptio* (Szönyi). This does not mean that there is no space for interpretation.

Although it is thought that it was the medieval culture that had possessed an emblematic mentality it is obvious that the succeeding periods were not unaffected by this rich legacy. In fact, "there were no aspects of Renaissance or Baroque life completely free from this (emblematic) way of seeing" (Praz 12, 24). The habit of "scanning and interpreting" cannot be exclusively applied to only architecture, fashion or the visual arts, but indeed, the plays and the theatre (Daly, Silcax 1991, 203-38). Emblematic expressions and structures, if we pay careful attention, are constantly present in say, Shakespearian works⁵.

It is unlikely that Shakespeare studied the complex theological or etymological context and basis of these emblems, yet by his time, emblem books went through a certain popularization and were known commonly and served as a "kind of primers in classical and Christian moral symbolism" (Szönyi). Peter Daly recently specified that the function of emblems in literary works are to deepen, clarify or even complicate the contexts in which they appear (Daly 1984, 120).

According to Dieter Mehl, English Renaissance plays either borrow or quote directly the whole/part of the *inscriptio* or *subscriptio*, generally embedded in the text as similes or metaphors. Yet the author warns that sometimes the "figures of speech are in such depth integrated into the text that they lose their original meanings and dynamics". These emblems are called "veiled emblems" (43).

³Every emblem I've chosen and used can be found at the French Emblems at Glasgow site and will be cited accordingly from the webpage <<http://www.emblems.arts.gla.ac.uk/french/index.php>>

⁴Quoted by Praz, *Studies in Seventeenth-Century Imagery* (1964), 15.

⁵It was Peter Daly who wrote several groundbreaking studies focusing on the emblematic structures of Shakespearian Drama and Elizabethan theatre. See: "Shakespeare and the Emblem" (1984) and "Teaching Shakespeare and the Emblem" (1993)

I choose to analyze the concept and image of the "veil" not only because of Isabella⁶ but when looking at the whole of the play, *Measure for Measure* can be understood as a micro-biblical story, from Genesis (each protagonist is reborn into a new situation) to a sort of final Judgement in Act V, where people are unveiled. It is not coincidental that the Greek word ἀποκάλυψις (apocalypsis) contains the word καλύπτω (veil) in it. From beginning to end the readers will go through a plot that begins with seeming (veiled) and ends in truth (unveiled).

Though "Seeming" and "Truth" are not the sole opposing concepts in *Measure for Measure*, but this essay will try to focus on and unravel these aspects in particular. It would be, however, unreasonable to assume that the countless prevailing dichotomies within this work do not intersect. These contrasts - either in the form of abstract concepts or concrete characters - will enrich each other with layers of meaning throughout the play. Namely, when I talk of Isabella, I will have to talk about Angelo and the Duke as well. In fact, the three of them form an unlikely triumvirate for they are the ones hiding behind a facade. Likewise, the concepts of honour, mercy and grace will serve as key devices of the plot. These literary tools are crucial for Isabella, who does not solely represent a watershed between inwardness and inexperience but also between theoretical knowledge and practical action.

Isabella was criticized so many times as badly-written and shallow: scholars like Stauffer and Fergusson stated that "Isabella is an exception by her virtues, but lacks compassion and true complexity" (Stauffer 153-154) and that "she is matured by suffering and by the end of the play, the Duke is the one who teaches her the true values in a society (Fergusson 116). Another⁷ argued that Shakespeare disliked the character of Isabella thus writing her contradictory and dislikeable. George L. Gackle, however, claims that while these readings are truly self-consistent that is not proof of their validity (165). I must agree with Gackle and will attempt to prove that Isabella's character and actions is perfectly retraceable.

2. Renaissance Inwardness

There is one more specification I need to make before I move on to unravel the play. Many a times, self-consciousness and self-knowledge will systematically reappear as an argument or motif, though in the seventeenth century, this term or idea did not exist at all. Or at least, not in the manner we perceive it today. It is true that Renaissance is generally associated with the rediscovery of self

⁶The word veil itself specifically referred to a nun's head covering (c. 1200; from latin velare - to cover) and around the 14th century, the expression 'to take the veil' allegedly meant to become a nun..

⁷I mean William Empson who in his "Sense in *Measure for Measure*" wrote that "Shakespeare could not quite stomach the old reverence that is represented by Isabel" (London, 1951), p. 279.

and the individual, but in reality, this so called personal and separate entity did not exist back then. Even what we now can call retrospectively a "new-found" individualism, had been then a result of a meticulous and extended process, with countless factors to consider in the preceding and contemporary Era.

Inwardness, by definition, is a kind of self-consciousness that allows an individual being set apart from the world and in taking a stance toward it; a self-ownership that can compensate for the effacement of differences in society (Greenblatt 44). The society of *Measure for Measure* tolerates no complexities. Especially among women, Vienna allows two categories: wives (a place defined by men and actually missing from Vienna, making the whole projected town even worse) and whores ("nothing" (5.1.178) implying that if a women cannot be categorized, she is worth nothing and is for every men to take). By choosing to be a nun, Isabella holds a special position in Vienna, one that protects her from uniformity and the unalterable moral decay that is outside the convent walls.

In order to further understand why *Measure for Measure* is so convoluted and Isabella an exception in this Vienna, we must consider the divergence of ideas existing side-by-side at the turning point of the seventeenth century. What we can discover when examining *Measure for Measure* and the Age, is that the same dualism existed in both.

In Europe, Mannerism in Art takes pride in representing complementary tensions and promoting idiosyncrasy, often mixing the biblical with the autobiographic. True presentation of a self appears in music, a legacy of medieval occitan poetry finding its way into the renaissance court lyrics of Henry VIII (Maniates). The same contrast will exist in literature: an Erasmus of Rotterdam writing an extremely personal and informal introduction at the beginning of his Praise of Folly, aimed at his friend, Thomas More. Yet, when printed in 1511, it becomes public and accessible for every reader. Thus, without doubt, it is a polysemic and multidimensional work. The addressee, on the other hand, will not have anything to do with the personal or the private. More's Utopia highlights and focuses on the ordinary and the common. "Even Pleasure" claims Greenblatt in his Renaissance Self-fashioning, "which would seem irreducibly personal and subjective is understood by Utopians as an entirely objective phenomenon" (44). We can see the individual existing at the intersection of personal and the public, selecting carefully what to show openly and what to keep in private. In *Measure for Measure*, the readers meet Isabella as an eager and meek novice, wanting the strictest restraint in her life; yet once outside in Vienna, she will reveal the least possible of herself and in parallel talk of things she knows with an "outstretched throat" (2.4.151). Because she chooses to talk, she involves herself in a greater plot than she is supposed to, so her personal quest becomes public-sized, applicable and relevant to the whole of Viennese society.

Protestantism, a characteristic and decisive feature of the age, helped to shape this conflict between the individual and society/state, both strengthening and weakening it. On the one hand, we have a Reformation that adds to this culture by merely favouring vernacular language over the Latin. The promotion of subjective self-scrutiny over an institutionalized one depicts the tension between person and society (Greenblatt 85). Still, it would be a bit too rash to state that Reformation advocated individualism so actively. It was rather both the Protestant and Catholic answer to the upcoming spiritual crisis (Greenblatt 109, 125) that gives a solution to this problem, and adds a significant background concept to *Measure*. The concept that power over sexuality produces inwardness (Greenblatt 126). So really, by her vocation alone, Isabella can be branded as inward, given that she is humbling to a God that "desirest truth in the inward parts" (Holy Bible, Psalm 51:6). By knowing truth inwardly, Isabella will be capable of either altering or preaching this truth. Inwardness thus becomes both an intellectual state (subjective/individual) and a spiritual condition (objective), both that can and will be rendered in speech.

