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SAA 2015 Abstract

I See Dead People:
2 Henry IV and the Corpse of History

In his influential, enigmatic, and final book, *Camera Lucida*, Roland Barthes meditates on Alexander Gardner's famous 1865 photograph of Lewis Payne (aka Lewis Powell), who was soon to be hanged in connection with the Lincoln assassination conspiracy. For Barthes, the photo's fascination resides in its collapsing of time, a feature he argues is "vividly legible in historical photographs: there is always a defeat of Time in them: *that* is dead and *that* is going to die." The photograph thus represents multiple temporal registers organized around the delimiting horizon of death—"an anterior future of which death is the stake."[1]

If one can say of the Payne image, as Barthes does, "He is dead and he is going to die," the same may usefully be said for the heroes of Shakespeare's history plays. My paper suggests that Barthes' understanding of historical photographs can help us conceptualize how both history plays and their embedded religious rites complicate their promised transcendence of time by staging the temporal overlap of anterior and immanent death. My paper focuses on a reference in *2 Henry IV* to the relics of Richard II, "scraped from Pomfret stones" to enliven a dispirited rebel army (1.1.204). This "corpse" army—men who are themselves both dead and doomed to die—can exceed the limitations of spiritless bodily action only by repurposing the corporeal remainder of a dead man (1.1.191-92). Although the memory of Richard is efficaciously revived, my paper emphasizes first-class relics' definitional status as corporeal remains of the dead.

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[1] Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography.* Trans. Richard Howard. 95-96.

Deni Kasa

"The Pattern of All Patience": Lear and New Testament Modes of Interpretation

King Lear has long been read as a secularized play that rejects the promise of Christian transcendence (Elton 29). As Hannibal Hamlin has argued recently, however, the play's numerous allusions to the Bible place *King Lear* in conversation with Christian theology despite its apparent disenchantment. By describing Lear as the "pattern of all patience," for example, Shakespeare links Lear to Job, whose patience was proverbial (319). At the same time, Hamlin thinks that both Lear and Job are not patient at all. This paper reads this issue through a New Testament understanding of patience so as to redefine the play's engagement with transcendence. The key passage for my purposes is Romans 5:3-4: "we rejoice in tribulations, knowing that tribulation bringeth forth patience· And patience experience, and experience hope." Paul thinks of patience as an interpretive attitude rather than as a Stoic indifference to tribulations: he argues, that is, that the patient interpreter reads tribulations as signs of hope by placing them within the Christian narrative of transcendent grace. In calling himself the pattern of all patience, I argue, Lear alludes to this New Testament form of interpretation while at the same time demonstrating that it is not available to him because he does not have access to Christian transcendence. The unavailability of patience, I argue, is largely responsible for his political ineffectiveness in the first scene and thus, by extension, for Lear's suffering as a whole. This reading of patience in *King Lear* engages some of the concerns of the "turn to religion" in Early Modern studies by suggesting that the play does not necessarily reject the transcendent as much as demonstrate the crippling effect of its absence on politics and interpretation.

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Transcendence and Edification in Bottom's England

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Building on the recent interest in St. Paul's epistles in studies of English renaissance literature, I consider *A Midsummer Night's Dream* as an experiment in Pauline accommodation of various transcendental desires with the present necessities of edification, Paul's figure for the building and maintenance of church unity. With reference to the religious controversies of the 1590s, the tension between transcendence and edification can involve several distinctions, for example: (1) between the loss of individuation in the "all in all" of the *parousia* and the Pauline figure of the organic corporate church; (2) between the invisible church of the elect and the visible church of nominal believers; (3) between the direct or individual experience of the divine and collective or mediated forms of religious experience; (4) between scripturally mandated forms of religious observance, particularly sacraments, and things indifferent. I argue that the play's embedding of marriage ritual in a layered and irregular natural world embodied by fairies presents a fluid ontology blending the natural and spiritual, blurring the theoretical boundaries between some forms of transcendence and edification in a manner similar to Richard Hooker's *Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*. By contrast, as the most Pauline figure in the play, Bottom's encounter with Titania in the woods and his performance of <u>*Pyramus and Thisbe*</u> with the mechanicals on stage reveals the social and cultural limitations of more private forms of transcendence and theatrical forms of edification.

