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Dedicated
With the love of a daughter
To my Papa and Mama
“Our doubts are traitors
And make us lose the good we might oft win
By fearing to attempt”
(William Shakespeare)
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All praises and thanks are unto Jesus Christ my Lord. With the love of a father, God has led me this far, and never left me alone.

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ABSTRACT

In the Renaissance England, more avenues were open for the advancement of women. Women were encouraged to achieve good education, equal to men. But the advancement of women in Renaissance England was limited by some obstacles, which were mainly caused by sexual stereotypes. The view of women in Renaissance England was stereotypical. Women were seen to be physically and intellectually inferior to men. Women were viewed with contempt; they were seen as the temptress who caused men to fall into sin. Because of these assumptions, it was assumed that a woman’s place was at home, and she was not trusted in public affairs.

Based on these phenomena, the researcher conducted this research. This research analyzed the sexual stereotyping of women in Measure for Measure, a comedy written by William Shakespeare in 1604. This research was a library research, which aimed to describe what kinds of sexual stereotyping of women are revealed in Measure for Measure. To reach this aim, the researcher employed feminist literary criticism approach.

After analyzing the play, the research came out with a conclusion that there are some kinds of sexual stereotyping of women in Measure for Measure. Women were viewed to be inferior to men, physically and intellectually. Women were expected to have virtues like chastity, and also fidelity and obedience toward their husbands. Measure for Measure also reveals the prejudice toward women, they were seen to be liable to temptation, and at the same time they were seen as the temptress who caused men to fall into sin. These stereotypes are revealed by characters in the play such as Lucio, Angelo, Isabella, Mariana, Juliet, and Kate Keepdown. There is also a generalization that all women should seek for marriage, for all women in the play got married, even Isabella who had been determined to be a nun.
CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

A. Background of Choosing the Subject

The development of English literature reached its peak during the reign of Queen Elizabeth I (1558-1603). The Renaissance, which ranged from early 14th century to late 16th century, brought new ways of thinking. In this age, as Wallbank, Taylor and Bailkey (1965, p.433) states, “men values are changing. Medievalism with its emphasis on scholasticism, church authority and conformity was replaced by a more modern culture which relies on science, skepticism and individualism”. The spirit of the age was what Alberti in Wallbank et. al (1965, p.434) sums up as “man can do all things, if they will”. Renaissance Humanism allowed men’s creativity to extend beyond the restrictions of the religious institutions, as stated in Encyclopedia Britannica Online (Nov. 12, 2001,), “Humanism encouraged men to break free from the mental structures imposed by the religious orthodoxy. It inspires free inquiry and criticism and a new confidence in the possibilities of human thought and creation”.

This was why art and literature flourished during the Renaissance. Wallbank et. al. (1965, p.436) describes that “in a sense, the Renaissance is the history of individual men expressing themselves brilliantly, and often tempestuously, in art, poetry, science, exploration and religion”. Furthermore, they named the forces that influenced the literature of the age as “such dynamic forces as exploration and
discovery of new continents, nationalism, and individualism, which are revealed in new forms of expression” (Wallbank et. al, 1965, p. 582).

This was the age that gave birth to the greatest figure in the history of English literature, William Shakespeare. In his lifetime, Shakespeare had written 36 plays, 154 sonnets, and 2 narrative poems. Shakespeare’s excellence had been recognized even in his own time. As quoted in Holzknecht (1950, p.375), in Palladis Tamia (1598), Francis Meres names Shakespeare as the most excellent in both comedy and tragedy for the stage, and lists him among the “most passionate among us to bewail and bemoan the perplexities of love“. In describing Shakespeare’s popularity among the people of his time, Holzknecht (1950, p.375) mentions, “Between 1591 and 1616, there are more than two hundred allusions to Shakespeare and his writings, more than a hundred different authors quoting or parodying lines from the plays and poems, and occasionally mentioning the author by name“

For today’s literary interpreters, Shakespeare’s work offers many subjects to study, as Johnston (Jan. 27, 2002), points out:

Shakespeare’s work offers an extraordinarily rich resource for the literary interpreter because it includes a huge variety, from lyric and narrative poetry to many different forms of poetic drama. Some of the plays seem deeply rooted in specific political realities, while others are clearly much closer to romance, science fiction or pastoral. The works include scores of complex characters, major and minor, whose physiological make-up in-
vites analysis, but they also explore complex social, political, and moral ideas.

Elizabethan literature, like any other literature in general, is a representation of the social reality. A literary work is a representation of the real life. As Aristotle in *Poetics* states, “Epic poetry and Tragedy, Comedy also and Dithyrambic poetry, and the music of the flute and of the lyre in most of their forms, are in their general conception modes of imitation”. As a “mode of imitation”, a literary work does not only reflect social reality, but also the thought, ideas, and issues commonly found in the real life. One of the aspects of life reflected in a literary work is the relationship between men and women, and the role of both sexes within the society. Although the first outbreak of the women’s movement had only started in the 19th century, the difference between men and women has been discussed for centuries. Even early philosophers such as Socrates, Plato, Xenophon and Aristotle had had their own opinions in defining the role and position of women, whether supporting or opposing the equality of men and women. As explained by Murphy (1995, p.3), that:

Socrates thought that women, if not equal to men, were not necessarily inferior. In *Oeconomicus*, Xenophon noted some equality between the sexes with respect to intelligent and moral ability, but he affirmed a division of labor that would direct feminine energies to the maintenance of the conjugal home… Plato believed men and women should receive the same education and share equally in public duties, but the philosophy of Aristotle
would lead to a deepening of the subordination of women and a frustration of their desires for fulfillment.

In the Renaissance world, women were considered subordinate to men. Although at this age there were two great female leaders, Elizabeth of England and Isabella of Spain, most women were excluded from public life, as Murphy (1995, p.91) states,

The few women, such as Elizabeth of England and Isabella of Spain, who reached the heights of power were extraordinary exceptions. Generally, women were excluded from public life. They were considered not only inferior, but also dangerous. If men were to gain glory, it was important for them to keep women under subjection and to prevent them from participating in public life.

Even in Shakespeare’s theatres, women were not allowed to participate. Female roles were acted by young boys before their voices changed. This was because women were considered less capable than men. The people of Shakespeare’s time even doubted that women could represent the female characters as well as the boys did, as Holzknecht (1950, p.155) states, “Shakespeare’s contemporaries with less faith in feminine capabilities wondered how women could possibly do as well”

One of the basic causes of the subordination of women is sexual stereotype. Sexual stereotype refers to the oversimplified conceptions regarding the differences between the men, the masculine, and women, the feminine. In general, as mentioned in *Encyclopedia Britannica Online* (Nov. 12, 2001), women are often
considered to be “relatively weak, passive, and dependent individuals who are less rational and more emotional than men”. Because of this, it is assumed that women are less capable in doing things that are usually done by men.

As the mirror of the society, literary work may reflect this problem too. This can also be seen in the works of William Shakespeare. Being a Renaissance writer, Shakespeare possessed the Renaissance concern for man and the world around him. His concern for human nature enabled him to create different kinds of character, which Wallbank et. al. (1965, p.587) describes as “the richest and most diversified collection conceived by the mind of one man”. In his works, Shakespeare often exposed the differences between being feminine and masculine. As Gerlach (July 18, 2001) states, the masculine and feminine characteristics were parts of what the Renaissance considered "human nature".

Furthermore, Gerlach states that “defining what a woman was supposed to be and do was an act of Renaissance culture, as it had been for other times”. In his plays, Shakespeare often expressed the assumptions about women in the Renaissance society, as Gerlach points out:

In his own time, Shakespeare seems to have been raising questions about the standard images of males and females, about what the characteristics of each gender are, about what is defined as masculine and feminine, about how each gender possesses both masculine and feminine qualities and behaviors, about the nature and power of a hegemonic patriarchy, and about the roles women and men should play in acting out the stories of their lives.
Shakespeare’s ideas about woman images can be seen in one of his plays, *Measure for Measure*. This play was written in 1604. Unlike most of Shakespeare’s plays, where the central characters are male, this play is focused on a female character, Isabella. Beside Isabella, there are four other female characters, Juliet, Mariana, Kate Keepdown and Mrs. Overdone.

At the beginning of the play, Vincentio, the Duke of Vienna, decided to temporarily leave his powers to his deputy, Angelo. Angelo was a strict man, and his first decision as the man of authority was to punish Claudio for impregnating his lover. Claudio was sentenced to death.

Claudio’s sister, Isabella, was just going to take her vow as a nun when she heard about what had happened to Claudio. She came to Angelo and tried to persuade him to take back the punishment. Angelo saw Isabella’s virtues, and fell in love with her. He said that he would cancel the punishment if Isabella promised to yield to him.

Isabella was offended by Angelo’s demand, and worse yet, Claudio also asked her to do as Angelo wanted, so that he would be saved. This offended Isabella even worse, that she said harsh words to him, and stated that her chastity was more important than her brother’s life.

By coincidence, the Duke, disguising as a friar, overheard the conversation between Isabella and Claudio. The Duke and Isabella then arranged a “bed trick”, in which Isabella’s place in Angelo’s bed was taken by Mariana, Angelo’s deserted wife. After the arrangement had been made, Angelo, not realizing that he had been tricked, broke his promise. He commanded to execute Claudio and send
his head to him. The Duke managed to save Claudio and sent the head of another prisoner who had died from illness.

The Duke then arranged a meeting where Angelo, Isabella, Mariana and Lucio were gathered. Isabella, thinking that her brother was dead, went before the Duke to seek for justice. The Duke revealed everything, and he ordered that Angelo should be meted with the same measure he had applied to Claudio; he was condemned to death for fornication. Angelo’s deserted wife, Mariana, pleaded for her husband’s life, and begged Isabella to do the same. Isabella was touched by Mariana’s love for her husband, she stated that her brother died because of what he had done, while Angelo should not die because he did not really sleep with Isabella, and did not really spoil her chastity. Isabella’s mercy for Angelo made the Duke forgive him, and he commanded him to return to his wife. The Duke then told the Provost to fetch Claudio to meet his sister and marry his fiancée.

At the end of the meeting, after everything had been settled, the Duke asked Isabella to marry him. However, it was not mentioned in the play whether Isabella accepted or refused the Duke’s proposal.

Throughout the play, it was shown that Isabella was different from other female characters. She was the only female character who had an important role in the play, and took an active participation in saving her brother. Isabella’s firm decision not to give up her chastity could also be seen as her courage to make her own decision about her life, to show her self-determination, out of the influence of men. However, the play was filled with sexual stereotyping of women, in Isabella’s attitude or the male characters’ attitude toward her. The sexual stereotyp-
ing of women was also shown in Mariana, the deserted wife who readily forgave her husband although he had greatly wronged her, and also other female characters in the play.

Concerning these phenomena, the researcher wants to analyze *Measure for Measure* from the point of view of feminist literary criticism. With feminist literary criticism approach, the researcher will analyze further the sexual stereotyping of women that are revealed in *Measure for Measure*. This research can be advantageous because it can give more understanding about *Measure for Measure*, about the condition of women and sexual stereotypes addressed toward them at Shakespeare’s time, and about sexual stereotypes as an important point in feminist literary criticism.

**B. Problem Statement**

The problem analyzed in this research can be stated as follows: “What kinds of sexual stereotyping of women are revealed in *Measure for Measure*?”

**C. Scope of Study**

This research applied feminist literary criticism to analyze the sexual stereotyping of women in William Shakespeare’s play, *Measure for Measure*. This research was focused on Isabella as the main character of the play. Particular
attention was also given to Juliet, Mariana, Kate Keepdown and Mrs. Overdone as the other female characters of the play.

D. Objective

The objective of this research was to describe what kinds of sexual stereotyping of women are revealed in *Measure for Measure*

E. Benefits

The benefits that were expected from this research are:

1. To give more understanding about *Measure for Measure* as one of the works of William Shakespeare, who is considered by many as the greatest dramatist of all time.

2. To provide more information about the condition of women, and sexual stereotypes addressed toward them in Renaissance England

3. To offer more understanding about sexual stereotypes as an important point in feminist literary criticism

F. Theoretical Approach

Murphy (1995, p.xii) states that “of all the obstacles that limit the advancement of women, those touching upon knowledge and values are the most difficult to remove”. He explains,
Knowledge is power; it is also a means by which men have maintained their control over women. Women who are seeking to express their insights and develop their talents within professional and intellectual communities often find that they are expected to conform to standards of thought and action upheld by men. (1995, p.xii).

