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**A Divine, a Sin-absolver, a Friend Professed or an
Unreverend and Unhallowed Friar?**

The Portrayal of Friars in Selected Shakespeare Plays

Bakalářská práce

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Podpis:

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Annotation

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Abstract: This thesis analyses the characters of friars in selected plays of William Shakespeare: *Romeo and Juliet*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, and *Measure for Measure*. The aim of the thesis is to analyse these Catholic characters in the context of the anti-Catholic social-political climate of Shakespeare's time period.

The thesis is divided into four parts. The first three parts explore the religious changes brought about by the English Reformation, the attitudes towards theatre during Shakespeare's time, and Shakespeare's own life and work in relation to his beliefs.

The fourth chapter presents an analysis of the friar characters in four areas: how the characters are introduced, what their role in the plot is, how they are perceived by others and how they perceive themselves. The aim of the analysis is to explore how Shakespeare portrays his characters, if negatively in accordance with the anti-Catholic rhetoric, positively with allegiance to Catholicism or neutrally with both positive and negative characteristics. The analysis finds that Shakespeare constructs his friars as complex characters, neither idolized, nor demonized, but with both positive and negative qualities.

Keywords: William Shakespeare, theatre, friars, spiritual authority, confession, faith, Catholicism, Protestantism, the English Reformation

Anotace

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Název práce: Kněz, Vlídny Zpovědník a Osvědčený Přítel nebo Bezbožný a Drzý, Sprostý Mnich?: Zobrazení Kněží ve Vybraných Shakespearových Hrách

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Abstrakt: Tato bakalářská práce se zabývá postavami kněží ve vybraných hrách Williama Shakespeara: *Romeo a Julie*, *Mnoho Povyku Pro Nic* a *Něco za Něco*. Cílem této práce je analyzovat tyto postavy v kontextu socio-politického klimatu v době Shakespearova života.

Tato práce je rozdělena do čtyř částí. První část zkoumá vývoj náboženských názorů v době anglické reformace. Druhá část popisuje vztah mezi divadlem a oficiálními náboženskými a politickými postoji Shakespearovy doby. Třetí část se zabývá Shakespearovým vztahem ke katolicismu, jak v jeho životě, tak jeho díle.

Čtvrtá část, samotná analýza, sleduje zkoumané postavy ve čtyřech oblastech: jejich první představení, jejich role v ději, jejich vnímání ostatními postavami a jejich vnímání sebe samých. Analýza si klade za cíl prozkoumat, jestli Shakespeare kněze zobrazuje v souladu s protikatolickou tradicí, zobrazuje je pozitivně na základě sympatií ke katolicismu, anebo je ztvárňuje neutrálně, s dobrými i špatnými vlastnostmi. Analýzy dochází k závěru, že Shakespeare svoje postavy mnichů ani neidealizuje ani nedémonizuje, ale konstruuje je jako komplexní postavy s pozitivními i negativními vlastnostmi.

Klíčová slova: William Shakespeare, divadlo, kněží, duchovní autorita, zpověď, víra, Katolictví, Protestantství, Anglická Reformace

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Introduction

William Shakespeare is one of the best known and arguably greatest playwrights in the history. As such, both his plays and his life are scrutinized by academics in search of better understanding of his inner thoughts. In the view of the socio-political climate of the time period Shakespeare lived in, many scholars turn to investigating Shakespeare's relationship with religion. This thesis employs this practice and analyses characters of Catholic friars in three of his plays, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, and *Measure for Measure*.

This thesis is divided into four parts. In the first part, this thesis provides an overview of developments of official attitudes regarding religion in the times of the Reformation, starting with Henry VIII's diversion from the Catholic Church and the establishment of the Church of England, and ending with the reign of James I, during which Shakespeare died.

The second part of the thesis is concerned with the relationship between theatre, religion, and state during Shakespeare's life. It outlines the anti-theatricalist movement, official laws regarding theatre, and provides examples of the works of Shakespeare's contemporaries with themes of religion.

The third part addresses the popular speculations regarding Shakespeare's own faith and examines his possible connections to Catholicism in both his life and his work.

The fourth part provides the practical analysis of the selected plays. It sets on to explore how Shakespeare chooses to portray Catholic characters, if negatively, in contemporary anti-Catholic fashion, sympathetically, with allegiance to the Catholic faith, or neutrally, by displaying both good and bad qualities. The initial hypothesis speaks in favour of a mostly neutral portrayal. This chapter first introduces each of the plays and further divides into four areas of analysis: first introduction of the characters, their role in the plot, other characters' perception of them, and their own perception of themselves. The analysis concludes that the friars in Shakespeare's plays are complex characters with both good and bad qualities and that Shakespeare neither idolizes nor demonizes them in the popular contemporary tradition.

1. Religious beliefs in England during the Reformation and Post-Reformation

The 16th century, into the second half of which William Shakespeare was born, was a period of drastic religious change in England. England diverted from official Roman-Catholic doctrine and each new ruler modified the official religion of England, either leaning more conservative or Protestant. It is, therefore, not surprising that many of the common people of England resorted to hiding their true faith while outwardly complying with the current official beliefs. This might have been the case for Shakespeare himself, something this thesis will explore later on. Regardless of Shakespeare's own beliefs, religion was a major part of everyday life and the official (and unofficial) attitudes regarding religion imprinted on every aspect of society, including theatre. This thesis therefore deems it necessary to map out the religious changes starting with the Reformation, which greatly affected the socio-political climate during Shakespeare's times.

This chapter draws heavily on the publication *Heretics and Believers: A History of the English Reformation* (2017) by Peter Marshall.¹

1.1. Henry VIII

The first steps of English Reformation took place during the reign of Henry VIII. After the Pope refused to grant him an annulment of his marriage with his first wife, Catherine of Aragon, Henry declared himself the Supreme Head of the Church of England and annulled the marriage himself. His reasons from diverting from Rome were strictly practical, Henry was not a devout Protestant reformer nor did he particularly dislike Catholicism. As David G. Newcombe points out: "The king was not a Protestant and did not want a Protestant Church in England, but a break with Rome had served his political and dynastic purposes."² The dawn of the Reformation did not come from a point of religious devotion on Henry's part, it was a means to an end. Consequently his rule was mostly orthodox in nature and he refused any major changes towards Protestantism.

Nevertheless, Henry VIII's decision radically shifted the position of the Church of England, positioning it somewhere in between Protestantism and

¹ Peter Marshall, *Heretics and Believers: A History of the English Reformation* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2017).

² David G Newcombe, *Henry VIII and the English Reformation* (London: Routledge, 1995), 1.

Catholicism without the Pope and with a king officially excommunicated from the Roman-Catholic church. There was not even a consensus in their religious standing of Henry's advisors, some tried to influence the King to lean more conservatively, and some supported a move to a full-scale Protestantism. Nevertheless, this unbalanced regime started to administer new policies, some of the most notable novelties included the official English translation of the Bible, denial of the existence of purgatory, and the dissolution of monasteries throughout England. It has to be noted that the reason for dissolving the monasteries was again more practical than anything else, as it brought a hefty sum into the royal treasury. The rest of Henry's rule remained ambivalent and some more prominent religious changes started to take place only during the reign of his successors.

1.2. Edward VI

Edward VI inherited the throne from his father after his death in 1547. At that time, he was only nine years old and as such needed a regent, who would rule in his name until he reached adulthood. His uncle, Edward Seymour, was appointed to this role, and governed over England as the Lord Protector, Duke of Somerset.

Somerset utilized politics of gradualism. He was of Protestant leaning, but he knew he couldn't introduce drastic changes immediately, especially due to the more conservative voices, who though any major changes should wait until Edward's adulthood.³

One of the earliest changes brought about during Somerset's regency was iconoclasm. Religious pictures, icons, as well as stained-glass windows and all types of idolatrous objects were destroyed and burned. Later England experienced burning of the Latin prayer books, as the English translation became the required variant. Clinging to the Latin text was seen as clinging to the ideas of the old religion. In 1549, Somerset suppressed a Catholic rebellion, a bloody affair resulting in many deaths and long remembered.⁴

However, after only three years in the role of the regent, Somerset was replaced. The Council thought Somerset's methods inefficient in furthering the Protestant ideas and in 1549 his fellow councillors organised a coup. Somerset was replaced by John Dudley, who was appointed Lord President of the Council,

³ Diarmaid MacCulloch, *The Boy King: Edward VI and the Protestant Reformation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002).

⁴ Peter Marshall, *Heretics and Believers*, 334.

Duke Northumberland. The Lord President of the Council was to be the head of the Council only, consulting his fellow councillors, not an autonomous head of state like the Lord Protector.

Lord Northumberland was a more pragmatic leader than Somerset. When he came to power, the royal funds were insufficient, and Northumberland was forced to focus on acquiring capital instead of spreading the Protestant faith. Channelling Henry's pragmatism, Northumberland sold more clerical property and lands. The Church saw further changes under Northumberland, stone altars were removed from the churches and substituted by wooden community tables. Furthermore, Northumberland finally permitted the long discussed marriage of clergy.

He also started to include young Edward into the politics. Edward was brought up in Protestant faith, in accordance with the Protestant inclinations of his regents and Council. He was reported to possess great rhetorical skills, with survived essays written in Latin, Greek, and French. Edward even wrote several essays discussing the questions of faith. His most notable treatise debates the pros and cons of papal supremacy, concluding by likening the pope to the Antichrist, as was the popular Protestant opinion.⁵ In regard to state politics, Edward tried to unsuccessfully persuade his half-sister, Mary of Tudor, to renounce Catholic faith. When Edward was nearing his death in 1553, he went against his father's wishes and tried to disinherit Mary. He tried to prevent her from ascending the throne in favour of his Protestant cousin Lady Jane Grey, but even this attempt failed, and Mary became his successor.

1.3. Mary I

Mary Tudor, the daughter of Henry VIII and Catherine of Aragon, was always intended to inherit the throne if her younger brother didn't produce any heirs on his own. However, since she refused to convert to Protestantism, she posed a great threat to the Edwardian regime and everything they accomplished during the six-year reign. Ultimately, even though Edward and his councillors tried to redirect the succession line to the Protestant Jane Grey, Mary claimed the throne and became the Queen of England.

⁵ MacCulloch, *The Boy King*, 26.

