"Again and again in Shakespeare we are tantalised by the possibility of an escape from theatricality and the constant pressure of power, but we are, after all, in the theatre, and our pleasure depends upon the fact that there is no escape, and our applause ratifies the triumph of our confinement" (Stephen Greenblatt). Consider the implications of this remark for our enjoyment of Shakespearean drama.

Stephen Greenblatt's remark implies that "theatricality" and "the constant pressure of power" are linked. I will examine how power uses theatricality to confine us and ask why we applaud this. I take theatricality to mean the artifice of "manner, speech [and] gesture" which is, in the words of the Concise Oxford Dictionary "calculated for effect"[1]. Theatricality is ritualised in theatre, and for this reason I closely associate the two in exploring the relationships firstly between theatricality and power, and consequently between confinement and enjoyment. Power and theatricality go hand in hand. As Stephen Greenblatt also wrote - of the Renaissance, "Theatricality is one of power's essential modes"[2]. Power maintains a façade because any position of responsibility within an organisation or state or justice mechanism, requires that the individual makes the pretence of shedding their personal interests to represent a higher purpose, to embody the institution. Immediately, the voice is not their own - the Crown the wig and the dog-collar mask the individual and thus in the words of *King Lear* even "a dog's obeyed in office"[3]. It is this charade of personal disinterest which is undermined by King Lear's attempt to use his office to obtain what he selfishly desires - his daughters' love: "Which of you shall we say doth love us most? / That we our largest bounty

1 [1] *The Concise Oxford Dictionary*; J. B. Sykes; seventh edition; (UK; Clarendon Press; 1982); p1109.

2 [2] Quoted here from Richard Wilson; *Will Power*; first edition; (UK; Harvester Wheatsheaf; 1993); p54.

may extend"[4]. In contrast, when Prospero refrains from his urge to seek revenge by redefining for himself nobler ends, "the rarer action is in virtue than in vengeance"[5], his position is morally strengthened. He becomes a force of justice, and thereby justifies his seemingly egotistical machinations - ordering the storm, terrorising Antonio and the shipwrecked crew. The façade of propriety is inversely created by Henry IV, who hopes to break through an image of dissipation "like bright metal on a sullen ground, / My reformation glitt'ring o'er my fault"[6]; and when he prematurely seizes the crown, he must swiftly disclaim power-lust: "But if it did infect my blood with joy / ... Let God for ever keep it from my head"[7]. By the same token, Julius Caesar publicly refuses the crown three times, before a scrutinising audience, and the usurpers are instructed by Brutus to "Let not our looks put on our purposes; / But bear it as our Roman actors do"[8].

But a façade is not enough. Whereas Portia as Balthasar, Viola as Cesario, and Rosalind as Ganymede, can wear the doublet and hose and thereby gain entrance to the male world of authority, their power derives from their ability to enounce. Their speech forces itself upon those around them, they derive power from the ability to sustain encapturing expression. Their theatricality, their artifice is that of playing to the gallery as opposed to talking to the person they address. For Anthony to regain influence in Rome, he must gather the crowd around him - "make a ring about the corpse of Caesar"[9] he instructs - creating a theatre in the round. We have been tantalised by the possibility of an escape from theatricality by the

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3 [3] IV. vi. 152; *The Norton Shakespeare*; first edition; Stephen Greenblatt; (USA; W. W. Norton & Company; 1997) p2537.

4 [4] I. i. 49-50; *The Norton Shakespeare*; first edition; Stephen Greenblatt; (USA; W. W. Norton & Company; 1997) p2480. Hereafter all Shakespearean quotations will be referenced to page numbers from this source.

5 [5] V. i. 27-28; p3098.

6 [6] *1 Henry IV*; I. iii. 190-191; p1164.

7 [7] *2 Henry IV*; IV. iii. 297 and 302; p1362.

8 [8] II. i. 224-225; p1550.

9 [9] III. ii. 155; p1567.

honesty of his tears, but in his formation of the round, he consciously puts himself centre stage and uses Caesar's body as a prop to move the audience's passions. Theatricality relies in essence upon a consciousness of the audience's gaze, and it is this consciousness which confers a power upon the observed to manipulate their sympathies. Bolingbroke is a "well-graced actor"[10] because he times his entrance to reap the popular gaze. He orchestrates the scene, he creates a spectacle - in the same way that the priest's breaking of the bread during mass confirms his power through performance. Paulina in *The Winter's Tale* therefore gains power by delivering a show: "Music; awake her; strike!"[11] she directs, conducting the ceremony of Hermione's transubstantiation. In absorbing the interest of a crowd, the performer subjectifies his audience.

