KING LEAR, SOVEREIGN OFFICE, AND DOCTRINES OF IDENTITY

BY

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ABSTRACT

King Lear is premised on a split in the office of sovereignty: between the title of king and the duties, potencies, and properties of that office. This disconnection, and the political and ethical crises that emerge from it, dramatises the conceptual faultlines that run through office, duty, and identity. Responding to the philosophy of Giorgio Agamben, this thesis contends that *King Lear* is preoccupied by the fraught intersections between self and politics. Kingship itself was doctrinally articulated as an office that mystically subordinates, or even obliterates, the selfhood of its holder. Finding himself beyond this office, Lear's subsequent tribulations can thus be read as a drama of self-recovery and, therefore, as a philosophical drama in its truest sense. Alongside Lear's personal trajectory, this thesis examines the play's wider depiction of doctrinal identities — the legitimate and illegitimate, the officer and the outlaw, masculinity and femininity — and contends that these frameworks for understanding self and other can constrain, and occasionally foreclose, more ethically responsible selfhoods. Lear earns the audience's forgiveness partly by articulating a philosophical vision for a better life, one which transcends such political roles; and the play's tragic climax generates much of its force by then terminating that possibility.

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PREFACE

Although explained in footnotes, the academic idiosyncrasies of this thesis are worth aggregating at the outset. With regards to quoting *King Lear*, I follow R. A. Foakes's Arden 3 edition with parenthetical citations of act, scene, and line number. Foakes's line commentary is indicated with the lines cited, followed by a lowercase "n." When not under direct discussion, I generally indicate Quarto- or Folio-only phrases in the parenthetical citation or, with mixed text, with superscript 'Q' or superscript 'F' respectively. For all other works by Shakespeare, I parenthetically cite line numbers from *The New Oxford Shakespeare: Modern Critical Edition* edited by Gary Taylor, John Jowett, Terri Bourus, and Gabriel Egan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), using abbreviations to indicate the appropriate play or poem. For matters of play chronology, I generally follow the "best guess" dating in Martin Wiggins's *British Drama: A Catalogue* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011-Present), unless otherwise noted. In referencing Giorgio Agamben's works, I have cited individual publications, rather than his somewhat unwieldy (and ironically partial) *Omnibus*. Lastly, when dealing with primary documents, I have preferred to modernise titles in the body of text and parenthetically provide the date of publication, to the best of my knowledge. However, for the convenience of any scholars pursuing my references, my footnotes retain the original spellings of these titles, and I cite image numbers in lieu of pagination or foliation when citing texts drawn from Early English Books Online.

INTRODUCTION

"*Who is it that can tell me who I am?*" (1.4.221)[1]

Scolded for the extravagance of his knights, Lear responds to his daughter with a pointed parody of amnesia: "Does any here know me?", "Who is it that can tell me who I am?" (1.4.217, 221). These sarcastic barbs are part of his growing appetite for irony — as Goneril notes in her reply, "This admiration is much of the savour / Of your other new pranks" (1.4.228-9) — but, within Lear's feigned confusion, a darker dramatic irony is also at work. This masquerade of self-forgetting anticipates the play's central trauma: the comic madness foreshadowing the tragic one. Lear's facetious question, taken seriously, thus draws attention to the play's fraught encounter with the ontology of self: what does it mean to be who one is? After all, Lear's mocking question does not ask 'what he is,' but 'who he is,' and between the two there is a subtle, but vital difference. To Lear, kingship, masculinity, rank, and title are not merely attributes; they are not circumstantial traits or properties. Instead, he sees them as somehow constitutive, necessary, for him to be who he is. In a way, he is right, and his experience of losing those attributes does transform him. But in another way, he is emphatically wrong, and untangling his office from who he actually is becomes the monumental task of the latter half of the play. The

[1] Parenthetical citations containing just act, scene, and line-number refer exclusively to William Shakespeare, *King Lear*, ed. R. A. Foakes (London: Bloomsbury Arden Shakespeare, 2009) I follow Foakes in marking Quarto- and Folio-only lines with superscript 'Q's and 'F's respectively. All other plays and poems by Shakespeare will also be cited parenthetically, with an abbreviation of their title, e.g. TN for Twelfth Night. These citations refer to William Shakespeare, *The New Oxford Shakespeare: Modern Critical Edition*, ed. Gary Taylor et al. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

question that the play implicitly poses then is simple to ask, harder to answer: who is Lear, if he cannot be King Lear?

I am, by no means, the first to acknowledge the centrality of this question to the play. William R. Elton observed that Lear is "a character in search of himself" — this search mirroring the "quest for identity" that both Edmund and Edgar undertake in the subplot.[2] To some extent, I am setting out a conventional ideological reading of some of the political identities of the play — an examination of the "unknown knowns" as Slavoj Žižek once pithily described them — in an attempt to render them clear.[3] Many unknown knowns have already been drawn out of the dark recesses of ideological assumption: gender, sexuality, race, and class are the well-known examples. These particular categories, and their historical corollaries, are discussed to varying extent in this work — sex and rank being prominent; ethnicity, nation, and sexual orientation being less so. Where I will hope to distinguish myself is by insisting on the experience of doctrinally articulated identities as well as their intellectual backgrounds. I also argue that some idea of ascetic philosophy provides Lear with an escape-point for these internalised pressures. But, in particular, this thesis aims to explore some unknown knowns, or unthought thoughts, that are central to the play, and fundamental to our culture, but whose ethical significance are still being unpicked in modern philosophy: namely the ideas of office and duty.

[2] William R. Elton, *King Lear and the Gods* (Lexington, Kentucky: The University Press of Kentucky, 1988), 280.
[3] Slavoj Žižek, "Philosophy, the 'Unknown Knowns,' and the Public Use of Reason," *Topoi* 25, no. 1 (2006): 137.

For this introduction, I have an internal and external goal: to give some overview of the trajectory and stakes of the thesis itself and to give some sense of where this thesis is positioned in wider scholarship. I begin by posing some general questions about politics, identity, and ethics, before then briefly explaining how they pertain to the content of the chapters. Concluding my overview of Lear's transformation, I venture into *King Lear*'s critical context by noting a certain suspicion for religiously-inflected readings. By suggesting that even the most stridently secular criticism has religious inflections, I introduce the discipline of political theology. In this field, scholars unpick how many of our received secular political ideas trace some heritage from theology. Referencing a few of the most pertinent philological studies from this discipline, I suggest that *King Lear* presents us with a good opportunity to think about the phenomenological dimensions of political theology also: what does it mean to live within a religiously-inflected politics? I touch on some methodological issues: *King Lear*'s two texts; my frequent recourse to the play's sources, productions, and adaptations; and, most distinctively, my engagement with the philosophy of Giorgio Agamben. Agamben provides a framework for understanding one of the most important ideas this thesis will attempt to introduce to *Lear* scholarship: the instrumental logic of sacred office. Noting how office, like other doctrinal identities, binds most powerfully through the internalisation of a persona, I finish this introduction by explaining the implicit model of subjectivity that the rest of the thesis works with.

In thinking about *King Lear*, I take seriously Catherine Mills's bold claim that "subjectivity is the mode through which politics and life come into contact."[4] There are a

[4] Catherine Mills, *Biopolitics* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2018), 8.

few ways one could interpret this. But I think it is certainly true that our experience of political life often falls short of life in its richest sense, as Lear discovers. Equally, and more intriguingly, the richest forms of life have often seemed to me to stand opposed to our usual experience of politics.[5] The arc of Lear's transformation can be usefully articulated in such terms: from a politically potent yet somehow impoverished life, to something richer that is nevertheless foreclosed by politics. At the core of the play rests a cataclysmic, yet not entirely unproductive, interplay of politics and self. Another way of posing this idea could be to ask how received doctrines of identity — the accepted notions of who or what we are, how we should or should not behave — constrain, drive, and foreclose lived experience? Furthermore, cannot the very state of relying on doctrines of identity — particularly those that stipulate a social contingency to morality — actually impede more ethically responsible perspectives?

These inelegantly abstract terms are, I think, demanded by the general nature of the problem. I will give some specific examples of what I mean. In my third chapter, I engage with arguably the most fundamental vector of doctrinal identity: gender. In the Renaissance, like today, value judgements around virtue and duty operate very differently according to one's gender. In fact, some of these lingering double-standards, particularly in the analysis of Lear's three daughters, continue to underpin the criticism of the play. Goneril's transgressions — murder, infidelity, and suicide — are routinely discussed in far harsher terms than those applied to male characters who perform comparable actions, such as Macbeth, Marc Antony, or Gloucester.[6] As I show, much of Goneril's behaviour

[5] Something very like this distinction can be found at the outset of Julia Reinhard Lupton, *Citizen-Saints: Shakespeare and Political Theology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 2.
[6] For example, A. C. Bradley described Goneril as "the most hideous human being (if she is one), that Shakespeare ever drew." G. Wilson Knight, though conceding some sympathy, considers them "below

seems driven by a deep dissatisfaction with her subordinate position to specific men, who demand a great deal without offering a jot of support in return. Goneril's mistake lies in attempting to escape "[her] hateful life" by reaching for a man who paradoxically idolises political identity as much as he also detests it (4.2.87). And, like Edmund, her rebellion ultimately only enmeshes her deeper into the structural logics that she resents.

By contrast, I argue that Lear eventually finds a real emancipation in his loss of identity. To work through this, I start my first chapter with an analysis of the sovereign office, which is among the most intensely articulated forms of doctrinal identity. This intensity manifests both in terms of the sovereign's conception of self and in the particularly acute political consequences associated with the loss of that office. In significant respects, the position of the ex-sovereign is analogous to that of the outlaw — a theme drawn out in my second chapter, which focuses on Edgar and his quasi-romantic trajectory upward through a variety of performed identities, eventually culminating in his proximity to the throne itself. Yet, as I show in the final chapter, Lear's reflective meditations end up focusing less on the sovereign office in particular, and more on the problems of office in general. So, while his political precarity (and his dangerously intense attachment to authority) can largely be indexed to his habituation to sovereign office, Lear's philosophical problem resembles a more general one, pertaining to offices of all kinds. In this, I complicate Dowden's claim that Lear's transformation can be characterised as a

humanity." In a similar fashion, Harold Bloom writes Goneril and Regan off, as though they were interchangeable, with Albany's phrase: "monsters of the deep." See A. C. Bradley, *Shakespearean Tragedy* (London: Penguin Books, 1991), 277; Robert B. Heilman, "This Great Stage," in *King Lear: Critical Essays*, ed. Kenneth Muir (Abingdon: Routledge, 2015), 138; G. Wilson Knight, *The Wheel of Fire: Interpretations of Shakespearian Tragedy* (London: Metheun, 1978), 206; Harold Bloom, *Shakespeare: The Invention of the Human* (New York: Riverhead Books, 1998), 496.

"purifying." [7] By contrast, I suggest that Lear's transformation almost runs against the idea of purity itself: what he purifies himself of — if anything — is his own sense of doctrinal purity.

Lear's journey has often been compared to Job's.[8] Yet, one key difference is that Job is tested because he already embodies faith, temperance, and patience; by contrast, Lear begins as a harsh, demanding figure, only developing Job's virtues through loss.[9] In this Shakespeare makes a significant change to his sources, especially the anonymous *King Leir* of 1589, from which Shakespeare otherwise draws a great deal — I discuss this debt in more detail below.[10] What is most important for the argument of this thesis is that in the Elizabethan comedy of *King Leir*, the king is depicted as a meditative, ascetic character from the outset: he resigns his crown to "think upon the welfare of [his] soul."[11] Similarly, his mistreatment by his daughters begins because he curtails their "banquet[s] extraordinary," rather than the other way around.[12] Shakespeare's Lear, by contrast, begins as a brutish king, who resigns his responsibilities to take up a life of pleasure. The play's intensity arises partly through Lear's painful struggle to arrive at the point that Leir begins: in a contemplative space, recognising the importance of compassion, dialogue, and forgiveness.

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[7] Edward Dowden, *Shakspere: His Mind and Art* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench & Co., 1886), 263; taken up whole-heartedly by A.C. Bradley, see Bradley, *Shakespearean Tragedy*, 263.
[8] Roger Holdsworth, "Shakespeare and Middleton: A Chronology for 1605-6," in *New Oxford Shakespeare: Authorship Companion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 380; Knight, *The Wheel of Fire*, 191.
[9] As Elton points out, the earlier Leir is a better match for Job. See Elton, *King Lear and the Gods*, 68.
[10] For Shakespeare's indebtedness to the earlier play, see Geoffrey Bullough, ed., *Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1957), 7:276-84; Kenneth Muir, *Shakespeare's Sources* (London: Metheun, 1957), 141-5, 163-4; Richard Knowles, "How Shakespeare Knew King Leir," in *Shakespeare Survey*, ed. Peter Holland (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 12-35; Meredith Skura, "What Shakespeare Did with the Queen's Men's King Leir and When," in *Shakespeare Survey*, ed. Peter Holland (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 316-25.
[11] Anon., *King Leir*, ed. Tiffany Stern, Globe Quartos (London: Nick Hern, 2002), 1.1.26.
[12] Ibid., 3.2.13.

This transformation produces a philosophical drama in its deepest sense. As his daughters remark, Lear's problem is essentially his failure to "[know] himself" (1.1.295). The demand to "know thyself" was the famous Socratic starting point for new philosophers, one which was especially important and difficult for rulers, who attracted flatterers and all-too-readily attached themselves to the allure of their social position.[13] The archetypal failed philosopher in this regard was Alcibiades — the subject of the great introductory Socratic dialogue and a key character in *Timon of Athens*, which was likely Shakespeare's next play.[14] Unlike Alcibiades, Lear, in response to his losses, embarks on something like a philosophical *epistrophē*, the inward-turn toward an understanding of the self that aims at caring for the self.[15] His madness depicts a transformation, in which he starts to critically distinguish himself from his doctrinal identity, especially as that identity was manifested in externals, like marks of rank, fine clothing, and high reputation. As the Stoic philosopher Epictetus remarked: "what else is tragedy than the portrayal in tragic verse of the sufferings of men who have attached high value to external things?"[16] To repurpose Arnold Kettle's phrase, Lear's cry of "Off, off you lendings," could therefore almost be "a summary of the play" (3.4.106).[17] Lear's philosophical task — of untangling who he is from his office, his reputation, his doctrinal positions — leads him to detach from these external things, and to thereby take his suffering in hand. This transformation

[13] Michel Foucault, *The Hermeneutics of the Subject: Lectures at the Collège de France 1981-1982*, ed. Frederic Gros, trans. Graham Burchell (New York: Picador, 2005), 172-4, 375-6, 380-1; see also, more generally, Michel Foucault, *The Government of Self and Others: Lectures at the Collège de France 1982-1983*, ed. Arnold Davidson, trans. Graham Burchell (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).
[14] Foucault, *Hermeneutics of the Subject*, 170-5; Holdsworth, "Shakespeare and Middleton," 384.
[15] I use *epistrophē* in the looser ethical sense without the additional epistemological Platonic meanings drawn out by Foucault. See Foucault, *Hermeneutics of the Subject*, 10-1, 217-8.
[16] Epictetus, *Discourses, Fragments, Handbook*, ed. Christopher Gill, trans. Robin Hard (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 13.
[17] Arnold Kettle, "The Humanity of King Lear," in *King Lear: Contemporary Critical Essays*, ed. Kiernan Ryan, New Casebooks (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993), 26.

finally culminates in Lear's vision of the good life: a life defined not by potency, sanctity, or even his pleasure, but by kindness, forgiveness, and reciprocity. The play's tragic climax generates much of its force by then terminating that possibility.

This profanatory, even philosophical, arc is a kind of redemption. However, such a redemptive reading needs some defence in the current critical climate. Kiernan Ryan stands out as one of the premier modern critics of Shakespeare's *King Lear*. In his vigorous overview of the play, he critiques the "Christian and humanist critics," presumably including Dowden and Bradley, who have "labored so long to twist *Lear* into a fable of forgiveness, enlightenment, and redemption."[18] In this, Ryan resonates with Jonathan Dollimore's critiques of the "facile Christianity" and "essentialist humanism" that marked much early twentieth-century criticism.[19] I am quite sympathetic with these positions — and, before proceeding, I should note Dollimore's enthusiasm for recent critical projects that engage seriously with the complexity and darkness of Christian theology.[20] However, I also think it is illuminating that Ryan's dismissal of redemptive readings lies a little uneasily with his own conclusion. Following his impressive critical outline of the play, Ryan writes:

> The magnitude of its achievement and the secret of its supremacy among Shakespeare's plays seem less of a mystery when seen in this light. *King Lear*

[18] Kiernan Ryan, "King Lear," in *A Companion to Shakespeare's Works: The Tragedies*, ed. Richard Dutton and Jean E. Howard, vol. 1 (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2003), 389; For an overview of the "Christian optimism" theory of King Lear, see Elton, *King Lear and the Gods*, esp. 3-6.
[19] Jonathan Dollimore, "Foreword," in *The Demonic*, by Ewan Fernie (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013), xiv; See also Jonathan Dollimore, *Radical Tragedy: Religion, Ideology, and Power in the Drama of Shakespeare and His Contemporaries* (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 189-91.
[20] Dollimore, "Foreword," xx-xxi.

> catapults us forward to a time when "all the breathers of this world" are long since dead, and Shakespeare's age and our own can be seen for what they are, the barbaric prehistory of the genuine civilization that humanity still awaits.[21]

This farsighted perspective makes good on his opening, which presents some thoughtful insights regarding the dubious civil war between historicism and presentism in Shakespeare studies.[22] However, from another perspective, this final utopian vision — where *King Lear* negatively implies "the genuine civilization that humanity still awaits" — still expresses a secular analogue for the soteriological readings that Ryan is dismissing.[23] Of course, rather than being read on an individual level, internal to the play, Ryan's redemption lies in extrapolating out into wider politics and wider culture. Nevertheless, like the Christian and humanist critics, Ryan still "twist[s] *Lear* into a fable," redeeming the play's suffering by positing its salvific import, granting Lear's narrative a "prophetic" purpose with which we must "catch up."[24] Even this language of "prophe[cy]" positions *King Lear* as a secular revelation, in which Shakespeare's narrative of cataclysm anticipates a paradise, albeit a terrestrial one. All of this is to say that the redemptive impulse *King Lear* seems to invite — and this thesis claims it exists, albeit in a qualified way — subtly emerges even in the criticism most vigilant against it.[25]

[21] Ryan, "King Lear," 390.
[22] Ibid., 375-80.
[23] Ibid., 390.
[24] Ibid., 388, 390.
[25] I follow Regina Mara Schwartz's critique of Stephen Greenblatt, which culminates in the observation that "this craving for redemption is not a sign that religion is 'emptied'; this craving is itself religious." See Regina Mara Schwartz, *Sacramental Poetics at the Dawn of Secularism: When God Left the World*, Cultural Memory in the Present (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008), 44.

I present this counter-reading of Ryan not just to defend my specific conclusions about the trajectory of Lear as a character but also to start introducing the theoretical background from which I approach this project as a whole. My view is that Ryan's "prophetic" reading of a secular salvation is an expression of a more systemic issue in modern thought. In 1922 (significantly republished in 1934), the Nazi jurist Carl Schmitt offered his famous pronouncement that "all significant concepts of the modern theory of state are secularized theological concepts."[26] To borrow the looser explanation of the Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben, despite a secular detachment from the belief in the existence of God, nevertheless "in modernity, theology continues to be active in a present and eminent way."[27] To put this another way, secular politics may have abandoned God as a transcendent referent to authorise power, but the structures and concepts which emerged around God remain. The ghost may have left, but the machine still runs.

From this position, the "genuine civilization" foretold by Marxist thought does indeed begin to resemble something like a secular eschatology. Of course, Schmitt's argument should be read in its historical context: his contentions are quite openly directed toward a juridical analogy between the exceptional function of the dictator and the miraculous power of God — one decisively suspending human law, the other the laws of nature.[28] Setting this propagandistic dimension aside, however, Schmitt's dictate also clearly makes a broader claim for the intellectual heritage of secular political thought. To render it in general terms, it does seem plausible that the concepts that a society uses to structure

[26] Carl Schmitt, *Political Theology*, trans. George Schwab (Cambridge, MA: Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, 1985), 36, 1.
[27] Giorgio Agamben, *The Kingdom and the Glory: For a Theological Genealogy of Economy and Government*, trans. Lorenzo Chiesa and Matteo Mandarini (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011), 4.
[28] Schmitt, *Political Theology*, 36.

itself may well borrow from earlier metaphysics with which they structured their understanding of the world. Yet, this movement of ideas is not nearly as unilateral as Schmitt claims. In his 1946 introduction to Thomas Hobbes's *Leviathan*, the conservative philosopher Michael Oakeshott echoes Schmitt's point, but with a better sense of the wider commerce of ideas:

> Probably there has been no theory of the nature of the world, of the activity of man, of the destiny of mankind, no theology or cosmology, perhaps even no metaphysics, that has not sought a reflection of itself in the mirror of political philosophy; certainly there has been no fully considered politics that has not looked for its reflection in eternity.[29]

Conceding the poetic expression of Oakeshott's argument, the implicit criticism of Schmitt is crucial. If politics looks to metaphysics to understand its own structures, metaphysics looks back. Indeed, Agamben has himself emphatically demonstrated this. Across his wider project, Agamben gives several examples of secular political concepts that derive from theological ideas — modern economics from the providential economy, public service from the liturgy — where the theological ideas were themselves borrowed from still earlier institutions that were not strictly religious.[30] In short, a society's metaphysics may reflect (or, at the very least, admit some influence from) the assumptions latent in pre-existing political structures too.

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[29] Michael Oakeshott, *Hobbes on Civil Association* (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 2000), 5.
[30] Agamben, *The Kingdom and the Glory*, 17-21; Giorgio Agamben, *Opus Dei: An Archaeology of Duty*, trans. Adam Kotsko (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013), 1-3.

Perhaps all of this is obvious. The pacific currents that move through the history of thought, even when they crest as decisive waves in a given field, rarely respect the neat division of disciplines.[31] A cursory survey of early modern intellectual culture will demonstrate that theology was used to explain law, law to explain politics, politics to explain domestic life, domestic life to explain medicine, medicine to explain theology, and so on and so forth.[32] Any pivotal change in one doctrine therefore produces ramifications for the others, at the very least in the terms in which their *status quo* is maintained. This acknowledgement should not collapse the distinctions between these different fields but rather make available the intellectual commerce — at times antagonistic, at times mutually beneficial — that runs between them. This sense of intellectual commerce is one concept that this thesis attempts to embrace and apply, especially where politics, law, and theology collide. In writing about ideas of sovereign office, duty, and other doctrinal identities, such an approach seems necessary.

With the trinity of politics, law, and theology in mind, there is an important terminological distinction to made. First, there is a modern academic discipline called political theology, which is the scholarly enterprise that seeks to uncover and analyse the correspondences between politics and theology. But there is also an older tradition of political theology proper, which explicitly posed and advocated the veracity of these ideas: St Thomas Aquinas's *De Regno* or St Augustine's *City of God* are two famous examples. Of course,

[31] This maritime metaphor to explain a *longue durée* view of history has been borrowed from Fernand Braudel. See Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, trans. Sian Reynolds (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 1:21; Fernand Braudel, *A History of Civilizations*, trans. Richard Mayne (New York: Penguin Books, 1995), 34-5.

[32] I give specific examples of such analogies throughout the thesis. However, for a scholarly work that insightfully reproduces some of this intellectual commerce at work, I direct readers toward Ian Maclean, *The Renaissance Notion of Woman: A Study in the Fortunes of Scholasticism and Medical Science in European Intellectual Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), which is prominently featured in my third chapter.

the scholarly enterprise often refers to these sincerely theological works, principally from the vantage of historical investigation, rather than necessarily advocating the views therein. (The staunchly Catholic Schmitt represents something of an overlap between the two.) With regards to the academic study of political theology, having accepted the general principle that political and theological concepts often have a correspondence, the next step is to try and comprehend that correspondence in particular cases. As with Shakespeare studies, this modern academic project can be loosely broken into historicist and presentist tendencies.

In the historicist scholarship, some authors of great distinction — for example, Ernst H. Kantorowicz — have carefully traced threads of influence, uncovering the genealogical and philological development of recognisable concepts, delving back into their theologically-saturated political origins (or their politically-saturated theological origins, as the case may be). This is often dense, esoteric work, picking over mutations of phrases. Something of this intellectual background rubs off on Agamben. For example, the early pages of *The Kingdom and the Glory* (2011) slowly work through the reversal of the Pauline expression of "the economy of the mystery" into "the mystery of the economy."[33] Kantorowicz's enormously influential *The King's Two Bodies* (1957) can similarly struggle to make headway, the argument sometimes suffocating beneath its erudition. One early reviewer described the book's scholarly richness as like "a diet of jam without bread," hard to consume at length.[34] This is perhaps part of the reason the observations of scholarly political theology have been slow to migrate into other disciplines. Regrettably, the density of the scholarship of these projects is almost certainly necessary

[33] Agamben, *Kingdom and the Glory*, 25-52.
[34] Beryl Smalley, "Review: The King's Two Bodies," *Past & Present*, no. 20 (1961): 32.

for scholars to give an adequate answers to their task. In another sense, it also enhances their usefulness as resources, supplying detailed translations and bibliographies for scholars less knowledgeable of the obscure recesses of Christendom.

Then there are the works of political theology of a more presentist register. Their emphasis is less the historical development of theologically-imprinted political ideas but rather how such ideas currently operate in modern secular society.[35] Given the focus of this thesis on a Renaissance literary object, these feature much less prominently in the present study. However, somewhere between those two modes, there is a middle ground: namely, those scholars who draw together an extensive scholarly excavation of the historical development of these concepts, with a view toward their modern significance. Nicholas Heron's *Liturgical Power* (2017) is precisely a recent example that bridges the gap between these two emphases: at once unveiling an erudite scholarship of medieval theology, while maintaining a clear eye on the present significance of ideas of service and office.[36] However, of the scholars of this third kind, among the most eminent and prolific is Giorgio Agamben, particularly in his *Homo Sacer* project, which spanned roughly two

[35] Simon Critchley, *The Faith of the Faithless: Experiments in Political Theology* (London: Verso, 2012); Marinos Diamantides and Anton Schütz, *Political Theology: Demystifying the Universal* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2017); Melanie Johnson-DeBaufre, Catherine Keller, and Elias Ortega-Aponte, eds., *Common Goods: Economy, Ecology, and Political Theology* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2015); Adam Kotsko, *Neoliberalism's Demons: On the Political Theology of Late Capital* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2018).

[36] Nicholas Heron, *Liturgical Power: Between Economic and Political Theology*, Commonalities (New York: Fordham University Press, 2017); for other examples of this third kind, see Emanuele Coccia, *Sensible Life: A Micro-Ontology of the Image*, trans. Scott Stuart (New York: Fordham University Press, 2016); Roberto Esposito, *Two: The Machine of Political Theology and the Place of Thought*, trans. Zakiya Hanafi, Translation edition (New York: Fordham University Press, 2015); Roberto Esposito, *Persons and Things*, trans. Zakiya Hanafi (Cambridge, MA: Polity Press, 2015); for why Italian philosophers are particularly well-represented in this kind of research, see Roberto Esposito, *Living Thought: The Origins and Actuality of Italian Philosophy*, trans. Zakiya Hanafi (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2012), 10-43.

decades and nine monographs.[37] The topics of these works have included sovereignty, martial law, duty, monasticism, outlawry, glory, providence, sacred life, and many more; and his scope sweeps from Ancient Greek politics to modern bio-ethics. He folds in both the genealogical and philological analyses of these concepts and terms, with a keen eye for their modern articulations.

This kind of thinking has been incorporated into Shakespeare studies in interesting ways. In recent years, Julia Reinhard Lupton, Regina Mara Schwartz, Richard Wilson, and Colby Gordon have all explored topics that might be termed 'political theology' in Shakespeare's works with real inventiveness.[38] Nevertheless, Kantorowicz's iconic *The King's Two Bodies* has made the most definitive impact on Shakespeare scholarship — especially with regards to *Richard II*, which Kantorowicz spends an early chapter analysing, albeit quite shakily.[39] The impact of this tome can, in fact, be partly indexed by the ubiquity of references to Kantorowicz in editorial introductions to *Richard II*.[40] In

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[37] Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998); Giorgio Agamben, *State of Exception*, trans. Kevin Attell (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005); Giorgio Agamben, *Stasis: Civil War as a Political Paradigm*, trans. Nicholas Heron (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015); Giorgio Agamben, *The Sacrament of Language: An Archaeology of the Oath*, trans. Adam Kotsko (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010); Agamben, *The Kingdom and the Glory*; Agamben, *Opus Dei*; Giorgio Agamben, *Remnants of Auschwitz: The Witness and the Archive*, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen (New York: Zone Books, 1999); Giorgio Agamben, *The Highest Poverty: Monastic Rules and Form-of-Life*, trans. Adam Kotsko (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013); Giorgio Agamben, *The Use of Bodies*, trans. Adam Kotsko (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2016).
Ordered by Agamben's own proposed sequence, rather than chronologically.

[38] Lupton, *Citizen-Saints*; Julia Reinhard Lupton, "Renaissance Profanations: Religion and Literature in the Age of Agamben," *Religion & Literature* 41, no. 2 (2009): 246-57; Richard Wilson, "'Smoke like Incense': Sacrifice, Shakespeare and the Shoah," *Shakespeare* 12, no. 1 (2013): 1-13; Richard Wilson, "As Mice by Lions. Political Theology and Measure for Measure," *Shakespeare* 11, no. 2 (2015): 157-77; Richard Wilson, "A Scribbled Form: Shakespeare's Missing Magna Carta," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 67, no. 3 (2016): 344-70; Schwartz, *Sacramental Poetics*, esp. 39-58; Colby Gordon, "Candied Cleopatra: The Cute Aesthetics of Shakespeare's Political Theology," *Journal for Early Modern Cultural Studies* 16, no. 3 (2016): 30-45.

[39] Ernst H. Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Medieval Political Theology* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016), 24-41; on the "baffl[ing] [...] selectiveness" of Kantorowicz's reading, see Stephen Greenblatt, "Introduction: Fifty Years of The King's Two Bodies," *Representations* 106, no. 1 (2009): 63.

[40] Charles R. Forker, ed., "Introduction," in *Richard II* (London: Arden Shakespeare, 2002), 17-8.

an introduction to a special edition of *Representations* celebrating fifty years of the book's circulation, Stephen Greenblatt wrote that, despite certain weaknesses: "[*The King's Two Bodies*] remains a remarkably vital, generous, and generative work."[41] The seemingly unlikely proposition that Kantorowicz's work on medieval political theology would prove so productive among Renaissance literary scholars seems, to me, now irrefutable.

However, this still begs the question, should it remain so? David Norbrook has argued against Kantorowicz's lingering influence in Shakespeare studies. Norbrook's article — wittily titled "The Emperor's New Body" — argues that although this "two-body theory" existed, it has acquired a status "out of proportion to its historical significance."[42] Norbrook suggests that the doctrine was a minority doctrine, popular among Catholics due to its "sacramental overtones," and he proposes George Buchanan's proto-republican thought as an example of a more prevalent model for kingship.[43] I have no strong opinion on the relative popularity of these theories. However, as I will show in my first chapter, the models of sovereignty articulated by Edmund Plowden and George Buchanan — the two-body theory and proto-republican contractual theory — are only superficially contradictory.[44] They actually coincide in so far as both posit that the person of the king is merely an instrument in service of a superior metaphysical force, differing only regarding the precise character of that force: the Body Politic or the quasi-metaphysical principle of *pro bono publica* (for the Good of the People). Therefore, even if Norbrook's

[41] Greenblatt, "Introduction," 63.
[42] David Norbrook, "The Emperor's New Body? Richard II, Ernst Kantorowicz, and the Politics of Shakespeare Criticism," *Textual Practice* 10, no. 2 (1996): 343; for another, more recent overview of this "protean text['s]" fortunes in the humanities, see Stephanie Elsky, "Ernst Kantorowicz, Shakespeare, and the Humanities' Two Bodies," *Law, Culture and the Humanities* 13, no. 1 (2017): 6-23.
[43] Norbrook, "Emperor's New Body," 343.
[44] The crucial article on this subject is Brian Sheerin, "Making Use of Nothing: The Sovereignties of King Lear," *Studies in Philology* 110, no. 4 (2013): 789-811.

rebuttal of the prevalence of Plowden's model is valid, his citation of Buchanan still suggests the necessity for a politico-theological reading of the sovereign office in Renaissance England.

As this overview has suggested, there are serious internal critiques that can be admitted in the analysis of *The King's Two Bodies*. In fact, Agamben mounts another quite brilliant critique in *Homo Sacer* too, though it would not be useful to rehearse it here.[45] From a wider perspective, there are further good reasons to push back against the pre-eminence of *The King's Two Bodies*. First, it is something of a pity that Kantorowicz's legacy has been reduced to the opening two chapters of *The King's Two Bodies*, and perhaps his controversial early biography of Frederick II — his overlapping work on liturgical acclamations and ruler worship, for example, is almost entirely overlooked.[46] Yet, as this neglected work's title — *Laudes Regiae* (1958) — suggests, even Kantorowicz's wider bibliography still reflects his personal fixation on transcendent rule. Secondly, the dominance of Kantorowicz has indirectly played to Schmitt's advantage, leaving the field of political theology preoccupied with sovereignty above all other political phenomena.[47] I want to note again the work of Lupton, Schwartz, Wilson, and Gordon in this light, who have shown several dimensions in which political theology could expand out past the singular problem of sovereignty, in spite of how alluring a problem it is.[48] As Oakeshott's

[45] Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, 91-103.
[46] For the preoccupation of scholars with the opening chapters, see Greenblatt, "Introduction," 63; for a partisan, but considered, reading of Kantorowicz's biography of Frederick, see Norbrook, "Emperor's New Body"; Ernst H. Kantorowicz, *Laudes Regiae: A Study in Liturgical Acclamations and Mediaeval Ruler Worship* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1958); prominently discussed in Agamben, *The Kingdom and the Glory*, 188-96.
[47] Political theology's almost definitive preoccupation with theories of sovereignty has been suggested by Agamben, *The Kingdom and the Glory*, 1; Heron, *Liturgical Power*, 1-5.
[48] Lupton, *Citizen-Saints*; Schwartz, *Sacramental Poetics*; Regina Mara Schwartz, *Loving Justice, Living Shakespeare* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016); Wilson, "'Smoke like Incense'"; Wilson, "A Scribbled Form"; Gordon, "Candied Cleopatra."

remark suggests, we should indeed be thinking about how theology intersects with a more "fully considered politics," one not dazzled by the exceptional glory of the sovereign.[49] It is pleasing to see that some scholars are already doing so.

To his credit, Agamben has insistently opened up new angles of this kind, often with little fanfare. He is certainly concerned with the question of sovereignty, but always with an insistent attention to unexpectedly related political, philosophical, and juridical phenomena. In *Homo Sacer*, he sought to demonstrate the structural symmetry between the person of the sovereign and other forms of doctrinally-excluded life, like the outlaw.[50] In *State of Exception*, he insists on the latent presence of the fascist 'sovereign exception' within deeper democratic and republican political histories.[51] In *The Kingdom and the Glory*, he opens sovereignty out into discussions of governance, bureaucratic economies, and spectacular politics.[52] These texts are among the three most widely-known of his *Homo Sacer* series. On the other hand, he also has works that are, at most, tangentially related to sovereignty — *The Highest Poverty* (2013) and *Opus Dei* (2013), for example — which have had much less critical impact, certainly in Shakespeare studies. In this sense, there is still some catching up to do with Agamben's innovative vectors of thinking, for sovereign power certainly, but especially for other forms of theologically-inflected politics.

These are risky things to foreground. This thesis — focused as it is on *King Lear* — can hardly ignore the question of sovereignty. However, I attempt to follow Agamben's lead.

[49] Oakeshott, *Hobbes on Civil Association*, 5.
[50] Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, 102.
[51] Agamben, *State of Exception*, 1-31.
[52] Agamben, *The Kingdom and the Glory*, 68-108, 144-66, 197-259.

Rather than treating sovereignty as some isolated, supreme potency, I want to insist on opening out into other dimensions of politics. For example, this thesis is particularly interested in a more fundamental category that enables the Renaissance conception of sovereignty in the first place: the notion of a sacred office at all. As Nicholas Heron's stunning genealogy of office suggests, this theological articulation of institutional identity has utterly suffused Western politics.[53] From this perspective, although Heron does not directly say so, sovereign office comes into focus as just one example, albeit a very glamorous one, within a much wider category. This is, indeed, the point that Lear arrives at, when he meditates on the "rascal beadle" and how even "[a farmer's] dog's obeyed in office" (4.6.156, 154-5). To keep up with Lear's experience of losing the unique sovereign office then, it becomes necessary to also think in more general, and often more subtle, categories. This is an example of how these deeper politico-theological genealogies — of office, duty, public service — can provide real benefit to Shakespeare criticism.

While this thesis therefore celebrates the erudition and brilliance of these esoteric disquisitions, *King Lear* also offers a platform to start asking a little more from them too. The question is a devilishly simple one: how does all of this manifest in our lived experiences? What might a phenomenology of political theology look like? *King Lear* could be one answer to that question, and quite a good answer. However, when one asks this question — as *King Lear*, from my perspective, demands us to — the project of political theology also has to start disclosing itself to the kinds of ideological resonances that it does not usually attempt to address directly. The phenomenological question insists

[53] He writes: "The Christian heritage of secular modenity — one of whose defining features is the seemingly infinite proliferation of offices." See Heron, *Liturgical Power*, 132.

that these exegeses of sovereignty, office, sanctity, outlawry, glory, and so forth, do not conclude when the philology is complete — as illuminating and provocative as these exegeses often are. Instead, political theology must also come into a more candid contact with other forms of ideologically-inflected experience: gender, sexuality, race, class, faith, ethics, identity, and selfhood. In short, how does political theology affect who I think I am and how I see the world? Opening this door is predictably messy — my third chapter exposes how sovereign power has some peculiar interactions with gendered ethics, for example — but for all its difficulty, the enterprise is also, I hope, fruitful.

Having spent some time on *how* I am reading *King Lear*, it is past time to ask an even more fundamental question: *what*, exactly, am I reading? Throughout this introduction, I have been speaking of *King Lear* in the singular, when it is perhaps more accurate to speak in the plural. Two substantially different versions have survived: from the Quarto of 1608 and the First Folio of 1623.[54] The present consensus is that the Quarto reflects an early authorial manuscript, probably penned in 1605, while the Folio represents a later revision, likely by Shakespeare himself.[55] There has been some minority disagreement, notably by Brian Vickers, who sought to challenge this "new orthodoxy" in *The One King Lear* (2016).[56] Despite the monograph prompting some public controversy — in no small part due to a blistering review by Holger Syme — Vickers's argument has not managed

[54] R. A. Foakes, "Introduction," in *King Lear*, by William Shakespeare (London: Bloomsbury Arden Shakespeare, 2009), 3; for the decisive collection of essays on these textual variants, see Gary Taylor and Michael Warren, eds., *The Division of the Kingdoms: Shakespeare's Two Versions of King Lear* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986).
[55] Holdsworth, "Shakespeare and Middleton," 367; Stanley Wells, "The Once and Future King Lear," in *The Division of the Kingdoms: Shakespeare's Two Versions of King Lear* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), 1-22.
[56] Brian Vickers, *The One King Lear* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2016).

to gain much scholarly traction.[57] I am content to follow the broad consensus on this matter. John Jowett's definitive and well-balanced account of relevant textual concerns, especially regarding the First Quarto, can be found in the first volume of *The New Oxford Shakespeare: Critical Reference Edition* (2017).[58]

The application of this knowledge to a more literarily critical project is not entirely straightforward. The most disciplined critics are laudably capable of holding the two texts in mind as strictly separate entities, and they examine them accordingly.[59] However, a minor theoretical caveat to such projects must be considered: Ernst Honigmann has observed that even Quarto or Folio-only editions depend on some level of conflation, since editors draw on variants to resolve textual difficulties: "Conflation appears to be unavoidable: the question is not whether to conflate or not, but rather how much to conflate."[60] With this in mind, I generally follow R. A. Foakes's edition. When significant phrasing differences emerge between the variants — or, indeed, when entire sequences, like the mock-trial, are extant in only one version — I indicate, as he does, the

[57] Holger S. Syme, "The Text Is Foolish: Brian Vickers's 'The One King Lear,'" Los Angeles Review of Books, accessed August 1, 2019, https://lareviewofbooks.org/article/text-foolish-brian-vickerss-one-king-lear/; for Vickers's reply, see Brian Vickers, "A Response to Holger Syme," Los Angeles Review of Books, accessed August 1, 2019, https://www.lareviewofbooks.org/article/response-holger-syme/; for an example of press coverage, see Alison Flood, "Academic Performs 500-Tweet Hatchet Job on New Study of Shakespeare," *The Guardian*, June 8, 2016, sec. Books, https://www.theguardian.com/books/2016/jun/08/academic-performs-500-tweet-hatchet-job-on-new-study-of-shakespeare.

[58] John Jowett, "King Lear," in *The New Oxford Shakespeare: Critical Reference Edition*, by William Shakespeare, ed. Gary Taylor et al., 2 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 1:1233-50.

[59] For an exemplary instance of this kind of criticism, see Pascale Aebischer, *Shakespeare's Violated Bodies: Stage and Screen Performance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); for an account of Quarto-oriented textual approach in rehearsal, see David Richman, "The King Lear Quarto In Rehearsal and Performance," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 37, no. 3 (1986): 374-82. Any scholar making the attempt would be well-served to start with René Weis's parallel text edition, see William Shakespeare, *King Lear: A Parallel Text Edition*, ed. René Weis, Longman Annotated Texts (London: Longman, 1993).

[60] Honigmann, "New Bibliography," 87-8. See also Michael Best's "Textual Introduction," *Internet Shakespeare Editions*, [Accessed 13 August 2019]. URL: https://internetshakespeare.uvic.ca/doc/Lr_TextIntro/section/The+two+versions+of+King+Lear/index.html

discrepancies. Infrequently, I do endeavour to discuss how such differences may affect the aesthetic impact of the play. For example, in my second chapter, I try to offer a balanced reading comparing the differing attributions of the final lines of the play. Nevertheless, especially with regards to variants on the level of word-choice, I largely follow Foakes.[61] My final word on the textual question is to note that when Quarto and Folio differences are not in question, I persist in referring to *King Lear* in the singular for a very simple reason: much of what I have to say about the play holds true for both versions.

Deploying an image much beloved by actors, Michael Pennington described *King Lear* as "a mountain shrouded in mist."[62] If this is true for actors, it is true too for critics.[63] Fortunately, some gifted mountaineers have already made the ascent, leaving behind some markers to ease the ascent. Qualifying Elizabeth Schafer's remark with the exception of *Hamlet*, no other Shakespeare play has been as thoroughly studied.[64] This thesis therefore joins an already replete shelf of monograph-length studies on *King Lear*, to say nothing of the innumerable articles and book chapters on the topic. Two of the more recent solo-authored books referred to in this thesis are Jennifer Mae Hamilton's *This Contentious Storm* (2017) and Simon Palfrey's *Poor Tom* (2014).[65] Both deploy a narrow focus on a specific event in the text to explore wider issues. Hamilton's reading

[61] For a flavour of these fine variations, see Jowett, "King Lear."
[62] Michael Pennington, *King Lear in Brooklyn* (London: Oberon Books, 2016), xi.
[63] For an overview of actors and directors using the mountain metaphor, and an argument against it, see Jennifer Mae Hamilton, *This Contentious Storm: An Ecocritical and Performance History of King Lear* (London: Bloomsbury, 2017), 99-101; see also the remarks of Helena Kaut-Howson and Gale Edwards remarks in Elizabeth Schafer, *Ms-Directing Shakespeare: Women Direct Shakespeare* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000), 143, 148.
[64] Schafer, *Ms-Directing Shakespeare*, 129.
[65] Hamilton, *This Contentious Storm*; Simon Palfrey, *Poor Tom: Living King Lear* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014).

of the storm branches out through the play's performance history into an ecocritical analysis of changing attitudes toward the environment.[66] Palfrey's characteristically elaborate reading of Poor Tom ramifies into a complex mesh of theoretical and historical concerns, including the Holocaust, the philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas, and the idea of suffering as such.[67] For the purposes of this thesis, Palfrey's book is also notable for his sporadic engagement with Agamben's theories of "bare life" and "exception," whose deployment I address in the thesis itself.[68]

Another relatively recent monograph, with which this thesis has a certain affinity, is Emily Sun's remarkable *Succeeding King Lear: Literature, Exposure, and the Possibility of Politics* (2010).[69] Again, Sun incorporates some references to Agamben, especially *Homo Sacer* and *State of Exception*, during her analysis of the play's "crisis of sovereignty" — she also discreetly cites *The Coming Community*, which suggests an engagement with Agamben's wider project.[70] With that said, a number of substantive differences open up between *Succeeding King Lear* and the present study: not least in our markedly different approaches to Agamben's terms, the early modern concept of sovereignty, and even the trajectory of the play itself. Like Philip D. Collington, Sun sees little change in Lear's philosophical outlook on freedom and politics — an interpretation that this thesis decisively opposes.[71]

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[66] Hamilton, *This Contentious Storm*, 115-93.
[67] Palfrey, *Poor Tom*, 112-7, 101-3, 136-41.
[68] Ibid., 29, 107-8, 116.
[69] Emily Sun, *Succeeding King Lear: Literature, Exposure, and the Possibility of Politics* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2010).
[70] Ibid., 2, 3-5, 43-4, 167.
[71] Philip D. Collington, "Self-Discovery in Montaigne's 'Of Solitarinesse' and 'King Lear,'" *Comparative Drama* 35, no. 3/4 (2001): 250; Sun, *Succeeding King Lear*, 61.

The powerful 2010 *Re-Visioning Lear's Daughters*, jointly authored by Lesley Kordecki and Karla Koskinen, is worth acknowledging as an important predecessor for my third chapter.[72] Kordecki and Koskinen revitalise the sympathetic performance possibilities for Goneril and Regan, fundamentally resisting the temptation to "reduce the three women to caricatures of morality or immorality."[73] In this they follow Marvin Rosenberg's declaration in *The Masks of King Lear* (1972) that "if [the daughters] were not thought of only as Lear's daughters, the play might be their tragedy."[74] Therefore, despite Rosenberg's tendency to write off Goneril and Regan as "evil," his demand to consider how and why the elder daughters move toward "tragic destinies of their own" has clearly proven a fruitful prompt.[75]

In terms of such older monographs with connections to the present study, there are two further examples worth noting. William F. Zak's *Sovereign Shame: A Study of King Lear* (1984) presents a reading of *King Lear* as an extensive meditation on the notion of "shame," particularly as connected to Lear's political position.[76] Zak takes a more subterranean, psychoanalytic approach to Lear's relationship to office than I do. However, Zak also pursues and opposes Maynard Mack's analysis of *King Lear*'s indebtedness to the "shape of pastoral romance" — as Mack remarks, much of *Lear*'s plot is "the heady brew of romance, not tragedy"[77] — and thereby also attends to the romance thematics in *King Lear* that become pertinent in my second chapter, albeit in a

[72] Lesley Catherine Kordecki and Karla Koskinen, *Re-Visioning Lear's Daughters: Testing Feminist Criticism and Theory* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).
[73] Ibid., 4.
[74] Marvin Rosenberg, *The Masks of King Lear* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972), 49-50.
[75] Ibid., 82, 49.
[76] William F. Zak, *Sovereign Shame: A Study of King Lear* (Cranbury, NJ: Associated University Presses, 1984), 9-12, 54-7, 88-90, 128-30, 133-8.
[77] Maynard Mack, *King Lear: In Our Time* (London: Metheun, 1966), 5.

somewhat cryptic fashion.[78] In this, I should note Cyrus Mulready's well-executed argument that Shakespeare's comedies, histories, and tragedies all have profound debts to the romance tradition that dominated the English stage at the beginning of Shakespeare's career.[79] However, the most important *Lear*-oriented monograph for my purposes is William R. Elton's magisterial *King Lear and the Gods* (1966, rev. 1988), which, though somewhat dated, remains a key touchstone on the topic of religion in *King Lear*.

Elton's treatise begins from the position that there has been a lack of consensus around two religiously-inflected themes in *Lear* criticism.[80] First, whether "the protagonist, among other characters, is, consequent to his suffering, 'regenerated,' 'redeemed,' or 'saved?"[81] Second, whether, in correspondence with this suffering, there is "an intrinsic teleology, a cosmically derived plan, which somehow gives providential significance to the events of the tragedy?"[82] These critical problems are often entangled, appearing in *King Lear* with variable emphases according to character. Notwithstanding, Elton provides an erudite and systemic account of the problem: beginning with background Renaissance doctrines of providence, and their representation in Sidney's *Arcadia* and the anonymous *King Leir* as key sources.[83] Elton then delves deep into character studies, grouping together Cordelia and Edgar, then Goneril, Regan, and Edmund, before treating Gloucester and Lear separately.[84] These four studies argue that these characters represent

[78] Zak, *Sovereign Shame*, 58, 70-1, 106-7.
[79] Cyrus Mulready, *Romance on the Early Modern Stage: English Expansion Before and After Shakespeare* (Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 43.
[80] For an overview of the disputes, see Elton, *King Lear and the Gods*, 3-8.
[81] Ibid., 3.
[82] Ibid.
[83] Ibid., 9-33, 34-62, 63-74 respectively.
[84] Ibid., 75-266.

four distinct attitudes toward theology: "virtuous-heathen," "the atheistic view," "the superstitious view," and a more complex "human reaction to the effects of hidden providence" respectively.[85] Finally, Elton closes with wider structural issues — such as the double plot and "irony" as a structural device — and concluding (in the 1988 edition) with a useful overview of *King Lear* studies between 1967-1988.[86]

Elton ultimately argues against any sense of redemption or providence at the play's end, finding "only suffering, tears, pity, and loss — *and* illusion."[87] By contrast, I argue that the intensity of the suffering arises due to our sense of Lear's redemption, which is then foreclosed by Cordelia's death. Importantly, however, Elton's notion of "redemption" depends on an exclusively theological definition: Lear's religious journey, from piously invoking the gods to cursing them, underpins much of Elton's argument against a redemptive narrative.[88] Yet, Lear's loss of faith in deities does not preclude a redemption of a more profane, moral kind — a redemption expressed more in the manner with which he approaches the world, regardless of whether he secures any particular salvific end.

Like Elton, my argument will present comparisons between Shakespeare's *King Lear* and the versions of the tale that pre-existed it. The best-known of these is the anonymously authored comedy *King Leir and His Three Daughters*, which was written around 1589 but was entered into the Stationer's Register as a "Tragedie" in May 1605, and published shortly thereafter.[89] The proximity of *Leir*'s publication to the composition of

[85] Ibid., 37.
[86] Ibid., 267-334, 339-45 respectively.
[87] Ibid., 334.
[88] Ibid., 259-63.
[89] For composition date, see Martin Wiggins, *British Drama 1533-1642: A Catalogue*, 8 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011-Present); for Stationer's Register, see Bullough, *Sources*, 7:269.

Shakespeare's play has generated a good deal of intelligent speculation about whether Shakespeare adapted his play from the 1605 print copy, an earlier manuscript, or even from memory.[90] One speculative possibility that I have not seen rebutted is that, since *Leir* was also entered into the Stationer's Register in 1594, and given the low survival rate of quartos from this period, the play may well have been printed but lost in the intervening centuries.[91] With regards to its originating company, *Leir* was known to have been performed by the Queen's Men and Sussex's Men in 1594 and is often regarded as an exemplary instance of the Queen's Men's chronicle-based comedic repertoire, especially following Scott McMillin and Sally-Beth Maclean's seminal book.[92] Darren Freebury-Jones has recently suggested the play may have been a Pembroke's Men offering in the first instance, before being taken up by Sussex's Men as *Titus Andronicus* was.[93] In each case, there is the possibility that Shakespeare performed in it, as Kenneth Muir and Stanley Wells have entertained.[94]

The critical preoccupation with Shakespeare's possible access to this Elizabethan comedy over all the other pre-1605 versions of the tale — such as those by Raphael Holinshed, Geoffrey of Monmouth, Edmund Spenser, and John Higgins — appropriately reflects the large number of unique features that appear in both *Leir* and Shakespeare's play.[95] *Leir*

[90] Knowles, "King Leir," 13, 27-35; Muir, *Shakespeare's Sources*, 141; Bullough, *Sources*, 7:269-70.
[91] For the 1594 registration, see Knowles, "King Leir," 29; for the survival rates of plays, see David McInnis and Matthew Steggle, eds., *Lost Plays in Shakespeare's England* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 1-3; this possibility is noted in Tiffany Stern's brief editorial introduction to Anon., *King Leir*, viii.
[92] Scott McMillin and Sally-Beth MacLean, *The Queen's Men and Their Plays* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).
[93] Darren Freebury-Jones, "Kyd and Shakespeare: Authorship versus Influence," *Authorship* 6, no. 1 (2017): 12.
[94] Muir, *Shakespeare's Sources*, 141; Stanley Wells, "Introduction," in *The History of King Lear*, by William Shakespeare, ed. Stanley Wells (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000), 11; for the contradictory view, see Knowles, "King Leir."
[95] For a critical overview of the strongest connections between the plays, see Knowles, "King Leir," 14-7; for a wider collection of possible echoes, see Skura, "What Shakespeare Did with the Queen's Men's King Leir and When," 316-25.

features a transformational storm when the King is out in the wilderness;[96] a flirtatious, murderously ambitious but, ultimately, repentant Messenger, suggesting Edmund;[97] a pretext for the daughters' mistreatment of Leir involves a disrupted banquet;[98] there is a recognition scene between Cordella and Leir, in which both kneel for forgiveness;[99] and so forth.[100] With that said, there are significant borrowings from other versions of the narrative also. For example, John Higgins's *Mirror for Magistrates* (1574) comes closest to Shakespeare's "reservation of an hundred knights," which is entirely absent in *Leir* (1.1.134). Higgins's king is provided with a train of knights and squires after his forcible deposition by his sons-in-law.[101] The second book of Edmund Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* specifies Cordelia's suicide by hanging — her suicide being noted also in Holinshed and Higgins — whereas Cordella's death is entirely absent in *Leir*.[102] (Importantly, no extant version of the tale apart from Shakespeare's presents Cordelia's death as a murder.) Throughout the thesis, I will therefore have recourse to comparisons with these sources, within which *Leir* represents only one of the more significant examples.

Beyond these direct narrative influences, there are other important verbal allusions. Notoriously, Shakespeare draws a number of Poor Tom's demonic invocations from Samuel Harsnett's *Declaration of Popish Impostures* (1603).[103] This has been so

[96] Anon., *King Leir*, 4.7.193-307.
[97] Ibid., 4.5.1-56, 4.7.20-307.
[98] Ibid., 3.2.13-16.
[99] Ibid., 5.4.205-10.
[100] For a detailed overview of the strongest of these connections, see Knowles, "King Leir."
[101] Bullough, *Sources*, 7:326; for another source of the "one hundred" knights, see the analysis of Ixion mythology as a source by O. B. Hardison, "Myth and History in King Lear," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 26, no. 3 (1975): 231.
[102] See Bullough, *Sources*, 7:334, 319, 332.
[103] Ibid., 7:269.

thoroughly discussed — most famously by Stephen Greenblatt, but perhaps most powerfully by Ewan Fernie — that I will not attempt to add to it.[104] Linguistically, the play also demonstrates some very probable debts to John Florio's translation of Michel de Montaigne's *Essayes* (1603).[105] The use of Montaigne, given his explicit engagement with classical philosophy, may also connect with the play's subtle interest in Greek philosophy.[106] I explore this question of classical philosophy particularly in the fourth chapter, in relation to *Timon of Athens* (1605-6) — a play which demonstrates some intense affinities with *King Lear*.[107]

Some of these classical resonances may simply reflect Shakespeare's well-known artistic engagement with Plutarch between *c.* 1599-1608, especially Thomas North's translation of *Lives* (1579).[108] On the other hand, another plausible textual connection has been proposed by Stanley Wells, who notes resemblances with Plutarch's work of moral philosophy titled *The Morals*, as translated by Philemon Holland in 1603.[109] Colin Burrow has argued for the influence of Seneca's *De beneficiis* — with its preoccupation with gratitude, luxury, and reciprocity — on Shakespeare's composition of the play.[110] Similarly, O. B. Hardison, Jr. writes persuasively on the myth of Ixion as a possible alternative source for Lear's "one hundred unruly horsemen" and Lear's description of

[104] Stephen Greenblatt, *Shakespearean Negotiations: The Circulation of Social Energy in Renaissance England* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 94-128; Ewan Fernie, *The Demonic* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013), 223-36; for an excellent overview of the connections, see Elton, *King Lear and the Gods*, 89-94.
[105] Holdsworth, "Shakespeare and Middleton," 371; Foakes, "Introduction," 104-5.
[106] For an argument that runs near this possibility but that opposes my overall reading, see Collington, "Self-Discovery in Montaigne's 'Of Solitarinesse' and 'King Lear.'"
[107] By contrast, Wiggins dates *Timon of Athens* to 1607.
[108] Colin Burrow, *Shakespeare and Classical Antiquity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 202.
[109] Stanley Wells, "The Taming of the Shrew and King Lear: A Structural Comparison," in *Shakespeare Survey: King Lear*, ed. Kenneth Muir (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 55-66.
[110] Burrow, *Shakespeare and Classical Antiquity*, 197-9.

his own offspring as centaurs — this reading jumping off from Lear's claim to be "bound upon a wheel of fire" (4.7.47).[111]

Jonathan Bate, picking up Hardison's argument, gives an intriguing overview of Shakespeare's possible debts to Ovid's *Metamorphoses* in *Lear*, especially around the transformative dimensions of madness.[112] John Kerrigan has more recently argued that the play reflects a deeper engagement with classical culture than usually acknowledged, drawing out some possible parallels with the tragedies of Seneca, Sophocles, and Euripides in particular.[113] Indeed, if Edmund's remark about "the catastrophe of the old comedy" ought, in fact, be capitalised — *i.e.* "the Old Comedy" — then this may be an explicit reference to the satirical Athenian style made famous by Aristophanes also (1.2.134). However, as Bate's argument suggests, when specific allusions give way to general affinities, the critical application of these correspondences must become more tentative too.[114] Nevertheless, even when precise debts cannot be proven, there is still some utility to identifying and analysing analogues. Particularly when seeking to unpick otherwise obscure details, this thesis will certainly draw on wider works — from earlier commercial English drama, to religious pamphlets, to legal dictionaries — to better illuminate the structure and language of the text, without necessarily making any claims for direct influence.

[111] Hardison, "Myth and History in King Lear," 231-2.
[112] Jonathan Bate, "Ovid and the Mature Tragedies: Metamorphosis in Othello and King Lear," in *Shakespeare Survey*, ed. Stanley Wells (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 135-6, 141-4.
[113] John Kerrigan, *Shakespeare's Originality* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 63-82.
[114] Bate, "Ovid and the Mature Tragedies," 135.

I have often thought that literary criticism ought to reflect the experience of reading its object, as well as enrich it. Personally, I find that reading a play-text usually suggests the idea of its performance, whether imagined or remembered. For example, take the stage direction:

> *Sennet. Enter* Q*one bearing a coronet, then*Q LEAR, CORNWALL, ALBANY, GONERIL, REGAN, CORDELIA *and attendants*.
>
> (1.1.32SD)

From the perspective of literary criticism, the imagined spectacle of this moment — provided one takes the fictive playworld seriously — demands some filling in. One way to start supplementing the impact of this opening procession is therefore to consider how it has been staged or might be staged. To that end, I draw on several recent productions precisely to discuss this very stage direction in my first chapter. In a related way, the broader history of *King Lear*'s adaptations can also illuminate dimensions of the text. For example, I argue at the end of my second chapter that some of Nahum Tate's Restoration revisions can usefully highlight certain latent romantic aspects of Shakespeare's text. Yet, there is a simple organising principle: I deploy them as and when they illuminate an aspect of *King Lear* that is pertinent to my specific topic.

This principle also governs a more idiosyncratic critical dimension of this thesis. As I have already suggested, I will be drawing from the wider corpus of the Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben. I have found his thinking especially well-suited to address much of *King Lear*. Of all living philosophers, his work has perhaps meditated the most intensely

on ideas of sovereignty, office, duty, poverty, sacredness, and outlawry. I think it is true that the play's narrative also resonates with dimensions of the dangerous nexus of politics, economics, and theology that Agamben traces back to antiquity.[115] Of the scholarship concerning Agamben and *King Lear*, there are some useful predecessors, which I will address directly in the course of my argument — though few have referred to the full extent of Agamben's project.[116] But beyond this fit in content, there is also an affinity of mood between the two.

Agamben's thought has been characterised as darkly anarchic — from *anarche*, meaning against the origin or principle.[117] By this, his commentators attempt to name his intense scepticism toward the ability of "schema of metaphysics" to master the world, including the providential thought of theology and the scientific-managerial techniques of modern governance.[118] Something like this scepticism toward the possibility of a justly managed economy of life seems to animate even the more theistic moments of the play too: "As flies to wanton boys are we to the gods / They kill us for their sport" (4.1.38-9). Gloucester's belief in divinity concedes intervention perhaps but not within a justly

[115] Agamben's interpretation of Foucaldian biopolitics (politics of life) is so bleak that it has been discussed as thanatopolitics (politics of death). See Mills, *Biopolitics*, 37-57.

[116] Elizabeth D. Gruber, "Nature on the Verge: Confronting 'Bare Life'' in Arden of Faversham and King Lear,'" *ISLE: Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment* 22, no. 1 (2015): 98-114; Palfrey, *Poor Tom*, 107; Sun, *Succeeding King Lear*, 43-4.

[117] Thanos Zartaloudis, *Giorgio Agamben: Power, Law and the Uses of Criticism*, Nomikoi (Abingdon: Routledge, 2010), 141-2.

For the most useful secondary resources regarding Agamben's work, see also Justin Clemens, Nicholas Heron, and Alex Murray, eds., *The Work of Giorgio Agamben: Law, Literature, Life* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008); Leland De la Durantaye, *Giorgio Agamben: A Critical Introduction* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009); Nicholas Heron, "The Ungovernable," *Angelaki* 16, no. 2 (2011): 159-74; Adam Kotsko and Carlo Salzani, eds., *Agamben's Philosophical Lineage* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2017); Mills, *Biopolitics*; Alex Murray, *Giorgio Agamben* (London: Routledge, 2010); Alex Murray and Jessica Whyte, eds., *The Agamben Dictionary* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011); Jessica Whyte, *Catastrophe and Redemption: The Political Thought of Giorgio Agamben* (New York: SUNY Press, 2013).

[118] Zartaloudis, *Giorgio Agamben*, 141-2.

managed providential economy.[119] Instead, if gods are concerned about men, it is only as a sporting involvement in human affairs, expressing cold cruelty in its randomness. Superficially, then, *King Lear* and Agamben coincide in a certain shared pessimism, a bleakness of outlook when it comes to the structuring of life. However, the more fundamental commonality seems to reside in a shared preoccupation with exclusion, debasement, negation, and absence. Perhaps most importantly, both the play and the philosopher seem to suggest that just such an abject negation, a debasing exclusion, resides in the most unexpected of places: in the sovereign office itself.[120]

The Christian notion of ministerial office arises, as Agamben demonstrates, partly to supplement the doctrine of the providential economy: that creation is indirectly subject to government and management.[121] According to Agamben's account, the chief spurs for the ministerial articulation of office arises from what might be considered theodicies. In other words, our modern sense of office begins as a "[vindication] of the divine," as the *OED* puts it, "in respect to the existence of evil."[122] To put the fundamental question crudely: if God loves us, and is all-powerful, why does He allow evil? In a real sense then, every theodicy risks attempting to *measure* divine love.[123]

As Agamben shows, the notion of office arose from two separate attempts to reconcile this omnipotent, benevolent economy of salvation with the presence of evil within it. The

[119] For the seminal argument regarding Gloucester's superstition as antithetical to properly providential thought, see Elton, *King Lear and the Gods*, esp. 147-8.
[120] My first chapter covers this topic in detail.
[121] Agamben, *Opus Dei*, 54-56; Agamben, *The Kingdom and the Glory*, 53-67.
[122] "Theodicy, n.," in *OED Online* (Oxford University Press), accessed October 3, 2019, http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/200356.
[123] Regina Mara Schwartz writes that Lear's love-test falsely purports "to measure precisely that which cannot be measured, love." For an important critique of the innate impoverishment in attempting to quantify love and justice, see Schwartz, *Loving Justice, Living Shakespeare*. For the quotation, see 39.

first is the more famous theodicy, what is the Devil's role in a divinely-ordered cosmos?[124] The second question, which is related but distinct, emerges from the so-called Baptismal Disputes: do the people that Judas baptised need to be re-baptised?[125] The close connection between the two rests on the demand to disentangle the purity of the providential economy from the impurity of the agents within it. Agamben records the extraordinary answer that the scholastic Peter of Poitiers (1130-*c.*1215) gives to the providential role of the Devil: "[Satan] does what God wants [but] he does not do it *as* God wants."[126] This statement is too subtle to explore properly here. Yet, the answer's pertinence to ministerial office can be drawn out precisely by comparison to the answer to the second question, in which even the sacraments performed by the epitome of a bad priest — Judas Iscariot — nevertheless remain efficacious, provided they are correctly performed, regardless of the priest's personal moral deficiency.[127]

As Agamben notes, that the paradigm of the Christian priest's praxis partly emerges from an explanation of Satan's role within the economy of salvation cannot fail to be "embarrassing" for theologians.[128] Yet, in my view, it makes perfect sense. How better to guarantee the providential efficacy of divine sacraments in spite of human frailty than with an analogy to the devil's existence within, resistance, and yet subordination to divine providence? This paradigm's crucial legacy for modern office rests in the disjunction between the institutional function and the moral engagement of the agent. Both theodicies, in this sense, secure the doctrinal validity of a sacred power exercised by

[124] Agamben, *Opus Dei*, 23.
[125] Ibid., 20-21.
[126] Ibid., 23, my emphasis.
[127] Ibid., 21.
[128] Ibid., 23.

impure agents: divine power is affirmed as such and the efficacy of providential offices remains unhindered by the morality of the agent. Yet, this strange disjunction cuts both ways. What began as an argument to secure the purity of the Church despite the occasional impurity of its agents transforms into a doctrine that actively encourages the suppression of any serious moral engagement at all.

As Agamben intuits, the peculiar legacy of this doctrine has been borne out with particular intensity in the idea of duty (Latin: *officium*).[129] Despite the absence of the anchoring Christian claim of institutional transcendence, secular office-holders continue to suppress personal moral responsibility in lieu of compliance. In fact, the archetypal forms of office today — the professional soldier or the civil servant — pose compliance to the office and the suspension of private moral opinion as a primary moral good.[130] Indeed, this suppression of personal moral objections in lieu of compliance is tellingly referred to as "doing one's duty." (The suspension of personal ethics to comply with an office as a moral good would seem peculiar to classical thought, as Agamben demonstrates.)[131] What is crucial here is that this contorted moral logic implies that one can therefore *dutifully* commit a terrible crime, provided the right person asks. Indeed, this is precisely what Edmund's officer does at the end of *King Lear*, when he dutifully murders Cordelia. An easy proof of how the force of office's moral logic continues to assert itself in our culture is precisely to ask the simple question: who do we hold more responsible for Cordelia's death: Edmund, who orders it? Or the officer, who performs it? Only a culture that still,

[129] Ibid., 89-129.
[130] For a suggestive analysis of this phenomenon, see Foucault's analysis of opening analysis of Kant in Foucault, *Government of Self and Others*, 1-39.
[131] Agamben, *Opus Dei*, 1-12.

at least partially, permits the moral imperative of dutiful obedience to an office over personal moral responsibility would need to pause over such a question.

