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# INTRODUCTION

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PHILIP LORENZ

**T**he following four essays respond to the question of “Literary History and the Religious Turn” in different ways.

In “The Religious Turn (to Theory) in Shakespeare Studies,” Julia Reinhard Lupton opens the cluster with a call to view the “religious turn” as a chance “for a return to theory, to concepts, concerns and modes of reading that found worlds and cross contexts, born out of specific historical situations, traumas and debates, but not reducible to them.” For Lupton, Shakespeare’s plays “are voiced “*ex cathedra*” . . . in a profane space cleared and illuminated by their own visceral staging of religious motifs.” This *staging*, then, becomes an opportunity for a rigorous engagement with religion as a *form of thinking*, that takes on “the big questions and systematic frameworks of psychoanalysis, philosophy, theology, and politics from the other side of our immersion in tracts and ephemera.”

Graham Hammill responds to Lupton’s call for a return to theory, by analyzing the operation of the theological imaginary in the political theologies of Machiavelli and Spinoza. “The Religious Turn: Exegesis and the Theological Imaginary,” locates the roots of the logic of the sovereign exception in the sixteenth and seventeenth century political theologies of Machiavelli and Spinoza. Hammill shows how both thinkers “turn one facet of religion against another, pitting exegesis against the theological imaginary in order to explore religion as a form of political thought.” For each thinker, sovereignty’s capacity relies on its relation to a theological imaginary. While Machiavelli “decathects” the theological imaginary upon which sovereignty rests by turning religion against itself, Spinoza demonstrates how the Hebrews re-cathect it, by transferring the *mysteries of State (arcana imperii)* necessary for effective rule, to the mysteries of the people. Complex linguistic operations lie at the center of both political theologies. As Hammill points out, these are not merely “rhetorical” operations, but are theatrical and real.

In “More Other than You Desire,” Ken Jackson asks, “What is the right genre to speak of religion?” How are we to respond to this real *Other* that is religion? Reading the

“absolute alterity of the call” of law in *The Merchant of Venice*, Jackson stresses the difficulty of really turning to religion without reducing it or confusing it with the familiar: “This is a far harsher, difficult and perhaps impossible movement toward the other than we generally prefer . . .” (7). Jackson considers the difficulty of returning to religion as a problem of our access code. In order to “get better at talking about the impossibility of accessing the other” that is religion, we need to respond to its modes of speaking, the logics—or il-logics—of religious thought. The religious “other,” as well as religion itself, as an Other, is not identical to, nor can it be subsumed to the *ethical*. Rather, what it presents is an absolutely other that I must “suspend the ethical” to access. Religion, thus, “points one in the direction outside or otherwise than reason.” Religion remains strange, uncanny, even somewhat wild, in that it does not lend itself to cultural, materialist, or historicist modes of analysis that attempt to tame its enigmatic nature.

In “Notes on the “Religious Turn”: Mystery, Metaphor, Medium,” Philip Lorenz closes the cluster by attempting to respond to Jackson’s call to attend to the challenges of our *access* to religion. Lorenz argues that the religious turn avoids the turns themselves, the tropes of theology that mediate our relation to the binding power of religion. Returning to Hamill’s analysis of the media effects of the *arcana imperii*, Lorenz focuses on the difference between metaphor and *mystery*. If metaphor initiates a *transfer* of thinking, the enigmatic representational logic of mystery is designed to “shut down,” or “close the eye” on a certain metaphorical reading. Following Lupton’s lead, Lorenz turns to these operations through theory, viewing them through the critical lens of Pierre Legendre’s notion of a “textual unconscious.”

Taken together, the cluster of essay raises the following questions about the “religious turn” in early modern literary studies:

1. If the religious turn is a return to theory, as Lupton calls for, then which theoretical models are best equipped to view the “Other” that is religion?
2. How should we understand *our* relation to the religious turn? Can we, in fact, recover a sense of religious mystery when we read Renaissance texts, without being either subsumed by, or subjected to partisan or participatory readings? What does it mean to read religion through the lens of psychoanalysis or deconstruction? What kind of response or irresponsibility is that?

What we suggest is that *religion itself, cannot be turned, or “returned” to in isolation*. The religious turn requires that we follow the dynamic and interactive historical relation between legal, constitutional theatrical, and theological history. More crossover work is needed among religious scholars, psychoanalytic critics, and literary scholars.

*The religious turn is always a question of mediation, of the metaphorical potentiality built into the construction of the “religious” thing we are re-turning to. Religious metaphors have an intimate and complex relation with legal fictions and figures, to stage a conceptual and historical dance of thought.*

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# THE RELIGIOUS TURN (TO THEORY) IN SHAKESPEARE STUDIES

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JULIA REINHARD LUPTON

**A**t the end of *The Winter's Tale*, Leontes, overcome by the specter of Hermione's "statue" stepping from her pedestal onto the stage of his reality, exclaims,

O, she's warm!  
If this be magic, let it be an art  
Lawful as eating. (V.iii.109–11)

The scene unfolds in a space arched by several theologies, with vectors borrowed from a cancelled Catholicism (the intimations of Mariolatry and the cult of the saints), Pauline Christianity (the spirit of faithful love animating the cold letter of Leontes's jealous law), and the pagan gods (Pygmalion and Galatea; humanist art and art theory). Mimetic naturalism rules the scene—the statue is really Hermione herself, sequestered in Paulina's quarters during the long winter of Leontes's atonement—and the only magic is theatrical. Here and elsewhere, Shakespeare has tapped the rich interference among the cultic strata of Europe's religious life in order to nourish his own art, serving up a magic as lawful as eating—natural and even necessary, rooted in the performative processes of the body, yet partaking in the congregational communion of the feast and triggering a luminous cascade of appearances made manifest. More than any other *oeuvre* of the period, the drama of Shakespeare—and perhaps this is what grants it something like the status of a third revelation in the history of European letters—crystallizes the epochal collision and collusion of religious and secular tendencies in the Renaissance at large. His plays mobilize exegetical narratives and typological rhythms of great authority and moment, only to release from their depths the profound profanities of sex, time, death, and laughter. The plays are voiced "*ex cathedra*," "from the chair" of a religious sensibility internalized by catechism, yet they also issue (to abuse the phrase) "out of" or "after" the cathedral, performed in a profane space cleared and illuminated by their own visceral staging of religious motifs.

Religion has always formed a major tributary of Renaissance literary criticism, whether channeled into the "old" historicism of intellectual, political, and ecclesiastical history, or into the "newer" ducts of cultural and materialist approaches, where religion takes its

place after race, gender, and class as a determinate category of cultural identity. Read in relation to historicisms old and new, the “religious turn” in Renaissance studies is hardly a turn at all, but rather a reaffirmation of history’s hold on what has been, through its constitutive debts to Renaissance humanism itself, a fundamentally historical discipline. But there is a third way as well, reflecting religion’s affiliation with philosophy and thought and its claims to universal rather than merely local cultural validity. After all, the phrase “the religious turn” migrates into literary history and criticism from its application to the career of the late Derrida, whose writings on gifts, ghosts, faith, and friendship addressed questions concerning religion. From this perspective, the “religious turn” in Renaissance studies represents the chance for a return to theory, to concepts, concerns, and modes of reading that found worlds and cross contexts, born out of specific historical situations, traumas, and debates, but not reducible to them.<sup>1</sup>

I see the following maxims as fundamental to this new work on religion.

