

A Guide to  
**MEASURE FOR MEASURE**

*by William Shakespeare*



Alistair McCallum

*“The Shakespeare Handbooks open the plays up admirably. Excellent for all levels of reader – everybody will get something from them.” Simon Callow*

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## **Setting the scene**

Shakespeare wrote *Measure for Measure* in the period 1603–4, when he was about forty years old. He was a leading member of the King's Men, London's most successful theatre company. He was also a shareholder in the company and in its new venture, the Globe Theatre, which had been the company's home since the start of the century.

With the newly crowned King James I as their patron, Shakespeare and his colleagues were frequent performers at court, and at state occasions and celebrations. However, theatre remained a precarious business, and in 1603 all the London theatres were closed for the entire season due to an outbreak of plague. It seems likely that *Measure for Measure* was one of the first plays to be performed in the reopened Globe in the summer of 1604.

Unlike Shakespeare's earlier comedies, *Measure for Measure* is a dark, cynical, probing drama, at times coming close to tragedy. Various critics have labelled it a 'problem play', a 'bitter comedy' and a 'tragicomedy', and there has been much speculation about the personal and professional factors that were influencing Shakespeare during this transitional period in his career.

*Measure for Measure* is a drama that deals with powerful, conflicting ideas and arguments. Watching the play is a demanding, challenging but ultimately rewarding experience:

*"Measure for Measure is the last comedy Shakespeare wrote. After it comes an unbroken succession of tragedies ... Sombre in tone, it creates images of human folly and cruelty which seem at moments to overstep the limits of comic form ... The play anatomizes society. It scrutinizes man's claims to justice, rationality and self-control ... Difficult to interpret, Measure for Measure has provoked more critical disagreement, and a greater number of conflicting readings, than any other Shakespeare comedy."*

Anne Barton, Royal Shakespeare Company programme notes, 1970

## **An enigma**

Duke Vincentio, ruler of the city-state of Vienna, is anxious.

A naturally withdrawn, contemplative character, he is concerned that he has not been paying enough attention to the condition of his city. He suspects that moral standards may have been allowed to slip, and he intends to investigate.

With this in mind, he has decided to absent himself from Viennese political life for a while. But where is he going? What is he going to do? And who is he going to leave in charge while he is away?



**Curtain up**

## A sudden departure

I, i

Duke Vincentio is talking to his trusted adviser Escalus. He is about to bestow an important responsibility on the elderly nobleman, but he has no qualms about his decision. He is confident that Escalus, with his long experience of Viennese politics, needs no advice from him:

*Duke:* Of government the properties to unfold  
Would seem in me t' affect speech and discourse,<sup>1</sup>  
Since I am put to know that your own science  
Exceeds, in that, the lists of all advice  
My strength can give you.<sup>2</sup>  
... The nature of our people,  
Our city's institutions, and the terms  
For common justice, y'are as pregnant in  
As art and practice hath enriched any  
That we remember.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *it would be presumptuous of me to explain the nature of government to you*

<sup>2</sup> *I have to acknowledge that your understanding of the subject goes beyond the bounds of any advice that I can give you*

<sup>3</sup> *you are as well versed in these matters, both in theory and through experience, as anyone in living memory*

The Duke now mentions his plan. He has to leave Vienna shortly, he explains, and has decided that Lord Angelo is to rule in his absence, with Escalus as his second in command. Angelo is the best man for the job, agrees Escalus; and at this moment Angelo himself appears.



The Duke begins by complimenting Angelo on his undoubted virtues. It is only right, he asserts, that such noble qualities should be used to good effect rather than simply be admired:

*Duke:* Heaven doth with us as we with torches do,  
Not light them for themselves; for if our virtues  
Did not go forth of us, 'twere all alike  
As if we had them not.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *if we did not make good use of our virtues, there would be no point in possessing them*

An important duty is to be conferred on Angelo, announces the Duke solemnly. He will rule Vienna in the Duke's absence, with the power of life and death over its citizens:

*Duke:* In our remove, be thou at full ourself.<sup>1</sup>  
Mortality and mercy in Vienna  
Live in thy tongue, and heart.

<sup>1</sup> *while I am away, you will fully take over my role*

Angelo, taken aback, asks whether there is any way in which he can prove his worth before taking on such an important task. The Duke brushes aside Angelo's fears: he has thought about the matter and made his decision, he states, and needs to leave at once.