As I hope is starting to become clear, there are some important "unknown knowns" at work in all of this. They underpin *King Lear* in the way they underpin much of our culture. This type of doctrinal identity, despite its historical contingency, continues to operate with many assumptions left unexamined. As Agamben has suggested, the logic of the liturgical office can still be found at the heart of many of our most significant institutions: from political ministers, to the bureaucracy, to the military.[132] Heron argues that office has proliferated throughout modern professional life.[133] It is true that even academia, whose profession has undergone drastic change alongside the rise of managerial office, has often struggled to address this issue. This failure is arguably an index of the elusive transparency with which office still appears in our daily lives — where its peculiar theological heritage remains imperceptible until pointed out — for no other reason than the concept's numbing familiarity.[134]

This thesis poses that office is a form of doctrinal identity like gender, class, or race. Like those forms of identity, the play depicts some of the real dangers posed by essentialising such discursively-defined properties, as Lear himself discovers. As I will show, doctrinal identity often serves to constrain individual ethics — but, equally, simply swapping one doctrinal identity in favour of another rarely works either: as Edmund and Goneril both prove. Yet, *King Lear* seems an unusually rich meditation on office in particular. Where

[132] Ibid., xii.
[133] Heron, *Liturgical Power*, 132.
[134] For the need to study our "numbingly familiar" political categories, see Francis Oakley, *Kingship: The Politics of Enchantment*, New Perspectives on the Past (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 9.

office differs from these others is its explicit logic of instrumental transience: by definition, office-holders come and go, "[they] ebb and flow by the moon," but the office lives on (5.3.13). (Though, worryingly, this is perhaps true of other forms of political identity too.) As Peter Goodrich writes: "a classical civilian motif, *dignitas non moritur* — dignity, meaning office and honour, do not die, though we may certainly die for them: we may die for an office, for a country, for honour, for a mask."[135] This idea of office as a mask is not merely a poetic metaphor on Goodrich's part. In a passage that anticipates Agamben and Heron, he quotes Pierre Legendre:

> Note that one of the central constructions of civil law, that which, following Justinian's terminology, we call *the law of persons*, literally derives from *persona* — referring initially to an actor's mask — and authorises me to translate the formula *de iure personarum* by 'of the law of masks.' In all institutional systems the political subject is reproduced through masks.[136]

Taking this just a little further, Goodrich argues that the law "binds deceptively, it binds unconsciously and it binds affectively — through acceptance, through the identities of speech and the masks of personality rather than explicitly through any paramilitary invasion of everyday life."[137] Here, the law, like the institutional systems of religion, economics, and politics, chiefly comes into effect through the internalisation of a persona, a doctrinal identity. This brings us full circle to Mills's claim: "subjectivity is the mode

[135] Peter Goodrich, *Languages of Law: From Logics of Memory to Nomadic Masks.*, Law in Context (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1990), 221.
[136] Ibid., 263-4.
[137] Ibid., 9.

through which politics and life come into contact."[138] Goodrich expresses the deep phenomenology implied by this with the simple statement: "we live the law."[139] But, most crucially in his view, one becomes bound to the law first and foremost by "the perception of oneself as an institutional being."[140] To return to the dramatic irony of Lear's joke — "Who is that can tell me who I am?" (1.4.221) — the play therefore suggests something about office that any actor knows: if one wears a mask for long enough, one starts to forget about the face beneath it.

The final question then to hammer out before delving into the play properly is the one that I began with. What does it mean to be who we are? I want to note some of the more insightful works of scholarship on *King Lear* and subjectivity, even as I distinguish this project somewhat from them.[141] Having suggested several ways in which Mills's claim about subjectivity, politics, and life can be read productively, I finally want to push back against it. First, following Agamben, I am suspicious of any statement that suggests some sort of apolitical life might exist beyond politics.[142] With that said, one area in which this thesis is explicitly not following the tracks of Agamben's project is in its conception of self and identity.[143] By this I mean that Mills's phrasing implies an inherent passivity to subjectivity, in which the self simply becomes the site for an encounter of politics and

[138] Mills, *Biopolitics*, 8.
[139] Goodrich, *Languages of Law*, 9.
[140] Ibid., 9, 289.
[141] Hanna Scolnicov, "'Who Is It That Can Tell Me Who I Am?' Individual, Subject, and Self in King Lear," *Shakespeare Jahrbuch* 142 (2006): 142-56; Coppélia Kahn, "The Absent Mother in King Lear," in *King Lear: Contemporary Critical Essays*, ed. Kiernan Ryan, New Casebooks (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993), 92-113; Erin Sullivan, *Beyond Melancholy: Sadness and Selfhood in Renaissance England*, Emotions in History (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 6, 12, 64-6, 73-4.
[142] For more explanation of this idea, see my second chapter's discussion of "bare life" in particular. See also Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, 8-11.
[143] For Agamben's account of discursive subjectivity, following Foucault, see Agamben, *Remnants of Auschwitz*, 140-43; for his more recent, and quite innovative analysis of volition and action, see Giorgio Agamben, *Karman: A Brief Treatise on Action, Guilt, and Gesture*, trans. Adam Kotsko (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2018).

life. This impression is emphasised when Mills says later, explicitly invoking Agamben, that subjectivity is "the battleground" of politics.[144] This model, sometimes known as the discursive model of subjectivity, has been eminently accepted across much post-Nietzschean, post-psychoanalytic theory.[145] While I accept its explanatory power, I propose it has some damaging consequences as a worldview, not least in rendering subjectivity as the symptomatic expression of discursive encounters — an instrumentalising doctrinal identity that might well risk foreclosing ethical responsibility.

By this I mean that posing subjectivity as a battleground — or the self as a cipher of discourse — risks losing sight of what is at stake in the conflict. The self is not merely the *locus* of a conflict, it is not the inert no-man's-land upon which politics and life tussle it out. In my view, self arises as the active participant in the tussle itself. In this sense, self is a practice: it is the imaginative, linguistically-immersed, and lived enterprise of reconciling our various identities, engagements, encounters, and principles, whether consciously or unconsciously.[146] The history of this battleground textures the fabric of our experience, but it also produces our capacity to develop a form of agency — illusory or not — with some degree of predictive awareness about our actions and our contexts. If one reduces selfhood to a mere expression of the variable intersections of politics and life, if all human action is the symptomatic expression of discourse, there is a real risk of tutoring ethical disengagement.

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[144] Mills, *Biopolitics*, 8.
[145] Agamben, *Remnants of Auschwitz*, 140-3.
[146] In modern cognitive psychology, my view has been best explained by the "dialogical self" theory of Hubert J. M. Hermans. Some of its distinctive features are presupposed in the ancient Socratic idea of self, but never articulated with the precision and detail that Hermans provides. For a layman's introduction to the theory, see Hubert J. M. Hermans, "The Dialogical Self," in *The Oxford Handbook of The Self*, ed. Shaun Gallagher (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 654-80; see also, Shaun Gallagher, "Introduction: A Diversity of Selves," in *The Oxford Handbook of the Self*, ed. Shaun Gallagher (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), esp. 23-4.

This is particularly pertinent to the question of philosophy itself. The practice of philosophy, with its values of critical thought, might be read as merely another ideological structure. Lear's philosophical transformation might therefore be characterised as simply swapping one discursive identity for another. Something like this notion was persuasively advanced by Pierre Bourdieu, who illuminated how philosophy, art, and other cultural enterprises — especially through the social positioning of "taste" as cultural capital — can articulate spurious social hierarchies.[147] However, his implicit critique of the conspicuous consumption of philosophy is itself a fundamentally philosophical one: it is precisely one of the first warnings that classical philosophers advanced to prospective philosophers.[148] From another perspective, philosophy could also be defined as the ideology that is aware of itself as ideology but perseveres in spite of that. Furthermore, to stop at the notion that all thinking, all subjectivity is ideological is to collapse distinctions that are, at the very least, vital in our experience of them. This is to say that this thesis advances the claim — as strongly as possible — that *King Lear* refutes the reductiveness of describing the acquisition of philosophy as the displacement of one discursive identity for another. In my eyes, a cursory comparison between "the dragon" of the first scene and the compassionate ascetic before the prison presents refutation enough (1.1.123). But prosecuting that particular case remains a long way off yet.

[147] For the introduction and the fraught references to the consumption of philosophy, see Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1984), 1-8, 16, 25-6, 31, 84, 91, 119, 128, 152, 155, 228, 231, 240, 278, 283, 293-4, 304, 325, 329, 331, 361, 415, 493-7.
[148] Epictetus, *Discourses, Fragments, Handbook*, 193-8, 259-63.

CHAPTER I

THE MAJESTY OF KINGSHIP: SPECTACULAR AND SACRED SOVEREIGN POWER

As far as political identity in *King Lear* is concerned, there are few better places to begin than with the king himself. However, this first chapter does not directly consider Lear's personal crisis of self but rather lays the background to understanding it. To do so, this chapter considers the office of kingship in and of itself. I examine the theological, political, and juridical import of sovereign kingship, particularly in relation to its signs, doctrines, and powers. To understand *Lear*'s depiction of kingship and sovereign power, I contend, it will not suffice simply to follow the word 'king,' since the play itself is premised on a fracturing of that role. It is therefore necessary to make some careful distinctions. Importantly, not all kings are sovereigns; nor are all sovereigns kings. In that vein, what it means to 'be king' is not straightforward: this is true historically but it is all the more true in drama, where constitutional conventions are routinely distorted (if not utterly abandoned) in service of dramatic expediency. In Shakespeare's *King Lear*, such difficulties acquire an even greater intensity, as the play explicitly stages a political crisis concerning the boundaries, meaning, and value of kingship without formal powers.

To analyse *Lear*'s depiction of the highest office, I undertake three key investigations. First, I examine his initial presentation to the audience: I describe several recent stagings

of his entrance and how their respective semiotics of power pertain to his imperious opening lines. I suggest that the legal and political connotations evoked by Lear's entrance supplement his speech acts with a procedural gravity and credibility. Lear's introduction demonstrates his personal habituation to authority but it also foregrounds a spectacular dimension to law in general, and to sovereign kingship in particular. With regards to Lear's legal powers, and the speech acts through which he exercises them, Shakespeare makes a unique contribution to the *Lear* narrative by duplicating the exclusionary action at the outset of his play: Shakespeare's Lear banishes a loyal nobleman, the Earl of Kent, as a political analogue to Cordelia's domestic expulsion. After comparing the juridical import of these speech acts, as well as the specifically exceptional power that underpins them, I then undertake a close reading of the transformation that Lear proposes for the office of kingship. Through his entrance, speech acts, and exclusions, Lear begins the play by spectacularly demonstrating his sovereign power. Yet, by the end of the scene, he formally detaches those sovereign powers from the "name" of "king," relegating himself and his kingship to a merely nominal office (1.1.137).

Within the play, Lear's "gift" is criticised not just on technical, pragmatic grounds but as a moral "evil," to borrow Kent's terms (1.1.165, 167). To illuminate this accusation, my second point of focus is the specifically sacred quality of sovereign kingship. To explore this, I draw upon the wider European intellectual discourse, which posits an analogy between the king and Christ, as well as the Tudor doctrine of the King's Two Bodies (reconciling the divinity of the office into the body of a man, as with Christ and his two natures). The key priority that animates these analyses is to meaningfully demonstrate

kingship's intensely *kenotic*, even inhuman quality.[1] This is to say that sovereign kingship is doctrinally understood as an office whose divinity alienates or negates the selfhood of the office-holder.

Building upon this understanding of both the spectacular and the sacred nature of sovereign kingship, I proceed finally to isolate the juridico-theological property of *majesty* for direct discussion. This jurisprudential concept, I contend, binds together law, religion, metaphysics, and physiognomy into a spectacular sovereign sanctity. Yet, by noting that 'majesty' is precisely one of the qualities that Lear conveys to Cornwall and Albany, troubling questions about treason — itself legally defined as *crimen lesae majestatis* (*lit.* the crime of injuring majesty) — begin to emerge. In particular, Gloucester's blinding, which elicits an intense moral response, demands cautious jurisprudential consideration. To conclude this chapter, I suggest that by evacuating himself of his *majesty*, and of his wider juridical significance, Lear approaches a position analogous with Agamben's "bare life." By dispensing with every duty, power, and right of his office, Lear's title of 'king' becomes a vestigial term of address, a floating signifier that in fact advertises his negated juridico-political significance. And, from this perspective, a hidden affinity between the banished man and the ex-sovereign becomes legible.

[1] (*lit.* 'an emptying', from *Phil.* ii. 7 — I make a comparison between Christ's kenosis and sovereign kenosis later in the chapter.) See also, "Kenosis, n.," in *OED Online* (Oxford University Press), accessed October 3, 2019, http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/102927.

SPECTACULAR POWER

The premise of *King Lear* demands that I note two important points concerning kingship: first, and more obvious, that the office of the king is one that is conventionally exercised for a life-long term; second, and less intuitive, that the title of 'king' can be conceptually distinguished from the sovereign powers associated with the office.[2] The events of the first scene of the play hinge upon these two ideas. Another immediate concern of the opening scene appears to be to establish Lear's habitual familiarity with the powers of sovereignty, in advance of him discarding them. It is impressive how effectively this sense of Lear's sovereign potency is communicated, particularly given the swift challenges made first by Cordelia, and then by Kent (1.1.87, 121). In performance, the set-piece of Lear's entrance offers directors an opportunity to establish the king's potency in a non-verbal register. The text indicates some fairly conventional stage-business involving a "*sennet*," a musical flourish, and some sort of procession (1.1.32.1-3). This stage direction has been articulated in numerous ways, the specific choices often illuminating the political characteristics of the production's setting and the temperament of Lear himself.

To illuminate this, I take three British productions from 2018, from both the stage and the screen. In Jonathan Munby's modern-dress stage production, at the Duke of York's theatre, Lear (Ian McKellen) entered to a patriotic anthem sung by the cast on stage, and

[2] For global iterations of this phenomenon, see the Merovingian 'do-nothing' kings and the Shogunate-era Japanese emperor, both analysed in Oakley, *Kingship*, 10-43.

he took his place in full dress-uniform in front of a vast oil portrait of himself.[3] By contrast, Richard Eyre's 2018 BBC production was also modernised but less overtly ceremonial — instead, military personnel in fatigues, the tolling of Big Ben, dark cars with tinted windows, Lear's Stalinesque clothing, and a sparsely decorated chamber evoked a more austere authoritarian regime.[4] At the other end of the spectrum, Gregory Doran's 2016/18 production featured smoking bowls of incense, a quasi-Gregorian chant, attendants carrying branches, and Lear himself being carried onto stage in a glass-box palanquin.[5]

These choices all participate in the "enunciative modalities" that Peter Goodrich analyses for English law *via* Foucault.[6] These are the semiotic conditions for an institutionally-defined site of legitimate power:

> [the] panoply of symbols that exist to create a legal space, a space of law, of legal annunciation in which a discourse becomes solemnised, a language approaches a liturgy, and the signs are all there to indicate the distances necessary to a place, the distances that will allow the judge to speak in the mask of the Other […] it is the Law that sits down in the place of merely human demands.[7]

[3] *King Lear | Pre-Show Talk* (Chichester Festival Theatre, 2017), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xAUvU9fhVHY.
[4] Richard Eyre, *King Lear* (BBC, 2018).
[5] Gregory Doran, *King Lear* (Royal Shakespeare Company, 2016).
[6] Goodrich, *Languages of Law*, 189.
[7] Ibid., 223.

In the case of *Lear*, in staging this opening scene, each of the aforementioned directors deployed distinctive sets of visual and spatial referents to evoke the sense of Goodrich's "space of law, of legal annunciation": through the panoply of a nationalist monarchy in Munby; the authoritarian will of the military dictator in Eyre; or the ancient, sacred kingship of Doran.[8] Clearly, the precise logic of the "exhibition value[s]" of these choices varies to some degree, but they are consistent insofar as they work to produce an impression of a sovereign legal space.[9] Furthermore, whatever the referents evoked in this opening scene, whatever symbols and signs, they will dissipate through the course of the play, becoming conspicuously absent (or, occasionally, parodically imitated) by the time of the mock-trial of the villains and the villain's mocking trial of Gloucester.[10]

This opening procession therefore provides an opportunity for a concentrated moment of theatrical semiotics, gesturing in some way to Lear's kingship. This serves as an appropriate juncture to solidify the recognition that sovereign kingship, like the law, rests on spectacular politics. This is so much so that even the modern English courtroom's "panoply of symbols," which Goodrich analyses, are themselves vestigial reminders that the judge sits in lieu of the sovereign.[11] Sovereign kingship exists in a mutually dependent relationship with its signs: to some extent, the sovereign grounds the juridico-theological sphere through political force, producing the "regular" (rule-based) situation;[12] on the

[8] Ibid.
[9] Heron, *Liturgical Power*, 85.
[10] Elton, *King Lear and the Gods*, 282. For further discussion of the English 'enunciative modalities' of law, see Goodrich, *Languages of Law*, 189-91, 223.
[11] Goodrich, *Languages of Law*, 189; on the origins of English "justices" as judge-delegates of royal authority, see J. H. Baker, *An Introduction to English Legal History*, 3rd ed. (London: Butterworths, 1990), 17-9.
[12] Schwab translates Schmitt as describing it as a "normal" situation, which the sovereign produces and guarantees, Schmitt, *Political Theology*, 13; Agamben prefers "regular" in his translation of Schmitt, Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, 15-26, esp. 16. Both "normal" and "regular" clearly need to be understood in their strongest senses, as permitting 'norms' or 'rules'.

other hand, the sovereign also evidently derives some political capital from the spectacular dimensions of juridico-theological legitimacy. Louis Marin has gone so far as to remark that "[t]he king is only truly king, that is monarch, in images. They are his *real presence*. A belief in the effectiveness and operativeness of *his* iconic signs is obligatory, or else the monarch is emptied of all his substance."[13] The logic here is significant: the 'real presence' of the king is the spectacle of his office, rather than the existence of the individual who holds it. (This implicit alienation of the office-holder from the office will become a recurring concern.) The aforementioned directorial choices for Lear's entrance therefore become intelligible as demonstrations of the entrenched and absolute quality of Lear's power through the spectacular display of his office. More importantly, Lear's apparent familiarity with these signs and significations, his ease with them — despite his desire to finally dispense with them — is a key component in the brisk communication of Lear's habituation to office.

These directorial choices only elaborate and re-inscribe a tendency already suggested by the text. Lear's first words, for example, are the imperative: "Attend the lords of France and Burgundy, Gloucester," which neatly demonstrate the thrust of Lear's initial characterisation (1.1.33). The command is followed by the cryptic announcement — "Meantime we shall express our darker purpose" (1.1.35) — but then another imperative swiftly follows: "Give me the map there" (1.1.36). The Quarto has the even more abrupt, "The map there," which has the merit of keeping the whole line more metrically regular, while also intensifying the sense of briskness. Foakes suggests that this demand for the map might conveniently be made to Kent, whose physical possession of the map could

[13] Louis Marin, *Portrait of the King*, trans. Martha M Houle (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1988), 9; see also Goodrich, *Languages of Law*, 260.

well spark the opening lines of the play (1.1.36n). On the other hand, in Eyre's 2018 film, Lear (Anthony Hopkins) snapped the demand for the map to Gloucester (Jim Broadbent) with audible impatience. Gloucester, already beginning to leave following the first command, was forced to double-back past Lear, and retrieve the map. Eyre's choice conveyed an immediate sense of Lear's capricious irritability, which set up the style of his government more broadly and his impending treatment of Cordelia in particular. In any case, the key point remains that Lear's opening cluster of lines are commands and proclamations, their terseness implying familiarity.

This commanding register recurs throughout the scene with unusual frequency. By my count, Lear utters at least 36 commands and/or speech acts across his first scene (1.1.33-368). This means, on average across his 122 lines, he delivers performatives of this kind roughly every three-and-a-half lines.[14] Quantifying the sheer quantity and rapidity of this flow of orders is useful in giving an impression of Lear's initial manner. However, this is still a limited index of the strategy at play here. Replies like, "Nothing, I have sworn. [F]I am firm,[F]" escape the aforementioned category but still evoke an authoritative temperament (1.1.247). Likewise, this impression is as much encouraged by the brevity and terseness of the commands — "Call France. Who stirs? / Call Burgundy" (1.1.127-8) — as by their frequency. The overall effect is that Lear appears as a person accustomed to the exercise of his absolute office.

Excluding Lear's resignation, there are two speech acts in this first scene that make particularly forceful impressions, both for the characters in the drama and for the

[14] This analysis reflects Foakes's conflated text.

audience. They receive extended treatment, in terms of the lines taken to deliver them, and they are repeatedly discussed within the drama subsequently. I refer to the banishment of Kent and the disowning of Cordelia. The two acts are similar: they both rest on an 'exceptional' mode of power and they are, therefore, in some respects analogous. Yet, to gently correct a terminological inexactitude that has acquired some critical prevalence, I also contend that Cordelia's punishment is sharply distinct from Kent's. It is imprecise to refer to Cordelia as being "banished" and this is evident from the terms that Lear sets, the power deployed, and the political sphere from which each character can be said to have been excluded.[15]

Lear's banishment of Kent is quite formulaic for Shakespeare, and it conforms to a wider paradigm of sentencing in Shakespeare's drama — this is worth noting in regard to Cornwall's disregard for the "form of justice" later in the play (3.7.25). The power at work here is depicted as an autocratic prerogative, an *exceptionality* as I will discuss shortly, but it does nevertheless conform to certain principles of application. Shakespeare's on-stage banishments typically begin with an articulation of the rationale, a public justification for the decision — it is this public justification that is notably absent from Cornwall's summary punishment of Gloucester.[16] With regards to Kent, Lear explains as follows:

[15] To give a few examples of critics who have described Cordelia as banished, see Bradley, *Shakespearean Tragedy*, 292; Hamilton, *This Contentious Storm*, 36-7, 92-5; Sun, *Succeeding King Lear*, 23-4; Rosenberg, *The Masks of King Lear*, 64, 82; Elton, *King Lear and the Gods*, 306; Paul A. Cantor, "The Cause of Thunder: Nature and Justice in King Lear," in *King Lear: New Critical Essays*, ed. Jeffrey Kahan (New York: Routledge, 2008), 231.

[16] See, for example, the banishments of Bolingbroke and Mowbray (*R2*, 1.3.124-33); or Caius Martius Coriolanus (*Cor.*, 3.3.93-109).

That thou hast sought to make us break our vows,
Which we durst never yet, and with strained pride
To come betwixt our sentences and our power
Which nor our nature, nor our place can bear
Our potency made good, take thy reward.

(1.1.169-73)

The alleged infraction here is an intriguing one. In a superficial sense, Kent has quite literally "come betwixt [Lear's] sentences and [his] power":

Lear. Now by Apollo —
Kent. — Now by Apollo, King,
Thou swear'st thy gods in vain.

(1.1.161-2)

This is not the first time Shakespeare plays with the interrupting of speech acts for dramatic effect (*R3*, 4.4.367-87). The technique also appears in *King Leir*.[17] However, this very literal 'coming betwixt' the king's sentences and his power is not the substantive issue here. Kent has also urged for Lear to revoke two proclamations: the gift of his powers and territory to his sons-in-law, and the disowning of Cordelia. Lear, quite simply, refuses to reconsider what he has already proclaimed, and it is intriguing that he considers any revision of a proclamation to be a "break[ing]" of "vows" (1.1.169) — despite the fact that, in the case of his gift, there was no obvious evidence of oath-taking. He makes

[17] Anon., *King Leir*, 4.7.185-93; see also Knowles, "King Leir," 19.

a particularly telling admission: "Which nor our nature, nor our place can bear" (1.1.172). His claim here is that neither he as an individual, nor the political exigencies of kingship, can tolerate a rupture in the unity of speech and act. What he has spoken, both as a man and as a sovereign, is sealed. As the living embodiment and source of law, the final transcendent bond that anchors law's mystical authority rests on the sovereign's oath. It is the idea of such a seal that Lear emphatically refuses to break.

As a dramatist, Shakespeare exhibits a recursive interest in the fragile magic of language, in the moments where speech coincides with act. The "felicity" (or, less precisely, the 'success') of such events, as the philosopher J. L. Austin took such pains to demonstrate, rests on a wide array of technical and political contingencies. In Austin's famous *How To Do Things With Words* (1962), he details a number of the protocols, formulas, and criteria for felicitous speech acts, which vary extensively depending on the act in question: for example, marriage has different formal requirements than a routine promise or the naming of a ship, and so forth.[18] However, beyond these formal requirements, there are also a variety of informal social conditions which govern effective language use. In this sense, words are activated and deactivated by contexts as spectacular as political legitimacy — as with Coriolanus's great cry of "I banish you" (*Cor*., 3.3.123) — to the prosaic problem of whether people are even listening.[19] As a dramatist, Shakespeare is especially attentive

[18] J. L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words: The William James Lectures Delivered at Harvard University in 1955* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962), 5-11.

[19] I have not rehearsed the usual constative/performative distinction because, as J. Hillis Miller has shown in his outstanding introduction to speech act theory, Austin himself exposes the limitations of that introductory distinction, hence his choice to ramify into more and more bespoke vocabulary (*e.g.* perlocutionary, illocutionary, behabitives, expositives, barbitives) whose deployment would only muddy the waters of this thesis. Suffice it to say, most utterances have a performative force in some sense, but some are explicitly formulated in terms of their criteria for success and the consequences of their pronouncement, esp. legal and/or religious rites. I thoroughly recommend Hillis Miller's text for a highly sophisticated and often entertaining overview of this area. See J. Hillis Miller, *Speech Acts in Literature* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), 6-62.

to these various conditions and it is no coincidence that allusions to his plays can be found throughout Austin's writing.[20]

To some extent, the full gamut of these vulnerabilities for the felicitous speech act underpin this initial conflict between Kent and Lear. Kent's interruptions, in this regard, may be as aggravating as his demands for Lear to "revoke [his] doom" or "reverse [his] doom," particularly for a king who is preoccupied with the efficacy of his sentences (1.1.160, 150; Q). Having been interrupted repeatedly, it can be no accident that Lear begins the banishment of Kent with the sovereign imperative: "Hear me, [F]recreant,[F] on thine allegiance, hear me" (1.1.168). Nor, indeed, that having stipulated the reasons for Kent's punishment, Lear then emphatically re-affirms the power of the king's voice: "Our potency made good, take thy reward" (1.1.173):

> Five days we do allot thee for provision,
> To shield thee from disasters of the world,
> And on the sixth to turn thy hated back
> Upon our kingdom. If on the next day following
> Thy banished trunk be found in our dominions,
> The moment is thy death. Away! By Jupiter,
> This shall not be revoked.
>
> (1.1.174-80)

[20] Miller, *Speech Acts*, 8-9.

The concluding vow, reaffirming the speech act — "By Jupiter, / This shall not be revoked" (1.1.179-80) — serves to reiterate Lear's stake in the conflict, namely the irrevocability of the sovereign speech act.

The detailed formulation of Kent's banishment is also striking. The series of careful stipulations, the terms and conditions of the sentence, are key to understanding the technical meaning of 'banishment' in this legal setting. There are, in practice, two customary meanings of the term 'banish': a technical meaning and a figurative meaning. The technical meaning is what is at stake when Lear refers to Kent's "banished trunk" (1.1.177), and also, for example, when Duke Frederick "banish[es]" Rosalind (*AYLI*, 1.3.73), or when the conspirators petition Caesar on behalf of Metellus Cimber, who "by decree is banishèd" (*JC*, 3.1.44). But this is not at all the same thing as what Lady Percy means when she says she has "this fortnight been / A *banished* woman from my Harry's bed" (*1H4*, 2.4.29-30, my emphasis); nor what Angelo means when he says, "Lay by all nicety and prolixious blushes, / That *banish* what they sue for" (*MM*, 2.4.162-3, my emphasis). The former examples represent the term's literal, technical usage; the latter reflect a metaphorical usage. Obviously, the two usages have some commerce, otherwise the metaphor would be unintelligible, and this can make unpicking the distinction quite complicated. However, in Shakespeare's drama, when legal terms and conditions are set out, one can confidently assume that 'banished' is being applied in its technical sense. Lear's specifications are exemplary in this regard.

Lear is quite precise in allocating a time-frame — though hawk-eyed textual critics will observe that the time-frame shifts between five and six days in the Quarto and Folio

respectively. The difference, to my mind, is insignificant. However, with that editorial crux in hand, there is another to address: "If on the *next* day following" has become a fairly standard editorial intervention (1.1.177, my emphasis).[21] In both the Quarto and Folio, on the other hand, it originally says "tenth."[22] Foakes argues that, after allotting five (or six) days for provision, to stipulate that Kent's banishment comes into effect on the *tenth* day "makes no sense" (1.1.177n). I personally consider the time-lapse intelligible as an allowance to travel to a port (a routine concession in the English tradition of abjuration-as-banishment, as I show below). Setting aside the issue of timing, the stipulation for the penalty is more crucial for understanding 'banishment' as a legal sentence: in the event "[Kent's] banished trunk" "be found in [Lear's] dominions / The moment is [Kent's] death" (1.1.177, 178, 179). To return to the literal *versus* metaphorical usages of 'banishment,' the difference emerges quite clearly through this specification. Banishment proper carries a suspended death sentence; metaphorically, it merely refers to an expulsion. The difference then is between the act and its presumed effect: banishment is primarily a juridical exclusion; the territorial displacement is its secondary effect.

I have asserted that banishment is both a suspended death sentence *and* a juridical exclusion. This deserves some explication. The first *OED* definition of "banish" is an excellent starting point in this regard: "To put to the ban, 'proclaim' as an outlaw, to outlaw."[23] Historically, the legal position of the outlaw was extreme: they had no right to

[21] See also, William Shakespeare, *The History of King Lear*, ed. Stanley Wells (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000), 1.1.165n.
[22] Shakespeare, *King Lear*, 1993, Q1.1.164, F1.1.174.
[23] "Banish, v.," in *OED Online* (Oxford University Press), 1, accessed October 3, 2019, http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/15224.

property, chattels, money, nor to the king's peace. If the outlaw was found, he could be killed with impunity — or as Bracton phrased it, "without judicial inquiry."[24] The outlaw's life then was held beyond the sphere of law, a position Agamben describes as "bare life."[25] Not without cause did Cavalca say that the outlaw may be considered "as already dead," and "civil death" emerged precisely as one term that described the outlaw's formal condition.[26] The commerce between the technical and the vernacular sense of banishment as a physical expulsion hinges then on the likely outcome of the sentence: namely, flight. Kent's seemingly paradoxical remark makes this logic clear: "Freedom lives hence and banishment is here" (1.1.182).

Historically, the procedure for the outlaw's flight was formalised through an additional practice termed 'abjuration,' in which the outlaw swore to abandon the territory — and on those grounds, and those grounds only, he was tolerated to walk the king's highway to a port and leave. (This tradition may explain *Lear*'s 'tenth day' textual crux, as noted above.) If he strayed from the highway, he was once more in danger.[27] Even in the oldest iterations of outlawry then, the 'exclusion' from the law, by virtue of such terms and conditions, was therefore still an inclusion, albeit an extreme one. As Agamben has sought to demonstrate, it is an inclusive exclusion.[28] The solution to this apparent paradox lies in the idea that even the privation of law is still a relation. By way of analogy, as any

[24] Henry de Bracton, *On the Laws and Customs of England*, trans. Samuel E. Thorne (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1968), 2:354.
[25] Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, 104-8.
[26] For Cavalca, see ibid., 105; for civil death, see Bryan A. Garner, ed., "Death," in *Black's Law Dictionary* (St. Paul, MN: Thomson Reuters, 2009); Bryan A. Garner, ed., "De Catallis Felonum," in *Black's Law Dictionary* (St. Paul, MN: Thomson Reuters, 2009).
[27] Susan Stewart, "Outlawry as an Instrument of Justice in the Thirteenth Century," in *Outlaws in Medieval and Early Modern England: Crime, Government and Society, c.1066-c.1600*, ed. John C. Appleby and Paul Dalton (Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2009), 50.
[28] Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, 7, 8, 11, 21, 27, 85.

exile knows, a relation of absence is not at all an absence of relation.[29] In fact, Shakespeare dramatises the difference, time and time again.[30] The other dimension of such practices, which Shakespeare also dramatises, is the close proximity of these juridical exclusions to the will of the sovereign, a proximity which has deep conceptual roots.[31]

One etymological origin of significance, according to Agamben, resides in the Germanic term *ban*, which at once denoted: exclusion, the pronouncement of the exclusion, and the insignia of the sovereign.[32] This is the etymological root of 'banish' but it is also the etymological root of 'banner.' In Agamben's theory, the *ban* in this tripartite sense is definitive of sovereign power, a position derived from Carl Schmitt's formulation: "Sovereign is he who decides upon the exception."[33] Whilst this formulation is commonly interpreted to refer exclusively to a "state of exception"[34] — which is to say, the suspension of the normal rule of law in favour of 'martial law,' 'emergency powers,' and so forth — Agamben is careful to expand the limits of this definition to acts of exception more broadly.[35] Accordingly, he includes any act in which the typical application of the law is suspended or withdrawn. Therefore, that which distinguishes and best defines sovereign power is not the individual consequence of exception — banishment, martial

[29] These relational issues, and the concept of "bare life" more broadly, is discussed in greater detail in the following chapter.
[30] If the significance of 'a relation of absence' for Shakespeare's characters needs to be spelled out: briefly, some are territorial, *e.g.* Prospero to Milan, Mowbray to England; some are interpersonal, *e.g.* Viola and Sebastian, Troilus and Cressida.
[31] With this in mind, Kantorowicz's famous reading of the King's Two Bodies in *Richard II* can be augmented by considering how the splitting of Richard's Body Natural from the Body Politic is precipitated by a crisis of banishment — a project I am pursuing elsewhere.
[32] Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, 28.
[33] Schmitt, *Political Theology*, 5.
[34] Ibid., 5n; see also, Palfrey, *Poor Tom*, 116.
[35] Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, 17-9.

law, or otherwise — but rather the paradoxical position of sovereign power, both within and outside the law, and the possibility of enacting exception at all. Furthermore, just as the exception proves the rule, this very possibility of enacting exception defines that which is sovereign and founds the juridico-political order.

In support of Schmitt's assessment, Pollock and Maitland note that late medieval lawyers had a common saying regarding the king: "*Le Roy est prerogatif*" (the king is prerogative).[36] These "intensified private rights" are so forceful, so excessive, that Pollock and Maitland conclude that:

> If the whole law were written down, we should not be sent to one great chapter of it to learn the law of kingship; rather we should see at the end of every proposition of private law or procedural law some note to the effect that this proposition must be modified before it is applied to the king's case. *'Prerogativity' is exceptionality.*[37]

Understanding outlawry as a fundamental sovereign power, an expression of the king's spectacular prerogative of exceptionality, is crucial to an adequate comprehension of the ancient English penal history. The exception lay at the heart of the *arbitrary quality* of sovereign punishments. The inconsistency of afflictive punishments, as the great historians of English law F. W. Pollock and F. Maitland note, in fact reflects the "mitigations of that comprehensive penalty [outlawry]."[38] In a legal system dominated by

[36] Frederick Pollock and Frederic William Maitland, *The History of English Law Before the Time of Edward I*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1898), 1:512n, my emphasis.
[37] Ibid., 1:512, my emphasis.
[38] Ibid., 2:461.

sovereign prerogative, the king "may take life and choose the kind of death, or he may be content with a limb; he can insist on […] abjuration of his realm or a forfeiture of chattels."[39] The totality of outlawry's retributive scope — eventually hemmed in by legislation, including the Magna Carta — explains the otherwise puzzling mutations of punishment through the reigns of Norman kings, under whom punishments were "changed without any ceremonious legislation": "The Conquerer would have no one hanged; emasculation and exoculation were to serve instead […] Loss of hand and foot became fashionable under Henry II," and so forth.[40] As Pollock and Maitland glibly put it, "by the gravest, the unemendable crimes a man 'forfeited life and member and all that he had.' It was not for him to complain if a foot was taken instead of his eyes, or if he was hanged instead of being beheaded."[41] The arbitrary quality of this absolute power can be felt throughout the chronicle histories and, unsurprisingly, in some of the plays they inspired.

Importantly, however, Shakespeare was not a jurist but a playwright. This juridical discussion of the *ban* as outlawry can benefit from a reciprocal appreciation of its dramatic portrayal. A key point, which Shakespeare's drama insistently develops, is that the point of coincidence between the sovereign and the act of outlawry (or banishment) is *the act of proclamation* itself: a proclamation which is catalyzed, as I have suggested, by certain semiotic conditions (Goodrich's 'enunciative modalities,' or Agamben's 'insignia'). But the actual proclaiming is an aspect that is left relatively undeveloped in

[39] Ibid.
[40] Ibid.

For a contradictory view to my analysis of Gloucester's blinding from this position, see Jay L. Halio's psychoanalytic reading of the blinding as a symbolic castration for Gloucester's adultery. See Jay L. Halio, "Gloucester's Blinding," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 43, no. 2 (1992): 221-3.
[41] Pollock and Maitland, *The History of English Law*, 2:462.

Agamben's treatise on the *ban*. Yet, what is key for Shakespeare's purposes is the *ban*'s property as a linguistic act — more specifically, as a speech act. *Black's* makes the historic dimensions of this view clear:

> ban, *n*. 1. *Hist*. A public proclamation or summons. *Bans* dealt with a variety of matters, such as the calling to arms of a lord's vassals or the proclamation that an offender was henceforth to be considered an outlaw.[42]

As Munroe Smith notes, "[a]n essential attribute of judicial power […] is the *bann*, the right to command and forbid. Etymologically, *bann* comes from a root signifying loud speech," which clarifies the other early modern meanings of 'ban' as the act of cursing, and in the 'banns of marriage' — both senses being relevant to this play.[43] This etymology returns us to the fundamental crux of the initial conflict between Lear and Kent: Kent's interruption and refutation of Lear's "public proclamation," his contradiction of Lear's sovereign *ban*.[44] Lear's sentencing of Kent then fits, in a poetic, albeit authoritarian, way: "our potency made good, take thy reward," Lear says (1.1.173). In other words: the *ban* made good, here is the *ban*.

To summarise, banishment can be understood as an exceptional power: a power which excludes the subject from the protections of the law, rendering their life up as seemingly without juridical significance. In Bracton's memorable phrase, they may perish "without

[42] Bryan A. Garner, ed., "Ban, n.," in *Black's Law Dictionary* (St. Paul, MN: Thomson Reuters, 2009), their emphasis.
[43] Bryan A. Garner, ed., "Bann, n.," in *Black's Law Dictionary* (St. Paul, MN: Thomson Reuters, 2009).
[44] Ibid.

judicial inquiry."[45] The life that has been excluded (more precisely, inclusively excluded) from the law is Agamben's bare life. Banishment is also an act that rests on, yet also constitutes, the sovereign as an exceptional entity, one that is beyond and yet grounds the law. As Agamben's etymology suggests, and my earlier analysis of the enunciative modalities of law supports, the sovereign is also one whose own condition as such is constituted within a semiotic reciprocity with the legal sphere. There is a spectacle to the sovereign, from which the *ban* partly takes its force, but also which the *ban* participates within and reinforces. This is a complex mesh of ideas but it usefully draws together a number of the active principles at play in banishment: the exclusion of the offender; the affirmation of the sovereign's absolute power; the vocal, enunciative quality of the act (in Shakespeare's drama, especially); and the spectacular legitimation of the utterance's force.

Having elaborated this theory of banishment in some detail, it is finally time to turn to Cordelia's punishment. To make the differences as visible as possible, let's recall the key conditions of Kent's banishment: the suspended death sentence ("the moment is thy death"), the specific time-frame ("five days we do allot thee"), and the invocation of sovereign power ("Our potency made good") (1.1.179, 174, 173). Here, by contrast, is Lear's declaration regarding Cordelia:

> Here I disclaim all my paternal care,
> Propinquity and property of blood,
> And as a stranger to my heart and me

[45] Bracton, *Laws and Customs*, 2:354.

Hold thee from this for ever.

(1.1.114-7)

Having schematised the procedures and effects of banishment, some of the differences may be immediately perspicuous. Lear offers no apparent provision of time — it is rather "from this [instant] for ever" (1.1.117) — nor does he spell out any legal rationale, invoke any sovereign potency, or offer an explicit threat of death. There is also a potentially significant change from the royal plural to the personal singular. In any case, the overall linguistic shift is certainly from the potency of the sovereign to that of the father, from the legal to the domestic. However, the *consequences* of the act are still not entirely clear. In fact, to understand the nature of the exclusion occurring here (and it is due to the shared logic of exclusion that the two events do resemble one another), it is necessary to sift the rest of the scene for evidence. When speaking to Burgundy, Lear articulates the nature of his new relation to Cordelia:

Qsir,Q will you, with those infirmities she owes,
Unfriended, new adopted to our hate,
Dowered with our curse and strangered with our oath,
Take her or leave her?

(1.1.203-6)

Lear has returned to royal plurals. However, this may merely reflect a struggle for formality, for royal composure, perhaps because he is now addressing a fellow head-of-state. I suggest it is a struggle because he tersely snaps back to first person in short order

(1.1.208-11), leading directly to his biting condemnation that Cordelia is "a wretch whom nature is ashamed / Almost t'acknowledge hers" (1.1.213-4). His final remarks of the scene are also telling:

> Thou hast her, France; let her be thine, for we
> Have no such daughter, nor shall ever see
> That face of hers again. Therefore, be gone,
> Without our grace, our love, our benison.
>
> (1.1.264-7)

It is not entirely surprising that for his dramatic exit, Lear resumes his plural pronouns, speaking in couplets for grand effect — the informal second-person, the condescending "let her be thine," are masterstrokes of contempt (1.1.264). Yet, despite his royal pronouns, the verbs and nouns being deployed — "daughter," "grace," "love," "benison" (1.1.265, 267) — suggest that the sphere from which Cordelia is being excluded is not primarily that of public law. In contrast to Kent's treatment, Lear's language here is domestic, familial, or, in the early modern sense of the term, economic.[46] Pascale Aebischer, always an observant critic, writes on this scene with a wonderfully concise distinction: Lear "banish[es]" Kent, but he "disclaim[s]" his "fatherhood" of Cordelia.[47]

[46] "Economic," from Gr. *oikos nomos*, "law of the home." It is through the concept of a divine "economy," especially through the providential ordering of persons and things, that the term took on its modern political meaning. See Agamben, *The Kingdom and the Glory*, esp. 17-22; Heron, *Liturgical Power*, 99; see also Schwartz, *Sacramental Poetics*, 41.
[47] Aebischer, *Violated Bodies*, 183.

On closer examination, this 'disclaiming' may have a greater juridical significance than it first appears. At first glance, Lear casts away a paternal relation to his daughter, disavowing "the paternal care," and "giv[ing] / Her father's heart from her" (1.1.114, 126-7). Lear also describes this as depriving Cordelia of his "grace," "love," and "benison" (1.1.267) — these are all devastating interpersonal denials, to be sure. However, the domestic register of this exclusion does not negate its potentially juridical importance. When Lear says, "we / *Have* no such daughter," that 'have' suggests that this disclaiming of the daughter is also a dis*owning*, or even an abandoning, in their strongest legal senses (1.1.264-5, my emphasis). Lear implies that the renunciation of fatherhood is also a renunciation of a proprietorial relation through the cold commercial logic of: "When she was dear to us, we did hold her so, / But now her price is fallen" (1.1.264-5, 197-8). Lear's diminution of the filial to the pecuniary is, in a sense, what he intends when he disavows the moral and emotional ties of parental care. These ties are abandoned in lieu of the private legal relation, namely possession.

Tellingly, France takes up this logic. He declares, "[t]hee and thy virtues here I seize upon," (1.1.254). The verb "seize," itself derived from the legal term "seise," could simply signify the modern sense of "seizure," *i.e.* France might only mean "[to] take possession of," as Foakes and Weis gloss it (1.1.254n).[48] However, particularly with the ambiguous preposition "upon," "seise" might technically suggest an investiture of possession, where "seise" means to "establish [someone] as a holder" of property, as

[48] "Seize, v.," in *OED Online* (Oxford University Press), accessed August 23, 2019, http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/174979; "Seizure, n.," in *OED Online* (Oxford University Press), accessed August 23, 2019, http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/174987.
"Seise" was spelled inconsistently, as the *OED* examples indicate, *e.g.*. "Doctour Ponet, was ceased in that Bisshoprike." Compare with Quarto-only spelling: "ceaze."

Black's puts it.[49] In other words, "here I *sei*[*s*]*e upon*" also permits the meaning that France will render Cordelia "queen of us, of ours, and our fair France" (1.1.254, 259, my emphasis). In contrast to Lear who has stripped her of her possessions and renounced his paternal claim over her, France seizes her and seises her. This pun appears more probable in the context of a speech filled with contrasting antitheses about her position: "most rich being poor, / Most choice forsaken," and so forth (1.1.252-3). With that said, France's remarks importantly confirm the *discarded* state of Cordelia: "Be it lawful I take up what's *cast away*" and "Thy dowerless daughter, King, *thrown* to my chance," (1.1.255, 258, my emphases). This choice of language suggests that Lear's proprietorial language is therefore not merely vindictive hyperbole but might have some serious "lawful" dimension (1.1.255).

This idea of Lear disowning Cordelia, with her legal status as property clearly foregrounded, points toward a rarely-discussed legal precedent in the traditions of English law. Earlier, I used exclusively male pronouns in describing the plight of the English outlaw. The grounds for that choice depend upon the fact that women could not be outlawed. This is spelled out by Bracton thus: "[a woman] cannot be outlawed because she is not under the law (in English, 'in law') that is, in frankpledge or tithing […] thus she cannot be outlawed."[50] *Black's* cites Bracton, and reiterates the point by stating, "[a]t common law, a woman could not be 'outlawed' because she was not considered 'in-law' — that is she could not undertake legal proceedings on her own."[51] For good measure, the controversial early modern jurist and lexicographer, John Cowell in his *Interpreter*

[49] Bryan A. Garner, ed., "Seise, Vb.," in *Black's Law Dictionary* (St. Paul, MN: Thomson Reuters, 2009).
[50] Bracton, *Laws and Customs*, 2:353.
[51] Bryan A. Garner, ed., "Waivery," in *Black's Law Dictionary* (St. Paul, MN: Thomson Reuters, 2009).

(1607), cites Bracton also: "*Bracton* saith in the place aboue specified […] that a Minor or a woman cannot be outlawed" because "women be not sworne in leetes to the King, as men be of the age of 12 or upward: […a woman is] not outlawed. for she was neuer vnder the law, nor sworne vnto it."[52] Shakespeare, and other dramatists, rarely exhibit much meticulousness about such details, of course. (The banishment of Rosalind in *As You Like It* would otherwise be an unambiguous breach in this regard.) However, the jurisprudential logic underpinning the traditional female equivalent of outlawry does closely resonate with Lear's act of disowning.

The parallel exclusionary measure, which is incidentally less frequently discussed in either legal texts or broader literature, was *waivery*. This is what Bracton has to say on waivery: "[a woman] cannot be outlawed, but […] she may well be waived and regarded as one abandoned, for waif is that which no one claims, nor will the prince claim her or protect her when she has been properly waived, any more than he will a male who has been properly outlawed."[53] *Black's* relevant definitions describe the state as follows: "[t]he act of putting a woman outside the protection of the law," "the effect of outlawry was achieved by 'waiving' her" — the waif being "[a]n abandoned article," "[w]aifs, *bona waviata*, are goods […] waived or thrown away," hence the more vernacular sense of "[a] homeless person, esp. a woman or a child; a social outcast."[54] Lastly, Cowell states, with some imprecision: "it is said, when a woman is outlawed, she is waiued, but

[52] John Cowell, ed., "Vtlawrie (Vtlagaria, Alias Vtlagatio)," in *The Interpreter*, Early English Books, 1475-1640 / 723:01 (Cambridge: John Legate, 1607); for full dictionary, see John Cowell, *The Interpreter*, Early English Books, 1475-1640 / 723:01 (Cambridge: Printed by Iohn Legate, 1607); for biography and context, see Brian P. Levack, "Cowell, John (1554-1611), Civil Lawyer," in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2008), https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/6490.
[53] Bracton, *Laws and Customs*, 2:353-4.
[54] Garner, "Waivery"; Bryan A. Garner, ed., "Waif, n.," in *Black's Law Dictionary* (St. Paul, MN: Thomson Reuters, 2009).

not outlawed."[55] To some extent, this idea of the waif as an "abandoned article," as a good "waived or thrown away" therefore anticipates Cordelia's situation: "Be it lawful I take up what's *cast away*," "*thrown* to my chance," (1.1.255, 258, my emphases). With that said, the consequences for Cordelia do not seem quite so severe as outlawry. In contrast to Bracton and Cowell's account of waivery, there is nothing in the text to suggest Cordelia's life slips into jeopardy due to Lear's declaration, which is in sharp contrast to Kent's predicament.

Having expended some effort distinguishing between the banishment of Kent and the disowning of Cordelia, it is worth admitting the similarities. They are both victims of Lear's exceptional power, they are both excluded for their honesty, for acts of frank speech (*parresia*) that are perceived by Lear and others as "hav[ing] obedience scanted" (1.1.280).[56] (In a sense, what is at stake in the love-test is a schism in the concept of duty, between loyalty and obedience.) Even more importantly, both suffer a loss of a political identity: Kent suffers the civil death of outlawry, forcing him into disguise; Cordelia is abandoned and disowned, expelled from her family, "strangered with [Lear's] oath" (1.1.205).[57] Nonetheless, the key distinction between the two events lies in the differing registers of asymmetrical power — one constituted as sovereign *ban*, and the other as

[55] Cowell, "Vtlawrie (Vtlagaria, Alias Vtlagatio)."

In *Homo Sacer*, Agamben analyses the Roman father's ancient right of life and death over the son but waivery represents an intriguing analogue: the waiving of possession, by the father, and thus the waif (the waived good, *bona waviata*) was left outside the protection of law: just like the outlaw, the bandit, and *homo sacer*.

[56] *Parresia* is the Ancient Greek term for "free speech," which in philosophical terms became associated with speaking truth to power. This idea was subject to extensive discussion in the final years of Michel Foucault's career. See Foucault, *Hermeneutics of the Subject*, 381-91; Foucault, *Government of Self and Others*, 45-57, 68-70, 149-54, 178-84, 379-84. I discuss this in brief detail in the fourth chapter. To my knowledge, Katrin Trüstedt (Yale) is currently working on a monograph including a more substantive analysis of Kent as an individual who practices *parresia*.

[57] Garner, "Death."

paternal (dis)possession. It is, in short, the difference between the political and the domestic, both spheres still bearing immense significance with regards to the relation of life and law. It is crucial that the play begins with Lear demonstrating these bipolar potencies, coercing compliance with his most forceful, exceptional powers. It is crucial because they are precisely what he will learn to disavow by the end of the play.

In a sense, the play's political crisis arises over quite a simple pair of questions, though not ones that are easily answered: what is it that Lear gives away, and what does he retain? The text provides several key terms that Lear uses to define his divestment. In the Folio, he begins with "rule, / Interest of territory, cares of state" (1.1.49-50). The first two instances are relatively straightforward: he disclaims direct governance (rule *contra* reign), and any "legal or equitable claim to or right in" the crown's lands.[58] "[C]ares of state" is a little more complex (1.1.50). In a political context, 'state' carries strong connotations of 'nation-state' for present-day readers. This is an active meaning in Shakespeare's plays also, such as when Othello refers to the "present business of the state" (*Oth*., 1.2.89). Yet, the term is also commonly used for the sovereign 'state' or office of kingship in particular, with a special emphasis on the pomp and ceremony of the office. The *OED* renders this more archaic signification thus: the "[c]ostly and imposing display associated with monarchs and other persons of high rank; splendour, pomp, magnificence (of ceremony, lifestyle, clothing, furniture, buildings, *etc.*)."[59] This meaning underpins one of Richard II's remarks, when he lists dichotomies to describe his abdication, concluding with: "Made glory base and sovereignty a slave, / Proud majesty

[58] Bryan A. Garner, ed., "Interest, n.," in *Black's Law Dictionary* (St. Paul, MN: Thomson Reuters, 2009); see also, Shakespeare, *King Lear*, 2009, 1.1.50n.
[59] "State, n.," in *OED Online* (Oxford University Press), 16, accessed October 3, 2019, http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/189241.

a subject, *state, a peasant*" (*R2*, 4.1.145.A97-8, my emphasis). "[C]ares of state" might then either mean practical political duties or the spectacular, ceremonial display of kingship (1.1.50). Of course, as the play's preoccupation with the visual dimensions of power indicate, the two often coincide, particularly when the polity in question is a theocratic monarchy.[60]

I am consciously skipping the particularities of the lands distributed, as those details have little bearing on the question of office. Concerning his resignation, Lear's next specifications (the first of the Quarto) are made after his disowning of Cordelia. He declares that he "invests [Cornwall and Albany] jointly with [his] power, / Pre-eminence and all the large effects / That troop with majesty," along with "the sway, / Revenue, execution of the rest" (1.1.131-3, 137-8). This is an essentially total renunciation of powers: there are the active potencies suggested by "sway" (the dominion, governance), "execution of the rest" (the putting into effect of law and policy), and "revenue" (incomes of the crown).[61] More important, however, are what one might term the passive properties of sovereignty: "[p]re-eminence" is a notable phrase, but the particular emphasis on "all the large effects / That troop with majesty" is vital, especially given that questions of treason (legally conceived as *crimen lesae majestatis*, the crime of injured majesty) will emerge later in the play (1.1.132-3). This giving away of both the active powers of

[60] For the spectacular visual dimensions of legal power, see Goodrich, *Languages of Law*, 210.

"[I]t is as an image, as a sign that law is recognised, accepted and lived. It is not as a system of rules that the individual is born into and adheres to the law as an aspect of everyday life. The law as a structure of material life, as an institution, is a system of images, and it is through its symbolisation of authority and through its signs of power that the law dwells within the subject. The law is in that sense nothing other than its image, no more and no less than a sign; it is the spectacle of the scaffold, the aura of judgment, the sense of the normal."

[61] "Sway, n.," in *OED Online* (Oxford University Press), 6a-c, accessed October 2, 2019, http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/195582; "Execution, n.," in *OED Online* (Oxford University Press), 1a, c, accessed October 2, 2019, http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/66007; "Revenue, n.," in *OED Online* (Oxford University Press), 1, accessed October 2, 2019, http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/164734.

government and the passive attributes of sovereignty, including any ceremonial duties, implies that Lear is therefore divesting himself of both rule and reign.[62]

The properties in question, Lear announces, will descend to Albany and Cornwall, rather than Goneril and Regan: "Beloved sons, be yours" (1.1.139).[63] The apparent totality of the gift, in terms of powers and properties, is acknowledged later when Lear says: "I gave you all," and Regan tacitly agrees: "And in good time you gave it" (2.2.439). Lear does insist on some material reservations, however. He has the famous condition of his "hundred knights," as well as his "monthly course" between the homes of his two remaining daughters (1.1.134, 133). These conditions are readily understood since they become such an explicit point of contention in subsequent scenes. Yet, Lear also stipulates a more enigmatic clause: that he will retain "[t]he name, and all th'addition to a king" (1.1.137). Foakes glosses 'addition' as "all the honours belonging to," which is broadly accurate but could benefit from a cautious clarification (1.1.137n).

Black's renders 'addition' as a term denoting the "title[s] and appellation[s] appended to a person's name to show rank, occupation, or place of residence."[64] Thomas Blount's authoritative *Nomolexikon: A Law Dictionary* (1670) supports this definition, describing addition (*additio*) as *titles* "over and above his Christian and Sirname, shewing his Estate, Degree, Mystery, Trade, Place of Dwelling, *&c.*"[65] Lear's sole reservation from his

[62] The famous French proverb "*le roi regne, mais il ne gouverne pas*" (the King reigns, but does not govern), beloved by political theologians, therefore has little application here. *King Lear* also therefore points to the difficulty of positing the difference between reign and rule as the difference between being and praxis, since reign itself implies certain ceremonial duties. See Agamben, *The Kingdom and the Glory*, 68-108.
[63] I attend to the question of dowries and Goneril's infidelity as capital treason in the third chapter
[64] Bryan A. Garner, ed., "Addition," in *Black's Law Dictionary* (St. Paul, MN: Thomson Reuters, 2009).
[65] For the full dictionary, see Thomas Blount, *Nomo-Lexikon, a Law-Dictionary Interpreting Such Difficult and Obscure Words and Terms as Are Found Either in Our Common or Statute, Ancient or Modern Lawes*, Early English Books, 1641-1700 / 168:09 (In the Savoy: Printed by Tho. Newcomb, for John Martin and

kingship then — besides his hundred knights — can be limited to the "title[s]" and "appellation[s]" of the office. This is, I believe, what Foakes means by 'honours.' My one reservation about that phrasing is that 'honours' possesses some potentially confounding connotations: particularly concerning the wide array of legal and political "dignities and privileges" that flow from the Crown, including a fairly common form of seigniory.[66] On the contrary, Lear is precisely attempting to shed such juridico-political dignities and privileges, especially those which imply any form of "execution," "interest," or "[care]" (1.1.138, 50, 38).

The new political hierarchy that Lear proposes then is a peculiar one. He neither wishes to reign, nor govern. (This is notably different from the accounts of Holinshed and Geoffrey of Monmouth, in which Lear still intends to govern "half the Island," until his death.)[67] To gesture toward Blount's definition, what Shakespeare's Lear "only […] shall retain" are the names, titles, and appellations of an office he will no longer exercise, an estate he will no longer hold, a degree which he will no longer manifest, and a mystery (meaning 'craft' or 'art') which he will no longer practice. Once it is expressed in this manner, the political paradox that Lear proposes begins to become a little clearer. Understanding Lear's nominal reservation (nominal in both senses) also brings a point of conflict in his next scene into greater relief:

Henry Herringman, 1670); for "addition," see Thomas Blount, ed., "Addition (Additio)," in *Nomo-Lexikon*, Early English Books, 1641-1700 / 168:09 (In the Savoy: Thomas Newcomb, for John Martin and Henry Herringman, 1670); for biography and context, see Ian Mortimer, "Blount, Thomas (1618-1679), Antiquary and Lexicographer," in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2008), https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/2697; for "addition" also see, Goodrich, *Languages of Law*, 137-8.

[66] Bryan A. Garner, ed., "Honor, n.," in *Black's Law Dictionary* (St. Paul, MN: Thomson Reuters, 2009); Thomas Blount, ed., "Honor," in *Nomo-Lexikon*, Early English Books, 1641-1700 / 168:09 (In the Savoy: Thomas Newcomb, for John Martin and Henry Herringman, 1670).

[67] Bullough, *Sources*, 7:312, 317.

Lear. O you, sir, you, come you hither, sir: who am I, sir?

Osw. My lady's father.

Lear. My lady's father? My lord's knave, you whoreson dog, you slave, you cur!

(1.4.76-9)

Oswald here breaches the one property of office that Lear had sought to retain, "the name and all th'addition to a king" (1.1.137). This infraction — preceded also by Oswald's unceremonious "[s]o please you" (1.4.45) — all communicate an increasing disregard for Lear's purely titular position. As one of Lear's knights observes, "to my judgement your highness is not entertained with that ceremonious affection as you were wont" (1.4.55-7). The knight clearly has the measure of both Lear and the situation: he uses the appropriate appellation, "your highness" (1.4.56). However, the knight's phrase "as you were wont" reiterates that Lear is *accustomed* to a certain standard of deference which is now dissipating (1.4.57). Kent intervenes and, after tripping Oswald over, says: "Come, sir, [F]arise, away,[F] I'll teach you differences," in effect proposing to remind Oswald, as Foakes annotates it, of the "distinctions of rank" (1.4.88, 88n).

It is likely that it is this complete resignation of powers, this reduction to nominative kingship, which is the "darker purpose" Lear speaks of, rather than the division of the kingdoms in general (1.1.35).[68] As the opening lines suggest, Kent and Gloucester at least

[68] In this thesis, I do not recapitulate the well-trod historical context of James I's 1604-1608 unification project. For further details, see Marie Axton, *The Queen's Two Bodies: Drama and the Elizabethan Succession* (London: Royal Historical Society, 1977), 133-47; Leah Marcus, "Retrospective: 'King Lear' on St Stephen's Night, 1606," in *King Lear: Contemporary Critical Essays*, ed. Kiernan Ryan, New Casebooks (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993), 114-9; Annabel Patterson, "The Popular Voice of King

are already aware of the long-term succession plan (1.1.1-6). What Lear seems to have concealed from both of them is his "fast intent / To shake all cares and business from our age" (1.1.37-8); in other words, the immediate execution of the succession. Gloucester registers his surprise later: "prescribed his power, / Confined to exhibition?" — 'exhibition' meaning given "an allowance," as Foakes explains, but the full phrase also suggesting: stored, shelved, no longer in use (1.2.23-6n) — "All this done, / Upon the gad?" (1.2.24-6). Gloucester is not alone in his shock. The prompt for Kent's objection also seems to be the "hideous rashness," the immediacy of the succession: "Revoke thy gift," "Reserve thy state" (1.1.152, 165, 150).[69]

In fact, the deeper content of Kent's challenge highlights several points of interest. To push against Bradley's reading, Kent's concern is not simply for Lear's personal "safety," but moreover that "[w]hen majesty falls to folly," the earl feels "bound" to rebuke Lear directly, to rebuke him as a man failing to fulfil his office (1.1.158, 150, 149).[70] As he says, "Be Kent unmannerly / When Lear is mad. What wouldst thou do, old man?" (1.1.146-7). Setting aside his anxieties around the moral fibre of the daughters — Kent's concerns for Lear operate on a twofold basis: first, for Lear's personal safety once he has given away his office; second, for the sake of the office itself, which Kent sees as "bow[ing]" to "flattery" and "fall[ing] to folly," by being distributed on the basis of "large speeches" (1.1.149, 150, 185). As Axton has argued, although Kent's defence of Cordelia

Lear," in *King Lear: Contemporary Critical Essays*, ed. Kiernan Ryan, New Casebooks (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993), 131-4.

[69] "Reserve thy state" is rendered "Reverse thy doom" in the Quarto. Foakes posits that in the Quarto version Kent is therefore referring to Cordelia. Yet, the term "doom" is ambiguous, referring to any judicial decision or judgement and could equally refer to the disowning of Cordelia or the decision to resign. Consider Duke Frederick's banishment of Rosalind, "Firm and irrevocable is *my* doom" (*AYLI*, 1.3.82, my emphasis); likewise, Carlisle is brought to abide Bolingbroke's "kingly doom" (*R2*, 5.6.23).

[70] Bradley, *Shakespearean Tragedy*, 283.

is significant — and he is evidently disturbed by her treatment — "the King's irresponsible gift, the sundered Crown" is the cause of Kent's most unequivocal statement of all:[71]

> Revoke thy [F]gift,[F72]
> Or whilst I can vent clamour from my throat
> *I'll tell thee thou dost evil*.
>
> (1.1.165-7, my emphasis)

Kent is not here referring to Lear's treatment of Cordelia, or even the love-test more broadly, but rather the gift: the "gift" itself is "evil" (1.1.165, 167). It is also crucial that Kent is not being hyperbolic. On the contrary, he says, "to *plainness* honour's bound" (1.1.149, my emphasis).[73] When he says then that Lear "dost evil," it is imperative that his accusation be taken seriously (1.1.167). Kent's objection to the "gift" principally depends upon two points: the "evil" of "majesty fall[ing] to folly" and Lear's own "safety" (1.1.167, 150, 158). In other words, Kent protests to the debasement of the sovereign office on the one hand, and the personal implications for Lear as an ex-sovereign on the other. Lurking behind these paired concerns are a number of theological and jurisprudential presuppositions concerning the sacred properties of kingship, including the infamous doctrine of the King's Two Bodies.

[71] Axton, *The Queen's Two Bodies*, 139.
[72] Again, the Quarto has the more ambiguous "doom."
[73] See Bullough, *Sources*, 7:288.

THE SANCTITY OF KINGSHIP

To contextualise Kent's admonition, I must now elaborate the Renaissance conceptions of sacred kingship. With regards to the theological and jurisprudential groundings of medieval and early modern Christian monarchies, the standard monographs have been fairly static for some time. Francis Oakley's *Kingship: The Politics of Enchantment* (2006), along with his more recent *Empty Bottles of Gentilism: Kingship and the Divine in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages* (2010) represent two thorough monographs in recent years on the intellectual origins of European monarchical sovereignty.[74] However, John Neville Figgis's authoritative *The Divine Right of Kings* (1896) is still routinely cited in contemporary criticism and political history.[75] Similarly, Ernst H. Kantorowicz's magisterial *The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Medieval Political Theology* (1957) remains the standard reference work, certainly with regards to its main topic, but often for broader questions of kingship too — not least due its exhaustive and exhausting footnotes.[76] Marie Axton's *The Queen's Two Bodies* (1977) effectively focuses and revises Kantorowicz's expansive thesis more precisely into the Elizabethan political context, particularly concerning succession.[77] Finally, for my purposes, Agamben's *Homo Sacer* (1998) is a key intervention concerning the conceptual

[74] Oakley interprets "kingship" in a broad sense to include theologically-sanctioned monarchs and autocrats of all shades, including emperors, princes, the papacy, and so forth. Oakley, *Kingship*, 1-9; Francis Oakley, *Empty Bottles of Gentilism: Kingship and the Divine in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), 1-10.
[75] John Neville Figgis, *The Divine Right of Kings*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1914); Meryl Bailey, "'Salvatrix Mundi': Representing Queen Elizabeth I As A Christ Type," *Studies in Iconography* 29 (2008): 187; Elliott Visconsi, "Vinculum Fidei: The Tempest and the Law of Allegiance," *Law and Literature* 20, no. 1 (2008): 17; Matthew W. Binney, "Milton, Locke, and the Early Modern Framework of the Cosmopolitan Right," *The Modern Language Review* 105, no. 1 (2010): 37.
[76] For my overview of Kantorowicz's impact on Shakespeare studies, see the introduction.
[77] Axton, *The Queen's Two Bodies*; for a critical response, see Norbrook, "Emperor's New Body," 343.

grounding of these classics, in particular by presenting an incisive, partisan genealogy of the notion of 'sacred life,' in its most abject and regal states.

For clarity, I am limiting my discussion of the vast intellectual history that has attached to sacred kingship to just three key ideas, which speak most directly to the question of political selfhood: 1) that the sacredness or divinity associated with kingship was understood not only as deriving from God, but as emanating from a *vicarious* relationship with Him; 2) that this instrumental office, often through analogies to Christ, reconciled two metaphysically distinct bodies (the body politic, the body natural) into a singular political subject, a singularity that was contingent upon the divinity of the office; 3) that this complex doctrine of office, along with the juridical procedures associated with the deaths of sovereigns, suggests not only the "absolute and inhuman character" of sovereign power, but a peculiar marginality for the life of the person exercising it: ethically, politically, and judicially.[78] All three of these ideas, I suggest, illuminate the powerfully ritualised, doctrinal ideology through which kingship alienates the sovereign subject from their personal, ethical selfhood — but, as I will also show, these doctrines also hint at the jeopardy faced by an ex-sovereign.