1. *Religion is not identical with culture.* Cultural studies works from the seemingly straightforward assumption that religion is an aspect of culture—in humanist accounts, because it forms part of the local practices, customs, and artifacts that make up civilization, and in materialist accounts, because religion is a species of ideology, supporting (and sometimes resisting) structures of power. The direction I am charting here rejects the assimilation of religion to the larger category of culture, positing instead that religion names one strand of those forms of human interaction that resist localization and identification with a specific place, time, nation, or language, installing elements of thought that stand out from the very rituals and practices designed to transmit but also to neutralize them. (Art forms a similar domain.) Like ghosts, religions leap across groups and epochs, and they practice cultural accommodation in order to survive rather than disappear into the contexts that frame them. This is not to say that religion does not participate in culture or ideology, but rather that what makes religion religion (distinguishing it from forms of identity such as nationality or ethnicity) is its absurd insistence and unlikely persistence beyond the logics of custom and habit, practice and power. Take the case of Judaism’s “lawful eating”: whereas the regional recipes cooked up by Jewish communities across the globe exemplify religion as culture, the singularity, severity, and absurdity of the commandment against mixing milk and meat that gives rise to these diverse cuisines in the first place reveals religion in its decisive separation from culture.

2. *Religion is a testing ground for struggles between the universal and the particular.* Religion’s absolutist claim to some form of universal validity is foreign to the relativism of culture, which is by definition founded on particulars. The universality of religion is not, however, a set of constant qualities or essences, but rather a recurrent struggle with universalism itself. “Universality” should be distinguished here from “universalism.”

While the latter is a species of ideology, an “inflated particular” in Ernesto Laclau’s terms, the former aims for truth, often emerging precisely where universalism reveals the cynical violence of its self-interest—for example, when the disenfranchised wrestle the language of “emancipation,” “redemption,” or “fellowship” from a governing elite that has justified its power by monopolizing these same ideas. Unlike the territorial entrenchment of religious universalism (the “-ism” signaling complicity with ideology), the *universality* of religion is momentary and elusive, participating in what Slavoj Žižek has called “the fragile absolute.” We glimpse universality—kinship with the poor, love of neighbor, creaturely community—when we manage to disengage from the routines of reality through individual or collective acts of creative critique, what Žižek calls, following Kierkegaard, “works of love” (128–29).

3. *Religion is a form of thinking.* By separating religion from culture on the basis of its bid for universality, the “religious turn” re-affiliates religion with thought—not only with the high tradition of formal theology, philosophy, and hermeneutics, but also with ordinary acts of rumination. In *The Life of the Mind*, Hannah Arendt defines “thought-things” as those speculative questions, inherently unanswerable, that nonetheless continue to engage human beings in their capacity as thinking subjects: “‘Thought-things,’ which Kant called ‘ideas,’ though never given to experience and therefore unknowable, such as God, freedom, and immortality, are *for us* in the emphatic sense that reason cannot help thinking them and that they are of the greatest interest to men and the life of the mind” (41). The “religious turn” encounters religion as a turn, a speculative turning-away from both nature and culture in their infinite variety to thought in its singular capacity to cut through the local habitations of lived experience. The “thought-things” of both formal and vernacular theology take shape in this cut, in the momentary suspension of acculturated embodiment that occurs when the mind lets itself go, following the twists and turns of thinking as such.

*Religion in distinction from culture; religion as a search for universality; and religion as a form of thought:* to bring these maxims back to literary studies, let’s take the case of Paul and Shakespeare, or rather Paul *in* Shakespeare, Paul as a formative voice in Shakespeare’s political-theological imagination. The tent-maker from Tarsus is the principle architect of the typological rhythms and exegetical motifs that undergird Shakespeare’s most sustained triptych of plays concerning religion, *The Merchant of Venice*, *Othello*, and *Measure for Measure*, each captivated by the opposition between Justice and Mercy, Old and New Testaments, and by the Pauline corporate metaphors that animate Shakespeare’s interlocking psycho-theologies of marriage, civil society, and the body politic.<sup>2</sup> An historical approach to the Pauline dimension of Shakespearean drama might focus on specific confessional debates vexing Shakespeare’s world (“old” historicism) or



on the colonial politics of conversion and circumcision (“new” historicism). The religious turn as I am conceiving it would take a different tack. How does Shylock’s conversion to Christianity in the penultimate act of *Merchant* mobilize concepts of emancipation derived from both Pauline and civil law traditions, not simply to assimilate Shylock forcibly into a false *universalism*, but also to grasp, however imperfectly, at the chance of *universality* glimpsed in the vision of a public sphere rezoned by his recalcitrant inclusion?<sup>23</sup> How does the evocation of Judeo-Christian models in *Timon of Athens* within an explicitly classical scene bear on the history and future of hospitality, friendship, and good housekeeping between Athens and Jerusalem?<sup>24</sup> Or, to return to our opening tableau, how does the end of *The Winter’s Tale*, under the artful direction of a woman named Paulina, imagine an object-world not fully captivated by sexual, ideological, or commodity fetishism, but rather momentarily illuminated by Arendt’s “thought-things,” including the intimation of immortality transmitted within the wrinkled visage of mortality itself? These questions take their bearings from exegesis and iconography, and in this sense rely on the work of traditional historicism. By focusing on problems of political theology, including the symbolic life of sovereignty and the protocols of group membership, these questions also share some concerns with cultural studies. They differ from both, however, in so far as they do not restrict religious motifs to specific contexts, confessions, or power structures, but rather approach them as players on the experimental stage of thought, free to make new combinations and arrive at new truths through acts of criticism that are both thoughtful and creative. The religious turn as a return to theory addresses the big questions and systematic frameworks of psychoanalysis, philosophy, theology, and politics from the other side of our immersion in tracts and ephemera. In the process, we aim to pursue forms of reading whose magic, like Paulina’s, is lawful as eating: both intellectually serious (responding to scholarly research and debates) and subjectively significant (addressing both texts and readers as agents of thought).

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#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> On the religious turn in Renaissance Studies, see the comprehensive review essay by Arthur Marotti and Ken Jackson. For a selection of Derrida’s writings on religion, see *Jacques Derrida: Acts of Religion*, ed. Gil Anidjar.

<sup>2</sup> I borrow the term “psychotheology” from Eric Santner, *On the Psychotheology of Everyday Life*. My student Jennifer Rust is writing a dissertation on the Pauline theo-political body in Renaissance literature from Spenser to Milton.

<sup>3</sup> I have broached these issues in my book "*Citizen"-Saints: Shakespeare and Political Theology*, and will pursue them further in my new project, "Thinking with Shakespeare."

<sup>4</sup> See Ken Jackson's essay on Timon and the gift, an exemplar of the religious turn as a return to theory.

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# “MORE OTHER THAN YOU DESIRE” IN *THE MERCHANT OF VENICE*

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KENNETH S. JACKSON

**F**inding the right the genre to speak of religion, without reducing religion to something it is not, particularly without giving it over to the master anthropological discourse of early modern literary studies, is difficult, perhaps impossible.<sup>1</sup> So I will confess: My “turn to religion”—I cannot speak for others—occurred during an early modern studies conference sometime in the early 1990s, perhaps the golden age of “New Historicism,” while watching a presentation on the poor. The presentation was very good, based on careful archival research, and detailed the lives of these impoverished, marginalized others. I followed and tracked the presentation quite closely and was convinced by its arguments. I had done some research on early modern poverty myself and judged the scholarship solid, informed, certainly better than my own.