No wonder why *Measure for Measure* can be seen as so labyrinthine. The conflicts will arise from the complexities within the play: political theory, theological beliefs and individual motifs are all interwoven and overlapping, especially in Isabella. She is layered and complex exactly because her inwardness - a self-fashioning process - grants her this luxury. This is not to say she "knows herself" because that is a non-existent concept, but rather, we should perceive her as having an intimately inward nature. A true model of the Renaissance woman; one who is not solely a construction of the cultural and social settings around her but capable of realizing a necessary dimension of embodiment and wants to remain that way (Martin 16-18). When she is called out from the environment where this self-fashioning and inwardness was possible, is the exact moment problems arise for Isabella and the play begins.

3. Verbal and Visual Disguise

Measure for Measure begins with a great political change followed by numerous personal ones as a consequence. "Angelo, Isabella, and the Duke," states Michael J. Collins, "each from a kind of cloister, enter the world for the first time" (25).

This is correct, but I must add that the Duke will enjoy the luxury of being hidden and stay still the "duke of dark corners", while both Angelo and Isabella are forced to make radical and undesirable decisions for the very first time, without proper guidance or any real experience. It is pivotal to draw this parallel between them because a) it will give the spine of this essay and argument b) when

unsure about Isabella, we can turn to analyze Angelo since he is much more talkative c) their few but existing differences will lead us to the conclusion. In the following subchapters I shall try to analyze Isabella's rhetoric, focusing especially on Act II and V, where her most climactic speeches take place. Examining Act I is necessary, because first impressions are always decisive, and Act III and IV will only serve as a ladder to Act V, so I will treat them as an intermission in Isabella's plot.

3.1. "And well she can persuade" - A Hesitant Protagonist

Though she appears for only a scene, Isabella is foreshadowed and delayed on purpose in the first act of Measure. Until then, we can and must witness the transition of power between Vincentio and Angelo in the first scene, so as to gain context for the radical and hasty changes in the jurisdiction. Then, in the following part we get a glimpse into the morally corrupt world of Vienna, an ethical sickness that seemingly only touches the lower layers of the society but is actually present everywhere. As we will later see, the problem lies really within each individual, since the concept of sin is perceived as inherent and present in every single person. We can then understand the reluctance of Isabella when asked to leave her safe haven for a world of extremes which does not tolerate complexities and is a moral black hole.

Isabella is introduced as a solution, to a problem arisen in the second scene, when her brother, Claudio is among (if not the first or only) to be imprisoned as a result of Angelo's quick ascension. So by the time she appears on stage, we know three crucial pieces of information about Isabel: She is the young sister of a condemned man, a novice to become a nun and, coincidentally, an excellent orator. As Claudio states:

I have great hope in that; for in her youth
There is a prone and speechless dialect,
Such as move men; beside, she hath prosperous art
When she will play with reason and discourse,
And well she can persuade. (1. 2. 172-176)

Yet this passage implies that this brother considers his sister's youth - in case of women, mostly associated with beauty - a much greater persuasive tool than her talent for speech. Nunhood or no, Claudio wants her to "make friends with the strict deputy" (1.2.170-171). While speaking, Isabella will also communicate non-verbally, with a "speechless dialect" as her brother puts it, which is not only her beauty, but how the nonverbal interact with the verbal: the repetition, uses of figure of

speech, whether there is a break within her text, exclamations, choice and order of words. Apart from these we can also make assumption how Isabella comes across visually based on her language.

First appearances and impressions are always powerful in Shakespeare. Isabella, *in medias res*, presents herself as someone who is keen on being a votarist, speaking "not as desiring more, but rather wishing a more strict restraint"(1.4.3-4). There is no need for us to suspect that she lies since she is not yet outside the convent walls, unsafe. Her short dialogue with a fellow nun, Francisca is interrupted by Claudio's friend and messenger, Lucio. What is important in the following exchange is the juxtaposition we might later notice in the manner Isabella speaks. She is succinct and focused, her speech is short of any grandiloquence or pathos which will later become her most distinguishing feature.

Before we move on to the controversial second act, there are two key sentences that we cannot omit if we want to understand the female protagonist. The first is Isabella's sudden outburst upon hearing that Juliet is with child; "O, let him marry her!" (1.4.58). This gives us a clear hint that she does not consider sex or sexuality a sin and has no problem with it as long as she is not involved in it. This ability to have a very unique sense of gray reappears in the third act, when the Duke suggests simply swapping Isabella for Mariana in Angelo's bed.

I have spirit to do anything
that *appears* not foul in the truth of *my spirit* (3.1. 205-206)

This is a clear example of a self-reinforcing truth, one we cannot really argue with. I put emphasis on "appears" and "my spirit," because these keywords suggest that Isabella has the capacity for acknowledging and handling morally dubious or complex issues, a trait Angelo does not have. This contrast is exactly the kind of tension that will form the dichotomy between them.

The second significant bit is Isabella's clear reluctance to go and help his brother even though by this point she is aware that Claudio is sentenced to death. She tries to dance back from giving help, twice; by first exclaiming: "Alas, what poor ability's in me to do him good!" (1.4.75-76) and then questioning her own competence: "My power? Alas, I doubt." (1.4.78) It is only after Lucio confirms that she needs to "weep and kneel" (1.4.80) too aside from "sueing" (1.4.79) is when Isabella agrees. This will weaken the argument of scholars like Dayton Haskin who claim that Isabella assumes that her "commitment to Christian ethical teaching will provide her with clear norms for practical conduct" (354). We are beyond the logos and ethos, and Isabella is aware of that, as we will clearly see in the second act when we may witness her deliberately passionate, but flawed reasoning.

Still, both her present reluctance and forthcoming rhetoric conduct may seem strange or even disagreeable. Yet these choices turn out to be only logical once we get to analyze the setting of *Measure for Measure*: Vienna.

We could never depict *Measure for Measure* as a comedy; since the circumstances we are introduced from the very beginning are so dark. We find ourselves in a city where an elemental human desire is treated as intrinsically and undeniably sinful and punished in the most radical ways. Yet the problem of Vienna does not necessarily lie in the fact that its laws consider sex a sin, but that the Duke previously failed to impose any kind of constraint on its habitants, causing total ethical and legal corruption. By legal I mean having no alternatives in-between death or free pardon. By ethical, that Claudio and Juliet - the ones truly in love - are thrown in jail, Lucio suffers from sexual illnesses, Mistress Overdone and Pompey thrive in this moral black hole. Vienna does not allow the luxury of complexity, has no tolerance for anything complex or polysemantic. An Isabella, who is a complex character, has no place and choice outside convent walls where woman are either whores or wives. But if we look more closely, there are no wives in Vienna, so there is really no choice for a woman to be *anything* but a whore.

It is no wonder that Isabella is hesitant to go out. Not yet a nun but merely a novice, she has to create a shield for herself; an allegorical veil of some sort. An emblem by Jean-Jacques Boissard, seen below⁸, captures this notion perfectly. Its title: "She hides secrets with a veil."