To begin in the broadest terms: the notion of a sacred king is an ancient and widespread one, which long predates Christianity.[79] The specific developments that Christian thought made to this concept therefore concern the articulation of specific, albeit often contested, understandings of the sacredness with which the sovereign was invested.[80] Just as with

[78] Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, 101.
[79] Oakley, *Kingship*, 10-43; Oakley, *Empty Bottles of Gentilism*, 1-39.
[80] For the twists-and-turns in the intellectual fortunes of these concepts, see Kantorowicz, *King's Two Bodies*, 42-192.

two lawyers debating the interpretation of a statute, these specialised disagreements typically arose in the context of wider disciplinary agreement. In other words, English theologians and political philosophers, for the most part, agreed that the king was sacred. Instead, the arguments focused on exactly how that sacredness was constituted and what that sacredness meant, juridically and politically.[81] Importantly, these conceptual enterprises did not occur in isolation from the phenomenon they sought to study. The theology and jurisprudence of sovereignty both informed and was informed by the traditions, rites, regulations, and practices that constituted the political life of the sovereign. In short, there have always been important reciprocal relations between theology, jurisprudence, and politics — the practice informed the theory and the theory informed the practice.

One thread that ran with some consistency through this vast conceptual web is the vicarious nature of the sovereign office: that the king was, in James I's words, "God['s] lieutenant" (*lit.* place-holder).[82] Similar terms suffuse Shakespeare's wider corpus, especially the description of the king as a "deputy" of God, although such phrases are notably scarce in the pagan play-world of *King Lear*.[83] There are two sub-strands to this

[81] Oakley traces in detail both the spread of the doctrine and its relative opposition. Augustine and New Testament theology both notably oppose the doctrine but such works were subjected to intense interpretative pressure to bend them into supporting the political orthodoxy. The influence of Byzantine political theology (*i.e.* Eusebius of Caesarea), the pagan traditions of sacred kingship, and (much later) Aquinas's ministerial theology had substantial impact on the trajectory of European Christian sacred kingship. For the repurposing of Augustinian theology, see Oakley, *Kingship*, 89-91; for the Byzantine developments, 68-86; for pagan influences, 14-8, 92-8; for Aquinas, see 154; but also Kantorowicz, *Two Bodies*, 144, 148, 201-2; and, for Aquinas's instrumental cause *vis-à-vis* ministerial office, see Heron, *Liturgical Power*, 83-4, 93-4, 96.

[82] England and Wales. Sovereign (1603-1625 : James I), *Wee Doe Not Doubt but That All Our Subiects (Embracing the True Religion Professed in This Church of England ...*, Early English Tract Supplement / C7:1[65] (London: By Robert Barker, printer to the Kings most excellent Maiestie, 1606), img. 1/2.

[83] For some Shakespearean examples of the king as deputy of God, consider: "the figure of God's majesty, / His captain, steward, deputy elect" (*R2*, 4.1.117-8); "Hail, you anointed deputies of God" (*KJ*, 3.1.62); or, more amusingly, "Great deputy, the welkin's vice-regent, and sole dominator of Navarre, my soul's earth's god, and body's fostering patron" (*LLL*, 1.1.208-9).

idea: the king stands in for God — he is there, like a vicar, in lieu of Christ — but also, importantly, that this implies a certain self-obliteration in accepting the office.[84] The specific connotations of the king as purely a "place-holder" for God captures this double-sense quite neatly.

This concept of the king as a proxy or surrogate for God has ancient origins in kingship as a peculiar kind of priesthood; a notion which carried through into the Christianised practice of anointing the sovereign.[85] It is true that the orthodox views on the ministerial nature of kingship evolved over the centuries, and varied significantly between polities also.[86] However, even the secular kingships were not entirely immune from the theological developments regarding *officium* (public duties), which, despite being articulated primarily to understand the divine instrumentality of the priest, predictably carried over to other institutional roles.[87] In short, the vicarious nature of the kingly office arises from the view that the king is there in lieu of God, and some of the ramifying arguments can be concentrated as follows: his kingdom exists by the grace of God, the king is invested in the image of God's majesty, and his sovereign potency was conceived as analogous to God's relation to the world.[88] In an obvious sense, this theoretically

[84] This self-obliteration is represented symbolically through the rites of coronation, discussed in the subsequent chapter. See Roy Strong, *Coronation* (London: Harper Perennial, 2005), 4.
[85] This has deeper origins in the Judaic *christi*, the anointed kings, of whom *Christus* was the fulfillment: "the King of Kings." This provided the basis of the sacrament of anointing ministers, known as 'unction', which was then used to Christianise and legitimate older pagan practices of sacred kingship. See Oakley, *Kingship*, 96-100.
[86] Kantorowicz, *King's Two Bodies*, 42-192; Oakley, *Kingship*, 126-93.
[87] Agamben, *Opus Dei*, xii; Heron, *Liturgical Power*, 131.
[88] The Pythagorean philosopher Diotogenes, in his treatise "On Kingship," influentially argued the view that the king bore "the same relation to the state as God to the world," and the state was "in the same ratio to the world as the king is to God." Diotogenes was known to English authors. George Gascoigne and Sir John Hayward both quote him explicitly in their political treatises. See George Gascoigne, *The Glasse of Gouernement A Tragicall Comedie*, Early English Books, 1475-1640 / 528:11 (London: [By Henry Middleton] for C. Barker, 1575), img. 16/55; John Hayward, *A Reporte of a Discourse Concerning Supreme Power in Affaires of Religion*, Early English Books, 1475-1640 / 1105:11 (At London: Imprinted by F[elix]

imbues the sovereign with immense power, a peerless pre-eminence. On the other hand, this logic also alienates the king from his office: the office is not at all 'his' in any proprietorial sense, he merely fills it, but he must nevertheless embody and exercise this office *as if* it coincided wholly with his person.

If this alienation creeps into this widespread concept of the vicarious office, it is articulated with particular intensity in the English doctrine of the King's Two Bodies. I will offer a cursory summary of its broader import, before honing in on the particular focus of this thesis: the alienation of the self through office. (The concept in general has been well-covered with regards to Shakespeare's drama — not least by Kantorowicz himself, who dedicated a chapter of his book to Shakespeare's *Richard II*.)[89] The customary starting point for introducing this topic remains the Elizabethan lawyer, Edmund Plowden, who recorded the efforts of Tudor jurists to articulate the relationship between the king and his office, which is framed as a conjunction of body politic and body natural. Here are Plowden's remarks:

> […] the King has in him two Bodies, *viz*., a Body natural and a Body politic. His Body natural (if it be considered in itself) is a Body mortal, subject to all Infirmities that come by Nature or Accident, to the Imbecility of Infancy or old Age, and to the like Defects that happen to the natural Bodies of other People. But his Body politic is a Body that cannot be seen or handled, consisting of Policy and Government, and constituted for the

K[ingston] for Iohn Hardie, and are to be sold by Iohn Flasket, dwelling at the signe of the black Beare in Paules Church yeard, 1606), img. 8/31.

[89] Kantorowicz, *King's Two Bodies*, 24-41.

> Direction of the People, and the Management of the public weal, and this Body is utterly void of Infancy, and old Age, and other natural Defects and Imbecilities, which the Body natural is subject to, and for this Cause, what the King does in his Body politic, cannot be invalidated or frustrated by any Disability in his natural Body.[90]

The report continues on in this vein in some detail. The key distinction here is that the natural body of king, "subject to all Infirmities," is irrelevant to the acts of the king with regards to the body politic. The doctrine then implies an alienation of sovereign action from the office-holder's corporeality, from their health, from their physicality; instead, it is constituted as a metaphysical action of official legal significance that cannot be contaminated by the organic shell that articulates it. As Goodrich writes, "[t]he king rules alone, through a body which is untouchable, inhuman, not his own, a supreme harijan [*lit.* untouchable]."[91] Something like this presupposition underpins the logic of the famous Tilbury Speech of Elizabeth I, when she disclaimed her natural body as suffering the "Defects" (in Plowden's terms) of "a weak and feeble woman," instead invoking the strength of her sovereign soul using the term "king."[92] The untouchable, incorporeal body politic — also known, for good reason, as the *corpus mysticum* — is figured as masculine

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[90] Ibid., 7.

This report, on the Duchy of Lancaster, was later cited by Edward Coke in his report on the seminal *Calvin's Case* (1608), which approves Plowden's credibility as a serious jurist, see Kantorowicz, *Two Bodies*, 7n.

[91] Goodrich, *Languages of Law*, 39, my translation.

[92] The manuscript of the speech has digitised and transcribed by the British Library. See England and Wales. Sovereign (1558-1603 : Elizabeth I), "Elizabeth's Tilbury Speech (July 1588)," British Library, accessed October 8, 2019, http://www.bl.uk/learning/timeline/item102878.html.

The attempt to emphasise kingly continuity despite of Elizabeth's gender may have underpinned Elizabeth's choice to partly replace the traditional motto of English sovereigns — *Dieu et mon droit* (note: the troublesomely masculine *mon*) — with her personal motto *Semper Eadem* [*lit*. Always the Same.] For a contrary interpretation of the motto's meaning, see Robin Headlam Wells, "Semper Eadem: Spenser's 'Legend of Constancie,'" *The Modern Language Review* 73, no. 2 (1978): 254.

according to a troubling Aristotelian logic, which posits that by being "void" of all "natural Defects" (implicitly including the imperfection of femininity) the body politic subsists in the relative 'perfection' of a masculine state.[93] The notion of sovereignty being a role defined, in part, by concentrated and politicised masculinity, even to the suspension of conventional feminine virtues, will become significant in subsequent chapters. This is also, incidentally, an area in which Agamben's analysis of sovereign power offers no guidance.

As in Elizabeth's case, there are obvious political advantages in characterising the sovereign body politic as transcendentally perfect; but, additionally, this theory had substantive legal implications. In the legal case that Plowden cites, he records that the actions of Edward IV in "Nonage" (infancy, minority) are legally-affirmed as legitimate due to the metaphysical perfection of the body politic, the *corpus mysticum*. Thanos Zartaloudis, working from William Blackstone's *Commentaries*, summarises the jurisprudential properties of the King's body politic thus:

> [A] transcendent nature, a royal *persona ficta*, an abstract physiological fiction who is incapable of doing or thinking wrong (or being negligent), who is invisible, absolutely perfect, the fountain of justice, immortal and perpetual, and who forms the corporational type of a single individual, the King, within (and as superior to) his natural body. The King, in this

[93] This pertains to the specifically Aristotelian notion, in which femininity is a failure to be brought to completion; a notion influentially described as the "One Sex" model by Thomas Walter Laqueur, *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud* (London: Harvard University Press, 1990). However, as I discuss in Chapter 3, while this model was prevalent among Aristotelian thinkers, there were significant opponents, not least Martin Luther. For more, see Maclean, *The Renaissance Notion of Woman*, 9.

> manner, has a bipartite body (natural and political or mystical) and yet both have legal ubiquity.[94]

The transcendent divinity of the body politic has been well-discussed. For the purposes of this thesis, the important question is how the body politic was understood to collapse *into* the body natural (or, indeed, *vice versa*): "[T]he mystical body politic of the King, his *officium*, his royal estate, his 'Dignity and Majesty' lie within the natural body of the King, but are ever presupposed as superior to it."[95] However, Plowden's remark — "His Body Natural, (*if it be considered of itself*)" — indicates the caution with which lawyers approached articulating the distinctions between the two bodies of the king.[96] After all, according to medieval thought, "to distinguish between the crown and the king, between the king and the man, is to teach a treasonable doctrine."[97] Plowden's jurists carefully warn, therefore, that: "these two Bodies are incorporated in one Person, and make one Body and not divers," the "Body natural […] [cannot be] divided by itself from the Office and Dignity royal."[98] From one perspective, it seems to demand a certain degree of mental gymnastics to assert a legally-significant distinction on the one hand, while insisting on the indivisible unity of bodies on the other; hence F. W. Maitland's disparaging remark that the doctrine was "a marvelous display of metaphysical — or we might say, metaphysiological — nonsense."[99] Yet, as Kantorowicz shows, jurists felt able to pursue

[94] Zartaloudis, *Giorgio Agamben*, 17.
[95] Ibid., 19.
[96] Kantorowicz, *King's Two Bodies*, 7, my emphasis.
[97] Pollock and Maitland, *The History of English Law*, 1:525; this was, in some senses, well-judged, given the later Roundhead slogan: "fighting the king to defend the King." See Kantorowicz, *King's Two Bodies*, 23; for a critique of Kantoworicz's use of this slogan, see Norbrook, "Emperor's New Body."
[98] Quoted in Kantorowicz, *King's Two Bodies*, 9; see also, Zartaloudis, *Giorgio Agamben*, 19.
[99] F. W. Maitland, *Maitland: Selected Essays*, ed. H. D. Hazeltine, G. Lapsley, and P. H Winfield (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1936), 104-27; quoted in Kantorowicz, *King's Two Bodies*, 3.

these seemingly paradoxical metaphysics precisely because it had a respectable theological pedigree.

Seeking to move beyond Maitland's dismissive quip, Kantorowicz's *magnum opus* provides a sympathetic account of the intellectual currents that ran through these explanations.[100] A key theological influence, he demonstrates, was the christological *hypostases*: the theology of divinity-in-man. (Put simply, in which ways was Jesus Christ both God and man?) Responding to a notable medieval theorist of kingship, known as the Norman Anonymous *(circa* 1100*),* Kantorowicz writes the following illuminating excerpt, which merits its quotation at length:

> The kings whom the Anonymous refers to are the *christi*, the anointed kings of the Old Testament, who have been foreshadowing the advent of the true royal *Christus*, the Anointed of Eternity. After the advent of Christ in the flesh, and after his ascension and exaltation as King of Glory, the terrestrial kingship underwent, very consistently, a change and received its proper function within the economy of salvation. The Kings of the New Covenant no longer would appear as the 'foreshadowers' of Christ but rather as the 'shadows,' the imitators of Christ. *The Christian ruler became the* christomimetes *— literally the 'actor' or 'impersonator' of Christ — who on the terrestrial stage presented the living image of the two natured God, even with regard to the two unconfused natures.* The divine prototype and his visible vicar were taken to display great

[100] Kantorowicz, *King's Two Bodies*, 4-5.

> similarity, as they were supposed to reflect each other; and there was, according to the Anonymous, perhaps only a single — though essential — difference between the Anointed in Eternity and his terrestrial antitype, the anointed in Time: Christ was King and *Christus* by his very nature, whereas his deputy on earth was king and *christus* by grace only.[101]

The Christian king imitates Christ. This imitation was not principally a matter of ethics — of Christ-like behaviour — as the conventional historical understanding of *imitatio Christi*, following St Augustine and Thomas à Kempis, might suggest.[102] The *christomimetes* was an imitation of Christ on the level of *being*, not praxis: the king "presented the living image of the two natured God, even with regard to the two unconfused natures."[103] The king imitates Christ, "shadows" Christ, insofar as both intrinsically reconcile divinity with the human form.[104] Nicholas Heron's *Liturgical Power* demonstrates how both this christological *hypostases* and the ministerial (and *ergo* the kingly) 'office' (*officium*, duties) were explicitly developed together through Aquinas's concept of the instrumental cause:

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[101] Ibid., 46-47, my emphasis; see also, Zartaloudis, *Giorgio Agamben*, 20.
[102] Saint Augustine, *St. Augustine, Of the Citie of God*, Early English Books, 1475-1640 / 614:08 (London: Printed by George Eld, 1610), img. 166, 187, 401/476; Thomas à Kempis, *The Imitation or Following of Christ, and the Contemning of Worldly Vanities*, Early English Books, 1475-1640 / 340:11 ; Early English Books, 1475-1640 / 1737:07 (Imprinted at London: By Henry Denham, 1568).
[103] Kantorowicz, *King's Two Bodies*, 47.
In later centuries, a greater emphasis was placed on the *paternal* role of kingship — a notion whose sinister Roman connotations Agamben identifies (*Homo Sacer*, 88-9). According to the paternal model, the king is seen primarily as an image of equity and justice, the living spirit of the law, the father of his people. Yet, still, in this *vicarious* authority there remained a certain through-line from the "physiology of the two-nature Mediator." See ibid., 92-4.
[104] Kantorowicz, *King's Two Bodies*, 47; see also Zartaloudis, *Giorgio Agamben*, 9 — "the body of Christ [...] as supra-individual: a natural body and a mystical body."

> Just as the body was held to be the instrument of the soul, [Aquinas] would argue […] so Christ's humanity was held to be the instrument of his divinity […] in Christ, two distinct natures were united in a single person (*ex distantibus naturis una fierit copulatione persona*), it was the suggestion that his humanity served as the instrument of his divinity that was responsible for securing this unification.[105]

This demonstrates certain conceptual similarities between the two dual natures:[106] both Christ and the king instrumentalise their humanity in service of divinity. Yet, as Kantorowicz's analysis of the Anonymous shows, there are also crucial differences between *christi* (kings) and *Christus* (King of Kings): first, the temporal (*i.e.* non-eternal) nature of the imitation (kings are merely "the anointed *in Time*") and, second, the providential grace with which this divinity-in-man is dispensed ("his deputy on earth was king and *christus* by grace only").[107] These fundamental differences are perhaps most perspicuous, for my purposes, when framed in terms of *kenosis* ('emptying-out'). In modern theology, Christ's *kenosis* is understood as the moment prior to his self-sacrifice, in which he empties-out his divinity, to fully embody his salvific role as man;[108] by contrast, the king's *kenosis*, ritualised in the moment of anointment, can be

[105] Heron, *Liturgical Power*, 105.
[106] That Christ reconciled two natures into one person became doctrine through the Declaration of the Council of Chalcedon. This doctrine was subject to two heretical objections: that Christ was exclusively of divine nature (associated with Eutyches) and that Christ was two persons (divine and human, associated with Nestorius). The philosopher, politician, and theologian Boethius — whose *Consolation of Philosophy* was famously translated by Elizabeth I — published a tractate on this very topic, distinguishing between "natures" and "persons," titled *Against Eutyches and Nestorius*. Boethius's *Consolation* will feature later in this thesis. For the above, see P. G. Walsh, "Introduction," in *The Consolation of Philosophy*, by Boethius (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), xxviii-xxix.
[107] Kantorowicz, *King's Two Bodies*, 47."[I]n time," my emphasis.
[108] "Kenosis, n."

correspondingly figured as an emptying-out of his human self to better accommodate the divinity of his office.[109]

Brian Sheerin's sensitive analysis of major political treatises of the late sixteenth/early seventeenth-century in relation to *Lear* largely focuses on the responsibilities of the sovereign. Yet, it also usefully traces the outlines of this self-obliterating, sacrificial logic of the royal office. In fact, Sheerin begins with a characteristically cryptic remark by George Bataille on sovereignty, namely that it is a "*ceasing to be*," which Sheerin then pursues along several different vectors.[110] Sheerin schematises his selection of political tracts as either absolutist or proto-republican. The differences between the two categories are apparent, for example, in their responses to the jurisprudential questions concerning the king's relationship to the law: was the king 'above' the law or 'under' it? Yet, despite such points of contention, these two major positions both agreed on a fundamental point. In the "widely present" proto-republican treatise titled *Vindiciae contra tyrannos* (1576),[111] the anonymous author states: "a legitimate prince is *nothing other* than the living law."[112] For the absolutist, the king is a cipher of God's authority, instrumentalising his humanity for divine power; whereas for the proto-republican, the king is a cipher for the law, and *pro bono publica*, for the good of the people. Whether the king is above the law or under it, whether he derives his power from celestial God or from an implicit contract with the temporal kingdom is irrelevant for our purposes. What is crucial is that, for absolutists and proto-republicans alike, *the sovereign is a cipher*; the merely human

[109] Strong describes this as a "self-obliteration." See Strong, *Coronation*, 4.
[110] George Bataille, *The Accursed Share*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Zone Books, 1993), 3:204, my emphasis.
[111] Sheerin, "Making Use of Nothing," 797.
[112] Anon., *Vindiciae Contra Tyrannos*, trans. George Garnett (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 123, my emphasis.

selfhood of the sovereign subject "ceas[es] to be," dissolving in lieu of an office of sanctified power.[113]

This principle of the sovereign as cipher is elaborated in Goodrich's allusive passage on the 'living law': "law comes from the oracle, from the living voice of law (*viva vox iuris*) in the person, the mask, of God's servant, *vicaraius Christi*, Justinian. The point is quite literally fundamental to the presence of law as a living and breathing law (*lex animata*), as the work of the tongue that speaks the law *as if* it were his own."[114] For Goodrich then, the embodiment of the law is also a displacement of the self; the fictive possession of law's voice ('*as if* it were his own,') also working to foreclose the uttering of an identity *beyond* office (to echo *Vindiciae contra tyrannos*, "the legitimate prince is *nothing other* than the living law").[115] In this sense, then, the sovereign voice of law cannot be possessed, but rather 'possesses' the utterer. This, I infer, is what Bataille means by sovereignty as a "ceasing to be."[116]

I am conscious that the terms in which I am exploring this issue might lend the idea an aura of obscurity, which is ever the risk with theory. Our contemporary unfamiliarity with some of these concerns may also imply that they are part of specialised, overly rarefied, intellectual enterprises, rather than representative of the pragmatic realities of sovereign power. By way of contrast, the Roman emperor Marcus Aurelius, in his famous *Meditations*, provides himself with crisp Stoic instructions concerning the need to struggle against the alienating qualities of sanctified sovereign power:

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[113] Bataille, *The Accursed Share*, 3:204.
[114] Goodrich, *Languages of Law*, 271, his emphases.
[115] Anon., *Vindiciae Contra Tyrannos*, 123, my emphasis.
[116] Bataille, *The Accursed Share*, 3:204.

> Be careful not to affect the Caesar too much and impregnate yourself too much with this spirit [*lit.* "stained with the purple," trans. Robin Hard, *e.g.* "become a tyrant,"]. Keep yourself simple, honest, pure, serious, natural, the friend of justice, pious, benevolent, affectionate and resolute in the performance of duties.[117]

Foucault conducts a useful analysis regarding this passage, observing that Aurelius articulates the "daily good conduct of any man whomsoever."[118] Foucault suggests that the lesson that Aurelius is imparting to himself is that the imperial principality must be treated as though it were any other "occupation and profession," "because for Marcus Aurelius the primary objective […] is not to be emperor, but to be himself."[119] Yet, Aurelius's warning to himself — "Take care that you are not turned into a Caesar, that you are not stained with the purple,"[120] — suggests precisely that the position of emperor is *not* like any other occupation and profession. Rather, Aurelius's affirmation to 'keep himself,' to hold himself in reserve from the 'spirit' of Caesar, reveals a fear that there is

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[117] Foucault, *Hermeneutics of the Subject*, 200, 201; Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations*, ed. Christopher Gill, trans. Robin Hard (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), VI.30; Christopher Gill, "Introduction," in *Meditations*, by Marcus Aurelius, ed. Christopher Gill (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), xx.

The availability of Marcus Aurelius's Meditations to Jacobean readers remains unclear to me. The first extant Latin translation was published in 1558 (the original being in Greek). The first extant English edition was published in 1634. See Marcus Aurelius, *Marcus Aurelius Antoninus the Roman Emperor, His Meditations*, trans. Meric Casaubon, Early English Books, 1475-1640 / 819:14 (London: Printed by M. Flesher, for Richard Mynne, in Little Britaine at the signe of S. Paul, 1634); Yet, Aurelius's philosophical aphorisms appear in English much earlier than that. See James Bentley, *The Harmonie of Holie Scriptures Vvith the Seuerall Sentences of Sundry Learned and Vvorthy Vvriters*, Early English Books, 1475-1640 / 1720:10 (London: Printed by I.R. for Nicholas Ling, 1600), img. 38/284; Jacques Hurault, *Politicke, Moral, and Martial Discourses.*, trans. Arthur Golding, Early English Books, 1475-1640 / 249:06 (London: Printed by Adam Islip, 1595), img. 20-1, 62, 79/259. Whether these quotations reflect the dissemination of Aurelius's philosophy from the Latin translation of his Meditations or were drawn from biographies of Aurelius, like Erasmus's Historia Augusta (1518) is uncertain.

[118] Foucault, *Hermeneutics of the Subject*, 200.

[119] Ibid., 200, 201.

[120] Aurelius, *Meditations*, 2011, VI.30.

something especially dangerous about the sanctified, quasi-divine sovereign office, which threatens to displace the self.[121] In this sense, the meditation evokes an emperor who is fighting to not become his office; a sovereign struggling to not cease to be.[122] As I will show in the final chapter, Lear is very much a sovereign who has been stained with the purple, one whose sense of self has long since collapsed into the sanctified power of his office.

These analyses of the theology (and, in the case of Aurelius, the experience) of the sovereign office leads to a startling conclusion. The human who holds the office of sovereignty has a certain secret sympathy with the outlaw: both are figures that are negated by their relation to sovereign power. This symmetry may otherwise be demonstrated, as Agamben himself argues, by a comparison of the legal responses to the death of each figure.[123] I have already demonstrated that historically the outlaw, the banished, might perish "without judicial inquiry."[124] (In this, the outlaw resembles *homo sacer*, Agamben's paradigmatic example of bare life.) By contrast, Agamben writes:

> […] there is no juridico-political order […] in which the killing of the sovereign is classified simply as an act of homicide. Instead it constitutes

[121] The comparison here between Roman imperial office and early modern English kingship deserves to be treated with some circumspection. I consider it justified due to the intense intellectual and ceremonial debts the latter has to the former. For an interesting (but not conclusive) example, the earliest known coronation rites for an English king (King Edgar, coincidentally) took place with openly Latinate influences (he was crowned *imperator*, rather than *rex*, at *Aquae Sulis* [Bath]). For more on Edgar, see Strong, *Coronation*, 3. For more thorough work on this general area, see Agamben's work connecting Roman imperial apotheosis with English royal effigies, including a commentary on Kantorowicz, see *Homo Sacer*, 91-103. Likewise, for the Roman traditions of sacral monarchy, with a view to their influence on medieval and early modern kingship, see Oakley, *Kingship*, 44-50; *Empty Bottles*, 67-78.

[122] For further examples of Aurelius's concerns about his political office, especially with regards to being antithetical to his philosophy of selfhood, see Aurelius, *Meditations*, 2011, I.17, IV.12, IV.31, IV.48, VI.12, VI.13, VIII.1, VIII.3, VIII.9, VIII.31, IX.23, IX.29, IX.36, X.27, XI.7, XII.2.

[123] Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, 101-3.

[124] Bracton, *Laws and Customs*, 2:354.

> a special crime, which is defined […] as *crimen lesae maiestatis*. It does not matter, from our perspective, that the killing of [the outlaw] can be considered as less than homicide, and the killing of the sovereign as more than homicide; what is essential is that in neither case does the killing of a man constitute an offense of homicide.[125]

This secret sympathy between the outlaw and the sovereign is a crucial aspect of Agamben's thesis, which advances a particularly complex view of sacredness. The clearest way to articulate this view is that the sacredness inheres in the devoting of the body of the sovereign to its office: this also accords with Strong's remark that the English coronation can be understood as a ritualistic "self-obliteration."[126] (This, however, raises important questions to the status of the body once the office is lost.)[127] In this sense, both the sovereign subject and the outlaw are marginalised by sovereign power: both undergo an obliteration of their prior political identity and both "cease to be" in a significant juridical sense (though, as Agamben shows through the inclusive exclusion of bare life, such ceasing to be is also fundamentally illusory).[128]

Agamben's observation — that killing a sovereign is more than homicide, killing the outlaw is less — names this "special crime," above murder, as "*crimen lesae majestatis*."[129] The terms in which this killing was criminalised, 'the crime of injuring

[125] Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, 102.
[126] Strong, *Coronation*, 4.
[127] For Agamben's brief and, in my view, unsatisfactory discussion of this, see Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, 103.
[128] I use the term "illusory" advisedly, not to mean "unreal." Illusions have an ontological character, which is to say that they are *really* illusions.
[129] Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, 102.

majesty,' is one of the more significant borrowings from Byzantine Christian political theology into English law.[130] In terms of my argument thus far, *lesae majestatis* represents yet another iteration of the alienating, inhuman quality of the sovereign office. Even in the killing of the sovereign, the crime is *not* homicide (the killing of a human), the physical death of the office-holder (as I will show) is in itself fairly irrelevant. Instead, capital treason concerns injuring the sanctity of the office. Even in the event of being killed, therefore, the sovereign office, through a juridico-theological conception of sacredness, legally alienates the subject from their own self, their body, even their life, as such. The event of their killing is more or less insignificant insofar as the law is concerned; the insult to the office is the true infraction.

[130] For an outstanding introduction to the importance of Byzantine political theology for the development of sacred kingship, see Oakley, *Kingship*, 68-83.

MAJESTY AND TREASON

Lesae majestatis is crucial to *King Lear* for substantive reasons. Given the narrative importance of treason to this play, particularly for Gloucester, Edmund, and Goneril, the concept of 'majesty' is worth explaining in its own right. Accusations of treason, in relation to majesty, also provide a means of tracing the legal transition of the sovereign office from Lear to his son-in-laws. First, to affirm the pertinence of *lesae majestatis* to the play, here is Lear's description of the powers, which he assigns to Albany and Cornwall at the outset of the play:

> I do invest you jointly with my power,
> Pre-eminence and *all the large effects*
> *That troop with majesty*.
>
> (1.1.131-3, my emphasis)

Black's Law Dictionary defines 'majesty' as "[Latin "supreme power"] *Roman law.* 1. The majesty, sovereign authority, or supreme prerogative of the state or sovereign; the supreme power of the people, esp. as represented by their highest representatives."[131] *Black's* "supreme power" or "prerogative" echoes the "power" and "[p]re-eminence" that Lear "invests" Albany and Cornwall with (1.1.131-2). *Black's* notes that, in the Civilian tradition, *majestas* is intimately intertwined with concept of high treason itself, known as

[131] Bryan A. Garner, ed., "Majestas, n.," in *Black's Law Dictionary* (St. Paul, MN: Thomson Reuters, 2009), their emphasis.

crimen majestatis or *crimen lesae majestatis*.[132] This is converted into Law French as *lèse majesté* or "injured majesty," which covers a broad array of crimes against the sovereign.[133] David M. Walker notes that although the term "majesty" originates with the Roman *princeps*, "from the time of Henry II, it has been used in England."[134]

Sir Edward Coke, a pre-eminent Elizabethan and Jacobean jurist, provides an influential account of high treason in *The Third Part of the Institutes* (1644). He technically terms high treason as "*crimen laesae majestatis*," noting that "nothing can concerne the king, his crowne, and dignity, more."[135] He helpfully divides the act into "severall classes or heads," representing them in the form of a table, which I have reproduced in an appendix.[136] Coke's table itself closely follows the statute set down by Edward III in 1352, a statute which likely "preserved a great deal of the then current doctrine" and certainly "became the whole law of treason for after times."[137] Coke's analysis can therefore be regarded as an authoritative judicial account of high treason, in its contemporary historical iteration, which had been stable for at least the preceding three centuries.

There are six classes of high treason (*crimen lesae majestatis*). In the first instance, there are also two sub-classes, which are paired insofar as both concern "death."[138] The first of the first category concerns "compassing or imagining the death" of the sovereign (or the

[132] Garner, "Majestas, n."; Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, 102.
[133] Bryan A. Garner, ed., "Lese Majesty," in *Black's Law Dictionary* (St. Paul, MN: Thomson Reuters, 2009).
[134] David M. Walker, *The Oxford Companion to Law*, 1980: 798.
[135] Sir Edward Coke, *The Selected Writings of Sir Edward Coke: In Three Volumes*, ed. Steve Sheppard (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 2002), 2:953.
[136] Ibid., 2:955. This table is reproduced as an appendix.
[137] Pollock and Maitland, *The History of English Law*, 2:502, 502n.
[138] Coke, *Selected Writings*, 2:955.

sovereign's consort or heir) *and* "declaring the same by some overt deed."[139] This is important, as this expresses that the declaration of an intent to kill the sovereign is held to be *as severe* an injury to majesty as the actual killing of the person who holds the office. This demonstrates the priority of the dignity of the office over the life of the individual who exercises it. This priority becomes increasingly perspicuous in the subsequent categories also. For example, the second of the first category of treasonous offences concerns the killing of specific officials (*e.g.* Chancellor, Treasurer, Justices, *etc*.) "*in their places doing their offices*," the logic being that the legal potency and symbolic authority of these offices arises as place-holders for the Crown, in whose absence they officiate.[140] This is why the murdering of these officials only constitutes *crimen lesae majestatis* if they are killed whilst exercising the said office. The second category unto itself refers to the carnal violation of the sovereign's consort, the sovereign's eldest daughter unmarried, or the prince's wife — this, as I discuss in the third chapter, represents the class of treason for which Goneril and Edmund are attainted by Albany at the end of the play (5.3.83-5). Third, concerns levying a civil war against the sovereign. Fourth, "adhering to the [sovereign's] enemies within the realme, or without, and declaring the same by some overt act," which (as I will show) forms the basis of Cornwall's accusation of treason against Gloucester.[141] Fifth and sixth both concern counterfeiting images of sovereign authority, *i.e.* "the great seale," "the privie seale," or "the king's coin."[142]

[139] Ibid.
[140] Ibid., 2:955.
[141] Ibid.
[142] Ibid.

To return to the sovereign *ban*, particularly with a view toward the insignia of sovereign power, there is a symbolic commerce between the spectacle of legitimate power and the highest crime of *crimen lesae majestatis*. Majesty is constituted as a sanctified property of the divine office, which flows through a variety of symbolic functions, especially including the wider spectacle of law as it variously touches: judicial or executive offices, the images of sovereign authority, the securing of royal marriage and inheritance, and the nation's fundamental oaths of loyalty. The sanctity of these institutions is confirmed through majesty, the breach of which is then charged with the highest offence possible in law. But correspondingly, the forceful spectacle of these institutions also serves to affirm and exalt the divine sanctity of the sovereign office itself. There is in short a reciprocal relation, in which the panoply and force of the sovereign guarantees the sanctity of the law, and the panoply and force of the law guarantees the sanctity of the sovereign. However, this is also a fragile symbolic bond, to be sure, even when it is bolstered with such exceptional violence, which partly explains the law's morose aversion to ridicule.[143]

To take a more subtle, yet concrete example of the diffusion of majesty through the symbolic apparatuses of law, Goodrich insightfully analyses armory as a legal writing system in early modern England. For example, he notes how a family's arms "had always to be placed *in signum subjectionis* in relation to the sovereign's arms."[144] Goodrich, in particular, cites Sir John Ferne's *The Blazon of Gentry* (1586), stating that "any subject setting his arms in public in any undue manner, as, for example, above those of his prince or above the arms of any person to whom he owes obedience, they are lawfully to be

[143] For an explicit and exemplary critique of melancholegalism, *i.e.* the "morose sanctity" of law, in the ludic mode, see Peter Goodrich, "Proboscations: Excavations in Comedy and Law," *Critical Inquiry* 43, no. 2 (2016): esp. 369-70.
[144] Goodrich, *Languages of Law*, 128.

removed and defaced. In the former case of the sovereign's arms it is treason."[145] Similarly, as John Logan described in *Analogia Honorum* (1677), an action lay for *crimen iniuriae* in the event of the "defacement, removal or taking down of arms from their authorised place," thus, according to Goodrich, "to see [the sovereign's arms] forth on a reversed escutcheon or to place them by any shameful and dishonourable matter, sign, emblem or writing" was treason.[146] Once again, these explicitly symbolic dimensions of treason exposes the fact that the crime under which the killing of a sovereign is prosecuted actually has very little to do with the loss of the life of the individual who holds the office. Instead, *crimen lesae majestatis* is so manifestly concerned with the dignity of the office that the human life contained within it lacks any observable legal significance in itself. This reiterates — and, in fact, concentrates — Agamben's argument concerning the secret juridical symmetry between the outlaw and the sovereign.

Treason itself is a recurring concern in *King Lear*, and it is clear that Lear himself is habituated to this kind of thinking. When he sees Kent in the stocks, he exclaims: "'tis worse than murder / To do upon respect such violent outrage," which is a neat summary of the legal logic of majesty (2.2.213-4). Likewise, ideas of treason are understandably still floating in Lear's confused mind when he reappears at Dover with a crown of wild flowers:

> Lear. No, *they cannot touch me for coining*. I am the King himself!

[145] Ibid.; John Ferne, *The Blazon of Gentrie Deuided into Two Parts*, Early English Books, 1475-1640 / 225:07 (London: Printed by Iohn VVindet, for Andrevv Maunsell, 1586), img. 139-140/239.
[146] Goodrich, *Languages of Law*, 133; John Logan, *Analogia Honorum, or, A Treatise of Honour and Nobility, According to the Laws and Customes of England*, Early English Books, 1641-1700 / 35:24 (London: Printed by Tho. Roycroft, 1677), img. 46, 148/167.

Edgar. O, side-piercing sight!

Lear. Nature's above art in that respect.

(4.6.83-6, my emphasis)[147]

Lear's remarks demonstrate that he is accustomed to thinking in terms of his own majesty, yet he forgets that he very precisely transferred this property over to his sons-in-law: "all the large effects / That troop with majesty" (1.1.132-3). Even if Lear had not made this specification, as *Black's* makes clear, *majestatis* is jurisprudentially associated with supreme judicial pre-eminence, rather than with titles or additions.[148] In his discussion of treason, Coke himself makes a useful distinction between those who have 'king' as a formal title, as opposed to those who possess the actual office and powers of kingship, *i.e.* the sovereign. Coke notes that *crimen lesae majestatis* principally concerns the "King regnant, and not of one that hath but the name of a King, or a nominative King," providing the example of "Queen Mary [who] had the office and dignity of a king," whereas "King Philip, who married Queen Mary, […] was but a nominative King."[149] This regnant/nominative split is related to, but distinct from, the *de facto*/*de jure* division also noted by Coke: "a pardon [for treason] granted by a King *de jure*, that is not also *de facto*, is voyde."[150] This essentially refers to the potential distinction between the juridically legitimate sovereign *versus* the sovereign with the actual political capital to enact their supremacy. This, in Schmitt's words, is "the fundamental problem of the concept of

[147] "Coining" being a reference to counterfeiting, a treasonous offence, as discussed above, see Coke, *Selected Writings*, 2:955. Compare with Richard's meditation on his face being "bankrupt of his majesty," (*R2*, 4.1.145.A113).
[148] Garner, "Majestas, n."
[149] Coke, *Selected Writings*, 2:963.
[150] Ibid.

sovereignty. All the difficulties reside here."[151] Agamben notably explores this distinction in Roman politics and law as *potestas* (legally-defined potency) and *auctoritas* (charisma, political authority) respectively.[152] Due to Lear's specific retention of "the name and all th'addition to a king," I will replace Coke's references to "the King" (meaning the '*de facto*' and/or 'regnant' ruler) with the term 'sovereign,' in order to more clearly denote the individuals that possess the office, dignity, and majesty of sovereign kingship. Accordingly, despite lacking the title of king, Albany and Cornwall shall be understood as sovereigns for all of the action following Lear's divestment.

To reiterate, in Lear's words, Albany and Cornwall are invested with sovereign "pre-eminence," including "all the large effects / That troop with majesty" (1.1.132-3). Following Coke, they both thereby assume the regnant potency of sovereign kingship, including the specific legal protections of *majestatis*. It therefore follows that any subsequent act injuring their office renders the culprit vulnerable to charges of "capital treason," a reading which is confirmed by Albany's attainder of Edmund and Goneril at the end of the play (5.3.84). However, this reading hints at an unsettling observation regarding the treatment of Gloucester by Cornwall and Regan; namely, that it may have some legitimate juridical grounding. In fact, following Coke's table, it becomes clear that Gloucester's treason resembles that described by the fourth class, "adhering to the [sovereign's] enemies within the realme, or without, and declaring the same by some overt act," which relates to "levying war against the [sovereign]."[153] Gloucester describes

[151] Schmitt, *Political Theology*, 18.
[152] Agamben, *State of Exception*, 74-88.
[153] Coke, *Selected Writings*, 2:955.

to Edmund the letter that he has received, alerting him to the French invasion, designed to support Lear:

> I have received a letter this night — 'tis dangerous to be spoken — I have locked the letter in my closet. These injuries the King now bears must be revenged home. There is part of a power already footed; we must incline to the King. (3.3.9-14)

Gloucester emphasises that the possession of such a letter places him in a position of extreme legal precarity: "[it is] dangerous to be spoken" (3.3.10). The danger of this "speaking" itself results from the specific clause that Coke cites as a necessary condition for high treason of the fourth class, namely "declaring [an adherence to the sovereign's enemies] by some overt act."[154] The conjunction of possessing the letter and his speaking of it therefore doubly implicates Gloucester. Edmund says as much when he hands over the letter to Cornwall:

> Edm. This is the *letter* [F]which[F] he *spoke* of,
> which *approves* him an intelligent party to the
> advantages of France. O heavens! That this *treason*
> were [F]not[F], or not I the detector.
> (3.5.10-3, my emphases)

[154] Ibid.

To have knowingly possessed the letter without revealing it instantly may have been sufficient grounds for a charge of treason. See Pollock and Maitland, *The History of English Law*, 2:507:"The severest doctrine that we hear is that he who knows of a plot against the [sovereign] and does not at once reveal it is himself guilty of treason."

Provided one accepts the "[p]re-eminence" and "majesty" of Cornwall, the case against Gloucester is quite strong, as Edmund's phrasing suggests (1.1.132-3). That the technical likelihood of Gloucester's guilt ought to be considered is also reflected in the fact that the blinding scene begins with an interrogation, reminding the audience of the "letter," his "confederacy" with the French army, and his dispatching of Lear toward the army at Dover: "Wherefore to Dover? Wast thou not charged *at peril* —" (3.7.47, 44, 51, my emphasis). The possibility of Gloucester's guilt is insistently reiterated: he is referred to as a traitor on no less than twelve occasions through the play, the majority of these in the blinding scene itself (3.7.3, 8, 22, 27, 32, 37, 44, 86; 4.2.6; 4.5.39; 4.6.224, 228). Likewise, Cornwall foresees no obstacle to *proving* his accusation, only that the summary, private nature of the punishment lacks "the form of justice" (3.7.25).[155] In other words, Cornwall admits that the absence of a public trial is neglecting the formal appearance of justice but, convinced of Gloucester's treason, he does not concede that the punishment itself is unjust.

Gloucester's technical guilt, however, does nothing to alleviate the atrocity of the act. The revulsion of the audience towards Cornwall's act (which has been well-attested in the performance history of the play), coupled with the intense sympathy for Gloucester,

[155] The servant who interrupts the blinding is unclear on his reason for intervening, only stating: "Better service have I never done you / Than now to bid thee hold." (3.7.73-4) Likewise, Albany's messenger, who reports the event later, only says the servant was "[t]hrilled with remorse" (4.2.74). Albany expresses disgust and pity for Gloucester's blinding — "Gloucester's eyes?"; "But, O, poor Gloucester, / Lost he his other eye?" (4.2.74, 81-2) — and satisfaction in hearing of Cornwall's death: "This shows you are above / You justicers" (4.2.79-80). *None of these moral objections, however, refute Gloucester's legal guilt.*

suggests a skeptical view of the moral weight of the law in this instance.[156] In a sense, the fracture within duty that was exhibited in the opening scene bursts apart here — as the cracked globe in Adrian Noble's 1993 RSC production, at this very moment, did also.[157] At this fulcrum of the play, the beauty of loyalty is shorn clear from legally-obliged obedience.

Gloucester's loyalty to Lear, even in its treasonous implications, exposes the potential moral dearth of law (*i.e.* that the morally correct course of action may be legally sanctioned; or that a morally dubious course of action may be legally demanded). This is an old and rather obvious jurisprudential problem, with many far more subtle iterations.[158] Importantly, I doubt that anyone would dare venture that what Gloucester does is wrong, which grants him an action of ethical solidity that, in my view, is more-or-less unmatched in the play. But it is worth asking where the moral solicitude for Gloucester's treason lies? The beauty of loyalty, as I said, has something to do it. Yet, I would like to submit another dimension for consideration. Gloucester's argument for defending Lear, mere seconds before his blinding, contains a curious line:

> Because I would not see […] thy fierce sister

[156] Foakes, "Introduction," 61; Alexander Leggatt, *Shakespeare in Performance: King Lear*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004, 9.
[157] "Royal Shakespeare Company: Past Productions — King Lear: Adrian Noble 1993 Production," Royal Shakespeare Company, accessed October 12, 2019, https://www.rsc.org.uk/king-lear/past-productions/adrian-noble-1993-production; Perry Mills, "A Heroic King Lear," Sprint for Shakespeare, 2012, https://shakespeare.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/category/people/adrian-noble/.
[158] This is by no means a novel jurisprudential problem, I merely note that it is skilfully dramatised by Shakespeare. For the classical analysis of the necessity of equity to temper the law, see Aristotle, *The Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. H. Rackham, Loeb Classical Library (London: William Heinemann, 1926), V.x.1-8 (1137b); for the reception of Aristotle's theory of equity into Renaissance jurisprudence, see Ian Maclean, *Interpretation and Meaning in the Renaissance: The Case of Law*, Ideas in Context (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 22-3, 175-7; for a compelling meditation on justice in Shakespeare, as distinct from what is merely licit, see Schwartz, *Loving Justice, Living Shakespeare*.

In his anointed flesh stick boarish fangs.

(3.7.55-7, my emphasis)

This one of the few explicitly Christian references in the play. To some extent, it affirms the likelihood that the vision of kingship being articulated in the play is fundamentally post-medieval Christian in conception, despite the superficially pagan referents. With regards to Gloucester's treason, which one scarcely thinks of as 'treason,' this line opens up a peculiar possibility. The question I can only pose — I have no answer — is whether, as modern audience members, a sense of Lear's sanctity still holds some ethical value for us? Does the ritualised consecration of anointment, the divine majesty of kingship, continue to elicit a certain moral outrage on its behalf, which the transfer of its secular legal properties cannot easily displace? This is a provocative possibility. On the other hand, Gloucester's admission that he still thinks of Lear as a sacred life, despite his loss of formal, legal kingship, also opens up a final concern of this chapter: namely, that the subject who has been consecrated and devoted to sovereign power, at the expense of their selfhood, cannot simply shed those powers and become a conventional subject. Furthermore, the doctrinally-defined exclusion through their relation to sovereign power is confirmed by their abject status, their legal insignificance, upon the occasion of their loss of that office.

Of the early modern political theorists that Sheerin cites, perhaps the most crucial, in this regard, is the work of George Buchanan. As Sheerin describes, Buchanan was the tutor to the young James Stuart — he presented his treatise *De jure regni apud Scotos* to James,

when the future sovereign was thirteen years old.[159] The thesis itself is a controversial one, proposing a "bond of humanity" implicit in the rights and privileges of sovereignty.[160] As Sheerin adeptly summarises, the breach of this "bond of humanity" in Buchanan's view ought to have two significant consequences: first, that "the sovereign who breaks the bond with his subjects loses his very nature *as* king, no matter what the outward appearance might convey."[161] Significantly, for our purposes, Buchanan adds that a king who "breaks the bond with his subjects" not only loses the *being* of kingship, but consequently "he is to be regarded not only as less than a king *but less than a person*."[162] He goes still further: "such men [...] should be accounted the greatest enemies of God and of all men," they should be thrown into the "solitary places" beyond the *polis*.[163] In short, the sovereign who breaches the 'bond of humanity,' loses his kingship, loses his humanity, and thus falls into a jurisprudential position not unlike that of the outlaw.

Buchanan's argument, of course, is designed to give the greatest possible weight to his contractual "bond of humanity," so that by breaking this bond, the tyrant also renounces his share in humanity as such. Yet, the jurisprudential movement implied in this formula — that the individual who *loses* the sovereign office is revealed as *less than a person* —

[159] Sheerin, "Making Use of Nothing," 798.
[160] Ibid.
[161] Ibid., 799, his emphasis.
I previously noted that the *christomimetes*, the imitation of Christ, was not a matter of praxis but rather of *being*, to do with "the nature" of the king rather than the practice of kingship. What Buchanan's theory seeks to achieve is to contractualise the exercise of the office, not with God, but with the populace; in effect, Buchanan neutralises any claims to an absolute "nature" or *being* of kingship, subordinating it to a juridically-inspired sphere of praxis ("bond of humanity"), an unwritten contract. In this, Buchanan is essentially making a 'natural law' argument for sovereignty, *e.g.* that sovereign power may exceed positive (*i.e.* human-posited law) but only in service to reason, justice, or (in his terms) humanity.
[162] Ibid., 799, my emphasis.
[163] Ibid., 799-800.

resonates with the wider intellectual history of sovereign power also.[164] Given some of the doctrines I have rehearsed in this chapter — that the holder's life and humanity are ceremonially obliterated in coronation; that the holder is rendered merely an instrument, a vessel, for a vicarious sovereign power that is not their own; that their physical body is reduced to an inferior, nutritive, animal host for the *corpus mysticum* — it cannot be surprising that the loss of office closely corresponds with a loss of juridical personhood. In fact, is it not possible, on a deep level, that to survive sovereignty is in some way to injure it? The possibility is that the survival of the former sovereign subject, the one whose body has already been consecrated to sacred power, threatens the "absolute and inhuman character" of sovereignty itself.[165] Threats are, as *crimen lesae majestatis* itself makes clear, injuries. If this is true, if the continued life of a former vessel on some level threatens the sacredly sacrificial quality of sovereignty itself, this may offer a submerged explanation as to why so few ex-sovereigns are permitted to live on in their former jurisdiction as a normal citizen.

[164] Agamben gestures towards this but does not pursue it in depth. See Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, 102-3.
[165] Ibid., 101.

THRESHOLD

The strange hollow position of the former sovereign is a point that the Fool builds up to in his first scene. He opens with quips and songs that focus on ridiculing Lear's domestic arrangement: that Lear has to "beg" things of his daughters, that he's turned his "daughters [into his] mothers," and that the Fool must "for sorrow [sing]" that "such a king should play bo-peep" (1.4.107, 164, 167, 168). Lear's relationship with his daughters will be examined in the third chapter, and his relationship to his own masculinity is touched on in the last. A notable exception to this domestic emphasis comes when Lear asks if he's being called "fool," and the Fool retorts: "All thy other titles thou hast given away" (1.4.141, 142).

However, particularly once Goneril enters, a partial but significant shift occurs in the Fool's tone and focus. His comments begin to open up to suggest Lear's profoundly empty political position: "Now thou art an O without a figure; I am better than thou art now. I am a fool, thou art nothing" (1.4.183-5). Likewise, when Lear asks his ironic, yet telling question — "Who is that can tell me who I am?" — the Folio gives the Fool the resounding reply: "Lear's shadow" (1.4.221-2). Though often cut in performance, the hollow quality associated with the ex-sovereign is also powerfully evoked when the Fool points at Lear and simply says, "That's a shelled peascod" (1.4.190). All of these comments are also legible as disparagements directed toward the apparent emasculation of a father deferring to his daughters in his old age. In this sense, they play with the conceptual commerce between ideas of 'impotence,' which returns us to the strange

masculinity of English sovereign power. Yet, many are more explicable for their significance to Lear's political selfhood, and the jurisprudential vacuum implied by the body of the former sovereign: "an O without a figure" (1.4.183-4). Goodrich states, "In strict mathematical terms, the [zero] refers to the absence of any other signs and not to the non-presence of any real thing."[166] Lear has long since been alienated by an office that posited him as a cipher of sanctified power. According to the various doctrines surrounding kingship, Lear's human self (his body natural) has been subordinated, if not displaced, by the "inhuman character of sovereignty." His renouncement of this position is paralleled by a loss of the signs of political supremacy.

This chapter began by noting the ways in which Lear's habituation to authority is routinely demonstrated in performance through a semiotics of power: military dress uniforms, national anthems, podiums, and so forth. The insignia, the titles, and additions of the office (the '*dignity*,' as offices were sometimes termed) serve, in Goodrich's view, to enable authority through metaphysical referents: "either an immemorial or to a divine source."[167] The tight intersection of the insignia and the office is well attested, even in legal axioms: "all offices are dignities and bear their own insignia or holy letters: *possessio dignitatis*, *probatur per insignia*, possession of a dignity is proved through its insignia."[168] This notion is particularly concentrated in Agamben's sovereign *ban*, which ties together the insignia, the sovereign office, and the symbolic act that best defines that office: exception. Goodrich's particular insight — which anticipates the work of Agamben and Heron on the subject of office — arises in relation to the alienating property

[166] Goodrich, *Languages of Law*, 131.
[167] Ibid.
[168] Ibid.

of armory and insignia as a language of the law: "the sanctity of the sign" is an "effacement of the sociality of the sign," and in the final analysis, the insignia speak "as something other than the human voice — as impersonal *officium* or function."[169] But if such elite signifying systems alienate the "the general and ignoble public," who are prevented from either "know[ing] or bear[ing] arms of honour," it must also surely alienate the bearers.[170] *King Lear*, I suggest, is a play precisely about a man who disavows "the sanctity of the sign" and must fight to recover his "sociality," to develop a new way of speaking that attests to a "human voice" that is no longer subordinate to *officium*.[171] He abandons the *ban*, only to find that he himself had already been excluded by it. Thus begins Lear's slow recovery toward a selfhood beyond office.

In all of this, there are echoes of *Richard II* — Shakespeare's great precursor play on the theme of royal divestment. The Queen, sighting Richard after the deposition, memorably says "Thou, King Richard's tomb / And not King Richard" (*R2*, 5.1.12-3). This remark, like the barbs of the Fool above, suggests the alien physiognomy implied by the theological, political, and juridical doctrines surrounding kingship. Once 'unkinged,' once the "absolute and inhuman character of sovereignty" is displaced, the former sovereign cannot conveniently be reincorporated as a subject like any other.[172] Instead, they find themselves in a political no-man's-land. In Lear's case, once vacated of *majestas*, the title of 'king' is merely *vestigial*, "in the classical sense of *vestigium*, an imprint, a footprint, a mark or a trace."[173] The impression of this exceptionally kenotic

[169] Ibid.
[170] Ibid.
[171] Ibid.
[172] Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, 101.
[173] Goodrich, *Languages of Law*, 117.

office of kingship cannot be erased, so the deposed sovereign lives on as some sort of container, a container that once held the body politic — the spirit of Caesar, the dragon — but now lies empty: a tomb, a shadow, a shelled peascod.

CHAPTER II

"THE BLOODY PROCLAMATION TO ESCAPE": EDGAR AND ROMANTIC OUTLAWRY

The 1608 Quarto of *King Lear* includes, as is not so unusual, the subplot in the title page. It appears as follows:

M. William Shak-speare:

HIS

True Chronicle Historie of the life and

death of King LEAR and his three

Daughters.

With the unfortunate life of Edgar*, sonne*

and heire to the Earle of Gloster, and his

sullen and assumed humor of

TOM of Bedlam.[1]

[1] William Shakespeare, *True Chronicle Historie of the Life and Death of King Lear and His Three Daughters*, Early English Books, 1475-1640 / 904:11 (London: Printed [by Nicholas Okes] for Nathaniel Butter, 1608), img. 1/41.

The 1619 Second Quarto, which was falsely advertised as the 1608 Quarto, offers the same subtitle, albeit with some minor deviations in terms of spelling and formatting. Deviations include: "Lear" for "LEAR," "EDGAR" for "Edgar," "Glocester" for "Gloster," "three daughters" is italicised, and so forth. See William Shakespeare, *True Chronicle History of the Life and Death of King Lear, and His Three Daughters*, Early English Books, 1475-1640 / 1007:03 (London: Printed [by William Jaggard] for Nathaniel Butter, 1619), img. 1/44.

This subtitle was absent from the First Folio version, which was simply headed "The Tragedie of King Lear,"[2] a precedent followed by the Second, Third, and Fourth Folios.[3] The Quarto's emphasis on Edgar is worth considering carefully. In the market for printed plays, this subtitle — as much as the notations concerning the playwright, playing company, and theatre — may well have helped to identify this particular iteration of an otherwise widely-known story. After all, there is no Edgar in the source-play.[4] *King Leir* was printed (or possibly reprinted, given the Stationers' Register entry on 14 May 1594) as *King Leir and His Three Daughters* in 1605.[5] There has been some intelligent speculation regarding *King Leir*'s publication date and the composition of *King Lear*: whether the printing was intended to capitalise on the anticipation or established popularity of the new King's Men's offering, or whether the publication in some way prompted the new composition remains unclear.[6] I have no strong opinion on the matter.

With that said, although the foregrounding of Edgar might have helped the publisher distinguish Shakespeare's play from the older drama, Edgar is by no means the only original contribution of Shakespeare's. If differentiation was the sole objective, the

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[2] William Shakespeare, *Comedies, Histories, & Tragedies Published According to the True Originall Copies [First Folio]*, ed. John Heminge and Henry Condell, Early English Books, 1475-1640 / 774:11 (London: Printed by Isaac Iaggard, and Ed. Blount [at the charges of W. Iaggard, Ed. Blount, I. Smithweeke, and W. Aspley, 1623), img. 398/458.

[3] William Shakespeare, *Comedies, Histories, and Tragedies Published According to the True Originall Copies [Second Folio]*, ed. John Heminge and Henry Condell, Early English Books, 1475-1640 / 1978:01 (London: printed by Tho. Cotes, for Richard Meighen [, John Smethwick, Robert Allot, Richard Hawkins, and William Aspley], and are to be sold at the middle Temple Gate in Fleetstreet, 1632), img. 398/457; William Shakespeare, *Comedies, Histories, and Tragedies. Published According to the True Original Copies [Third Folio]*, ed. John Heminge and Henry Condell, Early English Books, 1641-1700 / 1858:06 (London : printed [by Roger Daniel, Alice Warren, and another] for Philip Chetwinde, 1663., 1663), img. 398/453; William Shakespeare, *Comedies, Histories, and Tragedies Published According to the True Original Copies [Fourth Folio]*, Early English Books, 1641-1700 / 1294:21 (London: Printed for H. Herringman, E. Brewster, and R. Bentley, 1685), img. 357/466.

[4] Bullough, *Sources*, 7:284.

[5] Anon., *King Leir*, viii.

[6] Knowles, "King Leir," 13, 27-35; Muir, *Shakespeare's Sources*, 141; Bullough, *Sources*, 7:269-70.

subtitle might easily have emphasised the murder of Cordelia, the rise and fall of Edmund, the banishment of Kent, or the betrayal and blinding of Gloucester. Instead, the stress lands on "*the unfortunate life of* Edgar." This chapter is not an attempt to reconstruct why the printer or the bookseller (Nathaniel Butter, in this case) elected to include this particular piece of information. However, from 1608, there has existed an invitation to the reader to consider Lear in conjunction with one other character in particular: Edgar. This conjunction of characters is fortuitous for the purposes of this thesis since Edgar's identity — like Lear's — remains consistently "in question" throughout the play, as William R. Elton observes.[7] Furthermore, both of these lives are "*unfortunate*" in a rich sense that evokes the romance genre to which the play is indebted.[8] Their sharp downturns are insistently characterised in terms of Fortune or Fortune's wheel: "I am even the natural fool of Fortune," "To be worst, / the lowest and most dejected things of [F]ortune" — though for Edgar, at least, "the wheel [comes] full circle" (4.6.187; 4.1.2-3; 5.3.172).

There are deeper affinities also. In the previous chapter, I showed how kingship was understood as a self-negating position: the king being doctrinally articulated as a cipher, whether of divine sovereignty, law, *pro bono publica*, and so on. In contrast to the "gusto and energy" of his half-brother Edmund and the "richer" *alter ego* of Poor Tom, Edgar himself has been considered comparatively "colourless" by Arnold Kettle, as "excit[ing] the least enthusiasm" by A.C. Bradley, and as being "not even a shadow" by Elton.[9] To some extent, Edgar has been read as a cipher too: as a "mere mouthpiece for cliché" as Ewan Fernie put it, but also as a living emblem for law, for legitimacy, and for a political

[7] Elton, *King Lear and the Gods*, 85.
[8] For the play being a "heady brew of romance," see Mack, *King Lear: In Our Time*, 5.
[9] Bradley, *Shakespearean Tragedy*, 281; Elton, *King Lear and the Gods*, 85; Kettle, "The Humanity of King Lear," 22, 20.

hierarchy that is otherwise collapsing.[10] Even the name Edgar — "he whom my father named, your Edgar," Regan attests (2.1.92) — is associated with the famous Saxon law-giver king in Holinshed, who succeeded an Edmund.[11] Such readings often find their climax in the chivalric confrontation between Edgar and Edmund, the legitimate and the illegitimate, at the end of the play.[12]

What superficially complicates this reading is Edgar's status as a banished outlaw: "The bloody proclamation to escape / That followed me so near" (5.3.182-3). However, Edgar finds himself in the company of the former sovereign — the two characters mirroring each other in the perils of a vestigial, exclusionary legal identity. Importantly, Edgar's response to his outlawry is generically romantic: he disguises himself in "rags," "a semblence / That very dogs disdained," into a "*habit*" (5.3.186-7, my emphasis). Edgar's ascetic disguise of Poor Tom, which has justly received more critical attention for its opaque, fiery expressions than its generic affinities, nevertheless conforms to the wider chivalric trope that he evokes: the future prince, unjustly banished into "pilgrim's

[10] Fernie, *The Demonic*, 224, 227; Kettle, "The Humanity of King Lear," 19-20; for Howard Felperin's description of the action as "simple and homiletic," see Howard Felperin, "Plays Within Plays," in *King Lear: Contemporary Critical Essays*, ed. Kiernan Ryan, New Casebooks (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993), 34; Leonard Tennenhouse, "The Theatre of Punishment," in *King Lear: Contemporary Critical Essays*, ed. Kiernan Ryan, New Casebooks (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993), 66, 69-70; Kiernan Ryan, "King Lear: The Subversive Imagination," in *King Lear: Contemporary Critical Essays*, ed. Kiernan Ryan, New Casebooks (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993), 78; Michael L. Hays, *Shakespearean Tragedy as Chivalric Romance: Rethinking Macbeth, Hamlet, Othello, and King Lear* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2003), 192, 205.

[11] There are more than 150 references to Edgar in the *Chronicles*. For references to his father Edmund Ironside, and to his laws, support of monks, and good government, see Raphael Holinshed, *The Firste [Laste] Volume of the Chronicles of England, Scotlande, and Irelande*, Early English Books, 1475-1640 / 1897:08 (At London: Imprinted for Iohn Hunne, 1577), img. 252-4/1493.

[12] Kettle, "The Humanity of King Lear," 19-20; for Kathleen McLuskie's view that the "ordered formality" is disrupted by the "unseemly disorder" of the women, see Kathleen McLuskie, "The Patriarchal Bard: Feminist Criticism and King Lear," in *King Lear: Contemporary Critical Essays*, ed. Kiernan Ryan, New Casebooks (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993), 52; Cantor, "Cause of Thunder," 243.

poverty," who eventually returns to the "top of Fortune's wheel."[13] The chivalric Edgar's adventure is thereby also recognisable as a romantic *advent*: an unveiling of a prince, a new heir to the kingdom.[14] A sense of this upward, restorative trajectory is crucial to understanding Edgar's role in the play's overwhelmingly tragic climax.

[13] Robert Greene, *Alphonsus, King of Aragon*, ed. W.W. Greg (Oxford: Malone Society, 1926), TLN 377-9.
[14] For the etymological connection between adventure and the Christian Latin adventus, see Giorgio Agamben, *The Adventure*, trans. Lorenzo Chiesa (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2018), 23.

THE LEGITIMATE

In the wake of the first scene — a scene littered with oaths and invocations of various kinds — Edmund holds the stage. He begins his soliloquy with his own audacious invocation: "Thou, Nature, art my goddess; to thy law / My services are bound" (1.2.1-2). The immediate significance of these lines is relatively straightforward. As he goes on to detail, Edmund considers legal structures, particularly those attached to inheritance, as nothing more than a "plague of custom" (1.2.3) and a "curiosity of nations" (1.2.4). He first criticises primogeniture, questioning why he should lack inheritance because he is "some twelve or fourteen moonshines / Lag of a brother" (1.2.5-6). But, in particular, he circles around the concept of bastardy, querying it as a term: "Why bastard? Wherefore base? / When my dimensions are as well compact / My mind as a generous [...]" (1.2.6-8). It is important to note that his initial claim posits a parity of faculties between bastards and "honest madam's issue" (1.2.9), an egalitarian argument with which a modern audience might well be sympathetic, but this gives way. Rather than being "*as* well compact [...]" (1.2.7, my emphasis), Edmund goes a step further, inverting the structure completely:

> [F]Base, base?[F]
> Who in the lusty stealth of nature take
> More composition and fierce quality
> Than doth within a dull stale tired bed
> Go to the creating [Q]of[Q] a whole tribe of fops
> (1.2.10-4)

Here, bastards are not simply as good as true-born children, they are better.[15] This movement of his soliloquy is significant and it pertains indirectly to our understanding of the play's broader social and political crisis. Edmund's argument here does nothing less than invert the conventional structure of society, a structure that has been legitimated by an intense political theology cohering around principles of patrimony, specifically primogeniture and legitimacy. More importantly, however, Edmund's critique of the institution of patrimony itself, a critique which will soon materialise into practice, contributes to the play's wider depiction of the established social hierarchy being forced into a state of emergency: "Love cools, friendship falls off, brothers divide: in cities, mutinies; in countries, discord," so goes Gloucester's lament (1.2.106-8). However, Edmund's attack on the structure of society in general, begins in the particular with an attack on Edgar.

As I have suggested, Edgar has received a mixed critical reception. To give a few choice examples, he has been described as "inconsequential," "faultless but without virility," "colourless," and "superficial."[16] To some extent, Edgar's poor fortune in criticism testifies to an impression that he, in some sense, is subordinate to his wider roles: as a naive and chivalric nemesis for his "panther" half-brother, as a mad doppelgänger and eventual successor to the king, or as the Sidneyan guide for his blinded father.[17] On close

[15] Elton describes the superiority of bastards as a "ubiquit[ous]" Renaissance *topos*, providing an extensive footnote on the subject. See Elton, *King Lear and the Gods*, 131-2n.
[16] Jeffrey Kahan, "Introduction: Shakespeare's King Lear," in *King Lear: New Critical Essays*, ed. Jeffrey Kahan (New York: Routledge, 2008), 53; Knight, *The Wheel of Fire*, 177; Kettle, "The Humanity of King Lear," 22; Felperin, "Plays Within Plays," 35.
For overviews of this critical contempt, see Kahan, "Introduction," 53; Palfrey, *Poor Tom*, 16-7.
[17] Knight, *The Wheel of Fire*, 206.

inspection, Edgar's cipher-function for other identities is an impression that is quickly established in the earliest scenes of the play. Crucially, it is Edmund who does much of the work in building this perception for the audience. This perhaps should not surprise us. After all, Edmund's entire identity thus far has hinged on his doctrinal position as a bastard — he is introduced to both Kent and the audience as such by his father within the first few lines of the play: "I have so often blushed to acknowledge him that now I am brazed to it" (1.1.9-10).

As Baker, Pollock, and Maitland observe, in common law bastardy was not a proper legal "condition" as such but merely a fictitious "absence of a legitimate family relation" — they were, in legal terms, a child with no father (*filius nullus*).[18] The result of this legal position is that the bastard, as Baker recounts, has more or less the same civil rights as other free men, "with the single exception that he could not be heir to his parents nor have any collateral heir himself."[19] However, while the English legal doctrine of bastardy was not as harsh as medieval French and German customs — within which "the bastard is reckoned among the 'rightless'"— bastardy nevertheless constituted a serious disability in a society heavily stratified by inheritance.[20] The politico-theological structure of society thereby ties together matrimony and patrimony. The beginning of Edmund's speech begins with this preoccupation with the legal disqualification of bastards from inheriting — as the devotion to "[Nature's] law" and the discarding of the "plague of custom" and the "curiosity of nations" suggest (1.2.3-4). This point returns later in the scene when he declaims, "Let me, if not by birth, have lands by wit" (1.2.181).

