

Analysis of act 1 scene 1 of measure for measure

Law



Act 1 Scene 1 at its most basic interpretation is encircling the thoughts and actions of three characters; the Duke, Escalus and Angelo. The reader observes the Duke of Vienna telling Escalus, an his advisor, that he is leaving the city and would like to leave Angelo in his place. Escalus agrees with the Duke's choice and Angelo is summoned. Angelo appears surprised and slightly reluctant of the Dukes offer but accepts it readily.

However if the reader decides to probe deeper inside the scene, it becomes clear that the seemingly simple interpretation above conceals a more complex scenarios.

Firstly the scene is set the city of Vienna in approximately 1604, the reader is made aware it is Vienna when Escalus states, 'if any in Vienna...' The reader is left to wonder whether the play is set in Vienna because of its beautiful historic architecture or its dazzling surroundings. Or if perhaps there is a more fundamental reason such as the plays context, whether for instance the themes running rife throughout the play are so diverse and unconventional for its time, that Shakespeare feared situating it in more familiar surroundings such as England. These imminent revelations help to captivate and develop the curiosity of the reader.

The language used in measure of measure is Elizabethan, formal and conventional of its time. The play is composed of words such 't'affect' and 'y' are' which were frequently used during that period. The play is constructed within iambic pentameter and subsequently blank verses. The fact that the verses do not rhyme may indicate to the reader, the sincerity of the issues stirring inside the play.

As in most plays, the characters within it help guide the play through its stages. Measure for Measure is not an exception. The Duke appears to be an intelligent and sensitive man who cares about the welfare of his citizens, this is emphasised utters statements such as 'The nature of our people, Our city's institutions, and the terms For common justice...' and ' I love the people' although he seems to be dismayed by the by the decay in his city and wishes to reform it. The Duke speaks with formal, somewhat legalistic language of a ruling, noble figure. He uses the royal 'we' and regards the citizens of Vienna " our people," the city is " our city". Again demonstrating his status as well as his care for his citizens. His diction is quite elegant in some places; he makes use of alliteration, stating that with his " special soul" he has chosen Angelo. The Duke also uses paradoxical terms that convey the duties of a ruler; he says he will lend Angelo both his " terror" and his " love" to rule with, showing how a ruler must be authoritarian, yet caring for his subjects. This causes the reader to ponder just why he is leaving and what drives the urgency.

The Duke seems to confide earnestly in Escalus his advisor. Escalus seems to genuinely respect and look up to the Duke, along with a strong fondness towards Duke. The reader becomes increasingly aware of this throughout the scene. A classic example is when Escalus chimes 'I'll wait upon your honour' just before the Duke's departure. As a result the reader is not sure whether Escalus agreed with the Duke's choice because of his fondness for the Duke or if he made an objective decision and agreed. The puzzling issue is likely to befriend the reader and subsequently encourage them to read on. The reader is made aware that Escalus is an intelligent man, when to the Duke

reports to Escalus, 'since I know your own science exceeds, in that, the lists of all advice my strength can give you. Then no remains but that, to sufficiently, as your worth is able'. The reader is left to wonder how substantial Escalus's role will be in the remainder of the play.

Lastly we are introduced to Lord Angelo. The Duke and Escalus both seem to be immensely confident in Angelo's capabilities. Highlighted with phrases such as when Escalus states 'if any in Vienna be worth to undergo such ample grace and honour it is Lord Angelo' and when the Duke states to Angelo that: 'There is a kind of character in thy life that to the' observer doth thy history fully unfold. Thyself and thy belongings are not thine own so proper as to waste thyself upon thy virtues, they on thee'. Angelo is portrayed as a young trustworthy, righteous able man. However he although he does accept the offer humbly he does express reluctantly and concern as times. For example when he pleads, 'let there be some more test made of my mental before so noble and so great a figure be stamped upon it'. The reader could possibly perceive this as warning to his behaviour in the rest of the play. Angelo's righteous appearance subtly disturbs the reader; the reader is subsequently left to ponder whether there is something sinister under this loveable exterior.

The imagery of a coin could possibly signify Angelo becoming corrupt and obsessed with money.

After the reader's brief introduction to the setting, characters and subsequent situation the scene leaves the audience crying what next. As although it is a short scene the reader is overwhelmed with a variety of

themes and potentialities. Such as the Dukes intentions. For instance why this imminent departure? Also the reason for the portayl of Angelo is it possibly to contradict his behaviour within the rest of the play. The scene could also be a breeding ground for lots of themes for instance, how power can curopt or howresponsibilityis handled. To summarise although Act 1 scene 1 appears docile in appearance, the volcano is bubbling with possible revelations waiting to erupt, possibly mirroring the potential pattern for the rest of the play.