TEXT AND PERFORMANCE

General Editor: Michael Scott

The series is designed to introduce sixth-form and undergraduate students to the themes, continuing vitality and performance of major dramatic works. The attention given to production aspects is an element of special importance, responding to the invigoration given to literary study by the work of leading contemporary critics.

The prime aim is to present each play as a vital experience in the mind of the reader – achieved by analysis of the text in relation to its themes and theatricality. Emphasis is accordingly placed on the relevance of the work to the modern reader and the world of today. At the same time, traditional views are presented and appraised, forming the basis from which a creative response to the text can develop.

In each volume, Part One: *Text* discusses certain key themes or problems, the reader being encouraged to gain a stronger perception both of the inherent character of the work and also of variations in interpreting it. Part Two: *Performance* examines the ways in which these themes or problems have been handled in modern productions, and the approaches and techniques employed to enhance the play's accessibility to modern audiences.

A synopsis of the play is given and an outline of its major sources, and a concluding Reading List offers guidance to the student's independent study of the work.

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MEASURE FOR MEASURE

Text and Performance

GRAHAM NICHOLLS

M
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TO THE STAFF AND STUDENTS
OF
THE ENGLISH DEPARTMENT,
UNIVERSITY COLLEGE, SWANSEA,
1965–8

GENERAL EDITOR'S PREFACE

For many years a mutual suspicion existed between the theatre director and the literary critic of drama. Although in the first half of the century there were important exceptions, such was the rule. A radical change of attitude, however, has taken place over the last thirty years. Critics and directors now increasingly recognise the significance of each other's work and acknowledge their growing awareness of interdependence. Both interpret the same text, but do so according to their different situations and functions. Without the director, the designer and the actor, a play's existence is only partial. They revitalise the text with action, enabling the drama to live fully at each performance. The academic critic investigates the script to elucidate its textual problems, understand its conventions and discover how it operates. He may also propose his view of the work, expounding what he considers to be its significance.

Dramatic texts belong therefore to theatre and to literature. The aim of the 'Text and Performance' series is to achieve a fuller recognition of how both enhance our enjoyment of the play. Each volume follows the same basic pattern. Part One provides a critical introduction to the play under discussion, using the techniques and criteria of the literary critic in examining the manner in which the work operates through language, imagery and action. Part Two takes the enquiry further into the play's theatricality by focusing on selected productions of recent times so as to illustrate points of contrast and comparison in the interpretation of different directors and actors, and to demonstrate how the drama has worked on the modern stage. In this way the series seeks to provide a lively and informative introduction to major plays in their text and performance.

MICHAEL SCOTT

PLOT SYNOPSIS AND SOURCES

In order to enforce his neglected laws against sexual immorality, Vincentio, Duke of Vienna, announces his departure and his plan of handing over power to Angelo. The Duke remains in the city disguised as a friar to watch his deputy's behaviour. Angelo's regime opens with an attack on the brothels but the first victim of the capital law against fornication is Claudio, who has got Juliet with child. Claudio asks Lucio to inform his sister Isabella of his fate and asks her to plead with Angelo for his life. Isabella is on the point of entering a convent but she agrees to talk to Angelo. In pleading for her brother Isabella awakens Angelo's sexuality and at a second meeting he proposes that if Isabella will sleep with him he will pardon Claudio. Isabella rejects the suggestion but her brother begs her to accept Angelo's proposal. Isabella reproaches Claudio for his moral cowardice. The Duke meanwhile has been observing their meeting and suggests a counter-attack on Angelo. At an earlier period Angelo has jilted Mariana and she has gone into gloomy isolation. The Duke suggests that Isabella pretend to agree to Angelo's suggestion but that Mariana take her place in his bed. Mariana agrees to the plan but Angelo breaks his word and confirms the order for Claudio's execution. The Duke brings the Provost of the prison into his intrigue, who suggests that the head of a deceased prisoner be sent to Angelo. The Duke tells Isabella that her brother has been executed on Angelo's orders. The campaign against prostitution continues and Lucio gleefully paints for the Friar a slanderous picture of the 'absent' Duke's activities. Concealing his knowledge of Angelo's behaviour, the Duke returns in his own person to receive the accusations of Isabella. At first these are rejected and Lucio leads another slanderous attack on the Friar. When it is revealed that the Friar and Duke are the same person the Duke orders Angelo to marry Mariana, the ceremony to be followed by his execution. Mariana pleads for Angelo's life and Isabella joins in her appeal. But the Duke only pardons Angelo when Claudio is brought from the prison. In his final judgements Claudio is ordered to marry Juliet and, for slandering the Duke, Lucio is condemned to marry a prostitute. The Duke proposes marriage to Isabella.

SOURCES

Shakespeare's immediate sources are the two-part play by George Whetstone, *The Right Excellent and Famous Historye of Promos and Cassandra* (1578) and a story in the second part of Giraldi Cinthio's *Hecatommithi* (1565). Cinthio dramatised the story in his play *Epitia*. The ultimate source of the sexual proposition may be based on a true story. Other plot elements, such as the disguised ruler and the so-called 'bed trick', are found widely in world folk literature.