To Make the Fox Surveyor of the Fold:
Foucault on Shakespeare, Sovereignty, and Surveillance

Richard Wilson

"The Fox" was an apt student nickname for Michel Foucault, as a "masked philosopher" whose thinking prefigured Shakespeare's analysis of the shift from sovereignty to surveillance, when "the empire of the gaze" made "the fox surveyor of the fold." For just as the plays install the new figure of the "great observer," in place of the executioner "stained with crimson blood," so the theorist imaged the modern "theatre of power" as a stage which put secrecy on display. For a generation of critics trained in the hermeneutics of suspicion, Foucault's ideas about the medical gaze or panoptic power therefore seemed uniquely applicable to Shakespearean drama. But the publication of his late lectures has revealed a different analytics of power, in which the Ubu-esque figure of the fool, who "struts and frets [. . .] upon the stage," performs a permanent *coup d'état*. Thus, Foucault's last words on power anticipate the current turn to political theology in positing the madness of "Hitlerian nights," and the investiture crisis that follows when "a dog's obeyed in office."

Michel Foucault's student nickname, biographers tell us, was "Le Fuchs," "The Fox"; and at the end, the reading by his graveside was a poem by René Char, tracking the blood such foxes left in the snow. The "masked philosopher" ("Le Philosophe masqué" 1, 17) was happier to accept this sobriquet than a schoolboy one that played on his given name, Paul Michel: "Polichi nelle" or Punchinello, a "misshapen figure

of fun" (Macey, *The Lives of Michel Foucault* 12, 473). Between the cunning Mr Fox and grotesque Mr Punch, Foucault's alternative monikers touched symbolically, then, the poles of secrecy and spectacle, seeing and saying, that would shape his thought. The theorist who opened his most quotable text, "What is an Author?" with words he attributed to Beckett – "'What does it matter who is speaking,' someone said, 'what does it matter who is speaking?'" (101) – which it turned out he had authored himself,[1] and who traced the psychiatric talking cure back to the confession box, connected his own desire to write "in order to have no face" (*The Archaeology of Knowledge* 17) to his sensation when growing up in Vichy France that "the obligation of speaking was both strange and boring. I often wondered why people had to speak" ("An Interview with Stephen Riggins" 121-22).[2] Yet the last words of the last lecture, and final public appearance, in the amphitheatre of the Collège de France, of the public intellectual who claimed to be "developing silence as a cultural ethos," were "[l]isten, I had things to say to you about the general framework of these analyses. But, well, it is too late. So, thank you" (*The Courage of Truth* 338).

Today, in our post-industrial society, Foucault feared, "we are neither in the amphitheatre, nor on stage, but in the panoptic machine" (*Discipline and Punish* 217). But it was his own temperamental hostility to what Guy Debord likewise anathematised as the "society of the spectacle," and suspicion of clinics, hospitals, prisons and schools as so many theatres of both "observation and demonstration, but also of purification and testing" (*Psychiatric Power* 336), that when his work first appeared on the horizon of Shakespeare Studies during the 1970s, seemed to give him an uncanny affinity with the pre-industrial dramatist of "observation strange" (*The Tempest* 3.3.87). Thus, my own first encounter with Foucault was as a heretical historian of art, whose 1967 celebration of Erwin Panofsky, for exposing the interplay of "the visible and sayable that characterises a given culture" (Foucault "Les Mots et les images" 649), framed my PhD dissertation on Shakespeare and Renaissance theories of perspective space. From the reference to Bosch, Brueghel and Dürer with which *The History of Madness* opened; and the first words of *The Birth of the Clinic* ("This is a book about space, about

[1] See Macey, "The Foucault Interviews": "To my frustration and annoyance, I have never been able to identify this quotation from Beckett" (77).

[2] In the same interview: "Silence may be a much more interesting way of having a relationship with people [. . .] This is something that I believe is really worth cultivating" (121-22); "For someone like me, and I am not a great author, but simply one who manufactures books, one likes [the books] to be read for their own sake" (426).

language, and about death; it is about the art of seeing"); through the analysis of "Las Meninas" as a representation of representation that fronted *The Order of Things* (1-18); to the gruesome tableau of public execution at the ceremonial entrance to *Discipline and Punish*, the entire corpus proceeded, as Michel de Certeau noted, "from vision to vision" (196). Recent commentators like Catherine Soussloff have indeed shown how intimately his writings on Velazquez, Manet and Magritte were imbricated in this philosopher's thinking about subjectivity and visual culture. So, by the time he died in 1984 it seemed clear to me that Foucault was the theorist with most affinity to a theatre that likewise staged the "empire of the gaze" (*The History of Madness* 24) in scenes of surveillance, such as the one where Shakespeare imaged power in the figure of a *surveying* fox, at the outbreak the Wars of the Roses:

> Were' not all one an empty [hungry] eagle were set
> To guard the chicken from a hungry kite [. . .]
> As [. . .] make the fox surveyor of the fold [. . .]
> By nature proved an enemy of the flock,
> Before his chaps be stained with crimson blood (*2 Henry VI* 3.1.248-59)