To watch is to be passive. Therefore while theatricality can derive power by raising crowds, the full expression of theatricality in theatre can subdue and sedate. In her essay 'Government and Spectacle', Janice Carlisle observes that in *The Times* newspaper reviews of 1879, the reviewers seem preoccupied with the response of the "lower orders" to each play. Carlisle remarks "more than half of these notices begin with comments that prove that the most unruly elements of the audience are tamed by the performances they see"[12]. Where it does not advance the main plot of the narrative, the play within the play in Shakespeare's works can be seen as a means of deferral. Both in *The Tempest* and in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Prospero and Theseus respectively, use performance to defer the time when the lovers will go to bed. Theseus is realising his original intention to "wed thee in another key"[13] and the play

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10 [10] *Richard II*; V. ii. 24; p1003.

11 [11] V. iii. 98; p2951.

12 [12] Janice Carlisle; 'Spectacle as Government'; *The Performance of Power*; Sue-Ellen Case and Janelle Reinelt; first edition; (USA; University of Iowa Press; 1991); p172.

13 [13] I. i. 18; p815.

acts as mood music, which like the "noises / Sounds and sweet airs"[14] of Caliban's isle are "voices / That if I than had waked after a long sleep / Will make me sleep again"[15]. We become lulled to stillness by theatre, tamed like Christopher Sly in *The Taming of the Shrew*, who sits at the side of the stage as the play absorbs him.

By inverting the assumed order of who is watching who, power is able to use theatricality subjectify the audience. Dickens admiringly noticed of the Britannia Theatre, that "the whole [was] so admirable raked and turned to the centre, that a hand could scarcely move in the great assemblage without being seen from thence"[16]. Thus, Carlisle draws the analogy between the theatre and the Foucaultian-Benthamite panopticon: "The person on stage is not the object of the audience's gaze, but the overseer of the audience as spectacle"[17]. The implication is that the environment of the theatre conditions us as subjects, in accordance with Foucault's explanation that a panopticon "induce[s] in the inmate a state of consciousness and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power"[18]. Carlisle therefore upholds that an audience "polices itself, ejecting any disorderly "man or boy""[19]. Richard Wilson describes Prospero's circle - in which his "spell-stopped"[20] captives stand confined - as another embodiment of the panopticon[21]. This theatrical round is made of "docile bodies"[22] unsure as to whether they are being watched. Thus, although Prospero's

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14 [14] *The Tempest*; III. ii. 130-131; p3087

15 [15] Ibid.; lines 134-5.

16 [16] Quoted here from Janice Carlisle; 'Spectacle as Government'; *The Performance of Power*; (USA; University of Iowa Press; 1991); p167.

17 [17] Ibid.

18 [18] Foucault, Michel; 'Discipline and Punish'; *Literary Theory: An Anthology*; first edition; Julie Rivkin, Michael Ryan; (GB; Blackwell Publishers Ltd.; 1998); p470.

19 [19] Janice Carlisle; 'Spectacle as Government'; *The Performance of Power*; (USA; University of Iowa Press; 1991); p167.

20 [20] V. i. 61; p3099.

21 [21] Richard Wilson; *Will Power*; first edition; (UK; Harvester Wheatsheaf; 1993); p153.

22 [22] Ibid.; p154.

abrupt interruption of the masque "Well done! Avoid; no more!"[23] seems to herald a release from his theatrical domination, the intrusion of the shipwrecked wrong-doers on to his stage is just as orchestrated as the masque which preceded it. Even as we are tantalised by the prospect of Prospero relinquishing this all-containing magical power "I'll break my staff, / Bury it certain fathoms in the earth"[24], we have - like the prisoners - already become internally subjectified, and we carry this confinement within us. Power inculcates self-surveillance through theatricality and as Wilson writes, "if Ariel vanishes into air, it is because surveillance of our crimes is now undertaken by ourselves, the judges of normality who are present everywhere"[25]. We ratify this shift into a surveillance culture by our forced applause. If we do not applaud, Shakespeare's stage directions threaten that Prospero will remain on the central stage of the panopticon until we have internalised - or given "indulgence"[26] to - his confinement. Thus the word "indulgence" in the line "Let your indulgence set me free"[27] refers both to our reprieve and our assent; both of which are demanded by Prospero for his use of theatrical power to subjugate us.