What I could not follow or track, however, was the presenter’s clear compassion and empathy for the early modern poor, signaled by voice inflection when discussing the process whereby one was “othered” in early modern London, and pained facial expressions at the harsh forms early modern charity often took. Frankly, I have trouble mustering any such compassion or empathy for my next door neighbor let alone a vagabond who lived more than four hundred years ago in another country. This is not to suggest the presenter’s compassion and empathy was somehow inauthentic. Indeed, how can one—with the exception of the current evangelical Christian president of the United States—look so easily into another’s heart? I am only confessing that I had and still have no corresponding affect to match the apparent affect of the presenter. I look for it, but I must confess, like Shylock looking for “charity” in the bond between himself and that ever generous and compassionate giver Antonio, “I cannot find it” (4.1.259–60).

This difference, this distance, between myself and the presenter would not be terribly important to anyone but my therapist if the compassion and empathy visible in the presentation did not also seem to be the *raison d’être* of the scholarship. When pressed, and I mean really pressed in the early modern sense of tortured, the ultimate point of the argument might be put like this: you must respect the otherness or alterity of the early

modern poor (and, by extension, the contemporary poor).<sup>2</sup> In that, the presentation that prompted my turn to religion stands as an exemplar for much New Historical literary scholarship. The *underlying* claim of so much New Historical scholarship echoes, paradoxically, like an ethical commandment from on *high*: you must respect the other—whether that other be the early modern poor, the “Turk,” the woman, the Jew, etc. This characterization, of course, is reductive, but not absurdly so; one need only try to discuss our scholarship with a university-wide, interdisciplinary committee, filled with chemists, political scientists, biologists, business professors, etc. (a modern academic form of torture) to hear the ethical echo reverberate in one’s own voice. The New Historical mission seemed more and more to me to involve a bringing to light of all possible “others.” No other would remain other or unaccounted for in this methodological, often zealous, and seemingly universal (within a particular field, of course) crusade to write a more inclusive, “thicker” history.

While others seemed to locate and identify early modern others (Aaron, Shylock, Othello, Edgar as the “Bedlam-beggar,” etc.) with ease, and bring them into the fold, I remained fixated on this strange, haunting ethical call from on high that seemed, paradoxically again, to ground the whole effort. Who issued the command in the first place and why was I having such a hard time following the directive? Where was it coming from? On high, or down low? How did King Hamlet’s ghost get under the stage? Why can’t I pin down these early modern others like the others?

Perhaps, I thought, like Richard III, I just lacked “love’s majesty” (1.1.16). But if I did lack love, and the seemingly necessary compassion and empathy to embrace the other, the absence of those qualities certainly did not provide me Richard’s freedom to “bustle” (1.1.152) about in the world. On the contrary, the eerie call of the other maintained a fierce and restrictive hold on me. Here I am, after all, writing about others I cannot possibly know—the early modern poor, my presenter, Shylock—the list is, as Descartes recognized, infinite. And, I should say, I have not killed any brothers or murdered any children. “Obligation happens,” as John Caputo writes in bumper sticker fashion, as does responsiveness to the other, regardless of compassion, empathy, or volition (6). Since we are talking about murdered children perhaps I should go directly to Kierkegaard’s reading of Abraham and *Fear and Trembling*: one reason I can not be moved in the direction of the ethical commandment of New Historicism is because “the ethical is the universal,” the ethical is what there is (33). Even when I am unethical, I am within the realm of the ethical. I can not locate precisely where the strange call to respond to the other comes from because it comes from everywhere at once all the time.

What holds me in rapt attention, then, is not the ethical, but the other, the absolutely other that I must “suspend the ethical” to access. But how does one cut through the eth-

ical/universal to think something “other” than the ethical? The unethical, again, or the “subversive” does not count: at our most subversive we are often at our most ethical. “I stretch every muscle to get a perspective, and at the very same instant I become paralyzed,” Kierkegaard writes in trying to think himself into Abraham, the one historical figure whose response to the call from the other to give death to Isaac seems to suspend the ethical, if only for an instant.

Stuck: I could not fulfill the ethical command of New Historicism to engage the other, but I could not ignore it either. As Emmanuel Levinas might put it, I felt myself held “hostage” by the other, held hostage by my responsibility for the other (117). My will was not my own, Laertes might say, a fact that might drive one mad, point one in the direction outside or otherwise than reason, ultimately dissolving—in that the other had a greater hold on me than “me”—the very “oneness” of the one. The split subject preceded New Historicism, of course, but to its credit that methodology’s ethical demands had placed “me” very much in the position of the subjects split by the demands of early modern religion who could neither access nor ignore the “other” that existed in the most inward parts of themselves. To borrow St. Augustine’s language, this may be the other “more inward to me than my most inward part.”<sup>3</sup> Or, perhaps, to stay in chronological order, I should turn the question around: maybe the still resonant religious demands of early modern religion had put me in the position of the split subject rendered paralyzed by the demands of New Historical ethics? Which is the religious here, and which the ethical?



Shylock, the Venetian court demands, must be merciful. But this is an impossible demand. As Portia admits, mercy “is an attribute to God himself” (4.1.190). What the Venetians demand from Shylock, what the “Christians” seek from the “Jew,” is what Jacques Derrida identifies as the impossible, the gift.<sup>4</sup> As Lisa Freinkel writes, “Mercy is the grace that imputes righteousness where none has been deserved; it is that love, that faith that gives itself for nothing in return” (288). The “quality of mercy,” Portia says, is uneconomical, “not strained” (4.1.182). Like Shylock’s “deed of gift” that the Christian play later seeks to recast as “manna,” mercy “droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven” (4.1.183). Shylock himself points out the contradiction, “on what compulsion must I?” provide this “gift.” The absolute alterity or otherness of the gift dissolves when it is compelled by human economics.

The critical assumption, like the assumption of the Venetian court, has been that Shylock has a “choice” to be merciful—truly “merciful”—or not. Intriguingly, the assumption has been that this “other” *has what we think we have in New Historicism*—an ethical ability

to access that which is absolutely other, the impossible gift. We tend to assume Shylock could give—or forgive—perfectly, purely if he only so desired. The assumption has been that Shylock’s “will” (4.1.83) is simply his own. But there is *more* other in this play (and in Shylock) than we—or the Venetian court—desire. We tend to ignore the fact that the law and not just Shylock’s “humor” demands that he kill Antonio to honor the terms of the bond. The law calls for Shylock to kill Antonio and the court of Venice stands horrified, perplexed at this inability to locate the law beyond the law, but prepared to see the law enforced. We can imagine an other beyond the law that would salvage this situation, but we cannot realize it.

That the law calls for Antonio’s death, and not just Shylock’s whim, as he describes it, creates the dramatic energy of the famous scene. This demand of the law distinct from Shylock’s “own” desire is registered most distinctly in the brief instance when Portia actually presses Shylock to take his “forfeiture” (4.1.333) without the “jot of blood” (4.1.303) not provided for in the bond.