The domination of man in the form of male standards also occurs in the study of literature, as Fetterly in Leitch (1998, p.227) states that “as readers and teachers and scholars, women are taught to think as men, to identify with a male point of view and to accept as normal and legitimate a male system of values”. Regarding these facts, feminist literary criticism attempts to set new standards that are free from gender bias, as Spencer in Kostelanetz (1982, p.158) states, “feminist literary criticism attempts to set standards for literature that is as free as possible from biased portraits of individuals because of their class, race or sex”

Feminist literary criticism as Kolodny in Djajanegara (2000, p.19) states, ”involves exposing the sexual stereotyping of women, in both our literature and our literary criticism and as well demonstrating the inadequacy of established critical schools and method to deal fairly or sensitively with work written by women”.

Sexual stereotypes are conventional and oversimplified conceptions, opinions, or images regarding the differences between man and woman. These sexual stereotypes are not the natural characteristics of man and woman; instead they are created by the society, which has been deeply influenced by the patriarchal cul-
ture. In this research, the researcher will apply feminist literary criticism to describe how these sexual stereotypes are revealed in *Measure for Measure*.

G. Research Method

In this research, the researcher employed descriptive method. This research was a library research, which means it relied on data gathered from books, essays, encyclopedias, Internet homepages and other writings and medias related to the subject matter of the thesis.

1. Data and Sources of Data

The data used for this research were classified into two categories, main data and supporting data.

The main data were taken from William Shakespeare’s *Measure for Measure*, originally written in 1604, republished by The New American Library in 1964. The main data include dialogues, monologues, and events or happenings which are performed by the main character and other characters in the play. From these, the researcher found useful materials for the research.

As the supporting data sources, the researcher used criticism, reviews, and comments about the play and William Shakespeare as its author.
2. Data Collecting Method

In collecting the main data for this research, the researcher read the main data source thoroughly and repeatedly. Then, the researcher took notes of sentences that are related to the subject matter of the research. The same attitude was taken for supporting data sources.

3. Data Analysis Method

After the data had been collected, the researcher analyzed the data through some steps as follows:

Firstly, the data related to the subject matter of the research were arranged in a list of data

Secondly, the researcher analyzed the data by using the chosen approach.

Thirdly, the researcher drew a conclusion of the analysis.

H. Thesis Organization

The thesis is arranged in four chapters. Chapter one is introduction, which includes background of choosing the subject, problem statement, scope of the study, objective of the study, benefits of the study, research methodology, theoretical approach and thesis organization.
Chapter two includes literature review and theory. Literature review explains about some factors that influence the characteristic of women in Shakespeare’s plays, while theory explains further about feminist literary criticism as the chosen approach for this research.

Chapter three is analysis. In this chapter the researcher analyzes the sexual stereotyping of women in Shakespeare’s Measure for Measure.

Finally, in the last chapter, the researcher presents the conclusion of the research, and also some recommendations for further researches.
A. Literature Review

To some extent, the characterization of women in Shakespeare's plays is influenced by some factors that will be explained in this following sub-chapter.

1. The Life of Women in the Renaissance England

Although it is often said that Shakespeare’s plays are universal and not of an age but for all time, Holzknecht (1950, p.63) states that “Shakespeare cannot be thought as an isolated, aloof figure with his ideals and theories that are magnificently indifferent to those of his contemporaries and the audience for which they catered”. As a playwright and a human being, Shakespeare was influenced by the social order, manners and customs of his age. In order to understand Shakespeare’s plays, it may be necessary to look back at the life of Shakespeare’s age. To understand the characterization of women in Shakespeare’s play, therefore, requires understanding about the life of women at Shakespeare’s time.

*Measure for Measure* was written in the period of the English Renaissance. Renaissance begun in Italy in the 14th century, and reached its climax about 1500. In this age, as Lucas (1934, p.4) states, “Italy was more and
more assuming cultural direction of European life and thought…all Europe came to be what Italian was”. Renaissance conception found its way into England later than other European countries such as France or Germany. According to Holzknecht (1950, p.34), this was because of the insular position of the country and the conservative nature of the English people. Renaissance thinking was brought into England by Englishmen who had studied in Italian Universities. *The Cambridge History of English and American Literature* (Nov. 07, 2001) names the later Elizabethan and early Stuart period (the beginning of the reign of King James I, Elizabeth’s predecessor) as “the height of the English phase of the Renaissance”. As stated in Lucas (1934, p.437), England’s greatest contribution to the Renaissance was to be found in her dramatic literature, which culminated in the work of William Shakespeare.

Humanism affected the life of women in the Renaissance. As stated by Thomas (Dec. 10, 2001) that “the Renaissance brought with it a new way of thinking. It was thought men and women could do anything and be anything they wanted to be, that their capacity for knowledge was boundless”. Renaissance women were encouraged to achieve good education, equal to that of men. Lucas (1934, p.347) states that the society of Renaissance Italy tended to make women the equal of man. Women could be educated in the same manner as men, and they could study in the schools of Vittorino da Feltre and Guarino da Verona, the great masters of the Italian Renaissance. There were some women who took active parts in public affairs, and they gave evidence of the energy and courage usually expected only of men. These women were called the “virago”.
In Renaissance England, as Thomas (Dec. 10, 2001) states, “women had more freedom than they did in subsequent centuries”. Women were given good education, but unlike in Italy, they could not go to public schools, they could only be educated by tutors at home. In the Renaissance England, generally women was excluded from public life, but Queen Elizabeth as a great female leader had shown woman’s capability that equaled, or even exceeded that of man.

Although the women of the age had more freedom, there were still some restrictions for them. The view of woman in Renaissance England was very stereotypical, and it kept women from placing themselves in equal position with men. Sexual stereotypes pervaded every aspects of woman’s life, including family’s life, education, and working.

a. Family Life

In the Renaissance England, marriage was seen as the desirable state for both men and women. Particularly for women, marriage was the only desirable option they could take, because single women were looked upon with suspicion. Thomas (Dec. 10, 2001) states that single women were often thought to be witches by their neighbors.

Marriage as the only desirable option for women was also due to the reformation. The reformation began in Germany on October 31, 1517, when Martin Luther, a university professor at Wittenberg, posted 95 theses inviting debate over the legitimacy of the sale of indulgences by the church. The
reformation aimed to purge the church of medieval abuses and to restore practices that the reformers believed conformed with the Bible and the New Testament model of the church. This movement led to a breach between the Roman Catholic Church and the reformers whose beliefs and practices came to be called Protestantism. In England, reformation occurred as a direct result of King Henry VIII’s effort to divorce his first wife, Catherine of Aragon, which caused the formal break of England with the papacy. Following the reformation, monasticism disappeared in Protestant countries including England under the reign of Elizabeth I and James I, so in this period women could not enter the nunnery.

In Elizabethan society, men and women could get married at very early ages. According to Secara (Aug. 7, 2001), with parental permission, boys were legal to marry at 14 and girls at 12, though it was not recommended so early. When a couple got married, religious ceremony was not always considered necessary. As stated in Holzknecht (1950, p.6), formal engagement, or commonly called pre-contract, was considered a legally valid marriage.

As a wife, a woman was in charge of the household, and she had authority over her servants, as Holzknecht (1950, p.56) states,

The lady of an Elizabethan country household was in entire charge of her establishment, supervised the dairy work and the baking and the brewing, managed her kitchen and the pantry and the linen closet and kept good discipline among her servants.

However, the wife was still inferior to her husband. Although she had authority over her household, she uses it to serve her husband. In the words of
Dolan (1989, p.207), she “borrows her authority from her husband”. Dolan explains this in sun and moon analogy:

The moon analogy is particularly useful in describing how a wife can be both authoritative and subordinate. Since she borrows her authority for her husband, her command bolsters rather than undermines his "taking all her light (as the Moone, it is said from the Sunne, so she) from her husband for government and authoritie, as his lieutenant under him”. The image of the wife as moon reflecting the light of her husband as sun also figures in the very popular image of wife as mirror reflecting her husband's wishes.

In this analogy, it can be seen that the wife has no real control over the household, she only reflects her husband’s wishes, not her own wishes. As Dolan (1989, p.207) states, “such images, like the sun-moon analogy, make the husband the focal subject and authority”. The wife should always be inferior to her husband, as Brathwaite in Dolan (1989, p.207) states “so the wife in her husbands absence shines in the family, like the faire moone among the lesser stares, but when he comes in, it will be her modestie to contract, and withdraw herselfe”.

The role of a woman in the family still remained the same for many years after the Elizabethan era ended. A popular work written by John Dod and Robert Cleaver in 1630, A Godly Forme of Houshold Government, still emphasize a wife’s duty to serve her husband. As stated in Dolan (1989, p.206), “they acknowledge love as means of insuring loyalty and thus cheap, life-long domestic service”.
b. Education

In the Elizabethan England, women at the higher strata of the society could receive the same education as men did. They were taught the same lessons as men, such as Classics, Mathematics, and other academic subjects of the day. However, the system education of the time served to keep women’s place at home. Women could only be educated at home by tutors, they were not allowed to go to public schools.

The rule of women’s education of the age showed the stereotyping of women as the source of temptation. The women were not allowed to enter the universities due to the prejudices addressed toward them. In the Renaissance England, women were viewed as the temptress. This was based on the story of the fall of man in the Bible, in which Eve became the cause of Adam’s fall. Thomas (Dec 10, 2001) states that “Queen Elizabeth even banned women from university premises as she felt they were distracting men from their studies”.

c. Working

Since it was assumed that a woman’s proper place was at home, there was no chance available for women to work, except for domestic services. According to Thomas, women could not enter the professions i.e. law, medicine or politics, but they could work in domestic service as cooks, maids, etc.
Women were also allowed to write works of literature, although only few of the works were published. Women writers of the age had to face the domination of men in English literature, their works were often underestimated by men, as Travitsky in Miller (1989, p.122) states, “a major deterrent to literary publication of English women was the negative attitude taken by the male arbiters of the time regarding works by women on subjects outside of the spheres of religion and domesticity, which were considered the province of women.”

This was why the works of women were often neglected in the English Renaissance. Virginia Woolf, the writer of A Room of One’s Own, as quoted by Miller (1989, p.121) states that “any woman born with a gift of poetry in the sixteenth century would never have been able to realize that gift as did Shakespeare, or one might say, a Sydney”.

The first published work by an English woman was The Countesse of Mountgomeries Urania, written by Lady Mary Wroth in 1621. Because of this work, Wroth was attacked by some of King James’s male courtiers, and it was withdrawn from sale only six months after its publication. As mentioned by Miller (1989, p.121), her primary attacker, Lord Denny, addressed her as “hermaphrodite in show, indeed a monster” and advised her to “leave idle books alone/for wiser and worthyer women have writte none”.

d. Queen Elizabeth I as a Female Leader in Renaissance England
Elizabeth was born on September 7, 1533. She was the daughter of Henry VIII and her second wife, Anne Boleyn. Henry’s first wife, Catherine of Aragon had not borne him a son after 20 years of marriage, and he married Anne in the hope of begetting a male heir to the throne. As he was expecting a son, Henry was disappointed at Elizabeth birth. After years of waiting, Anne failed to give birth to a son, and she was suspected of infidelity, which caused Henry to execute her in 1536. Henry also had the Parliament make his marriage with Anne Boleyn invalid from the beginning, which made Elizabeth an illegitimate child.

Although Elizabeth was an illegitimate child, she was not completely neglected. Jagger (Jan. 14, 2001) states that although Henry VII was hard on his wives, he was affectionate with his children. Elizabeth was given good education in languages, history, rhetoric and moral philosophy. With the birth of Edward, the son of Henry’s third wife, Elizabeth was third in line to the throne, after Edward and Mary, Henry’s first daughter from Catherine of Aragon. In the eyes of the people of her time, Elizabeth possessed exceptional qualities that people of her time considered rare for a woman. In the words of her tutor, Roger Ascham, as quoted in Jagger (Jan. 14, 2001), “her mind has no womanly weakness, and her perseverance and memory were equal to that of man.”

When Henry died in 1547, Edward became king at the age of 10. During the reign of Edward, Elizabeth had a love affair with Thomas Seymour. Seymour was accused of wishing to marry Elizabeth in order to rule England, and was beheaded in 1549.
Edward fell ill in 1552 and died on July 6, 1553, and Mary succeeded him. Mary was a Catholic and she wished to restore Catholicism in England. As mentioned by Lehmberg (2000), she executed about 300 Protestant for their beliefs, and this caused her to be called “Bloody Mary” Mary’s reign was short, and when she died on November 17, 1558, the throne passed to Elizabeth.