Not unlike the first years of Edward's rule, Mary's regime could not simply reverse everything their predecessors have done. Mary carefully reintroduced the right to celebrate mass and reissued the prayer books in Latin. The marriage of clergy was again prohibited, and some monasteries were reopened. Most parishes readily complied with reintroducing religious equipment like stone altars and chalices to the churches. They even brought back more instruments that was required and in shorter time than expected, showing the true sympathies of the people, since they only hid the religious object instead of destroying them.⁶

However, not everything could be reversed so easily, especially the connection to Rome, as the Pope was heavily antagonised for the last 20 years, since Henry's promotion to the Head of the Church. In Mary's reign the Church of England returned to the convictions of the Henrician regime rather than the Catholic church preceding it, in Peter Marshall's words: "the English Church remained in a kind of limbo, allied to Rome, but formally independent of it."⁷

Before England could formally return to the Roman-Catholic Church, it was necessary to suppress the Protestants. Some of the major Protestant reformers, including those in the highest positions of power, were surprisingly quick to renounce their beliefs and turn back to the old religion. Elizabeth herself proclaimed to her sister her willingness to serve the true religion, excusing her Protestant beliefs as never having been taught better.⁸ But others refused to renounce their faith. Marian times have seen some of the harshest political persecutions of religious opposition, "burning of more than 280 protestant men and women in just under four years, from February 1555 to November 1558. This was the most intense religious persecution of its kind anywhere in sixteenth-century Europe."⁹

In 1558 Mary took ill and without any heir of her own she reluctantly named her half-sister Elizabeth as her successor, according to their father's wishes. In similar position to her brother, Mary and the leading Catholics were afraid that Elizabeth would reverse all the changes they have made during their

⁶ Marshall, *Heretics and Believers*, 380-381.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 367.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 364.

⁹ Eamon Duffy, *Fires of Faith: Catholic England Under Mary Tudor* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), 7.

regime. They were rightful in the worries as even though formally she repented her Protestant beliefs, Elizabeth returned England back on the path of Protestantism.

1.4. Elizabeth I

The period of greatest importance for this thesis is the rule of Elizabeth I, daughter of Henry VIII and Anne Boleyn. She ruled between the years 1558 and 1603. Shakespeare was born 6 years after Elizabeth ascended the throne and she ruled for most of his life. Her official stance on religious matters was therefore fundamental for Shakespeare's work as well as his personal life.

Even though Elizabeth outwardly converted to Catholicism during Mary's reign, there was a general understanding that Elizabeth was a Protestant and that England under her rule would return to the reformed faith. After Elizabeth became Queen of England, the country truly returned to Protestantism, but not as quickly as some would have hoped. Although she changed her Council to devout Protestants promptly after her accession, Elizabeth proved more hesitant changing the laws.

During her reign, her councillors were often frustrated with Elizabeth's unwillingness to approve the legislation they wanted. If she didn't outright reject the laws, she often delayed or heavily revised them. She was especially resistant to changes that would ratify harsher punishments on the Catholics.

Officially, Elizabeth recognized only one true faith, Protestantism, but she was unwilling to fully repress the Catholics. As long as they were loyal to her in matters of state and conformed to the law, they could inwardly believe what they liked. As she herself was suppressing her own faith during her sister's reign, Elizabeth expected her Catholic subjects to do the same if they wanted to keep their faith. The term for concealing one's true beliefs is "Nicodemite" and Peter Mashall describes Elizabeth as the "queen of Nicodemites":

The Queen's religion was not that of her father. But it shared with his the quality of appearing idiosyncratic, uncategorizable. The difference was that while Henry's faith expressed itself in aspirations towards absolute domination, Elizabeth's was formed over two decades of finding herself at the mercy of others. She had learned the virtues of

inwardness, and of knowing when, and when not, to take a principled stand. At heart, Elizabeth was a Nicodemite queen, and willing to reign as a queen of Nicodemites. She had no reason to love ‘popery’, but she did not see Catholics, even Roman ones, as the artful agents of Antichrist.¹⁰

Elizabeth was determined not to put her subject in yet another religious turmoil. However, that does not mean that Elizabethan England was a time of religious peace between Catholics and Protestants. Under Elizabeth’s rule, everyone had to attend mass on Sundays and holidays. With the recusancy laws in place, her subjects were faced with penalties and possible imprisonment in case of refusal. Idolatry and unnecessary embellishments in the church was forbidden and monasteries were again dissolved.

Throughout the years, Elizabeth’s kingdom became more and more Protestant, leading to Elizabeth being officially excommunicated by the Pope. Yet Elizabeth had to deal with extremist on both sides of the faith. Protestantism produced a strict branch of Puritans, who disagreed with some of the official stances on religion and preached it loudly (without any official licence). On the other hand, Elizabeth had to handle Jesuits, hoping to rise a Catholic resistance by circulating Catholic pamphlets and calling for a religious debate with the councillors and clergy. In consequence, harsher policies were passed against both extremist groups, especially the Jesuits, who were automatically considered traitors.

Elizabeth, as a woman, had to rule her Kingdom carefully, but firmly. A woman was seen unfit to stand as the head of the Church and an exemption had to be declared, extracting Elizabeth from the general group of women.¹¹ She was unmarried and without an heir, and many of her advisors tried to push her in different directions, looking for a suitor that would best fit their own interests. Others saw her being childless and unmarried as a sign that her rule will not last long and did not take her laws very seriously.

Elizabeth’s reign brought only one of the many consecutive changes in the official religion and many English people accordingly did not see them as long-

¹⁰ Marshall, *Heretics and Believers*, 449.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 431.

lasting. Others simply did not agree with them. Consequently, devout Catholics resorted to only hiding instead of destroying offensive objects and parishes were reluctant to remodel their churches to adhere to the official doctrine. The official laws were confusing, and the actual sermons were carried out nonuniformly. With so many changes regarding one's religion, it does not come as a surprise that many common people simply gave up on keeping up with the latest religious attitudes and just believed what they wanted, or became slightly indifferent to religion altogether.

1.5. James I

The reign of James I, Elizabeth's successor, is important to mention for this thesis, as it coincided with the last 13 years of Shakespeare's life. As his reign isn't covered in *Heretics and Believers*, this part is based on other sources, especially on *James I* (1995) by Christopher Durston.¹²

When he inherited the English throne from Elizabeth in 1603, James I had already lifelong experience of being a king in Scotland. James I was aware that politics might not be conducted the same in England, so upon his ascension he decided to get acquainted with his new country first, before implementing any new policies.¹³

James was brought up Protestant and subscribed mostly to the Calvinist teaching, but in terms of his theological policy, he championed the approach of moderate toleration. He would not tolerate extremists on either side, but as long as they were loyal subjects to the throne, James would turn a blind eye on practising other than the official religion, similarly to Elizabeth before him. James was even freer to do so than Elizabeth, who had to tame eager Protestants after emerging from over 5 years of hiding and oppression.¹⁴

James' refusal to fully lean towards either side ignited hope in representatives of both religious factions. Protestants believed that James would finally eradicate the Roman-Catholic minority, while the Catholics hoped James would renounce his upbringing and declare Catholicism as the one true religion.¹⁵

¹² Christopher Durston, *James I*. (London: Routledge, 1993).

¹³ Newton, Diana Rosemary Newton. *The Impact on England Of James VI and I With Particular Reference to Religious Context*. (Phd Thesis, University of Liverpool, 1995).

¹⁴ Durston, *James I*.

¹⁵ Durston, *James I*, 56; Doelman, *King James I and the Religious Culture of England*, (Suffolk: D. S. Brewer, 2000), 21.

To the disappointment of both sides, James remained firmly somewhere in the middle, advocating for moderation. There have been however some measures taken against the Catholics after the Catholic “Gunpowder Plot” in 1605 led by Guy Fawkes, most notably the Oath of Allegiance. The Oath required citizens to deny pope’s authority over the king’s. Other than that, as long as the citizens vowed to be loyal to the king, pay the recusancy fines, and stay quiet about their true convictions, they would not be persecuted.¹⁶ The state was officially Protestant, but there was some room for the Catholics to exist in.

To conclude this historical overview, Shakespeare and his contemporaries navigated a society more lenient than their predecessors, yet they carried with them the memory of uncertain times and harsh punishments of disobedience with the official faith. Some decided to fully lean into the Protestant anti-Catholic rhetoric, while others practised the old religion in secret. As playwrights were often drawing inspiration from life, both is reflected in the plays written by Shakespeare’s generation.

2. English theatre in the times of Shakespeare

Theatre in the times of Reformation and Post-Reformation was standing in a difficult position. Like any other aspect of English culture during that time, it had to cope with ever-changing religious and political scene. Theatre was quickly gaining popularity, professional theatre companies were forming, and theatre houses were being built, but the dramatic form also met with a great deal of opposition.

Strongly objecting to the theatre were the anti-theatricalists, in great measure, yet not exclusively, Puritans.¹⁷ The anti-theatricalists were charging theatre with many offences. Theatre was luring churchgoers away from the service, even during religious holidays.¹⁸ Theatre houses were filled with disreputable individuals like pickpockets and prostitutes¹⁹ and some accused theatre spaces as the epicentre of the plague. The actors were also seen as suspicious, they had no land on their own or stable employment and were

¹⁶ Durston, *James I*, 59.

¹⁷ Michael O’Connell, “The Idolatrous Eye: Iconoclasm, Anti-Theatricalism, and the Image of the Elizabethan Theatre,” *ELH* 52, no. 2 (Summer 1985), 285.

¹⁸ Michael Hattaway, *Elizabethan Popular Theatre* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1982), 43.

¹⁹ Shell, Alison, *Shakespeare and Religion* (London: Bloomsbury Adren Shakespeare, 2010), 31.

officially classified among vagrants. The Vagabond Acts from 1604 required from vagrants either a proof of owning land or being in service of some master, or sentenced the offender to public whipping. To protect themselves from any legal action, actors had patrons from the aristocratic classes, whom they legally served. Nevertheless, many representatives of faith and regular citizens alike held them in contempt.²⁰

The severest complaint against theatre was its connection to idolatry. Anti-theatricalists compared staging a play to a Catholic mass, which featured some theatrical elements like the elevation of the host.²¹ Besides similarities with sermon, theatre was seen as idolatrous on its own. In the iconoclastic fashion, the Protestants denounced any visual representation of God, Jesus Christ, the Saints, or any scene from the Bible. Their reasoning was that the visual representation pulls focus from the message behind it and can lead to idolatry, worshipping the images themselves instead of what they represent. To Protestants, the Word of God was what the citizens should focus on instead of images.

Applying the iconoclastic doctrine to theatre, it must be deemed inherently sinful. Theatre is primarily visual, audiences are there to see a play and they focus on the visual aspect. Theatre is made to be seen and marvelled at which were for some clear signs of it being in itself idolatrous. However, the depiction of actual religious pictures and stories was the harshest offence.

The plays in the Middle Ages were based on bible stories, in majority, they were mystery and morality plays, but after the Reformation those types of plays faced great opposition from the church and the government. The traditional medieval mystery plays depicted biblical stories and thus biblical characters, but in order to make the play interesting, the biblical figures were often humanized and the story itself approached with creative liberties. The authorities did not want the biblical figures depicted at all, let alone modified.²² This was reflected by the official laws. The government did not ban theatre altogether as the anti-theatricalists would like, but there were restrictions on what could and could not be seen on the stage. No religious or political matters of the time were to be

²⁰ Stephen Greenblatt, *Will in the World: How Shakespeare Became Shakespeare* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2004), 71.