Theatricality confines us by encouraging us to suspend our disbelief and our moral faculties. Honnigman describes as "sympathy", this "purely impersonal, non-emotional self-projection"[28] by which we are able to identify with the immoralists Iago and Falstaff, thereby conferring upon them a mandate which is "almost unconditional"[29]. In Macbeth, "the killing of Duncan may not be right, and yet may be "right for Macbeth"; given his character and

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23 [23] IV. i. 142; p3095

24 [24] IV. i. 54-55; p3099.

25 [25] Richard Wilson; *Will Power*; first edition; (UK; Harvester Wheatsheaf; 1993); pp. 155-6.

26 [26] Epilogue, line 20; and note 2; p3106

27 [27] Ibid.

28 [28] E. A. J. Honigmann; *Shakespeare: Seven Tragedies: The dramatist's manipulation of response*; (UK; The Macmillan Press Ltd.; 1976); p23.

29 [29] Ibid. p21.

situation, we accept that he acts plausibly - and if tragedy extorts *poetic assent* we *approve*, and cannot extricate ourselves by describing our approval as purely aesthetic"[30]. Our suspension of disbelief in the theatre persuades us to indulge ourselves in a suspension of moral beliefs. We have allowed ourselves to become bound up and immersively caught along with personalities who "appeal to us as more sharp-sighted, more amusing, more alive than other characters, or more richly endowed with Shakespeare's own irrepressible genius for manipulating men"[31]. This is a confinement by absorption, a mastering by intensity of character. As Baillet de Saint-Julien describes of Van Loo's 1755 painting *St. Augustin prêchant devant Valère. Evêque d'Hippone*, "The orator ... seems to be seeking in the eyes of his listeners the means to fully persuade them of those truths"[32]. In his book *Absorption and Theatricality*, Michael Fried describes this as an "absorptive activity"[33] and we are reminded by Cima's essay 'Conferring power in the Theatre' that this relationship is typical of theatrical confinement; "the actor-audience relationship promoted in the realistic theatre, [is one] where the actors' virtuosity is on display for the audience's pleasure: where the actors master the audience"[34]. Robert Langbaum protests that such an acquiescence to intensity, such an adulation towards "sheer vividness of character"[35], propagates a way of thinking which locates and confers power against "the moral principle"[36]. Thus, "it leaves an anarchic free-for-all in which the characters compete for a sympathy that depends on the ability to

30 [30]Ibid. p19.
31 [31]Ibid. p21.
32 [32]Quoted here from Michael Fried; *Absorption and Theatricality*; first edition; (USA; University of California Press; 1980); p22.
33 [33]Ibid. p23.
34 [34]Gay Gibson Cima; 'Conferring Power in the Theater'; *The Performance of Power*; Sue-Ellen Case and Janelle Reinelt; first edition; (USA; University of Iowa Press; 1991); p261.
35 [35]Quoted here from; E. A. J. Honigmann; *Shakespeare: Seven Tragedies: The dramatist's manipulation of response*; (UK; The Macmillan Press Ltd.; 1976); p18.
36 [36]Ibid.

command attention, with the strongest character able to assert his point of view against the general meeting"[37].

The implications of this suggestion for the allocation of political sympathies are disturbing but perhaps not surprising. In the cynical representation of the masses depicted in *Julius Caesar*, Brutus speaks first, enrapturing the Roman crowds with his convincing oration until they cry "Live, Brutus, live, live!"[38] and believe that "Caesar's better parts shall be crowned in Brutus"[39]. Then Antony speaks, he sheds tears, he outwardly disclaims theatricality "I am no orator as Brutus is"[40] whilst he dramatically uncovers Caesar's body and movingly talks of putting "a tongue / In every wound of Caesar that should move / The stones of Rome to rise and mutiny"[41]. In the space of minutes, the crowd assembled in the forum have moved from mutinously declaring "'Twere best he speak no harm of Brutus here!"[42], to saying "If thou consider rightly of the matter, / Caesar has had great wrong"[43] and vowing not just to hear "the noble Anthony"[44], but that "We'll hear him, we'll follow him, we'll die with him!"[45]. The attitude of the plebeians is not one of ambivalence, yet their responses seem far from considered in the giddy throws of impassioned mob rule. Their allegiances to one version of events or another deeply contrasting political spin, are deeply swayed by the charisma of their politicians. Brutus and Anthony are effectively getting rated upon their performances. It is the intensity of Anthony's performance which allows him to confine and then politically master an audience of Romans.