At the same year as Elizabeth’s coronation, a Calvinist preacher named John Knox wrote *The First Blast of Trumpet against the Monstrous Regiment of Women*. In this book, Knox states that women are weak and foolish by nature, and therefore they should not be trusted with authority. He states:

Nature, I say, does paint them forth to be weak, frail, impatient, feeble, and foolish; and experience has declared them to be inconstant, variable, cruel, lacking the spirit of counsel and regiment ... For thus writes Aristotle, in the second of his Politics. What difference shall we put, says he, whether that women bear authority, or the husbands that obey the empire of their wives, be appointed to be magistrates? For what ensues the one, must needs follow the other: to wit, injustice, confusion, and disorder.

He also states that woman was made to be subject to man, and should not have power above him. He says:

Woman in her greatest perfection should have known that man was lord above her; and therefore that she should never have pretended any kind of superiority above him, no more than do the angels above God the Creator, or above Christ their head. So I say, that in her greatest perfection, woman was created to be subject to man.
Since as a female leader Elizabeth was believed to have exceptional qualities that were commonly found in a man, this book was not addressed to her. Instead, it was addressed to Mary, the Queen of Scots and other queens of Catholic Monarch. However, Elizabeth was offended by this book and made Knox persona non grata in England.

When Elizabeth came to throne in 1558, England was at its hardest time. Threats came from inside and outside of the country. As Holzknecht (1950, p.48) states, “for years Elizabeth literary stood between her people and the double disaster of civil war and invasion from abroad”. Elizabeth succeeded in leading her people through the hard times. In describing Elizabeth’s successfulness in leading her people, Easton (1961, p.428) states, “her policy… held her people together, avoided civil war, raised her country to a prestige as yet unequaled, and maintain intact the ancient liberties of the people”.

England was at peace during the reign of Elizabeth. This was primarily because of her religious policies. Unlike her sister Mary, Elizabeth was a moderate Protestant. In the matter of religion, she chose to stand in the middle between Catholicism and Protestantism. Her policies were designed to avoid divergence between the religions, and both extreme Catholics and extreme Protestants were punished.

Lehmberg (2000) states that under Elizabeth England experienced a period of economic growth, overseas exploration, and social mobility. In 1588, England defeated the invasion of the Spanish Armada, which raised England to a prestige it never had before.
Queen Elizabeth was also famous for her long-preserved virginity. Although she had many suitors, Elizabeth was never married. Elizabeth queen was proud of her virginity, Craig (1961, p.7) states that “the Queen made cult of her virginity”. In her relations with foreign powers, Elizabeth benefited from her unmarried status, as Easton (1961, p.428) states, “she was trying to use the fact that she was still marriageable in her relations with foreign powers”. As noted by William Camden, when she was urged by the Commons in 1559 to get married she responded by saying that she was married to her kingdom. She said:

“Yea, to satisfy you, I have already joined myself in marriage to a husband, namely, the Kingdom of England. And behold”, said she, “which I marvel ye have forgotten, the pledge of this my wedlock and marriage with my kingdom”. And therewith she stretched forth her finger and showed the ring of gold where with at her coronation she had in a set form of words solemnly given herself in marriage to her kingdom (Holzknecht, 1950, pp. 47-48)

Elizabeth loved her people, and in turn she was loved by them. When she died in 1603, as Thomas Dekker wrote,

To report her death took away the hearts from millions, for having brought up, even under her wing, a nation that was almost begotten and born under her, that never have shouted any other ave than for her name, never saw any prince but herself; never understood what that outlandish word change signified. (Holzknecht, 1950, p. 48)
2. Dramatic Conventions

As a Renaissance playwright, as Holzknecht (1950, p.274) states, “Shakespeare was conditioned in every important way by conventions imposed by the medium in which he worked”. Shakespeare’s plays are conventional. Being conventional, according to Craig (1961, p.45) means “it followed a mode of representing plays which was customary, accepted, and unrealistic”

One of the dramatic conventions of the Renaissance drama is the contrast between tragedy and comedy. Dante in Holzknecht (1950, p.250) describes the difference between tragedy and comedy as “tragedy at the beginning is admirable and placid, but at the end or issue is foul and horrible…whereas comedy begins with sundry adverse conditions but ends happily”. Furthermore, Holzknecht (1950, 250) states that

Elizabethan tragedy is heroic and moving. It begins with the protagonist in happiness and prosperity, relates the steps of his fall, and ends with his death. Elizabethan comedy, on occasion, can be filled with misery and pathos, but it reverses the formula by beginning with things all wrong, or rapidly becoming so, and ending when “all losses are restored and sorrows end.

Unlike in tragedy where the characters have to pay fatal consequences for what they have done, in comedy characters can escape from the consequences, as Holzknecht (1950, p.274) states, “folly, credulity and error are not followed by their inexorable consequences, and mercy tempers justice”
Shakespeare’s comedies always end with one or more marriages, as Holzknecht (1950, p.274) describes “sweethearts parade to the altar as a single pair, if it cannot be helped, in greater numbers if possible”. Marriage becomes the solution of all the problems, as Holzknecht (1950, p.274) states, “if the lovers are married, all misunderstanding are cleared up and all faults are forgiven”.

The conventional plot of the comedy affects its characterization. In comedies, as Holzknecht (1950, p.275) states, “conversions are common and never open to question”. Characters in Shakespeare’s comedies may undergo radical changes as Danson (1986, p.217) states, “Shakespeare’s characters may undergo radical shifts in apparent identity, psychic slippages that unsettle a spectator’s expectation for the unity of a person”. Regarding characterization, Holzknecht (1950, p.275) states that “the laws of comedies are liberal laws”. This means that in order to produce a happy ending, Shakespeare can freely change the characteristics of each character in his comedies to suit his plot.

4. The Influence of the Theatre

The condition of the theatre had significant influence upon Shakespeare’s plays. Shakespeare’s plays were created for stage performance, and in writing his plays Shakespeare was controlled by the demands of the company of actors who hired his service. Shakespeare’s plays were so greatly affected by the actors of his company that Baldwin in Holzknecht (1950, p.159) believes that “his work can be divided into definite periods solely upon the knowledge of the talents of the actors
who made up his company, and the type of play changed as the type of actors in
the company changed”.

The influence of the actors upon Shakespeare’s plays can be seen in the
classification of women in Shakespeare’s plays, as in Shakespeare’s theatre
women’s role were acted by young boys. In creating female characters,
Shakespeare had to keep in mind that he should not make the characters too
complicated to be acted by the young boys. Hill (1986, p.236) states in creating
female characters,

He was writing with the capacities and limitation of his boy actors (or in
Granville-Baker’s phrase, his “boy actresses”) firmly in mind, and that his
techniques for the creation of mature women are direct response to the
working condition of his theater.

Shakespeare had to avoid difficulties for the boy actors, and thus, as Hill
(1986, p.252) points out, “the boy actors is not forced to go through continuous
complex developmental change in the scene”. Because of this, Shakespeare’s
female characters are simple and uncomplicated compared with the male
characters. This led to the oversimplification of the characteristics of women in
Shakespeare’s plays. The female characters in Shakespeare’s plays tend to be
stereotypical, as Holzknecht (1950, p.157) states:

Even Shakespeare’s finest heroines run into conventional types –the
sentimental like Viola or Julia, the pathetic like Desdemona, Imogen or
Ophelia, the witty, like Maria, Portia, or Rosalind. Only the case of the
strong woman, like Cleopatra and Lady Macbeth, are they drawn on a
scale comparable to that of men

B. Theory

Feminist literary criticism seeks to expose the sexual stereotyping of
women in literature. Stereotype, as defined in Mish (1989, p.1156), is “something
conforming to a fixed or general picture, especially a standardized mental picture
that is held in common by members of a group and that represents an
oversimplified opinion, affective attitude, or uncritical judgment”. Stereotype
tends to be oversimplified, it tends to generalize people or things according to
common assumption, which are not always correct. As stated in The Year 2002
Grolier Multimedia Encyclopedia, stereotype is a conventional, formulaic, and
oversimplified conception, opinion, or image. Sexual stereotypes, therefore, are
conventional, formulaic, and oversimplified conceptions, opinions, or images
regarding the differences between man and woman.

Sexual stereotypes of women exist in every society in the world, and they
are remarkably similar in every society. They tend to reinforce the subordination
of women, as Verma in Nussbaum (1995, p.435) states:

This narrow conception of femininity is well-known throughout the world.
Its stereotype is remarkable, cutting across cultural and temporal
differences. Whether it be ancient Indian texts like Ramayana,
Mahabharata, and Dharmashastras or Western philosophers like Aristotle,
Hegel, Kant, Locke, Nietzsche, and Rousseau, they all have more or less the same conception of womanhood. They all view the essences of manhood and womanhood as sharply contrasting with each other and allot entirely different roles to men and women, generally placing woman in powerless and inferior rank in the society.

This following sub-chapter will explain about sexual stereotypes which are commonly found in the society.

**1. Women are Inferior to Men**

In the society, it is commonly assumed that women are inferior to men. As Gerlach (Jul. 18, 2001) sates, the people of the Renaissance assumed that women are physically, emotionally, intellectually weaker than men. This opinion was also confirmed in the work of John Knox, *The First Blast of Trumpet against the Monstrous Regiment of Women*, published in 1558, which states that women are weak by nature, “nature, I say, does paint them forth to be weak, frail, impatient, feeble, and foolish”. Knox’s idea of woman as expressed in his work more or less represented the idea of woman in the society of Renaissance England, that woman are weak, and they should not be trusted with authority.

Women are also considered to be inferior to men because they are assumed to be more emotional, and less rational than men. Nussbaum (1995, p.390) defines emotion as “blind forces that have nothing (or nothing much) to do with reasoning”. Emotion is opposed to reason. Men are considered rational,
while women in contrast are emotional, and thus irrational. This assumption often become a reason to keep women from taking important parts in the society, as Nussbaum (, p.360) points out, “women are emotional, emotions female. This view, familiar in Western and non-Western alike, has for thousand of years been used in various ways to exclude women from full membership in the human community”.

2. The Concept of the Virtuous Woman

In the Renaissance England, women were kept under subjection with what was called “virtues”. Gerlach (July 18, 2001) states that the women of the age were supposed to have virtues such as obedience, silence, sexual chastity, humility, constancy, and patience.

These virtues kept women under subjection to men. Among others, the most important virtue for a woman was obedience. Stephen (Aug. 7, 2001) names obedience as “one of the most important virtues a woman could display”. She states that for a woman in the Renaissance England, respecting the husband or father was parallel to respecting and obeying the king. It was assumed that for a woman, obeying her husband was more acceptable before God than anything else, as Sovernam in Stephen (Aug. 7, 2001) states, “obedience is better than sacrifice, for nothing is more acceptable before God than to obey”.

The concept of the virtuous woman had deeply affected the mind of the people of the Renaissance England, that even female writers of the age adapted it
in their writings. Anderson (1989, p.158) mentions the fact, as written in Elaine V. Beilin's *Redeeming Eve*, that:

Women Writers of the English Renaissance identifies a tradition of women's writing between 1524 and 1623 that is both motivated and circumscribed by cultural expectations. She finds that the persona of the virtuous woman—modest, chaste and pious—dominates everyone of the thirty writers she treats, even those who attempted to challenge or subvert these expectations.

In their education, women were also taught about these virtues. As Stephen (Aug. 7, 2001) states, “the literature presented to women advocated the virtues of humility, submissiveness, obedience, and chastity, and reinforced the sanctity of marriage”. The society of the Renaissance England believed that women were liable to temptations as Stephen (Aug. 7, 2001) states, “women were seen as frail creatures predisposed to temptation; they still carried the burden of Eve’s original sin”. Because of this, it was believed that men should have an active role in maintaining women’s virtues, as stated in Stephen (Aug. 7, 2001), “Eve was a good woman before she met with the serpent, her daughters are good virgins if they meet with good tutors”.

3. Women are Liable to Temptation

In the story of the fall of man, Eve was deceived by the serpent, and in turn caused Adam to sin by disobeying God. Since Eve was easily deceived by the
serpent, it was believed that women are easily led into temptation, and female sexuality is viewed as weakness, as Murphy (1995, p.1) states:

Having been subject to the will of woman, man had been disobedient to God. Fidelity to one had led to infidelity to the other. Thus, at the beginning of our common history, the seed of a fundamental opposition were being sown. Female sexuality became a symbol of human weakness, and Holy Writ, given by God to men, could only be interpreted by male priests.

3. Women as the Temptress

As a major institution in Western society, the Church inevitably affected the mind of the people in Western countries, including in the matter of sexual stereotypes. The sexual stereotyping of woman as the temptress is derived from the story of the fall of man in the Bible. Eve, having been deceived by the serpent, caused Adam to disobey God. Because of this, women are often seen as the temptress, they are blamed for causing man to fall into sin.