Therefore prepare thee to cut off the flesh.  
 Shed thou no blood, nor cut thou less or more  
 But just a pound of flesh. If thou tak’st more  
 Or less than a just pound, be it so much  
 As makes it light or heavy in the substance  
 Or the division of the twentieth part  
 Of one poor scruple, nay, if the scale do turn  
 But in the estimation of a hair,  
 Thou diest, and all thy goods are confiscate (4.1.322–30)

Shylock seeks a reprieve from the demand of law, asking only for his “principal” and Bassanio offers to comply. But Portia reiterates the demand of the law: “He hath refused it [the return of the principal] in the open court. / He shall have merely justice and his bond” (4.1.337). That Shylock’s initial desire to kill Antonio coincides with what the law demands complicates, but does not negate, the disturbing call of the law to kill. And if the play tries very hard to characterize this demanding “law” as “Jewish,” the play also reveals—perhaps against its own will—that the law is “Christian,” imposed by the Venetian court, necessary for the survival of the Venetian state.

Neither specifically Christian, nor Jewish, I would suggest the law comes from someplace else. The law is “other.” Let me recite Derrida’s “pre-definition” of religion here.

However little may be known of religion in the *singular*, we do know that it is always a response and responsibility that is prescribed, not chosen freely in an act of pure and abstractly autonomous will. There is no doubt that it implies freedom, will and responsibility, but let us try to think this: *will and freedom without autonomy*. Whether it is a question of sacredness, sacrifi-

ciality or of faith, the other makes the law, the law is other: to give ourselves back, and up, to the other. To every other and to the utterly other. ("Faith and Knowledge" 34).

Shylock acts willfully, but not autonomously, and gives himself up and over to the other, the law. There is more law here than we desire; or, more precisely, given that "the law is other," there is, again, paradoxically "more" otherness than we desire. The *subject* Shylock we think we know in his desire to kill Antonio disappears at this instant when the call of the absolutely other holds Shylock, the Venetian court, critical response, and, perhaps, Shakespeare, hostage.

Shylock's response to the call of the law is, if we move more slowly, structurally speaking, a call to give—to give death. This is, in short, the call that suspends the ethical for Kierkegaard's Abraham and that, for us, disallows any perspective on Shylock no matter how we stretch our critical muscles. There is a sense, in other words, in which Shylock acts "religiously"—"an oath, an oath! I have an oath in heaven" (4.1.226)—in these trial moments without being bound strictly by either Christianity or Judaism. That Shylock's religious oath, and the "religious" demand of the law I am pointing to, suspends the ethical would confirm the absolute alterity of this call. This is a far harsher, difficult, and perhaps impossible movement toward the other than we generally prefer to consider. But if we don't get better at talking about the impossibility of accessing the other, we are better off just talking about ourselves.

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## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> I have made this point elsewhere. See "The Turn to Religion in Early Modern Studies."

<sup>2</sup> There is an unexamined and distinctive strand of "presentism" in New Historicism. See the various writings of Ewan Fernie in particular for a provocative, positive take on this term and its relationship to the "turn to religion."

<sup>3</sup> See Gary Kuchar's *Divine Subjection: The Rhetoric of Sacramental Devotion in Early Modern England* for an engaging discussion of this Augustinian formulation of subjectivity.

<sup>4</sup> See Derrida's discussion of the play in "What is a 'Relevant' Translation?"

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# THE RELIGIOUS TURN: EXEGESIS AGAINST THE THEOLOGICAL IMAGINARY

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GRAHAM HAMMILL

In 1996, Ullman, Wade, et al., developed shock and awe as a military strategy for the Command and Control Research Program (CCRP), a part of the DOD. In their report, titled *Shock and Awe: Achieving Rapid Dominance*, they cite several authoritative sources, including Clausewitz and Sun Tzu, but they do not mention Carl Schmitt. In some ways this is surprising since the two main assumptions behind the military strategy could have come straight from his 1922 monograph, *Political Theology*. The first assumption is that “there is no external adversary in the world that can successfully challenge the extraordinary power of the American military in either regional conflict or conventional war” once the United States decides to use its force to its fullest capacity; and the second, that even so, certain “grey areas” involving Operations Other Than War (OOTW) will arise that demand military attention. In short, we have the logic of the decision and the exception. In the space of the exception or the OOTW, the stated goal of shock and awe is to produce compliance through intimidation. While traditional war implies using enough force to prevail over an enemy, according to Ullman, Wade, et al., shock and awe implies using overwhelming force in an attempt to control the enemy’s “will, perception, and understanding and literally make an adversary impotent to act or react.” It is a psychological as well as a physical attack and implies, among other things, the ability “to ‘own’ the dimension of time” (Ullman and Wade, “Intro”).

A twentieth-century military report is an unlikely place to discuss the religious turn in the academic study of early modern literature, but, as I hope will be clear momentarily, the goals of this military strategy have their roots in a particularly early modern entanglement of politics and religion. In sixteenth- and seventeenth-century political thought, the strategy of shock and awe was mostly associated with the *arcana imperii*, the secrets of imperial power, often translated as the mysteries or mystery of state. As well as a particular strategy for responding to OOTWs, the mystery of state was also a general strategy for consolidating and sustaining sovereign power. The phrase *arcana imperii* comes from Tacitus’s *Annals*, where Tacitus describes how the emperor Tiberius dissimulates, feigns conciliation, and pretends republicanism in order to protect and consolidate his

imperial rule. Not just rhetorical, however, the phrase also implies the use of violence—most often in the name of religion—to support sovereign power. By the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, this phrase came to designate a form of political violence that is both theatrical and real—real to the extent that the violence is often enacted upon individual and collective bodies, and theatrical to the extent that its relation to the public intensifies its effects. Absolutist and proto-absolutist political writers such as Bodin, Clapmar, and Naudé associate the *arcana imperii* generally with “the uses of deception, extra-legal force, and the political manipulation of religion” necessary for effective rule and specifically with political acts that range from the murder of political rivals to the massacre of a portion of the population in order to ensure the stability of the state (Donaldson 112). Although these acts were not often actually hidden from public view, absolutist and proto-absolutist political writers argued that they should be withheld from public judgment. The response of the public is not to judge, but to remain awestruck by the magnificent and sacred violence of the act. It is not just violence, then, but this particular epistemological relation to violence that makes the *arcana* what Tacitus calls “the substance of power” (2.36).

The proto-absolutist and absolutist writers who develop the *arcana imperii* give the conditions for the metaphysics of sovereign power that, as a strategy of intimidation and compliance, shock and awe assumes. Two early modern writers who develop this strategy *against* the metaphysics of the absolutist state are Machiavelli and Spinoza. Both assume that the persistent problem of the *arcana imperii* is political theology. That is, both assume that the sovereign’s capacity to produce compliance through intimidation relies on a theological imaginary at the heart of the collective life. Moreover, both also assume a productively antagonistic relation between sovereign and political subject. As Machiavelli puts it in *The Prince*, because people are “ungrateful, fickle, liars, and deceivers,” a prince must impose force upon them to prevent their turning against him (33); and as Spinoza asserts in the *Theologico-Political Treatise*, because the state is “in greater danger from its citizens than from the external enemy,” often rulers try to persuade their subjects that “they were descended from immortal gods” (538). Rather than dissolve or suspend that antagonism, both Machiavelli and Spinoza attempt to claim it in order to turn it against absolutist sovereign power, Machiavelli by draining the theological imaginary upon which the state relies and Spinoza by subsuming absolutist political theology within a new, hypothetical form of government. Neither abandons religion, but each turns one facet of religion against another, pitting exegesis against the theological imaginary in order to explore religion as a form of political thought.