In the centre of the illustration, a lady is clothed from head to toe, her arms spread while in the corners, two men contemplate the phenomenon before them. In the background a city. Isabella indeed will hide her secrets, with her rhetoric and her vocation. Let us make no mistake: apart from her language, Isabella's status as a novice creates a special place for her in Viennese society. She will not and cannot be categorized with other women, as we can see through the address of Lucio:

⁸Originally "*Velo Latet Abdita*" <<http://www.emblems.arts.gla.ac.uk/french/emblem.php?id=FBOa005>>

I hold you as a thing ensky'd and sainted.
By your renouncement an immortal spirit,
And to be talk'd with in sincerity,
As with a saint. (1.4. 34-37)

Later, when Angelo talks of Isabella in his second soliloquy, the same beatific image will waltz back, amplified:

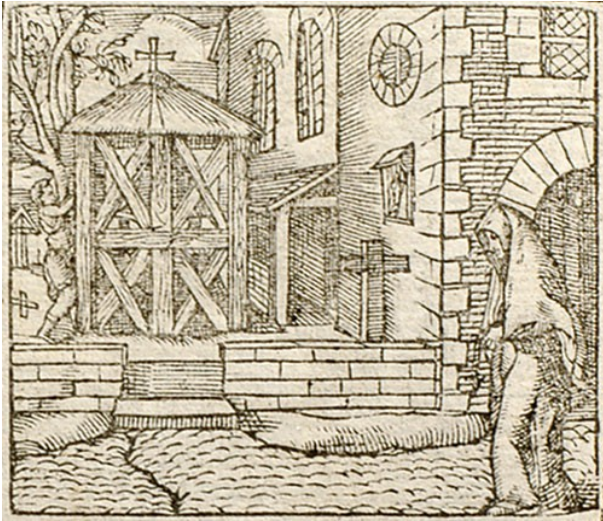
Whilst my invention, hearing not my tongue,
Anchors on *Isabel: Heaven* in my mouth,
As if I did but only chew *his* name; (2.4. 3-5)

While she is compared to a saint in Act I, Isabella is compared to God in the next. The pronoun "his", as observed by G. K. Hunter, suggests that the "Heaven" in the preceding line used to be "God" in the original text (169-171). The reason for the substitution must have been a contemporary legal act against stage profanity. By placing Heaven/God in close succession to Isabella's name the text is able to evoke and link the two together. 'God in my mouth' thus exalts Isabel to a divine level.

Isabella, too, is aware of her special status:

as the glasses where *they* view themselves,
Which are as easy broke as *they* make forms.
Women! - Help Heaven! Men *their* creation mar
In profiting by *them*. (2.4.124-127)

The plural suggests that Isabella separates herself from the rest of women. She does not belong to this city's hierarchy, making her choice to become a nun not solely religious, but social as well. Women in Vienna are a thing dependent on their relation to men and if they fail to have any, then they simply cease to exist. Again, this is the internalized problem of Vienna that fails to see in any way but in extremes. So let us suppose Shakespeare would have wanted an exception in this story, by any means, he needed to give that character an exceptional place or role.



Joannes Sambucus' *Emblemata* of 1564⁹ contains an illustration depicting a nun walking toward a belltower; in the background a convent, above the picture, its title: 'Things shared and conjoined'. The sententia under it:

Who could be called wise, if he does not have the will to express what he sees, and how to speak with learned wit? He who pours forth words from an empty breast and a talent which lacks eloquence makes meaningless noise. Nor does application without a rich vein (for indeed, what talent could a man obtain from nothing?) win scantier praise.

What should strike us as strange, is the masculine pronoun instead of a feminine one. This can be explained by the fact that Sambucus/Sámboky addressed his poem to Francesco Robortello, a contemporary humanist in Italy who was nicknamed as "the grammatical dog" for his rather vicious manner when it came to philology. Robortello also stated that women, being morally inferior, should submit themselves to the will of their husband. If we behold the picture and the poem together with this context in mind, then it's clear that Sambucus/Sámboky was mocking Robortello, pointing out that convents are full of morally superior women, who indeed, had the means and potential to become as literate as men.

By analyzing texts written by and about religious women in early modern Europe we can get "a rich picture of nuns whose life frequently involved as much creative labor as prayer" (Travitsky xvii). Jeryldine M. Wood goes into details how monastic women had the opportunity and means to compose, paint, write and take active roles in architectural and decorative projects (272). Bourdillon, in fact, talks specifically of the Order of St. Claire's when mentioning that its members had chance to learn theology and mysticism (78-80).

⁹Original title: *Mutua & Coniuncta*

Despite these examples, we have to note, that in real historical occurrences the Brides of Christ were not the only ones to enjoy these privileges. Let us think of noblewomen (Ivetta Huy, Margery Kempe, Julian of Norwich) whose social background allowed to enjoy the luxury of education and travel also. This is the kind of complexity that Vienna denies us. Thus, if we perceive Isabella as an inward character, we can safely state that her nature is inclined to self-realization but finds none outside the convent. Becoming a nun is perfect for her: she is not only a part of a creative and beneficial community, but most importantly safe from submission, sacrifice or compromise.

Nunhood and chastity are interconnected and it is the combination of the two that really protects Isabella. Society, not Scripture, defines chastity as an implicit and definitive virtue that gives place for both men and women. Chastity is a universal power that ensures when Isabella meets with men, she is esteemed in the highest possible form¹⁰.

Her role as a nun and her rhetoric together will serve as a shield once she is outside the convent walls. Both Claudio and Lucio will expect Isabella to rely more on a pathos-based rhetoric, rather than on a didactic or ethos-based one. If we accept as a premise that Isabella is introspective in nature, we can assume that she knows what is expected of her and she, although grudgingly, agrees to help and indeed, will wear her shield.

3.2. "Why do you put these sayings upon me?" - The Clash of Catalysts

Act II is undeniably the act of two congruent characters: that of Angelo and Isabella. A watershed for various reasons, this sequence is not only where we can witness Isabella's rhetorical *modus operandi* via her debate with Angelo but at the very end, she will have her soliloquy. This monologue embodies the extent of her devotion to Francisca's heeding.

We also must not forget that the moment Isabella leaves the convent, she will try her hardest to conceal her true nature thus we must question everything she says to the point of her soliloquy at the end of the Act.

3.2.1. The Angelo-Isabella parallel

¹⁰The last two sentences in this paragraph are really a summary of an article by Barbara J. Baines. "Assaying the Power of Chastity in Measure for Measure." *Studies in English Literature* 30.2 (1990): 284-288

Isabella will have such a formative debate with Angelo that not only their formerly flawless linguistic abilities will begin to unravel instantly, but as a result of their encounter they will be compelled to make desperate decision and act rashly. It is also formative, because when I mentioned interdependent narratives earlier I really meant that they serve as catalysts to each other.

Thus, before solely focusing on Isabella, let us try to pinpoint the many ways they can be treated as parallels. Ascetic in temperament -though one by choice and one by ignorance- perceived as callous by most ("Angelo; a man whose very blood is snow-broth" (1.4.57-58) and Lucio commenting on Isabella being "too cold" (2.2.56)). Furthermore, both share an aptitude for absolutism: Angelo being a legal, Isabella being a moral extremist. Besides, they are the only ones who respect and look on laws as beneficial, as "severe but just" and both of them are rhetorical geniuses. So their rhetoric -eloquent and sophisticated- matches as do their plotlines, especially by the denouement where they are given the same punishment in the form of a marriage. Only the last fifty years of academic and last fifteen years of theatrical legacy¹¹ allows me to speak of Angelo as either a "potential tragic hero misplaced in a comedy" (Dodds 255) or an "incontinent man"(Wasson). Furthermore, among the many perplexities of *Measure for Measure*, one that chiefly stands out is that no character in the play is entirely blameless.