²¹ Shell, *Shakespeare and Religion* 40, 76.

²² O'Connell, "The Idolatrous Eye," 285.

depicted on stage and every play had to be inspected before being staged or printed.²³

Already in the Edward's reign, plays had to have written permission from six councillors in order to be performed²⁴ and since the second year of Elizabeth's reign, plays had to be officially licenced. Later on, in 1580's, the Master of the Revels took on the responsibility of examining the plays and censoring them, if necessary.²⁵ In 1591, Sunday performances were banned²⁶ and from 1606, officially (unofficially in effect earlier), the Holy Trinity could not be depicted on the stage or portrayed by any actor.²⁷

Elizabethan theatre tried to steer away from the religious matters. According to Hilský, the function of theatre changed during Queen Elizabeth's reign from didactic, moralizing, and propagandistic to entertaining in the second half of 1580's, the theatre companies wanted to amuse and entertain.²⁸ Amongst the fan-favourite genres were history plays, revenge tragedies or romantic comedies.²⁹

Shell notes that even though overt depiction of religious themes was forbidden, the playwrights turned to allusions: "If direct and extensive reference to religion was difficult, there were many indirect ways that Shakespeare and his contemporaries could exploit a subject of such profound emotional resonance. Shakespeare's plays and poems, like those of most imaginative writers among his contemporaries, are saturated with religious allusion."³⁰

Yet, some of Shakespeare's contemporaries are recorded to lean much more heavily into the anti-Catholic and especially anti-papal rhetoric. John Webster imagines a corrupt world lead by popery in his plays *The White Devil* (1612) and *The Duchess of Malfi* (1613),³¹ Thomas Dekker stages a papal plot to kill the Queen in *The Whore of Babylon* (1606), and Barnabe Barnes portrays the

²³ Shell, *Shakespeare and Religion*, 55.

²⁴ Marshall, *Heretics and Believers*, 347.

²⁵ Hattaway, *Elizabethan Popular Theatre*, 44.

²⁶ Stephen Greenblatt, "General Introduction" in *The Norton Shakespeare* eds. by Stephen Greenblatt et al. (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2016), 1-74.

²⁷ O'Connell, "The Idolatrous Eye," 284; Martin Hilský, *Shakespeareova Anglie*, (Praha: Academia: 2021), 185; Shell, *Shakespeare and Religion*, 54.

²⁸ Martin Hilský, *Shakespeareova Anglie*, 187.

²⁹ Friedmann Kreuder, "Repertoire and Genres" In *A Cultural History of Theatre in the Early Modern Age* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2017), 154.

³⁰ Shell, *Shakespeare and Religion*, 56-7.

³¹ *Ibid*, 12.

pope making a deal with the devil in *The Devil's Charter* (1606).³² The eponymous main character in Christopher Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* (1592) is walking dangerously on the line of atheism³³ but he is assigned Catholic attributes.³⁴

Focusing specifically on the portrayal of friars, they are perceived negatively in Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* and *The Jew of Malta* (1591), in *Old Wives' Tale* (1595) by George Peele,³⁵ or in George Chapman's *May-Day* (1611).³⁶ In Richard Greene's *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay* (1594), although the name might suggest that the play would be concerned with Catholic monks, the titular characters are alchemists and magicians. It has nothing to do with religion and possibly parodies Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*.³⁷

On the other hand, legacy of Catholicism can be found in some Shakespeare's contemporaries and their plays. For example, Ben Jonson, one of the major playwrights of Shakespeare's time, converted to Catholicism³⁸ and got in trouble for his first draft of *Sejanus His Fall* (1603). He was charged with popery and forced to edit his play.³⁹ There are some positive depictions of friars, like the characters of Friar Bernard and Friar John in *A New Trick to Cheat the Devil* (1623) by Robert Davenport,⁴⁰ but they are in the minority. The anti-Catholic rhetoric dominated Shakespeare's society, especially during Elizabeth's reign, and the fact that Shakespeare is reported to be less severe on and possibly even sympathetic to Catholicism is unconventional at least. It justifiably awakened interest about Shakespeare's own religion in many scholars. Shakespeare's possible personal connection to the Catholic faith will be explored in the next chapter.

³² Hilský, *Shakespeareova Anglie*, 78-9.

³³ Shell, *Shakespeare and Religion*, 13.

³⁴ Hattaway, *Elizabethan Popular Theatre*, 93.

³⁵ James C Bryant, "The Problematic Friar in *Romeo and Juliet*," *Shakespearean Criticism* 33, (1997): 301.

³⁶ David N Beauregard, "Shakespeare on Monastic Life: Nuns and Friars in *Measure for Measure*," *Shakespearean Criticism* 126, (2010): 149-159.

³⁷ C. W. R. D. Moseley, *English Renaissance Drama: A Very Short Introduction to Theatre and Theatres in Shakespeare's Times* (Tirril [England]: Humanities-Ebooks, 2008), 75.

³⁸ *Ibid*, 77.

³⁹ Ian Donaldson, "Johnson, Benjamin. [Ben] (1572–1637), poet and playwright." Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, 23 Sep. 2004; Accessed 15 March 2024. <https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-15116>.

⁴⁰ Todd H. J. Pettigrew, "Unaccustomed Drams and Unconstant Propositions: Apothecaries and Beneficed Practitioners." *Shakespearean Criticism* 118, (2009), 305.

3. William Shakespeare and Religion

William Shakespeare is the best known writer of the era described above, and it is therefore no wonder that scholars and ordinary people alike are highly interested in his life. A significant part of Shakespeare's life remains a mystery and one of the most widely speculated areas of his life is his personal faith. Many believe that Shakespeare could have been a hidden Catholic outwardly complying with the Protestant laws, and they look for the evidence in his life and his work. There is, however, no reliable evidence supporting these claims, so they remain what they are, speculations and conspiracies only.

William Shakespeare was born in Stratford-upon-Avon in 1564, in the early years of Elizabeth I's reign. The official religion reverted to Protestantism, but Mary's Catholic reign left its mark and Elizabeth refused forceful abolition of Catholicism. She wanted from her subject only outwardly compliance and allegiance to her as a ruler. Consequently, there were many Catholics hiding in England, and some could possibly be hidden even in Stratford. William Shakespeare's mother, Mary Shakespeare, came from the influential Arden family, who were devout Catholics. Her father insisted on being buried with Catholic rites⁴¹ and members of her more distant family tried to further the Catholic interests, with some going even as far as attempting to assassinate the Queen.⁴²

William's father, John Shakespeare appears somewhere in-between in his faith. John went through several occupations, he was a glover, an ale-tester, speculated in illegal wool-trade, but most importantly he held multiple municipal offices in his life.⁴³ As such, he was a highly respected and influential member of his community and with it came certain obligations. He had to enforce the (Protestant) law and is recorded to oversee the whitewashing of the local church and the sale and destruction of the other objects in the church. On the other hand, he and the rest of the council appointed to the local school consecutively three teachers, who had Catholic ties: Simon Hunt, who later left to become a Jesuit, Thomas Jenkins, with Catholic connections on Oxford College, and John Cottam,

⁴¹ Greenblatt, *Will in the World*, 43; Shell, *Shakespeare and Religion*, 86.

⁴² Greenblatt, *Will in the World*, 85; Peter Iver Kaufman, *Religion Around Shakespeare*, (University Park, Pennsylvania: Penn State University Press, 2013); John Yamamoto-Wilson, "Shakespeare and Catholicism," *Reformation & Renaissance Review* 7, no. 2-3 (2005): 347-361. Kaufman, Peter Iver. *Religion Around Shakespeare*. University Park, Pennsylvania: Penn State University Press, 2013.

⁴³ Greenblatt, *Will in the World*, 45; Kaufman, *Religion Around Shakespeare*, 48.

whose brother went on to become a Catholic priest and tried to come back to England to preach the old faith.⁴⁴ The teachers had to outwardly conform to Protestantism in order to be allowed to teach, but their own convictions could have influenced their methods and imprint on their pupils. Among the children taught by those men were William Shakespeare and his brothers.

There are other events possibly proving John's hidden Catholicism. He is recorded avoiding going to church, while the attendance was mandatory under the threat of a fine. This practice was popular with so called recusants, hidden Catholics who did not want to compromise their faith by attending Protestant services. During this time, however, John Shakespeare faced severe financial difficulties and the official report notes that John evaded going to church for the fear of being confronted by his creditors.⁴⁵ Another possible proof of John's Catholic faith lies in a document found long after his death. This "spiritual testament" professes allegiance to the old faith and bears John's signature. However, only a copy remains, the original was lost, and there are doubts about its authenticity.⁴⁶ In conclusion, there are multiple accounts hinting at John's religious conviction, but nothing reliable enough to profess it as a fact. Even less evidence can be found about the religious convictions of his son. Still, William Shakespeare's faith is highly speculated.

Besides his possibly Catholic surroundings, the multiple secretly Catholic teachers and his own familial ties to Catholicism, possible evidence can be found in Shakespeare's so called "lost years." The lost years mark a time period in Shakespeare's life between his school years and the first evidence of him moving to London, circa late 1570s/early 1580s to early 1590s, and scholars are unsure what Shakespeare did during this time.⁴⁷ He was not studying at a university, as his father could not afford it and he was probably employed or apprenticed somewhere.

There is no clear record, but some scholars suppose he spent his years in Lancashire.⁴⁸ There are speculations that Shakespeare might have been

⁴⁴ Greenblatt, *Will in the World*, 79-81; Shell, *Shakespeare and Religion*, 85-6; Kaufman, *Religion Around Shakespeare*, 48; Yamamoto-Wilson, "Shakespeare and Catholicism," 351.

⁴⁵ Greenblatt, *Will in the World*, 47; Shell, *Shakespeare and Religion*, 86.

⁴⁶ Greenblatt, *Will in the World*, 84; Shell, *Shakespeare and Religion*, 86; Kaufman, *Religion Around Shakespeare*, 49.

⁴⁷ Greenblatt, *Will in the World*, 40.

⁴⁸ Greenblatt, *Will in the World*, 72.

recommended by John Cottam, the former teacher in Stratford, to a wealthy family of Alexander Hoghton. In the services of the Hoghton family, Shakespeare would be employed as a teacher of their children. The Hoghtons were devoutly Catholic, and they might have wanted someone reliable in the matter of faith, not only to teach their children but also because he would be a witness to many illegal activities in the house, from hiding idolatrous objects to harbouring Catholic fugitives. If William Shakespeare was employed in the Hoghton family during this time, it would decidedly point to him being a Catholic.