[18] Baker, *English Legal History*, 558, 557.
[19] Ibid., 558.
[20] Pollock and Maitland, *The History of English Law*, 2:397.

Yet, this last line opens up another dimension in Edmund's doctrinal identity. Although he repudiates the legal status of bastardy, he has certainly internalised, essentialised, and naturalised some of the cultural associations with bastards.[21] This is expressed both at the beginning and end of the play: "Who in the lusty stealth of nature take / More composition and fierce quality," and "Some good I mean to do, / Despite of mine of nature," (1.2.11-2; 5.3.241-2). In other words, this emphasis on Edmund's bastardy is not limited to how other people speak of him. In Edmund's first direct address to the audience, he too insists that the doctrinal circumstances of his birth is of primary importance to his identity and person. So emphatically is this characteristic iterated and reiterated, that even if Edmund were not to mention Edgar here, an audience could not help but to begin conceiving of Edgar primarily as being what Edmund is not: the true-born child of Gloucester. Edgar is, as Gloucester says in a throw-away remark, his "son, sir, by order of law" (1.1.18). Here, one might also recall the emphasis on Edgar as "*sonne* and heire" of Gloucester on the Quarto title-page.[22] However, all the glibness of Gloucester's account evaporates in Edmund's monologue, and he drives this point of difference home: "Well, then, / *Legitimate* Edgar" (1.2.15-6, my emphasis). His assertion of this identity for Edgar — the legitimate child — is so strong that from this point it supplants Edgar's name entirely:

> Our father's love is to the bastard Edmund
> As to the legitimate. [F]Fine word, 'legitimate'![F]
> Well, my legitimate, if this letter speed
> And my invention thrive, Edmund the base

[21] Elton, *King Lear and the Gods*, 131-2n.
[22] Shakespeare, *True Chronicle Historie*, img. 1/41.

Shall top the legitimate. (1.2.17-21)

This extraordinary insistence on the word "legitimate," five instances in six lines, is challenging: Edmund is clearly fixated on the idea. Much has already been written on Edmund's bastardy, and his psychology, I will not add to it.[23] However, there is also a further, curious consequence to this speech. Through this repetitive, ironic denoting of legitimacy to Edgar, Edmund may merely be reinscribing his brother's legal identity to highlight the legal identity's arbitrary quality. The dramatic consequence, however, is that the individual of Edgar is effectively reduced to his position as "the legitimate," as the heir, before he has even stepped foot on-stage. To Edmund's mind, but often for an audience too, Edgar's primary dramatic significance begins as "the legitimate" heir, who is to be "top[ped]" by Edmund's "baseness" (1.2.21, 10). Indeed, when Edgar eventually enters the scene, as Edmund says, "he comes, like the catastrophe of the old comedy" (1.2.134), suggesting the convenient arrival of a plot-point: a mere obstacle who is to be gulled and duped, so that Edmund may "grow [and] prosper" (1.2.21).

Edmund's cryptic phrase — "the catastrophe of the old comedy" (1.2.134) — merits an exegesis for two reasons. First, it often remains only tentatively glossed. Second, because the phrase itself can provide a convenient key to the rest of the subplot. "[C]atastrophe" is a term derived from Ancient Greek meaning "a downward turn," which perhaps explains its expressly negative connotation today.[24] However, in the early modern period,

[23] For example, Dollimore's powerful reading, reconciling Edmund's desire for property with his broader political scepticism: "[Edmund] in liberating himself from the myth of innate inferiority, does not thereby liberate himself from his society's obsession with power, property and inheritance; if anything that obsession becomes the more urgent." See Dollimore, *Radical Tragedy*, 201.

[24] "Catastrophe, n.," in *OED Online* (Oxford University Press), accessed October 3, 2019, http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/28794.

the positive possibilities of "catastrophe" were much more widely acknowledged. To take a contemporary dramatic example, in *Wily Beguiled*, a comedy dated between 1602-1606, the play concludes happily with the poor scholar and the usurer's daughter being able to marry despite her father's opposition.[25] The epilogue's final two lines are: "And if they [the audience] like our playes *Catastrophe,* / Then let them grace it with a *Plaudite*."[26] As this suggests, the meaning of "catastrophe" is therefore the transformation of a situation, whose particular quality is neither good, nor ill, but rather conclusive.

The 1609 edition of Robert Cawdry's *Table Alphabetical* defined the term in a similar sense: "the end of a thing, overthrow."[27] Richard Dutton annotates Ben Jonson's usage of "catastrophe" in his 1607 *Epistle to the Two Universities* by saying, "dénoument; last act […] Renaissance theory divided plays into four phases: *protasis*, *epitasis*, *catastasis*, and *catastrophe*."[28] This sense of catastrophe as an end is crudely played upon in Shakespeare's *Henry IV*, *Part 2*, when a page threatens: "I'll tickle your catastrophe!" (*2H4*, 5.48-9). As this joke suggests, the conclusive meaning was not confined to the discussion of literary matters. John Denison's 1608 treatise on salvation summarised the

J.R.R. Tolkein subdivided the literary "catastrophe," terming the comic variant a '*eucatastrophe*' (good catastrophe) to explicitly work against the prevailing negative sense. See "Eucatastrophe, n.," in *OED Online* (Oxford University Press), accessed October 3, 2019, http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/272958.

[25] For a fuller discussion of the plot and dating of the play, see Wiggins, *Catalogue*, 4:367-70.

[26] Anon., *A Pleasant Comedie, Called VVily Beguilde*, Early English Books, 1475-1640 / 1016:23 (London: Printed by H[umphrey] L[ownes] for Clement Knight, 1606), img. 39/39.

[27] Robert Cawdry, *A Table Alphabeticall Contayning and Teaching the True Writing and Vnderstanding of Hard Vsuall English Wordes, Borrowed from the Hebrew, Greeke, Latine, or French &c.*, Early English Books, 1475-1640 / 1829:44 (London: Printed by T.S. for Edmund Weauer, 1609), img. 15/75.

[28] Richard Dutton, "Volpone," in *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson*, by Ben Jonson, ed. David Bevington, Martin Butler, and Ian Donaldson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), Epistle.82n.

afterlife thus: "we see a maine difference between the godly and the wicked: in that the day of death is a comical Catastrophe to the one, but a tragicall conclusion to the other."[29]

To return to "the godly and the wicked" in *King Lear*, Edmund's otherwise elliptic phrase becomes a little clearer: "Pat he comes, like the catastrophe of the old comedy" (1.2.134).[30] Edgar takes his first steps onto the stage, just in time for "Edmund the base" to "overthrow"[31] or "top the legitimate" (1.2.20, 21), thereby seeming to secure a "comical Catastrophe" for himself, and "a tragicall conclusion to the other."[32] Yet, if "catastrophe" can be readily explained, "the old comedy" has proven harder to interpret. Foakes annotates it, "Edmund is constructing his own 'comedy'" (1.2.134n). This in itself might be considered fitting since *King Lear* presents an unusually developed double plot for a Shakespearean tragedy — and the double plot has been considered a traditionally comic structure.[33] Elton has suggested that this line also quietly signals the fact that Edmund and Edgar are the two most theatrical characters of the play.[34] Yet, while these readings adroitly explain the theatrical reference, neither reading resolves the addition of the definite article with the adjective "old." Following Stanley Wells, I can offer only two possibilities: "the old comed[ies]" of the English stage tradition or "the [O]ld [C]omedy" of Athens (1.2.134).[35] To my knowledge, it has yet to be observed that these two possibilities could be considered antithetical in their customary conclusions.

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[29] John Denison, *A Three-Fold Resolution, Verie Necessarie to Saluation*, Early English Books, 1475-1640 / 1094:07 (London: Printed by Richard Field for Iohn Norton, 1608), img. 169/297.
[30] Ibid.
[31] Cawdry, *Table Alphabeticall*, img. 15/75.
[32] Denison, *A Three-Fold Resolution*, img. 169/297.
[33] Susan Snyder, *The Comic Matrix of Shakespeare's Tragedies* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), 141, 143; Elton persuasively connects it to a "jest-earnest" polarity, see Elton, *King Lear and the Gods*, 319.
[34] Elton, *King Lear and the Gods*, 87.
[35] Stanley Wells does not express any preference between these two possibilities: "the denouement of a classical, or old-fashioned, comedy." See Shakespeare, *The History of King Lear*, 2.125n.

Contrary to generic convention, the Old Comedies of the Greek tradition — as exemplified by Aristophanes — were believed to exhibit a mixture of "comical" and "tragicall" dimensions in their catastrophes. Renaissance literary theories suggest that comedies ought to end with "reconciliation," rather than retribution.[36] To return to Jonson's 1607 *Epistle*, he defends the bleak "catastrophe" — he uses the exact word — of *Volpone* (1605-6) by stating that his ending was "not without some lines of example, drawn even in the ancients themselves, the goings out of whose comedies are not always joyful, but oft times the bawds, the servants, the rivals, yea, and the masters are mulcted."[37] The verb "mulcted" here, derives from the Latin *mulctāre*, indicating the imposition of a punitive fine, especially an "arbitrary" one — later becoming associated with being "swindle[d]," or being deprived through "deceit or extortion."[38] This double-meaning fits the catastrophe of Jonson's *Volpone* nicely, in which the central characters are undone through a combination of their reciprocal deceits and a set of punitive fines and judgements.[39]

From this perspective, Edmund might view Edgar's timely arrival as the prompt for a conclusive "mulct[ing]," swindling his half-brother and retributively gaining what his innate ability deserves: "Let me, if not by birth, have lands by wit" (1.2.181). His capacity to deceive Edgar thereby becomes an index of his "fierce quality," a proof that he merits

[36] Dutton, "Volpone," Epistle.83n.
[37] Ben Jonson, *Volpone*, ed. Robert N. Watson (London: New Mermaids, 2003), 169.
[38] "Mulct, v.," in *OED Online* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 1, 2b, 3, accessed August 21, 2019, https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/123414; "Mulct, n.," in *OED Online* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 1, accessed August 21, 2019, https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/123413#eid35918081.
[39] Jonson, *Volpone*, 5.12.106-51; for an outstanding essay on this play's ending, see Ian Donaldson, *Jonson's Magic Houses: Essays In Interpretations* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), 106-24.

the lands more than his "credulous father" or "foolish" brother (1.2.12, 177, 179). Thus, in laying the final touches of his plot, Edgar's timely arrival might suggest to Edmund a "catastrophe of the [O]ld [C]omedy" (1.2.134).

The mocking execution of this deceit fits into Edmund's character, which often seems animated by a malicious satirical energy. For example, he derides Gloucester for believing in the prognosticative powers of astrology — "[a]n admirable evasion of whoremaster man, to lay his goatish disposition on the charge of a star" (1.2.126-8) — only to ironically mimic just such a position with Edgar: "O, these eclipses do portend these divisions" (1.2.136-7). This too might fit with the idea of Edmund "constructing his own comedy" in the Old Attic style, which was notorious for its crueller, more personal humour (1.2.134n). Aristophanes's venomous satire of Socrates in *The Clouds*, for instance, was certainly well-known among Elizabethan authors like Stephen Gosson, Robert Allott, and Richard Mulcaster.[40] In fact, when Jonson's plays have been read in relation to "tart Aristophanes," Jonson's more acidic satirical sensibility has been invoked as one his key debts.[41] With that said, if "the catastrophe of the old comedy" is a reference to the cruel comedy that Edmund believes he is bringing to a conclusion, he has evidently

[40] Stephen Gosson, *Playes Confuted in Fiue Actions Prouing That They Are Not to Be Suffred in a Christian Common Weale*, Early English Books, 1475-1640 / 384:21 (London: Imprinted for Thomas Gosson, 1582), img. 33/62; Robert Allott, *VVits Theater of the Little World*, Early English Books, 1475-1640 / 733:02 (London: Printed by I[ames] R[oberts] for N[icholas] L[ing], 1599), img. 131/284; Richard Mulcaster, *Positions Wherin Those Primitiue Circumstances Be Examined, Which Are Necessarie for the Training vp of Children*, Early English Books, 1475-1640 / 426:05 (London: By Thomas Vautrollier for Thomas Chare [i.e. Chard], 1581), img. 57/163.

Paul Cantor uses Aristophanes as a starting-point for his essay. See Cantor, "Cause of Thunder," 231.

[41] Ben Jonson, "To the Memory of My Belovèd, The Author Master William Shakespeare and What He Hath Left Us," in *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson*, ed. David Bevington, Martin Butler, and Ian Donaldson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 5:641; P. H. Davison, "Volpone and the Old Comedy," *Modern Language Quarterly* 24, no. 2 (1963): 151-7; Coburn Gum, *The Aristophanic Comedies of Ben Jonson* (The Hague: Mouton, 1969), 10-1.

misapprehended both the structure and kind of narrative he is participating in (1.2.134).[42] The Gloucester narrative is undoubtedly reminiscent of an old-fashioned comedic structure — indeed, as I have already mentioned, the very presence of the double-plot itself could be considered a generic borrowing[43] — but it is a structure that does not conclude with a cynical mulcting but rather begins with it.

There are numerous English romances, both in prose and for the stage, that begin with the unjust banishment or exile of a nobleman, often an innocent heir.[44] These were evidently popular at the beginning of Shakespeare's career, such that, when speaking of Shakespeare's Jacobean "romance plays," it is perhaps better to speak of them as part of a romantic revival.[45] An example of this banishment-and-return narrative can be found in *Mucedorus*, a 1591 drama about a banished shepherd-prince that was revived by the King's Men in 1610 and became the most popular printed play-text of the Jacobean and Carolingian periods.[46] Even prior to 1590, there are a number of extant examples of dramas that follow this basic premise: *The Country Knight* (1581), *Love and Fortune* (1582), *Alphonsus, King of Aragon* (1587)*, Suleiman and Perseda* (1588), and *The Wounds of Civil War* (1588).[47]

[42] For an analogous reading of Mosca, see Robert N. Watson, "Introduction," in *Volpone*, by Ben Jonson, ed. Robert N. Watson (London: New Mermaids, 2003), xxiv; readers interested in the influence of Old Comedy on Jonson's play, see Davison, "Volpone and the Old Comedy."
[43] Snyder, *Comic Matrix*, 141, 143.
[44] Ladan Niayesh, "Introduction," in *Three Romances of Eastern Conquest* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2018), 6.
[45] Ibid., 3; Mulready, *Romance*, 2.
[46] For the definitive essay on *Mucedorus*'s popularity, see Peter Kirwan, "Mucedorus," in *The Elizabethan Top Ten*, ed. Andy Kesson and Emma Smith (Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2013), 223-34.
[47] I am grateful to Martin Wiggins for providing an extensive list of banishment and exile narratives from his *Catalogue* records.

This specific trope and the broader romantic genre were even more popular in prose, judging by John Lyly's widely-imitated *Euphues: The Anatomy of Wit* (1578).[48] In one of the many spin-offs from Lyly's *Euphues*, John Dickenson's prose romance *Arisbas* (1594) has an early account of a character called Aristophon, who was "falsely accused" and "banished" from Epirus by the "tyrannous doom of an vnnaturall Souereign."[49] His "innocencie oppressed by iniurie could not prevail," and so Aristophon is compelled to bear "with manlike patience the burthen of his exile."[50] However, in an almost certainly coincidental resonance, "Fortune ending frownes with fauours, did thus absolue *the Catastrophe of this roial Comedy*," and "guiltlesse Aristophon [is pardoned] from exile."[51] This is entirely conventional in the old-fashioned romantic structure, as is evident in *Love and Fortune* and *Mucedorus* also, where the unjustly banished noblemen are ultimately restored as part of the climactic comic "reconciliation."[52] The role of Fortune as a superficially improvident providence is a recurring motif in these "*unfortunate*" lives (to redeploy the Quarto's title-page description of Edgar).[53] In short,

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[48] For the popularity of romances in general, see Louise Wilson, "Serial Publication and Romance," in *The Elizabethan Top Ten*, ed. Andy Kesson and Emma Smith (Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2013), 214; for the imitations of Lyly, see Andy Kesson, *John Lyly and Early Modern Authorship* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2014), 75.

[49] John Dickenson, *Arisbas, Euphues amidst His Slumbers: Or Cupids Iourney to Hell*, Early English Books, 1475-1640 / 380:16 (London: By Thomas Creede, for Thomas Woodcocke, 1594), img. 9/34.

Kesson notes that *Arisbas* has closer compositional ties to Sidney than Lyly. See Kesson, *John Lyly*, 75.

[50] Dickenson, *Arisbas*, img. 9/34.

[51] Ibid., img. 34/34, my emphasis.

For those interested in the comparison, there are other resemblances between *Arisbas* and *King Lear*. For example, *Arisbas* begins with the protagonist wandering a storm-wracked wilderness in a frenzy of loss. He is lodged in a shepherd's dwelling — a romance convention that Shakespeare pointedly inverts with the "hard house" that "scant[s] courtesy," forcing Lear and Kent into the hovel (3.2.63, 67). It features a *katabasis* (descent into hell), as discussed in my fourth chapter. Boreas inflicts a retributive storm against the Arcadians. Finally, most significantly, Arisbas's father, the King, "desirous to disburthen himselfe of the heavie charge of gouernment, and inuest his age with ease, surrendred his esate & resigned ye regiment to *Arisbas*" (img. 34/34). With that said, having briefly surveyed *Arisbas*, my impression is that their similarities are more likely derived from their deployment of fairly common generic conceits, rather than any deliberate imitation.

[52] Dutton, "Volpone," Epistle.83n.

[53] For a contrasting view on Fortune and providence, see Elton, *King Lear and the Gods*, 10-1, 16-28.

Edmund might compare his deceit of his family to the conclusion of an ancient comedy — in which "credulous[ness] and "foolish honesty" is "top[ped]" by "fierce quality," (1.2.177, 179, 21, 12) — but this plot actually produces the beginning of another kind of "old comedy," in which "Fortune end[s] frownes with fauours" and the "falsely accused" will be restored (1.2.134).[54]

I will return to this romantic idea of the "old comedy," which I find to be a useful one for explaining Edgar's overall trajectory. But, for now, I want to focus on Edmund's plot against the "legitimate" (1.2.18). Edmund, his "invention thriv[ing]" (1.2.20), makes short work of gulling both his "credulous father" (1.2.177) and his brother "[w]hose nature is so far from doing harms / That he suspects none" (1.2.178-9).[55] In another example of Edmund's dark irony, he begins proving his brother's guilt by first arguing that his brother is innocent: "I dare pawn down my life for him, ^{F}that^{F} he hath writ this to feel my affection to your honour and to no other pretence of danger" (1.2.85-8). By so doing, he further establishes himself in his "credulous father['s]" eyes as a "[l]oyal and natural boy" (1.2.177; 2.1.84). Gloucester himself says, prophetically, "I would unstate myself to be in a due resolution" (1.2.99-100), confessing his need to be, as Foakes annotates it, "properly convinced, either of [Edgar's] guilt […] or perhaps of his innocence" (1.2.99-100n).[56] Turning over the management of this enquiry to Edmund — "frame the business after your own wisdom" (1.2.98-9) — Gloucester leaves the bastard a free hand to *frame* the business, indeed. Inventively manufacturing a case of

[54] Dickenson, *Arisbas*, img. 34/34.
[55] For more on 'invention' as a rhetorical category with a particular forensic history, see Lorna Hutson, *The Invention of Suspicion: Law and Mimesis in Shakespeare and Renaissance Drama* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), esp. 1-2, 7-9.
[56] Elton notes the echo of Lear's abdication. See Elton, *King Lear and the Gods*, 155.

circumstantial evidence, including a self-inflicted wound (2.1.35SD), Edmund finally proceeds to slandering his brother directly (2.1.38-85).

I note all of this because in the course of these two scenes, Edgar's role is exceptionally passive. In the first scene of the two, only counting their direct dialogue, Edgar speaks nine lines to Edmund's thirty-three — a significant difference, even without counting the three soliloquys Edmund has elsewhere in the scene (1.2.1-22, 118-36, 176-82). In their next scene, the discrepancy is even more severe, with Edgar only speaking once: "I am sure on't, not a word" (2.1.28). No wonder then that some have found Edgar rather "colourless" in comparison to Edmund.[57] This lack of speech surely contributes to the audience's early perception of Edgar as nothing more than "the legitimate," a cipher for the political order, who is dislodged for Edmund to "have [his] land" (1.2.16). Edgar, in short, is posed to us by Edmund as an emblem of positive "law," the "plague of custom" and "curiosity of nations" — only then to be toppled by Edmund's manipulation of the law itself (1.2.1, 3, 4). It is therefore not Edgar but Edmund who first presents their conflict in the emblematic, homiletic terms for which Edgar has been so often criticised. Perhaps it speaks to the efficacy of the dramaturgy of Edmund's strategy, as well as the strategy itself, that not only his father, but so many critics have accepted this reductive characterisation of his brother.

[57] Kettle, "The Humanity of King Lear," 22; or "colorless" in Palfrey, *Poor Tom*, 21.

THE ASCETIC OUTLAW

Having established Edmund's role in characterising Edgar as a symbolic cipher for a hierarchical system, it is worth admitting that this perspective is to some extent also encouraged by Edgar's own early response to his degradation. Ousted from his family home, there is much he might say. However, to Edgar's mind too, his vicissitude is understood principally for its legal significance, which is evident in his first soliloquy:

> I heard myself proclaimed,
> And by the happy hollow of a tree
> Escape the hunt. No port is free, no place
> That guard and most unusual vigilance
> Does not attend my taking.
>
> (2.2.172-6)

Fittingly then, just as Edmund uses his first soliloquy to muse on his legal situation, so too does Edgar: "I heard myself proclaimed" (2.2.172) — which he describes later as the "bloody proclamation to escape" (5.3.182). Foakes footnotes the former with "[proclaimed] as an outlaw," which corresponds with Gloucester's later remark, "I had a son, / Now outlawed from my blood" (2.2.172n; 3.4.162-3). The concept of outlawry merits some careful consideration, particularly since it seems that Edmund had this consequence in mind.

As the great historians of English law, F. Pollock and F.W. Maitland record the practice, common law outlawry was brought to bear on those that fled or refused to appear before the courts.[58] Henry de Bracton's name and phrase are consistently cited in the key legal dictionaries of the period: "*extunc enim gerunt caput lupinum*."[59] Much of the Latin that makes up these entries (of which the former is an excerpt) refers to the thirteenth-century legal tracts recorded under the name "Bracton."[60] Bracton's treatise, described as "the crown and flower of English medieval jurisprudence," has long been a key source for the *leges non scripta* (*lit.* unwritten laws) of English common law.[61] The terminology here is of particular interest and it translates as "henceforth they bear the wolf's head."[62] This formulation is not merely poetic ostentation on the part of Bracton, Cowell, and Blount; this was the specific phrasing by which outlawry was declared.

The fugitive's name is proclaimed in court as *caput gerunt lupinum* (*lit.* "bearing the wolf's head"), then with *hutesium et clamore* (*lit.* "hue and cry"), they are pursued in a "hunt," almost exactly as Edgar describes (2.2.174).[63] This tradition is presumably what Wiggins has in mind when he summarises Edgar's flight as: "[Edmund] induces Edgar to flee as if he were guilty. Edgar evades the hue and cry."[64] By "induc[ing]" Edgar's flight — "Fly, brother, ^{Q}fly!^{Q}" (2.1.33) — Edmund has secured the "legitimate['s]" outlawry

[58] Pollock and Maitland, *The History of English Law*, 1:449; for a more recent account of medieval outlawry, see Stewart, "Outlawry as an Instrument."
[59] John Cowell, ed., "Outlawry (Utlagaria)," in *The Interpreter*, Early English Books, 1475-1640 / 723:01 (Cambridge: John Legate, 1607); Cowell, "Vtlawrie (Vtlagaria, Alias Vtlagatio)"; Thomas Blount, ed., "Utlary or Utlawry," in *Nomo-Lexikon*, Early English Books, 1641-1700 / 168:09 (In the Savoy: Thomas Newcomb, for John Martin and Henry Herringman, 1670).
[60] There are authorial questions. See Frederick Bernays Wiener, "Did Bracton Write Bracton?," *American Bar Association Journal* 64, no. 1 (1978): 72-75.
[61] Pollock and Maitland, *The History of English Law*, 1:206.
[62] Bracton, *Laws and Customs*, 2:354.
[63] Pollock and Maitland, *The History of English Law*, 2:578.
[64] Wiggins, *Catalogue*, 5:253.

(1.2.18). The consequences of this pertain directly to Edmund's attack on patrimony. Pollock and Maitland explain: "if a man accused of felony flies, he can be outlawed," and "the outlaw forfeits all, life and limb, lands and goods."[65] A mere fifty lines after Edgar's flight, Gloucester confirms that Edmund will take his brother's place as heir to Gloucester: "I'll work the means to make thee capable" (2.1.84-5). Outlawry is therefore an essential tool by which Edmund's chiasmatic catastrophe is achieved: the legitimate has become illegitimate and the illegitimate has become legitimate. However, the illegitimacy that Edgar faces now is entirely different from that of bastardy. He is not simply disqualified from inheritance but rather from all protections and rights of law.

To explain the totality of this exclusion, Pollock and Maitland return to the force of *caput gerunt lupinum*, describing the plight of the outlaw as: "[...] outside [the law's] sphere; he was outlaw [...] It is the right and duty of every man to pursue him [...] to hunt him down like a wild beast and slay him; for a wild beast he is; not merely is he [*Friedlos*], he is a wolf [...] [and in later centuries] this old state of things was not forgotten."[66] This animalising rhetoric is important but, in claiming the outlaw "is a wolf," Pollock and Maitland go too far. To clarify this, Giorgio Agamben provides a more sophisticated reading of this legal expression.

In so far as the formulation "*extunc enim gerunt caput lupinum*" has the force of juridical decree here, Agamben is in agreement with Pollock and Maitland.[67] However, what

[65] Pollock and Maitland, *The History of English Law*, 2:466, 461.
[66] Ibid., 2:449; I believe Pollock and Maitland mistranslate "Friedlos" by rendering it 'friendless'. Agamben's argument that "Friedlos" actually means 'without peace' seems more persuasive. See Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, 104.
[67] Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, 105.

Agamben isolates in this expression is crucial: "That such a man is defined as a wolf-man and not simply as a wolf [...] is decisive."[68] Thus, to say the outlaw "is a wolf" is inaccurate — rather, the outlaw is a 'wolfshead.'[69] The wolfshead is therefore "not a piece of animal nature without any relation to law and the city [...] the life of the [outlaw ...] is precisely *neither man nor beast*."[70] As Agamben also points out, this English formulation finds its analogues in Salic and Ripuarian law: the proclamation being "*wargus sic, hoc est expulsus*" (The outlaw is that which has been expelled).[71] Here the word for outlaw "*wargus*" shares its etymology with "*vargr*" (wolf), thereby linked to the medieval Latin "*garulphus*" and French "*loup-garou*" (werewolf) also.[72] This legal fiction of the outlaw being simultaneously neither man nor animal — a monstrous notion underpinning other romantic stock characters, like the *homo silvestris* and *cynocephali* — becomes crucial to Agamben's understanding of the relation between the human creature and law.[73]

This placing of life beyond the protections and rights of law is the central object of study in Agamben's *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (1995), the first volume in his *Homo Sacer* series. In this first volume, which is probably Agamben's most famous,

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[68] Ibid.
[69] Pollock and Maitland, *The History of English Law*, 1:449.
[70] Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, 105.
This woolly passage has caused endless difficulties with critics, who often take this to mean — against the grain of the rest of the book — that Agamben himself believes that "animal nature is without any relation to law and the city." Instead, Agamben is describing how, even within the medieval cultural frame, the "wolfshead" is not presented as being utterly detached from law but rather as a threshold between the city and the wilderness, between law and nature. This offers a clue to the odd, juridically marginal position of the outlaw. For an example of how this has caused difficulty even among the most sophisticated critics, see Laurie Shannon, *The Accommodated Animal: Cosmopolity in Shakespearean Locales* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013), 34-5.
[71] Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, 105, my translation.
[72] Ibid., 105.
[73] De la Durantaye, *Giorgio Agamben*, 202; for more imaginary figures of the animal-human threshold, see Karl Steele, "Centaurs, Satyrs, and Cynocephali: Medieval Scholarly Teratology and the Question of the Human," in *The Ashgate Research Companion to Monsters and the Monstrous*, ed. Asa Simon Mittman and Peter J. Dendle (Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2013), 257-74.

he explores English outlawry — and its lupine nomenclature — as one example within a broader politico-juridical paradigm that he terms "bare life."[74] In the context of a project that engages with the human creature and the law, the question of how certain forms of life or living are excluded from the sphere of law becomes paramount. "Bare life" is a term that Agamben develops to denote those political claims or actions in which individual lives or forms of life are somehow placed outside the law. Examples of this paradigm might occur on the conceptual level — as in the Greek distinction of *zoē* and *bios*, which I will discuss below — but Agamben also attends to examples which are put into practice and actualised through legal and political apparatuses. (Agamben does not himself emphasise any distinction between the conceptual and the actualised forms of bare life, perhaps because they often overlap, but I find it to be a helpful distinction.) By way of demonstration, one might say that the semi-animalising language of the "wolfshead" is a conceptual example of bare life, while the legal event of outlawry actualises it.

Returning to the specific mechanics of English outlawry, the demands that outlawry places on the still lawful population are not solely prohibitive (or "negative," in the parlance of jurisprudence). This is to say, there is not only a negative injunction forbidding them from assisting the outlaw: "He that conceals him, death!" exclaims Gloucester (2.1.63). More interesting still is the proclamation's explicitly positive universal injunction, which obligates any and every subject of the law to assist in the apprehension and/or killing of the outlaw. Edgar describes how in every port (meaning both town gate and seaport) and every place the people will with "most unusual vigilance

[74] Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, 104-8.

[...] attend [his] taking" (2.2.174-6, 174n) — Gloucester also described this exact effect earlier: "All ports I'll bar, the villain shall not scape" (2.1.80). Foakes here glosses Edgar's phrase, "attend my taking" (2.2.176), with the perhaps optimistic "look out for me to be arrested" (2.2.176n). Ultimately, the play does not provide a concrete answer on what will happen to Edgar if he is caught by the people — but it certainly permits the possibility that this "taking" may refer to the sorts of extrajudicial killing that Bracton describes: "without judicial inquiry."[75] Cornwall sums up the text's ambiguity perfectly when he ominously remarks, "If he be taken, he shall never more / Be feared of doing harm" (2.1.111-2).

"The bloody proclamation to escape" is one then that renders its target precariously 'outside' the law (5.3.182). Edgar has "heard [his name] proclaimed," he has (to borrow Pollock and Maitland's phrase) "forfeited life and member and all he had," and he is being hunted like an animal (2.2.172).[76] This position of utter precarity certainly resembles the paradigm of bare life that Agamben proposes. Yet, despite appearing to be outside the law it is important to remember that this is — as Agamben insistently reminds us — still a relation *with* the law. This exclusion is, in spite of appearances, an inclusion: it is, to borrow Agamben's insistent phrase, "an inclusive exclusion."[77] This point may seem at first glance to be superfluous, or merely a paradox. But it is all too easy to be seduced by the implicit logic of a term like 'outlaw' — which implies an individual who is 'without law' or is in some way 'beyond the law' when it is the law itself that has imposed this

[75] Bracton, *Laws and Customs*, 2:354.
[76] Pollock and Maitland, *The History of English Law*, 2:462.
[77] Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, 7, 8, 11, 21, 27, 85.

position upon the individual. The ease with which this conceptual slippage can occur is evident in some of the criticism surrounding *King Lear*.

One of the more inventive monographs focusing on *King Lear* in recent years — Simon Palfrey's *Poor Tom* (2014) — exhibits precisely this error. Palfrey remarks about Tom that "[he is] not reducible to 'bare life,' if we mean by that some condition before or without political orders, common to all living beings."[78] In this, Palfrey also writes, "Tom either eludes or preempts the genealogy proposed by Agamben."[79] But Palfrey has here faltered at the exact point which Agamben warns the reader of. From Agamben's perspective, individuals are not at all "reducible [… to] some condition before or without political orders."[80] Rather, he argues, certain juridico-political structures operate (in part *through and with this claim*) to effect the *apparent* exclusion or suspension of individuals from what Palfrey has here termed "political orders."[81] But as Agamben repeats insistently, they are still "included [through] exclusion," which is to say that if the law places an individual beyond its putative limits, there is still a relation.[82] Therefore, in Agamben's model, the condition of bare life is absolutely not a life "before or without political orders" but quite the opposite — bare life is only possible in the context of a juridico-political order that produces it.

In fairness to Palfrey, this error seems to be a common one, which points to the difficulty of Agamben's work at times. Elizabeth D. Gruber makes more or less the same mistake

[78] Palfrey, *Poor Tom*, 107.
[79] Ibid.
[80] Ibid.
[81] Ibid.
[82] Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, 17-19.

in an otherwise intriguing article on nature in *King Lear* and *Arden of Faversham*. She cites the distinction that opens Agamben's *Homo Sacer* project: "The Greeks had no single term to express what we mean by the word 'life'," but Gruber then notes "'*Zoe* [*sic*]' pertains to 'bare life,' as it invokes 'the simple fact of living common to all […] beings,' while '*bios*' refers to 'the form or way of living proper to the individual or group'."[83] Yet, in Agamben, while *zoē* does *pertain* to bare life, it is not interchangeable with it. *Zoē* may mean "the simple fact of living" in Ancient Greek[84] — this is almost certainly what Palfrey has in mind when he refers to life "before or without political orders"[85] — but it is precisely Agamben's point that what appears as a "simple fact" is instead a complex political and cultural presupposition.

With that said, James Gordon Findlayson has brought a convincing case refuting Agamben's Greek in this distinction between *zoē* and *bios*.[86] However, without advocating for his defective Greek, it is worth noting that Agamben's interest in the term *zoē* is because he believes (erroneously) that it makes a conceptual claim for a form of life "before or without political orders," not unlike the way *caput gerunt lupinum* makes a juridical claim for a monstrous life beyond the law. However, that does not entail that Agamben agrees that such a form of life is valid. Agamben deploys the term "bare life" (*nuda vita*) precisely to gesture towards the essentially political quality of these sorts of

[83] Gruber, "Nature on the Verge," 99; see also Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, 1.
[84] Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, 1; Agamben's Greek has been robustly criticised in this instance, see James Gordon Finlayson, "'Bare Life' and Politics in Agamben's Reading of Aristotle," *The Review of Politics* 72, no. 1 (2010): 97-126.
[85] Palfrey, *Poor Tom*, 107.
[86] Finlayson, "'Bare Life' and Politics in Agamben's Reading of Aristotle." With due respect to Finlayson's expert reading of Aristotle, I am unconvinced by his overall critique of Agamben's project, which runs aground at key points on Agamben's admittedly highly abstract prose. For example, Finlayson seems to struggle with the core premise of the book in a footnote, 105n.

concepts.[87] His position is that the exclusion of a life from the political order, even on the conceptual level, is a necessarily political act. *Zoē*, outlawry, and so forth, all represent particular iterations of a paradigm of political exclusion. In approaching Agamben's work, one must be very careful to differentiate between the concepts he is investigating and the terms which he employs to describe and analyse them. To borrow an influential and more perspicuous example, one might take Foucault's reading of factories, schools, and prisons as disciplinary institutions — but in spite of their commonalities, these different iterations are not interchangeable with one another, nor should their particularities be entirely collapsed by the broader paradigm.[88] The confusion here is in part solicited by Agamben's work, which has been understandably criticised for this tendency toward highly formalised, paradigmatic analyses.[89]

Edgar's response to this position of bare life, his exclusion from the juridical order, is one that is quite characteristic of Renaissance English drama: he adopts a disguise. The play itself has one precedent of this already, namely the banished Kent, who has "razed [his] likeness" in an earlier scene (1.4.4). In the wider corpus of drama of this period, there are several examples of this convention, including a number of the romance comedies I previously cited: *Love and Fortune* (1584), *Alphonsus, King of Aragon* (1587), and *Mucedorus* (1591). Each of these old comedies feature protagonists who have been unjustly outlawed or banished: Bomelio and Hermione in *Love and Fortune*, Carinus and

[87] *Nude life* might be the better sense, since "nudity" suggests an absence of clothes. Compare with Giorgio Agamben, *Nudities*, trans. David Kishik and Stefan Pedatella (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011), esp. 50-90.
[88] Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage Books, 1995), 135-94.
[89] For an example of such criticism, see Cary Wolfe, *Before the Law: Humans and Other Animals in a Biopolitical Frame* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012), 24, 33; for Agamben's own account of his method, see Giorgio Agamben, *The Signature of All Things*, trans. Luca di Santo and Kevin Attell (New York: Zone Books, 2009).

Alphonsus in *Alphonsus*, and the titular hero of *Mucedorus*. Furthermore, all of these protagonists adopt disguises or forms of life that are isolated and impoverished — often explicitly evoking the image of the hermit.[90]

Shakespeare plays with this trope throughout his career. Bolingbroke is an especially interesting example of someone who deploys an ascetic identity to great political effect: "I stole all courtesy from heaven, / And dress'd myself in such humility / That I did pluck allegiance from men's hearts" (*1H4*, 3.2.50-2). In *King Lear*, however, Shakespeare departs from the specific tradition of the hermit, in favour of that of the mad beggar — a creative decision that reaps dramatic benefits as a counter-point to the genuine madness of Lear. Yet the shared ascetic connotations between the hermit and the beggar are nevertheless played upon in Edgar's description of his initial disguise, which he defines by its extreme destitution. As he states it, he "take[s] the basest and most poorest shape" (2.2.178) — this return to "base[ness]" thereby reiterates the chiasmatic "top[ping]" that Edmund "the base" initiated the sub-plot with (1.2.20-1). Furthermore, the emphatic superlatives — "basest," "most poorest" — signal the extremity of this position, the "spirit of *utter* poverty" that Ewan Fernie describes.[91] This descriptive stress on poverty continues throughout the soliloquy:

> [I] am bethought

[90] "Enter Bomelio solus like an Hermite," in Anon., *The Rare Triumphs of Love and Fortune*, ed. W.W. Greg (Oxford: Malone Society, 1930), TLN 571; "thy fathers Cell," and "Carinus in this sillie groue / Will spend his daies with praiers and horizons [orisons]," in Greene, *Alphonsus*, TLN 173, 177-178; Anon., "Mucedorus," in *William Shakespeare and Others: Collaborative Plays*, ed. Jonathan Bate et al. (Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 11.23.

[91] Ewan Fernie, "Introduction: Shakespeare, Spirituality and Contemporary Criticism," in *Spiritual Shakespeares*, ed. Ewan Fernie (Abingdon: Routledge, 2005), 17, my emphasis.

To take the basest and most poorest shape
That ever penury in contempt of man
Brought near to beast. My face I'll grime with filth,
Blanket my loins, elf all my hair in knots
And with presented nakedness outface
The winds and persecutions of the sky.

(2.2.177-83)

In light of the legal formulation of outlawry — *caput gerunt lupinum* — and the observation that animalising rhetoric can routinely be found in articulations of bare life, Edgar's description of his disguise in terms of "man / brought near to beast" is tempting (2.2.179-80). But the most obvious interpretation here is almost certainly to be resisted. Edgar is not describing himself, nor is he describing an individual who has been dehumanised and excluded *via* a legal apparatus. Rather, he is building an image of a person that "*penury* in contempt of man / Brought *near* to beast" (2.2.179-80, my emphases). In contrast to Lear's later observation of Poor Tom — "Thou art the thing itself," (3.4.104) — Edgar presumes that poverty limits the expression of humanity in its most dignified sense. In this, Edgar's line fits with Lear's early opinion that poverty renders "[m]an's life cheap as beast's" (2.2.457) — something the king's philosophical transformation eventually leads him to refute.

In other words, Edgar posits that poverty limits human dignity and, in this sense only, the impoverished are brought "near to beast" (2.2.180). Nevertheless, even this undignified position appears superior to Edgar's juridically excluded position: the "contempt" of

"penury" is preferable to "the hunt" the wolfshead must face (2.2.179, 173). In short, Edgar would rather be dehumanised within the juridico-political hierarchy than outside it: "Poor Tom, / That's something yet: Edgar I nothing am" (2.2.191-2). At least the impoverished beggar, though treated like an animal, exists within the protection of the law — even an iniquitous law, as the play suggests it may be: "Through tattered clothes ^Qsmall^Q vices do appear; / Robes and furred gowns hide all" (4.6.160-1).[92] Therefore, although the animalising rhetoric that often accrues around bare life is significant, the subject's relation to law presents the crucial criteria. It is precisely such a distinction that underpins Edgar's rationale for adopting his impoverished disguise.

However, when Fernie remarks that Edgar describes beggary as "utter poverty," an issue of historicity must be addressed. Notably, in monastic theology, the most "absolute poverty" would not denote merely an absence of property, but rather the absence of the legal right to property itself. Before explaining this jurisprudential oddity, I should note how this context pertains to the romance tradition that anticipated *King Lear* generally and the Edgar subplot in particular. The early stage romances routinely depended on some correspondences between the outlaw and the ascetic: Bomelio and Alphonsus both begin *Love and Fortune* and *Alphonsus* respectively as banished men who have lived hermitic existences in the wilderness for some time, rather than simply moving to a new urban jurisdiction.[93] The banished Mucedorus also adopts a disguise as a hermit, which becomes subject to a sequence of puns by the play's clown which presuppose that the audience

[92] Foakes prefers the Folio's "*Through tattered clothes* great *vices* […]."
[93] Anon., *The Rare Triumphs of Love and Fortune*, TLN 571; Greene, *Alphonsus*, TLN 173, 177-8.
Hermitage was just one genera of Christian asceticism, alongside monasticism — the key difference between the monk and the hermit residing in whether one subsists within or without a cenobitic community.

understands this ascetic convention — Mouse remarks upon seeing the disguised prince, "I never saw such a big emmet [ant] before!"[94] Some of the ascetic connotations of Edgar's disguise are emphasised when he describes how he'll "[s]trike in [his] numbed and *mortified* bare arms, / Pins, wooden pricks, nails, sprigs of rosemary" (2.2.186-7, my emphasis).[95] Intriguingly, Holinshed's account of King Edgar repeatedly emphasises that, in addition to the "princely qualities as appeared in him," he was "a great fauorer of Monks," and that "there passed no one yeare of his raigne, wherein he founded not one Abbay or other."[96] Both these internal and external ascetic resonances could then add additional weight to Edgar's description of his disguise as a "habit" (5.3.187).

On a superficial level, the outlaw and the Christian ascetic coincide in so far as they are depicted as living outside of conventional society. However, there are deeper reasons for the cultural association between these two otherwise contrasting figures. Importantly, the externality of the outlaw and the ascetic were doctrinally conceptualised in similar terms, which, given this project's self-defined interest in doctrinal identity, is of evident concern. In fact, despite the obvious communitarian component of monasticism, Franciscan cenoby defined itself as a form of life that existed outside of law. Given the concentration of theological intellects that arose in such communities, it is perhaps unsurprising that monastic thought exhibits some of the most serious attempts to think through such extraneousness in juridical terms.

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[94] Anon., "Mucedorus," 11.23.
[95] For an intriguing reading of mortification (in its widest sense) in relation to ideas of sensation and numbness the play, see Giulio J. Pertile, "King Lear and the Uses of Mortification," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 67, no. 3 (2016): 319-43.
[96] Holinshed, *Chronicles*, img. 253, 252, 254/1493.

As Agamben reconstructs in *The Highest Poverty*, one of his less recognised works, Franciscan monasticism exhibits precisely such a jurisprudence of life beyond or without law.[97] Indeed, it was this self-deprivation of law itself which the friars and the Church termed the "*altissima paupertas*" (the highest poverty).[98] The superlatives at stake in this monastic terminology are suggestively opposed from those that characterise Edgar's description above: "basest," "most poorest" (2.2.178). Where Edgar initially sees deep degradation in poverty, the Greyfriars pose their intense disavowal as quasi-divine. (Shakespeare depicted Franciscan cenobites in *Measure for Measure* in 1603 — superficially in the Duke's disguise, quite pointedly in Isabella's position as novice of the Franciscan "votarists of St Clare" (*MM*, 1.4.5).)[99] This absolute poverty posed by the Franciscans, including the abnegation of law itself, might therefore be read as a jurisprudential countertype to Edgar's position of outlawry.

The correlations of outlawry and monasticism find a partial juridical convergence in the legal fiction of "civil death," whose effect is summarised by *Black's* as: "the loss of rights — such as the rights to vote, make contracts, inherit, and sue — by a person who has been outlawed […] or who is considered to have left the temporal world for the spiritual by entering a monastery."[100] As Pollock and Maitland describe the monastic element: "A monk or nun can not [*sic*] acquire or have any proprietary rights. When a man becomes

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[97] Agamben, *The Highest Poverty*, 108-43.

Intriguingly, the Franciscans contended that their rigorously codified form of life was not legal or penal. Monastic punishments were not simply retributions for infringements, for falling short of monastic behaviour. Rather such corrections were articulated as the identity of monastic life in and of itself. At the level of precept: the life is the rule, the rule is the life. This deliberate displacement of rule from the level of praxis to the level of selfhood, or even to the level of being, is critical for Agamben.

[98] Agamben, *The Highest Poverty*, 122.

[99] For an adroit reading of Franciscan poverty in Measure for Measure, see Natasha Korda, *Shakespeare's Domestic Economies: Gender and Property in Early Modern England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002), 165-76.

[100] Garner, "Death"; Garner, "De Catallis Felonum."

'professed in religion,' his heir at once inherits from him any land he has, and, if he has made a will, it takes effect at once as though he were naturally dead."[101] The loss also is one of *persona standi in judicio*, the personal standing in judgement, the right to appear in court or vindicate a legal right.[102] With that said, the effects clearly differed: the monk's civil death obviously did not expose them to the kind of jeopardy that the outlaw faced. Putting the point firmly, Edgar's conception of his penury, superlative only in its "base[ness]," does not indicate an "absolute" poverty in this Franciscan sense. Instead, it is precisely that he sees "basest" poverty within the bounds of the law to be a preferable position than to remain excluded from it (2.2.178).

Another interpretation of "basest" poverty presents itself though (2.2.178). In a political discourse by Innocent Gentillet, translated by Simon Patrick in 1602, Gentillet outlines the difference between the Greyfriars' "superlative" "High Povertie," the "Meane Povertie" of Dominicans and Jacobins, and the "Base Povertie" of Augustines.[103] As I have already indicated, the Franciscan "high and soueraign poverty," whose very phrasing evokes the classical philosophical inheritance of Christian monasticism, disavows not only ownership of "house, nor possession, […] nor moveables, nor apparrell" but even the "rights" to such possessions.[104] It is not only a disavowal of possessions, but a disavowal of the possibility of possession as such. By contrast, the "Mean Povertie" of Dominicans and Jacobins signifies that they may own "nothing in

[101] Pollock and Maitland, *The History of English Law*, 1:434.
[102] Bryan A. Garner, ed., "Persona Standi in Judicio," in *Black's Law Dictionary* (St. Paul, MN: Thomson Reuters, 2009), 1260.
[103] Innocent Gentillet, *A Discourse Vpon the Meanes of Vvel Governing and Maintaining in Good Peace, a Kingdome, or Other Principalitie*, trans. Simon Patrick, Early English Books, 1475-1640 / 888:02 (London: Printed by Adam Islip, 1602), img. 174/196.
[104] Ibid.; Francis Gerald Downing, *Cynics and Christian Origins* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1992); for Cynicism as a high, even sovereign office, see Epictetus, *Discourses, Fragments, Handbook*, 181-93.

particular or proper, but somethings in common."[105] The Augustines' poverty is termed "[b]ase" as they may own things "proper, common, and in particular, whatsoever is justly necessary."[106] Legally-speaking then, Gentillet's "[b]ase" poverty is the kind that all beggars experience, merely the relative lack of possessions — and, in the hierarchy of Christian ascetic poverties, such poverty is both the "basest" and, in a serious spiritual sense, the "most poorest" (2.2.178).[107]

To summarise, the jurisprudence of Christian asceticism presents a crucial point of comparison to the well-studied figures of the sovereign and the outlaw. However, like the person of the king, the Franciscan monk presents a doctrinally-articulated form of bare life that was not abject, but perversely dignified in their exclusion from the ordinary bounds of law.[108] On the other hand, this monastic identity was explicitly articulated as antithetical to office. According to a monastic precept set out in the sixth-century *Regula Magistri*, while the bad priest was still a priest, "an unworthy monk is simply not a monk."[109] Furthermore, in all of this I have indicated some of the deeper doctrinal resonances that underpin the wide-spread romance triad of extraordinary identities (Lat. *extrā ordinem*, *lit.* outside order): the outlaw, the ascetic, and the sovereign.

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[105] Gentillet, *Governing and Maintaining*, img. 174/196.
[106] Ibid.
[107] The Franciscans articulated this poverty through animalising rhetoric, importantly without any insinuation of that indicating their manner of living was undignified. See Agamben, *The Highest Poverty*, 110-11.
[108] One implicit issue here is whether bare life can be chosen or if it must be imposed. But see the discussion of *devotio* in Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, 96-9.
[109] Agamben, *The Highest Poverty*, 84.
That this precept did not foreclose the infamy of monasteries across Europe needs little recapitulation. To give but one famous example, Desiderius Erasmus, who had been himself ordained as a canon regular, writes in a dialogue: "What you doe in your dennes, and how you vse holie virgins, and nunnes, the worlde knoweth well enough. As for the houses of rich men that you haunt so much, how little the better or the honester they are for your comming thither, is sufficiently knowne to all men, euen to the poreblinde and barbers." See Desiderius Erasmus, *Seven Dialogues Both Pithie and Profitable*, trans. William Burton, Early English Books, 1475-1640 / 833:07 (London: Printed [by Valentine Simmes] for Nicholas Ling, 1606), img. 79/86.

Despite these doctrinal affinities that I have begun to unpack, romantic dramas still reflect the substantive differences — and *King Lear* is no exception. As I have already suggested, the position of the outlaw and the position of the ascetic are not interchangeable. Edgar is, after all, adopting his impoverished disguise in order to avoid attention: "t'assume a semblance / That very dogs disdained" (5.3.186-7). The annals of romance drama are similarly littered with outlaws whose hermit disguise foils their identification. I have noted that in *Mucedorus*, for example, the titular character disguises himself as a hermit, where the play's clown, insists on mistaking him for an "emmet" (an ant).[110] Yet, the clown is only looking for him as part of the *hutesium et clamor* associated with outlawry — "Here's a stir indeed! Here came hue after the crier"[111] — and the disguise is successful. What this disguise-function proves, however, is that while the two positions do share a distinctive extraneousness (an exclusion, which is nevertheless an inclusion), there remains an absolutely critical difference between the ascetic and the outlaw. This difference occurs with regards to the actual jeopardy of the life itself. For all the superlatives, despite being the "basest" and "most poorest," despite the drastic poverty of Poor Tom, Tom's situation cannot approach the comprehensive juridical extirpation of legally-sanctioned life, the bare life, that outlawry represents. The play's attentiveness to this difference is both the crux and the climax of Edgar's soliloquy: "Poor Tom / That's something yet: Edgar I nothing am" (2.2.191-2).

The transformation then is from the absolute limit of the legal sphere (bearing in mind Agamben's "inclusive exclusion"), to the lowest possible position within a legally-

[110] Anon., "Mucedorus," 11.23.
[111] Ibid., 9.71-2.

sanctioned hierarchy, a hierarchy whose structure is heavily defined by property relations.[112] Edgar's poetic language suggests both the symbolic proximity and the incommensurable distance between the position of outlaw and beggar. This distance is especially signalled by his description of the visual and material components of the disguise, a description which evokes the processes of the coronation. For example, the face "grime[d] with filth" is reminiscent of anointment. In fact, the *OED* notes precisely that to "anoint" is an obsolete sense of the verb "grime."[113] Furthermore, the "blanket[ed] […] loins" resembles a profane corruption of the investiture, where the sovereign is enrobed in the *colobium*, and other symbols of power. [114] And finally, when Edgar "elf[s] all [his] hair in knots," he presents a striking image of a crowning. Even the order in which Edgar articulates these images — anointment, investment, crowning — mirrors the coronation process that James I underwent roughly two years earlier.[115] And, as if to invite this comparison still further, Edgar describes how he "with presented nakedness [will] outface / The winds and persecutions of the sky" (2.2.182-3) — an impending piece of stage business for the play's king himself.

This profane simulation of coronation presages Albany's offer of the throne to Edgar at the conclusion of the play. In the process of considering the pragmatics of the disguise, it

[112] Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, 21.

[113] "Grime, v.," in *OED Online* (Oxford University Press), b, accessed October 2, 2019, http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/81491.

Harnestt's *Declaration*, an identified source for Edgar's later scenes, resounds with both figurative and literal references to anointment, both for priests and sovereigns, and coronations. See Samuel Harsnett, *A Declaration of Egregious Popish Impostures*, Early English Books, 1475-1640 / 889:05 (London: Printed by Iames Roberts, 1603), img. 21, 23, 45, 48, 52-53, 56, 81, 85/148.

[114] The formula for English coronations is set out in an illuminated manuscript entitled *Liber Regalis*, held in Westminster Abbey. Printed versions were also disseminated. For further detail on this procedure, see Anon., *A Collection out of the Book Called Liber Regalis, Remaining in the Treasury of the Church of Westminster*, Thomason Tracts / 161:E.1081[3] (London: Printed by R.D. for Charls Adams, 1661). For a detailed analysis of James I's coronation in particular, see Sybil M. Jack, "'A Pattern for a King's Inauguration': The Coronation of James I in England," *Parergon* 21, no. 2 (2004): 87-8.

[115] Ibid.

is intriguing that a subtle analogy with a juridico-theological ritual, like the coronation, admits itself. In chivalric romances, ascetic disguises often pave the way toward future sovereignty. As Roy Strong describes it, the coronation is a form of "self-obliteration,"[116] a point mirrored by Edgar's "I nothing am" (2.2.192). The strange gulf between his legally-negated self and even those "basest [...] most poorest shape[s]" appears to be analogous to that faced by the subject who becomes sovereign (2.2.178). What is crucial is that this is not simply characterised as mere dissembling. There is a strangely paltry, bare, and yet miraculous shift here, as his own phrasing of transforming "nothing" to "something" implies (2.2.192) — a statement that quietly sets itself against the grain of the pagan *ex nihilo nihil fit* ("nothing can be made of nothing") that famously repeats in the play (1.4.130; 1.1.90).[117] And, indeed, that the register of Edgar's thinking here maintains a juridical inflection is suggested by the very next lines, where he remarks that "[t]he country gives me *proof and precedent* / Of Bedlam beggars" (2.2.184-5, my emphasis).

Yet, as this speech moves on to demonstrate, it is the poverty of this coronation that is surely the most significant aspect. Here, the conspicuous lack of glory counterpoints the pomp and ceremony of the earlier scenes: the rich spectacle of Lear's descent is accordingly mirrored by the "horrible object" of Edgar's 'ascent' (2.2.188). This suggests a politically significant contrast. Lear dispenses with his property in order to better avoid humility: he wishes to discard with his belongings the difficulties of governance and ownership in order that he might "*unburdened* crawl toward death" (1.1.40, F, my

[116] Roy Strong, *Coronation*, London: Harper Perennial, 2005, 4.
[117] For the seminal reading of *ex nihilo* creation and King Lear, see Elton, *King Lear and the Gods*, 54-55, 181-8.

emphasis). Edgar, by contrast, has had his rights and property taken away but then implies the figure of an ascetic king — a potentially desirable political alternative, less susceptible to spectacle and to flattery. Yet, I want to defer further discussion of Edgar's romantic trajectory toward kingship. Having emphasised the fact that Poor Tom has his precedents in the romantic disguise of the wilderness-dwelling hermit — as Sidney's *Arcadia* also affirms[118] — and that Poor Tom is the first in a sequence of new identities, I must now spend some time on Shakespeare's key innovation: his madness.

Tom's maddened speeches — like Lear's — seem to allude to matters elsewhere in the play. Howard Felperin quite elegantly argues that Tom's mock-madness, though "stagey and conventional" in its preoccupation with "'sin' and 'foul fiends'," also functions as a "shadow or parody of 'the thing itself'" in Lear.[119] He writes: "[Tom] has the status of a sign emptied of its significance and divorced from the realities of nakedness and madness to which it refers, the absent referent in both cases being supplied by Lear."[120] Yet, perhaps improperly, Tom seems more naked, more mad than Lear — and, indeed, so Lear and Gloucester seem to find him: "Here's three on's us are sophisticated; thou art the thing itself," "What, hath your grace no better company?" (3.4.103-4, 138). There is something genuinely abject in Tom, which overpowers our knowledge of it being a disguise — if anything, he feels too real. Surprisingly, Felperin also writes that "madness is thus the opposite pole to morality," despite the content of both Tom and Lear's mad ramblings being intensely preoccupied by morality: "wine loved I deeply, dice dearly; and in women, out-paramoured the Turk," "[Q]here's another whose warped looks proclaim

[118] Bullough, *Sources*, 7:402-6.
[119] Felperin, "Plays Within Plays," 41.
[120] Ibid.

/ What store her heart is made of[Q]" (3.4.88-90; 3.6.52-3).[121] Like Lear, Tom's mad utterances are not at all solipsistic, or even truly anarchic, but, in a proto-psychoanalytic way, his seemingly elliptic phrases consistently develop the play's submerged concerns with rank, law, and ethics.

Where Tom's remarks stand apart from Lear's is in their density and, at times, for their almost oracular force — his imagery often suggests poetic connections beyond Edgar's knowledge. In one of Tom's earliest speeches, he describes how "the foul fiend" has "laid knives under his pillow […] set ratsbane by his porridge, made him proud of heart […] to course his own shadow for a traitor" (3.4.50-6). Elton reads the final example — "course his own shadow for a traitor" (3.4.56) — as self-referential.[122] However, the preceding descriptions also heighten and stylise Edgar's own situation: a domestic threat (metaphorically expressed as "knives under his pillow […] ratsbane by his porridge"), culminating in him being "course[d]" — meaning hunted — "for a traitor" (3.4.56). Yet, they also presage the very next scene: Gloucester's betrayal to Cornwall by Edmund, which commences the later "cours[ing]" of the "published traitor" Gloucester also (3.4.56; 4.6.228).

Skirting near the idea of Edgar's outlawry, Tom's thought is then punctuated — as if to turn attention from it — by the statement: "Bless thy five wits, Tom's a-cold" (3.4.56-7). The formulation "Tom's a-cold" recurs throughout the scene, as I will discuss (3.4.57, 81, 142, 169). The blessing of the "five wits" — "[the] five faculties of the mind […]

[121] Ibid.
I develop my argument about Lear's madness more thoroughly in Chapter 4.
[122] Elton, *King Lear and the Gods*, 85.

common wit, imagination, fantasy, estimation, and memory" (3.4.57n) — suggests some significant possibilities, though it resists any firm interpretation. The strange proleptic force of Tom's utterances might suggest that the blessing is offered to the present Lear and the absent Gloucester in the same moment — Edgar's godfather and father, both proclaimers of outlawry, both then hunted by their children. This blessing's ambiguity, in the strong etymological sense of "driving in both directions," is sustained by the subsequent: "bless thee from whirlwinds, star-blasting and taking" (3.4.58).[123] The whirlwinds evoke Lear's recent foray into the storm on the one hand; while the "star-blasting and taking" suggests Gloucester, with his predilection for prognosticative astrology, on the other.[124] But in either case, and in both, Poor Tom's benediction, with its focus on perception and mental acuity, becomes prophetic to the drama that is to unfold. Of the two aggrieved fathers in the play, one will perceive too readily his own state and, recoiling, wish to end it; whereas the other will abandon himself to it with an appalling totality. A profound unity between the two may be found in that their redemption is earned in the eyes of the audience primarily through the prolonged poetic spectacle of their acute psychological suffering, rather than within the instance of their physical discomfort — "bless [their] five wits," indeed.

In Tom's second speech, which according to Naseeb Shaheen is a "garbled version of the Ten Commandments, the Sermon on the Mount, and related Scriptures," Tom cries out: "Take heed o'the foul fiend; obey thy parents, keep thy word justly, swear not, commit

[123] "Ambiguous, Adj.," in *OED Online* (Oxford University Press), accessed September 17, 2019, https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/6145.
[124] For further discussion regarding Gloucester's astrological interests, see Elton, *King Lear and the Gods*, 147-61.

not with man's sworn spouse" (3.4.78-80).[125] Shaheen notes the Biblical echoes with his customary precision: *Eph*. 6.1: "Children, obey your parents," *Ex*. 20.12, *Deut*. 5.16: "Honour thy father and thy mother," *Matt*. 5.33-4: "Thou shalt not forsweare thy selfe, but shalt performe thine othes […] Sweare not at all," and so forth.[126] Intriguingly, this parodic sermon proleptically catalogues the sins of his half-brother: Edmund conspires against his father (3.5.20-1), forswears himself (5.3.98-102), and is party to adultery (5.1.56-66). Furthermore, all of these injunctions cohere not only to the three substantial precepts of monasticism — obedience, humility, chastity[127] — but also to the wider politico-theological principles that safeguard the legitimacy of patrimony itself, the very structure that Edmund opposes himself to.

In the context of these dense, allusive passages, with their complex dramatic and theological underpinnings, Poor Tom's taciturn moments become just as notable. If any one of his utterances especially sticks with an audience, it is probably the phrase "Tom's a-cold." The expression appears just five times, four of which are within a single scene (3.4.57, 81, 142, 169; 4.1.55). But I suspect that part of the reason the phrase is so memorable is due to its careful placement, as an analysis of 3.4 demonstrates. It seems only to appear at points of peculiar stress — at moments in which Poor Tom fills an empty space or replaces a thought — but, more specifically, he does so in response to thoughts or remarks concerning Edgar's juridical situation. (This displacement function perhaps explains why, in the Folio, his first "Tom's a-cold" is also accompanied by a string of nonsense noises: "O do, de, do, de, do, de" (3.4.57).) The effect is to punctuate moments

[125] Naseeb Shaheen, *Biblical References in Shakespeare's Tragedies* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1987), 150.
[126] Ibid.
[127] Agamben, *The Highest Poverty*, 36.

of possible significance in the dialogue, drawing our attention to the preceding content, and supplying us with a certain amount of space to sift it, before the next piece of dialogue begins. So when Tom offers his description of "cours[ing] his own shadow for traitor," or when he presents the mock sermon, listing Edmund's sins, as discussed above, he concludes both with "Tom's a cold" (3.4.56-7; 3.4.78-81).

In these first two instances, Tom therefore uses the phrase to punctuate his own elliptic commentary. But, having established this convention, the phrase begins to encroach upon the remarks of others:

> Glo. Our flesh and blood, my lord, is grown so vile
> That it doth hate what gets it.
> Edg. Poor Tom's a-cold. (3.4.140-2)

Here, Tom's utterance can work to underscore the dramatic irony of Gloucester's statement by drawing attention to Edgar's presence. But it also highlights an even deeper dramatic irony — for, as the audience knows, Gloucester is wrong about Edgar, yet Gloucester's statement remains true of Edmund, as Poor Tom cryptically acknowledged. The fourth and final instance of Tom's phrase in this scene takes place again in conjunction with a description by Gloucester of Edgar's outlawry. It begins when Gloucester says to Kent:

> Glo. I'll tell thee, friend,
> I am almost mad myself. I had a son,

Now outlawed from my blood; he sought my life,
But lately, very late. I loved him, friend,
No father his son dearer. True to tell thee,
The grief hath crazed my wits. What a night's this?
I do beseech your grace.

Lear. O, cry you mercy, sir.
Noble philosopher, your company.

Edg. Tom's a-cold. (3.4.161-9)

This is, in my opinion, one of the most exquisite passages of the play. Gloucester's first mention of madness carries with it the air of conversational hyperbole, "I'll tell thee, friend, / I am almost mad myself" (3.4.161-2). But the nuances of his description of the situation — the past tense "I *had* a son," the powerful immediacy of feeling that underpins "[b]ut lately, very late" (3.4.162, 164, my emphasis) — all build towards the brief story's emotional conclusion. Here, in a refrain of the opening, but with a more confessional preface, his comment carries all the more weight for its repetition, "True to tell thee, / The grief hath crazed my wits" (3.4.165-6). In the instant of uttering this admission, Gloucester's sense of loss is so intense, and his emotional state so delicate, that he is compelled to turn outward. He shifts Kent's (and our) attention from the painful stillness of his grief to the turbulent weather outside, "What a night's this?" (3.4.166). His deflection is completely recognisable and all the more painful for it. Then, as if aware of its transparency, Gloucester redirects us again, now to the troubled Lear, "I do beseech your grace" (3.4.166-7). Lear makes to leave with Tom but all that Tom can seem to say,

in response both to his imminent re-separation from his father and to his father's account itself, is "Tom's a-cold" (3.4.169).

The bareness of Tom's response permits a wide range of possibilities for performance. But whatever the performance choice, my suspicion is that lurking beneath the apparent simplicity of this line is one of the key emotional points of Edgar's narrative. First, it represents the culmination of a phrase conspicuously repeated throughout this scene, seemingly at points of significance touching his experience of being "outlawed from [Gloucester's] blood" (3.4.163). Here, for the first time, Edgar learns that his father believes without reservation that Edgar intended to make an attempt on his life. Significantly, Gloucester's reaction to Tom's line (however the actor playing Edgar decides to deliver it) is to gently, but insistently, usher Tom away:

> Edg. Tom's a-cold.
>
> Glo. In fellow, there, into the hovel; keep thee warm.
>
> (3.4.169-70)

By this point, "Tom's a-cold" has become a vocalisation that conceals, but thereby also articulates, Edgar's trauma: a trauma which he initially fails to express in positive terms. Rather than intersecting the scene with asides on Edgar's part, disclosing his suffering point-by-point, instead the tortured language of Tom elliptically expresses the significance of Edgar's exclusion. This is perhaps the moment in which Shakespeare's creative decision to shift from hermit to mad beggar becomes most powerful, along with the decision to withhold the reunion of Edgar and Gloucester — both significant and

deliberate deviations from the source material in Sidney's *Arcadia*.[128] In my view, the pair of lines above — "Tom's a-cold," Edgar's forlorn remark in response to his father's story, who responds with "In, fellow, there, into the hovel; keep thee warm" (3.4.169-70) — represents the emotional apex of Shakespeare's experimentation with the figure of the disguised outlaw. The bereft father, unwittingly shooing his innocent son away; the innocent son, faced by his unrecognising father, softly ushered back into a dank hovel.

The *persona* of Poor Tom is so magnetic that he cannot be skimmed over entirely, although this chapter will go on to stress that he represents just one disguise in a sequence. With that said, I unpacked these moments partly to make good on my introduction, where I expressed the intention to consider some of the play's presentation of the phenomenology of law and political theology. There is often an understandable tendency in legally-oriented readings to become enmeshed in fine-grained juridical distinctions, even to the extent that they seem to lose sight of the drama of law itself. What risks being elided in these readings is the emotional weight and the experiential reality that the law has for the individuals living under it and for those excluded from it. As Goodrich remarks: "we live the law."[129] This emotive encounter between Gloucester and his disguised, outlawed son demonstrates that the living of law is something that Shakespeare is also entirely attentive to. In this, there is also a resonance with Edgar's own journey: his first soliloquy intellectually articulates the legal processes and consequences he faces, yet, as the play progresses, his remarks increasingly emphasise the emotional experiences of himself and those around him.