In Renaissance England, the story of the fall of man greatly influenced the view of women of the age, as Stephen (Aug. 7, 2001) states, the people of the Renaissance England assumed that “they still carried the burden of Eve's original sin”.

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5. Marriage should be Sought by Every Woman

Mill in *The Subjection of Women* states that the society assumes that marriage should be sought by every woman, he states, “Marriage being the destination appointed by society for women, the prospect they are brought up to, and the object which it is intended should be sought by all of them”.

Even from their childhood, women are taught that the main goal of their lives is to find a man to marry them. Wollstonecraft (Dec. 19, 2001) states that women are taught to show submissiveness to obtain the protection of men, and beauty to attract them, so she can get married. She states:

Women are told from their infancy, and taught by the example of their mothers, that a little knowledge of human weakness, justly termed cunning, softness of temper, outward obedience, and a scrupulous attention to a puerile kind of propriety, will obtain for them the protection of man; and should they be beautiful, everything else is needless, for at least twenty years of their lives
A. Women are Inferior to Men

The sexual stereotyping that women are inferior to men can be seen in Lucio’s attitude toward Isabella. Lucio was a friend of Claudio. He became the witness of Claudio’s capture and he was asked by Claudio to come to Isabella and ask her to help him. Claudio said:

“This day should my sister the cloister enter
And there receive her approbation
Aquint her with the danger of my state
Implore her, in my voice, that she make friends
To the strict deputy, bid herself assay him.” (I.iii.181-185)

Claudio had great expectations upon Isabella because he understood her ability. He knew that she could persuade well, and affect men with her charm. He said:

“I have great hope in that; for in her youth
There is a prone and speechless dialect
Such as to move men, beside, she hath prosperous art
When she will play with reason and discourse
And well she can persuade.” (I.iii.186-190)
Isabella and Claudio came from a noble family. The case of Claudio received particular attention from Escalus, the Duke’s counselor, because their father was a well-reputed man, as Escalus said:

“Alas, this gentleman, Whom I would save had a most noble father” (II.i.6-7)

As in the Renaissance noble women could receive the same education as men, Isabella was probably a well-educated woman. Compared with other women in the play, Isabella is a more advanced woman. Other women, such as Juliet and Mariana, did not show ability and courage like Isabella’s. Juliet did nothing to save her lover, while Mariana could only “weep and kneel”, as she did when Angelo accused her for lying before the Duke. Mariana did not try to convince the Duke about her honesty by giving reasonable argument. Instead, she said she would kneel down before the Duke until he believed in what she said:

“He knew me as a wife. As this is true Let me in safety raise me from my knees Or else be forever confixed here, A marble monument.” (V.i.230-233)

Chambers (1964, p.201) states that Isabella is the only woman in Shakespeare’s plays who can persuade, beside Lady Macbeth. Isabella’s ability to persuade can be seen in her manner in pleading for her bother’s life. In her persuasion, she shows her extensive knowledge about religion and her reasonable mind.
However, Lucio completely disregarded Isabella’s capability. Having promised to Claudio, Lucio visited Isabella at the nunnery and asked her to help her brother. In convincing Isabella to come to Angelo, Lucio did not take into account Isabella’s ability to persuade. Instead, he suggested her to seek for Angelo’s mercy by displaying her weakness and inferiority:

“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.” (I.iv.79-83)

In these lines, Lucio implied that women could only achieve their goals by showing weakness and inferiority, by kneeling and weeping, so that men would have pity on them and give them whatever they want. When women show their power or use their ability and knowledge (“when maidens sue”), men are more powerful, they act like gods and therefore it is hard to convince them to give what the women want. If women show their weakness, by kneeling and weeping, they can get whatever they wish for, “all their petitions are as freely theirs as they themselves would owe them”. The word “owe” in this sentence according to the footnote in Measure for Measure means “own”.

Lucio’s assumption about women’s inferiority still persisted when he was accompanying her to come to Angelo. Although Isabella chose to use her reason to persuade Angelo, Lucio thought that it was improper for a woman, and he thought that she would not succeed.
In persuading Angelo, Isabella first showed that she had the same view about adultery. Just like Angelo, Isabella was very strict. She stated that she also condemned adultery, and she agreed that Claudio should be punished, but her sisterly love for him forced her to plead for his life:

“There is a vice that I most do abhor,
And most desire to 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 ‘twixt will and will not” (II.ii.29-33)

Isabella asked Angelo to act as she did, that is to condemn the sin but have mercy on the actor, and forgive Claudio by compassion, as she said:

“I have a brother is condemned to die.
I do beseech you, let it be his fault,
And not my bother” (II.ii.34-36)

Since from the beginning Lucio expected Isabella to use her womanly weakness so that Angelo would feel sorry for her, he was not impressed to see her persuading Angelo in her own way. He told her to show her weakness and inferiority, so he would have mercy on her. He told her to kneel down before Angelo:

“To him again, entreat him,
Kneel down before him, hang upon his gown;
You are too cold, if you should need a pin,
You could not with more tame a tongue desire it.” (II.ii.43-45)
Lucio stated that Isabella was too calm, she did not show her emotions. As Lucio expected her to weep, he thought that she was too cold because she did not show her sadness, which might touch Angelo’s heart and make him pardon Claudio. In Lucio’s view, Isabella spoke as if she was only asking for something as unimportant as a pin.

Isabella knew that the case of Claudio had provoked sympathy from the people of Vienna. While Angelo still insisted in his decision to punish Claudio, Isabella said that Angelo should pardon her brother, and pardoning him would please God and also his people, she said:

“Yes; I do think that you might pardon him
And neither heaven nor man grieve at the mercy (II.ii.49-50)

Isabella stated that mercy is better than any other things, she said:

No ceremony that to great ones ‘longs
Not the king’s crown, nor the deputed sword,
The marshal’s truncheon, nor the judge’s robe,
Become them with one half so good as grace
As mercy does.“ (II.ii.59-63)

Isabella stated that all men have sinned, they all deserved to be punished, but God had forgiven them:

“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 will then breathe within your lips,
Like a man new made.” (II.ii.73-79)

Here, Isabella stated that everyone has sinned (“all the souls that were
were forfeit once”), but God had forgiven (“He that might the vantage best have
took found out the remedy”). Isabella tried to make Angelo think of what would
happen if God judged with no mercy as Angelo did. Isabella tried to convince
Angelo to forgive Claudio because God had also forgiven Angelo for his sins.

Isabella was aware of the immoralities around her, she knew that many
people had also committed adultery but they were not punished. The Duke’s rule
had been permissive, and because of this adultery had become common in Vienna.
She knew that many people had committed adultery but Claudio was the only one
ever punished because of it, as she said:

“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.” (II.ii.106-108)

Isabella thought that Angelo’s decision for Claudio is tyrannous, she
thought that Angelo was using his authority to do whatever he wanted, without
concerning about the impact of his decision to other people. Isabella also assumed
that Angelo might have committed the same sin, but his authority could conceal it
and save him from punishment:
“Because authority, though it err like others,
Hath yet a kind of medicine in itself,
That skins the vice o’ the top. Go to your bosom;
Knock there, and ask your heart what it doth know
That's like my brother's fault: if it confess
A natural guiltiness such as is his,
Let it not sound a thought upon your tongue
Against my brother's life.” (II.ii.134-141)

After all Isabella had said to him, Angelo started to see that Isabella’s words made sense to him. He saw Isabella’s virtue expressed in her words, and he fell in love with her. After she had left, he wanted to hear her speak again:

“What, do I love her,
That I desire to hear her speak again,
And feast upon her eyes?”(II.ii.176b-178a)

But to Lucio, Isabella’s abilities did not count. He kept on reminding her that she was too cold because she did not show her womanly weakness. Lucio also thought that a woman’s strength is in her sex-appeal, and he expected Isabella to use her sex-appeal to attract Angelo, influence him, and make him forgive her brother, for he said:

“Ay, touch him; there’s the vein” (II.ii.70)

In *Measure for Measure*, blood is used to symbolize sexual desire. Isabella stated that her brother had fallen by “prompture of the blood” (II.iv.178), Angelo was described as a man who “scarce confesses that his blood flows” (I.iv.51b-52),
and Angelo called his desire for Isabella as “blood, thou art blood” (II.iv.15). Vein is where blood flows, so Lucio’s suggestion for Isabella to touch Angelo’s vein can mean arousing his sexual desire. Lucio could also see that Angelo was beginning to fall in love with Isabella for he said:

“O to him, to him, wench! He will relent; I perceive it” (II.ii.124)

And Lucio was right, because Angelo really fell in love with Isabella, and he then offered to pardon Claudio if she yielded to him.

Lucio’s view about Isabella confirms with the sexual stereotyping that women are inferior to men. Women should not try to fight against men since men are stronger, and if they do, they will not win. He assumed that a woman can only benefit from her weakness to make men sympathize her and her sex-appeal to attract him.

B. The Concept of the Virtuous Woman

1. Chastity

Sexual chastity is considered an important value for a woman. For a woman, sexual chastity equals honor. Losing chastity will cause her to be dishonored all her life. While with men losing virginity before marriage does not become a problem, with women the case is different. Chastity is very important for a woman, as Wollstonecraft describes, “reputation for chastity, became the one thing needful to the sex”. Unchaste women are degraded forever, as
Wollstonecraft states, “if an innocent girl become a prey to love, she is degraded forever”.

To the people of the Renaissance England, chastity was an absolute value for women. The people of the Renaissance believed in the sanctity of marriage. Adultery was included in deadly seven sins, which were pride, envy, wrath, sloth, avarice, gluttony, and lechery. For a woman, being unchaste could provide her husband with a reason to divorce her.

In *Measure for Measure*, sexual chastity becomes an important issue. Isabella as the central character of the play places chastity above anything else. In fact, she would rather lose her brother than her chastity. From the point of view of modern critics, Isabella’s choice to let her brother die so that she could stay chaste is unacceptable. The character of Isabella is much criticized, Barton in Wall (Nov. 13, 2000) judged Isabella as “a narrow minded but passionate girl afflicted with an irrational terror of sex”, while Nicholls in Wall (Nov. 13, 2000) states that Isabella is a “young, immature woman demonstrating moral absurdity and cruelty”.

However, in creating his heroine, Shakespeare did not mean to make Isabella a cruel woman. Throughout the play, Isabella showed her compassion for other people, including her brother Claudio, her brother’s lover Juliet, the Duke, Mariana, and even Angelo.

Isabella was an affectionate woman. She had a close relationship with Juliet, her brother’s lover. While talking to Lucio about Juliet, she named her as her adopted cousin:
Isabella. Someone with child by him? My cousin Juliet?

Lucio. Is she your cousin?

Isabella. Adoptedly, as schoolmaids change their names

By vain, though apt, affection (Liv.45-48)

Isabella cared for other people, although their acts were against her religious beliefs. When she heard about what had happened to Claudio, she willingly tried to help him, even though she herself thought that her brother was guilty and deserved to be punished. Unlike Angelo who said that he would condemn anyone who was guilty for fornication including his family, Isabella understood her brother’s sin as human frailty and asked him to be forgiven.

Isabella’s sympathy for other people can also be seen in her attitude toward Mariana. When she heard about Mariana’s sufferings, she showed her sympathy to Mariana and her willingness to help her by saying:

“What a merit were it 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?” (III.i.235-238)

So when the Duke told her about the “bed trick”, which would solve all the problems, save her brother and bring Mariana back to her husband, she agreed to come back to Angelo and say that she would yield to him.

Isabella also expressed her concern about the Duke. Since Duke Vincentio was known as a good Duke, and Angelo obviously abused his power, Isabella was concerned about the Duke being deceived by Angelo, she said:
“But O, how much is the good Duke deceived in Angelo! If ever he return again and I can speak to him, I will open my lips in vain, or discover his government!” (III.i.93-96)

Isabella even showed her compassion for Angelo, and at the end of the play she kneeled down beside Mariana to ask the Duke to forgive Angelo.

Although Isabella was an affectionate woman who understood the frailties of others, in the matter of her own chastity she was very strict. The people of the Renaissance England assumed chastity as an important virtue for a woman. In Measure for Measure, Isabella represents virtue. In the play, she was always called “virtuous maid”.

Even Lucio, who had no respect for others, recognized her as a virtuous woman. In his first encounter with Isabella, Lucio saw her as a chaste woman, for he said:

“Hail, virgin, if you be, as those cheek-roses
Proclaim you are no less!” (I.iv.16-17)

Lucio respected Isabella, and he did not dare to joke with her. When Lucio told Isabella about what had happened to Claudio, she did not believe him and she thought that he had made up his story. But Lucio said:

“‘tis true,
I would not, though it is my familiar sin
With maids to seem the lapwing and to jest,
Tongue far from heart, play with all virgins so.
I hold you as a thing enskied and sainted,
By your renouncement, an immortal spirit;
And to be talked with in sincerity,
As with a saint.” (I.iv.30-36)

To Lucio, Isabella was not like common women. Lucio had no respect for other women. To Lucio women are simply the object of jokes, but he did not dare to joke with Isabella.