The piece of evidence on which this argument stands, is Alexander Hoghton's will from 1581. In it, Alexander mentions some "William Shakeshafte" and asks his brother to either employ him or find him employment. Alexander's will is so excitedly investigated because it could not only explain Shakespeare's lost years but also his connection to theatre, as William Shakeshafte is mentioned in the will in relation to theatre. Alexander bequeaths his brother his musical instruments and costumes, necessary equipment for any theatre company and asks him to take care of his players. Many believe William Shakeshafte to be Shakespeare, as spelling was not fixed at the time, while others comment that Shakeshafte was a very common surname in Lancashire and has no connection to Shakespeare.⁴⁹ The case remains inconclusive.

On the other hand, in 1582, only a year after his alleged stay in Lancashire, Shakespeare married Anne Hathaway in Stratford, and six months later, they baptised their daughter Susanna.⁵⁰ Anne came from a devoutly Protestant family, there is evidence of her father asking to be buried in the Puritan fashion and similar evidence can be found regarding her brother.⁵¹ It has to be said, that Shakespeare spent most of his life in London, away from his wife and children, and in his will he left Anne only their second best bed, leaving the majority of his wealth to Susanna.⁵² Shakespeare might have distanced himself from his wife due to the rift in their religious beliefs but it might have just as easily be from a different reason or no reason at all. Shakespeare might have stayed away only to make money for his family and Anne's inheritance might

⁴⁹ Greenblatt, *Will in the World* 87; Kaufman, *Religion Around Shakespeare*, 56-7.

⁵⁰ Greenblatt, *Will in the World*, 101.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 100.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 124.

have been a sentimental gesture, with the bed being their own marital bed.⁵³ Looking at the possible evidence supporting Shakespeare's Catholicism found in his life and his surroundings, there is simply not enough evidence for a definite conclusion. Many scholars have therefore instead turned to his work to look for possible evidence.

John Yamamoto-Wilson⁵⁴ argues that Shakespeare lived in a time heavily influenced by Catholicism. No matter his own personal convictions, the old faith was imprinted in the cultural awareness of English public and in expectantly seeped through into the art of the time. Consequently, there are Catholic themes and motifs in Shakespeare's plays, just like in the plays of his contemporaries.

However, his plays differ significantly from his contemporaries in the way he chooses to depict the old religion. While many of other playwrights, like Christopher Marlowe or John Webster, put blatant anti-Catholic propaganda in their plays, Shakespeare seems to be mostly neutral, or at least enigmatic regarding the matters of faith.⁵⁵ Shell notes that "Shakespeare does not appear to have been particularly interested in writing about religious topics for their own sake. In his surviving writing, engagement with religious issues, while acute and various, is invariably subsumed to dramatic context."⁵⁶

The speculations about Shakespeare's own convictions are truly widespread, there was not a consensus even in his own time period. Comments from Shakespeare's time can be found critiquing him from Protestant and possibly Catholic positions as well.⁵⁷ Today, most scholars agree that Shakespeare's relationship to faith as found in his plays is at least ambiguous and open to speculations. Scholars looking for proof of Shakespeare's own Catholicism find in his plays hidden codes and messages that would be evident to the Catholics hiding in the audience,⁵⁸ while others think that looking at Shakespeare as a Catholic is simply more exciting, placing him in a position of the underdog.⁵⁹ Hilský notes

⁵³ Greenblatt, *Will in the World*, 124.

⁵⁴ John Yamamoto-Wilson, "Shakespeare and Catholicism," *Reformation & Renaissance Review* 7, no. 2-3 (2005): 347-361.

⁵⁵ Shell, *Shakespeare and Religion*, 82.

⁵⁶ Shell, *Shakespeare and Religion*, 81.

⁵⁷ Shell, *Shakespeare and Religion*.

⁵⁸ Claire Asquith, "The Catholic Bard: Shakespeare & the 'Old Religion,'" *Commonweal*, 132, no. 12 (June 17, 2005): 10-14.

⁵⁹ Michael Davies, "Introduction: Shakespeare and Protestantism," *Shakespeare*, 5, no. 1 (2009): 1-17.

that the fact that Shakespeare did not participate in anti-Catholic satire does not mean that he was a Catholic. He states Shakespeare's possible reasoning for steering clear of the controversial topics: he wanted to keep as wide audience as possible, including the Catholics, and he simply found the genre dull, reductive and primitive.⁶⁰ Similar opinion is expressed also by Beauregard.⁶¹

Shakespeare's plays represent a versatile depiction of religious matters. There are allusions to biblical stories like the flood in *As You Like it*;⁶² religious ceremonies as in *Henry V*⁶³ or *The Merchant of Venice*,⁶⁴ caricatures of Puritans like Angelo in *Measure for Measure* or Malvolio in *Twelfth Night*,⁶⁵ as well as Catholics, like Isabella in *Measure for Measure*.⁶⁶ More negative depiction of Catholics can be found in Shakespeare's history plays, with real-life models. There are for example Joan of Arc and Bishop of Winchester in *Henry VI, Part 1*, Archbishop of Canterbury in *Richard III* or Cardinal Thomas Wolsey in *Henry VIII*.⁶⁷

On the list of plays connected to religion, there are three that will be discussed in the practical analysis of this thesis, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, and *Measure for Measure*. While *Measure for Measure* is already mentioned above, it will be analysed together with the other plays in relation to a specific group of characters, friars.

⁶⁰ Hilský, *Shakespearova Anglie*, 79.

⁶¹ David N. Beauregard, "Shakespeare on Monastic Life: Nuns and Friars in *Measure for Measure*," *Shakespearean Criticism* 126, (2010): 149-159.

⁶² Shell, *Shakespeare and Religion*, 57.

⁶³ Yamamoto-Wilson, "Shakespeare and Catholicism," 352.

⁶⁴ Asquith, "Catholic bard."

⁶⁵ Kaufman, *Religion Around Shakespeare*, 145.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 146.

⁶⁷ Yamamoto-Wilson, "Shakespeare and Catholicism," 353; Kaufman, *Religion Around Shakespeare*, 95-96.

4. Analysis of the selected plays

In the practical part, this thesis focuses on the analysis of the Catholic characters present in Shakespeare's plays, namely the friars. This thesis will look closely at those characters portrayed in three selected plays, *The Most Lamentable Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet* (1597, further referred to in short as *Romeo and Juliet*),⁶⁸ *Much Ado About Nothing* (1600),⁶⁹ and *Measure for Measure* (1604).⁷⁰

As proposed in the previous chapters, Shakespeare depicted Catholic characters in a less negative way than some of his contemporaries, Shell in her assessment mentions all three analysed plays: "the plays where he uses contemporary Catholic settings peopled by nuns and friars – *Measure for Measure*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Much Ado About Nothing* – convey a more neutral attitude to the faith"⁷¹ and Beauregard goes as far as claiming that Shakespeare's portrayal of friars in those plays is "exceptionally sympathetic"⁷² in comparison with other dramatists. In accordance with those findings, the aim of the analysis is to see how Shakespeare portrays his characters of friars, with the hypothesis that the analysed friar characters are neither demonized, as was usual for Shakespeare's contemporaries, nor idolized, proving some secret allegiance to Catholic faith, but that they are portrayed neutrally, as characters with both good and bad qualities.

The analysed characters are namely Friar Laurence in *Romeo and Juliet*, Friar Francis in *Much Ado About Nothing*, and Friar Lodowick in *Measure for Measure*.

4.1. Introduction to the selected plays

4.1.1. Romeo and Juliet

Romeo and Juliet does not require much of an introduction. It is, arguably, one of the best known tragedies in history. This thesis will therefore only provide a brief summary of the play. Two feuding families, the Montagues and the Capulets live

⁶⁸William Shakespeare, "The Most Lamentable Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet," in *Norton Shakespeare*, eds. Stephen Greenblatt, et. al., (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2016), 967-1035.

⁶⁹William Shakespeare, "Much Ado About Nothing," in *Norton Shakespeare*, eds. Stephen Greenblatt, et. al., (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2016), 1406-1462.

⁷⁰William Shakespeare, "Measure for Measure," in *Norton Shakespeare*, eds. Stephen Greenblatt, et. al., (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2016), 2181-2239.

⁷¹Shell, *Shakespeare and Religion*, 1-12.

⁷²Beauregard, "Shakespeare on Monastic Life," 150.

in the city of Verona. Romeo Montague intrudes into a masquerade ball thrown by the Capulets, there he meets Juliet Capulet and they fall in love. As their love is forbidden, they marry in secret, ordained by Friar Laurence. Their happiness is postponed, however, because Romeo kills Juliet's cousin Tybalt in a duel and is exiled from Verona by the Prince. Meanwhile, Juliet is set to marry Paris, a match made by her father, unaware of Juliet's marriage to Romeo. To escape the second marriage, Juliet, drinks a sleeping draught made by Friar Laurence and pretends to be dead. Romeo hearing of her supposed death, but not knowing it is only pretence, rushes to her grave and in grief poisons himself. Juliet wakes up from her sleep to see her lover's dead body and kills herself with a dagger. The feuding families, seeing what damage their quarrel has done, decide to reconcile and build statues in Romeo and Juliet's honour.

4.1.2. Much Ado About Nothing

Much Ado About Nothing is a comedy, but it interestingly shares some plot points with *Romeo and Juliet*. The play also takes place in Italy, this time in the city of Messina. The plot revolves around the family of the city governor, Leonato. Pedro, Prince of Aragon, and his company return from a war campaign and stop to rest in Messina, where they are hosted by Leonato. During their stay, Claudio, Pedro's companion, takes interest in Leonato's daughter, Hero. Pedro woos her in Claudio's name on a masquerade ball and Hero and Claudio are set to marry.

However, Pedro's villainous half-brother, John, decides to spoil the marriage and convinces Claudio that Hero is disloyal. Claudio decides to publicly shame her and cancel the wedding. Friar Francis, who was supposed to ordain the wedding, believes that Hero is innocent and devises a plan. Hero should pretend to die from the shock of being falsely accused. Claudio would in his grief remember only the good parts about her and abandon the idea that she could ever be disloyal. Hero is proven innocent, and Claudio is devastated. Since he was the reason for his daughter's death, Leonato asks Claudio to marry his niece instead, to honour Hero and to stay in the family. Claudio agrees and when he unveils the bride, she turns out to be Hero. There is also a secondary plot in the play, where all the other characters try to couple up Benedict, one of Pedro's companions, and Beatrice, Hero's cousin, who are constantly bickering with each other. The match proves successful and the play ends in a double wedding.

4.1.3. Measure for Measure

The third play, *Measure for Measure*, is likewise categorized as a comedy, but is regarded as a “problem” comedy. This classification is awarded due to the difficult moral issues explored in the play and the way in which they are performed, stretching the usual boundaries of comic form and steering close to the tragedy territory.⁷³ As it is more complicated and less known play, it deserves a longer introduction.