Yet, by claiming that Angelo and Isabella are comparable does not mean that they are entirely similar. The difference between their vocations gives us the key to the two character's inherent disparity. Angelo is a part of the secular; the judicial system: an impartial and impersonal entity and autonomy which is not aware of the human instruments who are its executors (Dodds 249). Being in administration, especially by an Angelo who is reputed to be so spectacularly virtuous and knowledgeable to the extent that everyone in the court accepts him immediately as a deputy, means dealing with people, in other words, operating outwards. Rolf Soellner in addition states, that Angelo's legal absolutism arises from the conviction that his own mind is superior to that of others

¹¹Theatres in the last few years started to note how awkward Angelo really is, rather than vicious or villainous, and hence represented him either:

- stuttering in Vakhtangov Theatre's production of a Russian *Measure for Measure*, on the 24-25th of April, 2012; where Angelo and Isabella literally hug and dance; this is a really light interpretation compared to most of the post-modern productions. <<http://exeuntmagazine.com/reviews/measure-for-measure>>.
- changing his glasses to contact lenses in order to appeal to Isabella in Almeida Theatre staged *Measure for Measure* in 2010, February; directed by Michael Attenborough who cast Rory Kinnear as Angelo and Anna Maxwell Martin as Isabella. In the play's final scene, Isabella and Angelo stare at each other "as if realising theirs would be a natural union". <<http://www.theguardian.com/stage/2010/feb/19/measure-for-measure-review>>

Productions such as these transformed the previously "dark antagonist" Angelo to one who behaves like an adolescent around his schoolcrush. This is not necessarily better than the previous condition, but depicting Angelo as being immanently in control is a grave mistake.

and can easily control his course of action (218). Isabella, on the other hand, works on an unconditionally pre-emptive level by choosing the enclosed life of nuns, which is as much of a social as it is a religious decision. By means of her inward nature, she is aware that Vienna is an impossible place to live a complex and fulfilling life, so she is determined to alienate herself from it. This preventing technique, however, backfires. Isabel won't be practically prepared to deal with Viennese people, though she is truly an outstanding orator.

But the conflict of Measure truly begins with the encounter of these two dichotomous characters. It begins the very moment Isabella stops appealing to Angelo, the judge, and addresses Angelo, the person behind the role.

3.2.2. Angelo's Humanization: Cause, Process and Consequences

If we choose to solely scope Isabella then, luckily enough, the whole of the second scene can be clearly distinguished into three major *protreptic* parts. These are the following:

- a) introduction + ad hominem argument [2.2.27-69]
- b) objective commoratio [2.2.73-144]
- c) dubious goodbye [2.2.146-161]

Part a) is all about warming up to the all-veiled part b). Scholars such as D. A. Traversi claimed that Isabel believes in false simplicity (53), and one of the reasons he must have thought so is her meek and tentative way when she steps into the courtroom. If we are to be honest, Isabella's rhetoric is insufficient at the beginning but her humility plus her role as a novice has quite the appeal. Before stepping in the court room, the Provost gives Angelo an *ad vericundium* basis ("a very virtuous maid; and to be shortly of a sisterhood" 2.2.20) that will make him listen. Then arrives Isabella, who addresses him twice as "your honour" and then stating immediately that she, in fact, does agree with the anti-fornication law.

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 'twist will and will not. (2.2.28-33)

Her reason (logos) and morals (ethos) dictate Isabel to condemn the action but still, in her heart of hearts, she finds that she must crave mercy -by very definition, something that no person deserves

yet it is given- for her brother. Isabella, as shown above, is very careful with her words: would and must have but a slight difference and she does not only pay attention to the logical, but also the aesthetic structure of her argument. She is warming up to the debate which brings out the erotic dynamics of the encounter that both character create through language (Rayner 163).

For example, "will", before going through a lexical change, expressed the „strengthening of senses" around the fifteenth century. So when Isabella says "at war 'twist will and will not" (2.2.33), it is really foreshadowing how the moment Angelo and Isabella meet, they will strengthen each other's senses (The Oxford English Dictionary 134-135). It is also a biblical allusion to Paul's account of the struggle between "spirit and flesh" which creates a certain innuendo from the very beginning (Holy Bible, Gal. 5:16-18).

Isabella then tries to separate sin and sinner, but Angelo palpably out-argues her at this point. As a consequence of that, she sees and senses that Angelo has a clear concept of the principles of justice and assumes that he is a character of rectitude who will not bend. It is no coincidence then, that the recurring notion of the escaping Isabella returns -which is important when we will study scene four- and it is Lucio who has to remind her that reason will not win this man over.

So she decides to use his own word against him, by means of understanding their meaning and taking them one step further, in order to rebut them. In the following sequence, we can clearly see how stubbornly will Angelo cling to his own words, but let's Isabella's in as well. With the words, the thoughts come rushing in, initiating a simultaneous change in Angelo's diction and character:

Ang. I *will not* do't.

Isab. But *can* you if you *would*?

Ang. Look what I *will not*, that I *cannot* do.

Isab. But *might* you do't, (2.2. 50-53)

Isabella is extremely shrewd: she mixes and reconnects her own language to fit the purpose with the same ease as he does Angelo's. She is undoubtedly like a lawyer in this aspect. What is more, she subtly starts to insert an *ad hominem* streak into the argument by means of comparison and speculation, for further persuasion.

If so *your heart* were touch'd with that remorse as *mine* is to him. (2.2.54)

After she not only likens him to herself, -seemingly making them equal and one- but to her brother, Claudio as well. This is only fitting since reason has no place in this argument, so she has no other choice but passionately appeal to Angelo's humanity.

If he had been as you, and you as he,
You would have slipped like him, but he like you
would not have been so stern. (2.2.64-66)

Now Angelo will make her leave. Such as these are the telltale signs that she indeed has the desired effect on Angelo with her language ("Pray you be gone". 2.2.67), as she takes his words and expands on their meaning. By taking his words, she really takes his character too, creating an erotic tension which will reach its peaks in the last scene.

Isabella does not relent and in fact, we can sense a sort of shift, or rather, escalation in the scenario, because Lucio implies that she touched Angelo while she delivers her rebuttal. There is a shift and from this moment on, Isabella carries out an objective homily which calls for magnanimity.

Commoratio, is a rhetorical term noting the phenomenon when one returns or dwells on one's strongest argument. Isabella's strongest argument will be man's "natural guiltiness" (2.2.140) thus appealing not to the impersonal body of the Justice, but Angelo's very person. Part b) is critical, because Isabel by simply naming it, evokes the idea of sin as being acceptable or common. The problem is that under normal circumstances -were it not for her brother's life- she would not even argue with the anti-fornication laws. But, since she wants to save Claudio, Isabella argues on his behalf, as she admits it in scene IV:

To have what we would have, we speak not what we mean:
I something do excuse the thing I hate,
For his advantage that I dearly love (2.4.118-120)

One mistake Isabella makes is to erase or lighten the weight of the fault she otherwise would not. Another mistake she makes is that she humanizes Angelo by holding herself up as a mirror, as seen in part 2.2.54 and by using plural in 2.2.127:

We cannot weigh *our* brother with ourself.

By this, she does not only suggests that the two of them are an exception but also foreshadows her soliloquy and the change that takes place in her until then.