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37 [37] ibid.
38 [38] III. ii. 44; p1565.
39 [39] III. ii. 47; p1565.
40 [40] III. ii. 208; p1568.
41 [41] III. ii. 219-221; p1568.
42 [42] III. ii. 65; p1565.
43 [43] III. ii. 106-7; p1566.
44 [44] III. ii. 199; p1568.

During its performance, theatricality conditions us by defining our relation to ideology as passive onlookers to be manipulated to subjective responses. Theatre, the embodiment of theatricality, presents a version of reality. Should this reality be idealised as a just and retributive world where "Virtue triumphs, Vice and Villainy fail, all to prove unequivocally that "honesty is the best policy""[46], it reaffirms Christian ideology and the ideology of the fair state - and subjects the audience to it. If, in contrast, the reality portrayed is one like *King Lear*'s in which Dollimore sees closure as having been pushed beyond our grasp[47], the performance tantalises us with the possibility of an escape from our assumed ideology. After Edgar kills Edmund, he sermonises "The gods are just and of our pleasant vices / Make instruments to plague us"[48]. The power of this ideological confinement is shattered by the death of Cordelia, but Albany attempts to reinstate what Dollimore calls "the old punitive/poetic terms"[49], saying "All friends shall taste / The wages of their virtue, and all foes / The cup of their deservings"[50]. Then Lear dies. In observing two ideological positions struggling for supremacy, the rigidity of our confinement is called into question. In Shakespeare's plays, we witness polyphonous discourse, and we are tantalised by the possibility that a dominant ideology will not resurface. However, it invariably does. Even the subversion and anarchy inherent in *King Lear* is ultimately banished by the restoration, however compromised, of patriarchal order by Albany and Edgar. The forces of subversion are finally contained and order is restored by Fortinbras in *Hamlet*, by Prospero in *The Tempest*, by Cassio in *Othello*, and by Anthony and Octavius in *Julius Caesar*. As a

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45 [45] III. ii. 200; p1568.
46 [46] Janice Carlisle; 'Spectacle as Government'; *The Performance of Power*; (USA; University of Iowa Press; 1991); p168.
47 [47] Jonathan Dollimore; *Radical Tragedy*; second edition; (UK; Harvester Wheatsheaf; 1989); p203.
48 [48] V. iii. 169-170; p2549.
49 [49] Ibid.
50 [50] V. iii. 301-303; p2552.

consequence, the promise of a saturnalian break from subjection is withheld and when Theseus' promised time of "revelling"[51] arrives, we realise that we are still under his compunction: to enjoy and to applaud. Theseus instructs us to "Love, therefore"[52] this rudely mechanical drama and as he overrules objection with "I will hear that play"[53], our voices are silenced by the imposition of the performance as an Ideological State Apparatus. The enactment of this imposition has long seemed unlikely, the repeated interventions of the spirit realm and the disorganised preparations of the Mechanicals tantalising us with the prospect that Theseus original intention to "wed us in another key"[54] will not be realised. But the enactment of this ideological wedding is not disbanded - it is only deferred to the penultimate act - because power's insistence that "the show must go on" is one intent upon our theatrical confinement.

Why do we cede to theatricality and applaud its imposition upon our consciousness? Why do we enjoy this confinement as Greenblatt contends? Theatricality allows us to explore our unconscious. Much like "fantasy"[55] in the Zizekian sense, the representation of a world "no more yielding than a dream"[56] provides a psychological arena in which we are able to uncover the repressed. *Hamlet* tells us what will happen if we secretly meet our mother in the bedchamber[57], *King Lear* plays out the consequences of a daughter trying to break free of patriarchal control, and both *As You Like It* and *Twelfth Night* reveal the chaotic consequences of shifting sexual identity. As Zizek describes, fantasy is the means by which

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51 [51] I. i. 19; p815.

52 [52] V. i. 104; p853.

53 [53] V. i. 81; p852.

54 [54] I. i. 18; p815.

55 [55] Slavoj Zizek; 'The Sublime Object of Ideology'; *Literary Theory: An Anthology*; first edition; Julie Rivkin, Michael Ryan; (GB; Blackwell Publishers Ltd.; 1998); pp. 320-325.

56 [56] *A Midsummer Night's Dream*; Epilogue; line 6; p860.

