

The characters Mak from The Second Play of the Shepherds and Autolycus from The Winter's Tale, are both thieves that attempt to steal others' belongings as well as adding a bit of comedy throughout their respective stories and how they are portrayed at different points within the story affect the atmosphere as a whole. They both interact mostly with the shepherds of their stories while also hatching schemes to fit their desires. Mak is a thief who gets discovered by the shepherds early on while Autolycus is swift and clever when he schemes and steals from others, creating a different subplot that contrasts with the more serious main story. Conceptually, both thieves leave an impact on the baby that is the "savior" of the story and thematically, both have a huge role in moral values in their respective plots in opposite directions. However, they both impact the story and carry out their deeds in incredibly different ways.

Firstly, Autolycus and Mak both bring an element of comic relief to their stories' atmosphere and create a more lighthearted experience for the audience in order to contrast with the main plot's more serious tone. For example, Mak tries to scam the three shepherds that he comes across with and tries to pass off a lamb as the "Lamb of God" to the three shepherds. By doing this, he risks his life because he can be in serious trouble for stealing and even lose his own life if he were reported to the authorities; "Sirs, do what I say; For this trespass We will neither curse nor chide, No more deride, No longer bide, But toss him in a canvas." (Guthrie). The first shepherd says all this to show that they won't heavily punish Mak in the end and this gives the story a lighter atmosphere compared to its serious main plot of the Nativity scene with the three shepherds giving gifts to baby Jesus. The story of Mak and his wife happens before the actual Nativity scene and thus eases the audience into the actual story of Jesus Christ's birth to the virgin Mary. The story of Mak is also used as a lesson for the audience. Mak is used as a symbol of what not to do as a believer of Jesus Christ and God and shows what would happen if

one were to submit to their sins. The sinners who kept sinning and did not repent or atone for their sins would be punished for their wrongdoings; albeit it was done in a more comedic way. While Mak got thrown into a canvas in the end, Autolycus never got punished. He is another thief who comes across the story's own shepherd. Unlike Mak, Autolycus is successful at stealing from the shepherd's son and is left unscathed. In line 79, it says *stealing the Shepherd's Son's purse* and in line 130 Autolycus sings merrily after stealing the shepherd's son's belongings with no repercussions, "*Jog on, jog on, the footpath way, And merrily hent the stile-a. A merry heart goes all the day, Your sad ties in a mile-a.*" This shows that the main difference between Mak and Autolycus is their purpose in their respective texts. Autolycus is used as comic relief to help the story take a break from the darker main plot while Mak is used as the moral of the story for the audience to learn from. That is why Autolycus has generally more good luck and more success at being a thief while Mak does not because Autolycus's purpose in the play was not to teach the audience a lesson.

Secondly, their impact on the "savior baby" of the story is completely different. Autolycus helps Perdita and Florizel when they want to escape Bohemia by giving them disguises. "If I thought it were a piece of honesty to acquaint the King withal, I would not do't. I hold it the more knavery to conceal it, and therein am I constant to my profession." (lines 803-805). Mak on the other hand, tried to manipulate the shepherds with a fake baby in order to deceive them and failed. Through Mak's failure, the audience realizes that he represents what a believer of God should not do in order to get into the Kingdom of Heaven while also displaying God's compassion towards his "lost sheep", no matter how bad the sin was, as Mak never lost his life in this text for stealing and having a sheep impersonate the Son of God as stated in the text that Mak and his wife go home after Mak's thrown in the canvas. Another difference between

the two is that Autolycus does not like doing “good deeds” or things that paint him out to be a person who does good things. Mak does not care if what he does is good or bad. He just wants to get what he desires regardless of the consequences. These differences in morality help to distinguish the two from one another because although Mak could have lost his life, he didn’t and was merely punished for his actions. In a biblical story when dedicating one’s life to God and Jesus Christ, the stakes are generally higher than what was shown in the play. Mak got off with a lighter punishment for what the bible says will happen to those who sin. Autolycus, however, is in a story where the stakes are extremely high. The queen had died due to the king, their child was almost burned to death and after learning about Perdita’s royal heritage, the shepherd and his son were about to be killed for it. Their king had lost his whole family due to his jealousy and suspicions while Florizel was about to lose his inheritance. Actions have extreme consequences in this play, whether the characters did it intentionally or not. Even though Autolycus was surrounded by this dark atmosphere, he was the only one that did not get involved with any type of life or death situation directly. He was never punished or threatened. In fact, he was thanked for “helping” the other characters, like when the Shepherd and his son are thanking him for helping save their lives, “We are blessed in this man, as I may say, even blessed.” and “He was provided to do us good.”(lines 960-963). Autolycus, morally, is the complete opposite of what The Second Shepherd’s Play wanted to teach its audience. He does all these mischievous things but does not get reprimanded for it. .

In conclusion, Mak and Autolycus are thieves who, at first, look like they have similar roles in their stories, however, when delving deeper into what they stand for in their plays, are almost complete opposites. Mak had little to no success as a thief, was punished and left a negative impression on the audience as a way to teach a lesson. Autolycus was almost

completely successful in his role as a thief but also ended up being seen in a good light to other characters in the play while also being the ideal “what not to do” character for followers of God. Both characters are important pieces for the plot but realize their own paths in opposite directions. They are compared due to their roles as thieves, but actually contrast more once their purpose of the story is shed to light. They represent different ideas of how the same role as comic relief can be used differently depending on the intended audience and function within the story. It is clear to say that the two thieves create a dynamic in different ways for the author to show the different flavors of life.