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Prosperous Art, Perilous Mouths:
The Political Uses of Religious Speech in *Measure for Measure*

   Near the beginning of *Measure for Measure*, Isabella pleads for her brother Claudio
before the intransigent Angelo by staking the efficacy of her argument on a shared assurance in a
transcendent source of authorization: the law and its administrators, she declares, ought to be
swayed by mercy because mercy was divinely exercised through the redemption of humankind.
Isabella's "prosperous art," as Claudio calls it, displays an impressive capacity for religious
rhetoric, but as I will argue in this paper, there is much riding on its eventual constriction, which
is owing both to Angelo's hypocrisy and the disguised Duke's machinations. The consequence of
their actions is to render the transcendent into a linguistic effect susceptible to varying meanings
and functions. The play's ending reveals the guiding impulse to be political, for the effect of
subjecting religious belief to the high contingencies of language is that it enables religious
speech to become politically weaponized. The Duke's final triumph testifies to how effectively
the process facilitates the accretion of power. More broadly, *Measure for Measure* instantiates
early modern drama's capacity to register changes in the use and circulation of religious
language and its attendant concepts in the theatrical space, where questions of authority cannot
find stable answers but are endlessly deferred.

Secondary Sources:

Philosophical Investigations, Ludwig Wittgenstein
Political Theologies in Shakespeare's England: The Sacred and the State in Measure for
   Measure, Debora Kuller Shuger
The Rhetoric of Religion: Studies in Logology, Kenneth Burke

Jennifer R. Rust (Saint Louis University): Abstract for "Shakespeare and Transcendence" (SAA 2015)

Title: 'Of Government, the properties to unfold': Governmentalities in *Measure for Measure*

Acknowledging the major impact that a certain reading of Foucault has had in New Historicist criticism, I argue that Foucault's later lectures at the College de France provide a more nuanced framework for grasping the interplay between the political and the religious in the early modern period. These spheres become not simply matters of "power" but questions of "government." Government is defined by an intrinsic concern with the conduct of individuals and communities. Diverse forms of communal relations are governed by codes of conduct (in families, parishes, monasteries). Government in this sense arises originally in the pastoral activities of the Church and only begins to move into other spheres during the sixteenth century. Foucault's concept of governmentality expresses this broader dynamic by encompassing the *mentalités* shaping conduct as well as the specific practices of governments. I claim that the concept of governmentality illuminates the conflicts between proliferating forms of government (monastic, Catholic and Protestant pastoral, emergent *Raison d'Etat*) in *Measure for Measure*. A unique model of secularization in which the religious is intensified rather than disenchanted is implicit in Foucault's account. In the Reformation, different pastorates (Protestant and Counter-Reformation) proliferate and intensify the spiritual field; *Measure* extends these insights by illustrating how pastoral governmentality migrates into the political field. As the play turns on questions of sexual conduct, pastors and governors multiply and conflict. Isabella and Angelo initially share a stringency of conduct: their ascetic self-government potentially models social and political government. These intense forms of ascetic conduct offer the vantage from which the Duke appears challenged as a singular sovereign at the beginning of the play. Under this pressure, the Duke discretely resumes governing—as a Friar. He is compelled to pass through the religious (in the strict sense) in order to legitimize his government of certain forms of conduct (sexual and economic).

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SAA Abstract LaPorte

Title: "*Is it to operate like a sermon?*': Reading Shakespeare in the Nineteenth Century"

   The Victorians were unusually given to devotional readings of Shakespeare. Charlotte Brontë dramatizes this tendency in *Shirley* (1849), where the heroine Caroline Helstone gives her cousin Robert Moore impassioned advice about the best way to read *Coriolanus*. In response to Moore's doubtful inquiry, "Is it to operate like a sermon?," Helstone responds, ""*It is to stir you, to give you new sensations. It is to make you feel your life strongly—not only your virtues, but your vicious, perverse points*." So, yes, in other words: it is to operate like a sermon.
   Even Brontë, nonetheless, might have been surprised to see Caroline Helstone's attitude strongly taken up in the Shakespeare Tercentenary celebrations and henceforth throughout in the nineteenth century. So-called "Shakespearean Sermons" became a matter of course in the Victorian world—in England at Stratford-on-Avon especially, but also abroad and as far away as Toronto, Madison, and San Francisco. Sometimes a sermon was dubbed "Shakespearean" because a preacher supplemented Biblical meditations with reflections on Shakespeare. Over time, however, many omitted the Bible entirely and used Shakespeare as an implicit or explicit substitute for it. In each case, the idea was to read Shakespeare devotionally, and thereby to come to grips with his transcendent power.
   In the following paper, I hope to grapple with the devotional ways in which the Victorians read Shakespeare, with the overlooked merits, as well as the perils, of this form of devotion. The collapse (or, at least, radical reconfiguration) of the secularization narrative in recent years makes this an excellent time to revisit the stakes not only of Renaissance literature but of Victorian hermeneutics, as well.