My own writing on Shakespeare has been so interwoven with my reading of Foucault that it can perhaps serve as a modest index of the impact of the French thinker on how a generation of early modernists have discussed the interplay of secrecy and surveillance in what he termed "the theatre of power" (Foucault, *Théories et institutions* 49). Thus, my 1993 book *Will Power* was shaped by the thesis of *Discipline and Punish*, that "[w]here the Old Regime sought in bloody spectacle to stage a small number of people to the multitude [. . .] modern power aims to bring a multitude into the view of a few" (156). This was a theme I explored through Shakespeare's successive dramatisations of the figure of the "Great Observer," typified by the Dukes in *Measure for Measure* and *The Tempest*, that stands on the threshold of modernity, and "at the juncture" (*Will Power* 156) of different visual regimes, as a spectator who, rather than being the "observed of all observers" (*Hamlet* 3.1.153), "looms over everything with a single gaze" (Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* 217), and symbolises the whole process by which the spectacular manifestations of power were extinguished in the daily exercise of surveillance, "the vigilance which would soon render useless both the scaffold and the throne" (*Will Power* 156). So, *Will Power* viewed the "Observations on English Bodies" in Shakespeare's comedies via Foucault's premise in *The Birth of the Clinic* (107) that the clinician's gaze "will have access to the truth of things if it rests on them in silence. The

clinical gaze has a paradoxical ability to *hear as soon as it perceives a spectacle*" (*Will Power* 159-60). Shakespearean tragedy staged the pathos of the sovereign deluded enough to proclaim the defunct repressive hypothesis that "[w]hen I do stare, see how the subject quakes" (*King Lear* 4.6.106). But with their biopolitical rationale that in the modern age of mass armies "[t]he world must be peopled" (*Much Ado About Nothing* 2.3.262), I argued, the happy endings of Shakespearean comedy instead placed the subject under the *productive* incitement of an enlightened despot such as "the old fantastical duke of dark corners" in *Measure for Measure* (4.3.136):

> My business in this state
> Made me a looker-on here in Vienna
> Where I have seen corruption boil and bubble
> Till it o'errun the stew; laws for all faults,
> But faults so countenanced that the strong statutes
> Stand like forfeits in a barber's shop,
> As much in mock as mark. (*Measure for Measure* 5.1.310-16)

Foucault's paranoid visual thematics influenced my attempt with *Secret Shakespeare* to construct a biographical study of the so-called Soul of the Age that took as its cue Foucault's proposition in *Discipline and Punish* that "[t]he man described for us, whom we are invited to free" by humanist criticism,

> is already in himself the effect of a subjection more profound than himself. A "soul" inhabits him and brings him to existence, which is itself a factor in the mastery that power exercises over the body. The soul is the effect and instrument of a political anatomy [. . .] (30)

Obedient to this theorem, and Foucault's paradox that "the eraser marks intended to attain the anonymous indicate more surely than any ostentatious penholder the signature of a name" (Lotringer 29), my 2004 book therefore projected a paradigmatic scenario for Shakespearean drama in the stand-off, repeated in play in play, when some sovereign or seducer commands a subject, as Gertrude does, to "let thine eye look like a friend" (*Hamlet* 1.2.69); like Lear, "[w]hich of you shall we say doth love us most?" (*King Lear* 1.1.49); or Cleopatra: "If it be love indeed, tell me how much;" and an Antony replies, "[t]here's beggary in the love that can be reckoned" (*Antony and Cleopatra* 1.1.14-15); Cordelia: "I cannot heave / My heart into my mouth" (*King Lear* 1.1.90-91); and Hamlet: "I have that within which passes show" (*Hamlet* 1.2.85).

Shakespeare's primal theatrical scene, I thereby inferred, was that of the Elizabethan "Bloody Question," or Oath of Supremacy, which primed a generation of Englishmen and women to take the loyalty test demanded of the young Lords of Navarre in *Loves's Labour's Lost*, when in the King's words, they are required at the start to swear:

> to keep those statutes
> [. . .]
> That violates the smallest branch therein.
> If you are armed to do, as sworn to do,
> Subscribe to your oaths, and keep it to. (*Love's Labour's Lost* 1.1.17-23)

With *Secret Shakespeare*, I compared the dramatist who organised his plays around such compulsory truth games to the artist described by Leo Bersani and Ulysse Dutoit in their study of Caravaggio, who "begins by seductively inviting the spectator to read him" (8-9), but whose paintings then "repeatedly initiate the conditions under which a visual field more or less urgently solicits and resists its own symbolization" (18-20). Caravaggio's boys, who flaunt their "sexy secrets," were analogous to Shakespeare's characters, with their religious riddles, I suggested, in that what gave the pictures and plays in which they figure an "intractably enigmatic quality" is a comparable "provocative unreadability," as if "we were being solicited by a desire determined to remain hidden." It was therefore no surprise that the capital offences of sodomy and heresy should be closeted together in this hermeneutic, for in each case the tantalising *agent provocateur* might cause us to "lose our head" (*Secret Shakespeare* 35-36). As the actors warn each other in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, the penalties of self-exposure were such that "[t]hat would hang us, every mother's son" (1.2.64). For Shakespeare wrote, as Patricia Parker observed, in

> an England that included not only an increasingly elaborated secret service as the dispersed eyes and ears of state but also increasingly extended networks of mediation and representation, of secretaries and go-betweens that simultaneously conveyed and enfolded messages and "secretes" [. . .] an England that had recourse to the language of a chamber, closeting [. . .] cover for the simultaneously hidden and open secret [. . .] (271)