Each does this by giving an account of the Mosaic constitution. In Book Six of *The Prince* Machiavelli claims that Moses succeeds in founding a new state because he used both religion and force to prop up his authority to rule. Moses was an “armed prophet” who

arranged matters so that when the people “no longer believed,” they could be made to believe “by force” (13). How Moses arranges these matters, however, exactly what he did to enforce belief, Machiavelli leaves as an open question. When it comes to the founding of Rome, Machiavelli is very clear. In the *Discourses*, he explains how Romulus murders his brother in order to shift political continuity from a hereditary model to a model based on limited monarchy and government by council. Romulus’s successor Numa invented civic religion by feigning intimacy with a nymph in order to secure the obedience of the Roman people. Extrapolating from this example, Machiavelli deduces that together religion and crime make up the founding of the state. Although Machiavelli conspicuously does *not* say this in his discussion of Moses in *The Prince*, he does imply it in the *Discourses*. “Whoever reads the Bible judiciously,” Machiavelli writes, “will see that since he wished his laws and his orders to go forward, Moses was forced to massacre [*ammazzare*] infinite men who, moved by nothing other than envy, were opposed to his plans” (241–42). Machiavelli’s reference is to Exodus 32, where Moses is on Mount Sinai speaking with God, when God notices the people worshipping the golden calf. God then promises to kill all of the people, but Moses intercedes and God repents. Immediately thereafter, in an act which goes unexplained, Moses himself does what he prevented God from doing. He commands the massacre of the people in the only Biblical example of Moses acting against the people on the basis of his own authority.

In a certain sense, Machiavelli stages the epistemological dynamics of the *arcana imperii* in the way he withholds but implies what Moses did. He does not exactly withhold this massacre from view. But he does withhold the act from moral judgment. However, instead of supporting the theological imaginary upon which sovereignty rests, Machiavelli decaethects it by focusing on how Moses speaks—a perennial problem from Exodus on, but with Machiavelli in particular a problem that foregrounds the theological imaginary. After casting Moses as a founder of a state who relies on his own *virtù*, Machiavelli backs off, produces the ideal speech act that justifies extralegal actions committed by the sovereign by speculating that Moses was merely an executor of what God ordained. He then goes on to show that this speech act works insofar as we suspend prudential reasoning for incredulousness or awe. We should not reason about Moses, Machiavelli writes, but praise him for the *grazia* or grace which made him worthy of speaking with God. The description oozes with irony, and, as almost every reader of Machiavelli has noted, Machiavelli so strongly calls attention to his rhetorical presentation of this ideal speech act that he belies its sincerity. Victoria Kahn has persuasively shown that Machiavelli’s is a rhetorical politics whose thesis is that rhetoric is political power. This is part of Machiavelli’s lesson here. Machiavelli uses what a great many of his contemporary readers found to be a shocking claim in order to deflate the *arcana imperii*. His use of rhetoric opposes and exposes a sovereign who invents a God for his people and

claims divine inspiration in order to deflect attention from the massacre that reproduces the people as obedient to their sovereign. In so doing, Machiavelli turns religion against itself. By presenting this scene in the way that he does, Machiavelli provokes a kind of political exegesis that uses Biblical interpretation to oppose the theological imaginary, pitting textual analysis against political performance.

In the *Theologico-Political Treatise*, Spinoza emphasizes the necessarily incomplete nature of Machiavelli's effort. Machiavelli weakens but does not do away with the theological imaginary, which for Spinoza is in any case impossible to accomplish in the domain of collective life. This is not because of some innate necessity of the theological imaginary; rather, the theological imaginary persists because of a fundamental relation between sovereignty and language. Instead of casting Moses as a deceptive rhetorician, Spinoza poses Moses as a speaking subject. He then goes on to show that Moses's sovereignty is not based on a lie—as Machiavelli argues—but on the production of an empty signifier. Spinoza focuses on what for Judaism is the first commandment: "I am the Lord your God." Issued from the mouth of Moses, this command simply imposes ignorance. "The people who previously knew nothing of God but his name . . . desired to speak with him so as to be assured of his existence," only this need was not met "through a created thing (which is no more related to God than are other created things). What if God had manipulated the lips of Moses—but why Moses? the lips of some beast—so as to pronounce the words 'I am the Lord'? Would the people thereby have understood God's existence?" (397) While the command produces no knowledge, it does produce a surplus of terror. As Spinoza emphasizes, Moses teaches by moral law, issuing "terrifying threats if [the Hebrews] should transgress these commandments, while promising many blessing if they observed them" (413). The Hebrews ensure their subjection by repeatedly commemorating this non-knowledge in religious practice, keeping that point of non-knowledge opaque so as to avoid divine or political wrath. In the process, they translated the surplus of terror into an empty but cathected signifier, the unrepresentable God.

Spinoza gets at this most clearly in his discussion of election. With the idea of the chosen people, "Moses wished to admonish the Hebrews in a particular way, using such reason as would bind them more fully to the worship of God" (416). He promises God's love if they obey and his wrath if they don't. The fact that election worked in historical reality strengthened the force of Moses's assertion, securing Moses's political use of God as theological truth. Moses could never prove the existence of God through the enunciation of his name, but by speaking that name as command he could set up the conditions that retroactively secure the ideological reality of that God through the endurance of the Hebrew state. Moses's God is the intrusion of duration into historical time as a way to reproduce historical time within the state's domain.

Etienne Balibar proposes that Spinoza is a philosopher of “communication—or, even better, of *modes of communication*—in which the theory of knowledge and the theory of sociability are closely intertwined” (Balibar 101). This is certainly the case with Spinoza’s analysis of the modern state. By framing the problem of what he calls the “supreme mystery [*arcanum*] of despotism [*monarchicū*]” within an analysis of the sovereign command, Spinoza posits the state as a complex linguistic phenomenon. Religion and the state combine in a sophisticated discursive operation, all around a kind of traumatic shock and its repeated commemoration in religious practice. The command that founds the state structures a point of opacity within it. Religion re-encodes this point of opacity as the unknowable God who attains an aura of full meaning through obedience and terror. By subsuming the *arcana imperii* and in fact sovereignty itself within the domain of language, Spinoza gives the fullest response to Machiavelli. The state is an extraordinarily pervasive mode of communication that necessitates a theological imaginary, even if it also gives the grounds for ironizing that imaginary. Although in the *Theologico-Political Treatise* Spinoza elaborates precisely the kind of political exegesis that Machiavelli provokes, he also shows the inevitability of the theological imaginary for the modern state.

I’d like to conclude with what is also Spinoza’s conclusion. This theological imaginary is especially a problem for democracy. At the end of the *Theologico-Political Treatise*, Spinoza splits the scene of Moses’s utterance into two. When the Hebrews first heard the sovereign command, they “harkened to Moses” and “resolved to transfer their rights not to any mortal man but to God alone” (539). While this first covenant is clearly a fiction, an act of interpretive bravado on Spinoza’s part, it is also clearly a fiction of democracy. As Spinoza insists, since this transfer was not to an individual person or human collective, it must be understood as form of democracy in which “all had an equal right to consult God, to receive and interpret his laws,” and “to [share] equally in the government of the state.” Almost immediately thereafter, the Hebrews, “terrified and . . . thunderstruck at hearing God speak,” abrogate the first covenant and absolutely transfer to Moses their rights so that he becomes sole lawgiver, interpreter, and supreme judge (540). By splitting the covenant, Spinoza certainly produces democracy as the collective potential that the sovereign command presupposes and transforms. At the same time, by positing an originary democratic political theology, Spinoza shifts the *arcana imperii* so that it becomes the mystery of the people. Democracy is no solution to political theology. It is just another and—from the perspective of contemporary events—stronger form of it.