The play is set in Vienna and deals with the topics of religion, power, and sexual desire. The Duke of the city decides to leave temporarily and entrust the power in the hands of his advisor Angelo. In reality, the Duke never leaves, he stays in the city and puts on a disguise of a friar in order to inspect, how Angelo is enforcing the laws. Angelo is devoted to suppressing all crime and sin in the city. He punishes even those crimes that were previously overlooked. Convicted of such crime is Claudio, he is guilty of getting his lover pregnant outside of marriage. The judges try to persuade Angelo not to punish Claudio, as he is otherwise an honest man and him and his lover were already unofficially married. Angelo refuses. He wants to make an example of Claudio to discourage everyone else from acting the same, so Claudio is set to be executed the next day.

In a desperate attempt, Claudio sends his friend to seek out his sister, Isabella, who is intended to enter a convent that day, and ask her to go plead for Claudio’s sake to Angelo. He hopes that Isabella’s devotion and persuasiveness will win Angelo over and he would spare his life. Isabella postpones her noviciate and goes to Angelo to plead for her brother. Angelo is aroused by her fiery and convincing speech and asks her to come back the next day to hear his decision. At their next meeting, Angelo proposes to Isabella that he will free her brother if she sleeps with him. Isabella is appalled. She is not willing to sacrifice her purity for her brother’s life and so she goes to see her brother to prepare him for his death.

While visiting him in jail, she is approached by Friar Lodowick, the Duke in his disguise, who offers a solution that would save everybody. The Duke proposes to Isabella to go back to Angelo and seemingly agree to his offer. But instead of going herself and sacrificing her virginity, another woman, Mariana, will take her place. Mariana is Angelo’s ex-fiancée who he cast aside when her

⁷³ Katharine Eisaman Maus, “Introduction to “Measure for Measure.” in *The Norton Shakespeare*, eds. by Stephen Greenblatt et al. (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2016), 2171-2179.

brother drowned at sea together with her dowry. She is still in love with Angelo and this act, when later revealed, will force him to finally marry her.

They carry out the plan, but Angelo decides to still execute Claudio and moreover, sends for his head as proof. Luckily, at the time of the execution, a pirate with features very similar to Claudio dies in the prison and the Duke sends his head to Angelo instead. Even though Claudio is saved, the Duke (still disguised as the friar) lets Isabella believe that her brother is dead and encourages her to plead her case to the Duke when he returns in a few days. He fakes his return to the city and hears Isabella's case, at first pretending not to believe her. When Angelo tries to deny the claims, the Duke reveals himself to be the friar and to be pulling the string all along. He frees Claudio, orders Angelo to marry Mariana and proposes to Isabella to marry him.

Although *Measure for Measure* depicts multiple characters of the clergy, this analysis will concentrate on the "pretend friar," the Duke in his disguise. This character is deemed relevant to the analysis, as all the other characters approach the disguised Duke as if he were a friar and behave accordingly. The Duke pretending to be a friar also adds an interesting layer, he is behaving according to what he thinks a friar should behave like, he is performing the (to him) quintessential friar-like qualities.

4.2. First introduction of the characters in the play

Firstly, let us take a look at how the characters are introduced to the audience. The first appearance of a character is very important as it sets a tone to how the audience is supposed to perceive the character and can affect the audience's perception of the character for the whole duration of the play.

4.2.1. Friar Lodowick

In *Measure for Measure* the Duke is the first character to appear on stage. In the first act, he informs his advisor of his trip and entrusts the power to Angelo. Later, he appears with a friar and tells him about his plan to observe Angelo's actions in disguise. The Duke assumes his alter ego in friar Lodowick who can be first seen in Act 2. During his first appearance, the Duke chooses to present Lodowick as a pious man of religion, focused on helping others:

Bound by my charity and my blessed order,

I come to visit the afflicted spirits
Here in the prison. Do me the common right
To let me see them and to make me know
The nature of their crimes, that I may minister
To them accordingly.

(2.3.3-8)

From his first moment on stage, Lodowick is devoted to his duties as a friar, piously determined to help the prisoners by hearing their confession and granting them absolution. That is, at least, how it looks to the Provost, who Lodowick in the excerpt speaks to, as this is not actually the character's first appearance. The audience knows about Duke's plan to observe Angelo's rule undetected, so his visit to the prison is not just a selfless act. Still, his hidden motives are not evil. Beauregard notes that disguise as a dramatic device has often been used as a way to demystify or satirize the monastic life, but that this is not the case as Duke's disguise is not used for seduction or other evil purposes but for the common good.⁷⁴

4.2.2. Friar Laurence

Friar Laurence in *Romeo and Juliet* is introduced in a very different manner. He is first seen picking out flowers and herbs with healing and other properties in an early morning. The scene starts with a cheerful monologue about a beautiful new day and the earth and its gifts. He likens the rising sun to the Roman God of sun, and the weeds and flowers to the offsprings of mother nature:

And fleckled darkness like a drunkard reels
From forth day's path and Titan's burning wheels.
Now ere the sun advance his burning eye
The day to cheer and night's dank dew to dry,
I must upfill this osier cage of ours

⁷⁴ Beauregard, "Shakespeare on Monastic Life," 154.

With baleful weeds and precious-juicèd flowers.

The earth that's nature's mother is her tomb;

What is her burying grave, that is her womb,

And from her womb children of divers kind

We sucking on her natural bosom find:

Many for many virtues excellent,

None but for some, and yet all different.

(2.2.4-14)

This behaviour is very unlike what we might expect of a friar. Laurence is not devoted to prayer or anything remotely religious, he refers to other deities and overall resembles an alchemist or apothecary more than a clergyman, more in accordance with Greene's *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay*. Laurence's interest in nature and its medicine appears strange to modern audiences, and even though Shakespeare's audience would find it less extraordinary, it would still be unusual.

As Pettigrew explains, clergy practicing medicine were common in Middle Ages, but the practice declined in the 14th century due to the rising accusations that friars were selfishly taking fees for their medical care for their own financial gain. Some critics also felt that while practicing medicine they could not focus properly on their priestly duties. A friar engaged in activities connected to medicine, would therefore feel at least slightly out of place to the contemporary Shakespeare's audiences.⁷⁵

Laurence is presented as unusual, out of place. But this narrative is very quickly spun when Romeo comes to ask for his help.

In this moment, Friar Laurence is sought out by Romeo as a person of authority, someone who could marry him and Juliet. Regardless of his own possible strangeness, Laurence stands as the voice of reason in opposition to Romeo. He is at first surprised by Romeo's request, as Romeo was just a day ago pining after a different girl and he scolds Romeo for his hastiness. Ultimately Laurence decides to support the match as it could prove useful on a larger scale by ending the feud between their families. In the introduction, Laurence is presented

⁷⁵ Pettigrew, "Unaccustomed Drams and Unconstant Propositions."

both as confused friar dabbling in medicine and as an authority and a voice of reason with a particular power to affect other people's lives.

4.2.3. Friar Francis

Contrasting both Friar Laurence and Friar Lodowick, Friar Francis in *Much Ado About Nothing* is awarded little introduction. He appears in Act 4 during Claudio and Hero's wedding and the first time we see him he is getting instructions.

LEONATO Come, Friar Francis, be brief. Only to the plain form of marriage, and you shall recount their particular duties afterward.

FRIAR [to CLAUDIO] You come hither, my lord, to marry this lady?

CLAUDIO No.

LEONATO To be married to her, Friar. You come to marry her.

FRIAR [to HERO] Lady, you come hither to be married to this Count?

(4.1.1-9)

Francis is rushed by Leonato to get to the point, his sole purpose is to conjoin the two in marriage as quickly as possible. Francis' only lines in this part are asking the engaged couple their intentions to marry and inquiring after objections to the marriage. When Claudio refuses to marry Hero, Leonato at first blames Francis for stumbling his words.

Michalos draws attention to Francis's silence.⁷⁶ During his first appearance, the discourse is dominated first by Leonato then by Claudio, and Francis is completely sidelined. Only after Claudio and his company leaves, is Francis allowed to speak again and show some of his personality and character, but he has to make a considerable effort to be heard and respected. During his first introduction, we know nothing about him, he is treated only as the formal

⁷⁶ Constantina Michalos, "Shakespeare's Feminized Friar." *Shakespearean Criticism* 122, (2009): 168-174.

authority, but not awarded much respect. He is pushed around and overall does not seem like an important character.

In contrast with Lodowick's and Laurence's positive, yet somewhat distorted introductions, Friar Francis is not really introduced and is instead presented to the audience as a character of little importance or personality.

Examining the first appearances of all three characters, Shakespeare's depiction of his friar characters is already conflicting. Lodowick looks like a selfless man, but we know he has ulterior (albeit good) motives. Laurence is naively and somewhat dimly picking up herbs, but he is also able to strategize how to end a long-lasting feud and reason with Romeo. It could be argued that Francis initially presents no positive qualities, he is meant to be a person of higher spiritual authority, yet he is silent and he lets others push him around, but it will be proved to be otherwise in the other parts of the analysis.

4.3. Role in the plot

Despite their vastly different introductions, all three characters have the same role in the plot. They advise the main characters and come up with the climactic scheme that resolves (or is supposed to resolve) the issues the main characters face. It is important to note that none of the friar characters are explicitly sought out for their advice (with one exception), in this aspect they carry something of the "meddling friar" tradition. But they always act with good intentions and their plans ultimately succeed, even though at a higher price in the case of *Romeo and Juliet*.

4.3.1. Friar Laurence

Friar Laurence's position in regard to Romeo goes beyond the usual bond of a man and his confessor. Bryant considers their relationship to be friendship rather than spiritual guidance.⁷⁷ Romeo trusts Laurence deeply and he confides in him. In scene 3.3, after killing Tybalt, Romeo is desperate and lamenting his situation when Laurence interrupts him and offers him a solution. Laurence's intervention is not framed as wicked meddling, he simply wants to help his friend. Here, Laurence behaves in accordance with the image of the "benign friar"⁷⁸ as Yamamoto-Wilson describes him. He acts as the calm, collected and helpful

⁷⁷ Bryant, "The Problematic Friar in *Romeo and Juliet*."

⁷⁸ Yamamoto-Wilson, "Shakespeare and Catholicism," 352.

counterpart to the overcome Romeo, he scolds him from his useless lamenting and gives him instructions:

Go; get thee to thy love as was decreed;
Ascend her chamber; hence and comfort her.
But look thou stay not till the watch be set,
For then thou canst not pass to Mantua,
Where thou shalt live till we can find a time
To blaze your marriage, reconcile your friends,
Beg pardon of the Prince, and call thee back
With twenty hundred thousand times more joy
Than thou went'st forth in lamentation.⁷⁹

(3.3.146-154)

When another obstacle arises, Juliet is to be married to Paris, it is once more Friar Laurence who offers a solution. Here is the exception to the previously stated, Juliet seeks out Friar Laurence to ask his advice on what to do. Laurence comes up with a solution and offers her the means to do so by giving her the sleeping potion. Friar Laurence is again not depicted as a meddling friar, but as a wise mentor, guiding the couple.