While the Duke is away, he intends to communicate with Angelo by letter from time to time. He emphasises, however, that Angelo is to rely on his own judgement:

*Duke:* Your scope is as mine own,  
So to enforce or qualify the laws  
As to your soul seems good.

In 1603, after 45 years on the throne of England, Queen Elizabeth I died. It soon became clear that her successor, King James I, was a great theatre enthusiast; just ten days after taking the throne, he announced his decision to become the official patron of Shakespeare's acting company.

While this gave the company unprecedented prestige and security, it meant a much heavier workload; the actors could be called on at short notice to perform at royal events and state occasions of all kinds, and new work was constantly in demand.

The king's tastes and interests had to be considered, too. He was known, from his published works, to be particularly interested in the nature and philosophy of monarchy, and believed firmly in the king's God-given authority over his people. However, Shakespeare's treatment of such topics is far from uncritical:

*“Though the playwright seems to have felt it necessary to respond to the King's keen interests in theology and justice, the plays he produced in the first years of James's reign are not hollow royalist propaganda ... Every play Shakespeare wrote in the first years of James's reign seems touched by the same forces – at once subject to a demanding royal scrutiny, yet never subservient to it. Measure for Measure responds in a characteristically oblique way to questions James had outlined in his own published treatise on kingship. Almost the play's first words are ‘of government’, as if we are about to hear an official policy paper read out ... These circumlocutory words are spoken by Duke Vincentio; in the first of many surprises sprung by the play, his unorthodox solution to the fact that his city, Vienna, is so chaotically governed is to propose fleeing it, leaving his deputies in charge with the minimum of guidance.”*

Andrew Dickson, *Royal Shakespeare: A Playwright and his King*, 2016

The Duke now bids a hasty farewell. As he leaves, he mentions that he will depart from Vienna discreetly. He dislikes ostentatious public ceremonies, and distrusts those who enjoy such things:

*Duke:* ... I'll privily away.<sup>1</sup> I love the people,  
But do not like to stage me to their eyes:  
Though it do well, I do not relish well  
Their loud applause and *aves*<sup>2</sup> vehement;  
Nor do I think the man of safe discretion  
That does affect it.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *I will leave unobtrusively*

<sup>2</sup> *cheers, cries of acclamation*

<sup>3</sup> *in my opinion, any man who is fond of public adulation is not trustworthy*

With that, the Duke hurries away. Angelo and Escalus turn to one another. They agree that the next step is clear: they urgently need to discuss the roles that have suddenly been thrust upon them.

## A new regime

I, ii

In a street in Vienna, the libertine Lucio is chatting to two of his friends. The absent Duke, they believe, has gone abroad to take part in peace talks with neighbouring states.

The conversation soon drifts to more earthy matters; and as they talk flippantly about venereal diseases and their effects, the owner of the local brothel, Mistress Overdone, appears.

Lucio complains that he has spent a fortune at her establishment and suffered from several bouts of disease as a result. The three men continue to joke about the consequences of their sexual antics, but their mood changes suddenly when they hear some grim news about their friend Claudio:

*Mistress Overdone:* ... There's one yonder arrested and carried to prison, was worth five thousand of you all.

*Gentleman:* Who's that, I prithee?

*Mistress Overdone:* Marry sir, that's Claudio; Signior Claudio.

*Gentleman:* Claudio to prison? 'Tis not so.

*Mistress Overdone:* Nay, but I know 'tis so. I saw him arrested: saw him carried away: and which is more, within these three days his head to be chopped off.

*Lucio:* But, after all this fooling, I would not have it so. Art thou sure of this?

*Mistress Overdone:* I am too sure of it: and it is for getting Madam Julietta with child.

The men are shocked; there has been talk recently of harsher penalties for immorality, and it seems that Claudio is a victim of the new policy. They set off to find out what has happened. As they leave, Mistress Overdone reflects sadly on the state of her business. Times are hard for a brothel-keeper:

*Mistress Overdone:* Thus, what with the war, what with the sweat,<sup>1</sup> what with the gallows, and what with poverty, I am custom-shrunk.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *sweating sickness; plague*

<sup>2</sup> *I have very few customers*

Mistress Overdone's servant Pompey Bum now approaches. He has just heard a public decree, and it does not bode well for either of them:

*Pompey:* You have not heard of the proclamation, have you?