It was ironic that *Secret Shakespeare*, which was a book about *putting secrecy on display*, was persistently misread by reviewers as a conspiracy theory about Catholicism, as it closed with the theme of my 2001 British Academy Shakespeare Lecture, that in an age racked by religious wars,

Shakespearean theatre had been devised as a type of heterotopia, one of those "different spaces" preserved within society, the purpose of which, in Foucault's definition, was precisely to defy such inquisition, by suspending judgement under the sign of an indefinite erasure ("Different Spaces" 178-79). As the Queen of France tells Navarre, when he yet again pleads, "at the latest minute of the hour" in *Love's Labour's Lost*, to "[g]rant us your loves," the theatre has "[a] time [. . .] too short / To make a world-without-bargain in [. . .] That's too long for a play" (5.2.769-71, 855). That Shakespeare's playhouse was nevertheless implicated in the scopic regime of a totalising modernity was the subject of my 2007 book, *Shakespeare in French Theory*, the subtitle of which, "King of Shadows," announced not only a methodology derived from Foucault, but an awareness that, if "[a]ll the world's a stage" (*As You Like It* 2.7.138), the name of the Globe itself proclaimed a programme of panopticism. For as Sam Weber emphasises in *Theatricality as Medium*, "a 'world' is not necessarily visible: a 'globe' is [. . .] As such it implies a viewer" (342). This would be the subject of my 2016 book *Worldly Shakespeare*. For sure enough, in *Troilus and Cressida*, Shakespeare's grand spymaster Ulysses imagines "all the commerce" in the state under just such a system of surveillance:

> The providence that's in a watchful state
> Knows almost every grain of Pluto's gold,
> Finds bottom in th'uncomprehensive deeps,
> Keeps place with aught, and almost like the gods
> Do infant thoughts unveil in their dumb cradles. (3.3.189-93)

Reformation historians like Patrick Collinson have tended to believe Elizabeth when she claimed she saw no need for "windows in men's souls," and have inferred from this that the drive for confessional conformity became decoupled from Tudor state-formation.[3] Yet Shakespeare's Ulysses fantasises an intelligence operation so omniscient it can intercept any communication "breath or pen can give expression to" (3.3.196), as though the panoptic dream of a homogenised transparent space, endlessly accessible to the sovereign gaze, had been realised. That was Lord Burghley's aim, as he sat in his map-room charting the "dark corners" of Catholic England (Gillow 4). And such technicity is everywhere in the postmodern Shakespeare, whose plays are now seen to be packed with maps and mapping, surveying and surveillance (Elden). Here Ariel is what Jan Kott called Prospero's

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[3] See, in particular, Collinson; see also Pettegrew.

angelic spirit: "the embodiment [. . .] of the perfect and unspeakable secret police" (George Lamming, qtd in Kott 171). So, though Foucault located the model for this Enlightenment project in London's circular prison, the actual panopticon designed in 1843 by Jeremy Bentham, "the eye of power" (Foucault, "The Eye of Power" 152) is so ubiquitous in Shakespearean culture that we might infer that this could be because, compared to France, Tudor and Stuart England was, in the formulation of historian James Sharpe, already "a much-governed country" (29, 57), already gripped by the dream that, according to the philosopher, defined the Enlightenment:

> It was the dream of a transparent society, visible and legible in each of its parts, the dream of there no longer existing any zones of darkness, zones established by the privileges of royal power of the prerogatives of some corporation, zones of disorder. It was the dream that each individual, whatever position he occupied, might be able to see the whole of society, that men's hearts should communicate, their vision be unobstructed by obstacles, and that the opinion of all should reign over each. (Foucault, "The Eye of Power" 152)

In a chapter of *Shakespeare in French Theory* entitled "Prince of Darkness: Foucault's Renaissance," I argued that Shakespeare had been crucial to the philosopher's concept of the shift of power from spectacle to surveillance (106-12). This is a theory that itself belongs to the Parisian suspicion of vision which developed in resistance to the absolutist state, where, as Martin Jay recounts in his history of French "anti-ocularcentrism," *Downcast Eyes*, the court was both "a dazzling display of superficial brilliance" and a laboratory for testing new techniques of observation, with the king at the centre of the glittering spectacle "both the God-like source of all light and an eye that could see everything" (87-89). Thus, Foucault's maxim that "[v]isibility is a trap" (*Discipline and Punish* 200) had been prefigured by the dramas of Racine, where "anxieties about being the object of the others' look created a theatre of resentment in which being seen was less a mark of glory than shame," and the protagonists "lived in the shadows," if they could, away from the daylight that signalled "the judging eye of God or the sun" (Jay 89). But as Shakespeare's characters know, belief in the evil eye – *Mal Occhio* – as "the underside of vision" (di Stasi) is as pervasive as the terror of being watched by some voyeuristic "Peeping Tom," which René Girard connected to "the mass phobia of spies" (117), and as old as tales like the one told by Aesop, and quoted by the Duke in *Measure for Measure*, about "an o'ergrown lion in a cave / That goes not out to

prey" (1.3.23).