[128] Bullough, *Sources*, 7:402-6.
[129] Goodrich, *Languages of Law*, 9.

With the exception of one brief aside — in which Edgar comments on the difficulty of performing his role given the moving spectacle of Lear's madness (3.6.59-60) — the Folio text offers us few clues to Edgar's immediate experience of performing Tom. However, the Quarto text provides a significant insight in the form of a retrospective soliloquy at the conclusion of 3.6. What is most surprising about this soliloquy is that when Edgar finally does define the shared trauma between himself and Lear, he declares: "He childed as I fathered" (3.6.107). What is shocking about this is Edgar's use of the verb "fathered" — not 'brothered' as one might have expected. After all, it was Edmund, not Gloucester, who engineered Edgar's outlawry. As I have suggested, the outbursts of Poor Tom imply that Edgar does recognise his brother's culpability, at least on a subconscious level. Yet, this line — "He childed as I fathered" (3.6.107) — is the clearest expression of Edgar's otherwise submerged resentment of his father's betrayal. This bitterness is not at all without cause. After all, in spite of Gloucester's apocalyptic declamations against the collapse of families — "nature finds itself scourged by the sequent effects […] there's son against father […] there's father against child" (1.2.105-12) — he is turned almost instantly against Edgar, despite his further claim that "no father [loved] his son dearer" (3.4.165).

It is worth noting here that the insistent use of couplets in this soliloquy is sharply distinct from the blank verse of Edgar's "I heard myself proclaimed" speech (2.2.172). There are two explanations worth considering here. One, that the "joy" of Tom's "carnival rhyme" might be beginning to suffuse Edgar's own speech patterns,[130] which would complicate Arnold Kettle's view that Edgar discards the persona of Tom without any lasting

[130] Fernie, *The Demonic*, 226.

impact.[131] The more persuasive possibility, for my purposes, is that the play is increasingly evoking Edgar's old-fashioned romantic role and "the old comed[ic]" structure that I previously suggested might underpin this subplot (1.2.134). One clue to this lies at the point where the rhyme scheme climaxes:

> Edg. He childed as I fathered. Tom, away;
> Mark the high noises, and thyself bewray
> When false opinion, whose wrong thoughts defile thee,
> In thy just proof repeals and reconciles thee.
> (3.6.107-10)

Skirting dangerously close to acknowledging his suppressed anger toward his father, Edgar leaps back into his role of Poor Tom, "Tom, away[!]" (3.6.107). The safety of the disguise, he declares, can only be discarded when he's in a position to be "repeal[ed] and reconcile[d]" (3.6.108-10). This entirely accords with the long established conventions around banishment in commercial drama. For the purposes of this argument, I return once more to *Love and Fortune* (1582), *Alphonsus, King of Aragon* (1587), and *Mucedorus* (1591). In each of these 'old comedies,' a nobleman is banished unjustly on the basis of slander or deceit — "false opinion" (3.6.109) — but is eventually repealed within the plot's 'catastrophe' or conclusion.[132] More importantly, in each of these old comedies, their climactic reconciliation into the *polis* is accompanied by an adoption to the throne, if not an outright coronation.

[131] Kettle, "The Humanity of King Lear."
[132] Anon., *The Rare Triumphs of Love and Fortune*, TLN 379-432, 1739-72; Greene, *Alphonsus*, TLN 139-72, 1931-2085; Anon., "Mucedorus," 7.70-1; 14.30-55.

THE CATASTROPHIC ADVENT

At the opening of Act 4, Edgar is still in disguise as Poor Tom. He begins a soliloquy that affirms the shift I have already described, from a primarily legal register to a phenomenological one:

> The lowest and most dejected thing of fortune,
> Stands still in esperance, lives not in fear.
> The lamentable change is from the best,
> The worst returns to laughter.
>
> (4.1.3-6)

It is significant that Edgar is still ultimately speaking of his legal circumstances. But the difference here is that the register of his thought, his vocabulary, has shifted away from primarily legal terms and images that dominated his earlier identity. Instead, here he articulates an emotional and intellectual response, an embodied response, to his position of precarity, the emphases landing on qualitative, emotional terms — "dejected," "esperance," "fear," "lamentable," and "laughter" (4.1.3-6). This certainly suggests Edgar's own "descent into feeling," as Elton phrased it.[133] On the other hand, there remains a strong sense of proverbial distance from the sufferings of the world, something that feels "crudely moralising, platitudinous" in comparison to the deeply felt responses

[133] Elton, *King Lear and the Gods*, 85.

of Gloucester and Lear.[134] But perhaps, this can be explained as in the context of the old-fashioned, generic "mode of thought" that Michael J. Warren described as "Christian romantic-heroic," which presumes that "virtue usually triumphs" — an expectation that will become key to understanding Edgar's role in the conclusion.[135] With this in mind, it is the specific self-description as "the lowest and most dejected thing of fortune" that is pivotal, in both senses of the term. His description continues the superlatives that have hitherto characterised his experience: before he used "basest" and "most poorest," here "lowest," "most dejected," and "worst." But what is signified by these superlatives is that, in harmony with the concept of 'fortune,' his destitution is specifically relational. He is the "lowest" in the context of a wider structure of human behaviour and experience.

As I have already shown, there has been an established motif of Fortune's wheel (*rota fortuna*) as the prominent structure of this kind, which his remark, "the most dejected thing of fortune," also reiterates (4.1.3). The wheel of Fortune is one of many commonplace conceptual devices used to represent the stratification of social position and experience. But the distinctive connotation of the wheel — as opposed to ladders or other hierarchical metaphors — lies in the implication of the extreme mutability of one's social position, which is the focus of this soliloquy. Indeed, Edgar's optimistic argument is that his fortune can only improve — this, as Susan Snyder remarks, is part of a wider effect of the romantic elements: "a long range hope, based on the well-established assumptions of comedy, that all the confusion and pain is leading to a positive conclusion."[136] Thus, Edgar's statement does accentuate the impact of Gloucester's

[134] Fernie, *The Demonic*, 224.
[135] Warren, "Quarto and Folio *King Lear*," 53.
[136] Snyder, *Comic Matrix*, 141.

imminent arrival, blinded and cast out.[137] But, on another level, this speech also serves to build an audience's expectations for a conventional romantic ending.

Banished aristocracy are often characterised in reference to Fortune and Fortune's wheel, both in drama and in prose.[138] Dollimore includes a rare error here in suggesting that "princes only see the hovels of wretches during progresses […] in flight or in fairy tale. Even in fiction the wheel of fortune rarely brings them that low."[139] In fact, this popular romance convention is evoked prominently by Shakespeare in *As You Like It*, where Celia consoles Rosalind about her banished father by "mocking the good housewife Fortune from her wheel" (*AYLI*, 1.2.24).[140] Outside of drama, this convention can be traced back at least as far as Boethius's influential *The Consolation of Philosophy* (*c.* 424), which was famously translated by Elizabeth I.[141] In his treatise, the aristocratic Boethius, who characterises himself as unjustly "banished," is consoled by Philosophy, who describes the *rota fortuna* in "Fortune's own words" thus:

> This power that I wield comes naturally to me; this is my perennial sport. I turn my wheel on its whirling course, and take delight in switching the base to the summit, and the summit to the base.[142]

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[137] Frank Kermode, "Introduction," in *King Lear: A Casebook*, ed. Frank Kermode (Houndmills, Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1992), 18.
[138] To provide just a few examples, see Greene, *Alphonsus*, TLN 377-80; Thomas Heywood, *The Four Prentices of London: A Critical, Old-Spelling Edition*, ed. Mary Ann Weber Gasior (New York: Garland Publishing, 1980), 1.1.1-12; for a romance in which Fortune herself intervenes to restore an exiled nobleman, see Anon., *The Rare Triumphs of Love and Fortune*, TLN 1729-857.
[139] Dollimore, *Radical Tragedy*, 191.
[140] For a monograph-length study that explicitly counters the idea that references to Fortune are merely "conventional," see Frederick Riefer, *Fortune and Elizabethan Tragedy* (San Marino: The Huntington Library, 1983).
[141] Walsh, "Introduction," xlviii.
[142] Boethius, *The Consolation of Philosophy*, trans. P. G. Walsh (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 14, 21-22; for an excellent overview of the passage of the *rota fortuna* trope from medieval literature onto

This chiasmatic switching of "the base to the summit, and the summit to the base" resonates particularly with the evoked rotation in Edmund's early remark: "Edmund the base / Shall top the legitimate" (1.2.20-1). This language of fortune refracts throughout the subplot. For example, besides being "the lowest and most dejected thing of [F]ortune," Edgar also describes himself to his father as a "most poor man, made tame to [F]ortune's blows," and in his chivalric challenge, Edgar faces Edmund "despite [his] victor sword and fire-new fortune," (4.1.3; 4.6.217; 5.3.130). Elton reads Edmund's "descend, brother, I say" as pre-empting a kind of infernal *katabasis* in the Dantean mode for Edgar: a descent into wisdom (2.1.20).[143] However, in the context of *rota fortuna*, "descend" sits just as featly within Edmund's own attempt to "[switch] the base to the summit, and the summit to the base," particularly given the preceding line: "Briefness and *fortune* work! / Brother, a word; descend, brother, I say" (2.1.19-20, my emphasis).[144] The *rota fortuna* thereafter becomes a commonplace symbol throughout the play for the dramatic shifting of places in the hierarchy: "Fortune, good night," the banished and stocked Kent laments, "smile once more: turn thy wheel" (2.2.171).[145]

As Kent's remarks suggest, Fortune's wheel need not only topple the good for the bad but *vice versa*. I have already cited the arc of Alphonsus, the titular protagonist of Robert

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the Renaissance stage, see Helen Cooper, *Shakespeare and the Medieval World* (London: Metheun, 2010), 141-6.

The use of "base" here is a fortuitous choice on the part of the translator. Contemporary translators more commonly use "low" and "high." See Boethius, *The Boke of Comfort Called in Laten Boetius de Consolatione Philosophie. Translated in to Englesse Tonge*, trans. John Walton, Early English Books, 1475-1640 / 604:02 (Tauestok [Tavistock]: Dan Thomas Rychard, 1535), img. 28/110; Boethius, *Boetius de Consolationae [Sic] Philosophiae. = The Boke of Boecius, Called the Comforte of Philosophye*, trans. George Colvile, Early English Books, 1475-1640 / 281:08 (London: Ihon Cawoode, 1556), img. 24/116; Boethius, *The Consolation of Philosophy*, Early English Books, 1641-1700 / 55:14 (London: James Flesher, 1664), img. 24/102.

[143] Elton, *King Lear and the Gods*, 85.

[144] Boethius, *The Consolation of Philosophy*, 2008, 21-2.

[145] Consider also the Fool's warning: "Let go thy hold when a great wheel runs down a hill lest it break thy neck with following it; but the great one that goes upward, let him draw thee after" (2.2.261-3).

Greene's 1587 romantic drama, who moves "from pit of pilgrim's poverty […] to the top of Fortune's wheel."[146] Likewise, in *The Triumphs of Love and Fortune*, Fortune herself intervenes in a climactic *deus ex machina* to restore Bomelio and Hermione from their banishment.[147] In other words, as much as Fortune is reviled when order collapses, she is also a widely-cited device in romantically-inflected dramatisations of the restoration of order, allegorically figured in the return of the unjustly banished prince.[148] In the broader genre of chivalric romance, as Alex Davis implies, such conclusions demonstrate an important preoccupation with "justifying rank and precedence through assertions of pedigree and lineage."[149] In the moment Edgar vanquishes Edmund, the bastard asks: "But what art thou / That hast this fortune over me?" (5.3.162-3). When Edgar reveals his identity with pointed reference to the status of their "blood" (5.3.165), Edmund articulates the convention that his plot had been operating within: "The wheel is come full circle" (5.3.172). Here, for a moment, the romantic promise that the "worst returns to laughter" seems plausible (4.1.6).

In the context of this chivalric trope, it is significant that while other banished heroes leap from the pit to the top, Edgar's ascension is more carefully gradated. Foakes is critical of interpreting Edgar as "a kind of everyman," who performs various positions of society.[150] To some extent, I agree that to reduce Edgar to a general performer is to "diminish" him.[151] But John F. Danby was right to highlight that the roles Edgar performs underpin

[146] Greene, *Alphonsus*, TLN 377-9.
[147] Anon., *The Rare Triumphs of Love and Fortune*, TLN 1729-857.
[148] For the perhaps most authoritative account of Fortune in Shakespeare's drama, see Cooper, *Shakespeare and the Medieval World*, 143-9.
[149] Alex Davis, *Chivalry and Romance in the English Renaissance* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2003), 3.
[150] Ibid.
[151] Ibid.

the play's plot.[152] Poor Tom is a vital counterpoint for Lear's narrative, the plain peasant Edgar then plays kills the sophisticated Oswald, and undoes Goneril by delivering her intercepted letter to Albany. Perhaps most distinctively, it is in the assumed visage of a knight that Edgar defeats Edmund in single combat. The bastard's defeat prompts Goneril's lamenting that the bastard had not invoked the chivalric "law of war" — a conclusive moment of poetic justice given Edmund's opening confession of contempt for the "plague of custom" (5.3.150; 1.2.3).[153]

Importantly, it is the gradated nature of Edgar's transformations that emphasise the hierarchical quality of his ascent. The play in general demonstrates a distinctive preoccupation with rank. When Kent trips up Oswald, he declaims, "Come, sir, [F]arise, away,[F] I'll teach you differences," meaning "distinctions of rank" (1.4.88, 88n). Similarly, at the very end of the play, Albany and Edmund's simmering antagonism is evoked through a recurring question of such 'differences': "Sir, by your patience, / I hold you but a subject of this war, / Not as a brother" (5.3.60-2).[154] Yet, these moments in which rank and precedence are enforced are equally matched, if not overpowered, by the dissolving of such distinctions also. This up-ending of the hierarchical structure of the playworld is reflected throughout, even with quite subtle touches that are easily overlooked: for example, the earl being placed in the stocks, the peasants refusing to help

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[152] John F. Danby, *Shakespeare's Doctrine of Nature: A Study of King Lear* (London: Faber and Faber, 1949), 171.
[153] For three readings of why Edmund does not invoke his right to refuse to fight an "unknown opposite," see Davis, *Chivalry and Romance*, 136-7.
[154] See also:

Goneril. Mean you to enjoy him [Q]then[Q]?
Albany. The let-alone lies not in your good will.
Edmund. Nor in thine, lord.
Albany. Half-blooded fellow, yes.
(5.3.79-81)

the storm-drenched king, and the old tenant guiding Gloucester across his own lands (2.2.123-71; 3.2.65-6; 4.1.10-9).

In this context, Edgar's slow ascent upward through the conventional hierarchy — "Poor Tom, a peasant, a messenger, a knight […] ruler"[155] — can be read as reinscribing a politico-theological structure that is otherwise in crisis. John F. Danby persuasively argued that, without an appreciation of the careful sequencing that Shakespeare follows, Edgar's arc would simply be "otherwise inexplicable and arbitrary transformations."[156] The upward trajectory produces a sense of what Elton describes as Edgar's "suffering ascent."[157] Furthermore, by rising upward through these feudal ranks, Edgar effectively incarnates and affirms the restoration of the hierarchy that he was initially presented as emblematic of. When combined with the conventions of the banishment romance and the explicit invocation that Fortune's "wheel has come full circle," Albany's offer of the throne to Edgar — whose "very gait did prophesy / A royal nobleness" — materialises as an entirely generic conclusion to the subplot, potentially suggesting a resolution for this wider political predicament (5.3.173-4). Here, then, a catastrophe of the old English comedies emerges: the adventure ending in the advent of a new prince.

The transformations themselves may suggest that there is some truth to Elton's observation that Edgar's identity, like Lear's, remains "in question."[158] However, this sense of a logical sequence reinscribing an order also suggests some important differences. First, the two characters' responses to their respective absence or "defect[s]

[155] Foakes, "Introduction," 46.
[156] Danby, *Doctrine of Nature*, 171.
[157] Elton, *King Lear and the Gods*, 86.
[158] Ibid., 85.

of identity" are by no means parallel.[159] As I will show in the fourth chapter, Lear learns to parodically distance himself from his political identities, critiquing them while undertaking a deeper recovery of self. By contrast, Edgar adopts new political identities from scene to scene, none of which ever seem to settle into a sense of self. But second, and more importantly, Edgar's trajectory if anything affirms his singular role: as the potential restorer of the legitimate order. Both Danby and Foakes see the transformations building to a point in which, as Foakes phrases it, Edgar ends "in his final role of ruler."[160] Even more explicitly, Michael L. Hays claims that Edgar "succeeds Lear as king, [thereby] ratifying chivalric romance and endorsing its idealism," which, as I have already noted, has been described as a genre concerned with the justification of rank.[161] By contrast, I want to argue that the play invites this hope but then resists it. The play encourages the expectation of a romantic catastrophe, a restoration of order, but ultimately withholds it.

Any analysis of the play's ending must first reckon with a significant textual crux between the Quarto and Folio versions. In both versions, Albany offers to divide the kingdom — "[Y]ou twain, / Rule in this realm and the gored state sustain" (5.3.318-9) — and in both versions Kent rejects the offer: "I have a journey, sir, shortly to go. / My master calls me, I must not say no" (5.3.320-1). His rhyming couplet leads into the final four lines of the play:

> The weight of this sad time we must obey,

[159] Ibid.
[160] Foakes, "Introduction," 46; Danby, *Doctrine of Nature*, 171.
[161] Hays, *Chivalric Romance*, 192; Davis, *Chivalry and Romance*, 3.

Speak what we feel, not what we ought to say.
The oldest hath born most; we that are young
Shall never see so much, nor live so long.
(5.3.322-5)

The textual crux lies in who speaks these lines. They are assigned to Albany in the Quarto and to Edgar in the Folio. To attribute them to either over the other would seem to suggest consequences with regards to the interpretation of the ending, as I will explore shortly in relation to my reading. The crux has historically represented a difficult decision for editors, directors, and, to some extent, for critics too. In the case of editors, the general preference today seems to lie toward attributing the final lines to Edgar.[162] Yet, this is far from a settled practice. Among the notable exceptions in recent years are *The New Oxford Shakespeare* and Stanley Wells's Oxford edition from 2000, which both prioritise the Quarto text in which the lines are spoken by Albany.[163] In performance, again, the preference seems to lie with Edgar.[164]

In terms of editorial rationale, the choice to give the lines to Albany seem to hinge largely on a point of "dramatic etiquette" as Schmidt termed it,[165] specifically that a tragedy ought

[162] William Shakespeare, *King Lear*, ed. Horace Howard Furness (Philadelphia: New Variorum, 1880), 5.3.324-327; William Shakespeare, *The Tragedy of King Lear*, ed. Jay L. Halio (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 5.3.297-300; William Shakespeare, *King Lear*, ed. Barbara A. Mowat and Paul Werstine (New York: Washington Square Press, 1993), 5.3.392-5; William Shakespeare, *King Lear*, ed. George Hunter (London: Penguin, 2005), 5.3.321-4; William Shakespeare, *King Lear*, ed. Jonathan Bate and Eric Rasmussen (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2009), 5.3.346-9; Shakespeare, *King Lear*, 2009, 5.3.322-5.
[163] William Shakespeare, "King Lear," in *The New Oxford Shakespeare: Modern Critical Edition*, ed. John Jowett (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 24.319-22; Shakespeare, *The History of King Lear*, 24.318-21.
[164] I have yet to see a production conclude with Albany. For a few examples of filmed productions that end with Edgar, see Peter Brook, *King Lear* (Sony Pictures Home Entertainment, 2007); Trevor Nunn, *King Lear* (Metrodome, 2008); Doran, *King Lear*; Eyre, *King Lear*.
[165] Shakespeare, *King Lear*, 1880, 5.3.324n.

to conclude with “the person of greatest authority” or “the highest-ranking character left alive.”[166] On the other hand, Albany has just offered Edgar the opportunity to “rule in this realm,” which perhaps complicates this point (5.3.319). There is also the view that, following this offer, the Duke is due a reply and, without these lines, it would be unseemly or awkward for Edgar to make no response.[167] Foakes offers a sophisticated interpretation, pointing out that the attribution of these lines to Edgar reflects the qualitative enhancement — though notably not an expansion — of his role in the Folio.[168]

The complication presented by this textual crux cannot be obviated but it is, in its own way, also fitting. Furthermore, the possibilities it presents actually clarify the structural significance of this final moment. In response to the offer to rule and the injunction to “sustain the gored state,” Edgar either speaks the final lines — and by closing the play, according to dramatic custom, implicitly assumes “the position of highest authority” — or he says nothing. In the first instance, in contrast to the pomp and ceremony of the opening procession, which precedes Lear’s resignation, here the death march punctuates Edgar’s implied acceptance of the throne. In the second instance, when offered his own kingdom, Edgar instead pauses at the brink, saying nothing — perhaps unable, like Cordelia, to “heave [his] heart into [his] mouth” (1.1.91-2). In either case therefore, the play closes with a shadow of the opening.

[166] Ibid.; Shakespeare, “King Lear,” 2016, 24.319n.
[167] Shakespeare, *King Lear*, 1880, 5.3.324n.
[168] Foakes, “Introduction,” 142.

In many respects, the quality of those final lines seem fitting for Edgar's speech-patterns. They are at once prophetic and proverbial, romantic yet ambiguous.[169] In fact, they are perhaps more fitting for being inflected by the possibility of not really being Edgar's. In the context of a character that has borrowed, imitated, and emulated so many other voices, to the point that Edgar himself has achieved a kind of critical opacity, what could be more appropriate? Yet what is really crucial is that whether Edgar adopts this ambiguous closing statement, or he maintains his silence, the effect is more or less the same: the returned prince fails to offer us any comfort as to what will follow, which is a curiously unromantic gesture. In this final moment, Edgar is not at all the "St George" figure that some have described and that an audience might expect.[170] He is either unable or unwilling to reconstitute a national identity in the moment of his triumph. He has no bride, no heir, no obvious ambition to govern or to restore peace. So it is precisely at this moment, the moment in which the play withholds solace or hope, that the implicit critique of the underlying romance narrative emerges.

The peculiar power of *Lear*'s ending does not solely lie in the shocking death of Cordelia. Criticism has often rightly focused on Shakespeare's choice to dislodge the narrative from its conventional endings: namely, the restoration of the king in *King Leir* and Cordelia's rule (and eventual suicide) in Holinshed.[171] Yet, Shakespeare's extraordinary amplification of the play's tragic effect is not simply a matter of introducing a number of

[169] For a contrasting reading of these lines "shading into a kind of Tom-ness," see Palfrey, *Poor Tom*, 247. For a more detailed comparison of Edgar and Albany's differing presentations across the Quarto and Folio versions, see Michael Warren, "Quarto and Folio King Lear and the Interpretation of Albany and Edgar," in *William Shakespeare's King Lear*, ed. Harold Bloom (New York: Chelsea House, 1987), 45-56.
[170] Kettle, "The Humanity of King Lear," 20.
[171] Jean R. Brink, "What Does Shakespeare Leave Out of King Lear?," in *King Lear: New Critical Essays*, ed. Jeffrey Kahan (New York: Routledge, 2008), 225.

deaths. Nor does it lie wholly in the powerful poetic imagery surrounding these deaths. Instead, a key element of the ending's bleakness lies in the creative decisions governing the depiction of the survivors.

The play concludes with three unprecedented characters. Kent, Albany, and Edgar are all original to Shakespeare's play. Furthermore, these unfamiliar characters end the play in an uncertain political arrangement. Kent's rejection of Albany's offer, as cited above, echoes Lear's initial rejection of sovereign responsibility, which precipitated the play's political and personal crises. Despite his original injunctions against Lear's decision, Kent, like his master, chooses an "[u]nburdened crawl towards death" rather than govern in Lear's wake (1.1.40, F). Similarly, Albany himself seems acutely anxious to avoid the demands of untrammelled sovereignty over Britain, first offering "absolute power" to the bereft Lear (5.3.299), and then proposing another division of the kingdoms to Kent and Edgar (5.3.318-9).[172] Finally, the surviving son of Gloucester, our romantic hero, either says nothing or he speaks ambiguously regarding what will come next: "we that are young / Shall never see so much, nor live so long" (5.3.324-5). As Warren states with a dry understatement: "[i]n neither text is the prospect for the country a matter of great optimism."[173] The cumulative effect of these choices is the privation of any certainty in the audience.

[172] As Bradley observes, whether Albany intends to hand over the entirety of Albion to Kent and Edgar, or just Cornwall and Regan's powers and properties is unclear. In my view, the latter seems more likely — especially as the earls of Kent and Gloucester would both be obvious successors to Cornwall's presumably southern dominion. Gloucester refers to Cornwall as "The noble Duke, my master, / My worthy arch and patron" (2.1.58-9). See Bradley, *Shakespearean Tragedy*, 275.
[173] Warren, "Quarto and Folio," 55.

It is through this uncertainty that the play abandons us, offering only the faintest sense of remaining order, and it is an unsettling order at that. The final three figures on the stage are male aristocrats, surrounded by the bodies of the old, of women, and of the illegitimate. In the most appalling sense, "the gods are just," as Edgar harshly remarks of his own father's blinding and death — the hierarchy has been preserved (5.3.168). Yet, precisely due to the absence of any practical political resolution, even the conservative gesture that Edgar's reintegration might have suggested ultimately feels ineffectual. Despite the return of the romantic hero, and his triumph over those that unfairly banished him, the "gored state" is guaranteed neither restoration nor meaningful change (5.3.319). In this, *Lear* makes available an acidic critique of the conventions of chivalric romance. Unlike the old comedies, Shakespeare's *Lear* refuses to end with a glorious ascension. Instead, this play's catastrophe is precisely that: a collapse. All that is left is for the verse to fall into silence, the overturned play-world still ringing in a state of dramatic emergency.

THRESHOLD

For over a century and a half, Shakespeare's *Lear* was absent from commercial English theatres. Between 1681 and 1838, Nahum Tate's adaptation, titled *The History of King Lear*, displaced Shakespeare's *Lear* "in every performance given."[174] Despite this remarkable supersession, the adaptation was not without its detractors. Charles Lamb accused it of being "childish," A. W. Schlegel remarked that, with a happy ending, "the whole loses its signification."[175] Siding with both of them, William Hazlitt settled for repeating Kent's famous injunction to Edgar, to let Lear die: "Vex not his ghost: O let him pass!"[176] Yet Tate's choices were undeniably popular. Of his defenders, Dr Johnson perhaps gives the most evocative exegesis:

> Cordelia, from the time of Tate, has always retired with victory and felicity. And, if my sensations could add anything to the general suffrage, I might relate, that I was many years ago so shocked by Cordelia's death, that I know not whether I ever endured to read again the last scenes of the play till I undertook to revise them as an editor.[177]

The good doctor's sensitivity to Shakespeare's ending is here explicitly tied to the death of Cordelia but his aversion is also broader than that single instance — he refers to the

[174] Wells, "Introduction," 63.
[175] Charles Lamb, "Charles Lamb (1810-11)," in *King Lear: A Casebook*, ed. Frank Kermode (Houndmills, Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1992), 43; A. W. Schlegel, "A. W. Schlegel (1811)," in *King Lear: A Casebook*, ed. Frank Kermode (Houndmills, Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1992), 32.
[176] William Hazlitt, *Characters of Shakespeare's Plays* (London: Oxford University Press, 1949), 143.
[177] Samuel Johnson, "Samuel Johnson (1765)," in *King Lear: A Casebook*, ed. Frank Kermode (Houndmills, Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1992), 28.

"last scenes of the play" as being unendurable. Once again, it is worth noting that Tate's *Lear*, and its wildly popular ending, represented substantial differences not only in terms of the number and quality of deaths but in the future it projects for the play-world as a whole.

Tate's final lines have a similar premise to Shakespeare's. Edgar has just been offered the throne, this time by the surviving Lear, but instead of silence or ambivalence Edgar responds by declaring: "Our drooping Country now erects her Head, / Peace spreads her balmy Wings, and Plenty Blooms."[178] In comparison to the bleak uncertainty of Shakespeare's play, this is a different political prospect altogether. Putting aside aesthetic judgements, I want to suggest that, in this final moment, Tate is not imposing a dramatic choice that has no relation to his source-play. As Tate suggests in his prologue, he is merely a gardener, imposing "Fresh Beauty" by cultivating "Order" in the wild flowers of Shakespeare's original play.[179] But Tate's idea of "Order" principally reflects the completion of generic convention — Mack remarks of the whole: "[Tate] has seized on the romance characteristics of Shakespeare's play and restored it to what must have seemed to him its intended genre."[180] This "restor[ation]" then demands the decisive change of the play's ending. However, in doing so, Tate appears to grasp the underlying structure of Edgar's journey. The difference lies in the decision to fulfil the generic expectations that Shakespeare had instead elected to evoke, only to frustrate.

[178] Nahum Tate, "King Lear," in *Adaptations of Shakespeare: A Critical Anthology of Plays From the Seventeenth Century to the Present*, ed. Daniel Fischlin and Mark Fortier (London: Routledge, 2000), 96.
[179] Ibid., 68.
[180] Mack, *King Lear: In Our Time*, 10.

Tate's cultivated re-arrangement of Shakespeare's finale is not restricted only to Edgar's successful ascension of the throne, and the restoration of the public order that that implies. Famously, his adaptation also ends with Edgar and Cordelia's betrothal — this is in fact the mechanism by which Edgar comes to inherit the throne. Like the unambiguous acceptance of the throne, this alteration again dissipates a crucial point of tension in Shakespeare's version. In the history of the play's criticism, Shakespeare's Edgar has often been interpreted as problematically asexual, another profoundly unconventional quality for a romantic hero.[181] In Tate, however, the restoration of political order is explicitly tied to a politically- and theologically-sanctioned reproductive arrangement, an arrangement which necessarily is at once political and personal. In other words, Tate restores the patrimony-matrimony structure that Edmund was posed as an incessant threat to. For Tate, Edgar's ascension into a position of political and public mastery can only be properly meaningful if accompanied by a similar restoration of the domestic and sexual hierarchy also.

[181] Palfrey, *Poor Tom*, 17.

CHAPTER III

DIVIDING BETWEEN DAUGHTERS

Of all the wide-spread preconceptions regarding *Lear*, I find the notion of two interchangeable 'wicked sisters' one of the most intriguing. It is a view that does not seem to be taken very seriously by actors and directors.[1] However, in criticism, the presupposition that Goneril and Regan are simply 'evil' and Cordelia is simply 'good' recurs with fascinating tenacity. In Act 1, Scene 3 of the RSC's 2016 production of *King Lear* (reprised 2018), Nia Gwynne's Goneril was depicted feeding the ragged beggars from the play's opening.[2] A little later, Lear's train of knights repeatedly interrupted Gwynne's "Not only, sir, this your all-licensed fool" speech, jeering her as an "insolent retinue" to considerable sympathetic effect (1.4.191, 192). These were two choices among a multitude that demonstrated a carefully-considered dramatic strategy designed to resist any lazy readings of the 'two wicked sisters.' This predictably sailed over the heads of the British theatre press, who, with their characteristic precision, bundled the two sisters together as "ingrate[s]" and 'villain[s]."[3]

[1] Kate Fleetwood and Anna Maxwell Martin, *King Lear: Goneril and Regan*, Video, National Theatre Discover (London: Lone Star Productions, 2015), https://youtu.be/y9jS-pH9-_A; Oliver Ford Davies, *Shakespeare's Fathers and Daughters* (New York: Bloomsbury Arden Shakespeare, 2017), 113-4, 118.
[2] Doran, *King Lear*.
[3] Dominic Cavendish, "Antony Sher's Monumental King Lear Is a Crowning Achievement in His Career — Review"," *The Telegraph*, September 1, 2016, https://www.telegraph.co.uk/theatre/what-to-see/antony-shers-monumental-king-lear-is-a-crowning-achievement-in-h/; Mark Shenton, "Antony Sher in King Lear, Royal Shakespeare Theatre Review — 'Physically Subdued,'" *The Stage*, September 2, 2016, https://www.thestage.co.uk/reviews/2016/antony-sher-as-king-lear-review-royal-shakespeare-theatre-physically-subdued/.

This assumption is present in academic scholarship also. Of course, I am following a number of scholars, who have offered nuanced readings of the three sisters, and to whom this chapter owes a profound debt.[4] However, many significant works of academic criticism have been marked by this reductive perspective. Harold Bloom, whose success has largely hinged on enthusiastic and detailed character studies, has been consistent in writing off Goneril and Regan as Albany's "monsters of the deep" (4.2.51, Q).[5] Stephen Greenblatt, a writer with a commitment to carefully reading individual ethics in relation to power structures, has likewise been content to render them both as "vicious" and "wicked" and leave it at that.[6] The erudite William R. Elton condemns Goneril and Regan together with an astonishing Hobbesian neologism: "*femina viro lupa*" (*lit.* woman is a she-wolf to man; *lupa* also connoting prostitute).[7] The list goes on.[8]

This view does not emerge entirely in a vacuum. The various source-texts, including the Queen's Men *Leir*, and Tate's wildly successful Restoration adaptation, all foregrounded the fairy-tale quality of the two wicked sisters. Bullough compares the traditional tale,

[4] Foakes, "Introduction," 42-43; Philippa Kelly, "See What Breeds about Her Heart: 'King Lear', Feminism, and Performance," *Renaissance Drama* 33 (2004): 137-57; Kordecki and Koskinen, *Re-Visioning Lear's Daughters*; Marlena Tronicke, *Shakespeare's Suicides: Dead Bodies That Matter*, Routledge Studies in Shakespeare (New York: Routledge, 2018), 114-20; for interviews with feminist directors, see also Schafer, *Ms-Directing Shakespeare*, 128-48.

[5] Harold Bloom, "Introduction," in *William Shakespeare's King Lear*, ed. Harold Bloom, Modern Critical Interpretations (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1987), 1, 5, 7; Bloom, *Invention*, 485, 496.

[6] Stephen Greenblatt, *Will in the World: How Shakespeare Became Shakespeare* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2004), 360.

[7] For Thomas Hobbes's famous "man to man is an arrant wolf," see Thomas Hobbes, *Philosophicall Rudiments Concerning Government and Society*, trans. Robert Vaughan, Thomason Tracts / 256:E.1262[1] (London: Printed by J.G. for R. Royston, at the Angel in Ivie-lane, 1651), img. 3/203. For the Latin *homo homini lupus*, see also Sigmund Freud, *Civilization And Its Discontents*, trans. Joan Riviere (London: Hogarth Press, 1930), 85. I am indebted to Nicholas Langford for pointing out the indecorous connotation of "*lupa*."

[8] In an especially Victorian remark, Dowden claims "[t]heir love is even more hideous than their hate." See Dowden, *Shakspere*, 264; for both canonical and recent instances, see also John Holloway, "King Lear," in *King Lear: A Casebook*, ed. Frank Kermode (Houndmills, Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1992), 176-97; Bullough, *Sources*, 7:286; Mack, *King Lear: In Our Time*, 32; Knight, *The Wheel of Fire*, 185, 206.

not without cause, to *Cinderella*.[9] One aim of this chapter, partly by comparison to the play's sources and afterlives, is to demonstrate that Shakespeare writes against the grain, finding opportunities to open up points of difference between Goneril and Regan. While carefully individuating the sisters in terms of their behaviour, relationships, and manners of expression, the play has to balance this with their shared positions, offices, and decisions.

King Lear, I argue, subtly explores the socio-political pressures exerted on Lear's daughters, especially those tied up in the transmission of their unusual dowries. These dowries are distinctive in that they fold in both domestic potency and public majesty, passing *via* the daughters from their father to their husbands. This reiterates the doubled registers of power that I analysed in the first chapter: the sovereign and the domestic. Due to their sex, Goneril and Regan are rendered legally as objects of exchange or, rather, objects through which and concerning which specific rights are transferred or transmitted. As ever, Shakespeare is attentive to the ramifications of this in the domestic relationships of his characters.

At stake in all of this remains the patrimony-matrimony relation, which must be read from a position that is attentive to the political theologies surrounding inheritance and household governance (*oikonomia*); as well as the broader intellectual discourses which legitimated structural misogyny, including medicine and physiology. The hierarchical structure depicted in the play conforms to early modern conceptions of social order, whose operation takes in both sex difference and socio-political rank. I draw upon the

[9] Bullough, *Sources*, 7:271.

1559 Catechism as a paradigmatic apparatus of duty, which operates across these different vectors of power, legitimating manifold forms of potency and obedience by exploiting the concept of divine omnipotence as both an analogue and source.

Moving from this early modern contextual work, I will hone in on Cordelia's rebellion in the context of this more expansive sense of duty, a theologically-inflected obedience, which coincides also with the masochistic demands of idealised femininity. From this position, I will also argue that the comparative 'falling short,' which Goneril is particularly repudiated for, can open up a more sensitive reading of Goneril's character arc, allowing her to emerge as an individual seeking expression and fulfilment beyond an etiolated domestic role. Goneril's own tragic dimensions, I contend, become more lucid through comparison to characters in the wider authorial corpus — such as Marc Antony or Macbeth. She is one iteration within a wider suite of characters exhibiting complex relationships to their identities and whose development hinges on the conflict of duty and erotic self-worth.

The critical poverty, which has reduced Goneril to a 'monster of the deep' — or, in Bradley's extraordinary words, "the most hideous human being (if she is one), that Shakespeare ever drew"[10] — I contend, speaks to a pervasive desire to still hold her to the fascistic and sexist ethical criterion that Lear brutally applies to all three of his daughters at the outset of the play — a character test which the entire play then works to repudiate. Rather than thinking carefully about each woman as an individual, criticism has been content to measure them by their obedience to the office of the daughter, to only

[10] Bradley, *Shakespearean Tragedy*; supported by Heilman, who queries the need for parantheses, see Heilman, "This Great Stage," 138.

ask of them: “Which of you shall we say doth love [Lear] most?” (1.1.51) The task of this chapter then is to understand the office of the daughter and to think about the ways in which Cordelia and Goneril, as individuals, relate to it and, by extension, to themselves.

As I discussed in my first chapter, the opening scene of *King Lear* sets out the crux of the play. What I want to begin by focusing on, in this chapter, is one particular issue at stake in this division and descent; an issue that the previous chapter illuminated as especially significant, namely the patrimony-matrimony relation. As has been noted, in contrast to the "darker purpose" of Lear's "fast intent / To shake all cares and business from [his] age," the ostensible cause for the grand meeting that opens the play is to answer the "two great princes, France and Burgundy / Great rivals in our youngest daughter's love" (1.1.35, 37-8, 45-6).[11] The arrangement of Cordelia's marriage thereby offers both motive and opportunity to divide the kingdoms and "to publish / Our daughters' several dowers" (1.1.42-3, F). By so doing, Lear intends to fulfil his twinned obligations as a father and as a king: in the first, by arranging each of his daughters' marriages and his son-in-laws' inheritance — here the dowry demonstrating the always-already interwoven strands of matrimony and patrimony — and, in the second, as a head of state, by arranging the succession of power, if not office. Kent and Gloucester, as the opening lines make clear, are aware of the proposed divisions but not of Lear's "darker purpose," namely his immediate semi-abdication (1.1.35).

As I noted previously, the provision of dowries is a paternal responsibility. Customarily, marriage entailed not only this transfer of material property but also a transfer of the father's potency over the daughter into the hands of the husband. However, by tying in "rule, / Interest of territory, cares of state" into these dowries, Lear goes a step further, drawing together this conventional transition of domestic rights and material portion with

[11] Foakes glosses 'darker' with "[M]ore secret […] As commonly used, 'darker' also hints at something more wicked than the overt purpose of the formal court meeting, which is to arrange a marriage for Cordelia" (1.1.35n).

political succession (1.1.49-50, F). As Foakes notes, such a provision would be largely untenable under English law in early Jacobean England, but that is more or less immaterial for this chapter's purposes.[12] Much has already been written on the broader Jacobean political context, particularly *vis-à-vis* the proposed unification of England and Scotland and James I's royal progresses, which I will not add to.[13] Instead, I am interested in reiterating how Lear's declaration suggests that the domestic and political structures are expected to converge and operate harmoniously, each paradigm operating to reinforce the other. In order to read this scene sensitively, critics must therefore keep these two registers in mind.

It is worth beginning with the material provision of Lear's dowries: land. Susan Dwyer Amussen's seminal work *An Ordered Society* (1993) conducts a detailed historical analysis of sex and rank in early modern rural society. Amussen explains in some detail the significance of land transfer within Renaissance English families.[14] Land represented an unusually secure (and prestigious) form of property in this period.[15] Unsurprisingly then, capital was frequently transformed at the earliest convenience into land.[16] Correspondingly, issues concerning inheritance often coalesced around the distribution of that form of property in particular. In his opening soliloquy, Edmund is less concerned by titles, honours, or movables but as he states it: "Well, my legitimate, I must have your *land*" (1.2.16, my emphasis). The transmission of this land in Edmund's case is somewhat

[12] Foakes, "Introduction," 17.
[13] Patterson, "The Popular Voice of King Lear"; Bruce Thomas Boehrer, "'King Lear' and the Royal Progress: Social Display in Shakespearean Tragedy," *Renaissance Drama* 21 (1990): 243-61; Axton, *The Queen's Two Bodies*, 133-47.
[14] Susan Dwyer Amussen, *An Ordered Society: Gender and Class in Early Modern England* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), 70-94.
[15] Ibid., 70-90.
[16] Ibid., 70.

unusual, being conferred on him by his liege lord following his brother's outlawry and then his father's alleged treason, "True or false, it hath made thee Earl of Gloucester" (3.5.17-8). Placing Gloucester's attainder to one side, the more typical mechanism by which land was passed on was through parental provision. As Amussen records it, the turning over of a portion of an estate to one's children, normally coincided with either one of two events: marriage or death.[17]

In the setting up of the division scene, Shakespeare makes an intriguing diversion from his source material. The Queen's Men's *King Leir* (1589) begins with the king making marital arrangements for all three of his daughters: "For at this instant two near-neighbouring kings / Of Cornwall and Cambria motion love / To my two daughters, Gonoril and Ragan."[18] Cordella is proving more troublesome to match, as she "vowes / No liking to a monarch, unless love allows."[19] (In all of these elements, Tate's 1681 adaptation intriguingly comes closer to the premise of the Queen's Men's play than Shakespeare's.) By way of contrast, Shakespeare's Cordelia is content to marry. Furthermore, Lear's first monologue implies Goneril and Regan's marriages are at least solemnised by the time the play begins: "Our son of Cornwall / And you, our no less loving son of Albany" (1.1.40-1, F). This interpretation is reiterated by Cordelia's later protest: "Why have my sisters husbands, if they say / They love you all?" (1.1.99-100). Productions often capitalise on this discrepancy, casting the daughters in such a way as to indicate a considerable age gap between Cordelia and her elder sisters. However, the key point is that Lear has held back the dowries until the point of Cordelia's public

[17] Ibid.
[18] Anon., *King Leir*, 1.1.56-8.
[19] Ibid., 1.1.59-60.

betrothal, which suggests partiality in Lear's domestic and political government. Shakespeare subtly colours later scenes with a filial resentment that seems to have been fired by this favouritism:

> Lear. I gave you all —
>
> Reg. And in good time you gave it.
>
> (2.2.439)

By contrast, the Queen's Men play embraces the 'two wicked sisters' premise much more freely. In *King Leir*, Gonoril and Ragan are informed in advance of the love-test by the duplicitous Skalliger (a probable prototype for Oswald).[20] The two sisters air their grievances at Cordella's popularity in the court: "Some desp'rate medicine must be soon applied, / To dim the glory of her mounting fame."[21] They decide that they will "flatter with [their] doting father / As he was ne'er so flattered in his life" in order "[t]o be reveng'd upon her unperceiv'd."[22] Shakespeare, on the other hand, omits this scheme and, in fact, makes it clear that Goneril and Regan had no intention of trying to undermine Cordelia: "with what poor judgement [Lear] hath now cast [Cordelia] off" (1.1.292-3). As Fleetwood and Maxwell Martin observed regarding their 2014 National Theatre performances, it is quite possible the two sisters themselves had hoped that Lear would indeed "set [his] rest / On [Cordelia's] kind nursery" (1.1.124-5).[23]

[20] Ibid., 1.2.52-9.
[21] Ibid., 1.2.15-6.
[22] Ibid., 1.2.77-8, 74.
[23] *King Lear — Nothing Will Come Of Nothing* (NTLive, 2014), https://youtu.be/tnYInEJ1-v0.

The exchange between the two sisters immediately after the division scene is entirely Shakespeare's invention. Oliver Ford Davies reads this interaction as a moment in which "Goneril and Regan are revealed as more intelligent, sympathetic and complex than the traditional sisters."[24] Rather than the self-serving motivations of the Queen's Men's *Leir*, Shakespeare's sisters are preoccupied by Lear's ill-temper, analysing it with considerable insight: the "unruly waywardness that infirm and choleric years bring with them" (1.1.299-300). So it is true that, as Bullough notes, "[t]hese two daughters see only [Lear's] faults."[25] Yet, by staging the daughters' accurate analysis of Lear's patent irritability, Shakespeare implies a more sympathetic motivation for the sisters' dissimulation in the love-trial — namely their fear of Lear's "unconstant starts" (1.1.301).

This anxiety foreshadows Goneril's concerns about his train of knights: "'Tis politic and safe to let him keep / At point a hundred knights!" (1.4.316-7, F). In modernised productions, like Richard Eyre's 2018 version for the BBC, these knights are typically depicted as active military personnel, conspicuously out-of-place in Goneril's domestic setting.[26] Guy Butler's historical article on Jacobean knights, if anything, concentrates this sense of inappropriateness. Butler argues for both the extraordinary extravagance of a hundred knights as a travelling retinue — an especially timely concern with James on the throne — and, quoting Lawrence Stone, suggests their "notorious" abrasiveness: "[t]here are many instances of [retainers] being wounded or killed in brawls on their master's behalf."[27] Shakespeare's revisions here are, as ever, telling. In no other extant

[24] Davies, *Shakespeare's Fathers and Daughters*, 114.
[25] Bullough, *Sources*, 7:289; see also Davies, *Shakespeare's Fathers and Daughters*, 113-4.
[26] Eyre, *King Lear*.
[27] For more details on such quarrelsome retainers, see Lawrence Stone, *The Crisis of Aristocracy: 1558-1641* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965), 227; Guy Butler, "The Topicality in 1606 of Lear's One Hundred Knights," *English Studies in Africa* 35, no. 1 (1992): 3.

version of the story does Lear set the "reservation of an hundred knights" as a condition of his abdication (1.1.134) — the closest analogue is John Higgins's *The Mirror for Magistrates*, in which Lear is provided with a train of knights and squires after he is forcibly deposed.[28] Whether or not the knights "do hourly carp and quarrel, breaking forth / In rank and not to be endured riots" can only be resolved in performance (1.4.193-4). However, Lear's own bull-like behaviour throughout the first two acts — banishing Kent, striking servants, cursing Goneril — ought to contextualise his claim that his knights are men of "most exact regard" (1.4.257).

No matter the directorial choices concerning the knights, Lear is presented in a manner which is a far remove from the calm beatitude of the earlier Leir. It is hard to imagine Shakespeare's king resigning so that he might "think upon the welfare of [his] soul."[29] Where King Leir is abated of his allowance so Gonoril can have more "extraordinary" feasts with her own "[p]arasites,"[30] it is Shakespeare's Lear who bursts into the scene, demanding dinners for his "riotous" knights (1.3.7): "Let me not stay a jot for dinner; go, get it ready" (1.4.8). Goneril's fears prove well-founded when Lear, after a litany of curses, eventually threatens: "Thou shalt find / That I'll resume the shape which thou dost think / I have cast off for ever" (1.4.300-2). As she states later, regarding the credibility of his threats, "I know his heart" (1.4.324, F). The fact that he continues to entertain this strategy in private in the subsequent scene suggests that she is not being disingenuous: "To take't again perforce — monster ingratitude" (1.5.37). The fact that Lear

[28] Bullough, *Sources*, 7:326; for an comparison of this specific debt, see Collington, "Self-Discovery in Montaigne's 'Of Solitarinesse' and 'King Lear,'" 252; for the myth of Ixion as another possible influence on the hundred knights, see Hardison, "Myth and History in King Lear," 227-42.
[29] Anon., *King Leir*, 1.1.26.
[30] Ibid., 3.2.13; 3.1.17.

contemplates civil war as a viable solution says a great deal; Leir, by contrast, laments his daughter's hatred, acknowledges his own sins, and then prays for his own death.[31]

Even a brief comparison of *Lear* to its source-play therefore demonstrates a vigorous revision of the personal and political dynamics of the play. By removing the daughters' scheme to disinherit Cordelia, and by augmenting Lear's irascible temperament, Shakespeare offers a more sophisticated account of the sisters' behaviour, grounding it in familial dynamics, and thereby complicating any easy notion of the two evil daughters. Indeed, the sisters' decision to err toward self-preservation, informed by the "observation [they] have made" of Lear's "changes," is vindicated by every subsequent action by Lear (1.1.291, 290) — "Kent's banishment," the "cast[ing] off" of Cordelia, his threats and curses, and the successful receipt (albeit delayed) of the dowries themselves (1.1.302, 293).

In terms of nuancing the behaviour of the sisters, Shakespeare's play touches on a controversial dimension of dowries in Renaissance English law. At the point of marriage, a woman's title to movable goods — such as money, furniture, and other such commodities — was entirely subsumed into that of her husband's.[32] This collapsing of her estate into his was one dimension of a specific legal status known as coverture.[33] John Cowell's *Interpreter* (1607) defined coverture as: "the estate and condition of a maried [*sic*] woman, who by the lawes of our realme, is in *potestate viri*" (the power of the

[31] Ibid., 3.3.37-48.
[32] Amussen, *An Ordered Society*, 72.
[33] Bryan A. Garner, ed., "Coverture, n.," in *Black's Law Dictionary* (St. Paul, MN: Thomson Reuters, 2009).

man).[34] Natasha Korda has made the persuasive argument that this legal theory did not always translate into practice and, *via* the work of Amy Erickson, points to examples of "formal settlements, simple bonds, or more informal arrangements" designed to produce separate estates between spouses.[35] As ever, it is worth noting that law does not always translate into lived reality.

For all of these counter-examples, however, there is also significant evidence for the orthodoxy of coverture being upheld, even to extreme conclusions. As Amussen details, women who brought their dowries as money could reasonably fear their husband's prodigality, with instances of entire dowries being spent regardless of the wishes of the wife or community.[36] Even when the marital portion took the form of land, something to which wives still held title (though the husbands controlled their use and profit), it was common enough for a husband to coerce his wife into selling the property, and thereby gain control of the proceeds.[37] On the other hand, this practice was sufficiently frowned upon that in 1623, for example, the townspeople of Skoulton intervened to protect the last remains of Mrs Robert Kirby's dowry from the "extraordinary spending" of her husband.[38]

In short, there are contradictory principles at stake: on the one hand, a broader socio-cultural sense that the dowry was brought by the wife, and that her wishes ought to be

[34] John Cowell, ed., "Couerture," in *The Interpreter*, Early English Books, 1475-1640 / 723:01 (Cambridge: John Legate, 1607), my translation.
[35] Korda, *Shakespeare's Domestic Economies*, 40; see also Amy Louise Erickson, *Women and Property in Early Modern England* (London: Routledge, 1993), 32, 104-6.
[36] Amussen, *An Ordered Society*, 72-3.
[37] Ibid., 72.
[38] Ibid., 72-3.

taken into account, *versus* the strong legal rights of the husband and his theologically-sanctioned pre-eminence as the head of the family. This tension seems to run as an undercurrent throughout *Lear* but appears most vividly when Goneril snaps at Albany that "the laws are mine, not thine / Who can arraign me for't?" (5.3.156-7). The legal argument that Goneril makes is weak — I will return to the context later. However, the outburst itself speaks to a deep well of resentment, touching a widespread point of domestic contention. The daughters bring their father's property and power to their husbands, but they are impeded from using them. Edward Bond's *Lear* (1971) poetically suggests this frustration, one of the daughters remarking: "the map's my straitjacket."[39] They are the means and object of a transmission of property, not a subject in their own right.

To better contextualise this tension, it is necessary to consider the intellectual atmosphere surrounding these issues. The popular market for domestic literature concerning marital relations and household governance — often referred to as 'economics' from the Greek *oikosnomos* (*lit.* "laws of the home")[40] — seems an appropriate place to begin. In the lists of domestic duties, the avoidance of such disputes was a significant priority, something which comes through in the ubiquitous *Homilies* also.[41] Thus far I have encountered no direct discussion of wives holding land titles. However, what occurs consistently across the (male-authored) economic handbooks are vigorously-argued justifications for the husband's control of the entire family's property and his pre-eminence in the household

[39] Edward Bond, *Lear* (London: Metheun, 1983), 48.
[40] Korda, *Shakespeare's Domestic Economies*, 27.
[41] Joan Larsen Klein, ed., *Daughters, Wives, and Widows: Writings By Men About Women and Marriage in England, 1500-1640* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1992), 11-26.

in general.[42] The influence of *Eph.* 5:23 is especially strong — "For the husband is the head of the wife […]"[43] — with King James VI borrowing the phrase for *Basilikon Doron* (1599): "Ye are the head, she is your body; it is your office to command and hers to obey."[44] Such justifications take a form that will become familiar, drawing on commonplaces from the full panoply of intellectually authoritative discourses, including medicine, philosophy, jurisprudence, and theology. In the coincidence of these discourses, the lack of any robust discussion of marriage or sex difference begins to emerge as an intriguing gap in Agamben's political theory — a theory which after all ostensibly attempts to integrate biopolitics and political theology.[45]

Ian Maclean's study on the intellectual discourses surrounding the cultural construct of 'woman' makes the biopolitical dimension of Renaissance thought particularly perspicuous. Maclean establishes, with his customary detail and rigour, the differences between the most prevalent theological and medical conceptions of the woman. So, it is worth noting an antagonism between Renaissance medical discourse and Thomas Aquinas's popular description of female inferiority. Aquinas posits (following Aristotle) that "females are the result of a generative event not carried through to its final conclusion" and may therefore be considered "incomplete" or "defective."[46] According to Maclean, while not the only position in Renaissance theology — Martin Luther offered

[42] William Gouge, "Domesticall Duties (1622)," in *The Cultural Identity of Seventeenth-Century Woman: A Reader*, ed. N. H. Keeble (Abingdon: Routledge, 1994), 152-9; William Whately, "A Bride-Bush (1617)," in *The Cultural Identity of Seventeenth-Century Woman: A Reader*, ed. N. H. Keeble (Abingdon: Routledge, 1994), 150-2.
[43] *The Bible: Authorized King James Version*, Oxford World's Classics (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), Ephesians 5:23.
[44] James Stuart, "Basilikon Doron (1599)," in *The Cultural Identity of Seventeenth-Century Woman: A Reader*, ed. N. H. Keeble (Abingdon: Routledge, 1994), 150.
[45] Agamben, *The Kingdom and the Glory*, 1.
[46] Maclean, *The Renaissance Notion of Woman*, 8-9.

an alternative interpretation — nevertheless Aquinas's was the position "most often quoted by subsequent theologians."[47] Even within this theological 'one-sex model,' there was still an intriguing "separation of sexual characteristics from gender," with theologians discussing the problem of "a manly soul in a weak female body."[48] Maclean suggests that such paradoxes were used to reinforce the presumption of natural female weakness, and thereby "act[ed] as a conservative force on language and ideas."[49]

Medicine, by contrast, refuted the idea of 'defectiveness' as such. Certainly, by the end of the sixteenth century, woman was considered "to be equally perfect in her sex."[50] But the phrasing 'in her sex' is key. There are one or two notable exceptions, such as Theodorus Collado, who suggested that there might be "a random distribution of mental strengths and weaknesses in both sexes."[51] However, the dominant medical discourse relied on sex difference not only as an explanatory tool to understand anatomical variation but, as Maclean shows, as a foundational binary more broadly.[52] The result is while woman was understood to be "equally perfect *in her sex*" — a view distinct from femininity as fundamental defect of nature as in Aquinas — the female sex was still considered to be naturally inferior to the male.[53]

As this account suggests, the socio-political differences between the two positions are fairly fine-grained. After all, both legitimate misogynistic social structures. However, the

[47] Ibid., 9.
[48] Ibid., 26.
[49] Ibid.
[50] Ibid., 44.
[51] Ibid., 43.
[52] Ibid.
[53] Ibid., 43-4.

conceptual differences are still significant. Maclean suggests the increasing empiricism of medical discourse in this period is an important difference, perhaps laying the groundwork for more progressive shifts in later years.[54] I am somewhat suspicious of this view. It is worth noting, however, that Maclean's work is primarily an attempt to produce nuanced distinctions between discourses, and he does so convincingly. In the interests of scholarly rigour, I have repeated these distinctions, largely because I do not want my ensuing argument to suggest that the two discourses are homogenous or interchangeable. However, there remain certain correspondences between the theological and the medical conceptions of the woman that merit discussion. One of the things that Maclean helps to demonstrate is that the politicisation of sex difference in the Renaissance was legitimated by both discourses in very similar ways. In this sense, sex difference becomes the site of a coincidence between political theology and biopolitics. Furthermore, these two discourses operate in such a way that, despite certain minor antipathies, they are essentially mutually legitimating.

The theological prohibitions against female participation in specific religious activities represent useful examples of this. Women were prevented from holding ecclesiastical office, taking communion, being in specific sacred places, and touching sacred vessels.[55] These prohibitions were in part legitimated through traditional misogynistic scriptural hermeneutics (for example, by extrapolating from Eve's role in the Fall) but also through specific claims made against the 'uncleanness' of female physiology. As Maclean summarises this point, many of the theological arguments supporting religious disqualifications "relate only to the physiology of the woman […] whether in herself

[54] Ibid., 86.
[55] Ibid., 18.

saintly or sinful."[56] In this quite obvious sense, the physiological characteristics of women are being politicised and theologised already in order to exclude them from offices and activities of politico-theological importance.

Conversely, medical thought of the period, despite its increasing empiricism, continues to interpret its evidence according to the long-standing cultural and political structures of the period. Maclean notes, for example, the way in which the lingering metaphors of ancient medical thought — "the association of woman with mother earth, nutrition fruitfulness and the fluctuations of the moon" — still seem present in the Renaissance medical account of female psychology, which emphasises "passivity, receptiveness, compassion, mutability."[57] The inability of empirical medicine to transcend its political and theological context explains a certain tension that Maclean otherwise seems frustrated by. His summary here is so excellent and so pertinent to this thesis that I cannot paraphrase it:

> For all this, woman is considered to be inferior to man in that the psychological effects of her cold and moist humours throw doubt on her control of her emotions and her rationality; furthermore, her less robust physique predisposes her, it is thought, to a more protected and less prominent rôle [*sic*] in the household and in society. Although apparently not bound by the authority of the divine institution of matrimony, doctors nonetheless produce a 'natural' justification for woman's relegation to the home and exclusion from public office, and provide thereby, as well as coherence with

[56] Ibid.
[57] Ibid., 44.

> a central tenet of theology, an important foundation on which arguments in ethics, politics and law are based.[58]

My previously acknowledged suspicion toward the progressive empiricism of medical thought coalesces around a central point: that whatever the various empirical traits or characteristics being examined (whether physiological or, more problematically, psychological), they were still subject to interpretation within a particular cultural context. The public uptake of empirical research, and often the empirical research itself, tends to be limited to supporting conclusions that are acceptable to prevailing ideological conditions. *Ergo*, the progressive possibilities of empiricism are subject to the pre-existing socio-cultural possibilities for ethical development, not the other way around.

When discussing household manuals it is worth noting their internal presuppositions regarding their readers. The advice offered is typically concerned with "independent, property-holding households."[59] This is to say that these economic guides assume the perspective of the male head of the household, offering little direct advice for the families of servants, for example, except to note how they may better serve the household. To some extent, this perspectival shortcoming fits the literary object of this thesis. All of the main characters of *King Lear* belong to independent, property-holding households. When the play offers characters beyond this core model — a model prized in Renaissance English culture for its theological, political, and economic significance — they are never sketched with the kind of complexity that suffuses the central agonists. The old man, a

[58] Ibid., 46.
[59] Amussen, *An Ordered Society*, 67.

tenant farmer from Gloucester's estate, by leading his blinded and attainted lord serves a metaphorical function for civil tumult, rather than representing a *persona* in his own right.

In the previous chapter, I discussed the ranks of feudal hierarchy in cursory detail but any discussion of household economies — fictive or otherwise — demands a more sophisticated conception of social order. Amussen helpfully offers the seating charts of the Renaissance English Church as a paradigm. An aisle divided the two sides of the church: women sat on one side and men on the other. In conjunction with this division, as each row receded back from the pulpit, there was a corresponding decline in social prestige. Amussen provides an example of just how these two axes of power coincided: "In a draft seating plan of the women's side of Cawston church made in 1615-16, the wives of current officers were placed in the second seat, just behind the rector's wife and the wives of three gentlemen."[60] A notable achievement of Amussen's monograph is precisely to balance these two power differentials, showing where sex and rank intersect but also where they come into conflict.

In examining the constitution of social order, Amussen identifies the catechism as a key instructional device aimed at the indoctrination of subjects in relation to a variety of institutions.[61] Amussen makes a convincing claim that, through customary utterances like the catechism, the Church of England acted as the central disseminator of the mainstream political theology, a doctrine which equated being a good Christian with being a good subject, a good child, a good spouse, a good parent, a good employee, a good employer,

[60] Ibid., 28.
[61] For a more thorough overview of catechisms in early modern England, see Ian Green, *The Christian's ABC: Catechisms and Catechizing in England, c. 1530-1740* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 3-9.

and so forth. The common thread tying each of these seemingly discrete categories together, a thread which the catechism itself makes quite clear, is power. The church teaches how to recognise, exercise, and serve legitimate forms of power, thereby helping to produce the very conditions of legitimacy itself.

The 1559 Book of Common Prayer renders a key moment of the catechism thus:

> My dutye towardes my neyghbour is to love hym as my selfe: And to do to all men, as I would they should do unto me. To love, honour, and succour my father and mother. To honour and obey the Quene, and hir minysters. To submitte my selfe to al my governours, teachers, spiritual Pastours, and Maisters. To order my selfe lowly and reverently to all my betters […] to do my dutye in that state of life, unto whiche it shal please God to cal me.[62]

This statement, quite plainly, works to legitimate a variety of power differentials: supporting the authority of parents, political leaders, teachers, employers, and pastors. Children and adolescents were expected to repeat this regularly, ideally on a weekly basis.[63] These obligations were framed explicitly according to an idea of "dutye," which one is called unto or interpellated by.[64] There were a variety of doctrines and exercises

[62] Brian Cummings, ed., *The Book of Common Prayer: The Texts of 1549, 1559, and 1662* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 153; see also Amussen, *An Ordered Society*, 36; Gordon J. Schochet, *Patriarchalism in Political Thought: The Authoritarian Family and Political Speculation and Attitudes Especially in Seventeenth-Century England* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1975), 78.

Amussen states that she quotes the 1559 Book of Common Prayer (following Schochet) but the quotation appears to actually be from the 1549 prayer-book, in that it references the "King" (presumably Edward VI) rather than Queen Elizabeth. The wording of these particular quotations is otherwise broadly interchangeable.

[63] Amussen, *An Ordered Society*, 35, 96.

[64] Cummings, *Common Prayer*, 153.

which were imposed on those who held such positions of authority too. (One such responsibility being, by law, that the head of the household ensures their family attend church each Sunday, and that their children and servants be catechised.)[65] I will come to other examples later, but what is key in this quotation is that, from the position of the inferior, these positions of power have been justified in reference to God. To be a good person, a good Christian, is to recognise potency in its various forms and to submit to it: "To order my selfe lowly and reverently to all my betters."[66] It is through this idea of potency that the various analogies of power — the household, the church, the commonwealth — and their insistent reference to God becomes a little clearer.

Amussen argues that the potency of the father, the minister, and the sovereign are not to be understood as entirely interchangeable; they can only be loosely equated.[67] Yet, like so many historians, Amussen struggles to explain the popularity of these analogies. On the most rudimentary level, theology represented a hegemonic discourse, much as science has become, whose intellectual and moral weight can be borrowed to legitimate all kinds of other discursive enterprises. This kind of analysis has some explanatory power but it fails to describe the internal logic of the analogies themselves. The offices of the father, the minister, and the sovereign resemble God's in so far as every potency may be said to derive from or reflect the collected omnipotence of God. (In this, there is an echo of Elton's assessment of *Lear*, in which "[h]uman love betrayed reaches into divine love betrayed; thus the question of providence obtrudes, analogically, into the question of a daughter's affection.")[68] This derivation therefore presumes that, despite the well-

[65] Amussen, *An Ordered Society*, 96.
[66] Cummings, *Common Prayer*, 153.
[67] Amussen, *An Ordered Society*, 37.
[68] Elton, *King Lear and the Gods*, 260.

observed Aristotelian distinction between the political ruler and the domestic patriarch (a distinction not merely of quantity, but also of kind, as Agamben reminds us), the submission and subservience they each demand are almost indistinguishable in their spiritual ramifications.[69] This is to say that, at least according to the logic of the catechism, a defiance of institutionalised power is *ipso facto* a defiance both of nature and divinity itself.[70]

If rank and sex determined the expectations placed on members of the community, a virtuous reputation represented the degree to which a person appeared to fulfil those expectations.[71] This meant, of course, that reputation was a sexually differentiated construct.[72] Generally speaking, the reputations of men were contingent upon a wider array of social behaviours concerning both their families and the wider community.[73] The reputations of women, on the other hand, were more narrowly concerned with their domestic behaviour, and especially with regards to their sexual fidelity.[74] The supposedly private sphere of the domestic household had clear public ramifications. Reputation (*fama publica*) could often become a crux in legal proceedings.[75] For example, the credibility of witnesses could come under serious question on the basis of their reported domestic conduct, even in matters seemingly unrelated to the case itself.[76] Furthermore, through

[69] Agamben, *The Kingdom and the Glory*, 17-21.
[70] There is a corresponding logic to the Solemnization of Matrimony in *The Book of Common Prayer*, where the wife is instructed that "the husband is the wives' head, even as Christ is the head of the Church. And he is also the savior of the whole body. Therefore as the Church or congregation is subject unto Christ, so likewise let the wives also be in subjection unto their own husbands in all things." This is derived directly from *Eph.* 5:23. This is also repeated in the widespread 'Homily of the State of Matrimony,' see Klein, *Daughters, Wives, and Widows*, 9, 18.
[71] Amussen, *An Ordered Society*, 98-104.
[72] Ibid., 104.
[73] Ibid., 102-3.
[74] Ibid., 103.
[75] Bryan A. Garner, ed., "Fama Publica," in *Black's Law Dictionary* (St. Paul, MN: Thomson Reuters, 2009); Pollock and Maitland, *The History of English Law*, 2:643.
[76] Amussen, *An Ordered Society*, 98-101.

the practice of compurgation (where neighbours would swear to the honest life of the defendant), accusations could be thrown out of court on the basis of the defendant's good repute.[77] The fulfilment of sexually-contingent social expectations had clear legal weight, representing the governance of 'life' that scholars of biopolitics have traditionally associated with modernity. The key difference being that these expectations were set, measured, and enforced according to a less scientific schema.

