

Love is in the Earth 3

“Leisure answers leisure; Like doth quit like and Measure still for Measure’ : *An exploration into questions of power and the evaluation of creativity in Dramatherapy.*”

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“ ‘Leisure answers leisure; Like doth quit like and Measure still for Measure’:

An exploration into questions of power and the evaluation of creativity in Dramatherapy.”

I am not making this presentation in a scholastic or academic manner in order to seek to persuade but rather in the spirit of explorative consideration - “questions”, “points” and “signs” that may suggest ways forward. It will be a paper *cum* workshop that, hopefully, has a multi-dimensional theme. Firstly, it will approach questions around the agendas of power, governance and expectations with which we are faced as dramatherapists working in a rapidly changing political and economic climate. Alongside this it seeks to find some answers to questions to do with the place of Love, Desire and Sexuality in clinical practice - if, indeed, there is one; and what kinds of measures may be service us most usefully in evaluating creativity within dramatherapy.

My own development has led me to a search for a healing place where spirituality, sexuality, psychology and politics may be brought together to develop clinical practice that is seen as working *with* people creatively through the arts rather than working *on* people. I have referred in previous papers to my identification of Love as being a possible integrating factor – Love being for me the desire for mutual nourishment, the desire to work together for a psychological, spiritual and physical flourishing. This may not at first sight seem like much of a strategy but it requires a notion of Love which sees the work that we do as being fuelled by the Desire towards a mutual collaboration between practitioners/researchers and clients/patients in the development of relationships.

As a referential backdrop, we will be referencing portions and themes that arise in Shakespeare’s *Measure for Measure* as a Guide from theatre – a potent cultural tradition within our professional heritage and some of this will form the participatory ‘workshop’ aspect this morning which will take the form of some individual work with a few of the characters as well as small group exploration.

The term ‘problem play’ was coined by Boas in 1890 and is applied to a number of Shakespeare’s plays including *Measure for Measure* partly as it is hard to categorize and its tone is neither fully comedic nor fully tragic and in a more direct sense as it poses problems – ethical dilemmas, tangled motives and tends to be peopled by characters who are in the words of Isabella ‘*at war twixt will and will not*’. It throws contrary views into play around several notions including those of virtue/vice; truth/deception; license/repression; justice/mercy and the nature of governance’ It also confronts many difficult social issues amongst which are the concealed corruption of those in authority; the outcomes of repressive governance; the control (or impossibility of control) of prostitution and the legal prohibition of all sexual activity outside marriage - including pre-nuptial sex.

Readers and writers often reflect their own concerns, perspectives and priorities when approaching text and I am sure this applies to this paper. For our purposes I invite us to consider the themes in the play concerning with the nature of governance and its role in regulating the Public Good, the expression/repression of manifestations of Desire as they are part of the human psyche.

Let us begin our consideration with the questions around governance and power. Turning to the play itself Angelo, the Duke's Deputy in the Duke's deliberate and conniving absence from Vienna, has revived a long-standing law against all forms of fornication (all sex outside the boundary of marriage) that has not been enforced for many years. Vienna is experiencing a sudden and rapid changing in the vision of its government agents – *'There is a change in the commonwealth'*. Angelo is described as a man of precision – which is the named reason for the Duke having chosen him to be his Deputy – and represents an idealistic, hegemonic quality of regulatory Governance. In pursuance of implementing this law Angelo has also directed that all brothels should be closed and all fornicators severely punished. Julietta is pregnant through having pre-nuptial sex with Claudio who is condemned to die. Escalus, an elderly Lord, represents the more liberal, conciliatory, face of governance that includes negotiation and mercy, advising a measure of leniency and entreats Angelo:

*'Let us be keen and cut a little,
Than fall and bruise to death.'*

Angelo is single-pointed in his goal:

*'Let us not make a scarecrow of the law,
Setting it up to fear the birds of prey,
And let it keep one shape till custom make it
Their perch, and not their terror.'*

When Escalus asks Angelo to look to his own affections and say if he has never been in a similar position to Claudio and to imagine the situation reversed, Angelo is unmoved and replies:

*'...I have had such faults; but rather tell me,
When I that censure him do so offend,
Let my own judgement pattern out my death
And nothing come in partial. Sir, he must die.'*

At the same time issues of right and wrong in the regulation of the Public Good are presented in relation to the change in the newly sanctioned enforcement of the law against prostitution (part of the law against fornication). Mistress Overdone, a prostitute, represents what Jonathan Dollimore has described in his essay