Laurence is here in a unique position of power. He is a vital player for the plan to succeed as he is the only one who knows the whole story. Juliet will be asleep, Romeo is banished so he depends on the friar and no one else knows about their plan. Yet Laurence's unique insight problematizes his position. Laurence transgresses his monastic vows, secret marriages were forbidden in the 16th century, he advises Juliet to lie to her parents and lies to them himself.⁸⁰ Bryant describes Laurence's conduct as "Machiavellian," for him the ends justify the means.⁸¹

⁷⁹ Romeo and Juliet, p. 1011, 3.3.146-154

⁸⁰ Bryant, "The Problematic Friar in Romeo and Juliet."

⁸¹ Ibid.

Paradoxically, Shakespeare's Friar Laurence is less virtuous than that which he was based on in Arthur Brooke's poem *Romeus and Juliet* (1562), even though Brooke presents a significantly anti-Catholic message in the introduction to the poem.⁸² Brooke's Laurence is a scholar, wise counsellor to the Prince, more hesitant with his involvement in the secret marriage and more repentant at the end of the play.⁸³ Shakespeare in his depiction problematizes the favourable image by making him not adhere to the law and monastic vows. Laurence might not be quite a meddling friar, but he also does not act how a good friar should.

In the final scene Laurence is subjected to a character change, he is cowardly, no longer Machiavellian, and repentant of his actions. Yet his role is still to guide the other characters through the series of events that led to this disastrous scene, and his narrative is believed on accounts of his spiritual authority. The play asserts from the beginning that Friar Laurence is not responsible for the couple's fate, they are "star-crossed lovers," (Prologue, 6) doomed from the beginning.⁸⁴ Accordingly, Laurence is not punished for his involvement in the end and although the course of events turned in an unexpected and disastrous direction, Laurence's plan to bring together the families ultimately succeeded.

Laurence is a vital character for most of the forming points of the plot, he guides and advises the other characters, yet his plan has negative consequences. He is a wise and authoritative figure, respected by the other characters (as developed further in the thesis), yet he is willing to transgress his sacred vows, lending him much of the authority, in order to accomplish his goal. He is good-intentioned but misguided. Shakespeare does not resort to the stereotypical portrayal of the "meddling friar," a route which he could have easily taken, but is determined to combine in Laurence both positive and negative qualities.

4.3.2. Friar Francis

Friar Francis also demonstrates some of the qualities of a meddling friar, he likewise offers a solution to the situation out of his own accords. Shell calls

⁸² Bryant, "The Problematic Friar in Romeo and Juliet."; Emma Smith, *This is Shakespeare: How to Read the World's Greatest Playwright* (London: Pelican, 2020),68.

⁸³ Bryant, "The Problematic Friar in Romeo and Juliet."; Smith, *This is Shakespeare: How to Read the World's Greatest Playwright*.

⁸⁴ Smith, *This is Shakespeare*. 68.

Francis “Olympian”⁸⁵ and he has to make enormous effort to be allowed to save the situation. The unexpected turn of events happens during the wedding which he is to ordain, so he happens to be a witness to the situation.

Michalos notes that Francis initial silence allows him to correctly assess the situation,⁸⁶ and the same is professed by Francis himself (4.1.154-6). While the two men give way to their emotions, Francis steps back to calmly observe and organize his thoughts. But when he finishes his assessment, he has to fight to be heard, Leonato at first does not want to believe that his daughter is innocent. Like Laurence has to calm down Romeo, Francis has to calm down Leonato. In this case, since Friar Francis does not know what happened beforehand, he is nobody’s confidant, so he has to make his point based on his observations and feelings alone. Francis and Leonato do not have the same bond Laurence and Romeo have so Francis has to call upon his spiritual authority in order to calm Leonato down and propose his plan. While he is not able to convince Leonato of Hero’s innocence, when he is finally allowed to speak, he “meddles” in a matter that does not individually concern him and designs a plan to rehabilitate Hero’s reputation:

FRIAR Pause awhile,

And let my counsel sway you in this case.

Your daughter here the princes left for dead.

Let her awhile be secretly kept in,

And publish it that she is dead indeed.

[...]

LEONATO What shall become of this? What will this do?

FRIAR Marry, this well carried shall on her behalf

Change slander to remorse.

(4.1.199-209)

Again, Francis’s “meddling” has good intentions like in Laurence’s case and his plan is ultimately successful. Friar Francis might not have been asked for a

⁸⁵ Smith, *This is Shakespeare*.

⁸⁶ Michalos, “Shakespeare’s Feminized Friar.”

solution and his advice is not as readily accepted as Friar Laurence's, yet he cannot be seen as the negative stereotype of a "meddling friar." King judges similarly and groups Francis with Laurence as characters who have inclination to the negative stereotype, but their good intentions reroute them from the role.⁸⁷ Friar Francis' involvement is not as strong as that of Friar Laurence; he does not have proof of Hero's innocence, he does not assume the role of the highest authority to those he is speaking to, and he offers no objects that could aid in his plan. Nevertheless, the group listens to his counsel and his plan succeeds. In the final scene, he, is similarly to Friar Laurence, in the position to inform the unaware characters of the events leading to this moment. In the words of Newman, he "restores sanity and reason."⁸⁸

Friar Francis' position changes dramatically to the one in the beginning of scene 4.1. A hundred lines later, he is no longer passive and silent but a coordinator of the actions. He represents some of the unfavourable qualities of the meddling friar, similarly to Friar Laurence, but their intervention is in both cases justified by their good intentions. Francis is also not further problematized with other negative qualities, unlike Laurence. His initial passivity and problem with authority are overcome and he comes closer to the representation of wise and well-meaning friar.

It has to be noted, that the role of Francis is much smaller than the role of Laurence, so there is not as much space to fully develop the character. Still, Shakespeare's Francis presents another subversion of the classic "meddling friar" trope.

4.3.3. Friar Lodowick

In comparing the characters to the stereotype of the "meddling friar," Lodowick comes the closest, even though he is not a real friar. He is not asked for advice, he eavesdrops on Claudio and Isabella's conversation in prison and steps in without an invitation. He, as the Duke in disguise, has an even more unique position than Laurence. No one knows who he really is, and he has some additional knowledge - he knows about Mariana. Moreover, he is the one who will deliver the final sentence. Maus places the Duke among morally ambiguous characters with

⁸⁷ Douglas J King, *William Shakespeare: Facts and Fiction* (Santa Barbara, California : ABC-CLIO, 2020),44.

⁸⁸ Karen Newman, "'Mistaking in Much Ado.'" *Shakespearean Criticism*, 55, (2000), 234.

divided critical reception, he is by some critics regarded as a rendition of God and by others as political schemer and meddler with people's lives.⁸⁹

The Duke is hard to read, and his duke/friar doubleness stands at the basis of this hardship. Maus comments that the Duke's double presence is the only way to solve Vienna's problems. By disguising himself as the friar, he is allowed insight into people's intentions he would not have as a Duke, and as the Duke he has the superior power to subsequently resolve the issues with an authority a mere friar would never have.⁹⁰

In making the Duke this double figure, Shakespeare strays from his source in *Promos and Cassandra* (1578). There, the Duke only appears at the end of the play to resolve the situation and never puts on a friar's disguise.⁹¹ Through Lodowick's unique position, Shakespeare places the Duke firmly in charge of the whole play. Shakespeare's Duke/Lodowick is not afraid to step in and offer an alternative plan to Isabella that would benefit everyone. He is manipulating the whole play and treats the other characters almost like his puppets:

The tongue of Isabel. She's come to know
If yet her brother's pardon be come hither.
But I will keep her ignorant of her good,
To make her heavenly comforts of despair
When it is least expected.

(4.3.100-4)

The excerpt shows, that Duke/Lodowick is the one charge not only in directing the action but also in his distribution of information. Lodowick is the one deciding how much will each person know – he keeps Claudio ignorant of his plan, instead telling him to prepare to die and he lets Isabella believe that her brother is dead to the benefit of a hypothetical eventual greater relief. Consequently, the Duke/Lodowick is considerably close to the “meddling friar” characterization. In Brett Gamboa's words: “He eagerly retires from public life but won't go away; he

⁸⁹ Katharine Eisaman Maus. “Introduction to “Measure for Measure.” in *The Norton Shakespeare*, eds. by Stephen Greenblatt et al. (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2016), 2171-2179.

⁹⁰ Maus, “Introduction to “Measure for Measure.”

⁹¹ Smith, *This is Shakespeare*.

is slow to intervene, yet a constant meddler; he is magnanimous but self-serving; he condemns “seemers” yet is a fraud himself.”⁹² Compared to Francis and Laurence, Friar Lodowick is unequivocally the biggest “meddler,” yet he cannot be fully stereotyped as such as he is not an actual friar, and he again has good intentions with his “meddling.”⁹³

This section demonstrates that Shakespeare constructs his friar characters by building on the classical negative stereotype, but he always subverts it by assigning kind-heartedness to the characters.

4.4. How other characters perceive them

To fully understand the portrayal of the friar characters in Shakespeare’s plays, it is important to analyse how other characters view them and act around them. If they are respected or ridiculed possibly provides insight into how Shakespeare wanted his audiences to perceive this type of characters. The most striking evidence regarding other characters’ opinions of the friars can be found in their form of address.

4.4.1. Friar Laurence

Friar Laurence is arguably the most respected of the three. He acts as a confidant and friend to Romeo and by others he is regarded as a spiritual authority. The evidence of Laurence’s respectability can be found in how other characters address him. Besides the neutral address of “Friar,” occurring regularly throughout the play, there are other, more affectionate forms of address: Juliet’s “ghostly confessor” (2.5.21) and “holy Laurence” (4.2.20), Nurse’s “holy Friar” (3.3.82) Capulet’s “reverend holy friar” (4.2.32) and most notably Romeo’s endearment “a divine, a ghostly confessor,/ a sin-absolver, and my friend professed” (3.3.50-51). It is evident that all the characters see Laurence highly in connection to his occupation. Even after the catastrophe at the Capulet’s tomb, the Prince excuses Laurence on the basis of the authority stemming from his occupation: “We still have known thee for a holy man” (5.3.270).

That, however, does not mean that he is untouchable and always regarded positively. His final speech is believed, but it is verified by Romeo’s letter “this

⁹² Brett Gamboa, “Performance Comments to “Measure for Measure,”” in *The Norton Shakespeare*, eds. by Stephen Greenblatt et al. (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2016).

