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SUBJECTIVITY AND INTIMACY IN SHAKESPEARE AND JONSON:

TOWARD AN ANTIFOUNDATIONAL HISTORY OF CULTURE

By

Philip Mirabelli

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in English in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York

1999

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Abstract

SUBJECTIVITY AND INTIMACY IN SHAKESPEARE AND JONSON: TOWARD AN ANTIFOUNDATIONAL HISTORY OF CULTURE

by

Philip Mirabelli

Advisor: Professor Richard McCoy

This dissertation examines texts of Shakespeare and Jonson in light of the transformation of intimacy and selfhood that culminated in the Renaissance. I analyze the emergence of "finite" (secular) depth in literature and individuals and of related modes of intimacy. My pragmatism combines an antifoundational, non-reductive view of selfhood with a cultural historicism that stresses long durations.

The Reformation's attempt to channel all sex and romance into an idealized institution of marriage is celebrated by Shakespeare's early plays -- as some critics realize. It is not generally recognized, however, that beginning with *Hamlet* his great tragedies and problem plays dissect this ideal and protest the elimination of irregular relationships such as clandestine marriage. After his moralistic early work Ben Jonson, I show, also resisted the new mores championed by the Puritans. Jonson offers a tolerant, liberated, relatively nonsexist vision of the relations between the sexes.

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Hamlet continues to fascinate us by brilliantly reflecting the trauma of epochal shifts in love, kinship and selfhood. The play's notoriously problematic emotional turmoil is, I argue, a reaction against modern romantic marriage ("we will have no more marriages") and a registering of the shift away from extended-family taboos (broken by Claudius and Gertrude's "incest") toward exclusive nuclear-family (Freudian) ones. The historical significance of the extended-family taboo dramatized in *Hamlet* is clear, since Henry VIII used this prohibition of marriage to one's sister-in-law to end his first union, and since Elizabeth's legitimacy depended on it.

The modern regime of intimacy brought about the increased concealment of drives for food and sex that is evident in the Renaissance revolution in manners, which may be behind the drastic variations in Hamlet's manners. Norbert Elias noted that the Renaissance revolution in manners represents a dramatic development of the superego. If such concealment entails the development of a deeper psychic structure, famous problems surrounding Hamlet may be intentional obscurities to enhance of our sense of his inner depth. Our view inward is partially obscured to give an impression of psychological depth, much as translucent paint and layered objects produce pictorial depth. The linguistic treatment of subjectivity by Shakespeare, whom Wittgenstein considered "more a *creator of language* than a poet," represents a pragmatism that can advance antifoundational theory. As *Hamlet*'s characters test hypotheses about other minds (as in the play-within-the-play), the semiotic process underlying concept formation is outlined.

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The use of obscurity to enhance our sense of subjective depth is employed by Jonson as well. Hamlet's deep self is constructed by the same riddling method that (as I demonstrate in a chapter published in *Studies in English Literature*) Jonson uses in *Epicoene, or The Silent Women* to create a hidden portrait of *True-Wit.* Jonson's conception of a centered, deep self helped to transform the medieval *soul* into secular *wit* (creative intelligence), which was reduced in the Enlightenment to Cartesian *mind.*

Hamlet and *The Silent Woman* dramatize the emerging difficulty of forging intimate bonds among deep selves. The social isolation of what would soon be Cartesian walled egos was aggravated by print culture's favoring of communication lacking immediacy. The relation among print culture, subjectivity, and intimacy sheds light on Shakespeare's attitudes toward publication. I show, for instance, that the enigmatic "Phoenix and Turtle" -- his only work that appears to have been written with faceless readers in mind, rather than a patron or a theatrical or coterie audience -- may be a troubled reaction to print culture's de-emphasis of intimacy. Jonson, on the other hand, was the first to publish plays in folio, and his role in the print revolution helps to clarify his relation to Shakespeare. He contributed great poetry, editorial advice, and prestige to Shakespeare's First Folio, because, I argue, he suspected that its literary power would help his own folio *Workes* become firmly accepted. He therefore felt more allied with than threatened by the power of "what [Shakespeare] hath left us."