In the fable cited by the Duke, the wily old ruler retires into the shadows of a cave, pretending to be dying, and simply waits for the smaller animals to walk into his trap when they visit him in hope of gifts. This story, also recycled by Jonson in *Volpone*, had been politicised by Horace, who quoted the Fox's apology to the reclusive ruler, that he would have paid him a visit, had he not noticed how every footprint led into the dark, but that none came out; and it seems to belong among those ancient stories, like the legend of the ring of Gyges, which allegorised the distinction drawn by Aristotle between brute force and the more subtle tactics of "the tyrant who makes others visible and is himself invisible" (*The Politics* 344-45). As Marc Shell explicates them, it was through such sinister narratives that classical thinkers expressed a deep cultural suspicion that the tyrant is he who possesses power not only to make himself invisible, but to make visible things invisible to others (30-31). Louis Marin likewise explored how La Fontaine reimagined these Aesopian fables in the palace of the Sun King, to expose how "the court is gorgonized" by the "power of the royal gaze," as a condition of vision "transcending vision itself: light as visible even in its invisibility, its secrecy" (199-200).[4] And such is Lucio's apprehension, when he echoes the Fox's foreboding, that the Duke's guileless subjects have "long run by the hideous law / As mice by lions" (*Measure for Measure* 1.4.63-4). Retold by Henryson, Aesop's cautionary tale of the Lion in the Cave had become for Shakespeare's generation an admonition to shun "the society of the spectacle" by spurning the false promises of the enlightened despotism which binds "up the threatening twigs of birch" (1.3.24): "And those eyes, the break of day, / Lights that do mislead the morn" (4.1.3-4). It was a warning against the treacherous cunning of reason that would surely have appealed to "the Fox" (Macey, *The Lives of Michel Foucault* 473):

> All that is needed [. . .] is to place a supervisor in a central tower and to shut up in each cell a madman, a patient, a prisoner, a condemned man, a worker or schoolboy. By the effect of backlighting, one can observe from the tower, standing out precisely against the light, the small captive shadows in the cells of the periphery. They are like so many cages, so many small theatres, in which each actor is alone, perfectly individualized and constantly visible. The panoptic mechanism [. . .] reverses the principle of the dungeon [. . .] Full lighting and the eye of the supervisor capture better than darkness [. . .] Visibility is a trap. (Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* 200)

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[4] See also 94-104.

Bentham's panopticon was the culmination of the dream of universal surveillance, but the panoptic idea was far older than Foucault allowed. For in 1516 Thomas More likewise imagined a carceral space with an observation tower at its centre, from which radiated rows of houses fitted with doors that were never locked, and were "so easy to be opened that they will follow the least drawing of a finger and shut again alone. Who so will may go in, for there is nothing within the houses that is private" (*Utopia* 60-61). So, as the historian Pieter Spierenburg contends, Foucault's history of the prison is *reinforced* by the data of which he was unaware from Amsterdam and London, where "infliction of pain and the public character of punishment [. . .] retreated in a long, drawn-out process," which by the 1590s had "anticipated the more fundamental change in sensibilities which set in after the middle of the eighteenth century" (viii, 200). And in his study of the paranoid world of Elizabethan spying, John Archer concurs that the story of the rise of *super-vision* remains as the theorist tells it: of a sovereignty that resigns the darkness of the dungeon to become an eye that *over-sees*, without being seen, by a subject under ceaseless observation. If the Renaissance was "Foucault's Lost Chance" (Logan), his error, it seems, was simply not to have noticed that the robe worn by Elizabeth I was embroidered with the thousand eyes of Argus, to symbolise the "ceaseless vigilance" the sovereign was promised by Scripture: "Blessed are your eyes, for they see" (Matthew 13:16; Graziani 247, 256). For in certain portraits, this Queen's motto, the philosopher should have known, was *Tutto vedo* ("I see all"),[5] which is how Shakespeare's Apollonian King Richard II dramatises his project of enlightenment:

> when the searching eye of heaven is hid
> Behind the globe, that lights the lower world,
> Then thieves and robbers range abroad unseen
> In murders and in outrage bloody here;
> But when from under this terrestrial ball
> He fires the proud tops of the eastern pines,
> And darts his light through every guilty hole,
> Then murders, treasons, and detested sins,
> The cloak of night being off their backs,
> Stand bare and naked, trembling at themselves. (3.2.33-43)

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[5] The panoptic motto appears in Elizabeth's "Sieve" portrait of 1583, attributed to Quentin Massys and probably commissioned by Sir Christopher Hatton. The sieve complements the motto as a symbol of the Queen's discernment in separating the good from the bad: see Doran, "Virginity, Divinity and Power" 186-87.