57 [57] Act III, scene iv.

the unconscious mind conceals the terrifying Lacanian Real: ""Reality" is a fantasy-construction which enables us to mask the Real of our desire"[58]. We use theatre, like fantasy, to catalyse a process of exploring, identifying and then repressing our desires.

We enjoy being mastered by ideology in the same way that we enjoy being mastered by the virtuosity of actors or by the rhetoric of convincing politicians. We submit to this ideology because it defines our role as a passive audience - we are given clear cues as to when to applaud, our emotional responses are manipulated, and we are confined to our seat and socially conditioned to docility. We are interpellated as Christopher Sly is in *The Taming of the Shrew*: "Your honour's players, hearing your amendment, / Are come to play a pleasant comedy, / For so your doctors hold it very meet"[59]. By restraining our freedoms, theatre makes our roles as individuals easier. Moreover, theatre also defines our world for us: a particular view of the world is contextualised - with ordained modes of behaviour, categorised identities and defined consequences. We respond well to this confinement when it presents a convincingly workable world-view because it gives us a reality to grasp which resonates with our own, and teaches us how to behave. Althusser defines ideology as "a 'representation' of the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence"[60]; and this is what is being presented to us by theatrical representation. As Halm describes, "Representation is part and parcel of an unending process of self-and-world definition and circumspection whose common name is "culture". In all human experience,

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58 [58]Slavoj Zizek; 'The Sublime Object of Ideology'; *Literary Theory: An Anthology*; first edition; Julie Rivkin, Michael Ryan; (GB; Blackwell Publishers Ltd.; 1998); p323.

59 [59]Induction 2; 124-6; p148.

60 [60]Louis Althusser; 'Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses'; *Literary Theory: An Anthology*; first edition; Julie Rivkin, Michael Ryan; (GB; Blackwell Publishers Ltd.; 1998); p294.

always, everywhere, a formal order is and needs to be imposed on the inchoate formlessness and irrepressible multiplicity of phenomena"[61].

In the Prologue of *Henry V*, the chorus holds out the possibility of an escape from theatricality to the reality of "A kingdom for a stage, princes to act, / And monarchs to behold the swelling scene"[62]. However, the confusing "multiplicity" of reality is not what we have come to see; and we tacitly acknowledge that even if we could, we would not "cram / within this wooden O the very casques that did affront the air at Agincourt"[63]. Who would want Baudrillard's unmanageably realistic country-sized map?[64] We passively applaud power's theatrical domination because it shows us an escape from the "inchoate formlessness" and it does so all the more effectively because it is performed under the illusion of our "voluntary participation"[65]. Carlisle suggests that "the power to purchase admission to a theatre might have encouraged the poor to see themselves less as the passive objects of a disciplinary process they could not escape than as consumers who could either accept or reject the commodity for which they had paid"[66]. Thus, although ideology structures and orders our lives, we enjoy our confinement within it because theatre sustains the illusion that our confinement is voluntary.

To conclude, in Shakespeare's plays his characters gain power by embracing theatricality. Theatricality is integral to the way authority sustains an impartial façade, it is the means by which it manipulates or sedates those it seeks to control and it is an apparatus for reforming its spectating subjects. By absorbing our gaze and manipulating our emotions, the performer

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61 [61]Ben B. Halm; *Theatre and Ideology*; first edition; (USA; Associated University Presses, Inc.; 1995); p9.
62 [62]Prologue; lines 3-4; p1455.
63 [63]Ibid; lines 12-14.
64 [64]Jean Baudrillard; *Simulacra and Simulations*; chapter one.
65 [65]Janice Carlisle; 'Spectacle as Government'; *The Performance of Power*; (USA; University of Iowa Press; 1991); p177.
66 [66]Ibid. p176.

can gain our sympathies and our assent for his ideological confinement; And we submit to this mastering by virtuosity because it grants us a passive relief from the "inchoate formlessness" of extra-ideological reality, and it helps us to repress the intrusion of the Lacanian Real. As the audience to Shakespearean drama we are confined within a credible illusion which makes sense of life, a dominant ideology which the theatrical panopticon ensures that we will continue to believe in long after our applause has subsided. Nietzsche wrote of "metaphysics, morality, religion, science" that they "merit consideration as various forms of lies: with their help one can have faith in life"[67]. This comment is equally valid with regard to the operation of Shakespearean drama.

67 [67]Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*; (USA; Vintage Books; 1968); p451; But quoted here from: Ben B. Halm; *Theatre and Ideology*; first edition; (USA; Associated University Presses, Inc.; 1995); p9.

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