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I should not like my writing to spare other people the trouble of thinking, but, if possible, to stimulate someone to thoughts of his own.

- -Wittgenstein

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PART ONE

INTRODUCTION

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Chapter One

PRIVACIES AND PRIVATE SELVES IN SHAKESPEARE AND JONSON

I. *Introductory*

This project began with the realization that Ben Jonson's *Epicoene, or The Silent Women* and William Shakespeare's *Hamlet* use analogous dramaturgical methods to construct "subjectivity effects."[1] These effects of subjective depth appear to have been intended for the perspicacious. Jonson, who was notoriously critical of his audience, made it so difficult to discover that the elusive True-Wit is true to his name's Renaissance significance -- roughly, *creative intelligence* -- that this fact remained generally unappreciated for centuries. Until the discovery was published in *Studies in English Literature* (the article appears as chapter 2 below) the hidden representation of *true wit* seems to have been observed only by John Dryden (or so his "Examen of The Silent Woman" indicates) and other seventeenth-century "cunning palates" -- to quote the play's

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[1]Joel Fineman coined this term: *The Subjectivity Effect in Western Literary Tradition.*

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prologue. *Hamlet*'s representation of depth, it is true, eventually became very famous, but most contemporary theater-goers appear to have been unaware of this side of the play. Human nature was not yet commonly conceived of as deep, at least not in a secular sense. Social and literary processes were, however, already beginning to change conceptions of human nature, especially in an urban elite, which suggests that the play's subjectivity effect could have been what Hamlet calls "caviare" that is not "for the general" (2.2.437).[2]

Shakespeare and Jonson, then, may have employed obscuration to represent for a select audience a type of depth that was virtually unknown in medieval literature. The use of this particular method by these two writers, who were quite different in crucial ways, suggests that they were part of a larger movement to provide models that reflected contemporary changes in subjective structure. Moreover, such changes in selfhood are, I will argue, significantly coordinated with and partially caused by important changes in modes of intimacy.

Both older diachronic approaches to literature and current synchronic ones, I think, miss, dismiss, or misconceive the relation between early modern representations of depth and the historical shift in subjective structure. Older critical modes -- not only the new criticism, with its emphasis on formal beauty (the "well-wrought urn") and universal human dispositions, but also traditional historicism -- tended to neglect variations in subjective structure, as well as in modes of intimacy, both of which in fact greatly affect the

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[2]All quotations of *Hamlet* unless otherwise specified are from the Arden Edition, ed. Jenkins. All quotations of Shakespeare's other works unless otherwise specified are from *The Riverside Shakespeare.*

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reception of literature. If the historical psychology is a difficult field, we nevertheless ignore it at our peril, for crucial issues will then only become more confused.

More recent critical modes have made important advances in integrating the studies of literature and general culture, but these modes remain deficient in my view. The attempt, for instance, by deconstruction to break down the boundaries between disciplines has helped to end the new criticism's isolation of literature, but formalist versions of poststructuralism nonetheless continue to under-appreciate the fact that formal characteristics are dependent on the assumptions of the age. Stephen Greenblatt's notion of a cultural poetics is,[3] on the other hand, an example of an approach that is both interdisciplinary and historicized. And yet, while new historicism and cultural materialism have developed our historical understanding of culture in significant respects, too often they view literature from reductive and limited frameworks. If we are now more aware of how easy it is to read our current notions into the literature of the past, we are perhaps more misguided in that we often imagine that the details of the political regimes of past eras are of utmost importance to works of lasting interest.

Rather than particular political concerns or even formal structures, perhaps what makes the literature of the past continue to live is its investigation of the structures of human relationship and of selfhood. Such structures may well become most intelligible from the perspective of the *longue durée*, which current critical modes too

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[3]Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning.*

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often neglect. Like Eve Sedgwick,[4] I reject the overly synchronic emphasis of structuralism and poststructuralism, while nonetheless learning from synchronists not to read current assumptions into past eras. While synchronic uses of the notion of the paradigm shift are extremely useful, I find certain diachronic perspectives equally important. Synchronic approaches often ignore, for instance, the early modern vitality of medieval and classical versions of subjectivity. An era can never be seen purely on its own terms without a temporal context. Although recent historicists have justly critiqued older writers for reading their assumptions about intimacy and subjectivity into the past, they tend to miss the fact that their own *thick descriptions* of past eras are highly focused selections that may also unnecessarily distort our view.