Under the manic vigilantism of Dogberry's Night Watch, this discovery scene would become *Much Ado About Nothing* through over-noting. So, if the sovereign is the one who can "see all" in Shakespeare's imagination, the question this must raise for the writer in such a scopic system is "What is an author?" Books and discourses began to be assigned authors, Foucault had explained in his famous essay, "to the extent that authors became subject to punishment" (108). Renaissance writing was therefore fraught with risk, but from the Shakespearean moment, a penal system of punishment gave way to an authorial system of ownership, as authors took upon their own heads the responsibility for their words. It is this shift of responsibility that seems to be negotiated in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, when the players determine to "[l]eave the killing out, when all is said and done," in deference to suspicious old "moonshine" (3.1.14, 45-46). The privileges of authorship begin, we thus see, when authors retreat from referentiality into the aesthetic void of "nothing in the world" (5.1.77), protesting how "[a]ll for your delight, we are not here" (5.1.114). If Shakespeare avoided the pains of authorship by such self-effacement, this was thus by a circumspect design we must distinguish from innocence of intention. So, in *Shakespeare's Book* I proposed that "tragedy begins for Shakespeare in a problem of truth-telling like the one considered by Foucault to be the birth of tragedy in ancient Greece" ("A Stringless Instrument" 107-08). For what Greek tragedy staged, the philosopher maintained, was the deadlock when *parrēsia*, the contract to speak truth to power, is revoked, in a culture where "the king's servant, the messenger is still quite vulnerable, and still takes a risk in speaking." This drama was therefore a fight to the death over free speech and silence, between the one "who has power but lacks the truth" and "the one who has truth but lacks power" (Foucault, *Fearless Speech* 32-33).

If Shakespeare's "moonshine" does mirror the "imperial votress," Elizabeth, as the power behind a play that depends on "her absence, her exclusion," a Foucauldian critique suggests his *Dream* can be compared to a contemporary picture of the artist in the studio, like *Las Meninas*, where Velazquez paints himself gazing out of the frame to the virtual place where we now stand, but which is occupied by his models, who are dimly identifiable, peering from a glass at the back, as the mirrored King and Queen, and, as Foucault comments, it is their *absent presence* that defines the point where art cuts free from its patrons, and the doomed world of princes to which it hitherto referred. For now "the entire picture is looking out at a scene for which it is itself a scene" (*The*

Order of Things 16).[6] So, we will never know what Velazquez is painting on the hidden side of his canvas. We may imagine it to be *Las Meninas*. But the painter called into doubt the reality of the transient objects of his gaze, by having the arrival of a chamberlain suggest that the royal couple "are just passing through, as his responsibilities included opening and closing doors" (Clark 48). Philip IV thereby visits the artist in his studio, as Alexander waited upon Apelles, as an ephemeral distraction for the sovereign artist. This was an age, More observed, of "kings' games, as it were, stage plays, and for the more part played upon scaffolds" (*The History of Richard III* 80-81). But like the court painter playing with the Habsburgs, Shakespeare, too, seems to want to bring down the curtain on this tedious game, in fatigue that "I am aweary of this moon. Would he would change" (*A Midsummer Night's Dream* 5.1.242).

The mirror was the chosen emblem of Elizabeth's successor James, who told Parliament that his own speech was "such a Mirror, or Crystal, as through the transparentness thereof, you may see the heart of your King" (*The Kings Maiesties Speech*, qtd in Rickard 124); and Shakespeare's Velazquez-like framing of the monarch in the mirror during the masque of Stuart sovereigns that is staged by the Witches in *Macbeth* has therefore come to be viewed as one of the definitive statements of Baroque court art, staged at Hampton Court in tribute to the king whose state secrets included connivance in the beheading of his own mother, the eighth and final spectre to appear in the accusing procession, Mary Queen of Scots.[7] So, like the reflection in *Las Meninas*, Shakespeare's mirror appears to be far more mediated than an act of sycophantic homage, because the dramatist has complicated his official commission by superimposing the space of the play over that of the hall where the House of Stuart watched, and to similarly subversive effect. For the intrusion of James's reflected head beside Macbeth's in the Witches' ball carries a condemning twist, when these agents of terror turn a command performance into a shock surprise to "[s]how his eyes and grieve his heart" (*Macbeth* 4.1.126; Holden 235). Shakespeare had called his theatre a mirror to "show scorn her own image," a "glass / Where you may see the inmost part of you" (*Hamlet* 3.2.21, 3.4.19-20). If King James did see his own head juxtaposed with that of the murderer it would thereby clinch the criminality of the monarch it reflects, and the

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[6] See also Montrose 125.

[7] For the importance of mirror symbolism in the consolidation of absolutism, see in particular Murray.

impermanence of these royal ghosts, who come and go as "shadows," like the actor who plays the king, and "struts and frets his hour upon the stage, / And then is heard no more" (*Macbeth* 5.5.23-25):

> FIRST WITCH: Show.
> SECOND WITCH: Show.
> THIRD WITCH: Show.
> ALL THE WITCHES: Show his eyes and grieve his heart
> Come like shadows, so depart. (4.1.123-27)

Foucault never once employed the term "political theology." But he organised his most political work, *Discipline and Punish*, around the theological nostrum he derived from Ernst Kantorowicz and *The King's Two Bodies*, that "[i]n the darkest region of the political field" the condemned criminal "represents the symmetrical, inverted figure of the king" (*Discipline and Punish* 29). And in Richard Crookback's anachronising self-realisation as "[d]eformed, unfinished, sent before my time" (*Richard III* 1.1.2), he identified a Shakespearean premonition of the theme of the occult "link between the sovereign above the law and the criminal beneath" that he would develop in his final lectures: the uncanny homology that "the first moral monster is the political monster [. . .] The first monster is the king [. . .] Kings are nothing else but tigers" (*Abnormal* 92, 94, 97). For the late Foucault, as much as for Carl Schmitt, Giorgio Agamben (*Homo Sacer*) or Jacques Derrida, "the beast *is* the sovereign [. . .] the one recognizing in the other a sort of double [. . .] depending on the fact that they both share that very singular position of being outlaws, above or at a distance from the law" (*The Beast and the Sovereign* 32). So, "he who plays the sovereign plays the beast" in this calculus (32). For like King Ubu, in Alfred Jarry's absurdist horror-comic drama, Shakespeare's player "king of shreds and patches" is "[a] cutpurse of the empire and the rule" (*Hamlet* 3.4.89-92) according to Foucault's Collège de France lectures; and what this means is that this sovereign lawbreaker is "he who decides on the exception" (Schmitt 5, 33):