As a virtuous woman, Isabella struggled to keep her chastity at any cost. To Isabella, losing chastity was worse than death. When Angelo offered to forgive Claudio if Isabella would yield to him, she refused it. Isabella thought that dying is temporal, because according to Christianity there is life after death, but to her losing chastity meant dying forever, as she said:

“Better it were a brother died at once
Than that a sister, by redeeming him,
Should die forever” (II.iv.106-108)

To Isabella, her chastity was more important than anything, even her brother’s life. As Angelo would only forgive her brother in exchange for her chastity, Isabella saw that there was no other way to save her bother and he had to die, so she concluded:

“Then, Isabel, live chaste, and brother, die
More than our brother is our chastity” (II.iv.184-185)

Isabella identified her chastity as her family's honor, and she thought that yielding to Angelo would also cause her brother’s shame and dishonor. When she explain about Angelo’s offer to Claudio she said:
*Isabella*. Yes, brother, you may live;

There is a devilish mercy in the judge,

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

But fetter you till death

*Claudio*. Perpetual durance?

*Isabella*. Ay, just; perpetual durance, a restraint,

Though all the world’s vastidity you had,

To a determined scope.

*Claudio*. But in what nature?

*Isabella*. In such one as, you consenting to’t,

Would bark your honor from that trunk you bear,

And leave you naked.

(III.i.64-73)

Isabella assumed that the shame that Claudio would have to bear if she did yield to Angelo would fetter him till death. He would live and be free from imprisonment, but he would have to carry the burden of shame all his life.

Isabella loved Claudio, and she was very much worried about him. If she had to die to free him from the punishment, she would die willingly. She said to Claudio:

“O, were it but my life

I’d throw it for your deliverance

As frankly as a pin” (III.i.104-106)
But to Isabella, chastity was more important than life, and she expected her brother to think the same. Isabella expected her brother to have honor just like their father. She thought that Claudio would choose to die than cause his sister shame. If she were in Claudio’s situation, she would also choose to die. In refusing Angelo’s offer, she argued:

“As much for my poor brother as my self
That is, were I under the terms of death,
The impressions 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.” (II.iv.99-104)

When Claudio told her that he was not afraid to die, she was relieved. She felt proud because her brother showed courage and honor as their father did, she said:

“There spake my brother, there my father’s grave
Did utter forth a voice. Yes, thou must die,
Thou art too noble to conserve a life
In base appliances.” (III.i.86-89)

But Claudio was just pretending to be brave. He was so frightened by the thought of death that he asked his sister to let him live. Isabella was outraged at her brother’s demand. She was disappointed because her bother was not as noble and courageous as she had expected him to be. She thought that to suggest her to yield to Angelo was as sinful as incest, she said
‘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?’ (III.i.137-40)

Because Claudio’s cowardice, Isabella even doubted that he really had
their father’s blood, as she said:

‘Heaven shield my mother played my father fair,
For such a warped slip of wilderness
Ne’er issued from his blood.’(III.i.141-143a)

Isabella was so angry to her brother’s demand that she cursed him, and
said that she would pray for his death:

‘Take my defiance,
Die, perish! Might but my bending down
Reprieve thee from their fate, it should proceed.
I’ll pray a thousand prayers for thy death
No word to save thee.’(III.i.143b-147)

Isabella’s anger was derived from her disappointment because she saw that
her brother did not have a sense of honor. As she thought that her chastity equaled
to her family’s honor, she expected that her brother would rather die than cause
her shame. She firmly refused Angelo’s offer, and she thought that her brother
would have suggested her to refuse too. She thought that even if her brother had to
die twenty times, he would choose to die than live by the loss of her chastity.
“Though he had fall’n by prompture of the blood,
Yet hath he in him such a mind of honor,
That, had he twenty heads to tender down
On twenty blocks, he’d yield them up,
Before his sister should her body stoop
To such abhorred pollution.” (II.iv.178-183)

However, Claudio was not like how she expected him to be. Fortunately, the Duke overheard the conversation between Isabella and Claudio, and came out with a plan that might save Claudio’s life without spoiling Isabella’s chastity. The Duke then told Isabella about Mariana, Angelo’s deserted wife. He told her to come to Angelo and say that she agrees to his offer, but at the night of the appointment her place in Angelo’s bed would be taken by Mariana. Thus, until the end of the play, Isabella remained chaste.

While Isabella placed her chastity above anything else and struggled to defend it at any cost, other women in Measure for Measure have problems because of being unchaste. As a chaste woman, Isabella was treated with respect by other people, she is called “virtuous maid”, and even viewed as a saint. But unlike Isabella, other women in Measure for Measure such as Juliet, Mariana, and Kate Keepdown, a prostitute who was pregnant with Lucio’s child, were not respected. They were considered to have lost their honor because they are not chaste.

Just like Angelo and Mariana, Claudio and Juliet were engaged. The engagement between Angelo and Mariana was made before witnesses, so it was
considered a valid marriage, while the engagement between Claudio and Juliet was made secretly:

“That stands it with me, upon a true contract
I got possession of Julietta’s bed
You know the lady, she is fast my wife
Save that we do the denunciation lack
Of outward order.”(I.ii.148-152a)

Here, “denunciation” means formal announcement. The engagement between Claudio and Juliet was private, with no witnesses, so it was considered illegitimate.

Claudio and Juliet had lived as man and wife, although according to the law they did not have the privilege yet. So when Juliet got pregnant, it became evident that Claudio and Juliet had committed adultery. Claudio called Juliet’s pregnancy as “character too gross writ on Juliet” (I.ii.158). Juliet’s pregnancy is an evidence of sin and shame that cannot be hidden or erased, and they had to pay the consequences for it.

Juliet did not only have to suffer from having the man she loved imprisoned and sentenced to death, she also had to suffer from humiliation. Juliet’s conversation with Friar Lodowick –the Duke in disguise- showed that in committing adultery Claudio and Juliet had wronged each other:

*Duke*. Love you the man that wronged you?

*Juliet*: Yes, as I love the woman that wronged him

(II.iii.24-25)
Here, the Duke assumed that Claudio had wronged Juliet by causing her shame, while Juliet assumed that she also had wronged him by causing him to be humiliated, imprisoned and sentenced to death. When she learned that he had to die on the next day, she called the love between her and Claudio an “injurious love”, because it had brought fatal consequences to them.

“Must die tomorrow! O injurious love,
That respites me a life, whose very comfort
Is still a dying horror” (II.iii.40-43)

For Juliet, with her pregnancy she was put to shame, and her reputation had been ruined. By losing her chastity, Juliet had been dishonored. She was called “fornicatress” by Angelo (II.ii.23). While seeing Juliet visiting the prison where Claudio was held, the Provost remarked:

“Look here comes one: a gentlewoman of mine,
Who, falling in the flaws of her own youth,
Hath blistered her report: she is with child” (II.iii.10-12)

Here, report means reputation. Other people, just like the Provost, could see that Juliet’s reputation had been spoiled. Even Mistress Overdone, a bawd, and her assistant, Pompey, made fun of her affair with Claudio, emphasizing on her unchastity:

*Pompey*. Yonder man is carried to prison.

*Mistress Overdone*. Well; what has he done?

*Pompey*. A woman.

*Mistress Overdone*. But what’s his offence?
Pompey. Groping for trouts in a peculiar river.

Mistress Overdone. What, is there a maid with child by him?

Pompey. No, but there's a woman with maid by him (I.i.87-95)

Here, Pompey refused to say that Juliet is a maid, because a maid means a chaste woman, while Juliet was no longer chaste. He called her a woman with a “maid”, which in this sentence means her child with Claudio.

With Mariana, the case was quite different, but it also showed the importance of chastity for a woman. Mariana was Angelo’s wife on pre-contract, but she was abandoned before they ever got married. As a reason for leaving her, Angelo claimed to have found her unchaste. She was abandoned by Angelo, and her reputation was ruined. Angelo used Mariana’s ruined reputation to justify his mistreatment toward her:

“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

Came short of composition, but in chief

For that her reputation was disvalued.” (V.i.216-221)

Here, Angelo stated that he had abandoned her mainly because her reputation was disvalued, which was a common reason for the people of Shakespeare’s time to break a marriage pre-contract.

While women are expected to be chaste, the case is different for a man. This is shown in Lucio, a man who had an affair with a prostitute named Kate
Keepdown. Lucio was a man with low morality. He was a regular visitor of Mistress Overdone’s prostitution house. As for a man unchastity does not become a problem, Lucio is not ashamed of the fact that he often visited the prostitution house, as he talked about Mistress Overdone to a gentleman:

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

_Second Gentleman_. To what, I pray?

_Lucio_. Judge.(I.i.45-49)

Lucio had a child with Kate Keepdown, but he refused to marry her. Lucio was Claudio’s good friend. While visiting Claudio in prison, he met the Duke who was disguising as Friar Lodowick. Not knowing that he was speaking to the Duke himself, he bragged that Claudio was not the only one who had committed adultery, as he had also done it. He said:

_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 meddlar. (IV.iv.172-175)

Lucio was not ashamed of his affair with Kate Keepdown, in fact he was proud and he told people about it. He had got Kate with child and promised to marry her, but then broke his promise. Here, Lucio used the same excuse as Angelo’s excuse for not marrying Mariana to avoid responsibilities, unchastity. He described Kate as a rotten meddlar. Meddlar is an apple-like fruit that is edible only when partly decayed. Here, “meddlar” refers to Kate’s job as a prostitute. As
she was a prostitute who was obviously no longer chaste, Lucio described that she was “a rotten meddlar”. Later, Lucio would have to marry Kate as a punishment for slandering the Duke.

Knight (1964, p.177) describes Lucio as “a typical loose-minded, vulgar wit”. Lucio speaks carelessly and vulgarly, he had no respect for others. Lucio did not know that he was speaking to the Duke himself, he said false things about the Duke. He stated that if the Duke was present, he would not punish Claudio for committing adultery, because the Duke himself had committed the same sin:

“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 nursing a thousand. He had some feeling of the sport; he knew the service, and that instructed him to mercy.”(III.ii.118-123)

Then before the Duke, Escalus, and Angelo at the final scene, Lucio made false reports about friar Lodowick, who was actually the Duke in disguise. He said that the friar had spoken against the Duke:

“My lord, I know him; ‘tis a meddling friar,
I do not like the man. He had been lay, my lord,
For certain words he spake against your Grace
In your retirement, I had swinged him soundly” (V.i.127-130)

When the Duke finally revealed himself before everyone, Lucio could no longer escape from the consequences of his carelessness. The Duke remembered everything that Lucio had said about him, and he was offended:

_Duke._ thou art the first knave that e’er maddest a Duke.
First, provost, let me bail these gentle three.
[to Lucio] sneak not away sir; for the friar and you
must have a word anon. Lay hold on him.

Lucio. This may prove worse than hanging.(V.i.359-363)

The Duke had forgiven Angelo for all his faults, but he could not forgive
Lucio. He said:

“I find an apt remission in myself,
And yet here’s one in place that I cannot pardon.

[To Lucio] you, sirrah, that knew me for a fool, a coward,
One all of luxury, an ass, a madman;
Wherein have I so deserved of you,
That you extol me thus?” (V.i.500-505)

Lucio knew that he would not be able to escape from punishment, so he said:

“Faith, my lord, I spoke it but according to the trick. If you will hang me
for it, you may; but I had rather it would please you I might be whipped.”
(V.i.506-509)

But the Duke chose a different method of punishment. Lucio was not
whipped nor hanged, but the Duke ordered that Lucio should marry Kate
Keepdown. Lucio was not grateful at all for the Duke’s decision. He said that
marrying a punk -an unchaste woman- was as bad as being whipped and hanged,
and the Duke replied that he deserved it because he had slandered him:
Lucio. Marrying a punk, my lord, is pressing to death, whipping, and hanging

Duke. Slandering a prince deserves it. (V.i.525-526)

From the attitude of the male characters toward women, it could be seen that the view of chastity in *Measure for Measure* is unfair. While to a man losing virginity does not become a problem, to a woman it can cause her to be dishonored. A chaste woman like Isabella is respected, while unchaste women are humiliated. A woman’s unchastity could also be used by a man as an excuse to abandon her and avoid responsibilities for her.

