



# The End of Kinship: Measure for Measure, Incest, and the Ideal of Universal Siblinghood

*Professor Marc Shell*

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In this provocative commentary on Shakespeare's Measure for Measure, Marc Shell focuses on the play's basic themes of sexual extremism, exchange, and political order. At the crux of the play, he notes, the novice nun Isabella accuses her brother Claudio: "Is't not a kind of incest, to take life/From thine own sister's shame?" Shell's analysis shows exactly how Claudio's request is a kind of incest in a virtuoso analysis that extends his earlier work on philosophical and literary economies.

In the first work to develop fully the thematic role of the monastic orders in Shakespeare's drama, Shell demonstrates that the play lays bare some Western culture's most fundamental tensions -- between natural and political teleologies, between Christian and political ideals of brotherhood and the incest taboo, and between the pragmatic imperative to classify people and the moral imperative to treat them all alike. Drawing upon an astonishing range of literary material, Shell's discussion goes far beyond mere commentary -- offering, for example, brilliant readings of other Shakespearean plays.

Praise for Marc Shell's *The Economy of Literature and Money, Language, and Thought*, also published by Johns Hopkins:

"Shell offers admirably close readings [which are] often brilliant." -- *The Eighteenth Century*

"A remarkable piece of work. Valuable for a wide range of readers from the expert to the inquiring generalist." -- *Religious Studies Review*

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