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# NOTES ON THE “RELIGIOUS TURN”: MYSTERY, METAPHOR, MEDIUM

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PHILIP LORENZ

**A** call, and a question:

Call hither,  
I say bid come before us, Angelo.  
What figure of us think you he will bear?  
For you must know we have with special soul  
Elected him our absence to supply,  
Lent him our terror, dressed him with our love,  
And given his deputation all the organs  
Of our own power. What think you of it?

*Measure for Measure* (1.1.14–17)

*Measure for Measure*, Shakespeare’s only play with a biblical title, opens with this question of the *figure* the substitute will bear. Will it be capable of filling in for an “absent” sovereign? To answer its own question, the play turns to a logic of transfer—or *trans-plant*—of the “organs of power” from one “body” to another.

A return. Paulina re-presents the king with his long absent (“dead”) wife:

Prepare  
To see the life as lively mocked as ever  
Still sleep mocked death. Behold, and say ’tis well.  
I like your silence; it the more shows off  
Your wonder. But yet speak; first you, my liege. Comes it not something near?  
Her natural posture.  
Chide me, dear stone, that I may say indeed  
Thou art Hermione; or rather, thou art she  
In thy not chiding, for she was as tender  
As infancy and grace. But yet, Paulina,  
Hermione was not so much wrinkled, nothing  
So aged as this seems.

*The Winter’s Tale* (5.3.18–28)



Hermione is restored. It's like a miracle—all but for one thing. While Leontes is undoubtedly glad to see her, “Hermione was not so much wrinkled, nothing so aged as this seems.” Her reappearance is marked by “wrinkles.” She's back, but with a twist.

The “turn to religion” in Renaissance studies is compelling for a variety of reasons, not the least of which is for the sophisticated combination of historicist methodologies it has produced for re-conceiving of the production and reception of early modern texts. If, as Kevin Sharpe has recently put it, religion in the early modern period “was not just about doctrine, liturgy or ecclesiastical government [but] was a language, an aesthetic, a structuring of meaning, an identity, a politics,” then recent scholarship has responded to the challenges posed by the complex phenomenon of religious language in diverse and productive ways.<sup>1</sup> Yet if religion is a “language,” and, specifically, what Arthur Marotti calls a “metaphorics” (Marotti, 2005: 11), then much of the turn, or re-turn, to religion is marked by a sustained avoidance of critical attention to the turns themselves, the tropes of theology that “saturate” the linguistic ground of Renaissance discourse.<sup>2</sup> With notable exceptions, much of the “religious turn” in Renaissance studies remains resistant to the problems, as well as the opportunities, religious language presents for thinking about the relationship between literature, religion, and history.<sup>3</sup>

While recent work on Renaissance drama and sacred kingship, for example, has complicated our sense of the interaction between theatrical and theological discourse, it has not, at the same time, fully confronted one of the most difficult but crucial features of this relation: the enigmatic nature of religious figure. For religion is *strange*, illogical, difficult, uncanny. The turn to religion does not seem to take enough advantage of both this strangeness and also the potential that religious turns of thought themselves enable—as conceptual *operations*—for gaining access to what Jackson and Marotti call the “alien landscape of Renaissance England.” To *really* “re-turn to religion,” that is, would be to turn to the turns themselves: the tropes of theology that screen and animate—or, in the case of *The Winter's Tale*—re-animate Renaissance drama. It would be to return to the relation between metaphor and what one of the period's most important theorists of metaphysical, juridical, and religious thought, the Jesuit theologian and philosopher Francisco Suárez, calls “mystery.”

While mystery is no stranger to early modern studies, particularly to Medievalists, the mode of mystery remains paradoxical and difficult to access. Like *Measure for Measure*, it contains a double movement. From the Greek *mysterion* (from *myein*) meaning both “to shut,” or “to close,” and at the same time, to “initiate,” in other words, to open, “mystery” in New Testament theology refers to “the sublime revelation of the Gospel . . . , the Incarnation and life of the Saviour and His manifestation by the preaching of the

Apostles" (*Catholic Encyclopedia*). Catholic *mysteries* are "revealed truths that surpass the power of reason" (*Catholic Encyclopedia*). "Mystery" thus identifies a point beyond which a certain kind of exegesis literally "shuts" down. At the same time, "mystery" refers to narrative, to a particular genre of story that presents incidents from the lives of Jesus, or the Blessed Virgin Mary, "such as the Annunciation or the Ascension, serving in Roman Catholicism as the subject of meditation during recitation of the rosary."<sup>4</sup>

## All About My Mother

Known to early modernists, both for his landmark *Metaphysical Disputations*, and also for his role in the 1606 controversy, in which he is called on by Pope Paul V to respond to King James's the *Oath of Allegiance*, Suárez is, at the same time, the author of *The Mysteries of the Life of Christ* (1592) (*De Mysteriis Vitae Christi*<sup>5</sup>), "the first attempt in Scholastic theology to give a separate and comprehensive treatment, based on theological sources, of the questions about Mary" (O'Brien viii). Suárez's text presents ". . . the *arcane mysteries* [*arcanos misterios*] of the life and death of the eternal Judge, Mediator between God and man . . . taken from the rich treasure of Sacred Books and clear sources of the Holy Fathers [and] adjusted to scholastic rigor . . ." <sup>6</sup> (my trans.). Responding to an increasingly threatening movement within the Jesuit order that was disseminating "diffuse," "intoxicating," and *mystical* spiritual texts, Suárez was one of a number of theologians who, at the beginning of the seventeenth century, began to publish "more technical, less affective" writings (De Certeau 250). As opposed to the *mystical*, "mystery," for Suárez, is a "science" that leads from a knowledge of the effect back to a knowledge of the cause.

[T]he effect presupposes knowledge of the cause, and since the Holy Virgin engendered Christ as man, she is necessarily his cause. Rightly, then, it is, that in order to know and obtain knowledge of the science of the Son, one prepares the ground [by going] through the Mother.<sup>7</sup> (my trans.)

Christian "mystery" is thus decidedly different from, or as Ken Jackson might put it, *Other* than metaphor. If "metaphor is defined in terms of movement" (Ricoeur 1997:17), then the "science" of "mystery" is designed to shut down a certain, rational movement, and open up, instead, an alternative path ("camino") toward revelation, one that goes, in this case, through the Mother. As a crucial participant in the construction of this "royal road" of spirituality, Suárez's text aspires to historical and above all theological precision.<sup>8</sup> Moving through an imposing collage of hundreds of biblical and other authoritative citations, Suárez's case for Mary takes the form of a systematically constructed bulwark of theological dogma. Yet, like Hermione, Suárez's formidable body—or body armor—of mystery, has a "wrinkle." In all of their logic and scholarly rigor, the *Mysteries* continually run into, even as they rely on *the problem of metaphor*.