2. Fidelity

The sexual stereotyping of woman as a faithful wife can be seen in the figure of Mariana. Mariana was Angelo’s wife on pre-contract, she was engaged to him but they never got married publicly. Because the people of Shakespeare’s time considers pre-contract a valid marriage, Mariana was assumed as Angelo’s legal wife

Before Angelo and Mariana got married, Mariana’s brother died at sea, and Angelo added to her sadness by leaving her. The relationship between Angelo and Mariana could be seen when Duke Vincentio explained about Mariana’s problem to Isabella:

“She should this Angelo have married, was affianced to her by oath, and the nuptial appointed, between which time of the contract and limit of
solemnity, her brother Frederick was wracked at sea, having in that perished vessel the dowry of his sister.” (III.i.216-219)

Angelo did not only abandon Mariana, but he also ruined her reputation. Isabella recognized Mariana as a woman with a good reputation, as she said:

“I have heard of the lady, and good words went with her name.” (III.i.215)

But in abandoning Mariana, Angelo pretended to have discovered her dishonor, as the Duke says:

“Left her in tears, and dried not one of them with his comfort, swallowed his vow whole, pretending in her discoveries of dishonor.” (III.i.229-231)

Just like the women of the Renaissance England were expected to have unlimited fidelity toward her husband even though they did not deserve the fidelity, Mariana remained loyal to her husband, although she had been treated so badly by him. Mariana herself realized that she had been cheated, but she never stopped loving him. Mariana’s feeling to Angelo was well described in her song:

“Take, O, take those lips away,
That so sweetly were forsworn;
And those eyes, the break of day,
Lights that do mislead the morn;
But my kisses bring again;
Seals of love, but sealed in vain, sealed in vain” (IV.i.1-6)

In this song, Mariana said that Angelo had forsworn. He had promised to marry her but then abandoned her. She realized that her love for him was given in vain, because he did not love her and he treated her bad. But in spite of her
sufferings, she did not stop loving her husband and expecting him to come back to her. Angelo’s unkindness to Mariana even made her love for him grow stronger, as the Duke described:

“This forenamed maid hath yet in her the continuance of her first affection, his unjust unkindness, that in all reason should have quenched her love, hath, like an impediment in the current, made it more violent and unruly.” (III.i.243-246)

When a chance came to her to be with her husband, she was willing to take it. Although she had been cheated, humiliated and abandoned by Angelo, she willingly took Isabella’s part in her agreement with Angelo.

As mentioned before, Angelo had offered Isabella a pardon for her brother if she would yield to him. The disguised duke heard about this, and instructed Isabella to come back to Angelo and say that she agreed to yield to him. The duke told Isabella to say to Angelo that the place where Isabella and Angelo would meet should be hidden and dark, so that Mariana could replace Isabella without being known to Angelo.

When Isabella told Mariana about Angelo’s offer, it became obvious that Angelo has fallen in love with another woman, and he was not a faithful husband. However, she remained faithful to him. She was willing to make love to her husband, even when he was assuming that he was making love to Isabella. So Mariana went to the place where Angelo and Isabella had arranged to meet and took part in the “bed trick” masterminded by the Duke.
Mariana’s willingness to take part in the “bed trick” may be undignified, but this was how a woman was supposed to act at Shakespeare’s time. As Chambers (1964, p.188) states, “We may resent the elegiac and spaniel-like fidelity of Mariana of the Moated Grange. But is that the attitude of the year 1604? The tale of the deserted bride seeking her husband in disguise is old, approved, beloved.”

The people of the Renaissance England assumed that a woman should always be faithful to her husband, even he was not faithful to her. If her husband left her, she should still be faithful to him and do whatever she could to find him and bring him back home with her.

The bed trick remained unknown to Angelo until the final scene of the play where everyone gathered at the city gate, and Mariana revealed herself to Angelo and the Duke. When Mariana’s identity had been revealed, everything had become clear and all Angelo’s faults had been uncovered, the Duke considered that Angelo deserved to die. Angelo had deserted Mariana, tried to spoil Isabella’s chastity, and then broken his promise to set Claudio free. He had had Claudio executed for adultery, the sin that Angelo himself had also committed. To secure Mariana’s reputation, the Duke ordered that Angelo should marry Mariana first, and then executed. However, Mariana was steadfast in her love for Angelo. She said:

“O my gracious lord
I hope you will not mock me with a husband.” (V.i.419-420)
Mariana said that the Duke’s decision to let Angelo marry her and then execute him is like mocking her, that is he gave him what she wanted for a moment, but then took it away from her. To her statement the Duke replied:

“It is your husband mocked you with a husband.

Consenting to the safeguard of your honor,

I thought your marriage fit, else imputation,

For that he knew you, might reproach your life,

And choke your good to come. For his possessions,

Although by confiscation they are ours,

We do instate and widow you withal,

To buy you a better husband.”(V.i.421-428)

The Duke explained that he had ordered Angelo to marry Mariana only to safeguard her reputation. He also said that Angelo’s possession should be given to Mariana, so she would be able to “buy a better husband”. But Mariana did not want a better man to be her husband:

“O my dear lord

I crave no other, nor no better man.” (V.i.429)

When the Duke said that he was determined in executing Angelo, Mariana kneeled down to plead for Angelo’s life. As it was not enough for the Duke, she asked Isabella to kneel down beside her, promising that she would give all her life to serve Isabella if she helped her to change the Duke’s decision:

“O my good lord! Sweet Isabel, take my part,

Lend me your knees, and all my life to come
I’ll lend you all my life to do you service.” (V.i.433-435)

Mariana’s fidelity for her husband touched Isabella, and she did kneel down beside Mariana to ask for the Duke’s forgiveness for Angelo, even though she thought that her brother had died because of him. In the end, Mariana’s fidelity brought her husband back to her. Angelo was forgiven, and he and Mariana were united as man and wife.

3. Obedience

Obedience was seen as the most important virtue for a woman. Shakespeare describes the unlimited obedience of a wife in Mariana, Angelo’s dejected wife. Although Angelo had treated her badly, she still respected and obeyed him. At the final scene of the play, where the Duke, Escalus, Angelo, Mariana, Isabella, and Lucio met at the city gate, Mariana appeared with a veil on her face. When the Duke asked her to unveil, she said:

“Pardon my lord, I will not show my face

Until my husband bids me.” (V.i.169-170)

Only when Angelo, although not realizing that the veiled woman was Mariana, told her to unveil, did she show her face:

Angelo. this is a strange abuse. Let’s see thy face.

Mariana. My husband bids me; now I will unmask (V.i.205-206)
C. Women are Liable to Temptation

Although compared with other women of the play Isabella was an advanced woman, her view of her own sex was a traditional, and a stereotypical one. Isabella believed that women are liable to temptation. This can be seen in her conversation with Angelo, when she was coming to him for the second time and he offered to pardon Claudio if she yielded to him.

Isabella had attracted Angelo with her virtues. Angelo’s feeling for Isabella made him confess that he was only human, and he was as frail as others. He realized that as human being he was not free from sin. He admitted that all men are frail, for he said:

“We are all frail” (II.iv.121)

And to make Isabella admit that she was also human and she was liable to sin, he stated that woman were also frail:

“Nay, women are frail too” (II.iv.124)

Isabella agreed to Angelo’s statement. Moreover, she said that women are ten times frailer than men, she said:

“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. Nay, call us ten times frail;
For we are soft as our complexions are,
And credulous to false prints.”(II.Iv.125-129)
Here, Isabella stated that women were as breakable as a glass, they were “credulous to false prints”, which meant that they were easily misled into sin. Isabella also stated that women caused men to mar their creation. According to the Bible, men were created in the image of God. As written in Genesis 1:27, “So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them”. But because Eve was tempted by the serpent, she had caused Adam to fall into sin. With Adam’s fall, God’s image in men are marred.

As Stephen (1996) states, in Renaissance England “women were still seen as frail creatures predisposed to temptation; they still carried the burden of Eve’s original sin”. The view that women are liable to temptation was commonly believed, and it was reflected in Isabella’s statement.

Isabella’s statement gave Angelo chance to talk her into yielding to him, he said:

“I think it well:
And from this testimony of your own sex,--
Since I suppose we are made to be no stronger
Than faults may shake our frames,--let me be bold;
I do arrest your words. Be that you are,
That is, a woman; if you be more, you're none;
If you be one, as you are well express'd
By all external warrants, show it now,
By putting on the destined livery.” (II.iv.130-138)
Here, Angelo called Isabella’s statement a testimony of her own sex. He told Isabella to admit being a woman. As women are liable to temptation, she should give in to her human nature, and act the way a woman was supposed to act. She should admit that as a woman she was also liable to temptation, and give in to him. Although Isabella firmly refused Angelo’s offer, she did not deny Angelo’s assumption that women are liable to temptation, she even agreed with it.

D. Woman as the Temptress

The sexual stereotyping of woman as the temptress is derived from the story of the fall of man in the Bible. Eve, having been deceived by the serpent, caused Adam to disobey God. Because of this, women are often seen as the temptress, they are blamed for causing Adam to fall into sin.

In *Measure for Measure*, the view of woman as the temptress is expressed by Angelo. Angelo, the deputy of the Duke of Vienna, was a righteous man. He was trusted by the Duke to restore the law and order in Vienna because he was well-known for his righteousness.

Duke Vincentio decided to temporarily leave his powers to Angelo because he was very much concerned about the immoralities in Vienna. Law had not been enforced well in his government, so people had no fear of the law, as the Duke described:

“We have strict statutes and most biting laws,

The needful bits and curbs to headstrong weeds,
For this fourteen years we have let slip,
Even like an o’ergrown lion in a cave,
That goes out not to prey. Now, as fond fathers,
Having bound up the threatening twigs of birch,
Only to stick it in their children’s sight
For terror, not to use, in time the rod
Becomes more mock’d than fear’d; so our decrees,
Dead to infliction, to themselves are dead,
And liberty plucks justice by the nose,
The baby beats the nurse, and quite athwart
Goes all decorum.” (I.iii.19-30)

The duke felt that it was his fault for letting immoralities be allowed and passed without punishment in the fourteen years of his government. The duke thought that if evil deeds were not punished, it was the same as asking for them to be done again. If suddenly he changed the manner of his governing by being strict, he was afraid that he would be seen as a tyrannous duke, as he said:

“I do fear, too dreadful:
Sith ‘twas my fault to give the people scope,
‘Twould be my tyranny to strike and gall them
For what I bid them do; for we bid this be done
When evil deeds have their permissive pass,
And not the punishment.” (I.iv.34-39a)
Thus, the Duke decided to leave his powers to a stricter man, and Angelo was considered the best man for it. Angelo was well-known for his strictness, that made him inhumane, as the Duke remarked:

“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.” (I.iv.50-53)

It was commonly known that Angelo was cold-hearted and inhumane. Because of his coldness, Lucio joked that Angelo was not likely to be made by a man and a woman:

Lucio. They say this Angelo was not made by man and woman after this downright way of creation: is it 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 stock-fishes. 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 generative; that's infallible. (III.ii.106-114)

With his characteristics, Angelo was considered the right man to stop the immoralities in Vienna. Thus, the Duke left his government in Angelo’s hand, and gave him the authority equal to his own. Angelo thought that to restore order in Vienna, the weak rule of the Duke should be changed, otherwise, people would have no fear for the law. As he said to Escalus:

“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” (II.i.1-4)

So when Angelo learned about Claudio, a young man who had got his lover pregnant before marriage, he decided that it would be a good beginning to enforce the law in Vienna. Angelo treated Claudio’s case as an example of the new order and the law his wished to enforce.

Angelo had a strong sense of responsibility in his duty to enforce the law, He said that even if Claudio were his family, he would still be sentenced to death, as he said:

“Were he my kinsman, brother, or my son,
It should then be thus with him.” (II.ii.81-82)

But his good intentions changed into bad when he met Isabella, the sister of Claudio. Angelo was attracted to Isabella because of her virtues and her righteousness. Isabella courageously spoke to Angelo and persuaded him to cancel the punishment for Claudio. Before meeting Isabella, Angelo’s decision about Claudio was firm. Even the advice of Escalus, the wise counselor of the Duke, could not make him change his mind. But Isabella made him think again. Angelo saw that what Isabella had said made sense, he said:

“[Aside] she speaks, and ‘tis
Such sense, that my sense breeds with it.” (II.ii.142-143)
Although he had been very firm in his decision about Claudio, after hearing Isabella’s words, Angelo said that he would think again, and asked her to come the next day:

“I will bethink me; come again tomorrow” (II.i.144)

And when Isabella said goodbye to him, he felt that he was falling in love with her. Angelo started to sense his desire for her, and he called it temptation:

*Isabella.* Heaven keep your honor safe


For I am that way going to temptation,

Where prayers cross (II.ii.157-159)

Angelo was surprised with himself because he still could fall in love with Isabella and desire to be with her. He tried to justify himself by putting the blame on Isabella, whom he viewed as the tempter:

“What’s this? What’s this? Is this her fault or mine?