⁹³ Beauregard, “Shakespeare on Monastic Life,” 154.

letter doth make good the Friar's words" (5.3.286), and he is beforehand held and questioned. Laurence is not clear of suspicion due to his occupation alone, but it awards him a good reputation.

The harshest accusation against Laurence is made by Juliet but it is quickly dismissed on account of his spiritual authority. She briefly wonders before drinking the sleeping potion if the friar did not give her poison instead, to preserve his own name:

What if it be a poison which the Friar
Subtly hath ministered to have me dead,
Lest in this marriage he should be dishonored
Because he married me before to Romeo?
I fear it is—and yet methinks it should not,
For he hath still been tried a holy man.

(4.3.24-29)

Pettigrew is of the opinion that Juliet is in a desperate situation and has nothing else to do than hope in Laurence's honesty, so she chooses to believe him on accounts of his spiritual authority.⁹⁴ Regardless of how much Juliet believes in Laurence's honesty, the allusion to his authority is enough to make her drink the potion.

In the other characters' perception of Laurence, Shakespeare combats the spiritual authority. He showcases that religious affiliation does not amount to automatic pardon of any behaviour. Laurence is regarded highly thanks to his position of spiritual counsellor, yet it is not unthinkable that he could behave improperly.

4.4.2. Friar Francis

Friar Francis is not respected to the maximal degree, and the evidence can be found again in the form of address. He is addressed and talked about by everyone only using the neutral term "Friar." Only in the very last scene, when Francis already establishes his authority, is he addressed as "good Friar"(5.4.31) by

⁹⁴ Pettigrew, "Unaccustomed Drams and Unconstant Propositions."

Benedict, who might be wanting to get on Francis's good side, as he is asking him to marry him and Beatrice; and as "holy Friar" (5.4.58) by Claudio, who might be repenting his conduct during the first wedding.

For most of the play, Francis' respectability is nowhere near Laurence's. For Francis his authority is not automatic, he has to assert it himself. Francis is at first ordered around and when he tries to advocate for Hero, Leonato questions him. He does not have confidence in Francis' opinion "Friar, it cannot be/[...]/ Why seek'st thou then to cover with excuse/That which appears in proper nakedness?"(4.1.169-73) or in his plan "What shall become of this? What will this do?"(4.1.207). Friar Francis has to defend himself multiple times, but when he finally asserts his authority, he is listened to and complied with. Friar Francis illustrates that spiritual authority is not inherent or automatic, but that it has to be asserted.

4.4.3. Friar Lodowick

The other characters' perception of Lodowick is much less unified than in the cases of Laurence and Francis. Like with the other two characters, the forms of addressed used for Lodowick serve as evidence of the other characters' opinion of him. Lodowick is respected and highly regarded for most of the play. He is awarded the most respect in prison, by the inmates and especially by the Provost, who is very accommodating to him. Beauregard observes the forms of address used for Lodowick are a general "note of respect and trust towards friars."⁹⁵ They range from: "most holy sir" (3.1.47) used by Claudio and Barnardine's "ghostly father" (4.3.42) to some rendition of "good father" and "sir" used by a number of characters on multiple occasions. It is interesting to note that only the prisoners are addressing Lodowick with the allusion to his profession, possibly figuratively alluding to his ability to absolve them from sin and help them in their eternal life, while the other characters refer more to his character and non-spiritual authority.

The title "sir" instead alludes to Lodowick's general authority, almost as if to point out that Lodowick is not a real friar and should not be addressed as such. However, Lodowick is most frequently addressed as "good father" which references above all his character and his actions. It is used by Isabella, and also by the Provost and by Escalus, a lord and the Duke's advisor, who use it to praise

⁹⁵ Beauregard, "Shakespeare on Monastic Life," 154.

Lodowick's virtue in visiting the prisoners and providing them with confession. Escalus then goes further to praise Lodowick for fulfilling his religious duties: "You have paid the heavens your function, and the/ prisoner the very debt of your calling" (3.1.478-9).

Larence and Francis are not always regarded positively, and neither is Lodowick. In his case, he faces even bigger disrespect than the other two, he is directly insulted. Lodowick is especially badly treated by the character of Lucio, who originally starts with addressing Lodowick using the neutral term "Friar," but he later accuses him of badmouthing the Duke, something he has done himself but wants Lodowick to take the blame. After his accusations, Lucio showers Lodowick with insults, he describes him as "Honest in nothing but/in his clothes" (5.1.269-71). In this scene (5.1.), Lodowick is further titled "rascal," (5.1.287), "unreverend and unhallowed friar" (5.1.309), and "villain" (5.1.345), among other insults. Most of the insults are hurled by Lucio, but some are added by the higher standing nobles, Angelo and Escalus.

In this moment Lodowick illustrates that the spiritual authority of a Catholic friar is not superior to the secular authority. Lodowick's authority of a friar is not sufficient to prove his innocence, he has to unmask and call upon his superior secular authority. The character of Lodowick is not idolized, he does not possess inherent higher spiritual authority, the state (Duke) is governing the church (Lodowick) – just like in the Post-Reformation England. As proposed in 4.3.3., the Duke/Lodowick doubleness is a winning combination: the spiritual authority of Lodowick granted the Duke access to his subjects' confessions, something he would be unable to access with his secular authority only, and his secular authority allows him to implement his finding in practise.

This previous section highlighted Shakespeare's subversion of the classical "meddling friar" trope, this section showcases the other end of the scale. Shakespeare denounces any possible idolization of Catholic characters, their spiritual authority is strong and mostly positively regarded, but it is not inherent and all-encompassing. Rather, it has to be acquired and maintained, and it cannot compare to the authority of the state.

4.5. How they present themselves

In the last section of the analysis, this thesis will look at how the friar characters act and portray themselves. The analysis will examine how they talk about themselves, what are their qualities and personalities, and how they evoke the Catholic faith.

4.5.1. Friar Lodowick

As proposed in part 4.1.3., Friar Lodowick offers a unique representation of friar characters, as it is the Duke performing what he thinks is a friar-like behaviour. In order to best conduct himself in his role, he visits a monastery to consult a friar: “Supply me with the habit, and instruct me/ How I may formally in person bear/ Like a true friar” (1.3.46-8). While in his disguise, the Duke very explicitly draws attention to being a friar, he often mentions three attributes: his habit, his order, or his duties. Beauregard points out, that the habit, and the disguise of the friar more generally, grant the Duke an association with truth and authority.⁹⁶ The Duke is aware of this fact and takes advantage of it fully. It is this authority of a friar that allows him to hear the confessions of his subject, something he would not be allowed to do as the Duke. The very first thing he does as Friar Lodowick is referencing his order and demanding his rights as a friar to gain access to the prison (as can be seen in the excerpt on pages 27-28).

He references his attributes later as well. In scene 4.2, in the course of twenty lines, he invokes them all: “the vow of my order” (4.2.161), “the saint whom I profess” (4.2.170), as well as “my coat” (4.2.179). Whenever he mentions either his vows, habit, or order, he uses them to support his point, the attributes serve as an assurance, a proof of authority, and promote his character.

Additionally, he is not afraid to praise his character explicitly. Lodowick is referencing his good qualities, he is wise: “If I read it not truly, my ancient/skill beguiles me; but in the boldness of my cunning, I will/lay myself in hazard” (4.2.148-50), kind: “to the love/I have in doing good” (3.1.194), charitable: “induced by my charity” (4.3.44) and tells the truth: “mark what I say, which you shall find/By every syllable a faithful verity”(4.3.119-20).

For the Duke, the role of Lodowick is a performance and he has to convince the others that he really is an honourable friar. Besides invoking his

⁹⁶ Beauregard, “Shakespeare on Monastic Life,” 154.

ecclesiastical attributes, the performativity can be best seen in his extravagant greetings to the other characters, “Bliss and goodness on you” (3.1.447) and “The best and wholesom’st spirits of the night/ Envelop you, good Provost!” (4.2.67-8) Neither of the greetings is in itself religious, but there are odd in comparison to the common greetings they answer to.

On the other hand, on some occasions Lodowick references elements that are exclusively Catholic – besides him belonging to a monastery and offering confession, he uses Latin (2.3.39), and aligns himself with Vatican and the Pope “I am a brother/Of gracious order, late come from the See/In special business from his Holiness.” (3.1.450-2).

By an affirmative presentation of the Pope, Shakespeare aligns Duke/Lodowick with the Catholic Church more firmly than his counterparts in *Romeo and Juliet* and *Much Ado About Nothing*. He might have been too positive in the eyes of Shakespeare’s contemporary audience more used to the anti-papal rhetoric, yet this portrayal is in accordance with Lodowick’s inherent performativity. The Duke, in playing Lodowick emphasizes the friar-like characteristics to a point of excess, including the allegiance to Vatican.

The Duke constructs Lodowick with a high esteem to the friar post. He might be excessive in his performativity; in periodically calling attention to the formal attributes, his extravagant greetings and his praise of the Pope, but he constructs the character with predominantly good qualities, like kindness, charity, wisdom, and veracity.

4.5.2. Friar Laurence

The previous section already established that Friar Laurence is a respected man, especially by Romeo. Laurence is in the position to lecture and scold Romeo, he is his friend, his confidant, he wants the best for him, and he goes well beyond the duties of a spiritual teacher. Laurence sees his aid to Romeo as the greater good: “In one respect I’ll thy assistant be,/For this alliance may so happy prove/To turn your households’ rancor to pure love” (2.2.90-2). He is so convinced of the good it will bring, that he is willing to transgress his professionalism – ordaining a secret marriage and engaging in multiple forms of deception, as argued in 4.3.1.

As mentioned in 4.2.2., Laurence is introduced as a friar-medical practitioner. He believes in his abilities and in the last scene of the play, while

explaining everything that happened, he invokes his education in medicine to justify giving Juliet the sleeping potion:

Then gave I her—so tutored by my art—

A sleeping potion, which so took effect

As I intended, for it wrought on her

The form of death

(5.3.243-6)

He acted in accordance with studies and moreover, he was successful, the sleeping potion worked as it was supposed to. Laurence regards highly his own education.

He also references his connection to his order or their patron saint multiple times, but unlike in Lodowick's case, it is not to reinforce his authority. Laurence invokes them to reassure himself in moments when things go awry. He clutches to them and uses them almost as a cry of surprise: "By my holy order" (3.3.114), "Unhappy fortune! By my brotherhood" (5.2.17), "Saint Francis be my speed!" (5.3.121). Laurence is evidently deeply religious and sensitive.

The audience is presented with both Laurence's positive and negative qualities from the beginning, but the final scene of the play, 5.3, produces a full range of Laurence's emotions and characteristics. He is afraid to be in the churchyard and flees from the tomb when he hears voices. In doing so he leaves Juliet behind, who then has the opportunity to kill herself. When the guards find him, he is crying and shaking. He is undeniably cowardly and unreliable when his own plan fails.