It is also by these errors that Isabella becomes the catalyst to Angelo's self-apprehension. Until that point, Angelo -as he confesses in his monologue- was never even tempted to fall; he was, indeed, faultless and thus could truly take pride in his spotless reputation. Yet, the moment Isabella utters; "Go to your bosom, knock there, and ask your heart what it doth know" (2.2.137-138) Angelo is forced to do it, forced to look inside himself, be as inward as Isabella. This only quasi-works and will backfire quite spectacularly, as we will witness in scene IV.

Aside evoking Angelo's humanity via these and a 'nosce teipsum' allegory (2.2.120), we can witness that Isabella is not the only one who sees the flaws in the system, who understands the way authority works, but she truly *is* the only one who handles mercy as a form of justice, and thinks of it as having redeeming qualities (2.2.78). This is crucial to note, because Isabella will be the only character who puts her theoretical words into concrete actions in Act V. When she denies mercy for her brother in Act III, it's a result of her desperation; much like Angelo's attempt to blackmail her.

Angelo is desperate, because the first time in the play, he realizes he is capable of desire. What is more, it is far from average lust.

She speaks, and 'tis such *sense*

That my *sense* breeds with it. (2.2.143-144)

It is not her appearance that excites him in the first place, but her way with words and the logic behind it. Angelo is the one that notices the sense, it will be Mariana, Isabella's alternate that expands the true meaning of sense: "as there is sense in truth and truth in virtue" (5.1.225). Angelo then, in fact, realizes a kind of truth by desiring the first time in his life and this notion terrifies him. It frightens him to such an extent that he turns back, wanting to escape Isabella, escape temptation, but she would not relent until she gets a satisfactory solution.

Part c) can be mistaken to a conscious teasing, (especially 2.2.146) yet this is Isabella casting her spiritual role outwards, a continuation of her didactic sermon in part b). That is not to say that Isabella is not affected by Angelo. The fact that she bids him goodbye twice and offers prayers is Isabella's genuine way of thanking and showing admiration. Little does she know that her preaching initiated something much greater than she intended or anticipated. Isabella, due to the lack of experience mistakes Angelo as someone exactly like her, and thus assumes he would understand her ways of approach as a necessity. The true tragedy of the Angelo-Isabella plotline is that it has a potential to be exactly like the Benedick and Beatrice one in *Much Ado about Nothing*, yet the circumstances deny them the luxury of having a healthy or happy relationship. Scene IV will start

off with a desperate Angelo, and ends with an even more desperate Isabella to match his determination.

3.2.3. "To have what we would have" - Paradoxical power play

In scene II, we witnessed how Isabella humanized Angelo through her language. Protrepsis was necessary in order to gain free pardon for her brother, Claudio; and it seemed like the Deputy would relent, but no official verdict was given yet. Isabella thus, has every reason to hope in getting mercy, her aim is to try to persuade Angelo a bit more if he still has doubts. Angelo, on the other hand, went through three, deeply evaluative soliloquies, which show clearly how self-aware he had become. His aim in this scene is getting Isabella's consent to a sinful exchange.

This is obviously a challenging task, given that Angelo first has to drag down Isabella the same way she dragged him down through the humanization process. We can see that Angelo perceives Isabella as a higher entity:

Whilst my invention, hearing not my tongue,
Anchors on *Isabel: Heaven* in my mouth,
As if I did but only chew *his* name; (2.4.3-4)

The apposition evokes a parallel between Heaven and Isabel, setting them on the same level of transcendence. Angelo also refers to her as a "saint" (2.2.181) and an "enciel'd beauty"¹² (2.4.80).

Alongside this process, Angelo will try to make Isabel his accomplice by claiming that a) she just claimed that sex is not a sin and thus must think it too (2.4.114-116) b) free them under the label and responsibility of being exceptions in Vienna (2.4. 131-132) what Isabel really tried to emphasize in their first scene together (2.2.127).

It is by this point that most theatre productions decide to make the exchange between Angelo and Isabella scene really tactile; turning the last bit -around 2.4.158- into a near rape scene. The scene can or even has to be physical to some extent, but the issue with depicting sexual assault is that it would hint that Angelo feels confident and knows that he has the upper hand, while his language clearly mirrors his uncertainty. Right from the very beginning, Angelo is inconsistent and paradoxical;

Yet *may* he live awhile; and, it may be,

¹²J.W. Lever stated that under encieled we should mean enshielded, but I'd rather say it's an allusion to the french word "*ciel*" - heaven, sky

As long as you or I; yet he *must* die. (2.4.35-36)

Logical flaws in his words illustrate the immense inward struggle of this character. Claudio "may live", so there is a chance for Isabel's brother to survive, but at a horrible price which he himself condemns: Angelo ends his sentence with a "must"; expressing that the ethical process would be to condemn Claudio. There are more signs that Angelo's very character -which was known to be collected and infallible - is falling apart. It goes to such an extent, that his speech starts to have sporadic *non-sequitur* segments:

I talk not of your soul: our compell'd sins

Stand more for number than for accompt.

Nay, I'll not warrant that; for I can speak

Against the thing I say. (2.4.56-57; 59-60)

Angelo really loses his rhetorical advantage when Isabella is present, and even wants to omit naming the deed, (2.4.31-32) initially refusing to absolve Claudio (2.4.33) in hope that he can make Isabella talk.

But Isabella is ready to accept the verdict and leave (2.4.34) and so it is Angelo who calls her back. This is pivotal to note, because when we analyze who really blackmailed who, then we have to find that it was Isabella who was first to threaten. Until that point, there is a long, hypothetical discussion about morality and justice, until that point there is an Angelo who tries to make Isabella talk and catch her words, like she did his.- Indeed, Isabella is forced to talk in first person and she will attempt to smoke-screen her whole way through it.

We continued to emphasize how inward Isabella was all throughout these scenes; moreover, the last scene showed that Angelo and Isabella really share a deeper connection, a kind of sensitivity to each other through their words. If we still maintain this argument then we must assume that Isabella would know from the very beginning what Angelo really wants. Given this assumption, we can examine whether there are further layers of meaning to Isabel's answers or no.

Actually, Isabella rebuts Angelo three times. We will see that Angelo reformulates the same question thrice (2.4.51; 2.4.63; 2.4.97) and that it will be Isabel who will give the most blatant sexual innuendo, as an *apophasis*.

were I under the terms of death,

The impression of keen whips I'd wear as rubies,

And strip myself to death, as to *a bed*

*That longing have been sick for, ere I'd yield
My body up to shame. (2.4.99-103)*

Through the highly sexual analogy, Isabel admits she has desires, but refuses to act on them. For sex in Vienna has an all-consuming cost. The first time Angelo tries to get her assent (2.4.46-48) Isabella contrasts the divine laws with the current Viennese ones; exactly to show that while Heaven looks on murder as a more sinful than extramarital sex, Vienna does not.

'Tis set down so in heaven, but not in earth (2.4.50)

Then from 2.4.51 to 2.4.77, Isabella either feigns ignorance or really cannot follow Angelo's message; so she gives safe and ambiguous answers, until Angelo gets tired, and does not tiptoe around the subject anymore. It seems like, especially in retrospect of 2.4.138-139, that Isabella tries to give him a chance to back up. She gives him hints to speak "the former language" (2.4.139) as she calls it: the language and sense of justice he still possessed in scene II and now lost it.

It is before this that Angelo tries to argue based on what Isabella referred to in scene II; that everyone is "frail" (2.2.140-2.4.121). When Isabella successfully rebuts that Angelo tries to narrow the reference, and specifically names women as frail, trying to allude to Isabella's femininity.