The tempter or the tempted, who sins most?” (II.ii.162-163)

Here, Isabella is viewed as “the tempter”, which confirms the sexual stereotyping of woman as the temptress who caused man to fall. Isabella was seen as a temptress, even when she had no intention to tempt. Even though Isabella had shown her virtue and purity, Angelo still assumed that she was set by the devil to cause him to fall. He said:

“O cunning enemy, that, to catch a saint,

With saint doth bait thy hook! Most dangerous

Is that temptation that doth goad us on
To sin in loving virtue.” (II.iii.179-181)

Here, Angelo identified himself as a saint, because of his righteousness. He viewed Isabella as a saint that is used as a bait to catch a righteous man like him, and cause him to fall into sin.

By this moment, Angelo had already had a desire to offer Isabella a pardon for Claudio if she would yield to him. This made him feel guilty. He thought that he was responsible for enforcing the law, and therefore he should not break the law himself. He is terrified by his desire for her, as he said to himself:

“Shall we desire to raze the sanctuary
And pitch our evils there? O fie, fie, fie!
What dost thou, or what art thou, Angelo?
Dost thou desire her fouly for those things
That make her good? O, let her brother live:
Thieves for their robbery have authority
When judges steal themselves.” (II.iii.170-176a)

Here, it can be seen that Angelo assumed his duty to enforce the law as the substitute of the Duke was holy, and his desire for Isabella would pollute it (“raze the sanctuary and pitch our evils there”). He thought that if he submitted to his desire, he would set a bad example for the people of Vienna. He assumed that if the instrument of law was corrupt, the people would be even more corrupt (“thieves for their robbery have authority when judges steal themselves”).

Angelo tried to fight against his desire by praying, but it did not work. He could not stop thinking about Isabella, he could not resist his own desire, and
he could not stop wanting to take benefit from Claudio’s situation to make Isabella yield to him:

“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.” (II.iv.1-7a)

Angelo’s desire for Isabella has made him lose control, his knowledge and wisdom could not stop it, as Angelo mused:

“Why does my blood thus muster my heart
Making it both unable for itself
And dispossessing all my other parts
Of necessary fitness?.” (II.iv.20-24)

In Measure for Measure, blood is often used to symbolize sexual desire. Angelo is often described to be a man with cold blood, which in this context means have no sexual desire. Lucio describes him as

“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.” (I.iv.57-62)
But because of Isabella, Angelo fell by the “prompture of the blood”. When Isabella did come back the next day, Angelo told her that he loved her, and offered to pardon Claudio if she would yield to him.

Even Isabella’s attitude confirms to the view of woman as the temptress. Isabella also assumed that Angelo’s fall was caused by her, and therefore she could forgive him after all he had done to her and to her brother. At the end of the play, when everyone gathered at the city gate to wait for the Duke who was pretending to come home after his fake journey, all Angelo’s sins were revealed before the Duke. Angelo had deserted Mariana, tricked Isabella into yielding to him (although Isabella did not really yield to him, she was replaced by Mariana), and then broke his promise to pardon her brother. The duke ordered Angelo to marry Mariana and then executed, he should be judged according to the manner in which Angelo had judged Claudio as the Duke said to Isabella:

Being a criminal, in double violation
Of sacred chastity, and of promise-breach,
Thereon 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!”
Haste still pays haste, and leisure answers leisure;
Like doth quit like, and Measure still for Measure (V.i.407-414)

Just like Angelo commanded Claudio to be executed for fornication, Angelo should also be executed. But Mariana pleaded for her husband’s life, and
asked Isabella to do the same. Isabella did ask the Duke to forgive Angelo, because she assumed that Angelo fell into sin because of her, as she said:

“Most bounteous sir,
Look, if it please you, on this man condemned,
As if my brother lived, I partly think
A due sincerity governed his deed
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 perished by the way. Thoughts are no subjects,
Intents but merely thought.” (v.I.448-457)

Isabella assumed that Angelo had been sincere in his duty to enforce the law. Isabella assumed that as painful as it is, Angelo’s punishment for Claudio was just, and it came from his righteousness. But his sincerity changed into sinfulness after he met her, so Angelo’s fall was actually caused by her. She assumed that her brother deserved to die because he had actually committed adultery, but Angelo did not really spoil her chastity so he should be forgiven.
E. Marriage Should be Sought be Every Woman

A Shakespearean comedy always ends with “Sweethearts parade to the altar as a single pair, if it cannot be helped; in greater number if possible” (Holzknecht, 1960, p.274). In Measure for Measure, four couples got married. Angelo married Mariana, Claudio married Juliet, Lucio married Kate Keepdown, and the Duke was likely to marry Isabella. The marriages in Measure for Measure are different from marriages in most comedies. While in most comedies couples get married for love, in Measure for Measure only one couple get married for love, Claudio and Juliet, while other marriages are problematical.

Angelo and Mariana did not get married for love. Mariana loved Angelo, and Angelo once loved her, but he then abandoned her and fell in love with Isabella. Angelo later married Mariana only because he was ordered to do so, when actually he would rather die than live in shame for what he has done.

After all Angelo’s fault had been revealed before the Duke, Angelo lost his pride and honor. He did not want to live in shame, so he begged the Duke to order for his execution:

“O my dread lord,
I should be guiltier than my guiltiness,
To think I can be undiscernible,
When I perceive your Grace, like pow’r divine,
Hath looked upon my passes. Then, good prince,
No longer session hold upon my shame,
But let my trial be my own confession.

Immediate sentence then, and sequent death,

Is all the grace I beg” (V.i.369-377)

Angelo reverenced the Duke, he thought that his duty as the substitute of the Duke was holy, and he had polluted it. He felt guilty for abusing his authority, and therefore he felt that he deserved to die. However, Angelo never expressed his regret for what he had done to Mariana, and he never expressed his gratitude for Mariana who had been so faithful for him, and in the end saved his life by pleading to the Duke not to execute him.

Just like Angelo, Lucio was forced to marry a woman that he did not love. He had to marry Kate Keepdown, a prostitute, as a punishment for slandering the Duke.

The marriages between Angelo and Mariana and Lucio and Kate Keepdown showed the importance of marriage for a woman. Since it was assumed that marriage should be sought by every woman, Mariana and Kate Keepdown even sought to marry men who did not love them, and had obviously abused them. In Mariana’s search for marriage was absurd, she gave up her and dignity and she was willing to make love to Angelo when he thought that he was making love to Isabella. Because Angelo had made love to her, he had to be responsible for her, and he had to marry her.

Unlike Mariana and Kate Keepdown who sought marriage with men who did not love them, Isabella as the virtuous woman deserved to get the best man to be her husband. At the end of the play, the Duke asked Isabella to marry him:
“Dear Isabel,

I have a motion much imports your good,

Where to if you’ll a willing ear incline,

What’s mine is yours, and what is yours is mine.

So, bring us to our palace, where we’ll show

What’s yet behind, that’s meet all you should know.” (V.i.537b-542)

The Duke’s proposal for Isabella closed the play, and there was no answer from Isabella.

The Duke’s proposal to Isabella seemed to be a happy ending for Isabella, but it was not. From the start, Isabella had decided to be a nun. On the day that she heard about what had happened to Claudio, she was in a nunnery, ready to take her vow as a nun. Isabella was a novice of St. Clare, a very strict order in Catholic Church. Followers of St. Clare, commonly called as “Poor Clares”, had to practice austerities as described in *Lives of Saints* (Jan. 30, 2003):

The "Poor Clares," as they came to be known, practiced austerities which until then were unusual among women. They went barefoot, slept on the ground, observed a perpetual abstinence from meat, and spoke only when obliged to do so by necessity or charity.

The order of St. Clare also had a strict rule concerning the nun’s attitude toward men, as described by a nun named Francisca:

“When you have vowed, 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.” (I.iv.10-13)

Isabella was so determined to be a nun. She thought that the order of St. Clare was not strict enough, and she wished an even more strict restraint. This was revealed in her conversation with Francisca:

*Isabella.* And have you nuns no further privileges?

*Francisca.* Are not these large enough?

*Isabella.* Yes, truly. I speak not as desiring more,

But rather wishing a more strict restraint

Upon the sisterhood, the votarists of St. Clare. (I.iv.1-5)

The order of St. Clare might be strict and undesirable for women, but Isabella had chosen it to be her way of living. Because of her faith, Isabella firmly refused Angelo’s love, even though it might cost in her brother’s death. As she had done when Angelo told her that he loved her:

*Angelo.* Plainly conceive, I love you.

*Isabella.* My brother did love Juliet

And you tell me that he shall die for it (II.iv.141-143)

Instead of giving in to Angelo, Isabella threat Angelo by saying that she would tell the world about Angelo’s offer:

“*I will proclaim thee, Angelo; look for’t*

*Sign me a present pardon for my brother,*

*Or with an outstretched throat I’ll tell the world aloud*

*What man thou art* (II.iv.151-153)
According to Wall (Nov. 13, 2000), Isabella’s refusal to yield to Angelo showed Isabella’s courage to preserve her autonomy, as Wall stated that “she dares to assert autonomy, and a faith that honor is as important as a brother’s life”. Isabella was sure of what she would do with her life. She had chosen to enter the nunnery. Other men had tried to interfere with her life, Lucio, Angelo and Claudio had suggested her to deny her faith and yield to Angelo so that Claudio would be saved, but she refused their interference. And in the end, the Duke, the man of a great authority, also interfered with her life.

In the play, there is no evidence that Isabella loved the Duke. Isabella and the Duke met only when he was disguised as a friar. During the meetings, there was no conversation of personal matters. As Mazer (Nov. 12, 2000) states, “nothing mutual has been established between them”. The communication between the Duke and Isabella was one-way communication, in which the Duke instructed Isabella what to do, and she obeyed.

The Duke’s marriage proposal for Isabella came at an inconvenient time. When everyone gathered at the city gate to welcome the Duke, Isabella did not know that the Duke was the same person as the friar. Isabella thought that Angelo had broken his promise to pardon Claudio. She thought that her brother had died, and she kneeled down before the Duke to seek justice:

“Justice, O royal duke! Vail your regard
Upon a wrong'd, I would fain have said, a maid!
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.i.20-25)

But the Duke acted as if he knew nothing about what had happened between Isabella and Angelo, and told her to speak to Angelo because he has the authority to give her justice.

“Relate your wrongs; in what? by whom? be brief.
Here is Lord Angelo shall give you justice:
Reveal yourself to him.”(V.i.26-27)

Isabella replied that speaking to Angelo to find justice would be like seeking redemption of the devil and she insisted that the Duke should hear her. She said:

“O worthy duke,
You bid me seek redemption of the devil:
Hear me yourself; for that which I must speak
Must either punish me, not being believed,
Or wring redress from you. Hear me, O hear me, here!”(V.i.27-32)

To Isabella’s statement, Angelo tried to make the Duke believe that she was mad:

Angelo. My lord, her wits, I fear me, are not firm:
She hath been a suitor to me for her brother
Cut off by course of justice.--

Isabella. By course of justice!

Angelo. And she will speak most bitterly and strange.(V.i.33-36)
Isabella tried hard to convince the Duke about Angelo’s faults. She knew that Angelo was well known for his righteousness, and her reports about him might sound strange, but they were true. She said:

“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?”(V.i.37-42)

Isabella then told the Duke about what Angelo had done. He promised to pardon her brother if she yielded to him, but then broke his promise. To her statement, the Duke acted as if he did not believe what Isabella had said because Angelo was well known for his righteousness, and pretended to accuse Isabella for being involved in a conspiracy against Angelo:

“By heaven, fond wretch, thou knowest not what thou speak'st,
Or else thou art suborn'd against his honour
In hateful practise. 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 weigh'd thy brother by himself
And not have cut him off. Some one hath set you on:
Confess the truth, and say by whose advice
Thou camest here to complain.”(V.i.104-114)

This accusation made Isabella hopeless. She was desperate because the Duke did not believe her, and she thought that Angelo’s evils would never be uncovered.

“And is this all?

Then, O you blessed ministers above,

Keep me in patience, and with ripen'd time

Unfold the evil which is here wrapt up

In countenance! Heaven shield your grace from woe,

As I, thus wrong'd, hence unbelieved go!”(V.i.115-119)

The Duke then ordered an officer to take Isabella to prison, pretending that he was sure that she was a part of a conspiracy:

“I know you'd fain be gone. An officer!