"Transgression and surveillance in *Measure for Measure*" as

most exploited group in the society which the play represents, are absent from it. Virtually everything that happens presupposes them yet they have no voice, no presence. And those who speak for them do so as exploitatively as those who want to eliminate them. (85-86)

Prostitution which was formerly tolerated or connived at is now illegal and women like Mistress Overdone are being punished. In Act 1, Overdone complains about the new government policies, that she is losing her livelihood:

*What with the war, what with the sweat, what with the gallows and what with
poverty, I am custom shrunk*

But she is not a heartless sex-object. When she is brought to the prison we see her as a kind, sympathetic, maternal and caring person who has taken care of an illegitimate and abandoned child of the Lucio and its prostitute mother:

*Mistress Kate Keepdown was with child by him in the
duke's time; he promised her marriage: his child
is a year and a quarter old, come Philip and Jacob:
I have kept it myself; and see how he goes about to abuse me!*

While it is not contestable that the play endorses prostitution it throws some light on the question about who is to decide if the "moral benefits" of eliminating the public display of prostitution is in the best interest of the city?

The topsy-turvy nature of clowning is introduced when Angelo and Escalus are hearing cases of offences - 'abuses in common houses' – with Elbow, described as a simple Constable, whose presentations to the Justices are spattered with misplaced words – *I do bring in before your good honour two notorious benefactors* instead of "malefactors". He refers to *detesting* his wife rather than *protesting* against her; misplaces "cardinally given" for "carnally given". This may well be a comedic convention in terms of theatre but we may also see in it Clownish Wit commenting, in the manner of the Fool, on the ambiguous nature of language and its usage as well as contributing to questions on the precarious, changeable nature of definitions of "good" and "bad" according to perception.

Turning to look at the personal level of struggles with authority, we find Isabella, Claudio's sister who is a novice nun who comes with a heavy heart to plead for her brother's life to Angelo she struggles with her request as she is asking for the mitigation of a "sin":

*'For which I would not plead, but that I must;
For which I must not plead, but that I am
At war 'twixt will and will not'*

Meeting Angelo's continued determination Isabella is hoping to appeal to the better part of Governance and to the heart of Angelo:

*'Because Authority though it err like others,
Hath yet a kind of medicine in itself
That skins the vice o'th'top. Go to your bosom
Knock there and ask your heart what it doth know.*

Angelo's response is to manipulate a theoretical discussion on whether or not Isabella's love for her brother is great enough that she would consent to 'sin' herself if that was the way she could save him. This is hugely difficult for Isabella and the ensuing dialogue contains a debate as to the natures of virtue and sin and as Isabella counters each of his manipulative arguments Angelo declares that he loves her. Isabella replies that Claudio loves Julietta and is condemned by Angelo to die for his love. Angelo then says that Claudio will not die if Isabella consents to love him. Isabella in return blackmails him by saying that unless Angelo shows clemency to her brother she will go public about his proposal. Angelo at the end of all his arguments plays his Authority card and taunts her:

*'Who will believe thee Isabel?
My unsoiled name, th'austerity of my life,
My vouch against you and my place i'th'state*

*Will so your accusation overweigh
That you shall stifle your own report*

He then tells her directly that unless she has sex with him Claudio will not simply die but, because she has chosen to deny Angelo, he shall have a long, lingering death.

The questions as to whether an act is virtuous or not and by implication whether the implementation of a statute by a governing authority is proper or not arises once again in the deception of Angelo. The Duke has not in fact left the city, but remains there disguised as Friar Lodovick in order to observe the city's affairs and Angelo's performance as his Deputy. He arranges two deceptions to be perpetrated on Angelo – one involving sex. We learn that Angelo has previously refused to fulfil an engagement to marry Mariana. He abandoned her for monetary reasons - her dowry had been lost at sea. Isabella consents to the Duke's plan to send word to Angelo that she has decided to submit to him, making it a condition of their meeting that it occurs in perfect darkness and in silence. It is arranged that Mariana will take Isabella's place. The substitution is made and Angelo has sex with Mariana thinking her to be Isabella. If this is seen as pre-nuptial sex (fornication) which is illegal, according to Angelo's enforcement of the law, then Angelo is a fornicator. If it is seen as an acceptable consummation of their betrothal, and therefore their marriage, then it also assumes Claudio and Juliet are also legally married.

While the principal focus may be the abuse of Authority the play also questions the relationship between moral law and the implementation of statutory legislation; virtue and lawfulness. What is virtue? When is an act virtuous or 'good' and when is the same act wrong-doing? What place do Love and Desire have in relationship? Is there a place for liberality and mercy in governance or does justice mean that the rules, laws and regulations have to apply across the board with no redress? How should governance be best implemented? What is the role of government in affairs in determining the Public Good? Is there a place for the understanding of Love, Desire and the workings of the heart in governance? I suggest that we consider that these questions are not that far removed for us as therapists in the culture in which we are expected to work – though the focus with which we might wish to ask them may seem very different from the context of the play's narrative.

