

**Philip Lorenz. 2013**  
***The Tears of Sovereignty:***  
***Perspectives of Power in Renaissance Drama***  
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Reading Lope de Vega or Calderón de La Barca's works against Shakespeare's plays offers potentially substantial perspectives for any scholar interested in those great playwrights of the Baroque period. Lorenz's work transcends mere cross-cultural comparisons in order to explore larger cultural issues related to power and sovereignty and how theatrical representation deals with them. In this sense, Lorenz's book can be rightly associated with the traditional scholarship on the power dispute between the Church and the Monarchy and the more recent interest in Shakespeare's possible sympathies for the Catholic cause.<sup>1</sup>

Lorenz's book gains relevance given the twenty-first-century panorama. This century is being marked by a return to religious warfare similar to the one in the seventeenth century. Contemporary political and religious institutions are aware of the importance of adequate manipulation of iconography and imagery. Likewise, words and images understood as metaphors collide in Baroque

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<sup>1</sup> See Wilson (2004), Greenblatt (2004), Fielitz, S. (2009), Akroyd (2006). Wilson's self-proclaimed intention is to tackle the issues Shakespeare did not write about. Specifically, he refers to the "'Bloody Question' of religious loyalty which split his contemporaries between the Pope and the Queen" (2). Greenblatt thoroughly deals with Shakespeare's conflicting loyalties toward his Northern Catholic background as well as towards the dominant Anglican Church. This is specifically tackled in Chapter 2, "The Great Fear", in Greenblatt (87-117). Nevertheless, Greenblatt returns to Shakespeare's likely intention of going unnoted in matters of faith. Very likely, for Greenblatt, "he did have a faith (...) but it was not a faith securely bound either by the Catholic Church or by the Church of England" (321).

theatre. Therefore, Baroque Spanish and English drama can be studied in relation to their literary tropes. Against this background, Lorenz's book situates the reader within the challenging interdisciplinary perspectives of Sociology, Law, Theology, Political Theory, and Literature, all of which are energized by metaphorological analyses of five representative works: *Richard II* (Shakespeare), *Measure for Measure* (Shakespeare), *Fuenteovejuna* (Lope de Vega), *Life is a Dream* (Calderón de La Barca), and *The Winter's Tale* (Shakespeare).

The book begins with the theological dispute initiated by the Jesuit Francisco Suárez in *A Defense of the Catholic Faith against the Errors of the Anglican Sect*. Lorenz refers to the explosive impact of this theological work. Suárez's ideas contributed to threaten the allegedly unquestionable authority of James I. The Counter-Reformation cause is defended by Suárez. To this end, he focuses on the concept of sovereignty. Lorenz elegantly disentangles Suárez's dissociation of monarchy from the body of the king. By way of differentiating these two concepts, Suárez collides with the interests of the rising absolutist modern states. Ultimately, this ongoing confrontation would prove as serious as to lead to the European wars of the seventeenth century. Once this controversial dissociation is established, Lorenz manages to present the problematic relationship between metaphors and the objects they represent.

In "Introduction: The Body is Burning – Sovereignty, Image, Trope," Lorenz firstly handles the definition of sovereignty as body, as a sign, and as law-maker. Having isolated the intrinsic power of monarchy to act as a sign, Lorenz connects Baroque political and theological discussions with more contemporary ways of interpreting signs. Additionally, the writer facilitates an understanding on how tropes serve as bridges to tackle the paradoxes resulting from subjugation and resistance to power, both of which apply to contemporary events and ideas. Lorenz contrasts views of twentieth-century philosophers such as Schmitt and Benjamin on the dispute between the analogical representation of metaphysical conceptions of the actual world and the system of digressions and alterations that were designed to show the inner movements of human consciousness through iconographic representation and various tropes. In this sense, the reader is informed of Lorenz's view that intersections between politics and

religion are as important today as in the Baroque period. For Lorenz, the power crisis in the seventeenth century appears firstly emblemized through the “tear,” a dangerously fruitful trope that does not simply mean “tear” as in “mourning” but tear as “ripping apart,” “cutting,” or “threatening.” The tear is just the starting point for the progressive metaphorical movement that Lorenz relies on in order to interpret power in the succession of the five plays chosen.

In the first chapter, “Breakdown: Analogy and Ontotheology in *Richard II*,” Lorenz utilizes Suarez’s metaphysical disputations in relation to the 1606 Oath of Allegiance. The writer brings forward the contradiction between the two natures of the King as an embodiment of temporal and spiritual power. The problem presented for the political thinker of the period is the following: If the body is finite, how can power be infinite? The power of the King is related in analogical terms to divine power. Lorenz investigates and develops the idea of analogy and illuminates the reader with the problem presented by the space between analogy and the object represented, recognising a range of indeterminacy that, in any case, will be re-defined by some kind of significant movement. Here it is that Lorenz alludes to the power of metaphor. In this particular case, the movement carried out by the metaphor will be a falling one, which Shakespeare specifically shows through the metaphors of the two water buckets and the mirror shattered into pieces that are featured in *Richard II* (4.1.184-189, 4.1.276-291). These two images mirror the king’s fall in the deposition scene. Lorenz highlights a mechanistic representation of Richard as an alienated body that, like a clock machine, recognises his own functionality and, therefore, his own human failing substance. The answer is, therefore, that, although the institution of the Crown is eternal, the body of the King is not.