*Mistress Overdone:* What proclamation, man?

*Pompey:* All houses<sup>1</sup> in the suburbs of Vienna must be plucked down.

<sup>1</sup> *bawdy houses, brothels*

In short, all the brothels outside the city centre, like Mistress Overdone's, are to be demolished. Pompey tries to console his mistress, who is distraught at the news. One way or another, he reassures her, they will manage to carry on their trade. Hearing a sudden uproar nearby, the two of them decide to make themselves scarce.

*... what with the war, what with the sweat, what  
with the gallows ...*

Mistress Overdone's list of grievances would have struck a chord with Shakespeare's audience. Only a matter of months before the first performances of *Measure for Measure*, there had been anxiety over the continuing war with Spain; a virulent outbreak of the plague had swept through London, leaving the streets deserted; and a plot to overthrow the new king had been uncovered, resulting in numerous executions. Pompey's news, too, would have had contemporary echoes:

*"Measure for Measure begins from an attempt by the authorities to cleanse a city of licentiousness. In the period from May to December 1603, when the theatres were closed due to the worst outbreak of plague for a decade, a royal proclamation ordered a programme of slum clearance in the 'suburbs' such as Southwark, as an attempt simultaneously to prevent the spread of infection between closely packed dwellings and to get rid of brothels and ale-houses full of idle, indigent, dissolute and dangerous people."*

Jonathan Bate, *Soul of the Age*, 2008

## The condemned man

The source of the commotion now becomes clear. Claudio has been arrested, just as Mistress Overdone had said: and the provost – who is in charge of the city's prison – is parading him through the city streets. Officers of the law are accompanying him, and Lucio and his friends are crowding round.

Claudio is dismayed that he should be put on public display in this way, and is anxious to get to the privacy of his prison cell. The provost explains that he is acting on the orders of the new ruler of Vienna:

*Claudio:* Fellow, why dost thou show me thus to th'world?  
Bear me to prison, where I am committed.  
*Provost:* I do it not in evil disposition,<sup>1</sup>  
But from Lord Angelo by special charge.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *from malice*

<sup>2</sup> *specific instruction*

Claudio tells his friend that following his own pleasure has led to his downfall:

*Lucio:* Whence comes this restraint?<sup>1</sup>  
*Claudio:* From too much liberty,<sup>2</sup> my Lucio.  
... Our natures do pursue,  
Like rats that ravin down their proper bane,<sup>3</sup>  
A thirsty evil; and when we drink, we die.

<sup>1</sup> *arrest, captivity*

<sup>2</sup> *self-indulgence*

<sup>3</sup> *that greedily devour the very poison that will kill them*

Claudio explains that he and Juliet were engaged to be married. They had not yet broken the news of their plans to Juliet's relatives, who were in charge of her dowry; as soon as they had done that, and received her family's approval, they planned to go ahead with the wedding ceremony. In the meantime, Juliet had fallen pregnant, a fact that is now only too obvious.

It appears that the Duke's new deputy, Angelo, has decided to make his mark by enforcing old, neglected laws against sexual misconduct. As a result, Claudio is facing the death penalty:

*Claudio:* ... this new governor  
Awakes me all the enrolled penalties<sup>1</sup>  
Which have, like unscour'd<sup>2</sup> armour, hung by th'wall  
So long, that nineteen zodiacs have gone round,  
And none of them been worn; and for a name  
Now puts the drowsy and neglected act  
Freshly on me<sup>3</sup> ...

<sup>1</sup> *revives all the official punishments that apply to my case*

<sup>2</sup> *rusty, unused*

<sup>3</sup> *to enhance his reputation, penalises me with long-forgotten laws*

Claudio believes that his only hope lies with his sister Isabella, who is about to enter a convent. He is sure that her charm and eloquence will move Angelo and persuade him to take a less drastic attitude:

*Claudio:* ... Implore her, in my voice,<sup>1</sup> that she make friends  
To the strict deputy: bid herself assay<sup>2</sup> him.  
I have great hope in that. For in her youth  
There is a prone and speechless dialect<sup>3</sup>  
Such as move men; beside, she hath prosperous art  
When she will play with reason and discourse,  
And well she can persuade.