While questions that we may raise about governance may not be within the arena of morality or religious codes of conduct we are certainly concerned with the governance of our professional clinical practice which state-regulated. With all the perceivable advantages that this may bring we have also been experiencing and witnessing the rise of state-regulated definitions of what is "Good" – good practice, good outcomes, good conduct, good record-keeping, good treatment, good evaluation, good research. By implication then there is "Bad" – bad outcomes, bad practice, etc. etc. The meaning and understanding of these definitions vary somewhat according to who is doing the defining, and what criteria are being used to reach these definitions and who is deciding the nature of "Good" and "Bad". This can lead, directly and indirectly, to some sense of tension between the expectations of therapy or analysis and those of our roles as health professionals – and I suggest that these are not necessarily the same though they are assumed to be.

Within the public sector that comes within the authority of the government, we are more and more being asked to work in a culture in which those treatments and services fulfill certain criteria are deemed to be 'good'. Certain measures and forms of evidence are stipulated as being necessary to demonstrate the achievement of targets and outcomes in order to secure funding that may be appropriate within a medical model of health but that are not easily be used to address the legitimate concerns of analysis or psychological therapy. All too often we feel that much of what we do in our work as dramatherapists lies outside the realm of such evidence, in the inner landscape of the Psyche – or Soul and that to measure the invisible is not only impossible and inappropriate but, also, somehow an assault on it. How can we measure the immeasurable? How can we evaluate the Soul? This can then lead us to feel that such a process is contrary to what we would like research to be and this in turn may lead us to assume the somewhat false separation between theory and praxis. If, on the other hand, we are not able to fulfill the requirement for certain kinds of evidence then this will have implications for the future commissioning of dramatherapy services. We may find that we may lose our employments. In this sense we may share Isabella's position of being *at war twixt will and will not*; or like Mistress Overdone *custom shrunk*.

In this regard, psychotherapist Andrew Samuels in a video on his website entitled '*What are GPs supposed to do? - Where have all the psychotherapists gone?*' (Oct 2010) refers to the situation where psychotherapy have gone missing, being axed from GP referrals in favour of services offered to patients under the Government's IAPT scheme such as CBT, interpersonal psychotherapy, couples therapy and some short-term brief psychodynamic psychotherapies. He says:

If the NICE Guidelines are to be relied upon the work carried on for many years with demonstrably satisfactory results seem now to be not evidence based and therefore not to constitute a suitable referral.

He goes on to say:

Depression and Anxiety and other aspects of the human condition don't actually respond well to brief written formulations. We need to think more in terms of the way in which conditions such as depression link to some form of relationship difficulty on the part of the client but relationship difficulty is not an area addressed in the current recommended treatments.

The situation is similar to that which we as dramatherapists are being faced with.

If we turn now to issues of Love, Desire and Sex we may ask what Angelo's position in zealously enforcing the statute against fornication really is about? Is it an idealistic position in the service of some sense of purity? Is it a matter of safe-guarding the moral health in pursuit of the Public Good? His own choice in abandoning Mariana was financially driven and he is not above suggesting that Isabella, a nun, should have sex with him in order to save her brother's life which we could see as using sex as a bargain. He may be seen as a victim of his own sense of power.

Socially, the long-since un-enforced statute is meant to regulate sex in public life which in the play is often associated with death, decay, and corruption. In Vienna, there are many brothels, there is much mention of venereal disease, and the numbers of illegitimate children are on the rise. These problems were also present in Shakespeare's London where he is believed to have written the play in 1603 when he lived in Silver Street with the Montjoys; but we may also see the statute as deriving from Sexual Taboo.

