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# Beyond the Religious and the Secular: The Hybrid Nature of Forgiveness in Early Modern Drama

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BEYOND THE RELIGIOUS AND THE SECULAR: THE HYBRID NATURE OF

FORGIVENESS IN EARLY MODERN DRAMA

A Dissertation

Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies and Research

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Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

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Title:    Beyond the Religious and the Secular: The Hybrid Nature of Forgiveness in
          Early Modern Drama

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This dissertation provides a comprehensive definition of forgiveness and presents

a theory of reading forgiveness as it applies the proposed theory to early modern drama.

Forgiveness, as I define it, is a relationship of two singularities; a victim and guilty party,

in which the decision of granting forgiveness becomes an exclusive right of the victim or

the person offended. I theorize that we can separate out this relationship into either

secular or religious categorizations based on the motives or the manner in which

forgiveness is granted by man to man or withheld from one by another; if forgiveness is

granted or withheld due to a humane sentiment rather than divine sentiment or commands,

we are speaking of a secular relationship of forgiveness; if forgiveness is granted due to a

theological sentiment or commands, we are speaking of a religious relationship of

forgiveness. However, there are some other cases in which forgiveness can be seen as

neither secular nor religious. But rather, we can see it as hybrid form of forgiveness

which embraces both theological and secular aspects of forgiveness. Thus, I develop

three main categories of forgiveness: secular, theological and hybrid. Then, I define four

secular models of forgiveness and two main theological models of forgiveness in an

attempt to define secular and theological forms of forgiveness. I also define three hybrid

forms of forgiveness, which can be located within a continuum of both secular and

religious motivations. Chapter one deals with forgiveness from a theoretical perspective.

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It defines forgiveness as a concept and presents my theory of reading forgiveness supported with textual examples from early modern drama. Chapter two rereads forgiveness in William Shakespeare's comedies. It discusses the false, true and absolute forms of forgiveness in *All's Well That Ends Well, Measure for Measure* and *The Tempest*. Chapter three analyzes forgiveness in Shakespeare's *Othello* and *King Lear,* and Thomas Heywood's *A Woman Killed with Kindness*. Chapter four discusses the hybrid motives of withholding forgiveness from the other in Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* and Christopher Marlowe's *The Jew of Malta*. Chapter five summarizes and concludes the previous chapters.