At the center of the theological controversy between Catholics and Protestants, of course, is precisely the question of when a metaphor is more than a metaphor. For Catholics such as Suárez, the priest's language in the Eucharist ceremony is decidedly *not* metaphorical. As he puts it in his open letter to King James:

To represent is the same as to make a thing present. May Saint Jerome, interpreting Christ's words in Matthew 26, be the third witness: "After having celebrated the typical Paschal dinner and eaten lamb's meat with the apostles, he takes the bread, comfort to men's hearts, and goes to the true sacrament of Easter—just as Melchisidec, great priest of God, had done, by offering bread and wine—in order to represent the reality of his body and blood.

Maybe in reading this a heretic will also interpret the word "to represent" in a fictitious or metaphorical sense. But the sense and intention of Saint Jerome are clear: to represent is the same thing as to make the thing present, especially when the thing had been promised, predicted, or desired before.<sup>9</sup>

Only a heretic would take the term "representation" here in a metaphorical sense. Metaphorical reading ("the letter that killeth") is heretical reading. Yet in the case of the *Mysteries*, the heretic is of course always already inside the walls.<sup>10</sup> In his proof of Mary's virginity, Suárez writes,

I maintain that the Blessed Virgin preserved her virginity perpetually and never knew man. This is an article of Faith. It is proved, first of all, by a single text from Old Testament; Ezechiel (44:2): "**This gate shall be shut.** It shall not be opened and no men shall pass through it: because the Lord the God of Israel hath entered in by it." This passage, by a metaphor, it is true, refers literally to the Most Holy Virgin. So testifies Jerome in commenting on this passage. Moreover, this is the view of other Fathers who employ the text to establish the truth of this mystery; namely, Jerome himself, Augustine, Ambrose, Chrysostom, John Damascene, and others. (O'Brien 59–60)

This passage, "by a metaphor, it is true"—figures and dis-figures Mary at once: "This gate shall be shut." Here, in a metaphor, lies the definition of Christian mystery. To recognize the indistinguishable border between the metaphorical and the mysterious requires knowing how to respond to a certain *performance*.

How does an understanding of the operations of mystery affect our view of Renaissance drama? What is the relation between theater and religion, history and mystery? For *mystery* is *enigmatic*. That is, in its own terms, it does not present a rhetorical question of text, but rather a religious one of belief. One only mis-reads Mary's virginity, or the blood that Jesus sweats during the Passion, if one takes these in a metaphorical and not "mysterious" sense. In distinction from metaphor, "mystery" presents what Paul Ricoeur calls

a “limit expression,” in which the figure marks a border where a certain kind of knowledge ends, and another, *faith*, begins.<sup>11</sup> Its status, as text, is difficult, as it bears what one theorist describes as an “enigmatic literalness, which gets disrupted and obscured by metaphorical reading.”<sup>12</sup> If you don’t see Jesus as really present in the Eucharist, but understand this merely metaphorically, then metaphorical reading becomes heretical reading, taking as metaphor what is actually *mystery*. The heretic does not believe in the “enigmatic, trans-rational literalness” of the mystery and mistakes it for simple metaphorical fiction.<sup>13</sup> Tropological reading is heretical reading. Mystery is where metaphor stops.

What are we to do with a distinction like this? How are we to take a text like the *Mysteries*, with the evident difficulties it presents to really “returning to religion”? How are we to view the shared space of early modern religion and theater?

### **Transfers, Turns, and Re-turns: One “Royal Road” Leads to Another**

Psychoanalysis, in some of its hybrid forms, continues to provide productive ways of answering some of these questions. For like mystery, psychoanalysis remains a hermeneutic particularly well suited to read the strangeness and *binding* function of mystery.<sup>14</sup> The French jurist and psychoanalyst, Pierre Legendre, describes the history of religion and law as an institutional desire to establish a “normative function,” which *binds* “the biological, the social and the subjective (inclusive of its unconscious dimensions) orders which constitute the human . . .” (xiv). The principal means by which the normative function operates is through the force of the “traditional media: exegesis and the sovereign body . . .” (154). To illustrate this, Legendre turns to the history of medieval legal texts and their exegetes who, as with Suárez, are responsible for producing a subjective bond to the Text, the figure of Truth: “The exegetes thus take their place as a means of accomplishing a precise function: that of explaining how a legal text tells the truth” (155).

Legendre offers promising avenues for theorizing the link between religion, history, and law. Legal history especially cannot be left out, not only because of the enormous role the legal institution, and its “textual unconscious,” plays in the formation of early modern subjectivity, but also because, as Suárez argues, law itself emerges from the “matrix” of theology (53). And (as Suárez also argues), to arrive at knowledge of the effect (law), one has to go through the road to the cause, the “matrix,” the “Mother.”

Suárez’s own road moves with the liturgical logic and dogmatic rhythm of what Legendre calls “dance”: the historical means by which the Law writes its force on the body:

The institutional subject cannot come into being without a relation to this unknown yet familiar Other, which founds power and supplies it with the guarantee of Reason. One is forced to return to the mediaevals and then to a metaphysical idea which was prevalent in the scholasticism of the Counter-Reformation: dance is not a physical question, but rather a question of a beyond of the physical. (39)

Legendre links this “beyond” to the history of movement from Roman Law to Canon and Custom law, at the heart of which lies an *enigma*: “it is impossible to approach Roman law without reinstating what I call the rights of incomprehension and the sense of enigma” by means of which it was transmitted.<sup>15</sup> As figures of Truth, both the legal and the religious text constituted by *mystery* rest on a “sense of enigma” that requires mediation. The question is what kind? What type of mediation does the “normative function” require? If, as Derrida has argued, “enigma,” from the Greek *ainigma*, fable, is linked to narrative, then *mystery* would seem to require this form for the production of its chief special effect, the writing of its *binding* force on the body.<sup>16</sup> For nothing binds diverse people, across space and time, as efficiently as the language of mystery and the authoritative body of commentary it produces.<sup>17</sup> The medium of theater, however, disrupts this desire, by dividing narrative. The “actualization of theater,” as Samuel Weber argues, “involves a temporal repetition that is suspended in a divided space (259).<sup>18</sup> The repetitions and divisions of theater, in other words, interrupt the story-line of enigma. Theater presents mystery with a twist.

Any “religious turn,” therefore, must take into account both the enigmatic nature of mystery and the interruptions that constitute and de-constitute it. It must focus, in other words, on the capacity of theological tropes, as a medium, to stage and disrupt the enigma that comes to life. Hermione returns—but with a difference: she’s “wrinkled.” And these “wrinkles” throw a kink into the machinery of a certain cultural and historicist logic that avoids the real problem of mystery. The “religious turn” is thus faced with having to negotiate the relationship between religious and *rhetorical* readings—even if only as a preliminary movement on the way to reconstituting the rhetoricity of the religious trope. Rather than shutting down exegesis to rational analysis, however, the distinction between metaphor and mystery opens on to the possibility of a rigorous engagement with Renaissance drama’s relationship to the language of religion—a possibility marked in the double (closing-opening) movement of mystery.

What this return to the tropes of theology enables, then, is a shift of critical attention not only toward the operations performed by religious metaphor, but also in particular, to the media requirements these operations depend on for their force, for their special effects.<sup>19</sup> It is, at the end, a question of understanding how the binding force of religion speaks.