As it turns out, Isabella is perfectly capable of abstracting herself from the rest of Viennese women since she addresses them in third person plural:

ay, as the glasses where *they* view themselves;
Which are as easy broke as *they* make forms.
Women! Help Heaven! men *their* creation mar
In profiting by *them*. (2.4.123-126)

Isabella equals mirrors with women who form themselves accordingly to the pleasures of men. It is also a reference to the loss of virginity; and signifies the way Isabella scorns the notion of this loss ("to mar" is quite telling; the same internalized contempt towards sex or sexual desires can be found in Angelo's diction in his first soliloquy, when he compares desire to rotting as a carrion in the sun).

The abstraction, though it comes back in her soliloquy, ceases by line 127:

For we are soft as our complexions are,
And *credulous to false prints* (2.4.127-128)

The importance of this is indescribable. Now Isabella involves herself with the rest of the women as noting that this is her true answer to Angelo. Women are indeed frail, and they are mostly regarded

as such because the standards of the society are frail, and it is very easy to break -as in slander- them for life once they act on their desires. The same reminder rings in her answer to Angelo's "plainly conceive, I love you" (2.4.140):

My brother *did love* Juliet,

And you tell me he *shall die for 't*. (2.4.141-142)

Sex in Vienna has a price and it is one's reputation, one's life, one's very character and Isabel revolts against that, revolted from the very beginning by taking the veil.

The great difference between the two characters is then the ability to clearly distinguish between sinful desire and sinful action. Isabella admits she desires, yet prevents herself from falling by joining an order, while Angelo considers himself fallen the moment he is tempted; an ironic juxtaposition to what he confessed to Escalus at 2.1.17-18.

Isabella's last attempt to convert back Angelo is to evoke the notion of virtue via his role (2.4.144) but he refuses and his words at last match his purpose. This is the point where Isabella blackmails Angelo; she is genuinely angry, repeating seeming twice, exclaiming. In fact, the "seeming, seeming!" part is necessary to also show how very angry is Isabella at herself, to have let the situation with Angelo escalate, because she is the most culpable when it comes to facades.

It is by this point Angelo realizes that he actually holds the secular power here, rhetoric be damned; and since Isabella has mentioned seeming, he belatedly realizes that it is the same seeming Isabella blames her that might actually save him from the consequences of a sinful action. Angelo's actions sprung from desperation, and so will Isabel from this point on.

This scene is undoubtedly a power play if we realize that it's a matter of who can convince the other more quickly. Isabel has magnificent rebuttals but refuses to bend, and though Angelo is clearly weaker linguistically in this scene, it is only by scene IV that he realizes that the absolute legislative/secular power of Vienna is in him. Now the question is to what extent will Isabel go to protect herself.

3.2.3.1. The Soliloquy: Problem or Proof?

The problem we must face is that Isabella has only one soliloquy. Incidentally, that is the clearest proof of her inward nature and the passage shows just how clearly she succeeded in mastering the counsel of Francesca.

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 court'sy to their will:
 Hooking both right and wrong to the appetite,
 To follow as it draws! *I'll to my brother:*
 Though he hath fallen by prompture of the blood,
 Yet hath he in him such a mind of honour.
 That, had he twenty heads to tender down
 On twenty bloody blocks, he'd yield them up,
 Before *his sister* should her body stoop
 To such abhorr'd pollution.
 Then, *Isabel*, live chaste, and, brother, die:
More than our brother is our chastity.
I'll tell him yet of Angelo's request,
 And fit his mind to death, for his soul's rest. (2. 4. 170-186)

In these eighteen lines, Isabella speaks in the first person singular altogether four times: twice at the beginning, once in the middle and at the end. These are not the only interesting phenomena in the monologue; let us notice how Isabella, by line 181 has started to abstract herself from her own words; referring to herself as the sister of Claudio, and then as Isabella, as means to regain some control (chaste; chastity is reused to contrast the notion of blood) after seven lines of questions and exclamations. Just for a quick comparison, Angelo, has four, rather extensive and detailed soliloquies. He also started his first soliloquy with a question, back in scene II.

Now, Isabella is clearly shocked by this sudden turn of events; that is why she starts with a question, which seems redundant if knowing how eager she was to go back to the convent both times Angelo refused to pardon Claudio. Would it be too cynical to presume that she doesn't trust herself anymore?

O perilous *mouths*,
 That bear in them one and the self-same tongue,
 Either of *condemnation or approof*; (2.4.171-173)

Isabella refers to more mouths, so she either speaks in general, or refers to both of Angelo and herself. It is also meaningful, that even in her soliloquy, she borrowed Angelo's "will" from his last speech, in line 163.

Until this scene, she felt like she has the higher rhetorical and moral ground, hence her powerful and objective speeches in scene II. Now, however, she has to face the fact that she grossly misjudged Angelo and he has now realized that he has the actual upper hand when in secular matters. The lines: "Though he had fallen by prompture of blood, yet hath he in him such a mind of honour" are not only applicable to her brother, but can refer to Angelo as well. We can moreover interpret this as Isabella being reluctant to face the consequences of her action. She used *ad hominem* argument: it quasi-worked and backfired. She is now looking for escape routes, because blood - in Measure always connected to desire, pleasure and sexuality- is a foreign term and territory; and it is also forbidden in her mind, so she looks for absolution and needs it from her brother.

Still, her most quoted line is her most significant. In this, her whole *modus operandi* encased; showing just how completely she managed to embed the warning of the nun in Act I Scene IV. Isabella does not - because she wants not- to talk of herself, so when she cannot smokescreen her speech she is extra careful.

"More than our brother is our chastity", thus, gets another level of significance:

- a) semantically, it captures the absolute emphasis Isabella puts on chastity: how it substitutes and supersedes everything in her life, including her physical, tangible relationships.
- b) linguistically, it is the cathartic point of her soliloquy; her true intentions and thoughts exposed. "Our", the third person form in Shakespearian speeches, is used solely by royal characters, people in regal-divine position. Isabella clearly means to transcend her humanity; sacrificing what makes her a) woman (sexuality) b) human (blood relations).

In the last paragraph, a question was raised and in this soliloquy the answer is given. Isabella is ready to sacrifice everything in the name of what she holds and makes her holy.

3.3. "O, were it but my life" - Isabella's Dissolution

Whilst Act II was all about logical checkmating, Act III will be about trying to find either comfort in denying or a solution to deny Angelo. Isabella will seek comfort and absolution from her

brother, and then will ultimately be given a solution by the disguised Duke. The solution, while effective, has a risk of becoming a mere and minor instrument in a grander, political scheme. Yet, the Duke himself is unaware of how influential and unprecedented will be Isabella's character in that particular last Act V, which will serve as a sort of Last Judgment scenario.

Isabella arrives at the prison with the supposed purpose of preparing Claudio for death. His comfort is of outmost importance for Isabella, because that is the only way she can feel certain in her own choice of refusing Angelo.

As all comforts are: *most good, most good indeed.*

Lord Angelo, having affairs to heaven,

Intends you for his swift ambassador (3.1.54-56)

Upon arriving, Isabella greets her brother with a sweeping euphemism. She, in fact, will do the exact same thing as Angelo had done in the preceding scene: running the same irresolute rhetorical circles and delaying the point of her visit the best she can. When Claudio asks her the second time if there is any chance at all to live, Isabel is quick to indicate that the pardon which exists is conditional. What is more she arranges her words in such way that Claudio is sure to misunderstand it:

Yes, brother, you may live: (...)