As Maclean and Amussen also demonstrate, expectations for women were often contradictory.[78] The often repeated injunction for women to be both demure and obedient often came into conflict with their economic responsibilities. In agricultural families, wives were often responsible for taking goods to market, as well as for purchasing necessary household items.[79] Timidity had to be reconciled with prudence: a meek woman may not manage to get the prices available to her more assertive peers.[80] This was not only an economic concern, however. There are similarly useful examples of the complex mesh of expectations in the instructional literature of the period.

In the male-dominated literary culture, women, "whether fictive or actual" were frequently depicted as "extreme instances of virtue or vice."[81] One of the most popular texts of the period was precisely such an extreme instance: Philip Stubbes's *A Crystal Glass for Christian Women* (1591), which went through at least thirty-four editions

[77] Ibid., 99; Bryan A. Garner, ed., "Compurgation, n.," in *Black's Law Dictionary* (St. Paul, MN: Thomson Reuters, 2009).
[78] Amussen, *An Ordered Society*, 119; Maclean, *The Renaissance Notion of Woman*, 60-65.
[79] Amussen, *An Ordered Society*, 68-69.
[80] Ibid., 119.
[81] Klein, *Daughters, Wives, and Widows*, x.

between 1591 and 1700.[82] In *A Crystal Glass*, Stubbes gives testimony of his wife's life as "a mirror of womanhood, and now being dead, [as] a perfect pattern of true Christianity."[83] However, in his account of his wife's life and death, Stubbes also usefully represents an implicit conflict at the heart of this Christian economic theology.

A Crystal Glass concludes with an extraordinary death-bed sequence, in which Katherine lengthily rejoices in her "glorious vision and heavenly sights" of the "infinite millions of angels attendant upon [her]" and "the glory that [she] shall go to."[84] This leads into a zealous proclamation that she would "forsake" her child, her husband, and her dog, and "all the world, yea, and [her] own self," proclaiming that she "esteem[ed] all things dung."[85] This *contemptus mundi* is quite familiar, and theologically-sanctioned, but it also speaks to the implicit tension between the "mirror of womanhood" and the "perfect pattern of true Christianity."[86] The renouncement of her husband and child in lieu of God carries through the rationale of the catechism, and of the intertwined political theologies of potency and obedience, to its logical extreme.

What is striking about this example is that 'forsaking' one's family, for a woman, would commonly be considered "vicious" or "ungrateful" in most other circumstances, as the critical responses to Goneril and Regan have borne out.[87] Yet Katherine, due to the implicit obedience to a higher sense of duty, is not only depicted without censure but is,

[82] Ibid., 140.
[83] Philip Stubbes, "Selections from A Crystal Glass for Christian Women (1591)," in *Daughters, Wives, and Widows: Writings by Men About Women and Marriage in England, 1500-1640*, ed. Joan Larsen Klein (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1992), 141.
[84] Ibid., 145.
[85] Ibid.
[86] Ibid., 141.
[87] Cavendish, "Antony Sher"; Shenton, "Antony Sher."

indeed, hallowed. A very similar operation occurs in relation to the religious injunctions for "women to be silent."[88] Stubbes declares Katherine was always such, but at the same time, when in the presence of "Papist or Atheists," "[Katherine] would mightily justify the truth of God against their blasphemous untruths and convince them."[89] In fact, he applauds "her fervent zeal which she [bore] to the truth wherein she seemed to surpass many."[90] Once again, if one tries to structure these descriptions into an ethical model (as Stubbes intended), a complex shuffling back-and-forth of priorities and principles becomes necessary in order to virtuously fulfil one's duties. If such tensions are apparent in the lives of regular families, they are all the more of a concern in political dynasties.[91]

Maclean describes the variety and intensity with which the question of virtuous female rule was treated by Renaissance thinkers, tying it to a "reaction to such political figures as Catherine de Médicis, Mary Queen of Scots and Elizabeth I."[92] One of Maclean's key example is Torquato Tasso's *Discorsa della virtù feminile e donnesca* (1582). Torquato Tasso (1544-1595) was an Italian poet perhaps most famous for his *Gerusalemme Liberata*, which was partially translated into English as *Godfrey of Bulloigne* by Richard Carew in 1594 and then, more successfully and completely, by Edward Fairfax in 1600.[93] The impact that Tasso had on English letters is considerable. C. P. Brand's seminal monograph on this subject describes *Liberata*'s significance for leading English poets like Edmund Spenser, Samuel Daniel, and Michael Drayton in particular.[94] In *Palladis*

[88] Stubbes, "A Crystal Glass," 142.
[89] Ibid., 141-2.
[90] Ibid., 141.
[91] Maclean, *The Renaissance Notion of Woman*, 60-65.
[92] Ibid., 60.
[93] For each of these dates, see C.P. Brand, *Torquato Tasso: A Study of the Poet and of His Contribution to English Literature.* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965), 4, 31, 238, 241 respectively..
[94] Ibid., 226-76; see also Andrew Hadfield, *Edmund Spenser: A Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 255.

Tamia, Francis Meres mentions Tasso among "Dante, Boccace, Petrarch" as Italy's foremost poets.[95] There has been less scholarship on his work on domestic matters, however, and his influence in that field is harder to measure. Tasso's *The Householder's Philosophy* (trans. 1588) describes the contradictions of rank and sex, noting that when a man married a woman of higher rank (as in *Lear*):

> […] hee ought (not forgetting that he is her Husband) more honor and estéeme of her then of his equall or of one of meaner parentage, and not onely to account her his companion in loue and in his life, but (in dyuers actions of publique aparance) holde her his superior.[96]

Yet, Tasso also argues that the wife in turn should consider, "that the league which Nature hath ordeined betwixt men and women farre excéedeth it, for by Nature woman was made mans subiect."[97] This is an attempt by Tasso to think through, in the abstract, the competing power claims of rank and sex; competing claims that arise also, as I have noted, within the marital dynamic of Goneril and Albany: "the laws are mine, not thine / Who can arraign me for't?" (5.3.156-7). The other facet that *The Housholders Philosophie* draws out in an exemplary way are the differing conceptions of virtue for each sex: "The vertues proper to man, are *Wisedome, Fortitude,* and *Liberalitie.* To woman, *Modestie* and *Chastitie*."[98] Tasso, quite openly, moves on to describe the

[95] Francis Meres, *Palladis Tamia*, Early English Books, 1475-1640 / 287:08 ; Early English Books, 1475-1640 / 217:07 (At London: Printed by P. Short, for Cuthbert Burbie, and are to be solde at his shop at the Royall Exchange, 1598), img. 290/344.
[96] Torquato Tasso, *The Housholders Philosophie VVherein Is Perfectly and Profitably Described, the True Oeconomia and Forme of Housekeeping*, trans. T. K., Early English Books, 1475-1640 / 333:12 (At London: Printed by I[ohn] C[harlewood] for Thomas Hacket, and are to be sold at his shop in Lomberd-streete, vnder the signe of the Popes head, 1588), img. 16/44.
[97] Ibid.
[98] Ibid., img. 17/44.

customary double-standard of sexual ethics, in which infidelity in women is more vicious than in men. This argument for sexually heterogeneous virtue is developed in a number of other works, including in his debate with Ercole Tasso in *Of Marriage and Wiving*, translated in 1599.[99] In particular, Maclean draws attention to Torquato Tasso's *Discorso della virtù feminile e donnesca* (1582).[100]

There is, as Tasso acknowledges in this tract, a clash when masculine virtues, like courage, are required of women who are fulfilling political office. Tasso therefore draws a distinction between moral and political virtues. As Maclean has it:

> […] the practice of the [moral virtue], argues Tasso, leads to personal happiness, and the practice of [political virtue], to the proper functioning of the state […] Tasso argues that *the first duty of a princess is to her royal status*; it is therefore forgivable, although regrettable, if she neglects her moral virtues such as chastity in the pursuit of her royal virtues, as was the case with historical figures such as Semiramis and Cleopatra. *The princess is, as it were, a man by virtue of her birth*, and hence the masculine standard of morality applies to her.[101]

[99] Ercole Tasso and Torquato Tasso, *Of Mariage and Vviuing An Excellent, Pleasant, and Philosophicall Controuersie*, trans. Robert Tofte, Early English Books, 1475-1640 / 358:11 (London: Printed by Thomas Creede, and are to be sold by Iohn Smythicke, at his shop in Fleetstreete, neare the Temple Gate, 1599), img. 36-7/43.
[100] I have not located any extant English translations of this particular tract from the period, but its treatment of the contradictions at play here remain instructive.
[101] Maclean, *The Renaissance Notion of Woman*, 62, my emphases.

This argument drew intense refutation, as Maclean notes.[102] *King Lear* itself does not seem to endorse this position as such, but the play's structure seems to invite some thought on these issues. After all, *Lear* opens with Gloucester's admission of infidelity and more-or-less closes with the discovery of Goneril's (1.1.8-25; 5.3.83-160). The significantly different responses they receive seem worth noting: joking from Kent in the former, an accusation of treason in the latter.

The play stages Goneril's desire to transcend the conventional ethical restrictions inherent to her role as daughter and a wife — although notably only to a comparable degree to her male counterparts. What is instructive is that, when caught, she reaches for her royal blood as a defence *ex post facto*: "the laws are mine, not thine. / Who can arraign me for't?" (5.3.156-7). This remark is only possible within a playworld in which Cornwall and Albany appear anachronistically as dukes (a post-Norman title), rather than as kings in their own right (as in *Leir*, Spenser's *Fairie Queene*, and Higgins's *Mirror*).[103] Of course, Goneril's defence is not legally felicitous, nor do I imagine that very many audience members are rhetorically swayed by her argument. After all, unlike Cleopatra and Semiramis, she is not the regnant sovereign, *de facto* or *de jure*. Nevertheless, it draws valuable attention to the potential ethical contradictions between feminine virtue and royal status, between person and office.

This tension emerges at other points in *Lear*, and not simply with regards to sexual infidelity. Another point of contradiction between royal rank and feminine virtue arises

[102] Ibid., 63.
[103] Shakespeare elects to follow Holinshed and Geoffrey of Monmouth in this, who both describe Cornwall and Albany as "dukes" rather than kings. See Bullough, *Sources*, 7:313, 317, 325-6, 333.

with regards to attire. In "The Solemnization of Matrimony," *The Book of Common Prayer* (1559) cites Saint Peter's injunction to wives against the "puttinge on of gorgeous apparell," instead stating that they should, "as Sara […] whose daughters ye are made" apparel themselves in a more modest manner, attending to the spirit.[104] The adjective "gorgeous" resonates, consciously or not, with Lear's famous polemic about need:

> Thou art a lady;
> If only to go warm were gorgeous,
> Why, nature needs not what thou gorgeous wear'st,
> Which scarcely keeps thee warm. But for true need —
> (2.2.456-9)

This touches another tension that runs through the heart of Christian political theology, namely between glory and humility. There is a strong sense, in Lear's mind, that there is a necessarily visual or glorious dimension to royalty and power. Indeed, that is precisely what is at stake in his furious defence of his hundred knights. Though Lear arrives at a strong understanding of the deep injustice of spectacular society — "Through tattered clothes ^Qsmall^Q vices do appear; / Robes and furred gowns hide all" (4.6.161-2) — to begin with he struggles to think beyond the visages of power. He confirms this by reaching for the "gorgeous apparell" of aristocratic women as an analogy for his train of knights.[105] The insistent implication is that the efficacy of the spectacular dimension of power encourages a degree of ostentation beyond what would be held to be typically virtuous, despite its interior moral cost to the individual. At stake in all of this are the

[104] Cummings, *Common Prayer*, 163-4.
[105] Ibid., 163.

tensions between public office and domestic governance, between external function and internal subjectivity, between the transcendence of royal power and the well-ordered *oikonomia* of the self, the family, and the state.

In the opening chapter of *The Kingdom and the Glory*, Agamben declares quite clearly that one of the central aims of that work — and his *Homo Sacer* project more broadly — is the reconciliation of two political paradigms. As he states it:

> One of the theses that we shall try to demonstrate is that two broadly speaking political paradigms, antinomical but functionally related to one another, derive from Christian theology: political theology, which founds the transcendence of sovereign power on the single God, and economic theology, which replaces this transcendence with the idea of an *oikonomia*, conceived as an immanent ordering — domestic and not political in a strict sense — of both divine and human life. Political philosophy and the modern theory of sovereignty derive from the first paradigm; modern biopolitics up to the current triumph of economy and government over every other aspect of social life derive from the second paradigm.[106]

For those familiar with Foucault's conception of biopolitics, Agamben's critical shift here is perhaps already perspicuous. With biopolitics, but also with Foucault's concept of the *dispositif*, Agamben "neutralises the historical specificity that Foucault himself had assigned to his [terms]."[107] Nicholas Heron's article on Agamben's treatment of

[106] Agamben, *The Kingdom and the Glory*, 1.
[107] Heron, "The Ungovernable," 161.

Foucault's *dispositif*, in which he compares it to biopolitics, observes that Agamben does not "completely dehistoricise […] Foucauldian concept[s]" — as Agamben's insistent analyses of specific historical examples proves — but he does seek to demonstrate Foucault's claims that these concepts are "distinctly modern [phenomena]" are untenable.[108] Agamben's project, in this sense, falls into stride with the observations made by early modern scholars for some time now.[109]

In one of the more compelling monographs on the subject of biopolitics today — Jemima Repo's *The Biopolitics of Gender* (2015) — one can see that Foucault's sense of modern specificity often remains unquestioned. In outlining the conception of biopolitics, Repo describes how "[g]overnment became tasked with managing populations as biological beings and their life processes in order to regulate an economically efficient and biologically re/productive and healthy population."[110] Repo characterises this shift as an increasing attention to "life processes such as fertility, mortality, marriage, health, life expectancy, migration, and illness — which were seen as variables affecting population and hence capital accumulation."[111] However, any scholar with a cursory familiarity with English political discourse between 1560-1640 will note that these "life processes" were already rigorously scrutinised by ecclesiastical authorities, secular governments, and the local populations themselves.

[108] Ibid.
[109] Richard Wilson, *Shakespeare in French Theory: King of Shadows* (London and New York: Routledge, 2007), 80-1.
[110] Jemima Repo, *The Biopolitics of Gender* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 12.
[111] Ibid.

The biopolitical shift, therefore, is not exactly an increasing focus but rather a change in the explicit aims. The scrutiny directed towards questions of fertility, mortality, marriage, health, life expectancy, and so forth, in Elizabethan and Jacobean England primarily hinged on concepts to do with the social, moral, and political order of society. As has been demonstrated, what it meant to be a good Christian was inflected with responsibilities about being a good mother, how to die well, how to distribute property properly, how to be a good spouse, and so forth. Performing these roles appropriately often corresponded with appropriate financial behaviour — the public economic good, so to speak — but it was not seen as entirely reducible to that sphere.

The modern mode of government — "the economic management of population" and its "life processes" — differs from preceding paradigms only insofar as it represents the explicit capitalisation of the previously theocratic (but on some level still economically minded) domain of social structuring.[112] This is to say, these life processes began to be engineered in a discourse that privileged pecuniary and scientific mechanisms and objectives, rather than Judaeo-Christian political theology. To return to the reductive argument, modern governmentality first and foremost represents a shift of the master discourse — from theology to science — yet many of the crucial concepts and operations carry through. As Carl Schmitt provocatively argued in *Political Theology*, "[a]ll significant concepts of the modern theory of the state are secularized theological concepts."[113] Furthermore, as Jemima Repo's own examples demonstrate — the nuclear family of the 1950s and '60s, for example — such apparatuses are not unequivocally

[112] Ibid.; that this was often a conscious political strategy is evidenced by figures like Hans Reiter, who insisted that politics demanded a logical synthesis of biology and economics; see Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, 144-6.
[113] Schmitt, *Political Theology*, 36.

progressive, nor are they wholly detached from the sorts of socio-political presuppositions that saturated Western political discourse prior to the eighteenth-century.[114]

Repo's analysis of the ambivalences inherent to the term 'gender' draws her argument alongside another important critique of Foucault's project, and in turn, to identifying a point of opacity in Agamben's project. Foucault has been criticised for considering medical thought to be inherently repressive, yet Repo's argument precisely notes the way in which gender was repurposed by feminists to argue against biological determinism with great effect.[115] Certain constellations of concepts and terms can be appropriated from prevailing discourses in order to cut against repressive power structures, to cut against the apparatuses — or *dispositifs* — of power.

Herein lies the concern with regards to Agamben's political philosophy. Agamben has been criticised for catastrophising politics.[116] Yet, one of his partially recuperative gestures is to open the concept of the *dispositif* to include an unthinkably wide range of concepts:

> Not only, therefore, prisons, asylums, the Panopticon, schools, confession, factories, disciplines, legal measures and so on, whose connection with power is, in a certain sense, obvious; but also the pen, writing, literature, philosophy, agriculture, the cigarette, navigation, computers, mobile phones and — why

[114] Repo, *The Biopolitics of Gender*, 19, 40.
[115] Ibid., 78-96.
[116] Whyte, *Catastrophe and Redemption*, 6.

> not? — language itself, which is perhaps the most ancient of *dispositifs*, in which thousands and thousands of years ago a primate — probably without realising the consequences it was to come up against — had the imprudence to get itself captured.[117]

In the phrasing of this final example, Agamben risks slipping into simple animal *vs*. man/communication *vs*. language dichotomies, which he elsewhere criticises quite intelligently.[118] Putting that to one side however, the vast array of *dispositifs* Agamben proposes here has significant consequences for politics. On the one hand, it opens up some radical possibilities for critically redeploying the terms, ideologies, and apparatuses of political power, whilst, on the other, indicating the utter impossibility of ever escaping power itself.

A key *dispositif* that has emerged over the course of this chapter, one that recurs through *King Lear*, is the concept of virtue. Virtue, I contend, is an apparatus of selfhood that becomes associated with understanding and fulfilling contingent social positions and duties, defined by one's body as much as by one's office. To return to the Catechism: "to do my dutye in that state of life, unto whiche it shal please God to cal me."[119] In this sense, the debate over whether a female ruler should be primarily assessed on moral or political virtues precisely coincides with a vigorous contest of subjective precedence between embodied identity and political office. The possibility of knowing one's state

[117] Giorgio Agamben, *What Is An Apparatus? And Other Essays*, trans. David Kishik and Stefan Pedatella (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), 14.
[118] Agamben, *Sacrament of Language*, 68-9.
[119] Cummings, *Common Prayer*, 153; see also Amussen, *An Ordered Society*, 36; Schochet, *Patriarchalism in Political Thought*, 78.

(and, therefore, one's duty) is a concern that runs throughout *Lear*. As the external and internal catastrophes mount up — civil war and lost identities — the political and epistemological grounds for a contingently virtuous ethics become increasingly disrupted over the course of the play.

The implicit demand for obedience-as-virtue for all but those at the utmost pinnacle of the political sphere also represents a key concern of the play. Indeed, the fractious opening, in which Lear casts out Kent and Cordelia, represents precisely a conflict at the heart of duty, a hairline fracture between loyalty and obedience that the play's premise forces open. It is precisely the danger of this intersection of virtue, social position, and obedience which the play carries through to its absolute ethical extreme. The centrality of this question explains part of the tragic effect of Cordelia's death and, perhaps, can provide the means toward understanding the repulsion that some critics have felt toward it.

The cataclysmic tone of the event is evoked by many means. The stage-image of Lear bearing his daughter's body on his lap has been compared to the traditional *pietà*: the image of Mary bearing the crucified body of Christ.[120] Lear's mournful cry — "Had I your tongues and eyes, I'd use them so / That heaven's vault should crack" (5.3.256-7) — and Kent's grim intonation — "Is this the promised end?" (5.3.261) — both contribute to the apocalyptic quality of the scene. Despite these sacrificial overtones, it is crucial to

[120] Margreta De Grazia, "King Lear in BC Albion," in *Medieval Shakespeare: Pasts and Presents*, ed. Ruth Morse, Helen Cooper, and Peter Holland (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 148-52; Zak, *Sovereign Shame*, 22; Helen Gardner, "King Lear," in *King Lear: Critical Essays*, ed. Kenneth Muir (London and New York: Routledge, 2015), 272; R.V. Young, "Hope and Despair in King Lear: The Gospel and the Crisis of Natural Law," in *King Lear: New Critical Essays*, ed. Jeffrey Kahan (New York: Routledge, 2008), 272.

admit that Cordelia is murdered, the two forms of death being almost constitutively opposed. As Schwartz observes, where sacrifice "compensates, pays back, pays off," offering an individual as "substitutive and metonymic" in the redemption of a community; by contrast, murder "*violates*" the community and "cries out for satisfaction."[121] This cry is present in Lear's immediate, intimate lamentations — "No, no, ^{F}no^{F} life! / Why should a dog, a horse, a rat have life / And thou no breath at all?" (5.3.304-6). It is partly through these more naked utterances that Cordelia's death avoids slipping into abstraction. Feminist readings should be critical of the dramaturgical choices here: Cordelia is silenced and her dead body is instrumentalised as an object of tragic meditation for the play's mature, privileged, white protagonist. Yet, I think the play allows the possibility of reading this presentation of Cordelia in a self-critical manner.

In Greer's *The Female Eunuch* (1971), feminine masochism is a political problem of the first order. In Greer's view, it is a practice that is carefully inculcated and exploited from an early age, developing into a kind of emotional commerce.[122] In Greer's description of this enforced altruism, it is hard not to draw parallels to Cordelia's character arc, in which the self-sacrificial demands placed upon Cordelia are consummated in the climactic event of her death. Greer suggests that "[women] sacrifice what they never had: a self."[123] Given the succeeding fifty years of scholarship, it is worth noting the question as to whether *anyone* has 'a self' as such.[124] But what is more important, however, is the gist of Greer's statement.

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[121] Schwartz, *Sacramental Poetics*, 46.
Schwartz goes on to complicate this distinction with regards to *Othello*, in particular. Ibid., 50-58.
[122] Germaine Greer, *The Female Eunuch* (London: Paladin, 1971), 151.
[123] Ibid.
[124] For "discursive subjectivity," see Agamben, *Remnants of Auschwitz*, 140-3.

That Cordelia's self-sacrifice has a fundamentally masochistic impulse at its core is a provocative idea. However, this reading can perhaps offer a fresh insight into the otherwise cold defence that Cordelia makes in the love-test — "I love your highness according to my *bond*, no more nor less" (1.1.93, my emphasis). In a certain sense, it is *the bond* that is precisely at stake in masochism. This is not a reference to the various paraphernalia that are associated with BDSM practices, although such paraphernalia may illuminate this central component of masochism. Rather, as the writings of Masoch himself demonstrate, there is a powerfully contractual undercurrent to the masochistic relationship (the "emotional commerce" that Greer describes).[125] As Deleuze observes, many of Masoch's stories and, indeed, many of his own sexual relationships revolved around love-contracts, which is to say 'loving according to one's bond.'[126] This being bound, this position of vulnerable obligation, is an essential component of masochism. Deleuze writes quite brilliantly about the Platonic transcendence of this commerce, illuminating its coldness, its cruelties, but also its inadequacies.

For my purposes, a Deleuzian reading of the masochistic bond might go a touch too far. Yet, there is certainly something to the idea that Cordelia's behaviour is directed with selfish selflessness toward what she believes to be the fulfilment of her father's interests. However, it is absolutely crucial that these are not necessarily the interests of Lear himself. Foakes notes astutely that a key component of the tragedy is "that [Lear] cannot find release from his role as King."[127] As Foakes summarises it, "the burden of authority

[125] Greer, *The Female Eunuch*, 151.
[126] Gilles Deleuze, "Coldness and Cruelty," in *Masochism*, trans. Jean McNeil (New York: Zone Books, 2006), 10, 12-3, 18, 20-1, 65-6, 75.
[127] Foakes, "Introduction," 22.

remains, and he is always the monarch."[128] He later cites Lear's plea for Cordelia to forbear from restoring him to the throne: "You do me wrong to take me out o'the grave" (4.7.45), suggesting that Lear might have at last intuited a terminal solution to the "burden of authority."[129] Following this reading a little further would mean that, in truth, Cordelia's selflessness is directed toward the restoration, not of Lear, but rather of an idealised figure, a figure who perhaps never quite existed:

> O my dear father, restoration hang
> Thy medicine on my lips, and let this kiss
> Repair those violent harms that my two sisters
> Have in thy reverence made.
>
> (4.7.26-9)

I will leave the psychoanalytic implications of these lines for others to explore. However, in the interest of understanding Cordelia's self-sacrifice, this idealisation explains how Lear's interests and Cordelia's interests can be contradictory. More importantly, however, Cordelia's idealisation of her father goes hand-in-hand with a theologisation of her duties as a daughter, which cannot be more clearly expressed than in her line: "O dear father, / It is thy business that I go about," which is drawn directly from *Luke* (4.4.23-4, 23-4n).

Greer presents her own interpretation of *King Lear*, describing Cordelia as a "virago," and "[a] warrior princess […] who refuses to simper and pander to her father's irrational

[128] Ibid., 23.
[129] Ibid., 73, 35.

desire."[130] This literary criticism fails to address precisely the sacrificial, quasi-Messianic, tone of her behaviour. Moreover, it fails to explore the possibility that these seemingly unfeminine actions — invading England, refusing to "simper and pander" — are done in service of a yet greater sense of obedience.[131] An analogy with Katherine Stubbes — that "perfect pattern of Christianity" — immediately becomes legible here: the chaste woman, with the "soft, / Gentle, and low" voice, who speaks out against men but only ever in the dutiful pursuit of their interests (5.3.270-1).[132]

Indeed, as Greer's broader argument ought to suggest, Cordelia's servility to a grander sense of daughterly duty precisely coincides with the very feminine masochism that Greer critiques. In both of her rebellions, Cordelia must be aware that she risks being killed, punished, or harmed in some way. Indeed, that may even be part of the appeal. But the risk is acceptable provided it is not her own but rather "[her dear father's] business that [she] goes about" (4.4.24). I think we should be troubled by this and we should mourn, with Lear, the obliteration of a brave, earnest, and bold woman. However, it is all the more hurtful that she never found her way to some tranquillity outside of sacrificing herself for her brutal, myopic father. The saving grace of the play, the reason it can continue to work critically, is that there is no way to emerge from the play's climax feeling as though Cordelia's sacrifice was worthwhile. In this sense, the play points toward the hollowness of the purportedly messianic, but truly masochistic, ideal of femininity.

[130] Greer, *The Female Eunuch*, 208.
[131] Ibid.
[132] Stubbes, "A Crystal Glass," 141.

Nevertheless, it is worth weighing this with Pascale Aebischer's critique of *Lear*'s ending. In a candid moment of criticism, Aebischer admits that Cordelia "is easier to stomach if she can be read as an indisputable emblem with a symbolic function rather than as the representation of a 'real' woman whose ideal virtue women spectators are bound to fall short of."[133] In short, there is something accusatory in Cordelia's sanctified, sacrificial femininity. Tellingly, Maclean suggests that similar implicit accusations also lurked within early modern hagiographies of female saints more generally and within the figure of the Virgin Mary in particular. As he describes it: "[it] cannot be said, however, that such praise [of female saints, Mary, *etc*.] is to the advantage of the mass of women, who, by contrast with these saintly exceptions, remain associated with weaker reason, stronger passions and greater inherent vice."[134] In short, insofar as they are mobilised in intellectual discourse, the "symbolic function" of these saintly female icons, to borrow Aebischer's term, is first and foremost as a punitive counter-type, rather than a pragmatic role-model.

Unlike the intellectual treatises that Maclean examines, however, *King Lear* cannot be said to present this aspect of Cordelia entirely uncritically. In fact, this rebarbative quality of Cordelia's sanctified exemplarity is something which the play openly stages and explores. The audience witnesses it when Lear first upbraids Goneril, "O most small fault, / How ugly didst thou in Cordelia show" (1.4.258). Tellingly, the first and only thing that Regan ever says directly to Cordelia is a terse rebuttal — "Prescribe not us our duty" (1.1.278) — a sentiment, judging by Aebischer, that many audience members might share, consciously or not.

[133] Aebischer, *Violated Bodies*, 177.
[134] Maclean, *The Renaissance Notion of Woman*, 22.

This perspective on Cordelia as an accusatory emblem of feminine virtue leads, inescapably, into the question of feminine vice and into one of the most noxious passages of the play:

> Behold yon simp'ring dame,
> Whose face between her forks presages snow,
> That minces virtue and does shake the head
> [F]To[F] hear of pleasure's name —
> The fitchew, nor the soiled horse, goes to't with a more riotous appetite. Down from the waist they are centaurs, though women all above. But to the girdle do the gods inherit, beneath is all the fiend's: there's hell, there's darkness, there is the sulphurous pit, burning, scalding, stench, consumption! Fie, fie, fie! (4.6.116-25)

A great deal has been written on this passage, quite rightly.[135] The collapse of Lear's fatigued verse into prose formalises this moment of extraordinary psychological ruin. The misogynistic imagery that emerges from the furnace of Lear's troubled mind expresses a great deal about the character's internal life — more perhaps than any soliloquy of Hamlet's. The phrase "minces virtue" speaks to some of the concerns laid out in this chapter and to the conventional anxieties of the period (4.6.118). Yet there is something particularly striking about the imagery that follows, which is worth trying to address directly: "Down from the waist they are centaurs, though women all above" (4.6.121-2).

[135] For one of the most persuasive readings, see Bate, "Ovid and the Mature Tragedies," 143-4.

The meaning here is fairly unambiguous: there is something irreconcilably unfeminine, even inhuman, about female sexuality in Lear's mind. It is almost as if Lear's feminine ideal elides anything below the waist and thus to discover it is, for Lear, to discover the "sulphurous pit" or the "soiled horse" of the body (4.6.124, 120). An analogue that springs to mind is Boccaccio's famous gibe. I shall repeat it with Agamben's contextual summary:

> Against the women who affirm that 'all goods things are female: stars, planets and the Muses', Boccaccio opens up with brusque realism an incurable fracture between them and the Muses: '*It is quite true they are all females, but they don't piss*.'[136]

This remark, with its "brusque realism," serves as the opening epithet to Agamben's book dedicated to the image, a book which strangely draws back from the question of this specular, "[real]" image presented by its own orienting statement. Rather than attesting to "the gap between reality and imagination," the female-who-does-not-piss attests to a caesura within the historical image of woman itself, a caesura into which the image never ceases to unfold.[137] In *King Lear*, in Boccaccio, and, unwittingly, in Agamben's *Nymphs*, the woman is presented as an image in a constant state of falling apart from itself. The "incurable fracture" between women and the Muses for Agamben is in many regards nothing other than "the girdle" in Lear's fevered imagination: "Down from the waist they are centaurs, though women all above" (4.6.122, 121-2). The "brusque realism" of

[136] Giorgio Agamben, *Nymphs*, trans. Amanda Minervini (Calcutta: Seagull Books, 2013), 52, my emphasis.
[137] Ibid., 52.

Boccaccio's division is therefore not a repudiation but the expression of an insistent and accusatory image of woman.

What I mean by this is that, in some sense, the image of woman should not be understood simply as the isolated ideal — the nymph, the female-who-does-not-piss — but rather as the eternal falling short. Our inherited image of woman is not simply some Platonic ideal of femininity in itself, but rather emerges dialectically through some awareness of the malignant "false compare" also (*Sonnets*, 130.14). In this sense, sexual identity (which always ramifies into ethics and politics, as I have described) is simultaneously caught by and relegated to the failure of its inherited images. As such it is a *dispositif* that is both historical and specular. Theatre, at its best, then might become, as Agamben observes of Aby Warburg's *Atlas*:

> [a] station […] in which the images from the past that lost their meaning and now survive as nightmares or spectres are kept suspended in the shadows where the historical subject, between waking and sleep, engages with them in order to bring them back to life but also, sooner or later, to awaken from them.[138]

The temptation is perhaps simply to ignore such images, in the hope that they might atrophy into impotence. Yet, as Agamben's analysis suggests, even these withered images have afterlives. They are, as Agamben perceptively notes, "the locus of the incessant failure of the human to itself," but they are also our "constituents" and therefore, perhaps,

[138] Ibid., 37.

"the only avenues to [our] possible rescue."[139] In this sense, if the woman as centaur still haunts modern culture — and the tenacious artifice of the sex/gender *dispositif* suggests it might — then perhaps, by knowingly conjuring the image, we can begin to dispel it.

The difference then lies not in determining whether or not Shakespeare's depiction of Cordelia reflects a problematic view of femininity or not — it clearly does. Instead, it lies in whether or not the play itself can be read as critical, sympathetic, or (at the very least) ambivalent about such problems. To stake my claim quite plainly, my view is that the play does permit such readings. In some respects, however, the stronger evidence for this comes not from the treatment of Cordelia but rather through the play's depiction of Goneril, who transforms *via* an interplay of her duties and her sexual identity. In this, I follow the excellent work of Lesley Kordecki and Karla Koskinen, who have opened out the feminist possibilities of *Lear*, and who make the compelling argument that even feminist criticism has contributed to the marginalisation and homogenisation of Goneril and Regan in particular.[140] Like Kordecki and Koskinen, I want to take up Marvin Rosenberg's suggestion, "if they were not thought of only as Lear's daughters, the play might be their tragedy."[141] To do so, I will argue that Goneril precisely seeks an ethical subjectivity beyond her duties as a daughter and wife — her inability to pass beyond this framework represents a tragedy both for her and for the critics who continue to confine her according to the demands of those roles.

[139] Ibid., 56.
[140] Kordecki and Koskinen, *Re-Visioning Lear's Daughters*, 2-3.
[141] Rosenberg, *The Masks of King Lear*, 49-50.

First, to even attempt a recuperative gesture when reading Goneril, there is one act in particular that I must address from the outset. Goneril's most serious violation of moral decency can be said to be her suggestion to Cornwall and Regan that they blind Gloucester: "Pluck out his eyes!" (3.7.5). Her complicity here in one of the most abhorrent acts in the Shakespearean canon is hard to defend. But it is worth putting this remark in its proper context. *Lear* reverberates with images of blinding, Lear himself cries out for Goneril to be blinded earlier in the play: "You nimble lightnings, dart your blinding flames / Into her scornful eyes!" (2.2.354-5). He threatens to blind himself too, "Old fond eyes, / Beweep this cause again, I'll pluck ye out" (1.4.293-4); as well as to have Regan "flay [Goneril's] wolvish visage" (1.4.300). There is a horrible uncertainty about Poor Tom's line in the mock-trial also: "Want'st thou eyes at trial, madam?" (3.6.23-4, Q). Even when Gloucester defends his decision to assist Lear's escape, he too says: "Because I would not see thy cruel nails / Pluck out his poor old eyes" (3.7.55-6).

This litany of blinding images evokes an ancient, cruel time, one in which such punishments were more commonplace.[142] In fact, this is so much the case of medieval English legal history, that Pollock and Maitland felt obliged to coin the term "exoculation" for the act, as they considered 'blinding' too vague.[143] The repeated references to the 'plucking out of eyes' therefore has a series of effects: they foreshadow the horrible spectacle of Gloucester's exoculation; and they also reiterate the thematic blindness of Lear — "See better, Lear!" (1.1.159). However, they also suggest an archaic legal sphere, in which threats of mutilation are not abnormal. Goneril then, it must be noted, only ever threatens as much as Lear. Furthermore, she is ultimately absent from

[142] Pollock and Maitland, *The History of English Law*, 2:461-2.
[143] Ibid., 2:461, 461n.

the event itself. Peter Brook, in particular, exploited this disjunction to produce an intriguing ambivalence in his 1970 film version: in the moments immediately after Gloucester's blinding, the film cuts to Goneril crying in a carriage with Edmund, as though she had sensed and regretted her incitement of the act, all in the same instant.[144]

The other common point of repudiation arises from Goneril's sexual infidelity. I have already touched upon the structural symmetry (and ethical double-standards) presented by the corresponding admissions of adultery between Gloucester and Goneril. A key development that Shakespeare makes, with regards to his source material, is in the finer details of Goneril and Albany's marital difficulties. The Gonoril of the Queen's Men *Leir* is blatant in her disregard for conventional chastity from the very outset:

> By my virginity, rather than she shall have
> A husband before me,
> Ile marry one or other in his shirt:
> And yet I have made half a grant already
> Of my good will unto the King of Cornwall.[145]

This represents a component of a broader strategy, designed to demonise the two sisters as fully as possible. *King Lear*, by contrast, first depicts a troubled marital dynamic between Goneril and Albany considerably in advance of her affair. Their first interaction occurs in the aftermath of Goneril's argument with Lear. In response both to Lear's curse

[144] Brook, *King Lear*.
[145] Anon., *King Leir*, 1.2.25-29.
In *Leir*, Gonoril marries Cornwall, Ragan marries Cambria.

and his political threat — "Thou shalt find / That I'll resume the shape which thou dost think / I have cast off for ever" (1.4.300-2) — Albany's responses are, at best, cool: "I cannot be so partial, Goneril, / To the great love I bear you" and, in the Folio, "Well, you may fear too far" (1.4.304-5, 321). It is telling that Albany only speaks of his "great love" as a qualification to his impartiality — he verbalises his love but, as an intriguing reflection of his wife, he does not intend to act upon it. When pressed on the issue by Goneril, he can only offer a proverb: "Striving to better, oft we mar what's well" (1.4.342). Yet, all is not well, as the threats of flaying, civil war, and sterilisation demonstrate. Albany's neutrality, his "milky gentleness" and "harmful mildness," suggest at best a shallow optimism but, at worst, a reservoir of familiar contempt (1.4.337, 340). Elton condemns Goneril for excluding "pity […] from her cosmos."[146] Perhaps this is true — but we should note that neither her husband, nor her father are especially forthcoming with sympathy towards her either. Of the seriousness of Lear's threats, Goneril says quite simply, "I know his heart," and nothing in the play thus far suggests that she is wrong (1.4.324).

King Lear therefore is careful to present Goneril as an isolated figure. It is notable that, with the exception of her dowry, at no point does her family express any admiration or support for her throughout the play. Even Regan has moments in which she is appreciated by her family: "My Regan counsels well" (2.2.499). Actors have, understandably, been much more sensitive to the difficulties of Goneril's situation, noting her difficult relationship with her father and sisters, her unhappy marriage, and her struggle for

[146] Elton, *King Lear and the Gods*, 117; Elton later describes the marriage of Albany and Goneril as "hierarchical justice and degree are wedded to unfathomable evil and chaos, their conjunction suggesting the Hobbesian beast coupled with civilized order." See ibid., 301.

personal autonomy. Suzanne Burden is quoted by Oliver Ford Davies as having said that Goneril is a "portrait of a woman on the edge; the very edge."[147] In short, all the things which society has dictated should have made her happy have proven hollow — she is dressed in gorgeous clothes, she has a powerful husband, and a large staff of servants, all for nothing. She is still very much alone. So she embarks upon an affair with a vivacious, persuasive upstart, a man of passion and violence. In this, one should note, Edmund resembles Cornwall and Lear far more than Albany.

The appeal is clear, albeit implied: Edmund makes her feel feminine. As Goneril exclaims, "^{F}O, the difference of man and man!^{F} / To thee a woman's services are due" (4.2.26-7). Who hasn't felt a thrill — the sense of "achievement" that Butler describes — at the prospect of being found attractive by someone who seems to fulfil a masculine or feminine ideal?[148] Goneril's insistent application of lactescent imagery to Albany — "cowish," "milky gentleness," "[m]ilk-livered" (4.2.12; 1.4.337; 4.2.51) — suggests that her resentment is being experienced on the level of (heteronormative) sexual disappointment.[149] The rhetorical appeal of Edmund has been discussed widely in the critical literature, though an appreciation of this appeal rarely translates into sympathetic terms for Goneril or Regan.[150] I recognise Edmund's vigorous allure and, given her evident frustration with her own husband, I cannot entirely condemn Goneril for her marital breach — certainly no more than I could condemn Marc Antony for his.

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[147] Davies, *Shakespeare's Fathers and Daughters*, 123.
[148] Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York and London: Routledge, 1999), 29-30.
[149] Elton notes an irony in Albany being slandered as "cowish," while Lear indirectly accuses his daughters as "centaurs." See Elton, *King Lear and the Gods*, 121.
[150] Bloom, *Invention*, 479-80, 485.

Given the precarity of her grasp on this sense of femininity, Goneril's jealousy is not unthinkable. Regan not only seemed to please her father more, but she has already experienced what Goneril herself desires: a husband with "the fiery quality" that the "cowish" and "[m]ilk-livered" Albany lacks (2.2.281; 4.2.12; 4.2.51). Furthermore, not only is Regan the more colourful speaker but the death of Cornwall leaves her in a more attractive position for a social climber like Edmund: "But being widow, and my Gloucester with her, / May all the building in my fancy pluck / Upon my hateful life" (4.2.85-7). For Goneril to enter into a love contest with her sister would not only risk physical retaliation, given Regan's capacity for violence, but — worse still — sexual rejection also. Goneril realises the appeal of Edmund depends upon some sort of artificial "building" in her "fancy" but that knowledge alone cannot release her from it (4.2.86).[151] So rather than forego this precious and newly-won sexual fulfillment, she kills to secure her claim.

Now, I acknowledge that the poisoning of Regan is not commendable. But, even in this, Goneril has often received a harsher reading than her analogues in the wider Shakespearean canon. At no point does Shakespeare treat sexual jealousy lightly. In fact, his canon demonstrates with great sensitivity how the precarity of sexual identity can fuel the extremities of desire, not least when fired by the prospect of a partner's infidelity. If Leontes and Othello are considered some of Shakespeare's richest creations, critics ought to be wary of vilifying Goneril for slipping into comparably venomous depths. After all, at least her jealousy turns out to be justified: "To both these sisters have I sworn my love" (5.1.56). Similarly, in that very willingness to kill to preserve her 'achieved' sexual

[151] The question that Elton presupposes — as to whether Edmund inspires lust or love — remains, from my perspective, unanswerable. See Elton, *King Lear and the Gods*, 109.

identity in the eyes of an idealised sexual partner, Goneril should only be repudiated if critics are willing to repudiate Macbeth also.

The moment in which Edmund and Goneril's affair is exposed is a significant one for the play, but it is all the more significant for any scholar concerned with Agamben's project. As the play approaches this event, Regan and Goneril begin to squabble over Edmund's valour — "In his own grace he doth exalt himself / More than in your addition" (5.3.68-9) — not knowing that Edgar has delivered an intercepted love-letter to Albany, revealing Goneril's affair. Albany quips that Edmund would best suit Regan's 'commission' "if he should husband you," to which Regan replies: "Jesters do oft prove prophets" (5.3.71, 72). Regan then publicly declares to Edmund:

> Take thou my soldiers, prisoners, patrimony;
> Dispose of them, of me, the walls is thine.
> Witness the world, that I create thee here
> My lord and master. (5.3.76-9)

Provided that Edmund accepts, this would constitute a public troth-plight — or a betrothal — and therefore, by convention, a sealed contract of marriage. In fact, Edmund later admits that he was "contracted to them both," from which we may infer that such promises had been made privately already (5.3.227). The social encouragement toward a public promise and the legal necessity of public declarations (the banns of matrimony),

as Amussen's work shows, precisely function to permit the kind of objection that Albany then makes:[152]

> Alb. Stay yet, hear reason: Edmund, I arrest thee
> On capital treason, and in thine attaint
> This gilded serpent. (5.3.83-5)

This charge of "capital treason" is worth clarifying (5.3.84). Blount categorises treason as belonging to one of two kinds: "high," "paramount" treason (*alta proditio*) or "petit" treason.[153] In one sense, both forms of treason are "capital treason[s]" in so far as they are both capital offences, which is to say they are punishable by death. Yet, Albany clearly has "high treason" in mind. "Petit" (or petty) treason was a criminal offence until 1828, which was defined as the "lesser kind [of treason] […] where a Servant kills his Master, a Wife her Husband, a Secullar or Religious man his prelate."[154] This is clearly not the case here but the necessary difference in degree is worth noting. As I demonstrated in my first chapter, high treason requires a threat "whether it be by imagination, word, or deed" against the sovereign or commonwealth.[155] Albany was invested with Lear's sovereign "power, / Pre-eminence and all the large effects / That troop with majesty" in the opening scene (1.1.131-3). It is the quality of majesty that is at stake in this charge of capital

[152] Amussen, *An Ordered Society*, 104-6; Bryan A. Garner, ed., "Banns of Matrimony," in *Black's Law Dictionary* (St. Paul, MN: Thomson Reuters, 2009).
[153] Bryan A. Garner, ed., "Treason, n," in *Black's Law Dictionary* (St. Paul, MN: Thomson Reuters, 2009).
[154] Thomas Blount, ed., "Petit-Treason," in *Nomo-Lexikon*, Early English Books, 1641-1700 / 168:09 (In the Savoy: Thomas Newcomb, for John Martin and Henry Herringman, 1670); Garner, "Treason, n."
[155] Thomas Blount, ed., "Treason," in *Nomo-Lexikon*, Early English Books, 1641-1700 / 168:09 (In the Savoy: Thomas Newcomb, for John Martin and Henry Herringman, 1670).

treason (*crimen lesae majestatis*). Albany is quick to remind Edmund of his sovereign position — "I hold you but a subject of this war, / Not as a brother" (5.3.61-2).

Sir Edward Coke's *The Third Part of the Institutes* (1644) states that the second class of treason "concerneth, violation, that is, to violate or carnally to know […] the [sovereign's] consort, or queene. / the [sovereign's] eldest daughter unmarried. / the princes wife."[156] This is precisely the class of treason at stake in Edmund and Goneril's affair. According to Coke, "*Crime de Majestie vers le Roy p ceux Avowterors q spergissent* [*sic*] *la feme le Roy*" ([It is a crime] of [lèse-]majesté against the [sovereign] by adulterers who defile the [sovereign's] wife.)[157] This 'violation' or 'defiling' is defined as carnal knowledge (*carnaliter cognoscere*) with the stipulation that "if the wife of the [sovereign] doth yeeld and consent to him that committeth this treason, it is treason in her."[158] The legal precedents that Coke cites are famous ones: 28 H. 8 (Case of Queen Anne) and 33 H. 8 (Case of Queen Katherine).[159]

This criminal offence perhaps represents one of the most concentrated iterations of the patrimony-matrimony principle, in which sexual behaviour and reproduction are tightly governed by political theology. With this very principle in mind, Albany declares of Goneril that he "attaint[s] / This gilded serpent," thereby charging her with capital treason also (5.3.84-5).[160] The meaning of the verb 'attaint' is legally-specific, relating to a Bill

[156] Coke, *Selected Writings*, 2:955. See the table of *crimen lesae majestatis* in the appendix.
[157] Ibid., 2:968.
[158] Ibid.
[159] Ibid.
[160] For the fact that there are no accessories, only principals, in treason, see Thomas Blount, ed., "Accessory," in *Nomo-Lexikon*, Early English Books, 1641-1700 / 168:09 (In the Savoy: Thomas Newcomb, for John Martin and Henry Herringman, 1670); for attainting in various forms, see Thomas Blount, ed., "Attainted (Attinctus)," in *Nomo-Lexikon*, Early English Books, 1641-1700 / 168:09 (In the Savoy: Thomas Newcomb, for John Martin and Henry Herringman, 1670).

of Attainder: "the act of extinguishing a person's civil rights when that person is sentenced to death or declared as an outlaw for committing a felony or treason."[161] It derives from "the Latin term *attinctus*, signifying stained or polluted, and includes, in its meaning, all those disabilities which flow from a capital sentence. On the attainder […] [the defendant] is, in short, regarded as dead in law."[162] This "civil death" is a recognisable legacy and analogue of the earlier conventions of outlawry, as discussed in previous chapters. What is more crucial for our purposes, however, is the succeeding, and strangely ironic, speech act. Albany concludes his speech by barring Regan's betrothal to Edmund:

> Alb. [*to Regan*] For your claim, fair sister,
> I bar it in the interest of my wife:
> 'Tis she is sub-contracted to this lord
> And I her husband contradict your banns:
> If you will marry, make your love to me;
> My lady is bespoke. (5.3.85-90)

The sardonic humour here is quite distinctive of Albany. One of his more famous mocking lines — "O Goneril, / You are not worth the dust which the rude wind / Blows in your face" (4.2.30-2) — is a consistent punchline in performance: another instance of the familiar contempt discussed above. His propensity for coldness reaches its fullest

[161] Bryan A. Garner, ed., "Attainder, n.," in *Black's Law Dictionary* (St. Paul, MN: Thomson Reuters, 2009).
[162] Ibid.

expression later in the scene, when the bodies of Regan and Goneril are presented to him: "This judgement of the heavens that makes us tremble / Touches us not with pity" (5.3.230-1). To look more closely at the speech act, however, Albany is announcing an impediment to Regan and Edmund's marriage, namely the implicit "sub-contract" suggested by Goneril's correspondence (5.3.87). By so doing, Albany "contradict[s] [their] banns" (5.3.88). There is a technical, theologically-grounded mechanism at play here, that is worth considering in relation to Agamben's project. That it is staged with regards to a treasonous *carnaliter cognoscere* — which is to say, as an erotic and therefore defiling knowledge of majesty — draws together these various biopolitical and politico-theological dimensions into a dramatic coincidence.

Goneril's response to her attainder is to kill herself. For her suicide, as with everything else, she has received brutal censure: "[a] most damnable conclusion to a most damnable career," remarks Melvyn Donald Faber.[163] Once again, if one draws upon other characters in the corpus — Marc Antony, Brutus and Portia, even Gloucester himself — Shakespeare's suicide attempts are not unilateral markers of immorality. Elton offers a very sympathetic reading of Gloucester's desire for suicide in relation to "the Stoic position that courage expresses itself nobly in the face of tyranny by eluding its power in death. The Stoic doctrine of 'reasonable departure' (*rationalis e vita excessus*) permitted suicide in similar circumstances."[164] However, this reasoning is not then applied to his analysis of Goneril, which he argues is instead the fulfillment of Albany's accusatory

[163] Melvyn Donald Faber, "Some Remarks on the Suicide of King Lear's Eldest Daughter," *University Review* 33 (1967): 314; quoted in Tronicke, *Shakespeare's Suicides*, 114.
[164] Elton, *King Lear and the Gods*, 154n.

vision of "mankind preying on itself."[165] Intriguingly, in Shakespeare's sources, only "Cordeilla" kills herself, either by hanging or (in Higgins's *Mirror*) with "fatall knife" like Goneril — which Holinshed praises her for: "being a woman on manlie courage, and despairing to recover libertie, there she slue hirself."[166] That Goneril has a more masculine code of ethics in mind is expressed in her final lines, which I have returned to again and again in this chapter: "the laws are mine, not thine. / Who can arraign me for't?" (5.3.156-7). In other words, short-changed by her etiolated domestic identity, she has begun to exercise a political ethics more like her male counterparts, providing herself with a royal exemption for moral virtues in the manner that Maclean described.[167]

This dimension of her character was drawn out explicitly by Adrian Noble in the RSC's 1993 production of *King Lear*: among the Regency period costumes, Goneril was the only woman to don breeches and riding boots, a costume change that coincided exactly with the revelation to the audience of her affair with Edmund (4.2).[168] At the end of the play, Goneril prefers a terminal rejection of the duties of woman and of the female "state of life" she was called into.[169] She especially refuses the sexist criterion of feminine virtue that the entire play has worked to problematise: does she seem to love who she is supposed to love? This is, after all, the benchmark against which she is endlessly measured, one which is never applied to Lear, Albany, or Edgar. The continued application of this test to Goneril (and, indeed, the other daughters) is to fail to learn the

[165] Ibid., 299. For a sympathetic reading of Goneril's "last revolt," see also Tronicke, *Shakespeare's Suicides*, 114-20.
[166] Bullough, *Sources*, 7:331, 319; Spenser writes "her self she hong," and Higgins's Cordelle strongly warns against despair and suicide, lamenting that she became a "damned creature." See ibid., 7:334, 332 respectively.
[167] Maclean, *The Renaissance Notion of Woman*, 62.
[168] Adrian Noble, *King Lear* (Royal Shakespeare Company, 1993).
[169] Cummings, *Common Prayer*, 153.

lesson of *Lear*: "Which of you shall we say loves [Lear] most?" is neither an ethics, nor a reading, worth repeating (1.1.51).

Jonathan Dollimore once noticed an intriguing dimension to Edmund's scepticism of feudal property rights: Edmund's self-liberation from the myth of inferiority "does not thereby liberate [him] from his society's obsession with power, property, and inheritance; if anything that obsession becomes the more urgent."[170] Similarly, Goneril's attempt to escape the ideological demands ultimately enmeshes her deeper into the logic of structural sexism, not least through the writings of the critics who condemn her. She embarks on an affair with a 'real' man, one who can make her feel feminine, but one who betrays her at every turn. Nevertheless, there is the sense that Goneril, unlike the coldly static Edmund, develops over the course of the play.

This sense of Goneril's arc is important. The most damning readings of Goneril often quote disproportionately from the end of the play. For example, Elton's extraordinary account of Goneril as "in herself an aspect of disorder — chaos and evil" depends upon a very selective set of quotations almost entirely from the final two acts.[171] As I have argued, Goneril begins as a perceptive and isolated woman, who is frustrated on every occasion she requests the assistance of her husband or her father in her new role. By the end of the play, she has adopted an unambiguously aggressive political and erotic identity, pursuing a damaging idea of self-interest.

[170] Dollimore, *Radical Tragedy*, 201.
[171] Elton, *King Lear and the Gods*, 120, 116-20.

In other words, Goneril's transformation is regrettably limited: she may discard the restrictions of conventional feminine virtue, but only in service of fairly trivial improvements. The immense psychological effort she expends therefore never flourishes into a new state of life, nor even an awareness or appreciation of herself. The possibility of such a transformation is foreclosed when Goneril's affair breaches the bounds of the matrimony-patrimony relation in its concentrated regal form. In her final moments, she is condemned for defiling the majesty that she herself transmitted, from harsh father to cold husband. Faced with the polluting sentence of the sovereign attainder, Goneril opts out — knife in hand — and I, for one, will not join the chorus of condemnation for it.

THRESHOLD

What is distinctive of the early modern period, and somewhat irreducible in terms of modern legislation, is the lack of clarity surrounding what constituted a lawful marriage before one's community and before God. These vagaries complicate any retrospective discussion regarding extra-marital sex. Due to the importance of the troth-plight — the promise to marry — there was considerable disagreement as to whether sexual intercourse prior to the solemnisation in church was or was not lawful.[172] This was further complicated by widespread confusion concerning what constituted a legally binding promise. Amussen repeats an account from Norwich in 1565, whereby an Edward Bradley asked for Cicilia Hennant's hand in marriage, "to the which she answered nothing, but took the cup and bade him drink and so departed."[173] Even this was construed as consent by Edward Bradley and by his witnesses.[174]

Such ambiguities of consent that are routinely at stake in marriages of this period. An ancient legal maxim foregrounds this principle: "*nuptias non concubitus sed consensus facit*" (not sharing a bed but consent makes the marriage), by which is meant that the act of agreeing to marry, with or without physical consummation, establishes the marriage.[175] The correspondence between Edmund and Goneril would, by this criteria, be more than sufficient, provided neither party were already contracted. It is according to this logic that the private promise of marriage became "a common ploy in seduction" by those with no

[172] Amussen, *An Ordered Society*, 104-11, esp. 110.
[173] Ibid., 105.
[174] Ibid.
[175] Bryan A. Garner, ed., *Black's Law Dictionary*, 9th ed. (St. Paul, MN: Thomson Reuters, 2009), 1856.

intent to marry, a trope which appears in early modern drama.[176] One of the key juridico-theological mechanisms that protected the institution of matrimony from serial bigamy was therefore precisely the banns of marriage, which can be understood as an appeal for community self-discipline in order to secure the biopolitical stability of inheritance.

I find it surprising, therefore, that Agamben overlooks this concept. His project is defined as an exploration of the intersection of biopolitics and political theology. Within this context, he engages closely with the concept of "the ban," both as an act of exclusion and as the insignia of the sovereign. For a scholar whose work often advertises, quite overtly, his considerable philological expertise, the omission of "the banns" as another possible "originary structure in which law refers to life" seems to be a puzzling one.[177] All the more so, considering their shared etymologies: public proclamations (*gebannum*, Old English; *bannum, -us*, Medieval Latin; *bann*, Old High German, Saxon, Frisian, *etc*.).[178]

Nor is this a unique oversight in Agamben's writings. I noted in a prior chapter the gendered quality of sovereignty in the English political imagination, a quality of sovereign power that Agamben does not investigate. Similarly, the concept of *usus* (*lit.* use) in ecclesiastical and Roman law is also a recurring theme in his work, especially in *The Highest Poverty* and *The Use of Bodies*.[179] As a scholar of Roman law in particular, Agamben cannot be anything other than aware that among the forms of marriage

[176] Amussen, *An Ordered Society*, 110; for example, Thomas Heywood, *The Wise Woman of Hoxton*, ed. Sonia Massai, Globe Quartos (London: Nick Hern, 2002).
[177] Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, 23.
[178] "Ban, n.1," in *OED Online* (Oxford University Press), accessed October 3, 2019, http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/15092; "Banns, n.," in *OED Online* (Oxford University Press), accessed October 3, 2019, http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/15296.
[179] Agamben, *The Highest Poverty*, 110-43; Agamben, *Use of Bodies*, 14-5, 53-7, 80-94.

ceremony in Rome — including *confarreatio* and *coemptio* — is also *usus*. In these ceremonies, particularly *coemptio* and *usus*, there was a strong emphasis on the woman passing *in manum viri* (into the hand [*manus*: "the power exercised by the head of the family"] of the husband), which is to say that "in law she became the *Daughter* of her husband. She was included in his *Patria Potestas.*"[180] In this sense, there is a parallel with the English concept of coverture, at least as Cowell defined it: *in potestate viri*.[181] Yet, the Roman ceremonies were even more explicit that the wife/daughter was an object or article to be "used" by the *pater familias*, at least in the eyes of the law.[182] Puzzlingly, it is towards this "use of bodies" that Agamben steadfastly refuses to turn directly, but that the reading of *King Lear* must always demand.

[180] Bryan A. Garner, ed., "Confaerreatio, n.," in *Black's Law Dictionary* (St. Paul, MN: Thomson Reuters, 2009); Bryan A. Garner, ed., "Manus, n.," in *Black's Law Dictionary* (St. Paul, MN: Thomson Reuters, 2009).
[181] Garner, "Coverture, n."; Cowell, "Couerture."
[182] Bryan A. Garner, ed., "Usus, n.," in *Black's Law Dictionary* (St. Paul, MN: Thomson Reuters, 2009); Bryan A. Garner, ed., "Coemptio, n.," in *Black's Law Dictionary* (St. Paul, MN: Thomson Reuters, 2009); Garner, "Confaerreatio, n."

CHAPTER IV

LEAR'S REDEMPTION

The world of me, I of the world am weary,
And I would fain resign these earthly cares,
And think upon the welfare of my soul.[1]

This is how, fifteen years prior to Shakespeare's play, the Queen's Men's King Leir announced his intention to resign the crown. Both Leir and Lear seek to resign their "cares," the duties and responsibilities of their office, but their intentions for their life after office are quite different. Where Leir resigns to assume a *contemptus mundi* asceticism, to meditate on his soul, an activity which is curtailed by his daughters' riotous feasting; Shakespeare's Lear resigns so that he himself might better enjoy the pleasures of the world — hunting, feasting, jesting — without the impingement of any responsibilities, political or ethical.[2] Leir resigns earthly cares to take up spiritual ones; Lear resigns earthly cares to take up none, or so he hopes. That it is impossible to imagine Shakespeare's Lear, as he first appears, resigning to pursue self-reflection is instructive. Yet, it is precisely the trajectory of Shakespeare's tragedy to bring Lear to something approximating Leir's opening position. Lear, by the conclusion of his play, is led to discover or produce the philosophical, reflective temperament that Leir begins with. To do so, Lear must turn inward, toward a *care of self*. This care demands a humility that is

[1] Anon., *King Leir*, 1.24-26.
[2] For Leir's ascetic contempt of the world, see Elton, *King Lear and the Gods*, 64.

antithetical to his early dependence upon his spectacular sovereign office, and through humility Lear detaches from the superficial values of his office and he begins to articulate a new sense of self. As Epictetus remarks: "For what else is tragedy than the portrayal in tragic verse of the sufferings of men who have attached high value to external things?"[3] The philosophical gesture Lear must then make is perhaps best captured in his line: "Off, off, you lendings" (3.4.106). The tragedy of the play partly rests of the fact that this hard-won transformation is ultimately foreclosed by the untimely death of Cordelia and, then, Lear's own terminal collapse.

The aim of this chapter is to read *King Lear* with less emphasis on the "*crisis of sovereignty*," to borrow Emily Sun's phrase, but rather to focus on the *crisis of self* caused, in part, by sovereignty.[4] If the first chapter considered the ways in which sovereign office was an especially alienating doctrinal identity, this chapter considers Lear as someone trying to recover from that identity. In this context, "crisis" is meant in its richest etymological sense, historically referring to those moments where judgement is urgently called for: the juridical trial but also the decisive moment of a disease.[5] Such events are, to borrow a useful phrase from the *OED*, "*the turning point*."[6] Lear's madness is precisely decisive in that it signals such a turning-point: an inward-turn that thereby precipitates a deeper philosophical change.

[3] Epictetus, *Discourses, Fragments, Handbook*, 13.
[4] Sun, *Succeeding King Lear*, 2, her emphasis.
[5] "Crisis, n.," in *OED Online* (Oxford University Press), 1, 4, accessed October 3, 2019, http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/44539; see also, Giorgio Agamben, *Pilate and Jesus*, trans. Adam Kotsko (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2015), 58.
[6] "Crisis, n.," 3.

That Shakespeare's depictions of tragic madness are fundamentally about the Ovidian transformation of the subject has already been suggested by Jonathan Bate, who noted the introduction of the idea into Shakespeare's repertoire in *Titus Andronicus*, where Young Lucius, having studied Ovid's *Metamorphoses* describes how "Extremity of grief would make men mad" (*Tit.*, 6.19).[7] To some extent then, I intend to complicate the prevalent pattern of reading *King Lear* diagnostically. I resist the temptation to read Lear's psychosis primarily as evidence of an underlying psychiatric or neurological issue, through which his erratic early behaviour becomes explicable as a symptom of an impending and inevitable ailment. Instead, I focus on the contention that Lear's madness expresses an interior catastrophe, a shattering of identity, the details of which cannot be adequately explained through a diagnostic schematisation of symptoms alone.

Setting aside the specific symptoms and their diagnostic ramifications then, the truth is this: even in his madness, Lear is preoccupied with two forms of political identity, namely gender and office. The two forms, as previous chapters have suggested, are in some ways interlinked. Both make ethical claims regarding duties and virtues, which are socially contingent, and are often assessed superficially. More specifically, I will contend that in political office and masculinity, there are overlapping anxieties around potency and impotence — in Lear's case, to become politically impotent is experienced partly as a threat to his masculinity, as critics have observed. Yet, he also appears to experience these anxieties of impotence as threats to his humanity and to his sense of self as such.

[7] Bate, "Ovid and the Mature Tragedies," 135-6.

In this final chapter, I will pose that the latter stages of *King Lear* depict an ethical transformation of its central figure, a transformation whose conditions directly pertain to the concerns of each prior chapter. The central psychological crisis of the play emerges as a former sovereign attempts to develop a new conception of self that is not dependent upon the logic of office or masculinity — his quasi-banished state and his self-recognition in the figure of Poor Tom gives rise to an extended sequence of self-examination. Lear's madness therefore can be read as a descent into wisdom, as a philosophical crisis, which moves through parodies of office and masculinity. This is not a "process of purification," in Bradley and Dowden's sense, but rather a process of profanation — a process in which the allure of sanctity, the allure of purity, is dispelled through parodic or playful misuse.[8] This leads to the famous recognition scene with Cordelia, but which also crucially functions as a conclusive moment of self-recognition, thereby settling into a vision for a new form of life. The play's tragic force in part derives from how this final philosophical vision for 'the good life' is foreclosed by external circumstances, catastrophically executed by no other figure than the officer.

[8] Bradley, *Shakespearean Tragedy*, 263; Dowden, *Shakspere*, 263.

THE ANXIETY OF IMPOTENCE

I begin with the widely accepted observation regarding Lear: that much of his distemper seems bound up in a dangerous conception of his gender identity. Coppélia Kahn's seminal article on femininity in *King Lear* — "The Absent Mother in *King Lear*" — explores the powerful current of anxiety that coalesces around and animates Lear's brittle masculinity in the early acts of the play. Her argument begins with Lear's tortured cry:

> O! How this mother swells upwards toward my heart!
> *Hysterica passio*, down, thou climbing sorrow,
> Thy element's below. (2.2.246-8)

By naming his passion as hysterical, as Kahn explains, Lear "decisively characterises it as feminine."[9] Hysteria, deriving from *hyster* (the womb), was historically understood (aetiologically speaking) as a result of a "wandering womb."[10] Whether or not Shakespeare was aware of Edward Jordan's medical publication on hysteria, titled *A Brief Discourse of a Disease Called the Suffocation of the Mother* (1603) is largely irrelevant — "mother" evidently had currency as a familiar term for hysteria at the time.[11] The cultural associations, in the context of early modern doctrines concerning women, are as obvious as they are deplorable: that hysteria was the triumph of the impurity of the female body over the weak female mind, resulting in a distinctively feminine subordination of

[9] Kahn, "Absent Mother," 92.
[10] Ibid., 92-3.
[11] Ibid., 93.

reason to passion.[12] *King Lear*, even in the moment of this citation, evidently cuts against this particular mythologeme.

However, the presupposition that a loss of emotional control is fundamentally unmanly recurs throughout Lear's early flights of rage. In fact, *King Lear* stages a destructive irony lurking in the masculine investment in reason over emotion. Specifically, that an overflow of one's emotions is compounded by the additional shame of failing this masculine ideal. Lear's outbursts become the subject of further outbursts: "Life and death, I am ashamed / Thou hast power to shake my manhood thus" (1.4.288-9). The tearful outburst is shameful, the shame produces more angry tears, and so on. In all of this, Kahn suggests, that there is a fundamental repression of the 'feminine,' a "denial of connection with femininity."[13] As Lear demands of his hysteria, "down, […] thy element's below" (2.2.247-8). This argument has significant explanatory power, and Kahn offers a deep reading of the psychosexual dynamics of play, which I encourage interested readers to pursue. Yet, for the purposes of this thesis, the repression of femininity is less decisive than how this connects to the wider doctrinal problems of political identity and self.

In the history of Western intellectual culture, analogies between the state, the church, the household, institutional structures more broadly, and psychology have been abundant. Common to most is the proposition that the faculty of reason, the properly volitional force of the mind, justly commands subordinate faculties, whether mental or physical. Foucault summarises the classical distinction of psychology: "[reason is] the faculty of the use of

[12] For more on the broader medical backdrop to this, see Maclean, *The Renaissance Notion of Woman*, 44-6; Kahn, "Absent Mother," 93.
[13] Kahn, "Absent Mother," 96.

other faculties."[14] The "English Seneca," the clergyman Joseph Hall, expresses this psychological view with a commonplace political analogy when he wrote in 1604, "understanding and reason [are] the soueraigne faculties of the soul."[15] To take a particularly strong example of how this principle is then applied in ethics, Epictetus argues that only an individual with a properly developed "ruling centre" can truly be said to be sovereign over himself.[16] Correspondingly, his position suggests, that a king without a properly cultivated faculty of reason — one who has "subordinate[d] what is truly [their] own to external things," whether the "body," "petty possessions," or "reputation," — might be better said to be a "slave" and not truly be king, as they will be controlled by whoever "has authority over anything [they're] anxious to have or avoid."[17] In other words, a sovereign without reason is no sovereign at all.