Returning to Shakespeare's summons, at the beginning of *Measure for Measure*, what we see is that the discourse of religion, like the discourse of power, is always a question of figure, of the *mediation* of what Legendre, following Lacan, calls "theThird: the object of an impossible desire."<sup>20</sup> The binding power of religion is always mediated through this sovereign space of the Third—the space of mediation itself. The return to religion, therefore, is, or ought to be, a turn toward the figures that "supply" the force of an "absent" sovereign. In the discourse of political theology, as Kantorowicz long ago pointed out, it is to turn toward the *theological metaphors* that effect the *transfer* of power from "*the spiritual arcana ecclesiae . . . to the absolute power of the state*":

Under the impact of those exchanges between canon and civilian glossators and commentators—all but non-existent in the earlier Middle Ages—something came into being which then was called "Mysteries of State," and which today in a more generalizing sense is often termed "Political Theology." Felicitous as ever, Maitland once remarked that eventually "the nation stepped into the shoes of the Prince." While fully agreeing, I yet feel that we should add: "Not before the Prince himself had stepped into the pontifical shoes of Pope and Bishop."<sup>21</sup>

The transfers of mystery move with the rhythm of dance. To follow its "steps," we have to attend to the turns.

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## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Kevin Sharpe, *Remapping Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2000) 12. Quoted in Jackson and Marotti, "The Turn to Religion in Early Modern English Studies." *Criticism* 46:1 (Winter 2004) 169.

<sup>2</sup> I borrow the term from Lisa Freinkel: "To read Shakespeare's will is to read his bequest to, and from, literary history—a bequest saturated by religious doctrine." See *Reading Shakespeare's Will: The Theology of Figure from Augustine to the Sonnets* (New York: Columbia UP, 2002) xix.

<sup>3</sup> In addition to Freinkel, prominent exceptions include, Julia Reinhard Lupton, Debora Shuger, Christopher Pye, Graham Hammill, Arthur Marotti, and Ken Jackson. Also see the collection of essays edited by Carla Mazzio and Douglas Trevor, *Historicism, Psychoanalysis, and Early Modern Culture* (New York: Routledge, 2000).

<sup>4</sup> *American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*. Fourth edition. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2000).

<sup>5</sup> The full title is *Commentariorum ac disputationum in tertiam partem Divi Thomae tomus secundus* [*Second Tome of the Commentaries and Disputations on the Third Part of the Summa Theologica of Saint Thomas Aquinas*], published at Alcalá in 1592. Galdos xvi.

<sup>6</sup> Dedicatory epistle to Rodrigo Vazquez de Arze, President of the Spanish Supreme Senate.

<sup>7</sup> The Spanish translation of Suárez's Latin text reads,

. . . el conocimiento del efecto supone conocimiento de la causa; y como la Virgen Santísima engendró a Cristo en cuanto hombre, bajo esta consideración necesariamente es causa de él. Rectamente, pues, para conocer y obtener la ciencia del Hijo, se prepara el camino por el conocimiento de la Madre; porque no podían separarse en nuestro estudio o disputa quienes por sangre y amor tan unidos estaban entre sí; ni era justo en tratados tan largos de Cristo silenciar a su Madre. (1)

<sup>8</sup> As De Certeau writes, these “are major works, born of confrontation with the theological and mystic currents of the times; establishing, instancing, justifying what in Rome was called the *via regia* of spirituality, a “royal road,” henceforth the standard for the entire seventeenth century” (De Certeau 250–51).

<sup>9</sup> *Defense of the Catholic Faith* 1.135 (my trans.).

<sup>10</sup> This is perhaps always the case when dealing with sacred texts. As Northrop Frye long ago pointed out, “many of the central doctrines of traditional Christianity can be grammatically expressed only in the form of metaphor . . . When these doctrines are rationalized by conceptions of a spiritual substance and the like, the metaphor is translated into metonymic language and ‘explained.’ But there is a strong smell of intellectual mortality about such explanations, and sooner or later they fade away and the original metaphor reappears, as intransigent as ever . . . The doctrines may be ‘more’ than metaphors: the point is that they can be stated only in a metaphorical this-is-that-form. . . .” See Northrop Frye, *The Great Code: The Bible and Literature* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1982) 55–56.

<sup>11</sup> See *Figuring the Sacred: Religion, Narrative, and Imagination*, trans. David Pellauer, ed. Mark I. Wallace (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995) 228–32.

<sup>12</sup> I am grateful to Dirk Mende for this expression. See his unpublished dissertation: “Image and Clearing. Metaphorologic Investigations in the Relationship of Schelling’s *Ages of the World*, Speculations in Heidegger’s Late Philosophy of Being.” Diss. Dresden University, 2004.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> As Julia Reinhard Lupton has recently written,

. . . there could be no neo-exegesis without psychoanalysis, a discourse that translated the taxonomies and typologies of traditional hermeneutics into the cityscape of modern interpretation. Freud’s Jewish science and Lacan’s Catholic one have mapped the relations among symbolic orders of law and socialization, subject positions within these orders, and unique instances of enjoyment that articulate and exceed these roles via the synapses of fantasy. (“*Citizen*”-*Saints* 15)

<sup>15</sup> In Legendre, *L’Empire de la vérité*. Cited in Peter Goodrich’s Introduction to *Law and the Unconscious* 23–24.

<sup>16</sup> See Jacques Derrida, “Before the Law,” trans. Avital Ronell and Christine Roulston, *Acts of Literature*, ed. Derek Attridge (New York: Routledge, 1992) 187.

<sup>17</sup> Both Derrida and Legendre cite Emile Benveniste’s etymology of “religion,” from the Latin *religio*, that links the word to the Latin verb “ligare,” to bind, and “legere,” (to collect together, bring back to oneself, recognize and, by extension, to read). See Emile Benveniste, *Le Vocabulaire des institutions indo-européennes*, II, pp. 267–72. Cited in Legendre 234n.34.

<sup>18</sup> In precisely a discussion of the relationship between “Psychoanalysis and Theatricality, Weber writes,

Theatrical representations cannot be framed by a complete, self-contained, meaningful narrative, as seems possible in epic poetry, since the actualization of theater involves a temporal repetition that is suspended in a divided space.

See *Theatricality as Medium* (New York: Fordham, 2004) 259.

<sup>19</sup> On the relation between religion and “special effects,” see Hent De Vries:

The word “effect,” from the Latin *effectus* the past participle of *efficere*, “to bring about, to accomplish, to effect, to perform,” in effect (that is to say, virtually) comes to stand for any event or action whose structure finds its prime model in the theological, perhaps even theistic concept of God: the being that has no cause outside itself . . . On this reading, not even the most artificial special effect could be possible—that is to say, thought or experienced—without some reference to (or conjuring up) of the miracle and everything for which it stands.

“In Media Res: Global Religion, Public Spheres, and the Task of Contemporary Comparative Religious Studies.” *Religion and Media*, eds. Hent De Vries and Samuel Weber (Stanford: Stanford UP, 2001) 24.

On “non-conceptuality” and metaphor, See Hans Blumenberg, “Prospect for a Theory of Nonconceptuality,” *Shipwreck with Spectator: Paradigm of a Metaphor for Existence*, trans. Steven Rendall (Cambridge: MIT P, 1997) 81–102.

<sup>20</sup> “In theology, the power of God or absolute place of the mythical Third must thus always pass through a mediating figure—that of the Pope, the emperor or the priest—before it becomes an object of subjective attachment.” See Peter Goodrich, “An Abbreviated Glossary,” *Law and the Unconscious* 262.

<sup>21</sup> See Ernst Kantorowicz, “Mysteries of State: An Absolutist Concept and Its Late Mediaeval Origins,” *The Harvard Theological Review* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1955) 66–67.

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