He is, however, capable of introspection. While recounting the events to the Prince, Laurence promises to narrate everything truthfully. He is deeply sorry, confesses his cowardice and ask for severe punishment: "Miscarried by my fault, let my old life/ Be sacrificed some hour before his time/ Unto the rigor of severest law" (5.3.267-9). Shakespeare, again, makes his Laurence less virtuous than the original. Bryant notes that Brooke's Laurence voluntarily exiled himself for five years for his transgressions while Shakespeare's Laurence is only willing to bear the possible, but not certain, punishment.⁹⁷

⁹⁷ Bryant, "The Problematic Friar in Romeo and Juliet."

Shakespeare's Laurence might not be as virtuous as his model, but he is still presented mostly by his good qualities. Laurence presents himself as kind-hearted, erudite and truthful. He cannot hide his cowardice, yet it is evident from his behaviour that he is good at his core, he is sensitive, deeply religious, and well-intentioned, even though ultimately misguided.

4.5.3. Friar Francis

Friar Francis spends significantly less time on the stage than the other two friar characters and does not speak for a great portion of his time on stage. This prevents him from showing much of his character, but there is some information about him, nevertheless. Michalos describes him as "quiet, patient, modest, obedient, nurturing, and compassionate."⁹⁸ The silence and passivity deemed as negative qualities in the character's introduction are in actuality hidden virtues. What Francis explicitly draws attention to are his wisdom, experience and his authority:

Call me a fool,
Trust not my reading nor my observations,
Which with experimental seal doth warrant
The tenor of my book; trust not my age,
My reverence, calling, nor divinity,
If this sweet lady lie not guiltless here

(4.1.162-7)

Francis should be, in his own opinion, believed on accounts of his age, experience and the authority of his occupation. According to Pettigrew, this passage could reference Francis' medical study and should support Francis' position of authority. Francis is a "wise and learned man" and "a restorer of social health in the play."⁹⁹

Francis goes through a change in the play, initially overlooked in his silence and obedience, he reveals his wisdom and authority in order to help Hero. His actions further reveal his compassion, kind-heartedness, attentiveness, and self-confidence.

⁹⁸ Michalos, , "Shakespeare's Feminized Friar." 168.

⁹⁹ Pettigrew, Pettigrew, "Unaccustomed Drams and Unconstant Propositions." 301.

There are not many other hints about Friar Francis's character, when he speaks, he usually acts as a mediator between the other characters. One other clue speaking about his personality again concerns his cleverness. In the last scene, he reminds Leonato that he was right all along, his self-confidence was rightly placed: "Did I not tell you she was innocent?" (5.4.1)

Even if the others might think about Francis in a mostly neutral sense, sometimes listening to him sometimes pushing him around, he is evidently very confident in his abilities and sees himself as an authority. Like the other two friars, Francis draws attention to his wisdom stemming from his age, experience and erudition and he displays further qualities, like his self-assurance, attentiveness compassion and kindness.

This section reveals that the characters present themselves predominantly in a positive light. That is arguably nothing out of the ordinary, everybody usually presents themselves positively, but the texts provide evidence that their opinion of themselves is justified by their actions.

4.6. Concluding remarks of the analysis

The analysis showcases that Shakespeare's friar characters are not one-dimensional. They present neither the anti-Catholic trope of a "meddling friar" nor are they seen as inherently superior or ideal due to their association with the faith. Instead, Shakespeare connects those opposing one-dimensional depictions somewhere halfway, drawing from both, yet appeasing neither. Shakespeare subvert the "meddling friar" trope by making his characters act with good intentions and succeeding in their plots. He problematises the position of spiritual authority by not making it automatic, but something that has to be asserted and maintained, and placing it below the authority of the state. He devises his characters with a whole array of good qualities, yet they are never good to the point of a saint, they have their faults, their moments of transgression, and Shakespeare makes them conflicting from their very first appearance. Overall, Shakespeare constructs complex characters with both good and bad qualities, who are not siding with either of the religious positions.

Conclusion

This thesis analysed three characters of friars from Shakespeare's plays: *Romeo and Juliet*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, and *Measure for Measure*. The aim of this thesis was to explore Shakespeare's portrayal of Catholic characters in the context of the anti-Catholic attitudes in his time period. The analysis focused on the way Shakespeare portrays them, if with some hidden Catholic sympathies, in the caricaturist and demonizing tradition of his time, or neutrally.

The thesis was divided into four parts. The first part outlined the changes in official religious beliefs in England during the Reformation. It described the changing climates starting with Henry VIII and mapped the reign of his children, Edward VI, Mary I, and Elizabeth I, and the religious climate during Shakespeare's life in the times of James I.

The second part of the thesis described the position of theatre during Shakespeare's life. The religious climate was taken into consideration and this chapter described the relationship between theatre, religion, and state. It provided an overview of the anti-theatricalist accusations of immorality and sinfulness of the theatre, explored the official governmental regulations, and introduced the main theatrical traditions and popular genres.

The third chapter explored William Shakespeare's own life, seen through the lens of religion. It investigated Shakespeare's Catholic acquaintances, his own familial ties to Catholicism and the speculations regarding Shakespeare as a secret Catholic. This chapter also inspected religious references in the wider range of Shakespeare's plays and considered the imprint of his own beliefs in his plays.

The fourth chapter provided the analysis of the selected plays. The focus was put on three characters, Friar Laurence from *Romeo and Juliet*, Friar Francis from *Much Ado About Nothing*, and Friar Lodowick from *Measure for Measure*. There were four areas of analysis: how the characters are introduced, what their role in the plot is, how they are perceived by others and how they perceive themselves. The analysis was based on the hypothesis that Shakespeare's portrayal of the friar characters is mostly neutral, he diverts from the popular tradition of demonizing and satirizing Catholic characters, but he does not idolize them either. The findings of the analysis support the hypothesis. The conclusion of the analysis is that Shakespeare's characters of friars are neither demonized nor idolized, but

they are instead constructed as complex figures with both positive and negative qualities.

Resumé

Tato bakalářská práce se zabývá zobrazením katolických kněží ve vybraných hrách Williama Shakespeara: *Romeo a Julie*, *Mnoho Povyku Pro Nic* a *Něco za Něco*. Klade si za cíl analyzovat tyto postavy v kontextu socio-kulturního klimatu v době Shakespearova života, jako katolické postavy v protikatolické společnosti.

Tato práce je rozdělena do čtyř částí. První část zkoumá vývoj náboženských názorů v době Anglické reformace. Začíná vládou Jindřicha VIII, který odtrhl Anglii od římsko-katolické církve vedené Vatikánem, ale jehož vláda zůstávala formálně katolická. Vetší změny lze pozorovat za vlády Jindřichových dětí. Jeho syn, Eduard VI, byl ještě dítě když po Jindřichovi zdědil anglický trůn, a tak za něj vládli regenti. Ti se značně zasloužili o posun Anglie k protestantství. Po Eduardově smrti však na anglický trůn usedla jeho sestra Marie I, která se pokusila vrátit Anglii zpět ke katolicismu. To se jí ovšem nepodařilo a Marii na trůnu vystřídala Alžběta I, která se opět přiklonila k protestantské víře, ačkoliv byla tolerantní k těm katolickým poddaným, kteří ji byli ochotni uznávat jako nejvyšší autoritu. Podobné názory zastával i Jakub I, během jehož vlády Shakespeare zemřel.

Druhá kapitola se věnuje divadlu a jeho fungování s ohledem na náboženské a politické změny popsané v předchozí kapitole. Přibližuje postoje odpůrců divadla, kteří ho pokládali za nemorální z celé řady důvodů. Podle nich divadlo například pokoušelo pobožné občany a svádělo je k návštěvě představení místo chození do kostela, až moc se svou teatrálností blížilo katolickým mším a bylo ze své podstaty modlářské. Tato kapitola dále popisuje populární divadelní žánry a témata, mezi která patřila i protikatolická propaganda a negativní zobrazování katolických kněží. Dále poskytuje přehled tvorby Shakespearových současníků v kontextu víry.

Třetí kapitola se věnuje Shakespeareovi a jeho osobní zkušenosti s katolickou vírou. Rozebírá spekulace o Shakespeareově vlastní katolické víře, s ohledem na výrazné osobnosti v jeho životě, kteří mohli být utajenými katolíky. Mezi podezřelými jsou například Shakespeareovi učitelé a dokonce i jeho rodiče. Tato kapitola dále rozebírá, jak Shakespeare vyobrazuje víru ve svých dílech, uvádí příklady a srovnává Shakespeareův postoj s postoji jeho současníků.

Čtvrtá kapitola se věnuje vlastní analýze postav, a to otce Lorenza ze hry *Romeo a Julie*, otce Francise z *Mnoho Povyku Pro Nic* a otce Lodovika ze hry *Něco za Něco*. Kapitola nejdříve představuje jednotlivé hry a poté zkoumá postavy kněží ve čtyřech oblastech: jejich první představení, jejich roli v ději, jejich vnímání ostatními a jejich vlastní vnímání sebe samých.

Část zabývající se jejich prvním představením analyzuje otce Lorenza jako naivního kněziho, který se volnočasově zabývá bylinkářstvím, ale zároveň jako morální autoritu, otce Lodovika jako zaníceného a obětavého věřícího s postranními úmysly a otce Francise jako pasivní a nedůležitou postavu. V druhé části, zkoumající jejich úlohu v ději, vychází najevo, že všechny tři postavy mají něco společného se stereotypním vyobrazením kněze-pleticháře, ale plně nezapadají do tohoto obrazu díky jejím dobrým úmyslům.

Třetí část analyzuje jak jsou tito kněží vnímáni ostatními postavami a opírá se ve svých závěrech především o to, jak je ostatní postavy oslovují a jak se k nim chovají. Z této analýzy vychází najevo, že všichni tři kněží zastávají pozici autority, ale jen do určité míry. Otec Lorenzo je vážený člen komunity, ale musí se obhájit po nešťastných událostech u hrobky Kapuletů. Otec Francis se formálně respektován, ale přerušován a popostrkovan, a otec Lodovik je jak uznáván tak očeňován a urážen. Čtvrtá část pak představuje jejich vlastní pojetí sebe sama, v které předkládá, že si kněží sami sebe považují nejvíc na základě své učenosti, zkušeností a stáří. Dále analyzuje jejich chování, z kterého vyplívá, že jejich mnohé dobré vlastnosti převládají nad těmi špatnými.

Analýza postav dochází k závěru, že Shakespeare svým zpracováním katolických kněží ani nepodporuje protikatolické stereotypy ani kněze neidealizuje, ale konstruuje je jako komplexní postavy s dobrými i špatnými vlastnostmi.

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