The general notion that the soul ought to command the body as an instrument can be found in Plato's *Alcibiades* (130a).[18] The analogy becomes a crucial one in explaining the Christological hypostases (and, by extension, kingship), as I described in the first chapter — but it also underpins St Thomas Aquinas's conception of ministerial office, as I will discuss later in this chapter. Yet, as Agamben describes in *The Use of Bodies*, a more sophisticated version of this notion can be found in Aristotelian psychology: "The

[14] Foucault, *Hermeneutics of the Subject*, 456.

That self-governance through reason is the implicit crux of the play is persuasively explored by Elton, comparing the particular vices of Lear and Gloucester to the two parts of the "sensitive soul": "the irasible and the concupiscible," *i.e.* wrath and lechery. See Elton, *King Lear and the Gods*, 267.

[15] Find "English Seneca" quote. Joseph Hall, *Two Guides to a Good Life The Genealogy of Vertue and the Nathomy of Sinne*, Early English Books, 1475-1640 / 578:10 (London: Printed by W. Iaggard, 1604), img. 71/133.

[16] This leads into an extensive discussion of Diogenes and Crates as true kings, and Cynicism as the highest form of public office, like kingship, but one defined by an absolute dedication to virtue. See Epictetus, *Discourses, Fragments, Handbook*, 181-93.

[17] Ibid., 75-77. For another example of reason-led conscience and virtue as a sovereign power, see Boethius, *The Consolation of Philosophy*, 2008, 36.

[18] Plato, *Complete Works*, ed. John M. Cooper (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1997), 588.

soul commands the body with a despotic [*i.e.* master-slave] command, whereas the intellect commands the appetite with a political and royal command."[19] The impression is that the soul's command of the body is more absolute than the intellect's command of the appetite. However, although this model posits an intriguing distinction between the different qualities of command — the domestic despotic sphere, for Aristotle, precisely being different from the political not only in terms "of greater and smaller numbers" but "of kind" — nevertheless, in both instances the rational will justly subordinates the body and its appetites.[20]

As the implications around domestic dominance start to make clear, the primacy of reason, sovereignty, the head, the mind, also have a clear reciprocity — legitimating and being legitimated by — with what Kahn lists nebulously as other "patriarchal […] structures of authority, control, force, logic, linearity, misogyny, male superiority."[21] As an example of this reciprocal relation, Kahn argues Lear's shame at weeping does not simply reflect the fact that tears are positively coded as feminine, but that the tears also negatively imply a loss of reason, and therefore represent the "surrender of his masculine authority."[22] To return to the remarks of Epictetus, this suggests a certain layering of losses. The loss of Lear's masculine reason — the so-called "sovereign" faculty — thereby becomes a psychological analogue to his political impotence.[23] As his self-control

[19] Agamben, *Use of Bodies*, 3-4; for a direct source, albeit with a slightly different translation, see Aristotle, *Politics*, trans. H. Rackham, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1967), 1254b.
[20] Aristotle, *Politics*, 1252a; see also Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, 2; Agamben, *Use of Bodies*, 4; Heron, *Liturgical Power*, 99.
[21] Kahn, "Absent Mother," 94; Compare with *The Bible: Authorized King James Version*, Ephesians 5:23; Stuart, "Basilikon Doron (1599)," 150.
[22] Kahn, "Absent Mother," 106.
[23] In the Quarto, Lear seems to refer to knowledge and reason as "the marks of sovereignty," though the remark is somewhat ambiguous (1.4.223). See also Rebecca Munson, "'The Marks of Sovereignty': The

deteriorates, Lear's strange insistence that he is or can be "patient" comes into focus through this analogy between politics and psychology (2.2.419; 3.2.37; 3.6.57-8). Mirroring his nominal kingship, Lear's sovereign faculty eventually becomes sovereign in name only — his political fiction of control paralleled by a psychological fiction.

The gendered undercurrent is apparent in these explosive confrontations prior to the storm. However, Lear's sexual anxieties subtly present themselves from the very earliest point in the play: not in opposition to feminine emotion, but in opposition to the "second childishness" of old age (*AYLI*, 2.7.164).[24] This theme is suggested in John Higgins's *The Mirror for Magistrates* (1574), where the Lear tale is narrated by Cordelle beyond the grave: "Once olde and twice a childe, tis said with you, / Which I affirme by proofe, that was definde: / In age my father had a childish mind."[25] Shakespeare subtly weaves this into Lear's early language. For example, in Lear's opening speech, while he does not use any infantile nouns, the imagery he deploys is nevertheless suggestive: "Conferring them on younger strengths, [F]while we / Unburdened crawl towards death[F]" (1.1.39-40). "[C]rawl" catches the ear, in part due to the metrical stress. Kahn cites this precisely as evidence of Lear's pre-oedipal complex — but this might also speak to a submerged anxiety about his impending return to a senile infancy.[26]

However, "crawl" is distinctive precisely because it is not exclusively infantile. As the *OED* defines it: "To move slowly in a prone position, by dragging the body along close

Division of the Kingdom and the Division of the Mind in King Lear," *Pacific Coast Philology* 46 (2011): 13-27.

[24] For the relationship between Folly and second childishness, see Desiderius Erasmus, *Praise of Folly*, trans. Betty Radice (London: Penguin Classics, 1993), 23.

[25] Bullough, *Sources*, 7:324.

[26] Kahn, "Absent Mother," 99.

to the ground, as a child upon its hands and knees, any short-limbed quadruped or reptile, an insect, serpent, worm, slug."[27] Throughout the first half of the play, Lear articulates threats to his identity — whether political, sexual, or emotional — not only as emasculting, but as dehumanising. The most famous instance occurs when he declaims: "Allow not nature more than nature needs, / Man's life is cheap as beasts" (2.2.455-6). Few have caught this peculiar nexus of anxieties as succinctly as Erin Sullivan, who writes that Lear sees himself as "[u]nmanned in many senses — his lost attendants, his feminine tears, his declining reason."[28] With this propensity to bestialise any loss of face in mind, the semantic ambiguities in Lear's "crawl[ing] towards death" — does Lear mean childlike or wormlike? — perhaps subtly express only the first iteration of this characteristic tendency (1.1.40, F). As if to echo this, a strange convergence of the infantile and the vermicular occurs again, at another crucial point in the first scene.

During his furious "stranger[ing]" of Cordelia, Lear barrels through Kent's attempt at an interjection: "Peace, Kent, / Come not between the dragon and his wrath!" (1.122-3). As Elton notes, the dragon was, of course, a mythical symbol both of British kingship and of pride.[29] This sovereign signification can be adduced by the dragon's appearance in the arms of Henry VIII and Elizabeth I.[30] To add to Elton's point, this political symbolism also appears prominently in Merlin's prophecies in Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britannia* (1136), which are the source for the Fool's prophecy later in the play: "[two dragons] fought bitterly, breathing out fire as they panted […] the White Dragon,

[27] "Crawl, v.1," in *OED Online* (Oxford University Press), 1a, accessed October 3, 2019, http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/43973.
[28] Sullivan, *Beyond Melancholy*, 64.
[29] Elton, *King Lear and the Gods*, 192n.
[30] Ibid.

which stands for the Saxons […] The Red Dragon for [Britain]."[31] Importantly, Lear's line, in which he identifies himself with the image of the dragon — that ancient and apocalyptic worm[32] — then runs directly into the remark: "I loved her most, and thought to set my rest / On her kind nursery" (1.1.124-5). The old dragon Lear has been denied his "nursery" (1.1.125), upon which he had hoped to rest, and so he thunders — his cries at once terrible and childlike. In this, *King Lear* gestures forward to that other warlike "infant,"[33] Caius Martius, who also describes himself as "a lonely dragon" as he prepares to depart his mother (*Cor*., 4.1.30).

This self-animalising tendency therefore evokes the intensity of Lear's attachment to his capacity to control others and sustain his identity. Just as Lear foreshadows his self-forgetting madness when rebuking Goneril — "Who is that can tell me who I am?" (1.7.221) — he foreshadows his later exposure to the wilderness when rebuking Regan:

> Return to her? And fifty men dismissed?
> No! Rather I abjure all roofs and choose
> To wage against the enmity o'th' air —
> To be a comrade with the wolf and owl —
> Necessity's sharp pinch! Return with her?
>
> (2.2.396-400)

[31] Geoffrey of Monmouth, *The History of the Kings of Britain*, trans. Lewis Thorpe (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1968), 171.
It is this prophecy that lends King Arthur's father, Uther, the byname Pendragon. See Ibid., 202.
[32] Maria Leach, ed. *Standard Dictionary of Folklore, Mythology and Legend*, London: New English Library, 1972, 323.
[33] Bloom, *Invention*, 281.

The use of the term 'abjure' here is quite distinctive. The Latin etymology is *ab* [away, from] + *iurare* [to swear, oath; from *iuris*, law] and their conjunction can indicate a few different forms of speech act. It appears infrequently in Shakespeare's writing, typically indicating a self-imposed, sworn repudiation or renouncement: as when Prospero's "abjure[s]" his "rough magic" at the end of *The Tempest* (*Tem.*, 5.1.51, 50), or Olivia's rumoured oath to avoid "the sight / And company of men" (*TN*, 1.2.36-7).[34] However, in English common law, abjuration was the technical device that constituted an ancient form of banishment: the outlaw would swear an oath to abjure the country and, on that condition only, would be tolerated to walk the King's highway to a port and leave.[35] In these instances, 'abjured' held a double meaning: on the one hand, the outlaw having performed a sworn renouncement (*lit.* swearing away) of rights, and on the other hand the status of being 'abjured' (out of law) implying their disavowal by the juridical sphere also. Something like this double meaning is at stake in *Shrew*, where Tranio describes Ovid as "an outcast quite abjured" (*TS*, 3.33). Lear's remark — "Rather I abjure all roofs" (2.2.397) — denotes a renunciation of hospitality but it also carries a subtle connotation of outlawry. Like Coriolanus then, Lear threatens to banish society itself, rather than lose his identity on terms not of his choosing (*Cor.*, 3.3.120-35).

The language with which he expresses this alternative life is telling. On the one hand, he adopts a militaristic vocabulary — "To wage against" and "comrade" both evoke the conditions of war (2.2.398, 399) — but, on the other, this contrasts with animalistic imagery: "the enmity o'th' air," "with the wolf and owl" (2.2.398, 399). The two combine

[34] See also Malcolm recanting his self-accusations, "[I] here abjure / The taints and blames I laid upon myself" (*Mac.*, 4.3.124-5); Theseus threatening Hermia with a nunnery, as "abjur[ing] / For ever the society of men" (*MND*, 1.65-6).
[35] Stewart, "Outlawry as an Instrument," 50.

into an abstract, romantic vision of himself warring against the primordial elements, like a beast. He perhaps also assigns this proud abjection a degree of inevitability, if he does not get what he wants — "Necessity's sharp pinch!" (2.2.400). "Necessity" may simply denote this imagined state of deprivation (2.2.400n), but it could also suggest that, in Lear's eyes, such a state would itself become necessary under the current circumstances.

All of these elements reinforce what seems to be ostensibly a current of defiance, of masculine resistance. There is a strange symbolic logic at play here. Lear's abstract, animalistic imagery connects poverty with something inhuman; yet, his military terms suggest that a violent animality is itself preferable to a loss of authority and, thereby, his masculinity. Yet, what his bestial rhetoric occludes is the fact that, as the audience has already learned, poverty is a systemic issue among the population of Lear's kingdom. Two hundred lines earlier, Edgar envisages himself also "out-fac[ing] / The winds and persecutions of the sky" (2.2.182-3). However, while Edgar characterises that poverty in a somewhat abstract legal vocabulary, which resonates with his outlaw status, he also insists on its wide-spread human reality: "The country gives me proof and precedent / Of Bedlam beggars" (2.2.184-5). It is true that Edgar also describes that "penury in contempt of man" brings such beggars "*near* to beast" (2.2.179, 180, my emphasis). But by contrast, Lear does not even associate poverty with human beings until he finally reaches the heath and experiences it for himself.

The images of warring with the elements that Lear paints are, as Foakes notes, quite characteristic in their extremity (2.2.399n). They work to adumbrate Lear's impending trajectory into poverty, while also revealing his detachment from its lived reality — a

detachment that will later be overturned: "[F]You houseless poverty,[F]" "I have ta'en / Too little care of this" (3.4.26, 32-3). However, in the moment he is rebuking Regan, his militant vision of natural privation does not indicate a settled intent toward asceticism, but rather occurs within a litany of examples of things he would "[r]ather" do than dismiss his knights (2.2.397). Lear's furious catalogue of preferred humiliations, which constitutes his response to the suggestion that he dismiss half of his knights, is revealing. Lear claims he would rather "squire-like, pension beg" the king of France, "knee[ing] his throne" to "keep [a] base life afoot" (2.2.403, 404);[36] or be "slave and sumpter," meaning a pack-horse, to Oswald, Goneril's "detested groom" (2.2.405, 6). The use of "squire-like" recalls the earlier military metaphor but emasculates it with the connotation of male immaturity: the contiguity of "squire-like" and "pension" suggesting, once more, the conceptual proximity between the impotencies of minority and old age (2.2.403).

The extremity that Foakes identifies suggests that Lear's objection is not a material one, but a symbolic one. The material difference between having fifty knights instead of a hundred is patently not comparable to slavery. The symbolic issue at stake precisely depends on an anxiety of impotence. From this perspective, Regan's remark is well-targeted: "I pray you, father, being weak, seem so" (2.2.390). By saying this, Regan also announces the moment where Lear's model of nominal kingship falters, its impotence being conclusively exposed. Lear's response suggests, and foreshadows, that he would rather embrace some form of bareness, of animalistic necessity, than face his personal lack of importance in the symbolic dimension of the political order which he formerly dominated.

[36] Punctuation adjusted for clarity.

The first objection to my reading is an obvious one. If Lear has a dependence upon control, if he is anxious about impotency, why does he resign his sovereignty? Clarifying the intent of Lear's semi-abdication has proven a thorny problem for even the most sophisticated critics. My tentative answer is that Lear desires a certain kind of personal control while dispensing with as many responsibilities as possible. Leonard Tennenhouse presents a useful starting point, when he claims that Lear wishes to retain "only this symbolic status as king."[37] Hardison likewise comes very close when he compares Lear to the classical myth of Ixion: "the earliest and most persistent interpretation of the Ixion myth is that it symbolizes the desire for pomp (*dignitas*) without responsibilities."[38] Hardison quotes Salutati, suggesting Lear desires the "appearance of rule, without responsibilities."[39]

There is some truth to these interpretations. However, in a very important sense, it is this "symbolic status of king" that Lear is trying to fracture.[40] By this I mean, Lear appears to be uninterested in the various ceremonial duties, the "pomp" and "appearance of rule," that the symbolic status of king routinely demands, the so-called *lex ceremoniarum*.[41] Such "cares of state" are among the many burdens that Lear sheds (1.1.50, F). In other words, he wishes to be able to command without the ceremonial burden of potency — or, better, to retain authority without formal power.[42] Elton astutely notes Lear's first words

[37] Tennenhouse, "The Theatre of Punishment," 60.
[38] Hardison, "Myth and History in King Lear," 232.
[39] Ibid.
[40] Tennenhouse, "The Theatre of Punishment," 60.
[41] Agamben, *The Kingdom and the Glory*, 195.
[42] Agamben explores just such a distinction — figured as authority and potency respectively — in Agamben, *State of Exception*, 74-88.

after the abdication scene are the brisk command: "Let me not stay a jot for dinner; go, get it ready" (1.4.8).[43] The style of this demand exemplifies how Lear conceives of his new position: his sharp, prosaic verbal style declaring a rupture from the elaborate, formal verse of his first scene. Lear's shift in position is therefore intimately intertwined with a shift in speech. In this sense then, Lear attempts to retain the social force his speech possessed as king, without having to circumscribe it according to the performative demands of the actual office.

Crucially, Lear's intention is *not* to arrive at a position analogous to the line beloved by the most recent wave of political theologians: "The king reigns, but does not govern."[44] Reigning, while certainly distinct from rule, still implies some ceremonial or spectacular function — at the very least as a ritual object of acclamation.[45] Once again, Lear's rough prosaic style and his evident lack of care in safeguarding the "[grace]" of Goneril's court implies that such a doxological position is far from his mind (1.4.237). His choice is perhaps more perspicuous when instead considered as an attempt to render as personal what is official: to claim his office's symbolic force as properly his own. To put this another way, Lear appears to be jealously attached to his social identity as augmented by the office, rather than the office itself — at least, this is what his resignation of the legal duties and powers, but the retention of the name and addition to a king, seems to suggest.[46]

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[43] Elton, *King Lear and the Gods*, 64.
[44] Agamben, *The Kingdom and the Glory*, 69, 72, 75, 77, 110-1, 118; Mitchell Dean, "Governmentality Meets Theology: 'The King Reigns, but He Does Not Govern,'" *Theory, Culture & Society* 29, no. 3 (2012): 151; Mitchell Dean, "What Is Economic Theology? A New Governmental-Political Paradigm?," *Theory, Culture & Society* 36, no. 3 (2019): 17; Daniel McLoughlin, "On Political and Economic Theology," *Angelaki* 20, no. 4 (2015): 62; Jessica Whyte, "'The King Reigns But He Doesn't Govern': Thinking Sovereignty and Government with Agamben, Foucault and Rousseau," in *Giorgio Agamben: Legal, Political and Philosophical Perspectives*, ed. Tom Frost (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013), 143-61.
[45] Compare with Agamben, *The Kingdom and the Glory*, 195.
[46] For more on this distinction, see my first chapter, in which I analyse Lear's renunciation of powers.

In positing a distinction between social authority and legal powers, it is worth qualifying this with Goneril's Quarto-only complaint that Lear "still would manage those *authorities* / That he hath given away" (1.3.18-9, my emphasis). In this instance, Goneril is presumably referring to specific "administrative power[s]" that Lear formally disposed of, yet continues to intrude upon.[47] Therefore, distinguishing '*authority*' as a general trait from '*authorities*' as a term for duties or powers is both possible and desirable. In its general sense, authority may been defined as the "power to enforce obedience or compliance," "to give orders, make decisions" but this power may derive from an unofficial "moral" or "political supremacy," separable from any official legal or governmental powers.[48] In this non-specific capacity to command, authority then denotes an efficacy of social force that may or may not be attached to an official position. The paradox *King Lear* explores is that, without the implicit threat of violence inherent to legal office, authority depends upon willing service. So, to make a subtle distinction, perhaps authority is not exactly the "power to *enforce* obedience or compliance" but rather a power that, for whatever reason, *induces* obedience or compliance.

When Kent, disguised as Caius, introduces himself to Lear, he bluntly offers "[s]ervice" without any further qualification (1.4.23). When asked why he wishes to serve Lear, Caius claims not to know Lear but to recognise in his countenance a property which he "would fain call master" (1.4.28). This property is not any indication of formal power, nor is it any exterior marking of wealth: after all, Caius knowingly describes himself "as

[47] "Authority, n.," in *OED Online* (Oxford University Press), II.4, accessed October 2, 2019, http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/13349.
[48] Ibid., II.2.

poor as the King" (1.4.19-20). Instead, Caius says he wishes to serve because he sees in Lear some innate "[a]uthority" (1.4.30). Of course, this is fictive — Kent knows precisely who Lear is. Yet, this interaction is important because Caius's claim to have spotted some innate authority pleases Lear. In response to this offer of obedient service compelled by a personal, unofficial aura, Lear quizzes Caius on his abilities and then hires him: "Follow me, thou shalt serve me; if I like thee no worse after dinner, I will not part from thee yet" (1.4.40-1). This kind of charismatic, extra-juridical authority, unrestrained by the duties of office, seems to be the sort of control that Lear hopes to exercise into his retirement.

There is therefore a social throughline between these initial scenes, from active sovereignty to a personally authoritative but honorific kingship. If the style of Lear's demands changes, the objective remains broadly consistent: namely, the unquestioning compliance of his interlocutors. He claims dutiful obedience as a personal right — once again, exhibiting this dependence on control — such that when that right is questioned, he feels his very identity as a man is threatened. As I have demonstrated, this threat is expressed as emasculation and dehumanisation, as well as a degradation from his rightful position. Yet, it is also posed as a disruption to who he is as a person. Without authority, Lear questions the deepest ontologies of self. I began this thesis by examining the moment in which Lear poses the ironic question: "Who is it that can tell me who I am?" (1.4.221). I take this comic self-confusion seriously, not only as an adumbration of his impending tragic madness, but as an accusation. From his perspective, to disobey Lear must be to have forgotten who he is.

As Lear states later in the play, this deep identification with his capacity to compel is largely a result of his internalisation of a doctrinal mask, encouraged by flatterers:

> *To say 'ay' and 'no' to everything* F*that*F *I said 'ay' and 'no' to was no good divinity*. When the rain came to wet me once and the wind to make me chatter; when the thunder would not peace at my bidding, there I found 'em, there I smelt 'em out. Go to, they are not men o'their words: *they told me I was everything; 'tis a lie*, I am not ague-proof.
>
> (4.6.98-104, my emphases)

Lear has absorbed the "no good divinity," the bad "theology" (in Foakes's words) of the absolute pre-eminence implied by divine office: that he "was everything" (4.6.99-100, 100n, 104). Importantly, Lear sees a commerce here. This was not his unique failing but an issue that emerged from a doctrinal identity that others complied with and encouraged: "They flattered me like a dog," he says one line earlier (4.6.96-7). Later in the play, he seems to take more responsibility for his own errors, simply admitting to Cordelia: "You have some cause [to not love me]" (4.7.75). After all, as the play shows, there were — in figures like Cordelia and Kent — "[persons] o'their words," who refused to simply "say 'ay' and 'no' to everything F[that]F [Lear] said 'ay' and 'no' to" (4.6.103, 98-9).[49] With that said, Lear identifies a profound point, which became a major theme in classical philosophy: the jeopardy to self-knowledge posed by flattery.[50] This statement of Lear's therefore echoes Foucault's "general schema" of the classical arguments: that flattery,

[49] Elton suggestively reads Kent's final line — "My master calls me, I must not say no," (5.3.321) — in this context. See Elton, *King Lear and the Gods*, 292.
[50] Foucault, *Hermeneutics of the Subject*, 373-81.

like office itself, "prevents you knowing yourself as you are," and therefore fundamentally alienates the person from themselves.[51]

There are numerous classical precedents for this problem, which were well-known in the early modern period. In his fifty-ninth epistle, warning against flattery, Seneca tells the story of Alexander the Great being hit with an arrow and exclaiming: "*Omnes iurant me esse filium Iovis, sed vulnus hoc hominem me esse clamat*."[52] As the English clergyman William Chedsey translated it in 1545: "Euery man boldely affirmeth and swereth that I am Iupiters sonne: but this wounde of myne sheweth openly and cryeth that I am a mortall man."[53] However, a dilemma of courtly flattery that classical philosophy does not address — but that the play insists upon — is presented by a sovereign's demand for dutiful flattery: "Which of you shall we say doth love us most?" (1.1.51).[54] In such circumstances, dutiful service risks fracturing between obedience and loyalty, as I have suggested elsewhere in the thesis. While this fissure appears most starkly in this opening love-test, it elegantly refracts throughout the play.

This crisis of duty is particularly perspicuous in Shakespeare's depiction of lower-ranked characters, which breaks decisively from his source material. In the Queen's Men's *Leir*, the lower ranks are primarily characterised as either comically inept clowns or self-

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[51] Ibid., 376.

[52] Seneca, *Epistles*, trans. Richard M. Gummere, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1917), LIX.12-3.

[53] William Chedsey, *Two Notable Sermones Lately Preached at Pauls Crosse*, Early English Books, 1475-1640 / 2110:01 (London: by Johannes Herford, at the costs and charges Robert Toye, 1545), img. 25/78.

Chedsey mistakenly cites Seneca's seventieth epistle. For a modern translation, both the fifty-ninth and seventieth epistles are available in Seneca, *Selected Letters*, trans. Elaine Fantham (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 86-93, 109-14.

[54] The reasons for the relative silence of classical philosophy on this topic likely depends upon the peculiarities inherent to our post-medieval concept of duty. For more on this topic, see Agamben, *Opus Dei*.

serving vagabonds. There are the drunken watchmen, more concerned with their "bacon" than their "beacon," and the "merry crew of country folk," whose "quirks" and "antic fits" Cordella is amused by; or the "shag-hair'd, murd'ring" Messenger, who plots to kill for profit, and the cynical mariners, who are more concerned with "bargains" than doing kindly by a pair of old men in need of assistance.[55] There is very little attention to the general state of the population — something which becomes a significant concern for Shakespeare's king. Nor are the Queen's Men's lower echelons granted much in the way of complex moral dilemmas: the choices are typically between right and wrong, compassion or self-interest, with the moral stance of the play remaining clearly in focus.

By contrast, while there are comparatively fewer lower-ranked characters in Shakespeare's *King Lear*, those that appear participate in the play's central theme: namely, the strained relationship between the demands of office and ethics. Oswald, for example, has been described as a paradoxically loyal servant of an immoral mistress.[56] A pressing example, for this chapter's purposes, is presented in the figure of Cornwall's first servant, who disrupts the blinding of Gloucester. Although often overlooked in criticism, the killing of the first servant structurally repeats an opening event of the play. Like Kent, the servant explicitly claims to be enacting a higher loyalty through his disobedience. He intervenes against his master, so he says, on behalf of his master. He makes this crisis of duty clear in his lines, describing his interruption as a better kind of service:

1 Ser. Hold your hand, my lord.

[55] Anon., *King Leir*, 5.7.11-6; 5.4.7-12, 183; 5.3.34-8.
[56] Elton, *King Lear and the Gods*, 286.

I have served [F]you[F] ever since I was a child,

But better service have I never done you

Than now to bid you hold.

(3.7.71-4)

In a dark echo of the opening scene, this instance of free speech tendered in the name of good service infuriates the new sovereigns. In a catechistic move, Cornwall and Regan focus their incredulous rage on the servant's status, his political identity, rather than the moral substance of his objection: "My villein?", "A peasant stand up thus?", "Throw this slave / Upon the dunghill" (3.7.77, 79, 95-6). In another example of the prevalent critical double-standard, Elton condemns these remarks as an example of Regan and Goneril's "pride," neglecting the obvious parallels with Lear.[57] The king, like the duke, never offers a moral defence for his action, except to insist on his superior position relative to his servant: "Hear me, [F]recreant,[F] on thine allegiance hear me" (1.1.168). Similarly, with no one willing to tell Cornwall to "forbear," Cornwall draws on his servant, precisely imitating the moment in which Lear draws his sword on Kent in the opening scene (1.1.163). In these moments of jeopardy, both Kent and the servant suggest a willingness to die for their intervention: "Do, kill thy physician," and "If you did wear a beard upon your chin, / I'd shake it on this quarrel" (1.1.164; 3.7.75-6).

For all of these similarities, the consequences of these conflicts are distinct. Whatever tyrannical impulses toxically animate the opening scene, they remained restrained by the ceremonial rules of spectacle — "the form of justice," which Cornwall contemptuously

[57] Ibid., 120.

discards (3.7.25). There is a certain grim irony at work here. After all, it is usually Cornwall who helps prevent Kent's summary dispatch by Lear, joining Albany with the cry of "Dear sir, forbear" (1.1.163, F).[58] By contrast, tucked away from public scrutiny, Cornwall's own struggle between anxious potency and loyal disobedience erupts into grotesque violence. Importantly, this parallel demonstrates that Lear's abdication and Gloucester's blinding both become the site of a curious kind of intervention: the servant who speaks against the master, on behalf of his master. That this reflects Cordelia (and the earlier Cordella's) filial defiance is obvious. The difference lies in the interpolation of this act into a more conventionally official, public, or political relation. This distinctive action has some crucial precedents. Particularly for a play preoccupied by philosophy, self-knowledge, and the moral dangers of political office — as I will show — I propose that this kind of ethical intervention can be constructively read through the figure of the classical philosopher.

[58] This is a textual crux, since the Folio only indicates "Cor." and could therefore refer to Cordelia. See 1.1.163n.

"He Hath Ever But Slenderly Known Himself": *Parresia* and *Nosce te ipsum*

One of the most dramatically rich legacies of ancient philosophers, and often a great testament of their virtue, was their confrontations of sovereigns. As Epictetus remarks: "Now Socrates had learned to speak as one ought, to be able to speak as he did to the tyrants, to his judges […] Diogenes had learned to speak as one ought, to be able to speak as he did to Alexander."[59] For Epictetus, the capacity to "speak as one ought" to the highest political figures therefore becomes itself a marker of philosophical development. Crucially, these examples of speaking "as one ought" are not directed toward achieving specific policies or material outcomes, but rather with regards to the moral character of the sovereign themselves. This distinction is so crucial that it is worth repeating: the philosopher rebukes the sovereign not as a politician might, with a view toward some preferred political outcome, but with regard for the sovereign's own moral condition. (This distinguishes the Socratic and Cynical political interventions from, say, that of Boethius.)[60] This intervention is often referred to as a properly philosophical form of *parresia* (free or frank speech). Distinguishing this ethical *parresia* from *parresia* as a citizen's political right to freedom of speech, Michel Foucault explores this archetypal philosophical intervention in some detail.[61]

[59] Epictetus, *Discourses, Fragments, Handbook*, 100. According to Elton, Epictetus was known and translated in Shakespeare's era, see Elton, *King Lear and the Gods*, 104n.
[60] Boethius offers an impeccable and famous example of a politician, who certainly speaks frankly to the sovereign, and loses everything. Yet, his concern was more to prove the falsity of Albinus's accusers and secure the correct political outcome, than to attend to the moral character of the sovereign. It is perhaps then no coincidence that he then has to, as it were, rediscover philosophy in exile. See Walsh, "Introduction," xvii.
[61] Foucault, *Government of Self and Others*, 41-208.

The Socratic dialogue, *Alcibiades I*, is exemplary. Socrates attempts to pre-emptively secure the moral character of a young Athenian politician, through this kind of free-speaking (*parresia*) that political expediency itself often forecloses.[62] The dialogue was itself influential, widely regarded by Neo-Platonists in the Renaissance as the ideal introduction to philosophy.[63] But the episode was well-known beyond Plato. For example, it appears prominently in Plutarch's account of Alcibiades in his *Parallel Lives*, which Shakespeare probably consulted before or during the composition of *Timon of Athens* — the links between *Lear* and *Timon* will be discussed later in more detail.[64] In William Fulbecke's preparatory manual for legal education (1600), he remarks approvingly on this philosophical free-speaking in particular, noting how "*Alcibiades* was more moued by the naked speech of *Socrates*, then by the laboured eloquence of *Pericles*."[65] However, this private, ethical *parresia*, despite being a foundational episode for Neo-Platonists, was less well-known than the more public instances, in which the philosopher confronted the sovereign in their own court.

Two famous examples of this more perilous *parresia* can also be found in Plutarch's *Lives*. The first is Plato's address to the Dionysius of Syracuse, in which having lectured the tyrant on the subject of virtue, Dionysius snaps: "What business [Plato] had to doe [in Sicily]?" and Plato replies, "He came to seeke a good man," pointedly implying that he

[62] Plato, *Complete Works*, 557-95; see also Foucault, *Hermeneutics of the Subject*, 31-9; Foucault, *Government of Self and Others*, 225-7.
[63] Foucault, *Hermeneutics of the Subject*, 170-5.
[64] Plutarch, *The Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romanes*, trans. Thomas North, Early English Books, 1475-1640 / 1712:12 (London: Thomas Vatroullier and Iohn Wight, 1579), img. 119-120/603.
[65] William Fulbecke, *A Direction or Preparatiue to the Study of the Lawe*, Early English Books, 1475-1640 / 510:02 (At London: Printed by [Adam Islip? for] Thomas Wight, 1600), img. 26/98; see also, D. R. Woolf, "Fulbecke, William (1559/60-1616), Lawyer and Historian," in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2004), https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/10221.

had not found one.[66] In retaliation, Dionysius attempts to have Plato killed, and failing that has him enslaved.[67] This tale recurs throughout early modern letters, including prominently in Sir Philip Sidney's *The Defence of Poesy* (comp. *c.* 1582-3, published 1595).[68] Another famous instance can be found in the confrontations between Diogenes of Sinope and Alexander the Great, also reported by Plutarch, but dramatised for the commercial stage by John Lyly in *Campaspe* (1584).[69]

Even in these classical sources, such virtuous free speaking in pursuit of a sovereign's moral character was, of course, not the unique preserve of the philosopher. For example, in Plutarch's *Dion*, after having attempted to protect Plato, the virtuous courtier Dion follows the philosopher's example, also risking his life to morally improve the tyrant.[70] Therefore, although many of the more fabled instances of this ethico-political *parresia* are performed most authoritatively by philosophers, philosophers certainly had no monopoly on them. Therefore, despite this great image of the philosopher perilously but honestly challenging the morality of the sovereign — an image distilled in the democratic context of Socrates's trial also — this is merely the embodiment of a broader virtuous conduct.[71] In this sense, while one can certainly read the early public confrontation of Lear by Kent and Cordelia as instances of this philosophically-celebrated *parresia*, I am not attempting to imply that the characters are presented as philosophers as such.

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[66] Plutarch, *Lives*, img. 531/603; Foucault, *Government of Self and Others*, 49.
[67] Plutarch, *Lives*, img. 531/603; Foucault, *Government of Self and Others*, 49.
[68] Philip Sidney, *The Defence of Poesie*, Early English Books, 1475-1640 / 904:16 (London: Printed [by Thomas Creede] for VVilliam Ponsonby, 1595), img. 28/37; for composition date, see H. R. Woudhuysen, "Sidney, Sir Philip (1554-1586), Author and Courtier," in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2014), https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/25522. This anecdote is widely repeated in early modern literature, as an EEBO search of "Plato NEAR Dionysius" will demonstrate.
[69] Plutarch, *Lives*, img. 380/603.
[70] Ibid., 531-2/603.
[71] Plato, *Complete Works*, 17-36.

Instead, I am arguing that Lear's tyrannical outbursts can be persuasively read as an index of Lear's ethical dysfunction and, therefore, of his need for philosophy. In this vein, Elton gestures toward Lear's opening behaviour as a failure of "the natural moral and Stoic virtues of prudence, justice, and temperance […] by which one governs oneself (*bonum proprium*), [and] by which one governs others (*bonum commune*)."[72] Something like this philosophical failing is pointed out by the Fool when he remarks that, in Lear's court, "Truth's a dog ^{Q}that^{Q} must to kennel: he must be whipped out, when the Lady Brach may stand by the fire and stink" (1.4.109-11).[73] Likewise, the Fool perceives that Lear's problem is ultimately a failure to cultivate wisdom: "Thou shouldst not have been old till thou hadst been wise" (1.5.41-2).[74] Both of these remarks imply that Lear's initial behaviour is not necessarily simply a matter of medical or physiological dysfunction, nor of any purely political issue, but rather as a properly philosophical problem. On the other hand, Shakespeare's opening duplicates Cordelia's *parresia* into Kent's, thereby expanding Lear's philosophical failure out of the domestic sphere, and into a more explicitly political one. By doing so, the play makes itself available as an echo of those classical events, showing the site in which philosophy and politics came into most dramatic conflict: the moral fibre of the sovereign.

[72] Elton, *King Lear and the Gods*, 79; compare with Foucault, *Government of Self and Others*, esp. 386-8.
[73] Both Foakes and Elton read this as a reference to Cordelia (Truth) and the other daughters (Lady Brach [*lit.* bitch, she-dog]), see 1.3.110n and Elton, *King Lear and the Gods*, 309.
[74] For the Fool as a "wise youth," in contrast to Lear, see ibid., 320; for Roman Stoicism positing the wisdom of sage "old age" as the telos of philosophy, see Foucault, *Hermeneutics of the Subject*, 109-11, 132.

That Lear's dysfunction is first and foremost philosophical is suggested by other characters also. In an exchange completely original to Shakespeare's version, Regan and Goneril meditate on their father's flaws. Both Regan and Goneril admit that it is partly "the infirmity of his age," and his "choleric years," noting that even "[t]he best and soundest of his time ['physical age'] hath been but rash" (1.1.294, 300, 296-7). So, it is certainly true that the physical and physiological dimension of Lear's temper are present in the text. These lines certainly seem germane to more medically-oriented readings.[75] However, there is also an important counterpoint, as Regan observes: that Lear "hath *ever* but slenderly known himself" (1.1.295, my emphasis). Goneril agrees, and describes his poor behaviour tellingly as "the imperfections of *long-engrafted* condition" (1.1.298, my emphasis). The phrasing here is a little ambiguous: Goneril may mean that Lear's irritability in general has become engrained through repetition; but the phrase "long-engrafted condition" could also glance obliquely to his habituation to wielding sovereign authority in particular. This second sense is supported by her next lines, where she forecasts that, "[i]f our father carry authority with such disposition as he bears, this last surrender of his will but offend us" (1.1.305-7). In other words, Goneril suspects that Lear's familiarity with sovereign power, his habituation to his office, will lead him to offend those to whom he has ostensibly given power.

That Goneril sees this, like Regan, as part of Lear's failure to 'know himself' is reiterated when she confronts her father. Importantly, her chief criticism of Lear's train is that they

[75] For an example of the influence of the medical reading in performance, see *Talking Lear: Simon Russell Beale on King Lear* (National Theatre, 2014), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xgXM0b6PaHw; Jonathan Bate, "'The Infirmity of His Age': Shakespeare's 400th Anniversary," *The Lancet* 387, no. 10029 (2016): 1716; Robert Mccrum, "'Perfect Mind': On Shakespeare and the Brain," *Brain* 139, no. 12 (2016): 1312-3; Munson, "The Marks of Sovereignty," 15.

are "so disordered, so debauched" that they undermine the sanctity of her court: "Epicurism and lust / Makes it more like a tavern or a brothel / Than a graced palace" (1.4.235-7). The accusation is that, having discarded the "cares of state," which included the ceremonial obligations underpinning the spectacular power of sovereignty, Lear has begun to undermine his own successors' "graced palace" by assenting to the knights' debauched behaviour (1.1.50, F; 1.4.237). Yet, she proposes a solution, which tempers her argument to "disquantity [Lear's] train" (1.4.240):

> […] the remainders that shall still depend
> To be such men as may besort your age,
> Which *know themselves, and you*.
>
> (1.4.241-3, my emphasis)

Here, Goneril echoes Regan's somewhat cryptic criticism: that Lear does not "know himself." Surprisingly, neither of these phrases, with their emphasis on self-knowledge — "known himself," and "know themselves" (1.1.295; 1.4.243) — appear anywhere else in Shakespeare's works. The phrase "know thyself" has ancient roots: it was originally made famous as an inscription at Apollo's temple in Delphos.[76] Even a cursory search of EEBO reveals a preponderance of references to the phrase, especially within translations of classical authors — Euclid and Plutarch, for example — and in publications by literary authors with classical educations: Sir John Davies, John Lyly, Stephen Gosson, and Robert Greene.[77] It also appears prominently in works of natural philosophy and

[76] Eliza Gregory Wilkins, *"Know Thyself" In Greek and Latin Literature* (New York and London: Garland Publishing, 1979), 1.
[77] Plutarch, *The Philosophie, Commonlie Called, the Morals Vvritten by the Learned Philosopher Plutarch of Chaeronea*, trans. Philemon Holland, Early English Books, 1475-1640 / 390:04 (At London: Printed by

theology, especially those focused on the nature of humankind, and on the human mind or soul, *e.g.* Thomas Wright's *The Passions of the Minde* (1601) or Thomas Roger's *The Anatomie of the Minde* (1576).[78] (The original Greek phrase "*gnōthi seauton*" unsurprisingly occurs less frequently than its Latin or English translations: *nosce te ipsum* or "know thyself.") In any case, the phrase clearly had significant currency in early modern English intellectual culture, and especially with regards to the different forms of philosophical discourse. Yet, what is also clear from this brief survey is that the phrase's oracular ambiguity was very much still in effect.

In classical sources, the Delphic maxim was most famously taken up and explored by Plato's Socrates, especially in the *Alcibiades I* and in the *Defence*. In the latter of these two prominent instances of Socratic ethico-political *parresia,* to which I have already referred, Socrates distils the vagueness of the phrase into the philosophical axiom: "The unexamined life is not worth living."[79] Knowing thyself, in the Socratic philosophical tradition, thereby provides the foundation for the life worth living. Likewise, Socrates's

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Arnold Hatfield, 1603), img. 29, 105/721; John Davies, *Nosce Teipsum This Oracle Expounded in Two Elegies*, Early English Books, 1475-1640 / 1790:16 (London: Printed by Richard Field, for Iohn Standish, 1599), 1/44; John Lyly, *Endimion, the Man in the Moone*, Early English Books, 1475-1640 / 554:07 (At London: Printed by I. Charlewood, for the widdowe Broome, 1591), img. 1/38; Stephen Gosson, *The Ephemerides of Phialo Deuided into Three Bookes*, Early English Books, 1475-1640 / 384:20 (Imprinted at London: By Thomas Dawson, 1579), img. 43/100. These references are either explicitly contextualised in relation to Delphos or are invoked in Latin or Greek, rather than just general applications of the phrase in English.

Intriguingly, Davies was thought to have composed his poem, titled *Nosce Teipsum*, in "a fit of remorse" following his disbarring from the Middle Temple for violent assault; the work thereby embodying the properly therapeutic function of the phrase. See Sean Kelsey, "Davies, Sir John," in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 2008, https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/7245, accessed 21 May 2019.

[78] Thomas Wright, *The Passions of the Minde in Generall. Corrected, Enlarged, and with Sundry New Discourses Augmented.*, Early English Books, 1475-1640 / 1125:16 (London: Printed by Valentine Simmes [and Adam Islip] for Walter Burre [and Thomas Thorpe] and are to be sold [by Walter Burre] in Paules Churchyard at the signe of the Crane, 1604), img. 10/200; Thomas Rogers, *A Philosophicall Discourse, Entituled, The Anatomie of the Minde.*, Early English Books, 1475-1640 / 936:02 (Imprinted at London: By I[ohn] C[harlewood] for Andrew Maunsell, dvvelling in Paules Church yarde, at the signe of the Parret, 1576), img. 10-1/229.

[79] Plato, *Complete Works*, 33 (38a).

elaboration of *nosce te ipsum*, especially in his discussion with Alcibiades, inaugurates the demand for self-knowledge as the basis of a properly philosophical ethics: namely, that to live well, and to pursue a care of self, requires self-knowledge.[80] Yet, the phrase "the unexamined life is not worth living" might also chiasmatically reverse that syllogism. Foucault argues that the "care of the self" is, for Socrates, "the justificatory framework, ground, and foundation for the imperative 'know yourself.'" [81] In other words, the care-of-self, the life worth living, itself ought to also ground and orient the demand for self-examination.[82]

This is to say that one should not seek to 'know thyself' simply for the sake of the knowledge itself, but rather that one should examine oneself primarily in pursuit of a life worth living. The difference is a subtle but crucial one: is the principal goal an examined life or a life worth living? From the second perspective, *nosce te ipsum* derives its impetus and value from its possibility of enabling a better life. In short, one learns about oneself, in order to take care of oneself, and only from this position can one begin to care for others properly.[83] That is why, for Socrates, Alcibiades ought to understand himself and care for himself before entering the political domain.[84] In the Socratic tradition, therefore, this properly philosophical self-knowledge is an ethical precondition to holding office correctly — without it, Socrates presciently fears, Alcibiades will be corrupted by the demands of politics.[85] From a very early point, then, *nosce te ipsum* carries a connotation regarding philosophical self-knowledge as an antidote to the ethical perils of political

[80] Ibid., 580-1 (124b-c), 586-91 (128c-132d).
[81] Foucault, *Hermeneutics of the Subject*, 8.
[82] See also ibid., 51.
[83] Ibid., 33, 72, 74.
[84] Plato, *Complete Works*, 595 (135b-e).
[85] Ibid., 595 (135e).

office.[86] Yet, it is also clear is that this is not the exclusive connotation; and from the tiny syllogistic caesura that existed in classical philosophy, between the examined life and the life worth living, Foucault argues that a great modern faultline emerges.

Modern philosophy can be characterised by this internal antipathy between its status as a discipline of knowledge *versus* the various adjunct disciplines of living well, of ethics, and of self-care.[87] Foucault ties this disjunction to what he tentatively calls "the Cartesian moment."[88] However, it is clearly understood earlier than this. The "English Seneca," Joseph Hall wrote in his *Two Guides to a Good Life: The Genealogy of Virtue and the Anatomy of Sin* (1604) that philosophy may be divided into two paths: "Contemplatiue and Morall."[89] As Hall argues, this problematic fracture between contemplative philosophy and ethics was anticipated by Socrates, who rebuked his students for troubling themselves "about knowledge of external things," while so often failing to *know themselves*.[90] Likewise, in Boethius's *The Consolation of Philosophy* (*c.* 524), the exiled politician is rebuked by Lady Philosophy for having focused on "Dame Nature's hidden scheme," while having "forgotten […] who he is" — going so far as to say that "[f]orgetting who you are has made you confused, and this is why you are upset at being both exiled and losing your possessions."[91] Again, these philosophical distinctions could

[86] For more on philosophy as medicine for the soul, see Foucault, *Hermeneutics of the Subject*, 8-9, 99; Epictetus, *Discourses, Fragments, Handbook*, 197; Boethius, *The Consolation of Philosophy*, 2008, 5, 8, 15, 17, 19.
[87] Foucault, *Hermeneutics of the Subject*, 17.
[88] Ibid., 14, 17, 25-30, 68.
[89] Richard A. McCabe, "Hall, Joseph (1574-1656), Bishop of Norwich, Religious Writer, and Satirist," in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2008), https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/11976; Hall, *Two Guides*, img. 64/133.
[90] Hall, *Two Guides*, img. 65/133.
[91] Boethius, *The Consolation of Philosophy*, 2008, 5, 6, 17.

be figured as posing a crucial difference between descriptive knowledge and ethical wisdom.

However, there is a dimension to the genealogy of *nosce te ipsum* that Foucault does not spend much time on but that *King Lear* demands an analysis of. From the earliest point, *nosce te ipsum* also carried with it a contradictory implication of expected obedience.[92] As Eliza Gregory Wilkins demonstrated in her seminal philological study of the phrase's appearance in Greek and Roman literature, "know thyself" meaning "know [thy] place" and "know your measure" were in fact "*undoubtedly the usual connotations of the maxim*."[93] *Nosce te ipsum* thus routinely carried a demand that the inferior ought to reflect upon and acknowledge his inferiority. It therefore had a proto-catechistic dimension: if, each Sunday in early modern England, children and servants were expected to reflect on and acknowledge "the state of life" they were called unto; in a comparable manner, the supplicants at the doors to the Delphic temple reading the famed inscription were reminded to consider their place, to not ask "too much," and to conduct themselves with due reverence.[94] Wilkins demonstrates this usage across a historically-wide range of classical sources: from fragments of Heraclitus and Aeschylus, in Plato and Pindar, through to Dio Chrysostom's dialogue on reputation, in Cicero's *Phillipics*, and in Juvenal's satires.[95]

[92] Briefly discussed, see Foucault, *Hermeneutics of the Subject*, 3-4.
[93] Wilkins, *Know Thyself*, 12-3, my emphasis.
[94] Cummings, *Common Prayer*, 153; Amussen, *An Ordered Society*, 35-6; see also Foucault, *Hermeneutics of the Subject*, 3-4.
[95] Wilkins, *Know Thyself*, 9-22.

As important as *Alcibiades I* is for Foucault, it is no less so for Wilkins, who describes the Socratic dialogue as a "veritable treatise" on the phrase.[96] Within *Alcibiades I*, there are two usages of *nosce te ipsum*: first, when Socrates wishes to demonstrate that to the prospective politician that he is not as well-informed as he thinks; and second, when Socrates invites him to overcome this ignorance through thorough self-examination. Foucault's priority is to distinguish between what he terms the "weak" usage, *i.e.* as a "counsel of prudence" (know thy place, or Wilkin's "usual [connotation]"), and the "strong" philosophical usage, *i.e.* as a demand for serious self-reflection in order to care for oneself.[97] Socrates begins with the "weak" or "usual" usage of the phrase, for Alcibiades to "know [his] place" or "know [his] measure," as an introductory measure, so that the young aristocrat can then humbly begin the process of "knowing himself" in the "strong" philosophical sense.[98] The key point of my excursus is that these various contradictory meanings of *nosce te ipsum* may be used in a complimentary fashion, against one another, or entirely independently.

When Goneril advises Lear to surround himself with men that "know themselves and you," there is therefore an irresolvable ambiguity about precisely what she intends for him (1.4.243). On the one hand, her remark is perfectly legible as a political request, *i.e.* that Lear should be accompanied only by men that accept he is no longer sovereign, and that understand their own ceremonial position. In other words, Goneril's request to 'know thyself' may simply carry Wilkin's "usual connotations," namely to "know [thy] place" or "know [thy] measure."[99] This sentiment is supported by Goneril's Quarto-only lines:

[96] Ibid., 18.
[97] Foucault, *Hermeneutics of the Subject*, 35; Wilkins, *Know Thyself*, 13.
[98] Foucault, *Hermeneutics of the Subject*, 35; Wilkins, *Know Thyself*, 12-3.
[99] Wilkins, *Know Thyself*, 12-3.

"idle old man, / That still would manage those authorities / That he hath given away" (1.3.17-9). However, there is also the possibility that Goneril's demand at least implies that Lear also needs to undertake some serious self-examination. After all, when Regan initially states that Lear has "ever but slenderly known himself," the phrase seems to be fraught with implications regarding Lear's psychology, rather than his politics (1.1.294-5). Indeed, Foakes annotates this instance of the phrase's usage — citing Sir John Davies and Sir Philip Sidney — suggesting the daughters have identified Lear's failure to manage the relation between "intelligence" and his "desires" (1.1.294-5n). However, while Davies and Sidney mediated the classical maxim to an early modern audience, their ethical interpretation of the phrase reflects the deeper philosophical lineage that I have reconstructed.

From the context, regardless of the specific intellectual pedigree involved, Regan's usage of "know thyself" is clearly not a euphemistic demand for someone to acknowledge their relative social position. Instead, it seems to gesture toward some sort of philosophical failure in Lear, where his lack of self-knowledge is intimately connected with his "poor judgement," "rash[ness]," and the unspecified "imperfections of long-engrafted condition" (1.1.292-3, 297, 298). Again, all of these ethical issues are implied as having preexisted the "unruly waywardness that infirm and choleric years bring with them" (1.1. 299-300). If these negative attributes result from the combination of slender self-knowledge and the exigencies of public politics — and this is precisely the prophetic fear Socrates has for Alcibiades[100] — then Goneril's request for Lear to surround himself with men who "know themselves and you" could therefore be seen as a potentially therapeutic

[100] See Plato, *Complete Works*, 595 (135e).

intervention.[101] This is to say that Goneril's remark need not solely be read as a demand for Lear to accept his political position in the new hierarchy, but perhaps also as an attempt to improve her father's moral character — the two results potentially being connected, as the latter stages of the play bears out.

This ambiguity with regards to Goneril's intention has no obvious textual resolution, though in performance it may be possible to make a clear choice. What is crucial is to acknowledge the vast conceptual slippage that is latent in the phrase, and that this moves considerably past Foucault's initial analysis. On the one hand, "know thyself" is an interpolative demand to know and accept one's social position, and on the other hand, as an invocation to radical self-examination, to begin one's philosophical and ethical transformation as such, especially with regards to the unacknowledged pressures of society upon selfhood. To put it into terms already developed in this thesis, "know thyself" can therefore simply mean 'know thy office'; or alternatively, starting with the Socratic tradition, it can be read as a demand to take the necessary first steps in distinguishing your 'self' from your office. *Nosce te ipsum* is thus an apparatus, a *dispositif*, in Agamben's sense: it has the potential to support power, by inculcating the subject into 'knowing their place,' or to disrupt discursive power by encouraging a careful assessment of oneself in relation to these obligations.

In the case of Lear, a man for whom self-knowledge must demand the admission that he had lost himself to an office he no longer holds, these two meanings almost align. In some

[101] On philosophy being a kind of medicine for the mind, see Foucault, *Hermeneutics of the Subject*, 8-9, 99; Epictetus, *Discourses, Fragments, Handbook*, 197; Boethius, *The Consolation of Philosophy*, 2008, 5, 8, 15, 17, 19.

sense, to know his place would be to know he is not his office. On the other hand, Lear's ethical problems would not be solved by him meekly accepting his daughters' remonstrations for political and domestic expedience, no more than it is by his attempts to reassert his former identity. The consequences of a catechizing 'know thyself' would therefore be philosophically useless to Lear (though probably politically attractive to his daughters); the Socratic 'know thyself' on the other hand is precisely what Lear experiences in order to make his peculiar kind of recovery. He undergoes a genuine inward turn, an *epistrophe*. This inward turn is the necessary Platonic movement toward self-knowledge and self-care, providing the only means through which the subject derives proper access to truth and justice.[102]

[102] Foucault, *Hermeneutics of the Subject*, 209-10.

"TAKE PHYSIC, POMP": THE STORM AND THE CYNIC

Where the thunder-claps heralded the spiritual correction [the conversion (*lit.* turning-around)] of the assassin in *King Leir*, the storm rages precisely at the instance in which Shakespeare's Lear experiences his painful epiphanies.[103] Though the poetic intensity of his madness can obscure the process, Lear actually progresses through an intelligible sequence of thoughts and concerns, which illuminate this philosophical metamorphosis. The rest of the play can be read as a drama of self-recovery: Lear must work out who he is if he cannot be King Lear. It is toward this arc of transformation that I now turn.

That Lear undergoes some kind of transformative process is certainly not a novel idea. But the precise quality and texture of that process remains open for question. In my view, for example, his transformation would be more usefully posed as one of "profanation" than Bradley's "purification."[104] Profanation is defined by Agamben as the neutralisation of the power of sacred concepts, especially through play or misuse.[105] He holds this as distinct from secularisation, which he describes as a repression (and therefore merely a deferral) of their theological force.[106] Profanation is preferable here. After all, through his intense verbal engagements, often both serious and parodic, Lear learns to disavow precisely this sense of his sovereign sanctity, his internalised sense of office, the doctrinally-articulated purity. This is to say that Lear discovers that if he must be purified of anything, it is of his own sense of doctrinal purity.

[103] Anon., *King Leir*, 4.7.194-205, 294-307.
[104] Bradley, *Shakespearean Tragedy*, 263.
[105] Giorgio Agamben, *Profanations*, trans. Jeff Fort (New York: Zone Books, 2015), 76-7.
[106] Ibid.

This interpretation is borne out partly by Lear's attitude toward the storm. Lear shifts from viewing the storm as a divine embodiment of cosmic justice, into a prosaic awareness of his material conditions beneath the storm, and finally into a compassion for others in the storm. This movement from divine kingship, through material self-awareness, into philosophical compassion can be extrapolated into the general movement of Lear's transformation. This is something of a simplification, of course. At various stages, the struggle of this process is demonstrated by his slipping back and forth to great dramatic effect. Yet, as an overall trajectory of his transformation, this seems to hold up. Fundamentally, therefore, this is not a purifying movement, but a de-purification: a shedding of divinity through parody, especially driving toward a philosophical immanence and a compassionate humility. To substantiate this self-profaning trajectory, a close reading of Lear's evolving view of the storm itself is instructive:

> Blow winds and crack your cheeks! Rage, blow!
> You cataracts and hurricanoes, spout
> Till you have drenched our steeples, drowned the cocks!
>
> (3.2.1-3)

As is often the case, the most famous lines of a play are often the hardest to read clearly. Julian Lamb's attempt to read the "Blow winds" speech as an invocation, as a misfiring performative speech act, succeeds precisely in rendering fresh lines that risk becoming obscure through habituation.[107] To build on Lamb's argument, albeit in a rather different

[107] I saw Julian Lamb's excellent paper (now titled "Contending with the Storm: Lear's Performatives"), which read Lear's famous speech as a sequence of Austinian performatives, at the ANZSA 2018

direction, it is crucial to note that Lear is the one character who invokes the storm, or perhaps more specifically, desires the storm, and therefore calls the storm. Rather than Lear's speeches being expressions of "cosmic defiance," they are perhaps better understood as a quasi-divine invocation of terrestrial defiance.[108] Prior to Lear's famous speech, one of Lear's knights describes the situation:

> Kent. […] Where's the King?
>
> Knt. Contending with the fretful elements;
>
> Bids the wind blow the earth into the sea,
>
> Or swell the curled waters 'bove the main,
>
> That things might change, or cease.
>
> (3.1.3-7)

In the Queen's Men's *King Leir*, the storm fits into Perillus's appeal to "just Jehovah" for a divine intervention on behalf of the anointed king: "*It thunders.* [Messenger] *quakes, and lets falls the dagger next to* PERILLUS," with Leir crying out, "O heavens be thanked."[109] Even more tellingly, the thunder-claps also prompt the Messenger to describe his mind "turn[ing]," and he finally complains that some "spark of grace" has been "put in [him]."[110] This double-function, as both threateningly retributive and redemptive, is significant. Shakespeare's Lear begins by appealing, as Perillus does, for a similar (albeit much more destructive) intervention. It is only later in the storm that Lear

conference. The paper was subsequently circulated in a revised form at SAA 2019, and, at the time of submitting this thesis, is currently under submission with *Philosophy and Literature*.

[108] Elton, *King Lear and the Gods*, 144.

[109] Anon., *King Leir*, 4.7.206, 293SD, 294.

[110] Ibid., 4.7.197, 300, 301.

begins to see the storm as an unfair punishment directed toward him — "I am a man / More sinned against than sinning" (3.2.59-60). Initially, by contrast, the outcast king calls for the storm to "blow the earth into the sea," to "[drench the] steeples, [drown the] cocks," to "[s]trike flat the thick rotundity o'the world" (3.1.5; 3.2.3, 7). What is crucial, however, is that this is fundamentally still a demand for justice.

In this sense, the paradox of Lear's apocalyptic thinking is that his superficial desire for chaos is fundamentally a submerged desire for order. In Lear's mind, the destruction of the world, the "[c]rack[ing of] nature's moulds, all germens spill at once," would be an appropriate consequence to his present situation (3.2.8). Where the thunderclaps had unambiguously signaled the absolute sanctity of King Leir; here, the storm becomes a canvas against which Lear projects his desire for the divine retribution that has remained stubbornly absent, though repeatedly invoked: "Hear, Nature, hear, dear goddess, [F]hear[F]," "Into her womb convey sterility," "You nimble lightnings, dart your blinding flames / Into her scornful eyes," and so forth (1.4.267, 270; 2.2.354-5). Lear's invocation for terrestrial destruction is thus an invocation for cosmic order, as connected to his religiously-articulated potency. This can be easily overlooked because it runs in tandem with his self-destructive pleas too — "Singe my white head!" (3.2.6) — which could be superficially understood as contradicting his demand for retribution. Yet both desires, for the destruction of the world and for the immolation of the self, rest on a similar premise: that divine obliteration would be a just response to Lear's life on its new degraded terms. That Lear specifically imagines this cataclysm as divinely sanctioned becomes explicit:

Lear. Let the great gods

That keep this dreadful pudder o'er our heads

Find out their enemies now. (3.2.49-51)

Lear proclaims a substantial list of guilty parties that deserve this celestial wrath — "thou bloody hand, / Thou perjured, and thou simular of virtue," are but three instances (3.2.53-4). However, following the thread of this indictment, he arrives at an inescapable truth that proves terminal to his delusion: it is Lear, not the "wretch […] / Unwhipped of justice," who is out in the storm (3.2.51-3). Whether or not one agrees with the moral accuracy of the line, — "I am a man / More sinned against than sinning" (3.2.59-60) — this lament is nevertheless the acknowledgement that finally disperses Lear's apocalyptic fantasies. In this line, he admits the failure of cosmic justice to manifest itself, either through an Old Testament destruction of a guilty nation or through his own New Testament sacrifice. In fact, his remark implicitly concedes that he is perhaps not sufficiently "pure, chaste, unadulterated" to be claimed in a sacrificial redemption for his community: instead he is merely "a man / More sinned against than sinning" (3.2.59-60).[111] As these celestial aspirations falter, the banality of his circumstances comes back into focus: he is a cold, wet old man, in need of shelter. This temporary *turning* point in his madness, echoing *Leir*'s Messenger, is suggested by Lear's next line: "My wits begin to turn" (3.2.67).[112] After which, for the first time in the scene, Lear acknowledges the people about him, and acquiesces to the prospect of shelter:

[*to the Fool*] Come on, my boy. How dost my boy? Art cold?

I am cold myself. [*to Kent*] Where is this straw, my fellow?

[111] Schwartz, *Sacramental Poetics*, 46.
[112] Anon., *King Leir*, 4.7.197.

The art of our necessities is strange,

And can make vile things precious. Come; your hovel.

(3.2.68-71)

His observation regarding necessity and preciousness signals a deeper shift in thinking, particularly in comparison to his earlier remarks on "need," which I discussed in the previous chapter. In this sense, this moment serves as a hinge from his prior worldview, which foregrounded the importance of visual power, in close correspondence with the spectacular sanctity of the sovereign office, toward the new ideas he will express to Poor Tom, and, later, to Gloucester.

In the Folio, as the weather-beaten party leaves the stage, the Fool makes his notorious prophecy, which has such peculiar internal contradictions of its own that its relation to the preceding scene is often overlooked.[113] Indeed, in both criticism and in performance, the prophecy is frequently treated as a rupture, an awkward interlude that is dramatically out of place from the rest of the scene.[114] The truth is that the Fool, as he so often does, is cryptically elaborating on what he has just witnessed: Lear's supplications for armageddon. Thus, the Fool borrows Lear's cataclysmic imagery as a prompt for satire, describing endemic Jacobean social issues — hypocritical priests, dishonest brewers, vain nobles, and syphilitic lovers — as the ironic harbingers of apocalypse:

When priests are more in word than matter,

When brewers mar their malt with water,

[113] For a good account of the internal contradictions, and some editorial solutions, see Foakes, 3.2.70-96n.
[114] For example, see Ryan, "Subversive Imagination," 79-80.

When nobles are their tailors' tutors,

No heretics burned but wenches' suitors;

[…]

Then shall the realm of Albion

Come to great confusion.

(3.2.81-92, my emphasis)

But if the Fool's prophecy gestures anteriorly toward Lear's pleas for armegeddon, it also paves the way toward Lear's subsequent scene by widening the scope of concern from deposed kings and unpunished criminals to the full spectrum of society. In their next scene, it becomes clear Albion is already in "great confusion" (3.2.91). As Lear remarks, "O, I have ta'en too little care of this" (3.4.32) — a comment which indicates Lear's developing sense of ethical responsibility.

Lear's shift of outlook is evident from the outset of the scene. He encourages his fellows to go into the shelter before him, expressing concern for their comfort: first directing Kent, "Prithee go in thyself, seek thine own ease," and then, in the Folio, adding to the Fool, "In boy, go first […] Nay, get thee in. I'll pray and then I'll sleep" (3.4.23, 26-7,). These expressions of compassion towards his immediate companions then ramify out toward the rest of humanity in the course of the speech:

[F]You houseless poverty —

Nay, get thee in. I'll pray, and then I'll sleep. [*Exit Fool*][F]

Poor naked wretches, wheresoe'er you are,

That bide the pelting of this pitiless storm,
How shall your houseless heads and unfed sides,
Your looped and windowed raggedness, defend you
From seasons such as these? O, I have ta'en
Too little care of this. Take physic, pomp,
Expose thyself to feel what wretches feel,
That thou mayst shake the superflux to them
And show the heavens more just.

(3.4.26-36)

As Wells observes, Lear's remarks foreshadow Gloucester's exclamation about "superfluous and lust-dieted man," where "distribution should undo excess," so that "each man [has] enough" (4.1.70, 73-4).[115] Yet, intriguingly, Lear's terms still express a lingering preoccupation with cosmic justice. Initially, Lear imagines the storm's significance as either as a retributive act against a nation that had betrayed its king or as an immanent moment of sacrifice — in either case, the destructive event implying a providential significance to his suffering. Here, by contrast, the therapeutic lessons of "[n]ecessity's sharp pinch" could show him how to govern a more compassionate society, thereby suggesting a divine plan: "show[ing] the heavens more just" (2.2.400; 3.4.36). There are two lingering presuppositions, albeit expressed in a more compassionate register: that he is still connected to his kingship in some sense, and that there may be a divine import to his suffering. It is striking that, by the end of the play, Lear abandons both propositions. Kent and Edgar may see "the promised end" in Cordelia's inert body,

[115] Shakespeare, *The History of King Lear*, 15.65n.

but Lear grants her murder no such divine providence, bitterly wishing instead that he could "crack" "heaven's vault" (5.3.261, 257). Despite the lingering belief in his own divine office, Lear's internal trajectory is clear: he has moved from the desire to obliterate both society and himself toward a desire to improve society and himself.

Lear's desire to "physic, pomp" — to cure himself of the vanity of office — precisely anticipates his encounter with Poor Tom. Through Poor Tom, he spies the potentially therapeutic value of asceticism, for a man "sophisticated" by luxury:

> Lear. Is man no more than this? Consider him well. Thou ow'st
> the worm no silk, the beast no hide, the sheep no wool, the
> cat no perfume. Ha? Here's three on's us are sophisticated;
> thou art the thing itself. Unaccommodated man is no more
> but such a poor, bare, forked animal as thou art.
>
> (3.4.101-6).

This speech has been picked over extensively. For my purposes, there is one word in Lear's diatribe worth considering especially closely: "sophisticated" (3.4.104). It appears nowhere else in Shakespeare's works. Etymologically, the term "sophisticated" derives from the Latin *sophisticus*, and the Greek *sophistēs* — the ancient Greek teachers with whom Socrates famously clashed.[116] In Western intellectual thought, "sophistry" became a byword for, at best, specious or superficial knowledge; and, at worst, for a facility at

[116] "Sophisticate, v.," in *OED Online* (Oxford University Press), accessed October 3, 2019, http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/184762#eid21755048; "Sophistic, Adj. and n.," in *OED Online* (Oxford University Press), accessed October 3, 2019, http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/184757#eid21754033.

deceptive reasoning, especially in the pursuit of personal gain.[117] A blending of these meanings, with an awareness of the classical etymology, is suggested in *Henry VI, Part II* (1591), when the queen remarks of Salisbury's syllogistic defence of his treason: "[a] subtle traitor needs no sophister" (*2H6*, 23.191). The modern sense of sophistication suggesting a worldliness, or refined taste, derives from the implicit antipathy to philosophical simplicity, which affirms this classical etymology. But this modern notion of "refined" is decidedly not the principal sense in which Lear means it.[118]

The prevailing early modern usage of 'sophisticated' is better understood as a verb, rather than as an adjective. Wright's *Passions* (1601) uses the term precisely in this verb form when he laments the widespread use of sophistic rhetoric: "at this present it is sophisticated, by many, who couer stincking matters with fragrant flowers, and with a few sugred words temper the gall of their pernicious obiects."[119] Francis Marbury, in a sermon from 1602, talks approvingly of those who are not "sophisticated by the devil's mist."[120] The theologian Samuel Gardiner's *A Pearl of Price* (1600) describes Satan as having "thus sophisticated and glose with God, vpon the inclination of Job's devotion."[121] In fact, across EEBO, this seems to be the usual usage. An interesting variation can be found in the natural sciences, especially horticulture, where the term is used to describe

[117] "Sophistry, n.," in *OED Online* (Oxford University Press), accessed October 3, 2019, http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/184769.
[118] "Sophisticated, Adj.," in *OED Online* (Oxford University Press), 2.b., accessed October 16, 2019, https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/184763.
[119] Wright, *The Passions of the Minde in Generall. Corrected, Enlarged, and with Sundry New Discourses Augmented.*, img. 58/200.
[120] Francis Marbury, *A Sermon Preached at Paules Crosse*, Early English Books, 1475-1640 / 929:02 (London: Printed by Peter Short, and are to be sold [by C. Burby] in Paules Churchyard at the signe of the Swanne, 1602), img. 23/45.
[121] Samuel Gardiner, *A Pearle of Price or, The Best Purchase*, Early English Books, 1475-1640 / 423:02 ([London]: Printed by V. S[immmes] for Thomas Bushell, and are to be sold at his ship at the North doore of Paules, 1600), img. 100/112.

the artificial creation of a compound. As a French encyclopedia (trans. 1601) notes, regarding myrrh: "[t]here is great difference then betwixt natural myrrh, which distilleth out of the tree; and artificiall being sophisticated with gum, and mixed with other things, such as is ordinarie in our Apothecaries shops."[122] Yet, even here, there is a sense of deception — or, at the very least, a deliberate distortion of something natural.[123] For Lear, Kent, and the Fool to have been "sophisticated," in the early modern English therefore does not simply mean "refined," which would thereby imply the unnecessary luxury of their garments when compared with "the thing itself" (3.4.104). Instead, to have been "sophisticated" carries the deeper meaning of deceived or unnaturally complicated. For Lear, his opulent clothing serves as an index of this problem, certainly. But the term "sophisticated" carries a profound philosophical implication for their moral state, not just their attire.

