

Hello, my name is Anna Sicari and I am currently in my first year of the Master's Program here at St. John's University. It is my pleasure to announce that I will be the next Editor-in-Chief of the St. John's *Humanities Review*. Following my predecessors' example, John Nance and Christianne Cain, I hope to continue the excellent work of the journal, while hoping to advance it to an even higher level of work, a level that I know St. John's can, and should, attain. For the next *HR*, I believe that a different approach is needed for the upcoming year. We are all aware of the economic challenges facing the nation and St. John's. Thus, in order to ensure that the *Humanities Review* continues to be a quality publication, there will only be one *HR* next year, scheduled to come out in the middle of the spring semester of 2011. However, I see this as a change for the better; with one *HR*, I believe there will be available ample time to ensure that only work of the highest quality is accepted. This is where you, readers, come in. For the next publication, I hope to receive essays from well-known, high-profile people in their respective fields. Professors, faculty, and students of the English Department alike should feel that they are a part of *The Humanities Review*: a work that represents what the St. John's English Department sets out to do, advance new ideas and implement critical change through writing. Together, I truly believe we can make this journal one of excellence. My goal is to start this summer reaching out to scholars and writers, asking them for contributions to this journal. I ask of you to do the same; if you know of anyone who would be interested in submitting to the *HR*, please contact me. Along the same lines, if anyone has any ideas, concepts, suggestions—or just wants to be a part of the *Humanities Review* team—let me know and I'd love to have you on board. I look forward to working with you next year.

Anna Sicari

*"I will encounter darkness as a bride":
Death and the Possibilities of Comedy in
Measure for Measure*

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In *Measure for Measure*, more than in any other work, Shakespeare reshapes the ends of comedy by exposing the inhabitants of Vienna to death. From the threat of Claudio's execution to the risk of fatal syphilitic infection in the city's brothels, the overriding presence of mortality disrupts the conventional matrimonial resolution of comedy. The play does, of course, conclude with a series of marriages and espousals: Claudio to Juliet, Angelo to Mariana, Lucio to Kate Keepdown, and, perhaps, Duke Vicentio to Isabella. Yet these marriages fail to dispel the fatal impulses of human nature which govern the play. For in Shakespeare's Vienna, as Claudio explains to Lucio, "Our natures do pursue / Like rats that ravin down their proper bane, / A thirsty evil, and when we drink we die" (1.2.129-30).¹ In *Measure for Measure*, Shakespeare triangulates desire, death, and marriage to establish a flexible comedic mode that confronts the issue of death. Instead of resolving the problem of death through the traditional matrimonial union between men and women, he presents three forms of marriage to process the mortal impulses of desire: ceremonial marriage, the joining together of marriage and death, and spiritual union between individual and God.

Even though Shakespeare includes multiple responses to the problem of mortality, he does not resist the unitary structure of comedy. On the contrary, his expansion of the comedic form serves to disrupt the audience and reader's expectations. Indeed, the designation of *Measure for Measure* as a problem comedy confirms its unsettling themes and its departure from more stable Shakespearean comedies. Responding to these apparent problems, eighteenth-century theatrical editions of the play added various epilogues to conform it to generic conventions. At the conclusion of a 1722 acting edition, for instance, Duke Vicentio explains to Isabella, "Thy virtuous Goodness, which alone has Charms / To make thee worthy of a Monarch's Arms."² He then