<sup>1</sup> *in my name, on my behalf*

<sup>2</sup> *try to influence*

<sup>3</sup> *meek, quiet manner*

Lucio agrees to talk to Isabella at once. He hopes that she will succeed, and not only for Claudio's sake; after all, if sexual indiscretions are to be punished so severely, they are all in danger.

Claudio's death sentence would have seemed just as shocking to Shakespeare's original audiences, hardened as they were to severe punishments, as it does to us.

Sexual relations between a couple who had made a verbal agreement to marry were not necessarily considered an offence, as long as a formal marriage ceremony followed in due course. Shakespeare and Anne Hathaway had found themselves in this predicament in the autumn of 1582; a marriage was hastily arranged, eventually taking place three months into Anne's pregnancy.

*"The audiences for whom Shakespeare wrote Measure for Measure were used to seeing punishments inflicted on offenders against the law. In major towns and cities, executions were public entertainments. The pillory and the stocks were used to display and humiliate criminals. Whippings for certain offences, including sexual misdemeanours, were commonplace and were public ...*

*"Yet the Vienna of Measure for Measure is not early 17th-century England, even if its lowlife scenes might as well be set in London. While sexual incontinence was denounced by Christian moralists in Shakespeare's England, there was no such law as that by which Claudio is sentenced to death ... In Shakespeare's day it was conventional for a couple to take each other as man and wife well before the confirmation of a church ceremony. Such a private, sexually consummated, agreement had legal force. We should not assume that the first audiences of Measure for Measure would have been less forgiving of Claudio than we might be."*

John Mullan, *Measure for Measure and Punishment*,  
2016



## An undercover mission

I, iii

The Duke has come to a monastery, and is visiting a friar in his cell. He has just asked the friar to shelter him secretly in the monastery while he is away from the Viennese court. He brushes aside the friar's suggestion that the Duke may be embarking on a secret love affair; something much more important is at stake.

Before leaving the court and handing power to his deputy Angelo, the Duke explains, he announced that he was travelling to Poland. The real reason for his departure, he reveals, was very different. What lay behind the Duke's decision was his concern about the lax state of the law in Vienna. For years, many of the city's strictest decrees have been ignored. Although they still exist, they have not been enforced, and the law is in danger of becoming a laughing stock.

Like children who know they will escape punishment, the citizens of Vienna are becoming unruly:

*Duke:* ... 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<sup>1</sup>  
Becomes more mock'd than fear'd: so our decrees,  
Dead to infliction, to themselves are dead,<sup>2</sup>  
And Liberty plucks Justice by the nose ...

<sup>1</sup> *cane, birch*

<sup>2</sup> *since they are no longer implemented, are as good as dead*

The friar asks the Duke why he has not chosen to apply the law more strictly himself, rather than assign the task to Angelo. He replies that it would be unjust if he, who had tacitly allowed immoral behaviour to flourish, were suddenly to start punishing it severely. Instead, he has decided to entrust the work to a deputy.

In the meantime, the Duke himself intends to remain in Vienna to observe the operation of the new regime. This is why he has come to the monastery; he wishes to disguise himself as a friar so that he can blend in unnoticed as he wanders around the city. In this, he will need the monastery's assistance:

*Duke:* ... to behold his sway,<sup>1</sup>  
I will, as 'twere a brother of your order,<sup>2</sup>  
Visit both prince and people. Therefore, I prithee,  
Supply me with the habit,<sup>3</sup> and instruct me  
How I may formally in person bear<sup>4</sup>  
Like a true friar.

<sup>1</sup> *to observe Angelo's rule*

<sup>2</sup> *as if I were a member of your monastic community*

<sup>3</sup> *friar's clothing*

<sup>4</sup> *how I should conduct myself*

There is another thing that the Duke wishes to observe. Angelo prides himself on his strict, puritanical approach to life. Will the possession of power reveal a different side to his character?

*Duke:* Lord Angelo is precise;<sup>1</sup>  
Stands at a guard with Envy;<sup>2</sup> scarce confesses  
That his blood flows; or that his appetite  
Is more to bread than stone. Hence shall we see  
If power change purpose, what our seemers be.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *austere, inflexible*

<sup>2</sup> *is constantly on guard against malice*

<sup>3</sup> *if power can change a person's principles, the contrast between Angelo's public face and his true nature will be exposed*

*Lord Angelo is precise ...*

When King James came to the throne, religion was still a divisive issue, as it had been since Henry VIII had separated the English Church from Rome seventy years before. In particular, the new king was under pressure from the Puritans, radical Protestants who believed that the Church of England should rid itself completely of all forms of Catholic ritual.