To prison with her! Shall we thus permit

A blasting and a scandalous breath to fall

On him so near us? This needs must be a practise.

Who knew of Your intent and coming hither?” (V.i.120-124)

Mariana and Friar Peter —the friar who had helped the Duke in his disguise— came to support Isabella, but the Duke pretended to accuse them all for lying. Then the Duke said that he would leave for a while, and left the matters to Angelo:

“And you, my noble and well-warranted cousin,

Whom it concerns to hear this matter forth,
Do with your injuries as seems you best,
In any chastisement: I for a while will leave you;
But stir not you till you have well determined
Upon these slanderers.” (V.i.254-259)

The Duke then came back as Friar Lodowick, who knew the whole affair among Isabella, Angelo, and Mariana. He pretended to seek for the Duke, and called Angelo a villain, which caused Escalus, the Duke’s counselor, to order to imprison him. With Lucio’s help, the provost then tried to take him to prison. Lucio pulled off the hood that the friar was wearing, and the Duke’s face was revealed.

Although the Duke had managed to save Claudio, he pretended that he had not. He apologized to Isabella because he did not reveal himself earlier so that he could prevent Claudio’s execution:

“Your brother's death, I know, sits at your heart;
And you may marvel why I obscured myself,
Labouring to save his life, and would not rather
Make rash remonstrance of my hidden power
Than let him so be lost. O most kind maid,
It was the swift celerity of his death,
Which I did think with slower foot came on,
That brain'd my purpose. But, peace be with him!
That life is better life, past fearing death,
Than that which lives to fear: make it your comfort,
So happy is your brother.” (V.i.391-403)

The Duke then questioned the Provost about the execution of Claudio, and said he wished he had saved him. The provost then brought Claudio, whom he had saved, before the Duke, and he was reunited with his sister Isabella. Just like Angelo who offered to pardon Claudio if Isabella gave him love, the Duke pardoned Claudio and then asked Isabella to say she would be his:

If he be like your brother, for his sake
Is he pardon'd; and, for your lovely sake,
Give me your hand and say you will be mine.
He is my brother too: but fitter time for that. (V.i.492-495)

The Duke’s proposal for Isabella came in an inconvenient time. Isabella had just realized that the friar was the Duke himself, who could have helped her from the start and kept her from getting so much trouble. She had just been accused for conspiracy and almost sent to prison. She had just found out that the Duke had been lying to her about her brother, whom she had thought to be dead. When she had just found happiness because her brother was alive, the Duke asked her to marry him and leave the nunnery, the place where she was very determined to be.

With the Duke’s proposal for Isabella, Isabella was once again abused by a man. All other men had tried to abuse her, and in the end the Duke himself did too. The Duke’s action was the same as Angelo’s action, he saved Claudio but then asked for Isabella’s love in return. Because of this, in modern theaters Isabella refuses the Duke’s proposal, as Friedman (1996) states:
Many revivals over the last twenty-five years have exploited Isabella’s silence to make a political statement validating female resistance to the type of treatment Isabella receives from the play’s male characters. This countertrend began with John Barton’s landmark 1970 Royal Shakespeare Company production, in which “Isabella quite firmly did not agree to marry the Duke”.

But originally, Isabella accepted the Duke’s proposal. Though Isabella’s respond to the Duke’s proposal was not mentioned in the play, in the performance of the play Isabella silently took the Duke’s hand and thus accepted his proposal, as Friedman (1996) states:

Since no stage direction for a processional exit exists in the Folio, the play may conclude, after the Duke’s final couplet, with a tableau dominated by the veiled and kneeling Isabella holding the hand of the upright Duke, which fades into a blackout.

The Duke’s proposal to Isabella and Isabella’s acceptance to the proposal can be seen as a reflection of the sexual stereotype that all women should seek for marriage. Since marriage was considered to the most desirable state for a woman, in the end Isabella, also got married. Isabella left the nunnery, where she had wanted to be, and married the Duke.
A. Conclusion

After analyzing the play, the researcher found that there are some kinds of sexual stereotyping of women which are revealed in *Measure for Measure*. Firstly, women are viewed to be inferior to men. Secondly, women are expected to have virtues like chastity, and also fidelity and obedience toward their husbands. Thirdly, women are seen to be liable to temptation. Then, women are seen as the temptress. And finally, there is also a generalization that marriage should be sought by every woman.

In *Measure for Measure*, the assumption that women are inferior to men is revealed in Lucio’s view about women. Lucio thought that women were inferior to men. He said that if women sued against men, they would not win. He thought that a woman could only benefit from her weakness to make men sympathize her and her sex-appeal to attract them and make them give her what she wanted.

Women of the Renaissance were expected to have such virtues as chastity, fidelity and obedience. The importance of chastity for a woman is shown in Isabella and other female characters in the play. Isabella is the representation of the virtuous woman. To Isabella, her chastity was so important that she would rather lose her brother than her chastity. To Isabella, her chastity equaled to her family’s honor, and she defended it at any cost. As a chaste woman, Isabella was
highly respected, but on the other hand other women in the play were dishonored because of being unchaste. Mariana was abandoned by Angelo, and as a reason for leaving her he claimed to have found her unchaste. Juliet was dishonored because of her pregnancy, and her reputation was ruined. Lucio tried to avoid his responsibilities for his child with Kate Keepdown because of Kate’s unchastity. Meanwhile, fidelity and obedience that went beyond the limit was shown in Mariana although she had been treated so badly by Angelo, she remained faithful to him. She even refused to show her face before the Duke until Angelo told her to do so.

In *Measure for Measure*, the assumption that women are liable to temptation is expressed by Isabella herself. Although Isabella is a virtuous woman, she did not deny prejudices against women, she even justified them. She agreed with the assumption that women are easily misled into sin.

Women are also viewed as the temptress, who causes men to fall into sin. Even the virtuous Isabella became the cause of Angelo’s fall. Angelo was a righteous man before he met Isabella and fell in love with her, but his love for her led him from one sin to another. Even Isabella agreed that she was the cause of Angelo’s fall, and because of this she could forgive him after all he had done to her and her brother.

The closing of the play suggests that marriage should be sought by every woman. All women in the play got married. Mariana was willing to take Isabella’s place in her appointment with Angelo in order to trap him into marrying her. Both Mariana and Kate Keepdown gave up their dignity and sought for marriage with
men who did not love them and had obviously abused them. Isabella also married the Duke, although since the beginning she had been very determined to be a nun.

**B. Recommendation**

After completing this research, the researcher suggests some recommendations as follows:

1. In creating his plays, Shakespeare was bound to some dramatic conventions that uniquely form the plot and characterization of the plays. Understanding these dramatic conventions might be helpful to get a better understanding of the plays.

2. In applying feminist literary criticism on Shakespeare’s plays, a researcher should also mind the condition of women in the Renaissance England, because the view of women in Shakespeare’s plays may be derived from the view of women of the age.

3. Shakespeare’s plays are rich resources for literary studies. This research focuses only on the sexual stereotyping of women in *Measure for Measure*, but there are many other aspects to explore in the play. There are many more possibilities for researches on *Measure for Measure*, from many different points of view such as philosophy, sociology, and so on.


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Miller, N. J. (1989). “‘Not much to be Marked’ Narrative of the Woman’s Part in Lady Mary Wroth’s Uraina” in *Studies of English Literature*. Houston: Rice University


Wall, C. M. (Nov. 13, 2000) *Measuring Isabella from Within*. http://shakespearepalomar.edu/
Measure for Measure begins with Vincentio, the Duke of Vienna, handing over his authority to Angelo. The Duke had ruled in Vienna in 14 years, and because of his permissiveness immoralities had been allowed in Vienna. The Duke was very much concerned about the immoralities, but he felt that he could not enforce the law himself. He felt that he was the one to blame for the immoralities, because he had let them pass without punishment for fourteen years of his government. Thus, he chose to leave the responsibilities to enforce the law in Vienna to a man who was well-known for this righteousness, Angelo.

Angelo was a righteous man, and he was very strict. He wanted to stop the immoralities in Vienna. When he heard about Claudio, a man who got his lover pregnant before marriage, he decided to set the case as an example of the law he wished to enforce. Claudio was sentenced to death for fornication.

While he was being taken to prison, Claudio met his friend, Lucio. Claudio then asked Lucio to visit Isabella, his sister, and ask her to help him. Isabella is a novice of St. Clare, a very strict order in Catholic Church. Claudio wanted her to come to Angelo and plead for his life. Claudio had great expectations upon Isabella because he knows that she has ability to persuade. So Lucio came to Isabella at the nunnery, and told her about her brother’s problem.

Isabella willingly tried to help her brother. She came to Angelo and pleaded for her brother’s life. She persuaded Angelo to pardon Claudio. Angelo recognized Isabella’s virtues and fell in love with her. Although he is a righteous man, his love for Isabella
made him lose control. To Isabella, he offered to pardon Claudio, if she would yield to him. However, Isabella firmly refused his offer, stating that her chastity was more important than her brother’s life.

Meanwhile, Duke Vincentio met Friar Peter, who then helped him to disguise as Friar Lodowick. As Friar Lodowick, the Duke visited the prison. The provost told the Duke about Claudio, and the Duke sympathized him.

Isabella came to the prison to visit her brother and tell him about Angelo’s offer. She had decided that her chastity is more important than her brother’s life, and he expected her brother to think the same. She considered her chastity as her family’s honor. She expected that her brother would choose to die than live in shame, as to Isabella losing her chastity would cause her family shame. However, Claudio was afraid to die. He begged his sister to yield to Angelo, so that he would be free. Isabella outrageously refused Claudio’s demand. She cursed him and said that she would pray for his death.

The Duke overheard the conversation between Claudio and Isabella, and offered to help. He told Isabella about Mariana. Mariana is Angelo’s wife on pre-contract. Angelo deserted her and claimed that he had discovered her dishonor. In spite of all Angelo had done to Mariana, she still loved him and kept on hoping that he would come back to her. The Duke told Isabella about his plan that would save Claudio, keep Isabella from losing her chastity, and bring Angelo back to Mariana. He told her to come back to Angelo and told her that she agreed to yield to him, but at the night of the appointment her place would be taken by Mariana. Isabella, as well as Mariana, agreed to the Duke’s plan.
So Mariana took Isabella’s place with Angelo, and the bed trick remained unknown to Angelo until the end of the play. After he had got what he wanted, Angelo broke his promise to pardon Claudio. He ordered that Claudio should be executed. The Duke heard about Angelo’s command. The Duke asked the provost to save Claudio. There is another prisoner who died of fever, so the dead prisoner’s head was sent to Angelo instead of Claudio’s head.

Isabella visited the prison where Claudio was held only to find disappointment. She thought that Angelo would pardon her brother, but she found out that her brother was already executed. The Duke pretended that he had not saved Claudio and told Isabella that Claudio was dead.

Lucio came to the prison, and expressed his condolence to Isabella. Lucio met the Duke. Not knowing that he was speaking to the Duke himself, he told him that Claudio should not be executed because he is not the only one who had committed adultery. He stated that he himself had also done it. Lucio had got a prostitute named Kate Keepdown pregnant, but he refused to marry her. Lucio also said that if the Duke was present, he would not punish Claudio because the Duke had also committed adultery. The Duke noticed Lucio’s words, and in the end punished him for slandering him.

The Duke then arranged a meeting at the city gate. He sent letters to Angelo and Escalus, saying that they should welcome him at the city gate. He also told Isabella, Mariana, the Provost and Friar Peter to be there. Isabella, thinking that her brother was death, came before the Duke to seek justice. She told him about what Angelo had done to her and her brother. But the Duke pretended that he did not know anything about the affair and pretended to accuse Isabella for being involved in a conspiracy against Angelo.
When Mariana and Friar Peter tried to convince the Duke that Isabella was saying the truth, the Duke also accused them for lying. The Duke then said he would leave the matters to Angelo and Escalus. He left and then came back as Friar Lodowick. In the end, the Duke revealed himself to everyone at the city gate, and uncovered the whole affair. The Duke still pretended that Claudio was dead. He ordered that Angelo should marry Mariana and then he should be executed, but Mariana pleaded for his life. Mariana asked Isabella to help her convince the Duke to pardon Angelo. Isabella, thinking that Angelo’s fall was caused by her, agreed to kneel down before the Duke so that Angelo will not be executed. The Duke then asked the Provost about Claudio, and the Provost went to prison to fetch Claudio, whom he had saved.

In the end, Mariana married Angelo, and Lucio had to marry Kate Keepdown as a punishment for slandering the Duke. The Duke said that Claudio was forgiven, and then he asked Isabella to marry him.