The second chapter, “Reanimation: The Logic of Transfer in *Measure for Measure*” deals with the transference of power via an organ transplant. Lorenz introduces an imaginative comparison between Shakespeare’s play and Almodovar’s *All about My Mother* regarding the theme of fabrication of authenticity. Suddenly, the signifying potential of elements such as silicone ignites a motivating reading on the artifice of power. In this play, power transference is pervaded by images of body parts marketed by the institutions. The theme of exchange extends to money and sex, as well as

maidenheads for the life of one's brother, and the forgiving of one accused for the death of another. Simplifying the substance of the law and its application to the mere exchange of heads for the fulfilment and satisfaction of the parts involved in legal disputes leads to a view of power institutions as inhumane. The institution, thus, as represented, seems satisfied as long as some body parts occupy corresponding vacant places in the system.

The third chapter, "Resistance: Waiting for Power in *Fuenteovejuna*," tackles power structures in Lope de Vega's play. Lorenz approaches how the feminine figure rises against masculine abusive power. Ironically, this female subversion attempts to fill a power vacuum left by the incompetence of male rule. The articulations of two essential concepts for Spanish Literature – *honour* ("honor") and *reputation* ("honra") – appear in the form of signs, marks, and traces. Lorenz interprets the visual marks of dishonour in Laurencia's body as written symbols of rape. Laurencia's emasculating attack on the villagers' pusillanimous inaction advocates an earlier time in which there was friendship between men and women. True authority relies on this idealised primitive *status quo*. In this sense, the women in *Fuenteovejuna* advocate for a more satisfactory system which does not work against the coercive apparatus but rather enforces it.

The fourth chapter, "Transformation: The Body Moves Out in *Life is a Dream*," focuses on Calderón de La Barca's *Life is a Dream* with a study of the iconography of power in the seventeenth-century Spanish court. Lorenz highlights the metaphorical qualities of *Life is a Dream* inasmuch as they instruct on the Machiavellian notion that good government relates to foresight. The Counter-Reformation representation of political power was associated to visual display. Lorenz points out how the Spanish monarchs of the early seventeenth century were aware of the impact which iconography exercised on their subjects and their perception of royal power. Nevertheless, these icons of royal power were often substitutes for the real presence of the Spanish monarchs, who, contrarily to Elizabeth I, more often than not, chose to distance themselves from those they ruled. For Lorenz, the problem in *Life is a Dream* is that Basilio is not a good reader of signs. These "ciphers" or enigmatic figures that keep Basilio mystified are ambiguous. In his inability, Basilio misreads time and that brings defeat upon himself. As

opposed to the Protestant preference for the written word and the individual approach to God, Suárez promotes the Catholic faith as one which urges the believer to avoid any arrogance leading him to believe in his ability to decipher God's true intentions. In this sense, Lorenz reads *Life is a Dream* as a warning against pride derived from the alleged capacity of reading God's plans.

A fifth and visually significant move takes place in the last chapter, entitled "Return: The "Wrinkles" of Mystery in *The Winter's Tale*." In this chapter, Lorenz combines the aforementioned Machiavelli's concept with the notion of images of effective truth as possible traces of sovereignty. This means that, for Lorenz, the play studies the relationship between the monarch's ability to predict events and how images communicate absolute truths rather than metaphors. Consequently images, following Suárez's Mariological disputations, should not be understood as figurative but as representational. According to this premise, for instance, the bread and the wine in the Catholic ceremony should not be taken as metaphors but as genuine representations of Christ's flesh and blood. Following Catholic doctrine, if these elements are understood as metaphoric, the reader will be accused of heresy. The image of sovereignty is, in this play, represented by a statue. The statue is wrinkled, a trope introduced by Shakespeare to add a Christian twist to the Ovidian frame of reference from which the image of the statue derives. In this sense, the wrinkle evinces the idea of representation as truth according to Suárez's view.

Lorenz's "After-Image" examines the conceptual and representational forms of power. This section guides us towards a series of pithy conclusions on the nature of fiction tropes as a means to study the way in which power relates to legal codes, sociological and religious issues. He cleverly rationalizes the movement of tears in a photographic sense and envisages the fears and desires of power as forms of emotional response that remain inalterable over time. Again, the symbols change but the emotional responses have not been eradicated with the coming of secular thinking.

There is one problem the reader may encounter while he reads the book. What is the validity of the connections Lorenz establishes between these five plays? It is not just that Lorenz engages in the challenging intersectional exploration of five Baroque plays and the tropes displayed in them. Also, he goes as far as to apply these

connections to larger issues in matters of law, erudition, politics, and cross-temporal thinking. Lorenz aligns himself with history in a non-linear sense which recognises metaphors, allegories, and analogies, inasmuch as they function as ailments of power. The fact that sovereignty is fallible reflects the potential of metaphors which recur or that are modified through time. In this way, Lorenz beautifully refers to tears as the element that actually allows us to see power, in its pain and its fearful desire to prevail over the resistance it encounters. Thus, the book successfully establishes the failure and suffering of power in the inconsistency of tropes to represent such power. Therefore, Lorenz manages to make the point that tropes may change overtime while the “tears of sovereignty” remain alive and well in the twenty-first century.

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