James favoured tolerance in religious matters and intensely disliked the Puritans, regarding them as dogmatic and overzealous, a view almost certainly shared by Shakespeare:

*“The first years of James’s reign were marked by a profounder questioning, but also by more explicit affirmations, than Elizabethan times; and the need to hold on firmly to a middle way in the church, the state, and in private life was repeatedly stressed by the king himself. In this climate of ideas the mixed form of tragicomedy, exploring the double process of conflict and conciliation, would prove morally and aesthetically satisfying.”*

J. W. Lever, Introduction to the Arden edition of *Measure for Measure*, 1965

## **Disturbing news for Isabella**

I, iv

Claudio’s sister Isabella is shortly to become a nun. She is at the convent now, talking to Sister Francisca about the religious life. They are interrupted by a sudden shout at the door. It is a man’s voice. Francisca, according to the rules of her order, cannot speak to a man except in the presence of the prioress, so she leaves Isabella to receive the caller.

The visitor is Lucio. He has come, as requested by Claudio, to ask for Isabella’s help. She knows nothing of the trouble he is in, and is shocked to hear that her brother is in prison and his fiancée is pregnant. She asks why Claudio cannot marry Juliet to resolve the situation.



*Isabella:* Alas, what poor ability's in me  
To do him good!

*Lucio:* Assay<sup>1</sup> the power you have.

*Isabella:* My power? Alas, I doubt.

*Lucio:* Our doubts are traitors,  
And make us lose the good we oft might win  
By fearing to attempt.

<sup>1</sup> *try, put to the test*

Eventually Isabella agrees: she will go to Angelo and plead for her brother's life. Lucio urges her to act as soon as possible. There is no time to lose.

## Two views of justice

II, i

Angelo and Escalus, his second in command, are in a courtroom discussing legal matters. The law must be applied aggressively, argues Angelo. If this does not happen, it will lose its power to intimidate wrongdoers:

*Angelo:* We must not make a scarecrow of the law,  
Setting it up to fear<sup>1</sup> the birds of prey,  
And let it keep one shape<sup>2</sup> till custom make it  
Their perch, and not their terror.

<sup>1</sup> *frighten*

<sup>2</sup> *let it remain unchanged*

Escalus is unsure. He feels that the law should be used prudently, dealing with offences like a scalpel rather than a heavy, blunt instrument. He is particularly concerned about the sentence passed on Claudio, which he considers excessive. He mentions that he knew the young man's father:

*Escalus:* ... Let us be keen,<sup>1</sup> and rather cut a little,  
Than fall,<sup>2</sup> and bruise to death. Alas, this gentleman,  
Whom I would save, had a most noble father.

<sup>1</sup> *sharp, shrewd*

<sup>2</sup> *cause to fall, chop down*

Escalus gently suggests that Angelo himself may have been guilty, at some time in his life, of the kind of sexual indiscretion for which Claudio is facing execution. Angelo brushes the point aside. Even if it were true, the principles of justice remain the same, regardless of any wrongdoing committed by individuals involved in the legal process. Courts must make impartial decisions on the cases put before them:

*Angelo:* 'Tis one thing to be tempted, Escalus,  
Another thing to fall. I not deny  
The jury passing<sup>1</sup> on the prisoner's life  
May in the sworn twelve<sup>2</sup> have a thief, or two,  
Guiltier than him they try. What's open made to justice,  
That justice seizes.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *passing sentence, giving their verdict*

<sup>2</sup> *included in the twelve members of the jury*

<sup>3</sup> *justice operates on whatever situations are presented to it*

If Angelo were to be found guilty of a similar offence himself, he insists, he would expect the same penalty. There can be no compromise. He calls for Claudio's jailer, and orders him to carry out the sentence. Escalus reflects that, regardless of justice, the world is an imperfect place. All anyone can hope for is divine mercy:

*Angelo:* Sir, he must die.  
*Escalus:* Be it as your wisdom will.<sup>1</sup>  
*Angelo:* Where is the Provost?  
*Provost:* Here, if it like your honour.  
*Angelo:* See that Claudio  
Be executed by nine tomorrow morning;  
Bring him his confessor, let him be prepar'd,  
For that's the utmost of his pilgrimage.<sup>2</sup>  
*Escalus:* Well, heaven forgive him; and forgive us all.  
Some rise by sin, and some by virtue fall.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *wishes, decrees*

<sup>2</sup> *the end of his earthly journey*

<sup>3</sup> *some people prosper by doing evil, and some are brought down by their good deeds*

## A caution for Pompey

Elbow, a constable, has arrested two men and brought them to the courtroom. One is Pompey, Mistress Overdone's servant, and the other is Froth, a customer at her brothel.

Elbow attempts to explain why he has detained the two men, but his command of language is so haphazard that Angelo and Escalus can scarcely understand what crime has been committed:

*Elbow:* ... I do lean upon<sup>1</sup> justice, sir, and do bring in here before your good honour two notorious benefactors.

*Angelo:* Benefactors? Well, what benefactors are they? Are they not malefactors?

*Elbow:* If it please your honour, I know not well what they are. But precise<sup>2</sup> villains they are, that I am sure of, and void of all profanation in the world ...

<sup>1</sup> *I'm supported by, I'm relying on*

<sup>2</sup> *absolute, definite*

Eventually it emerges that Mistress Overdone, whose premises were demolished under Angelo's campaign against vice, has opened a new brothel masquerading as a bath-house.

Elbow insists that his pregnant wife was insulted by Pompey and Froth while she was innocently visiting the bath-house, but the facts of the case are lost in Elbow's baffling accusations and Pompey's lengthy, rambling descriptions.

Angelo loses patience with the pair, and leaves the courtroom. Escalus perseveres with his questions. Unable to establish what Froth has done wrong, he instructs the constable to release the man until his crime becomes clear:

*Elbow:* ... What is't your worship's pleasure I shall do with this wicked caitiff?<sup>1</sup>

*Escalus:* Truly, officer, because he hath some offences in him that thou wouldst discover if thou couldst, let him continue in his courses<sup>2</sup> till thou know'st what they are.

<sup>1</sup> *villain, wretch*

<sup>2</sup> *carry on behaving in the same way*

Elbow, interpreting this as a punishment of some kind, is delighted. Froth leaves, and Escalus turns to Pompey. He has no illusions about the man's business, he declares. Pompey argues that he is just trying to make a living:

*Escalus:* Pompey, you are partly a bawd,<sup>1</sup> Pompey, howsoever you colour it in being a tapster,<sup>2</sup> are you not? Come, tell me true, it shall be the better for you.

*Pompey:* Truly, sir, I am a poor fellow that would live.

*Escalus:* How would you live, Pompey? By being a bawd? What do you think of the trade, Pompey? Is it a lawful trade?

*Pompey:* If the law would allow it, sir.

*Escalus:* But the law will not allow it, Pompey ...

<sup>1</sup> *pimp*

<sup>2</sup> *however hard you try to disguise your occupation by serving drinks*



*“Angelo despises the people before him so much that he can’t bother to listen to their meanderings. The phrase ‘Judge not, that ye be not judged,’ comes to mind. What it surely means, among other things, is: If you despise other people for their moral inferiority to yourself, your own superiority won’t last long; in fact, it’s effectively disappeared already.”*

Northrop Frye, *On Shakespeare*, 1986

Prostitution is a fact of life, claims Pompey; the authorities will never be able to stop it as long as people have sexual desires. Escalus warns of the severe penalties that are planned for prostitutes and their clients, but Pompey is unmoved:

*Pompey:* Does your worship mean to geld and splay<sup>1</sup> all the youth of the city? ... If your worship will take orders for the drabs and the knaves,<sup>2</sup> you need not to fear the bawds.

*Escalus:* There is pretty orders beginning, I can tell you. It is but heading<sup>3</sup> and hanging.

*Pompey:* If you head and hang all that offend that way but for ten year together, you’ll be glad to give out a commission for more heads<sup>4</sup> ...

<sup>1</sup> *sterilise*

<sup>2</sup> *arrange for this to happen to all the wanton young women and men*

<sup>3</sup> *beheading*

<sup>4</sup> *issue a request for more people, in order to repopulate the city*