> Shakespeare's "historical" tragedies are tragedies about right centered on the problem of the usurper and dethronement, of the murder of kings and the birth of the new being who is constituted by the coronation of a king. How can an individual use violence, intrigue, murder, and war to acquire a public might that can bring about the reign of order? How can illegitimacy produce law? At a time when the theory and history of right are trying to weave the unbroken continuity of public might, Shakespearean tragedy, in

contrast, dwells on the wound, on the repeated injury that is inflicted on the body of the kingdom when kings die violent deaths and illegitimate sovereigns come to the throne. (Foucault, "Society Must Be Defended" 174)

"We touch here on an apparently marginal problem that I think is important," Foucault explained to his presumably bemused listeners at the Collège, when he swerved from his subject of governmentality to the infamy of the Shakespearean usurper, "and this is the problem of theatrical practice in politics, or the theatrical practice of *raison d'État*."

Such dramatisation might be "a mode of manifestation of the sovereign as holder of state power," he conceded. But he had grasped Kantorowicz's point about the difference between the office and its incumbent enough to insist on the contrast and opposition between the "traditional ceremonies of royalty," displays which "from anointment to coronation up to the entry into towns or the funerals of sovereigns, marked the religious character" of monarchy, and "this modern kind of theatre," in which the scenario was always the state of emergency of the "*coup d'État* carried out by the sovereign himself" (*Security, Territory, Population* 265). Theatre, in this view, was set over against power, which it depicted as "a wilderness of tigers" (*Titus Andronicus* 3.1.54), for Shakespeare's political significance was to have shown how *raison d'État* is not *rational* at all when "a dog's obeyed in office" (*King Lear* 4.6.153). Thus, just as Kantorowicz crowned Dante over his Hohenstaufen *Führer* Frederick II, on the grounds that while the emperor stood for "the manipulation of myth, the *Commedia* (like *Richard II*) stands for the fiction that knows itself as such" (Kahn 95-96),[8] so the Foucault of these lectures advanced Shakespeare over the maniacal monarchs he served, in awe at how the plays dramatise the clownish irrationality of power, and over and again confront the Pascalian Catch 22 that prefaces *The History of Madness*, that "[m]en are so necessarily mad, that not being mad would be being mad through another trick that madness played" (Pascal, *Pensées*, qtd in Foucault, *The History of Madness* xxvii):

Shakespeare's historical drama really is the drama of the *coup d'État* [. . .] Just as in politics *raison d'État* manifests itself in a kind of theatricality, so theatre is organized around the representation of this *raison d'État* in its dramatic,

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[8] Compare Alain Boureau: "Kantorowicz inverted Schmitt's understanding of political theology. Political theology did not furnish an authoritarian arm to secular sovereigns because they possessed it already [. . .] Political theology used the moment of the Incarnation as the model [. . .] to create fictions that remove man from the direct pressures of nature, power, and the group" (106).

intense, and violent form of the *coup d'État* [. . .] State, *raison d'État*, necessity, and risky *coups d'État* will form the new tragic horizon of politics and history. At the same time as the birth of *raison d'État*, I think a certain tragic sense of history is born [. . .] in this theatrical and violent form [. . .] something that quite remarkably makes one think of Hitlerian nights, of the night of the long knives. (*Security, Territory, Population* 265-66)

"Why was [Hamlet] sent into England? Why, because a was mad. A shall recover his wits there; or if a do not, 'tis no great matter [. . .] Twill not be seen in him there. There the men are as mad as he" (*Hamlet* 5.1.138-42). With his Ship of Fools bound for England, Foucault's Shakespeare is the undeceived servant, in these late lectures, of the Ubuesque King James, "The Wisest Fool in Christendom," a writer who, through the plays he plots for a mad and murderous monarchy, "represents the state itself" (*Security, Territory, Population* 266). Nothing more is heard about the "author function" in Foucault's praise now of an author whose function was to reveal how it is precisely a "grotesque" *disqualification* for office that is now "one of the essential processes of arbitrary sovereignty" (*Abnormal* 12). Instead, the philosopher whose history of madness was trashed for confusing fact with fiction rejoices in a theatre that presents "the person who possesses power" as, "in his costume, his gestures, his body, his sexuality, and his way of life, a despicable grotesque, and ridiculous individual" (12). "The limit and transgression depend on each other," Foucault had written in his "A Preface to Transgression;" but in Shakespeare, where the Ship of Fools became the Ship of State, it seems he found at last a form of symbolic transgression that was itself "as mad as the vexed sea, singing aloud" (*King Lear* 4.3.2; Foucault, "A Preface to Transgression" 73).