Anthropologically, most ancient taboos are seen to have been derived from reference to some sort of magical force which is believed to manifest in conjunction with various sexual practices. The force may be beneficial or dangerous and the person through whom it is believed to act is treated accordingly. It often appears as almost electrical; words like vibration, attraction, are frequently used and, similar to electricity things seem to become highly "charged". Like electricity, too, the force can be seen as either "positive" or "negative", static or dynamic depending on the medium or person/s conducting or manifesting it. If the medium was deemed "unclean" the force was considered to be dangerous and likely to contaminate Society, if "pure" then the force would be beneficial. Most people were considered to be potentially unclean unless surrounded by various rules or purified through appropriate rituals. The Priest-King or High Priestess was considered "pure" but needed to be protected along with the wider community from contamination, evil, disease or death by as much taboo in order to protect them as well as the wider community. Thus we find the separation between the "sacred" and the "profane" emblemized by the High Priest-King/High Priestess on the one hand and the Menstruating Woman on the other, for instance. This is represented somewhat in the play by the bawds, prostitutes like Mistress Overdone and Katie Keepsake and lechers like Lucio who are seen as being socially contaminating on the one hand and Isabella and Angelo who see themselves as being more virtuous than those around them. Characters like Claudio, Julietta and Mariana can be seen as falling into place somewhere along this line – being contaminated rather than spreading it.

In looking at these questions, then, we could go on to consider at the place of Sex, Desire as in our practice. If we give Sex a symbolic value then the outcomes/results of therapy or analysis might be expressed in abstract terms (or be able to be evaluated accordingly) instead of being derived from the physical relationship itself – such as in the case with the Oedipus complex and its "incest dread". We might in this regard wish to consider Jung's position in *Modern Man in Search of a Soul* where he says:

I see in all happening the interplay of opposites and derive therefrom my conception of psychic energy. What it (the relationship between the opposites) amounts to is an indeterminable and variable x which stands for the physiological activity of the glands at one extreme and the highest reaches of the spirit at the other.

We may wish to consider the position summarized by the esoteric writer Longfield Beatty in *'The Garden of the Golden Flower: The Journey to Spiritual Fulfilment'* which I am paraphrasing here when he suggests that the burden of the task is to discover as much as possible about Jung's "indeterminable x. 2 complementary terms exist whose

relationship is as to positive/negative or yin/yang or male/female. These terms represent forces/qualities within the psychology of the individual who herself/himself represents a third term in which the first 2 terms are integrated or not.

I might mention briefly my own clinical practice that has been largely with clients in whose issues sex has played a major part; I worked for 3 years with a street homeless prostitute project in West London – the Bawds and the Mistress Overdones of contemporary Britain. I have written up some parts of this work that involved work with gender-transgressive adolescent males in an article entitled *Splitting & Mirroring; The Processes of Mimetic Enactment and Mirroring in Addressing the Split Gender Role Conflict of Young Male Homosexual Prostitutes*. A large part of the dramatherapy work consisted of mediating the problems of fragmented identity and sexuality through enactments that gradually facilitated the clients to a demonstrably satisfactory integrated state. This work would, like the relationship difficulty mentioned by Andrew Samuels in his Rant, not be an area that is addressed by the current recommended treatments.

Is it, perhaps, useful at this point to consider therapy as providing a space in which clients feel that they can “speak the unspeakable”, space in which relationship is struggled with in a collaborative process, a space in which the clients’ relationship to Sexual Desire is not treated as something to be problematized but to be worked with in a truthful and nourishing process.

In my work with self-harming clients and clients who are struggling with issues around sex and addictive behaviours I find, too often, that the externally apparent alleviation of a client’s behaviour is seen as the prioritized goal of the treatment. True, the cessation of the behaviour would indicate that the client may not be physically at risk (which is a vitally important development) but all too often it is no indication that the client has truly found that which makes him/her feel ‘Whole’. As *creative* therapists we can ask if this is the essence of creativity and nourishment.

We may consider the Tidal Recovery Model which has developed over the last decade internationally as a creative and key model in some mental health nursing and treatment. ‘Recovery’ here refers to the reclamation of something lost – lost lives, lost opportunities, lost potential, lost status, etc. Here, there is a sense in which when people become ‘clients’ or ‘patients’ or ‘service users’ that they experience a loss of their personal sense of identity and the Tidal Recovery Model seeks to facilitate this process of recovery/reclamation. To reclaim their sense of personal identity and their own lives there is a need for people to reclaim their own personal stories in their own voices. Within the Tidal Recovery Model, individual and group work help people access (recover) their own personal stories of who they are as persons as well as the stories of how the problems they are dealing with arose in their lives and of how they can explore possibilities of moving on in their future pathways. This is part of the journey of ‘discovery’ as well as ‘recovery’ including the story of how life created problems for them.

Too often in a working culture that has a dominating and prescriptive governance, therapy comes to be regarded as something that the therapist is supposed to “do” to

the client. Often in this context, the client's own spiritual and sexual dimensions and personal stories are subordinated to a programme prescribed for them. When we work within this context we are faced with notions of Health that leave little room for exploration, for the client to express and discover themselves with a sense of their own integrity, their own creative empowerment. We may ask if this is appropriate for the creative arts therapies.