That Lear seems to believe that philosophy, specifically an ascetic form of philosophy, might provide an escape route for his "sophistication" becomes clear through his developing encounter with Poor Tom. Lear first misidentifies Poor Tom as a "discarded father" (3.4.71). In their next scene, the Fool poses the question to Lear, seemingly in reference to Poor Tom, "whether a madman be a gentleman or a yeoman?" and Lear replies simply: "A king, a king" (3.6.9-10, 11). Lear's projected reasons for Tom's abject state therefore do shift in the specifics, yet they are consistent in that they express some kind of identification, or self-recognition, on the part of Lear. This context is useful, when

[122] Pierre de La Primaudaye, *The Third Volume of the French Academie Contayning a Notable Description of the Whole World*, trans. R. Dolman, Early English Books, 1475-1640 / 257:05 (Londini: [Printed at Eliot's Court Press] impensis Geor. Bishop, 1601), img. 167/228.
[123] "[R]emoved from the simple state, no longer natural," in David Crystal and Ben Crystal, *Shakespeare's Words: A Glossary and Language Companion* (London: Penguin, 2002), 409.

situating another of Lear's misidentifications, which is certainly the most persistent. Lear refers to Tom as a philosopher on no less than five separate occasions in the scene:

> Lear. First let me talk with this *philosopher*:
>
> [*to Edgar*] What is the cause of thunder?
>
> (3.4.150-1, my emphasis)

Then, immediately after:

> Kent. Good my lord,
>
> Take his offer, go into the house.
>
> Lear. I'll talk a word with this same *learned Theban*:
>
> What is your study?
>
> (3.4.151-4, my emphasis)

Fifteen lines later:

> Glo. I do beseech your grace.
>
> Lear. O, cry you mercy, [F]sir.[F]
>
> *Noble philosopher*, your company.
>
> (3.4.167-8, my emphasis)

Then, almost immediately repeated:

Lear. Come, let's in all.

Kent. This way, my lord.

Lear. With him;

I will keep still with *my philosopher*.

(3.4.171-2, my emphasis)

And, one final time:

Kent. Sirrah, come on; go along with us.

Lear. Come, *good Athenian*.

(3.4.175-6, my emphasis)

There are four points worth noting here from the outset. First, contrary to Elton's claim that these remarks indicate the play's specific commentary on Roman Stoicism, Lear imagines Tom to be a classical Greek philosopher: "learned Theban," and "good Athenian" (3.4.153, 176).[124] Second, judging by the adjectives, the possessive 'my,' and his serious questions, Lear's interest and appreciation of Tom as a philosopher seems sincere, albeit confused: "*good* Athenian," "*learned* Theban," "[*n*]*oble* philosopher," "*my* philosopher," "[w]hat is your study?", "[w]hat is the cause of thunder?", and so forth (3.4.176, 153, 172, 154, 151). Third, that despite asking Edgar "What is the cause of thunder?" there is no reason to assume that Lear has a Renaissance "natural philosopher" in mind as some have suggested, since classical philosophers also discussed such topics (3.4.151, 151n).[125] Fourth, that Lear's hallucinatory encounter with the philosopher fits

[124] Elton, *King Lear and the Gods*, 97.
[125] Ibid., 201.

into a philosophical trope that is itself mirrored in the figure of Edgar: that, in the words of Boethius, "adverse Fortune benefits people more than good," in acquainting people with the possibility of living well without externals, like riches and reputation.[126] Therefore, just as Boethius's impoverished, exiled politician is visited by a vision of philosophy in his time of acute suffering; thus Lear, in like circumstances, conjures for himself a consolatory image of ascetic philosophy.

Despite small Latin and less Greek, Shakespeare seems to have had a reasonably clear grasp on the ancient schools of philosophy. For instance, Shakespeare's depiction of a historical Epicurean, the "lean and hungry" Cassius, avoids the lazy stereotypes of Greek hedonism that were prolific in the early modern period (*JC*, 1.2.194).[127] Furthermore, Cassius remarks that, although he always "held Epicurus strong," he has begun to "partly credit things that do presage" — suggesting an awareness of the Epicurean doctrine of inert, non-immanent divinity (*JC*, 5.1.76, 78).[128] In terms of identifying a specific school of ancient philosophy that Lear might be invoking, a critical consensus seems to have settled on Cynicism as the most plausible answer (3.4.153n).[129] This is principally based on two pieces of evidence: first, that Poor Tom's disheveled façade best resembles the

[126] Boethius, *The Consolation of Philosophy*, 2008, 37.
For a brief discussion of Boethius's reception in early modern England, see Chapter 2.
[127] Epicurus, though technically a hedonist, counselled simplicity of diet. Nevertheless, the term "epicure" and "epicurism" were associated with gluttony in early modern England. For example, when Goneril decries Lear's feasting knights for "Epicurism and lust" (1.4.235).
[128] For some discussion of the rejection of omens in Epicurean models of providence, see Elton, *King Lear and the Gods*, 272-3; see also Heron, *Liturgical Power*, 21-3.
[129] Steven Doloff, "'Let Me Talk with This Philosopher': The Alexander/Diogenes Paradigm in King Lear," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 54, no. 3 (1991): 253-5; David Hershinow, "Diogenes the Cynic and Shakespeare's Bitter Fool: The Politics and Aesthetics of Free Speech," *Criticism* 56, no. 4 (2014): 824; for the view that this is a reference to Socrates (with no counter-explanation of the Theban line), see Richard Wilson, "Introduction," in *Shakespeare and Continental Philosophy*, ed. Jennifer Anne Bates and Richard Wilson (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014), 6; Cynicism is left almost entirely undiscussed by Elton, who privileges four ancient schools — Platonism, Aristotelianism, Stoicism, and Epicureanism. See Elton, *King Lear and the Gods*, 274.

distinctive appearance of that school; second, while there were many famous Athenian philosophers, Thebes was not quite so distinguished — the only famous "learned Theban" being Crates the Cynic, a student of Diogenes (3.4.153, 153n). There are two further lines of argument that add weight to this interpretation. First, that Plutarch's depictions of Crates and, to a lesser extent, Diogenes make them especially well-suited as philosophical interlocutors given the particularities of Lear's position. Second, considering the compositional proximity of *King Lear* to *Timon of Athens*, Shakespeare seems to have been artistically interested in the possible utility of Cynical poverty as an antidote to luxury at this point in his career.

In the 1605 English translation of Plutarch's *The Morals*, the index demonstrates that Crates the Cynic is associated with a series of topics pertinent to Shakespeare's adaptation of *King Leir*: "[c]ontentment of minde," the philosopher who "joieth in his poverty," who "for sooke the world," and gave an "exclamation against negligent fathers in the education of their children."[130] Stanley Wells and William R. Elton have cautiously noted possible resonances and, like them, I am not arguing that it necessarily constitutes a direct source.[131] However, to make an original contribution, I note that *The Morals* offers an especially fitting account of Crates for *King Lear*'s concerns.

With regards to the "education [of] children," Plutarch describes how Crates would ascend to "the highest place of the citie, and there crie out aloud," rebuking those fathers who "gather goods and rake riches together" but "make little or no reckoning at all of

[130] Plutarch, *The Morals*, img. 702/721.
[131] Wells, "The Taming of the Shrew and King Lear," 55; Elton, *King Lear and the Gods*, 25-7, 101, 147-8, 252-3.

your children, unto whom you are to leave all your wealth."[132] This image of Crates sounding his paternal reproach from the "highest pinnacle" is repeated in other early modern pamphlets also.[133] I will not go so far as to contend that the image of Lear, who himself "crie[s] out aloud" from the "highest pinnacle" of the heath — which otherwise has no source in the preceding *Lear* narratives — was borrowed from Plutarch. Yet, the shared subject of their lament is certainly an intriguing coincidence and, if nothing else, this episode might explain why Crates the Theban seemed a fitting interlocutor for Lear, albeit an allusory and illusory one.

The substance of Crates's warning for neglectful fathers is quite general: that "[w]hen these children of theirs are growne to mans estate [… they] fall headlong into outragious courses."[134] But Plutarch offers an elaboration on Crates's warning, describing how such children risk falling victim to "flatterers, parasites," indulging in "adulteries" and coveting riches and pleasures. For Plutarch, neglected by the "cold affection" and "covetous minde" of their fathers, such children will almost inevitably subscribe to the appeal of things "mortal, transitorie, small," rather than "vertue and true happinesse."[135] In all of these examples of (to borrow Lear's phrase) "sophisticated" children, parallels emerge between Plutarch's *The Morals* and the particular vices of Edmund, Regan, and Goneril (3.4.104).

[132] Plutarch, *The Morals*, img. 7-8/721.
[133] Jean Taffin, *The Amendment of Life Comprised in Fower Bookes*, Early English Books, 1475-1640 / 1560:09 (Londini: [Printed by John Windet] impensis Georg. Bishop, 1595), img. 156/279.
[134] Plutarch, *The Morals*, img. 8/721.
[135] Ibid.

In fact, Plutarch is adamant that this paternal failure is fundamentally a form of sophistication, in so far as it reflects a lack of philosophical education. In a superficial sense, Goneril's lack of philosophical education is also proven by her remark in which she describes the knights' gluttonous behaviour as "Epicurism," which represents the prevailing misconception about Epicureanism noted earlier (1.4.235). However, Plutarch's account of the consequences of this sophistication offers a broad analogy with Shakespeare's *King Lear*: "such fathers all repent for their negligence past, in taking no better order for their [children's] education," and in later years such fathers will "languish in sorrow" and suffer "griefe of heart" to see their children "captivate" to the kinds of "vanities" that a basic education with "any Philosopher" could have prevented.[136] Crates the Theban therefore has a clear connection to the opening drama of *King Lear*: the dangers of cultivating vanity and flattery in one's children. The additional dimension that Shakespeare adds to this trajectory is clear: that Lear himself must first overcome his own "capitivat[ion]" to "vanities."[137] In this sense, where Crates predicts the fall, he also prescribes a therapy: the recuperative powers of philosophical asceticism. In a 1561 poetic translation of Plutarch, in a moral treatise titled "The Fruit of Foes," the text states:

> Diogenes and Crates chaunce,
> Do well declare, how banishmentes
> And losse of goodes, doe some auaunce
> To knowledge great, which them contentes.[138]

[136] Ibid.
[137] Ibid.
[138] Plutarch, *Three [Morall] Treatises No Lesse Pleasau[Nt] than Necessary for All Men to Read[e,] Wherof the One Is Called the Learned Prince, the Other the Fruites of Foes, the Thyrde the Porte of Rest*, trans. Thomas Blundeville, Early English Books, 1475-1640 / 339:26 (Imprynted at London: By Wyllyam Seres, dwellynge at the west ende of Poules at the signe of the Hedghogge, 1561), img. 15/69.

At this point in his career, Shakespeare's drama demonstrates a distinct (albeit passing) interest in Cynicism, which poses this therapeutic potential of philosophical poverty in its most extreme form. *Timon of Athens*, featuring the Cynic Apemantus, is often dated as the play either immediately before or after *King Lear*.[139] As John Jowett argues, "[*Timon*] is evidently closest of all to *King Lear* […] with which it has the strongest affinities of plot, style, and philosophical disillusionment — so close, indeed, that it is impossible to be sure which was written first."[140] Chronology aside, Jowett's remark also eloquently confirms the stylistic and thematic correlations between *King Lear* and *Timon*. Coleridge wrote that "[*Timon* is] a *Lear*, therefore, without its soul-searching flashes, its ear-cleaving thunder-claps, its meteoric splendours."[141] To entirely accept Coleridge's grandiloquent expression of the relative supremacy of *Lear* would be a little unfair. After

[139] The Oxford Shakespeare places it directly prior; the New Oxford after. Bate and Rasmussen leave it open as between 1604-6, but especially note the stylistic similarity to *King Lear*. (William Shakespeare, *Titus Andronicus and Timon of Athens: Two Classical Plays*, ed. Jonathan Bate and Eric Rasmussen, Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2011, 144.)

There are contrary opinions: Wiggins dates it early 1607, after *Macbeth* and *Antony and Cleopatra*; a view supported by Anthony B. Dawson and Gretchen E. Minton for Arden, who also propose 1607, noting the proximity of source-texts with *Coriolanus*, suggesting that Shakespeare moved from one to the other. (William Shakespeare, *Timon of Athens*, ed. Anthony B. Dawson and Gretchen E. Minton, Arden Shakespeare, London: Cengage Learning, 2008, 16.)

However, a confounding issue in dating *Timon* must be conceded to its collaborative composition between William Shakespeare and Thomas Middleton. Rather than simultaneously composing different scenes, it is possible that the play was begun by one playwright and then revised or completed by another at a later date. This coheres with the usual pattern between Shakespeare and Middleton, as evidenced by the New Oxford's interpretation of *All's Well*, *Measure for Measure*, and *Macbeth* also.

My suspicion is that *Timon* was plotted and begun by Shakespeare, either immediately before, during, or after *King Lear*, at least partly drawing from Plutarch's *Lives* — and that Shakespeare's draft was then revised and completed by Thomas Middleton, possibly between 1605 and 1607. This interpretation more-or-less coheres with both MacDonald P. Jackson and Gary Taylor's stylometric analyses of rare vocabulary and colloquialisms, which place the Shakespearean portions between 1604-5 and 1606 respectively (Jowett, "Introduction," 5.) In support of my interpretation of the direction of composition, it is notable that Thomas Middleton rarely, if ever, drew from Plutarch. Shakespeare, by contrast, was regularly turning to Thomas North's Plutarch as a direct source throughout this period, from at least 1599 with *Julius Caesar* until *Coriolanus* in 1608.

[140] John Jowett, "Introduction," in *Timon of Athens*, by William Shakespeare and Thomas Middleton (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 8.

[141] Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Coleridge: Lectures on Shakespeare: 1811-1819*, ed. Adam Roberts (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016), 176-7; quoted in Shakespeare, *Modern Critical Edition*, 2436.

all, *Timon* has its own rich qualities that *King Lear* lacks, particularly in its more acidic urban satire. Setting aside their differences for a moment, the two play's similarities seem to arise quite perspicuously within Shakespeare's particular compositional focus. As Gary Taylor notes, "Shakespeare creates almost the entire long part of the eloquent tragic male protagonist Lord Timon and […] [Shakespeare] completely dominates the play once Timon leaves the city for the countryside."[142] In this sense, a number of the two plays' most striking similarities become more coherent in the division of authorial attributions at work.

With this in mind, it is perhaps no surprise that the two plays do particularly reflect one another in their protagonists: both begin as wealthy and powerful individuals, in the "front rank[s]" of their state, enchanted by their self-image, who demonstrate their self-infatuation through the spectacular distribution of gifts.[143] Following enraging events of 'ingratitude' — "Ingratitude, thou marble-hearted fiend" and "Let [the earth] no more bring out ingrateful man" (1.4.251; *Tim.*, 14.187-8) — they begin a philosophical transformation (in dialogue with Cynic philosophy, through Poor Tom on the one hand, and Apemantus on the other), embracing a kind of asceticism. In *King Lear*, Lear's journey is intensified by its parallels with Gloucester and Edgar, but also through its contrast with the ascent of Edmund. In *Timon*, a similar effect is achieved when Timon's ascetic self-exile is contrasted against Alcibiades's luxurious banishment. The two plays — superficially at least — therefore present Cynical and cynical transformations: from wealth and immense social power into a properly ascetic worldview by the protagonists,

[142] Gary Taylor, "Why Did Shakespeare Collaborate?," in *Shakespeare Survey*, ed. Peter Holland (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 9; quoted in Shakespeare, *Modern Critical Edition*, 2435.
[143] This Athenian ideal of being in the "front rank" of society is something explored by Michel Foucault in his analysis of Euripides's *Ion*. See Foucault, *Government of Self and Others*, 155-6.

and from some sort of political marginalisation into a decadent position of immoral authority by their foils.[144]

Shakespeare is not the first dramatist, by any means, to stage such concerns. John Lyly's *Campaspe* (1583) is often cited as a precedent in this regard.[145] However, the interaction between Diogenes and Alexander — notable in its dramatic contrast between the doglike philosopher and the godlike emperor — concludes with significant, but comparatively subtle, changes in the sovereign. Alexander might disavow a pagan life of sensuality and embrace a quasi-Cynical, proto-Christian ethic, but this is broadly in line with the aims presented by his initial character: "we endeavour to be as good philosophers as soldiers."[146] In any case, Alexander certainly does not give up his prestige. In this sense, Lyly's *Campaspe* does dramatise a philosophical shift of the sovereign, but not in quite as grandiose a fashion as the emphatic disavowal of a spectacular former life, which makes up the cut and thrust of both *King Lear* and *Timon of Athens*.

This genuinely transformational movement also distinguishes *King Lear* and *Timon of Athens* from Shakespeare's earlier experiments with the noble ascetic trope. The eponymous sovereign of the *Henry VI* plays (1591-2) confesses his desire to simply be a shepherd in a long soliloquy — "Methinks it were a happy life / To be no better than a

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[144] This comparison is arguably complicated by the mutable nature of Athenian oligarchic-democracy. Yet, as the comparisons of Timon to James I indicate, there is some latent sense of Timon being in the "front rank" of Athenian society, and possessing a quasi-royal liberality. See Coppélia Kahn, "'Magic of Bounty': Timon of Athens, Jacobean Patronage, and Maternal Power," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 38, no. 1 (1987): 34-57.

[145] Doloff, "Alexander/Diogenes Paradigm," 253.

[146] John Lyly, "Campaspe," in *Campaspe and Sappho and Phao*, ed. G. K. Hunter, Revels Plays (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), 1.2.97.

On this reading of *Campaspe*, I am entirely indebted to the current doctoral work of Martin Higgins of the Shakespeare Institute, which (at time of writing) has not been formally published or submitted.

homely swain" (*3H6*, 9.21-2). However, this is not an extraordinary transformation for a king who exhibits a persistently troubled relationship with his own spectacular power. By contrast, Richard II is undeniably attached to his office, and he toys with the idea of becoming a mere pilgrim: "I'll give my jewels for a set of beads, / My gorgeous apparel for an almsman's gown," and so on (*R2*, 3.3.146-7). However, despite this fantasy, his attachment to office remains. In the conclusion, for all the abstract appeal of the ascetic life, Richard cannot quite disavow his kingliness: "Exton, thy fierce hand / Hath with the King's blood stained the King's own land" (*R2*, 5.5.109-10).

Further iterations recur throughout Shakespeare's corpus. In *Measure for Measure* (1603), the Duke of Vienna, disguised as a monk, seems to confess some sincere ascetic concerns about the dangers of excess for living a life worth living — he begins by noting that "[i]f thou art rich, thou'rt poor," describing the burdens of wealth, and ending with the bleak question: "What's in this / That bears the name of life?" (*MM*, 3.1.24, 37-8). But, like Richard, this appreciation of asceticism is temporary. The Duke returns to the opulent position he started in. In *Love's Labour's Lost* (1596), the King of Navarre represents another royal with ascetic aspirations, but who falls far short of surrendering his prestige. In *As You Like It* (1600) and *The Tempest* (1611), Duke Senior and Prospero live something like ascetic existences — but, instructively, neither renounces their sovereign identity, and neither declines their duchy when offered to them again.

Examples of the noble ascetic therefore span the entirety of Shakespeare's career, from *Henry VI* to *The Tempest*. However, Lear and Timon stand out from all of these counterparts in several regards. The most simple distinction is that they move the furthest.

They begin entirely attached to their positions, and end by emphatically disavowing their former properties and values, for better or for ill. But in both cases, intriguingly, ancient Greek philosophy is explicitly invoked. Stylistically and dramatically, they also share long, vitriolic monologues, out in the wilderness, in similar states of undress and distemper. However, if one concedes that Lear and Timon present close parallels in terms of trajectory — from wealth to poverty, from attachment to disavowal — their initial identities, and their philosophical means, aims, and conclusions sharply differ.

In complete contrast to the "*Misanthropos*" Timon, Lear manages to put aside his violent anger towards society, instead developing a compassionate sociability, as my analysis of the storm sequence suggested (*Tim*., 14.53, my emphasis). Some of this might have something to do with their initial positions: Timon's sociability was betrayed; for Lear, his sanctity had undermined his sociability long before the start of the play. I return to a point from my first chapter. Writing about armory as a language of law, Goodrich describes how "the sanctity of the [legal] sign" is an "effacement of the sociality of the sign," and, in the final analysis, that these insignia speak "as something other than the human voice — as impersonal *officium* or function."[147] Extrapolating from this analysis, Goodrich's interpretation of armory can offer some real insight into Lear's early habits of communication. King Lear speaks as a sanctified authority, and his total reliance on one-directional imperatives and speech acts could well be read as a 'language of law,' as an "effacement [of] sociality."[148] The ingenuity of the rest of the play is to demonstrate how, if these elite signifying systems alienate the "the general and ignoble public" who are prevented from either "know[ing] or bear[ing] arms of honour," they also alienate the

[147] Goodrich, *Languages of Law*, 131.
[148] Ibid.

bearer.[149] *King Lear*, utterly unlike *Timon*, is a play in which the sacred man must disavow his sanctity and recover some sense of "sociality," and develop a new way of speaking — a speech which is a properly "human voice," no longer subordinate to his *officium* or function.[150]

Throughout his madness, Lear insistently returns to images, phrases, and scenarios concerned with his relation to his former office. The famous mock-trial — extant only in the Quarto — is one example of this. This scene has been so well-discussed that I will not embark on a detailed reading, except to note two pertinent features.[151] First, Lear partially abandons the position of sovereign, instead primarily appealing as a plaintiff. Although he demands and appoints the judges — "Thou robed man of justice, take thy place" (3.6.36) — he does so in order to act out some new role in which he no longer exerts an absolute, personal authority. This shift into a plaintiff's relation to law, pleading for a trial with justices, becomes clear in the span of a single line: "Arraign her first, 'tis Goneril — I here take my oath before this honourable assembly — kicked the poor King her father" (3.6.46-8). The masterstroke occurs when he perceives this court failing him, when the law slips once more from his grasp. It is as if the world caves in on him, and he finds himself in the inferno: "Stop her there! Arms, arms, sword, fire, corruption in the place! False justicer, why hast thou let her 'scape?" (3.6.51-5). Expressed here then —

[149] Ibid.
[150] Ibid.
[151] Roger Warren, "The Folio Omission of the Mock Trial: Motives and Consequences," in *The Division of the Kingdoms: Shakespeare's Two Versions of King Lear*, ed. Gary Taylor and Michael Warren (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), 45-58; for a critical response to Warren, see William C. Carroll, "New Plays vs. Old Readings: 'The Division of the Kingdoms' and Folio Deletions in 'King Lear,'" *Studies in Philology* 85, no. 2 (1988): 230-6; B. J. Sokol and Mary Sokol, "Shakespeare and the English Equity Jurisdiction: The Merchant of Venice and the Two Texts of King Lear," *The Review of English Studies* 50, no. 200 (1999): 436-7; Nina Taunton and Valerie Hart, "'King Lear', King James and the Gunpowder Treason of 1605," *Renaissance Studies* 17, no. 4 (2003): 709-11; Marcus, "St Stephen's Night," 116-7.

simultaneously — is both Lear's lapsing sense of sovereignty and his blistering fear of lost control. In short, there is an impression of painful progress here. It is as if, descending into the incendiary pockets of his own mind, Lear is also progressing toward a new sense of self. From this perspective, one might read Lear's process not only as an *epistrophe*, but also as an example of the ancient literary trope of *katabasis*: the descent into wisdom.[152]

[152] John Freccero, "Infernal Irony: The Gates of Hell," *MLN* 99, no. 4 (1984): 783; Richard Jenkyns, "Unconscious Classical Sources of the 'Divine Comedy,'" *International Journal of the Classical Tradition* 4, no. 1 (1997): 29; Rachel Falconer, "Bouncing Down to the Underworld: Classical Katabasis in 'The Ground Beneath Her Feet,'" *Twentieth Century Literature* 47, no. 4 (2001): 467; for Elton's reading of Edgar in this vein, see Elton, *King Lear and the Gods*, 85.

"A Dog's Obeyed In Office": Lear's Redemption

When Lear next re-enters the stage, he is near Dover — evading a reconciliation with Cordelia due to a "sovereign shame," another instance of the analogy between psychology and politics (4.3.43) — and "[c]rowned with rank fumiter and furrow-weeds" (4.4.3). This scene contains some of the most intensely philosophical meditations on office and ethics in Shakespeare's canon. It would be misleading to say that, by this scene, Lear has entirely detached from his office, as the litany of remarks on his kingship proves: "I am the King himself," "Ay, every inch a king," "I pardon that man's life," and so on (4.6.83-4, 106, 108). As Elton wittily argues, Lear "plays the Fool to Gloucester's sorrow," suggesting that the Fool's "'all-license' becomes Lear's vision of licentiousness everywhere."[153] With that said, Lear's follies are not solely directed toward Gloucester, they also exhibit and enact a new relation to Lear's historic identity. However, the atmosphere of these utterances no longer suggests a jealous attachment, so much as a parodic self-satire.

The strongest evidence for this parodic impulse lies not so much in the immediate context of these assertions of mock-sovereignty themselves but rather in the moments where he seems to 'break character,' as it were. He does so, I contend, in order to disavow doctrinal sovereignty and the logic of office itself. I have already cited the lines in which he repudiates the "no good divinity," the bad "theology" that made him think he was "everything" (4.6.99-100, 100n, 104). But shortly after this, Lear dwells more decisively

[153] Elton, *King Lear and the Gods*, 321.

on the instrumental logic of office, the notion of spectacular sanctity that office carries, and the moral hypocrisy it permits. As one famous line has it: "handy-dandy, which is the justice, which is the thief?" (4.6.149-50). The scene is littered with instances like this, but there are two examples that render the moral dimensions of these issues in more perspicuous terms. One striking image is that of the hypocritical beadle:

> Thou, rascal beadle, hold thy bloody hand;
> Why dost thou lash that whore? Strip thine own back,
> Thou hotly lusts to use her in that kind
> For which thou whipp'st her.
>
> (4.6.156-9)

As *Black's* notes, a beadle is a "minor parish officer," not unlike a parish constable.[154] Thomas Blount's *Nomolexikon: A Law Dictionary* (1670) describes the various duties of "bedeles," including being a "Cryer or Messenger of the Court, the Keeper of a Prison or House of Correction, an under Bailiff of a Mannor."[155] But strikingly, the beadle frequently appears in Shakespeare's works, either literally or figuratively, as "a whipper of transgression."[156] R. Chris Hassel, Jr. notes two figurative instances: Biron's remark, "I, that have been love's whip, / A very beadle to a humorous sigh," and Henry V's remark that, scourge-like, "[w]ar is [God's] beadle" (*LLL,* 3.1.148-9; *H5*, 4.1.148).[157] He also observes that, in the second part of *Henry VI*, the beadle is explicitly named as the officer

[154] Bryan A. Garner, ed., "Beadle," in *Black's Law Dictionary* (St. Paul, MN: Thomson Reuters, 2009); "Beadle, n.," in *OED Online* (Oxford University Press), 2b-c, 4a, accessed October 3, 2019, http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/16469.
[155] Thomas Blount, ed., "Bedel (Bedellus, Sax. Bydel)," in *Nomo-Lexikon*, Early English Books, 1641-1700 / 168:09 (In the Savoy: Thomas Newcomb, for John Martin and Henry Herringman, 1670).
[156] R. Chris Hassel Jr., *Shakespeare's Religious Language: A Dictionary* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2005), 30.
[157] Ibid.

who will whip Simpcox (*2H6*, 5.130, 133, 140). One can also add Lear's remark to his account, and the prominent example in the second part of *Henry IV*, in which two beadles appear on stage, intent on giving Mistress Quickly "whipping-cheer" (*2H4*, 17.5).

What is particular to Lear's figurative example, and perhaps to Biron's, is the ethical critique concerning the internal moral paradox that the office might demand: "Thou hotly lusts to use her in that kind / For which thou whipp'st her" (4.6.158-9). First, this critical assessment offers a measure of Lear's ongoing philosophical transformation. This is to say that Lear's moral development can be synecdochally summarised in his shifting language regarding corporal punishment: from raging in the storm about those wretches still "[u]nwhipped of justice," to querying the ethics of the whipper himself (3.2.53). Yet, what this questioning unveils is an intriguing moral disjunction of office: namely, that the office might oblige the office-holder to publicly punish that which the office-holder privately desires to do.

In Shakespeare's canon, the most important precursor for this paradox occurs in *Measure for Measure*. The deputised Angelo is precisely such a hypocritical officer, who, as it were, whips the transgression that he himself desires. The well-worn interpretation of his 'angelic' name as an ironic expression of his "outward-sainted" "seeming" overlooks the purpose of angels in the Judaeo-Christian tradition: precisely, as deputised functionaries of God (*MM*, 3.1.86; 2.4.150).[158] Indeed, the word "angel" itself derives from the Greek *aggelos*, translating the Hebrew *mal'ak*, meaning "messenger."[159] As the great Patristic

[158] For more on angels, see Giorgio Agamben, "Angels," *Angelaki: Journal of the Theoretical Humanities* 16, no. 3 (2011): 117-23; Agamben, *The Kingdom and the Glory*, esp. 144-66; Heron, *Liturgical Power*, 11, 37-8, 43-6, 63-7, 79-81, 86, 88-90, 115, 130, 132.
[159] Heron, *Liturgical Power*, 79.

theologian, Gregory the Great stated: "the word 'angel' is *the name of a service, not a nature* [*officii, non naturae*]."[160] In short, angelic power is the communication of a divine potency that is not properly their own.

Angelic divinity does not then belong to the angel on the level of their essence, their nature, or being, but arises only in their contingent enactment of their liturgy, their divine service. In this sense, St Gregory's "*officii, non naturae*" neatly expresses the logic of sanctified office that I described in the first chapter: the office-holder does not possess the divinity of their office, but, so to speak, is possessed by it. It is worth recalling that in English Common Law, the office of the judge was itself doctrinally articulated as a vicarious embodiment of the king — hence the stipulation that murdering a judge "in their places doing their offices" constituted *crimen lesae majestatis* (high treason).[161] In reading this conception of office into Shakespeare, it is intriguing that it is precisely St Gregory's disjunction between office and nature that becomes the subject of Angelo's crisis.

The drama of *Measure for Measure* is, of course, partly animated by the more general mismatch between Angelo's honourable reputation and his actions but there is also an important emphasis placed on the conflict between his private morality and his public duties as a deputised judge. For example, in his early speech, condemning Claudio, he concludes with: "When I that censure him do so offend, / Let mine own judgement pattern out my death" (*MM*, 2.1.29-30). In fact, a little later in the play, this crisis is expressed on the level of ontology itself: "What dost thou? Or what art thou, Angelo?" (*MM*,

[160] Ibid.
[161] Coke, *Selected Writings*, 2:955.

2.2.178). The "hotly lust[ing]" Angelo even prefigures Lear's "handy-dandy" in his own formulation, describing his moral inconsistency with his office when he agonises: "Thieves for their robbery have authority, / When judges steal themselves" (4.6.158, 4.6.149; *MM*, 2.2.181-2). Yet, Angelo's remarks, unlike Lear's, do not collapse the thief and the judge into a state of indiscernibility — it is not, "Which is the justice, which is the thief?" (4.6.149-50). It is instead as if Angelo, the pseudo-angelic functionary, cannot help but believe that, even if two persons steal, even if both have fundamentally the same nature, a distinction (no matter how dubious) remains between the thief and the judge: namely, the judge holds sacred office and the thief does not.

As the quotation from Gregory the Great might suggest, this articulation of the angelic *officii* became, in fact, closely connected to the development of the idea of ministerial office.[162] Building from and, in a number of respects, surpassing Agamben's *Opus Dei*, Nicholas Heron's *Liturgical Power* offers a decisive account of the origin and development of this concept. One of the central chapters focuses on a crucial theological elaboration by Thomas Aquinas, in which the minister, like the angel, is posed in

[162] Heron permits some confusion when he argues that the officer "must act in order to be," that the officer "necessitates that he must incessantly enact that function in order to be" (131). What must remain at the absolute forefront of this interpretation, for it to remain clear, is Aquinas's view that merely by 'holding' the office, the officer is, in a sense, at least exercising the *doxological* function of the office. This is to say, that even in a state of apparent passivity, the minister, by virtue of appearing as a minister and not as themselves, contributes to the spectacular exhibition of power of the sovereign, or as Aquinas has it, "mak[ing] the plenitude of his [the King's or God's] power all the more manifest" (Heron, 85). This conception of ministries having both a practical function and a glorifying function leads to resolution of the paradox that Agamben addresses in *The Kingdom and the Glory*, when he analyses the ultimate end of angels, who (after the fulfillment of the salvific economy) have no further soteriological duties to fulfil, yet do not cease to exist:

> The angelic ministries survive the universal judgment only as a hymnological hierarchy, as contemplation and praise of the glory of the divine. With every providential operation exhausted and with all administration of salvation coming to an end, only song remains. Liturgy survives only as doxology. (Agamben, *The Kingdom and the Glory*, 162)

Aristotelian terms as an animate or living instrument (*instrumentum animatum*).[163] This aligns with the much older Christian doctrine of *opus operatum*, explored by Agamben in *Opus Dei*, in which the efficacy of the minister's sacramental action rests on the correct administration of the official rite, and not on the moral condition of the office-holder himself. In Agamben's words, the "effectiveness and validity of the sacrament" was considered objectively independent of "the subject who concretely administers it."[164] This doctrine emerged from the so-called "baptismal disputes" of the Church Fathers, regarding which the Augustinian orthodoxy emerged: that those baptised by Judas Iscariot did not need to be rebaptised, since the sacraments are efficacious not on account of the individual performing them, but merely *through* them in so far they are an instrument of a higher power.[165] As Augustine conclusively phrased it: "if it was the baptism of Christ, they were baptized by Christ."[166]

The utility of this doctrine for the purposes of this thesis partly rests on this extraordinary use of Judas Iscariot as an example of a sacramentally effective instrument. The ministerial office — the archetypal office in Christian political theology, through which the ancient roles of kingship and the judiciary were powerfully rearticulated — thereby implies a practical indifference with regards to the moral condition of the office-holder. Few other examples could so emphatically declare the intense substitutability implied by the institutional dogma of the *instrumentum animatum*. But, intriguingly, something very close to this bleak instrumental logic underpins Lear's thinking, when he tenders his other resounding critique of office.

[163] Heron, *Liturgical Power*, 89-115, esp. 89, 90, 92; Agamben, *Opus Dei*, 52-4.
[164] Agamben, *Opus Dei*, 21.
[165] Ibid.
[166] Ibid.

Lear. Thou hast seen a farmer's dog bark at a beggar?

Glo. Ay, sir.

Lear. And the creature run from the cur? There thou mightst behold the great image of authority: a dog's obeyed in office.

(4.6.150-5)[167]

In this phrase — "a dog's obeyed in office" — the emphasis might first appear to land on the image of the beggar "obey[ing]" a dog, which certainly complicates any abstract ideals about the innate political supremacy of man over beast. Yet, in my view, what is remarkable is the image of "*a dog* […] *in office*" at all.

Earlier in the play, Lear's language often seemed to imply that any symbolic encroachment on his position of authority was not only emasculating but, at least figuratively, an assault on his humanity. The greatest concentration of this animalising imagery occurred in the arguments concerning his retinue: "[t]o be a comrade with the wolf and the owl," "to keep *base life* afoot," "to be slave and *sumpter* [pack-horse] / To this detested groom," and most famously, "[m]an's life is cheap as beasts," and so forth (2.2.399, 404, 405-6, 456, my emphases). Yet Lear's "great image of authority" precisely reverses this prior outlook (4.6.154-5). Official authority is not only split from any sense of dignity — as the image of a farmer's dog chasing a beggar implies in the first instance. But furthermore, from Lear's new perspective — having been "[flattered] like a dog,"

[167] I have repunctuated two lines into questions, to convey the sense more clearly.

(4.6.96-7) — his former sovereignty now appears like "a dog […] in office," suggesting that the office was itself more dehumanising than its loss.

This perspective, in which the office-holder can be figuratively reduced to a dog guarding his master's property, resembles the Thomistic articulation of the officer as an animate instrument in several key regards. The dog, as an instrument of the farmer, chases the beggar — if the beggar complies, the farmer's delegated authority is exercised successfully, and the office is correctly fulfilled. Importantly, the dog does not need to understand why or how. The efficacy of the office hinges only on the "objective effectiveness and validity" of the results, to borrow Agamben's phrase, rather than on the subjectivity of the office-holder.[168] This is also to say that the individual dog (or beggar) is not important, except insofar as they are able to fulfil their functional relation. Lear's admission of this functional logic implies that he is detaching from his office, expressing a recognition that office (and the authority it brought) presupposed an inherent substitutability. Yet, in another sense then, the successful fulfillment of the dog's office depends upon the compliance not only of the beggar, but of the dog also.[169] That this Christian doctrine of office therefore presupposes a servile rationality, even in the highest positions, is confirmed by the Aristotelian precursor that Aquinas himself invokes. Heron summarises this neatly:

> […] it is not so much the Stoic sage that is reborn in the Christian minister, but (as we have already seen Aquinas will clearly intuit many centuries later)

[168] Agamben, *Opus Dei*, 21.
[169] This connects with Heron's remarks that even the governors are, in some sense, the governed. See Heron, *Liturgical Power*, 12-3, 129-30.

> *Aristotle's household slave*. Like the latter, he requires only the smallest amount of virtue — just enough, as Aristotle explains, to prevent him from failing in his function.[170]

Officers, for Aquinas, are angelic insofar as they are animate instruments, whose typological precedent is Aristotle's slave. According to the ministerial doctrines, the bare minimum of virtue that the *instrumentum animatum* requires — that the officer, the angel, and the slave require — is nothing other than the will to complete their function: in other words, the virtue of compliance. It is not for the instrument to question the agent, for the dog to question the master, or the angel to question the divine power which it exercises. In fact, the example of the slave is precisely instructive, since the slave's political identity is reduced, first and foremost, to function.

But, as *King Lear* stages over and over again, while an office might demand a minimal quantity of virtue — "just enough […] to prevent [them] from failing in [their] function — the virtue demanded is a virtue of a perverse kind: namely, a virtue that suspends other virtue.[171] It advocates the triumph of "know thy place" over any kind of Socratic "know thyself," and the subordination of an ethically-engaged self in deference to political identity. It is a catechistic social virtue, not a philosophical ethic. In brief, the internalisation of official logic — which, after all, is part of Lear's problem — therefore demands the dutiful suspension of personal ethics in lieu of complying with the demands of one's office.

[170] Heron, *Liturgical Power*, 130, my emphasis.
[171] Heron, *Liturgical Power*, 130.

Understood from this perspective, a hitherto overlooked dimension of *King Lear*'s ending comes into sharper focus. In the final moments of the play, a new form of martial figure is suddenly introduced. No longer are knights at the forefront of the narrative, Edmund instead asks for "[s]ome *officers*" (5.3.1, my emphasis). The significance of the abrupt arrival of the professional soldier precisely lies in the fact that, once again, they present an exemplum of the logic of the office. The soldier is another model for an ethical obligation that extends only to compliance with their instrumental function — where a suspension of personal ethics is achieved through the instrumentality of duty. (From this perspective, it ceases to be mysterious that the metaphor of the soldier was so beloved by theologians in articulating the ministerial office.)[172] Importantly, from the perspective of this thesis, there could therefore be no more appropriate agent for the final catastrophe of the play than the anonymous captain, who, when tasked with the murder of two prisoners, dutifully replies: "I'll do't, my lord" (5.3.35).

By granting the killer of a central character almost no substantive moral dimension, Shakespeare breaks with form. In one of the rare comments on the character, Elton describes the Captain as "a lesser Edmund."[173] Yet, Edmund's rationale for his self-interested trajectory is explained near the outset of the play: "wherefore should I stand / In the plague of custom[?]" (1.2.2-3). By contrast, the Captain is granted little in the way of motivation. He is not persuaded by a tale of personal antipathies, as Banquo's murderers are in *Macbeth*; nor does he struggle with his action, as the second murderer famously does in *Richard III* (*Mac*., 3.1.77-141; *R3*, 1.4.253-5). He does not explicitly weigh his decision on stage like Exton in *Richard II*, and he evidently has no interest in

[172] Ibid., 67.
[173] Elton, *King Lear and the Gods*, 134.

embarking on the kinds of lengthy premeditative disquisitions posed by the assassins of *Julius Caesar* (*R2,* 5.4.1-11; *JC*, 1.2.136-78; 1.3.88-119; 2.1.10-34). The closest comparison to the Captain in the source-texts is the Messenger of *King Leir*. Yet, as I have already shown, the Messenger, though a hired killer, ultimately fails to follow through with his assassination of Leir due to a timely spiritual conversion.[174] In contrast to all of these, *King Lear's* Captain is depicted as a rather empty character: an anonymous officer, who is dutifully obedient to his office over any personal moral choice.

This vacuousness is perhaps why he barely registers with audiences as the final agent of the tragedy, and why so few critics have discussed his appearance. In the endless pages written on Cordelia's death, I am not aware of any critic addressing the real innovation at stake. Cordelia commits suicide in several versions of the narrative: including Holinshed's *Chronicles* and Higgins's *Mirror for Magistrates*.[175] Shakespeare's original contribution is therefore not Cordelia's death, but rather her murder. R. V. Young comes closest, reflecting on the significance that "[Cordelia] *does not commit suicide*," as part of an essay on hope and despair, but understandably does not venture to analyse the introduction of a murderer.[176] Perhaps the surprising absence of the officer in *Lear* criticism is itself a measure of the numbing familiarity of the doctrine of office.[177]

The properly original dimension of *King Lear*'s catastrophe is thus to end a play that meditates torturously on office with a display of official action in its most bleak form. Edgar even insists on the point when he demands of the repentant Edmund in an otherwise

[174] Anon., *King Leir*, 4.7.197, 300, 301.
[175] Bullough, *Sources*, 7:319, 332.
[176] Young, "Hope and Despair in King Lear: The Gospel and the Crisis of Natural Law," 272.
[177] For the need to study our "numbingly familiar" political categories, see Oakley, *Kingship*, 9.

odd phrase: “Who has the office?” (5.3.246). Crucially, this figure of a dutifully compliant professional — another instrument of inert morality, like the “rascal beadle” and the “farmer’s dog” — dispatches Cordelia, who incarnated the possibility of dutiful disobedience (4.6.156, 150). In this sense, the fissure in the heart of duty, which the opening love-test prized apart, is left unhealed.

There is therefore a useful contrast available between Lear and the officer, in terms of how they address their personal ethical responsibility. In the Folio, “I’ll do’t, my lord,” is the Captain’s only line. However, the Quarto adds two more, which are illustrative: “I cannot draw a cart, nor eat dried oats. / If it be man’s work, I’ll do’t” (5.3.39-40). Here, the officer ties his instrumental acceptance of the order to a curious notion of “man’s work” (5.3.40). Of course, this phrase evokes the masculine symbolic privilege that attaches to professional violence in all of its forms. Yet, the thrust of the captain’s meaning lies in his intriguing juxtaposition of “man’s work” against animalistic acts, like “draw[ing] a cart” and “eat[ing] dried oats” (5.3.40, 39). The use of “cannot” suggests that this objection is not directed along the lines one might expect. He is not distinguishing himself from animals, who are routinely reduced to animate instruments. This is to say that his objection is not that he *would* not “draw a cart, nor ear dried oats,” but rather that he “*cannot*” (5.3.39, Q, my emphasis). His distinction rests on an instrumental question of what work he is properly capable of, with no quibbles about its moral character or its personal appeal.

In other words, when ordered to murder Lear and Cordelia, the Captain’s peculiar reply is that since he cannot do what one might ask of an animal, he will do whatever one can

ask of a man. In this, he foreshadows (but inverts) Shakespeare's most morally-engaged murderer: "I dare do all that may become a man; / Who dares do more is none" (*Mac.*, 1.7.46-7). I say inverts because, unlike Macbeth, the officer implies a fundamental equivalency between himself and the beast: namely, that they share the very animate instrumentality that Lear described (4.6.155). The distinction, for the Captain, between himself and beast lies primarily in their different capacities — and, in this, the catechistic virtue emerges once more: "know [thy] place."[178] The Captain's statement therefore presupposes that his only ethical responsibility is to identify and accept whatever duties he is physically capable of, without questioning their validity. Indeed, the very simplicity of the officer's affirmation in both the Quarto and Folio variants — "I'll do't" (5.3.35, 40) — precisely effaces his own moral agency in relation to the action. By addressing the action as the incomparably neutral 'it' — and even compressing the "it" into the curt "I'll do't" — the captain subtly empties the action of any content, except insofar as it is a generic action whose completion he is responsible for. The officer's lines, then, present a sharp contrast to the trajectory of Lear, where his engagement with the idea of the animal has not reinscribed his instrumentality, but has rather brought the basics of his own ethical responsibilities into a sharper focus.

The transformation that Lear's meditations imply is made increasingly explicit in his subsequent scenes. The "recognition scene" between Lear and Cordelia is certainly a precursor to one of Shakespeare's favoured devices in later romances, as Kiernan Ryan notes, and perhaps thereby contributes to the thwarted sense of a romantic trajectory discussed in my second chapter.[179] However, to add to Ryan's point, this recognition

[178] Wilkins, *Know Thyself*, 12-3.
[179] Ryan, "*King Lear*," 386.

scene was already suggested by the earlier *King Leir*, when Cordella initially presents herself to Leir in disguise before revealing herself.[180] A crucial point of Shakespeare's amendment is that — rather than the daughter deceiving the father — the father, as it were, had deceived himself. In this sense then, the "recognition scene" is not only a moment in which Lear recognises his daughter, but also in which he recognises himself. Here, his parodic kingship ends, and he begins to express a clearer sense of self-knowledge, in the most painfully tentative sense:

> I am a very foolish, fond old man,
> Fourscore and upward, [F]not an hour more nor less;[F]
> And to deal plainly,
> I fear I am not in my perfect mind.
>
> (4.7.60-3)

This self-recognition falls into place with his detachment from even his parodic kingship of earlier scenes. When Lear asks the question, "Am I in France?", Kent responds with "In your own kingdom, sir" (4.7.76). This elicits an ambiguous reaction from Lear: "Do not abuse me" (4.7.77). The precise nature of the abuse, as Lear sees it, is difficult to resolve. Perhaps, as some have suggested — surrounded by a French army, complete with the French insignia — Lear simply refuses to believe that he is still in Britain (4.7.0.1n).[181] The more tempting interpretation, from the perspective of this thesis, is that Lear has finally detached from any sense of having possession of the kingdom. He might accept that he is still in Britain, but to be told Britain is "*[his] own* kingdom," is an "abuse" —

See Chapter 2 for the dashed romantic implications of the Edgar subplot.

[180] Anon., *King Leir*, 5.4.203-10.

[181] See also Rosenberg, *The Masks of King Lear*, 283.

another instance of the "no good divinity" he has sought to set aside (4.7.76-7; 4.6.99-100, my emphasis). His detachment from any right to his kingship is arguably also supported by his gentle advice to Cordelia, to "forget and forgive" (4.7.83-4). These are admittedly ambiguous remarks. Yet, even if one is reluctant to accept these lines as positive evidence of his detachment from office, he also says nothing more in pursuit of retribution or the restoration of his authority. By comparison to the first half of the play, that absence itself represents a seismic shift.

In Lear's next scene, he has been captured, and is being conveyed to prison by Edmund's officers. The interaction is sufficiently rich to quote at length:

Cord. Shall we not see these daughters and these sisters?

Lear. No, no, [F]no, no[F]. Come, let's away to prison;
We two alone will sing like birds i'the cage.
When thou dost ask me blessing I'll kneel down
And ask of thee forgiveness. So we'll live
And pray, and sing, and tell old tales, and laugh
At gilded butterflies, and hear poor rogues
Talk of court news; and we'll talk with them too —
Who loses and who wins, who's in, who's out —
And take upon's the mystery of things
As if we were God's spies. And we'll wear out
In a walled prison packs and sects of great ones
That ebb and flow by the moon.

(5.3.7-19)

First, Lear seems instructively pacific about the subject of Goneril and Regan, answering Cordelia's angry question with an almost benevolently simple: "No, no" (5.3.8, Q). Here, then, is an echo of the tranquil Leir, the end-point of Shakespeare's trajectory.[182] Second, his preoccupation about office and political identity reasserts itself once more. One of the features of their new life will be to laugh at the "gilded butterflies," those politicians, who are inherently substitutable, who "ebb and flow by the moon": "who's in, who's out[?]" (5.3.13, 19, 15). More importantly, however, is the manner in which this discussion will ostensibly be handled. Pascale Aebischer identifies with her usual critical perspicacity that the speech is "striking for the recurrence of verbs of utterance (ask, pray, tell, laugh, talk)."[183] Yet, to add to this, the speech specifically also admits a new vocabulary of listening and dialogue: "when *thou* dost ask *me*," "*we'll* live / And pray, and sing," "[we'll] *hear* poor rogues," and "*we'll talk* with them too" (5.3.10, 11-2, 13, 14, my emphases).

This new emphasis on dialogue undermines Emily Sun's ambitious argument that Lear's philosophy remains unchanged between the beginning and end of the play, that in both cases he "situates freedom and happiness outside of a world lived between and among a plurality of human beings."[184] On the contrary, Lear's paradoxical freedom and happiness in confinement is partly expressed through an expectation of discursive engagement with other human beings. Furthermore, the change in Lear's philosophy can be demonstrated

[182] For the contrary argument that Lear "never achieves liberated serenity" or "integrity of the self," see Collington, "Self-Discovery in Montaigne's 'Of Solitarinesse' and 'King Lear,'" 250.
[183] Aebischer, *Bodies*, 188.
[184] Sun, *Succeeding King Lear*, 61.

by the novelty of the discursive forms that Aebischer identifies — praying, laughing, talking. These are all emphatically distinct from Lear's opening style: the commands, curses, interrogatives, invectives, jeremiads, and threats have been set aside.

The phrase "take upon's the mystery of things" seems fundamentally unclear. Does it mean, as Elton implies, the attempt to understand divinity, to attempt to surpass the *debilitas rationis* (the limitation of human reason)?[185] Or does the curious phrasing of "*take upon's*" imply the reverse: an acceptance of the mysteriousness of things, not attempting to understand the mystery but rather merely to witness it, as though Lear was there only to spy on the manifestation of providence-in-the-world for providence. When he says "as if we were God's spies," the key words are clearly "as if" — none of this need confirm a substantive belief in God or providence — but rather Lear suggests the efficacy of encountering the mystery of evil as if it were merely something to be witnessed and thereby "take[n]," not agonised over in an attempt to understand it.

As I showed at the outset of this thesis, Lear's initial condition of sovereign kingship was advertised by his spectacularly ceremonial and forceful utterances. Dispensing with the "cares of state," especially Kantorowicz's *lex ceremoniarum*, his change of speech matched his preferred new position (1.1.50, F).[186] The sharp prosaic style he initially adopts communicates his ideal of personal authority over official pomp: "Let me not stay a jot for dinner: go, get it ready. / How now, what art thou?" (1.4.8-9). Later, in his madness, the manner of Lear's language use transforms yet again: fluidly shifting

[185] Elton, *King Lear and the Gods*, 31.
[186] Agamben, *Kingdom and the Glory*, 195. See also Ernst H. Kantorowicz, *Laudes Regiae: A Study in Liturgical Acclamations and Medieval Ruler Worship*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1946, 180n.

between disjointed rage, playful self-parody, and a painful compassion. Following his recovery, Lear's new idea of selfhood manifests itself, this time explicitly, in a new vision for his speech: the fresh interplay of identities in the dialogic self producing a new discourse; or, equally, Lear's new discursive practice helping to consolidate a new interplay of identities. Importantly, this new vision is founded on a reciprocal, playful discourse. In short, Lear has completed the transition that I suggested: from sanctity to sociability. Here, at last, is a glimpse of the good life: the life worth living.

As I have tried to show, the tragic force of the play's conclusion operates along many vectors. One such vector, provocative though it is to admit, is that the brutal murder of Cordelia — which ought, in itself, to be tragedy enough — lands hard partly due to Lear's experience of it. Her death extinguishes his new worldview. Whatever hopeful vision he had won through his lengthy suffering — whatever wisdom he retrieved from its depths — is foreclosed by an abrupt and dutiful enactment of political violence. Like Socrates and Boethius, Lear's philosophical journey is foreclosed, but not repudiated, by the political jeopardy that fueled it. The exchanges between Cordelia and Lear at the end of the play are vital, delicate, and brief, but suffused with potential. In a sense then, redemption does appear in *King Lear*, but not as a sacrifice. Lear's redemption is an incandescent moment of human possibility. There is nothing pure in it. The ashes left behind are unbearably plain.

THRESHOLD

There are profoundly abject moments in *King Lear*'s depictions of degradation. This is true for the blinded Gloucester's prayers for death; the dispossessed and outlawed Edgar's feigned madness on the heath; and for Cordelia's inert body at the climax of the play. But it is important to recognise that, as with Agamben's concept of 'bare life,' such abjection is not a necessary consequence of political exclusion. This is another political myth that *King Lear* overturns. In fact, as Agamben attempts to explore throughout *The Highest Poverty*, there are certain forms-of-life that take on the attributes of bare life — as idealised 'natural' lives, lived beyond the bounds of juridical recognition or protection — which are not necessarily abject.[187] Specifically, there was the highest poverty of Franciscan theology, which sought to live without or beyond law, merely in a state of 'use,' as I touched on in earlier chapters. Such ascetic existences, in a more general sense, have long held a romantic attraction in literature, as is evident in chivalric romances, shipwreck narratives, spiritual quests, and so forth. But the ascetic fulfillment depicted in many banishment narratives suggests a latent appreciation of the spiritual possibilities of bare life. As the exiled king Carinus piously remarks to his ambitious son in Robert Greene's *Alphonsus*: "A quiet life does passe an Emperie."[188] *King Lear* seems to take this dimension of bare life as seriously as its political jeopardy.

[187] Agamben, *The Highest Poverty*.

The fairly common assumption in secondary criticism that Agamben's 'bare life' must be abject is a consistent marker that the author has not read Agamben's wider project.

[188] Greene, *Alphonsus*, TLN 156.

In fact, the differing uses and experiences of nudity in *King Lear* can be a tool to unpick this complex relationship with this *nuda vita* (bare life).[189] Edgar strips off, bringing himself "near to beast" with "presented nakedness," seeking to "preserve [him]self" by obscuring his identity as an outlaw (2.2.180, 182, 177). As he says, "Poor Tom, / That's something yet: Edgar I nothing am," implying that, by embodying the "horrible object" of absolute poverty, he feels less precarious than living as a "proclaimed" and "hunt[ed]" outlaw (2.2.191-2, 188, 172, 174). In short, Edgar prefers the anonymity of physical nudity to identifiable clothing, which might disclose his juridical position. Lear, on the other hand, sees the beggar's nudity as a prompt for digging deeper into who he is without his kingship. In fact, the image of a man as a "bare, forked animal" inspires Lear, leading him to consider the possibilities of living well, in spite of his juridically bare life, without needing to escape or conceal that issue (3.4.106). Fundamentally, Lear's task becomes to live a life that neither denies its political situation, nor permits itself to be reduced to it. In a sense, this is a task we all face.

Understanding this gives the appropriate context for Lear's penultimate scene. It is important that when Lear enters into prison, he is in some sense freer than at any other point in the play. I reject Bradley's claim that in this moment Lear's "mind is greatly enfeebled."[190] The fact that he does not weep at the prospect of confinement, or fret about the possibility of something worse, reflects his new and properly philosophical outlook that forages for whatever joy may be found in the present.[191] In the great tradition of

[189] Compare with Agamben, *Nudities*, 50-90.
[190] A. C. Bradley, *Shakespearean Tragedy*, 267.
[191] My interpretation effectively dissolves the difficulty that Collington faces in reconciling Lear's contentment with isolation and with talking with "poor rogues." See Collington, "Self-Discovery in Montaigne's 'Of Solitarinesse' and 'King Lear,'" 261-2.

persecuted philosophers, he affirms the possibility of a kind of liberty, paradoxically, in confinement.

This optimistic vision for a bare life of a former sovereign sharply diverges from that described by Richard II, in the young king's comparable moment:

> Sometimes am I king;
> Then treason makes me wish myself a beggar,
> And so I am. Then crushing penury
> Persuades me I was better when a king;
> Then am I kinged again, and by and by
> Think that I am unkinged […]
>
> (*R2*, 5.5.32-7)

Where Richard sees himself as doomed to a ghastly oscillation between tortured pride and shabby despair, Lear sees his bare life as holding a treasure trove of possibilities: to be humble, loving, reflective, playful, discursive, and collaborative. Unlike the power, titles, and identities that Lear wielded so jealously at the start of the play, the freedoms of his new life depend more upon himself than on their recognition by others. Yet, the play's subjective expression that bare life need not be abject does not absolve the factual horror of political exclusion, if anything it concentrates it. Even those lives, which can transubstantiate a joyous freedom from confinement, are nevertheless unprotected, unguaranteed, and available to perish. Lear manages to disentangle his sense of self from the office he used to hold but the mortal imprint of his office remains, the political

jeopardy of the ex-sovereign still hangs over him. Nevertheless, what is glimpsed in Lear's brief exchange at the threshold of the prison is a moment of freedom; and this moment of freedom, though internal and fragile, is real.

CONCLUSION

In the first chapter, I examined doctrinal aspects of kingship that were pertinent to the play's premise: I distinguished sovereignty from the title of king, I demonstrated that the sovereign's most distinctive powers drew on and reinforced their spectacular political position, and that the divine instrumentality of the kingly office suggested a certain obliteration of the self, a "ceasing to be."[1] This last point was partly evoked by George Buchanan's proto-republican argument that the sovereign was nothing other than a cipher of the law, though it was detectable in other theories and ceremonies around kingship also. All of these doctrinal presuppositions, I argued, could be seen to come into effect with particular force through the jurisprudential property of majesty. The terms and consequences of this latent quality — particularly as the spectacularly sacred attribute that treason injures (*crimen lesae majestatis*) — suggested that the physical person of the king was vastly subordinate to the sacred power they exercised. By communicating "all the large effects / That troop with majesty" to his sons-in-law, Lear therefore entered a precarious position: a cipher of nothing, an "O without a figure" (1.1.132-3; 1.4.183-4).

In the second chapter, I took seriously the critical hostility toward Edgar, especially the view of him as an empty character in comparison to Poor Tom or Edmund. This vacuousness could be interpreted as Edgar himself being a juridical cipher, albeit in a different way. I argued that Edmund could be seen to build such an impression from the outset, insistently posing Edgar as "the legitimate," before conspiring to have him

[1] Bataille, *The Accursed Share*, 3:204; Sheerin, "Making Use of Nothing," 797.

outlawed (1.2.18). In this sense, the sub-plot was also shown to emphasise the entanglement of political theology with issues of marriage, sexual ethics, and inheritance, which I termed the patrimony-matrimony relation. Edgar's subsequent arc — moving from outlaw, to ascetic beggar, to peasant, messenger, knight — articulated a wide-spread romantic convention in a more overtly hierarchical way, in which the unfairly banished nobleman returns to restore juridico-political order, including the matrimony-patrimony relation. The insistence on *rota fortuna* imagery, combined with Edgar's defeat of the illegitimate Edmund in chivalric single combat and Albany's offer of the throne to Edgar's "royal nobleness," seemed to poise the play for a romantic catastrophe: the advent of a new king, the coronation of a new cipher for the law (5.3.174). Part of the tragedy's force, I suggested, thus arose from the closing lines, which withheld any conventional comfort concerning the political future of the playworld — a choice that Nahum Tate's popular Restoration adaptation would later reverse.

In my third chapter, Lear's daughters, doctrinally reduced to objects and means of transmission, were shown to experience political theology in a substantively different way. I noted that studies of political theology, particularly Agamben's, have often failed to openly engage with questions of gender. Having unpacked some of the political, theological, and ethical doctrines that surrounded the Renaissance notion of "woman," I noted that *King Lear* criticism often reflects a damning double-standard, whereby Goneril's dubious actions — infidelity, murder, and suicide — are still held against an entirely different benchmark than her male counterparts in the canon. This reflects what I called a "catechistic" model of ethics, in which morality is posed as contingent upon doctrinal identity. I also argued that the Catechism was one device through which the

demand to "know thy place" had been cemented into a moral good, particularly by reference to duty.

This third chapter therefore reflected the increasing emphasis on the idea of duty in the thesis. In this vein, I also examined Cordelia's actions in comparison to Philip Stubbes's enormously popular pamphlet *A Crystal Glass for Christian Women* (1591), suggesting that even Cordelia's defiance of Lear, by primarily being posed as a service for him, could reflect a prevalent patriarchal conception of feminine duty. I argued that Cordelia's insistence on restoring Lear to the throne indicated that this duty was held not to the man himself, but to some idealised sense of her father. In the closing of the chapter, I returned to a structural irony of the play, in which *King Lear* opens with Gloucester's "brazed" admission of his own "good sport" but then closes with the chaotic unveiling of Goneril's "[sub-contract]" to Edmund (1.1.10, 22; 5.3.88). Having suggested that the sharply different ethical views regarding the two reiterate this catechistic model of morality, I note that Goneril thereby closes the play attainted with "capital treason" (5.3.83). In other words, she dies condemned for injuring the majesty that she herself transmitted, from harsh father to cold husband.

In the final chapter, I focused on Lear's transformative arc. I began by noting that, unlike the earlier Leir, Shakespeare's king begins with no interest in self-reflection or humility. I argued that his choleric disposition is presented not only as a result of old age or impending illness, but as a result of a habitual lack of self-knowledge: "he hath ever but slenderly known himself" (1.1.294-5). Taking this echo of the Delphic maxim as a cue to examine Lear's crisis as a philosophical one, I contended that the play poses Lear's

journey as a journey of shedding "sophisticat[ion]" (3.4.104). Pursuing Lear's own explanation, I contended that his lack of self-knowledge can be indexed against his habituation to his divine office: "They told me I was everything, 'tis a lie, I am not ague-proof" (4.6.103-4). I then extrapolated out into the wider question of office as a problem both of ethics and identity: "Thou rascal beadle," and "a dog's obeyed in office" (4.6.156, 155). In terms of solving his problem — the great tragic problem of Epictetus, "the sufferings of men who have attached high value to external things" — asceticism and humility were shown to take on a profound role in Lear's recovery.[2] The therapeutic use of simplicity ran through the ancient philosophical tradition: from Socrates, through Diogenes, up to Boethius. Such an idea, I argued, underpins Lear's encounter with Poor Tom: "this philosopher," "this same learned Theban" (3.4.150, 153). Before the prison, Lear's philosophical recovery can be detected in the shift of his speech: from sanctified authority to humble sociability. In this sense, Lear's journey can be read as a purification from his own sense of doctrinal purity.

In this fourth chapter, I also proposed a more nuanced reading of Shakespeare's adaptation of the story's conclusion. Specifically, I argued that Shakespeare's innovation did not lie merely in the death of Cordelia, but rather in having her murdered. Uncharacteristically for Shakespeare, this murderer was presented as an officer content merely to follow orders, with little to no questioning of the ethics of the deed. In a play that features extensive meditations on the idea of office as foreclosing ethics, I argued that it was striking that the figure of the dutiful professional was shown to commit this

[2] Epictetus, *Discourses, Fragments, Handbook*, 13.

final tragic act. It was also remarkable that, for all the close studies of *King Lear*, this terminal figure of the officer has received such scant critical attention.

The thrust of each of these chapters then concerned the disconnections between self and identity. The sovereign office, as I suggested, was perhaps the most intensely articulated form of identity that theoretically instrumentalised, even obliterated, self. The doctrines of self-negation surrounding sovereignty were shown to not only have certain phenomenological and ethical consequences, but also active juridico-political ramifications too. This was partly evidenced by the historically precarious position of the ex-sovereign. What *King Lear* intuits, however, is that while the precarity of the sovereign is relatively unique, ethical alienation is consistent across a more mundane category of experience: namely, office in general. In a similar vein, other doctrinal identities appear to be as potentially philosophically disempowering — including bastardy, rank, and gender — albeit often through recourse to the concept of duty and catechistic virtue.

Underpinning these ethical crises, the danger of mistaking attribute for essence runs through the play. Edmund chafes under what he has been told he is, and thus he seeks to juridically deactivate his bastardy, while also perversely revering it. Goneril resents the limitations and vulnerabilities of her doctrinal position as a wife and daughter, yet ironically makes herself vulnerable to a man who idolises identity as much as he resents it. Cordelia hazards her life to restore her father as a king, rather than escape to France with him as he is. And Lear's own crisis is perfectly summarised when, no longer treated like a sovereign, he sarcastically demands: "who is that can tell me who I am?" (1.4.221). In this moment, both the character and the play demand the question that I began with:

who is Lear, if he cannot be King Lear? At stake in all of these calamities is therefore nothing less than an elusive but decisive philosophical distinction: between what we are and who we are. The force of the play's ending, in part, rests on the impression that in the moment that Lear seems finally able to offer a positive answer to that question, catastrophe strikes — in the figure of a dutiful officer.

APPENDIX: *CRIMEN LESAE MAJESTATIS*

The first concerneth death,
- By compassing or imagining the death of the { King, Queene, Prince, } and declaring the same by some overt deed.
- By killing and murdering of the { Chancellor. Treasurer. Justices of the one Bench or other. Justices in eyre. Justices of assize. Justices of oier and terminer, &c. } In their places doing their offices.

The second concerneth, violation, that is, to violate or carnally to know { the kings consort, or queene. the kings eldest daughter unmarried. the princes wife.

The third is levying war against the king.

The fourth is adhering to the kings enemies within the realme, or without, and declaring the same by some overt act.

The fifth is counterfeiting of { the great seale. the privie seale. the king's coyne.

The sixth and last, by bringing into this realme counterfeit money to the likenesse of the kings coine, &c.

From Sir Edward Coke, *Selected Writings*, ed. Steve Sheppard (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 2002), 2:955.

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