Works consulted (among others):

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The Priority of the Word: Verbal Witness and the Miraculous in *Cymbeline*

Author: Melissa Beth Schubert

The miraculous phenomena in Shakespeare's late plays—when considered alongside the contemporaneous doctrinal controversy in the English church over the continuation or cessation of miracles—turn out to be distinctively early modern. In this paper, I suggest that *Cymbeline*'s double-interest in texts and miracles both bears resemblance to and departs from the theological discourse. Cymbeline's miraculous resolutions require a partnership between the visible *deus ex machina* and the material *dei verbum. Cymbeline* simultaneously affirms the need for verbal witness to accompany visual phenomena and questions the presumed superiority of the verbal over the visual.

Bruce Young
ABSTRACT: "Upon Such Sacrifices": Atonement and Ethical Transcendence in *King Lear*

Shakespeare, like many Anglican theologians of his time, was eclectic in his use of atonement theory, though he prefers certain images and uses various models in distinctively different ways. Like earlier plays, *King Lear* makes some use of financial, legal, and sacrificial models, yet it does so in part to show their limitations. *King Lear* also uses models of healing, moral example and influence, and personal and social transformation.

Despite its pagan setting, I see the following features of *King Lear* as especially relevant to Christian ideas of atonement:

(1) Exchange or transfer, especially of property or punishment.

(2) The essentially destitute condition of humans.

(3) *Kenosis* or self-emptying.

(4) Grace, that is, freely offered love and forgiveness.

(5) Social and personal transformation. With Cordelia especially, this latter idea is linked with images of healing and redemption.

Though sacrifice is missing from this list, the word appears in the play, but it is linked with self-emptying and grace rather than with satisfying the craving for punishment. Together, these concepts related to atonement point to what I call "ethical transcendence"—a transcendence of economic and forensic models of atonement and of the idea of the self as self-contained and primarily serving its own interests. By placing transcendence in an ethical context—in the transformation of character and relationships and in the "being for the other" by which the self transcends itself—the play in a sense secularizes religious concepts (that is, places them in a mundane context) yet also uncovers the transcendence and holiness located in the here and now.

The Ecstasy of Secret Study:
The Tempest, Humanism, and the Problem of Mysticism in Seventeenth-Century England

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According to Samuel Johnson's noteworthy remark about *The Tempest*, before "the character and conduct of Prospero may be understood, something must be known of the system of enchantment" that informed the traditions of esoteric culture leading up to Shakespeare's lifetime. Johnson's point comports well with those scholars who have, in various ways, charted a path from ancient and medieval manifestations of the occult through the magical conjectures of Marsilio Ficino and John Dee to the contemporary relevance of Giordano Bruno. Going beyond the extant competing attempts to isolate historical precursors to the figure of Prospero, this paper situates *The Tempest* along a different historical trajectory than that recommended by Johnson. Specifically, I argue that one can fruitfully read the play against the historical backdrop of that period of the seventeenth century when humanists, poets, and philosophers trenchantly debated the social significance of secret inquiry into mystical subjects: 1614-1674. From Isaac Casaubon's *De rebus sacris et ecclesiasticis exercitationes XVI* (1614), which explicated and critiqued the *Corpus Hermeticum*, to Méric Casaubon's and Henry More's polemics against alchemists and enthusiasts (such as Thomas Vaughan) in the 1650s and 1660s, one of the most pressing issues of religious speculation involved how to counteract those mystics and magi who sequestered themselves from mainstream society with a desire to inculcate their own private inspirations. By reading Shakespeare's romance in light of these analogues, I maintain that *The Tempest* presages nicely that radical confrontation between humanist inquiry and mystical speculation that would characterize much of seventeenth-century English intellectual culture. In this sense the most radical implications *The Tempest*, which juxtaposes the dual potencies of humanist textuality and ecstatic rapture, arguably come into sharper focus when read *vis-à-vis* the decades following its first appearance on stage.

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