

## ***The Invisible Foot: A Review of the Play***

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"The Invisible foot" in this play is the foot of the market. Because you don't see the foot, it can trip you up. It usually trips you up when you are at your most confident, when the chance to make a financial gain is at its most potent. Like much in this clever and funny play, the foot is symbolic. It tells us that the market is cunning, illusive, and tricky. Just when we think we know it, it can hurl us to the floor and force us to think again.

In concept, *The Invisible Foot* is very like a medieval mystery play, for although it is about economics, it has a powerful sense of religious morality. Back in the day, the medieval mystery play served as theatrical teaching tool for a largely illiterate audience. It would teach them how to behave, why they should fear the forces of heaven and hell. Similarly, *The Invisible Foot* serves to teach us the folly of our ways, to warn us against the terrors of corruption and greed and to remind us of our moral place in the universe of the market. As with all medieval mystery plays, the characters are symbolic. There is Kapital, the god of capital and Market, the god of the market and Yahweh, the god of religion. Even June the writer, is a kind of Everyman/Everywoman character, naïve about money and investment, interested primarily in her career, but like most of us mere mortals, vulnerable to the effects of corrupt financial advice. Ginger, the cruelest of them all, begins as an innocuous financial advisor but slowly morphs into Satan himself, betraying his cunning and evil intentions.

There is a lot to enjoy about this play, particularly if you have half an idea about the economic climate. *The Invisible Foot* begins as a play within a play and skillfully moves between the realistic world of the writer and her advisor (June and Ginger) to the stage fantasy of Kapital, Market and Yahweh. Sometimes the world of the stage fuses with the world of reality, like the moment when Market appears to trip up June with his invisible foot, just at the moment she decides to quit the financial world altogether. She falls to the floor and is forced to reassess. Markets do that sort of thing! This shift between worlds keeps the action alive and forces the audience into a reflective rather than a passive mode.

The character of June is the most interesting. She is both the author of this narrative as well as its victim. She can see how the dynamics of the market are played out, but fails to apply them to herself. She moves between the archetypal world of market forces and her own life, and these worlds constantly inform each other. It would be good to see the character of June developed into a more convincing three-dimensional character. Sometimes she speaks like the people on the stage and needs to be given more lines that will particularize her views and life-style. If we believe in June and her predicament, the play will carry more depth and clarity. Similarly, Ginger needs to be seen with more character detail at the beginning so that when he slowly transforms into Satan, there is more shock value.

I think the most successful element to the play is the incorporation of 'G' that stands for Growth. Its use as an addictive drug that is both necessary for religion as well as economics, offers an interesting perspective on our collective dependencies. Kapital, in particular, cannot give up his addiction. His sudden realization that that G (Growth) needs to be slowed down, if not given up altogether, gives further power to the play's thesis as well as its drama.

The end of the play has a strong dramatic import. At the point when we believe that all the characters have reached a climax of economic moral certainty, the play ends with three telling and pessimistic images: first we see Kapital snorting a line of G, unable finally to give up the stuff; second we see June as Everywoman, trying and failing to stop his act of self-destruction; third, we see market holding down June, the writer and creator of all, with his invisible foot. The writer seems to be warning us here that, despite our best intentions, the market will return to its inevitable pattern and the invisible foot will always triumph. To finish on three images leaves the audience with a lot to think about. In a way, it leaves the need for a solution with us rather than with these fictional characters.

The play is full of delightful invention and inspired repartee. It is funny and serious, wise and ridiculous. At present, it feels overly long and would benefit from some judicial cuts, especially in the second half. The comedy will be more telling with one or two less episodes from the archetypal characters. Cuts of between 2 and 3 pages would make a useful difference.

*The Invisible Foot* is sure to raise a laugh, especially amongst audiences of experts and will be an appropriate entertainment for the final night of a business conference. True believers, however, should not come without the tissue box!