If you'll implore it, that will free your life,

But fetter you till death. (3.1.65-66)

Claudio will remain clueless, and will only get partial information around line 75, when Isabella faces him with a grave question: "Dar'st thou die?" Only after she gets a satisfactory answer from her brother does she dare to tell about Angelo's request; and even then only after really emphasizing his villainy and showering Claudio in her flatteries for overcoming his fear of death (3.1.85-92).

There is no reason for Isabella until this point to tell Claudio about Angelo's request unless she wants a sort of acquittal from guilt (3.1.100-103). Guilt being, she desires too and now she would even have the chance to fulfil those desires but she cannot, given she would lose her sense of inwardness. Moreover, there are problems upon problems: if she accepts Angelo's offer, Claudio might live, but she would lose her virginity, something she regards as sacred and which ensures protection; and most probably be shamed if there was a child from the act. If she refuses Angelo -which she is in process of doing- all is well, but Claudio dies. Yet it is the cheaper way, as she puts it; and it is later reinforced in line 188-190:

I had rather my / brother die by the law than my son should be /unlawfully born.

In light of that it is perfectly reasonable why her answer to Claudio's "Death is a fearful thing"(3.1.115) is not something along the lines of "Yet this communion would be a sin" but "And shames life a hateful" (3.1.116). Her guilt is moreover proven after Claudio insist on Isabella saving his life and she loses her previous lengthy and composed reactions:

O you beast!

O faithless coward! O dishonest wretch!

Wilt thou be made a man out of my vice?

Is't not a kind of incest, to take life

From thine own sister's shame? What should I think? (3.1.135-139)

The three exclamations and two *erotemas* may as well function as signs of rage and sense of betrayal. Isabella denies her help and any sort of blood-bound connection with him, but she is not only angry at him, but at herself. How do we know? Sexual imagery is yet again present, referring back to Angelo's deal, and what is more, Isabel utters the exact same four words as Angelo in his soliloquy, when he chided himself for his own desires. "O, fie, fie, fie!"(2.2.172. ;3.1.147.) Both Claudio and Isabella thus are denied the comfort they sought and expected from each other.

Isabella is ready to leave, possibly for the convent; but a certain Father Lodowick stops her, offering his own help in form of a ready solution. Despite his seemingly good nature, we should be careful when dealing with the Duke. We must remember that this man really uses Angelo as a scapegoat. We know he does; why else would he believe and even openly announce Angelo's flawless name and past, while perfectly aware about the dangers of his rigid nature (1.3.49-55) and his sad case with Mariana (3.1.213-223)? These factors transform the helpful and philosophical character of the Duke to a rather opportunistic and susceptible one.

But Isabella cannot know this and above all that is desperate for a solution that would save herself and her brother. Led by the Duke and still in the streets of Vienna, Isabella finds a cause to carry on.

3.4. "Bitter to sweet end" - A Preface to the Apocalypse

Act IV is rather uneventful, yet we must mention two significant parts before we move to the final part of the play and with it, to the conclusion. Isabella is now part of a greater plan than her and her brother's salvation by unknowingly agreeing to be a part of the Duke's scheme of

reinstalling himself in a brand new light. The first scene of Act IV is the first step of the plan: meeting and making Mariana an accomplice.

The meeting between Isabella and Mariana is very symbolic, because it is censored. They withdraw to speak privately before line 60, and we will never know what they spoke of. This is essential to note, because Isabella might be honest with Mariana; her rhetorical veil concerns only men. All we know is that they have agreed to swap their places. What is interesting is to realize how Mariana, who serves as an alternate for Isabella physically, can be examined as a metaphorical alternate also. They are two sides of the same coin. Were it not for her inwardness, Isabel could have been like a Mariana in this Vienna. They share the same devotional passion, but for different things: God-Husband; Nun-Wife; Religion-Love. And to reach their goals and desires they are ready to shamelessly cheat: Isabella protecting her chastity and Claudio while she is at it; Mariana ensuring her marriage.

In order to further demonstrate my point, let me present a contemporary emblem about "The qualities of a wife", made by Hadrianus Junius in his *Emblemata* (1565)¹³.



According to the subscription under it, the qualities consist of three things: chaste modesty (*castus pudor*), constancy of love (*constantia amoris*) and the caring/guarding of either the house or the gods of the house (*custodia sui laris*). All three are true for both Mariana and Isabella. Maintaining their parallel is crucial, because just before Isabella's ultimate unveiling at 5.1.442, it is Mariana who does the same act, physically (5.1.204).

The other significant bit is in the third scene, whereupon the Duke informs Isabella of Claudio's "death". Although she was ready to give her brother up an Act ago, Isabella hoped that the bed-trick

¹³"*Uxoriae dotes*" <<http://www.emblems.arts.gla.ac.uk/french/emblem.php?id=FJUb012>>

would not only solve her case, but save Claudio as well. What is more, Isabella thinks it as a gross injustice which breaks her, a notion reflected in her language:

Unhappy Claudio! wretched Isabel!

Injurious world! most damned Angelo! (4.3.121-122)

We have only seen her distraught to this extent when Claudio begged her to save him. These are the same abrupt exclamations which are too random to be called fake. Isabella's grief sends her over the edge: she is again desperate and defiant. Her unapologetic and cathartic performance in Act V at the Duke's request is a result of her several encounter with men throughout the play. Isabella, who started out all "strength and energy" is "deeply weary" by the final Act (Rayner 164). Still, she has it in her to amaze Vienna for what is the last time in Measure.

3.5. "For truth is truth, to the end of reckoning" – Endgame

Every protagonist in the play at last comes together for the *denouement*. Act V starts off as a peaceful, but an immediate shift occurs when Isabella steps before the ruler in line 20.

What is most notable in the endgame is Isabella's volatile, loud and demanding tone until they take her away for a while (5.1.122). Her sudden appearance and repetition of the word "Justice" -five times, reinforcing her claim- is in sharp contrast of how she first appeared to Angelo, back in the second scene of Act II. When the Duke bids him to "reveal"¹⁴ herself to Angelo; she turns her whole diction to a biblical-sized sermon.

Most strange, but yet most truly, will I speak:

That Angelo's forsworn; is it not strange?

That Angelo's a murderer; is 't not strange?

That Angelo is an adulterous thief,

An hypocrite, a virgin-violator;

Is it not strange and strange? (5.1.40-45)

Even here, Isabella uses Angelo's word ("strange" - line 39) to destroy his claim. She furthermore uses highly exalted diction and grammar: *anaphoras* to emphasize the sinner's identity, enumeration of sins and *paradeigma*.

'Tis not impossible

But one, the wicked'st caitiff on the ground,

¹⁴From Latin *revelare* literally "*unveil*"; this is relevant given that we went through a kind of micro-biblical story from Genesis (each protagonist is reborn into a new situation) to a sort of final Judgement in Act V, where people are unveiled. It is not coincidental that the Greek word ἀποκάλυψις (apocalypsis) contains the word καλύπτω (veil) in it.

May *seem* as shy, as grave, as just, as absolute,
As Angelo; even so may Angelo,
In all his dressings, caract, titles, forms,
Be an arch-villain. (5.1.55-60)

She is at her most passionate, full of hyperboles and she is mixing lies with truths. "Seem" and "Be" could be swapped here and still be true; a *double entendre*. Isabel also takes her time to invoke Angelo's speech by mirroring his vocabulary, an allusion to God weighing one's sins on a scale by means of recounting them:

if you be more, you're none (2.4.134) <--> *if he be less*, he's nothing (5.1.61)

Angelo is in fact so shocked throughout the accusation that he stays silent. Though, Isabella does really give time for anyone to speak. Even the Duke can speak no more than one-one sentences in-between Isabella's six lines' assertions. By 108, she has finished her tale and the Duke, whom the readers would expect to back Isabel, shames her publicly. Truth -because there was a great amount of truth in her words apart from some minor bit- is ignored, or at least, paraded around as a joke.