For Foucault, when he surprised the Collège de France by returning to the speaking subject, it was because Shakespeare refused to sing "power's ode" ("Society Must Be Defended" 172-77), dreaming of "the freedom to roam," and of "free genesis, self-accomplishment [. . .] a freedom against the world" ("Dream, Imagination and Existence" 53-54), that his dramas rank among the origins of modern critical thought.[9] In 2013, I countered with my book *Free Will* that Shakespeare's will to freedom in fact took a less self-expressive form when he *did* sing power's ode; but in its own words, and *back to itself.* Yet the particular relation to the power of institutionalised religion of this intellectual who liked to recall "nostalgically what church power used to be" (Jordan 197) has been an unexpected focus of recent critical theory. For

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[9] For a stimulating commentary on this return to the subject, see Paras, 101-23 passim.

Foucault had begun his thinking life as an altar boy in Vichy France; and he ended it as a pious exegete in a Dominican library, joking how he was the last person in Paris still "interested in the daily operation of the Catholic Church" (Jordan 197). Notoriously, he also hailed the Iranian Revolution as a reprise of "those old dreams the West had known" in the sixteenth century, "when it wanted to inscribe the figures of spirituality on the earth of politics." In "their hunger, humiliations," and fervour for "sacrifice and the promises of the millennium," Foucault enthused, Shiite militants were reviving the tragic spectacles of the Catholic League ("Is It Useless to Revolt?" 132; see also Afary and Anderson 44, 62). According to the classicist Paul Veyne, Foucault was here paradoxically inspired by "aversion to dogmatism [. . .] He wanted not to reduce this future to Western ideals, not to make the veiling of women an *ultima ratio*" (126). But nothing the philosopher ever wrote fuelled more controversy, nor was so disastrously overtaken by events.

"There is a man who, with a single word pronounced from afar, is able to launch hundreds of thousands of protestors against the tanks in the streets of Teheran," exclaimed Foucault, when he met the Ayatollah Khomeini. The Parisian thinker had gone to interview the exiled Iranian cleric exhilarated by "this attempt to open up a religious dimension in politics," Veyne confirms; and when secular Iranians turned up at his apartment to protest, "[h]e was not impressed [. . .] Foucault had made his choice" (126-28). No wonder, then, that it has become possible "to detect a 'theological turn' in Foucault's archaeologies," which, by opposing religion as a thought "from the inside" to their political "thought from the outside," might be described as "modern versions of Christian negative theologies" (Bradley 116-17). Foucault's genealogy of confession has in fact been crucial to the picture of early modern political theology working not to separate but to "hold together" a "terrestrial power" with one "directed toward the world beyond," so that the "transcendent horizon provides a political leverage outside of history to motivate actions in history" (Carette, "Foucault, Religion" 375). The French theorist had honed this thought at Berkeley, where his colleagues included Stephen Greenblatt, whose *Renaissance Self-Fashioning* became the only work on Shakespeare Foucault ever cited (Introduction to *The Use of Pleasure* 11). Greenblatt was himself influenced by Foucault's hermeneutics of suspicion, and closed his book with a confession of his own, that by the time it was finished its title had become redundant, because he had learned that there was no such thing as a free subject: indeed, "the human subject itself began to seem remarkably unfree, the ideological product of the relations of power in a

particular society" (256). But the Parisian professor was equally
impressed by his Californian hosts, who seduced him with a concept
that would deflect his trajectory; which was the notion of *life style*: a
"freely-chosen life-aesthetic" (Paras 135).

Because his change of mind, away from relations of power and
toward the arts of living, was expounded by Foucault mainly back at the
Collège de France, awareness of the extent to which the philosopher of
discipline and punishment had moved on from the dark materials of his
carceral society has only slowly percolated the Anglophone academy,
with the release of the tape-recorded sessions. But as Eric Paras asserts
in one of the few studies yet to absorb the "mark 2 Foucault," the
significance of this late discovery of "life style" can hardly be
exaggerated, as it means that the same man "created the twentieth
century's most devastating critique of the free subject – and then, in a
voice that by the end trembled from pain and debility, liquidated it"
(158). The recent reconstruction of the lectures Foucault gave in 1981 at
the Catholic University of Louvain confirms how he nonetheless
remained a self-confessed atheist, suspicious of the transcendental truth-
claims of Christianity and the power structures behind them (Carette,
Foucault and Religion xi; Bradley 117). For there he reiterated how the
Christian practice of communal profession – *exomologēsis* – was
ominously related to law and psychiatry, as a form of self-sacrifice: "one
must publicly attest before the eyes of this world that one is ready to
sacrifice oneself in this world [. . .] to arrive in the other world." This
sinister "connection between veridiction and mortification" was
"fundamentally different" to the Stoic code, but "absolutely essential"
to the Christian technology of individualisation, Foucault kept repeating
(*Wrong-Doing* 112). And intriguingly, he affiliated his own critique of
such exhibitionistic truth-telling displays with Greek tragedy and
Shakespeare, for was not this drama also forensically concerned with
questioning the subjection of the truth in this world to otherworldly
verification?

> The central problem in Shakespeare [. . .] it seems to me, is the question of
> the foundation of sovereign right: How [. . .] can a sovereign succeed in
> legitimately exercising power that he seized through war, revolt, civil war,
> crime, or violating oaths? (58)

The solution Foucault supplied to the legitimacy problem is the one
that Henry V gives in Shakespeare's play. It is "ceremony" which covers
power with a magic cloak of pretended truthfulness, a "form of faith" as
dazzling as a "kind of god," whose "soul of adoration" consists in

"[c]reating awe and fear in other men." "What art thou, thou idol ceremony?" (4.1.221), Henry reasonably demands of this "experience of the sublime," which gives "form to the central *aporia* between sovereignty and political making that defines early modern political theology" (Hammill 133). His answer is to disaggregate "thrice-gorgeous ceremony" into its component items of regalia, the gaudy baubles that constitute "the tide of pomp" which monarchy inherited (*Henry V* 4.2.246-48), when, as Kantorowicz pictured the investiture ceremony in his essay on "The Mysteries of State," the absolute Prince stepped almost literally "into the shoes of the Roman Pontiff" (382-85):

> the balm, the scepter, and the ball,
> The sword, the mace, the crown imperial,
> The intertissued robe of gold and pearl,
> The farced title running 'fore the King,
> The throne he sits on [. . .] (*Henry V* 4.1.242-46)

Foucault invented a Greek word for the effect of all this glittering but factitious veridical paraphernalia, which might be translated as "acting truly" *after the truth*. As the symbolic forms of faith in supernatural validation, the flashy "rituals and forms of manifestation" that hold power and religion together in a "proud dream" (*Henry* v, 4.1.221) of transcendental truth constituted a technology of the sublime which he termed "alethurgy." So, the philosopher came to sound very like Shakespeare's inheritor figures when they meditate upon the "post-truth" effects of "the hollow crown" (*Richard II* 3.2.156), as he doubted whether power could ever be exercised without the symbolization of some pretended "ring of truth [. . .] an alethurgical circle that turns around it and accompanies it" (Foucault, *On the Government of the Living* 17). But he also echoed the Machiavellian Prince Harry when he added that it is a mistake to imagine that "if one were to strip power" of this "golden rigol" (*2 Henry IV* 4.3.166) one would uncover its real "kernel of violence [. . .] the naked game of life and death." For there can be no transfer of sovereign power "without a showy garb," Foucault concluded, when it is precisely in the dazzling ostentation of its vulgar bling that power's claim to truth resides, as Shakespeare's rulers prove (*On the Government of the Living* 7, 17):

> Thus did I keep my person fresh and new,
> My presence like a robe pontifical –
> Ne'er seen but wondered at – and so my state,
> Seldom but sumptuous, showed like a feast,

And won by rareness such solemnity. (*1 Henry IV* 3.2.55-9)

"It is but trash," we are assured in *The Tempest*, when the drunken butler dons "glistening apparel" to become "King Stephano" (4.1.220-24). Yet directly afterwards the spirit Ariel helps "*to attire*" Prospero in identical "frippery," so that he can present himself as the "famous Duke of Milan" (5.1.87, 195). In Shakespeare, then, there can be "[n]o hegemony without alethurgy" (Foucault, *On the Government of the Living* v). Foucault illustrated this axiom by describing the Roman throne-room painted with the horoscope of the emperor Septimius Severus, a décor that was designed to rig the imperial hotline to heaven. But government has never dispensed with this supernatural aura, the theorist continued, which became even more extra-terrestrial during the Wars of Religion, with the fabrication of the mythology of Divine Right. Eric Santner has noticed how Foucault therefore vacillates as to whether the sublime of sacred kingship has now been entirely superseded by the biopolitical "management of life," in the hospital and clinic, or whether the mystical presence of the king has seeped into "the lives of modern citizens" (8). Roberto Esposito similarly queries:

> "How are sovereignty and biopolitics to be related? [. . .] It is said that one emerges out of the background of the other but [. . .] Is it the definite withdrawal of a preceding presence, or rather is it the horizon that embraces and holds what newly emerges within it?" (33)

These are questions at the heart of today's agenda for early modern studies. For it was not by chance that Foucault structured his final lectures around the incarnational logic he derived from Kantorowicz, of the king's "Christological" double body, which "involves not only the transitory element that is born and dies, but another that remains unchanged by time" (*Discipline and Punish* 28).

The idea elaborated in *The King's Two Bodies*, of the existence of a "secret bond" uniting the state secrets of "modern power and the most immemorial *arcani imperii*," has been described by Giorgio Agamben as the "vanishing point" which the lines of Foucault's inquiry "converge toward without reaching." But the French theorist's deference to Kantorowicz offers the clue to his evolving thinking about this "tenacious correspondence" between the modern management of bodies and the archaic mysteries of state (Agamben 6). Thus, without, I believe, reading a word of either Carl Schmitt or Walter Benjamin, Foucault could clearly perceive that the function of theology in post-truth politics was still to veil the arbitrary executive decision of the

grotesque and despicable President Ubu in transcendental legitimacy; and that, in the infamous words of "Hitler's Crown Jurist," "[s]overeign is who decides on the exception," because "[t]he exception in jurisprudence is analogous to the miracle in theology" (Schmitt 5, 36). Then we recall that although Foucault had been full of naïve hope when he went off to interview the holy man, the philosopher returned to Paris saying the Ayatollah "spoke to me of his programme of government; if he took power, the stupidity of it would make one weep" (Veyne 127).

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