Isabel is then thrown in prison, and while she is further tried for her last test and trial; the conflicts and problems are seemingly unravelled: Mariana unveils and confesses (5.1.204-212) and the Duke's hood is ripped off by Lucio before he plays God. Angelo is ready to die (5.1.370-372) which signifies he is not truly an arch-villain at all.

But the fate of Angelo is given in the hands of Isabella, when Mariana turns her for help. Isabella is before a conclusive choice: she either kneels and saves the man she just sued or she does not and gets poetic justice. Her decision is also critical if we realize that if she kneels, she accepts that human frailty which she tried to escape from when joining the convent. If she accepts Angelo's frailty, she has to accept her own and then there is no more seeming, only the truth and Vienna's intolerance.

Yet she kneels (a symbolic fall from her "heavenly" role) and gives her last speech, unveiled, addressing the Duke:

Look, if it please you, on this man condemn'd,
As if my brother lived: *I partly think*
A due sincerity govern'd his deeds,
Till he did look on me: since it is so,
Let him not die. My brother had but justice,

In that he did the thing for which he died:
For Angelo,
 His act did not o'ertake his bad intent,
 And must be buried but as an intent
 That perish'd by the way: *thoughts are no subjects;*
Intents but merely thoughts. (5.1.441-452)

Isabella is collected and rational once more. No repetitions or allusion, but clear sentences. Three things are notable: Isabel believes in the righteous death of her brother, and what is more believes in Angelo's innocence a) thus her forgiving his deed b) equaling the life of Claudio of that of Angelo; which she preached about initially is now ironically fulfilled. We are once again reminded of the quite complex and powerful impact Angelo and Isabella left on each other: Isabella breaks the natural rhythm of the given stanza symbolizing the depth and gravity which she talks about him; thus the depth and gravity which she regards him. Her last sentence sums up her own inward and independent nature that resisted all throughout the play to be a subject to either a man's or society's standards.

Then we hear her speak no more. By granting mercy, she broke a pattern in Vienna and truly became an exception. Isabel had power to do harm yet she had done none, which, until that point, had been unprecedented in Vienna. The Duke abused the city by allowing licence to corrupt and Angelo abused it by legislating unnatural and extremist rules. Isabella does not only interrupt this pattern but is the first to put theoretical beliefs (2.2.138-141) into proper, practical action when she chooses to kneel. This is an actual implication that Isabella is the only wise character in the play. This notion can easily be reinforced by Georgette de Montenay's emblem, entitled: *To the blind, all things are dark.*¹⁵



¹⁵The picture can be found in the *Emblemata Christianorum* centuria of 1571;

Sun here is the symbol of wisdom; in *Measure* it is the sun that Angelo first compares Isabella to ("I that lying by the violet in the sun" - 2.2.166) since sun was also an attribute of the chaste ones ('sun-like chastity'¹⁶). In contrast to this, it is Vincentio and Angelo who talk in the very beginning of Act I as doing "as we with torches do," the allusion in the light of this emblem quite clear. Vincentio understands power but does not have spine for dealing with his consequences, and Angelo does not even understand himself. Isabella, on the other hand, is not only wise, but goes as far as to challenge the play's title. *Measure for Measure* was based upon a quote from the New Testament¹⁷ which really demands a *lex talionis* approach instead of a Christian one, and to stand by that would mean that Angelo's vice should be the same way punished as Claudio.

But Isabella practices mercy and by that reaches grace; e.g. divine aspect of one's humanity. Grace, by definition, has a redemptive quality, which Vienna does not know and therefore does not tolerate, so Isabella must die an allegorical death. This allegorical death is shown by her silence. There is no redemption in Vienna, so Isabel must cease to exist.

4. Conclusion

Isabella's journey ended in her unveiling; showing her true nature. The inwardness she possesses was traced and analyzed throughout the Acts, where we could see how her veil and language were interwoven while using emblems to emphasize the importance of some significant actions, roles or speeches within *Measure for Measure*.

In Act I, we could witness that her language was simple, which signified her calmness. Isabella's desire to be a nun is a crucial part of understanding her character. In the Introduction, I tried to present the many ways Isabella can and should be perceived as an inward, thus complex character. Yet complexities have no place or choice in Vienna, so there is no other choice for Isabella, but to alienate herself from the city and the society. In this aspect, we can state that Isabella's choice to become a nun is as much of a socially aware choice as it is a religiously devoted one. Once she decides to step outside the walls of the cloister, she will shape her language to fit the purpose of her departure. Since there is no place for a reasonable argument in Claudio's case, Isabella will rely on pathos; emphasizing what she *knows* about morality and power with passionare

¹⁶ Comment in the footnotes by Lever, in *Measure for Measure* (p. 49)

¹⁷ "For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again". (Holy Bible, Mt. 7:2)

rhetoric and smokescreen what she *is*. Her language will become her veil a shield almost as authoritative as her novicial role.

Act II mainly revolves around two dichotomous characters, that of Angelo and Isabella. By considering both their similarities and differences, we could see that they are indeed very much alike. Yet it is Isabella's inwardness contrasting Angelo's self-ignorance that gives the pair an undeniably erotic dynamic which can best be traced via their debate in the second scene. Isabella borrows Angelo's words and shapes them with as much ease as she does her words. All throughout the play we can witness Isabella "stealing" concrete words from her counterpart. Scene II initiated a kind of self-reflection in Angelo -caused by both Isabella's language and character- and in the fourth act, it is Angelo's attempt at humanizing an Isabella, whose main objective is to appear untouchable and otherworldly, for reasons of safety. She will do anything, even tell the truth ("to have what we would have, we speak not what we mean" 2.4.118) to escape Angelo showing his face without his mask; e.i. without his role as a judge. From that point on, Isabella, conflicted by the escalated situation and her own desires, will turn for some assurance to her brother in jail. But before she does that, we can witness her only soliloquy, one that portrays the extent of her devotion to total abstraction and chastity.

Act III and IV serve as an interval and preparation for the Last Act. In these two acts, three watershed take place: Isabella meeting the Duke who expands her linear plotline into a greater, whole-scale society one; Isabella meeting with Mariana -or their lack of communication which signifies how women cannot coexist together, but serve as a kind of attachment to men's plotline-, and Isabella receiving news of her brother's death which leaves her unravelled and desperate. These three men; Claudio, Angelo and the Duke together chase her to perform such a volatile speech in Act V, which will end in her silence.

The final Act can clearly be regarded and examined as a Last Judgement scenario, where it is not actually the Duke who judges, but Isabella. The Duke is a mere punishing instrument who, by his marriage proposal, punishes Isabella also; but only after publicly shaming and then testing her. Isabella's unveiling is both tragic and not. Tragic, since the last sentence she utters is crucial and exceptional like her character. Yet the silence that follows is a proof that she has no means and desire to exist in Vienna. On the other hand, *Measure for Measure* ends with a redemption arc: Isabella, who, despite the abundance of immorality around her, managed to stay fair and good. By kneeling, she fulfilled what other characters never could, that, despite having the power to do harm, had done none and had reached the grace which until that point was only talked about, but never granted.

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