Rather than taking a single totalizing point of view, my historiography attempts to take various perspectives. The work of Shakespeare and Jonson will be examined in light of the history of subjectivity and a range of social changes -- mostly shifts in modes of intimacy. We will look at types of intimacy that are heterosexual and others that are homosocial, some that are formed by kinship and others by coteries. The shifts in modes of intimacy are related to other developments that will also be considered: urbanization, the dramatic rise of modern manners, the ascent of print culture, and the early stages of capitalism and of modern science. Both poststructuralism and its critics will be drawn upon. Aspects of deconstruction, critical theory, analytic philosophy, psychoanalytic approaches and historical sociology will be used. My theoretical

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[4]Sedgwick, *Between Men.*

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perspective, which is outlined later in this chapter and extensively developed in chapters 7 and 8, is a type of pragmatism that draws on both continental and Anglo-American versions of antifoundationalism. While my theoretical perspective is most influenced by a reading of Wittgenstein, one of his central concepts -- logical criteria -- will be critiqued. I attempt to privilege neither theory nor history over the other. An historical sociology of philosophy will be presented and in turn cultural configurations will be seen from a theoretical vantage point. Neither my historiography nor my theoretical perspective is grounded in any one "entity" (to use Heidegger's term), and both are part of what may be called an antifoundational approach to culture.

The current historical emphasis on topicality and politics tends, I feel, to leave out too much that is essential to literature. Large scale political power usually operates at a significant remove from the individual, and power effects are channeled through intermediate means. Studies in micro-politics, on the other hand, tend to loose sight of lasting, if metamorphosing, values and larger issues. I will concentrate instead on examining and articulating the relation between the early modern shifts in mores and subjective structure. Because the self is affected by the power structure, I find current attempts to explain subjectivity in terms of political power to be important and will engage in this approach at times. I will usually do so, however, by connecting political structures to mores, for the changing social codes that regulate our intimate relationships may well affect our subjective constitutions more than political regimes do. Political revolutions are not unrelated to cultural ones; nor are

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these by any means always coordinated. The personal is political to the extent that shifts in large-scale political structures have important relations to shifts in mores. Only by examining how the structure of the intermediate level of mores is reconfigured over the *longue durée* can, I believe, an historical analysis of literature's relation to power become truly relevant to our present perspective.

Shakespeare's and -- now, after a period of neglect -- Jonson's work continue to haunt us, like old Hamlet's ghost, not only because of formal excellence (though this is surely part of the reason) and not because of a political plot (though political power is always involved in canon construction).[5] Rather, we continue to find their writing compelling to a large degree because of their ability to take fruitful and provocative perspectives on issues of continuing significance and to trope significance in interesting ways. That they lived during profound shifts in mores and selfhood made them quite familiar with both the older and newer paradigms. This double vision enabled them to see many of the cultural assumptions on which the modern world is founded. By stressing mores and the *longue durée* the perspective I am suggesting for the emerging cultural criticism and theory would revise recent advances in order to provide a nuanced approach that neglects neither literature's lasting value nor its historical situatedness. This point of view, which would be ecumenical in that it would draw on -- in order to move beyond -- various recent and older approaches, may help us to reach some

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[5]On Shakespeare's work haunting us, see Marjorie Garber, "*Hamlet*: Giving Up the Ghost." On Jonson's reputation see Jonas Barish's introduction to *Ben Jonson*. For political explanations, see Terence Hawkes, "Telmah" and Gary Taylor, *Reinventing Shakespeare*.

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degree of cross-cultural understanding of our differences and common concerns with past times. Such a perspective could, perhaps, eventually provide emerging cultural criticism and theory with the stature it needs to make a truly meaningful and progressive difference.

The histories of mores and of selfhood can, I think, be treated in a relatively systematic way by examining an era's structural use of *secrecy* -- or *social dissociation* -- which I employ in a broad sense that includes both modes of intimacy and modes of the private or disengaged subject. In contrast to the medieval world's tendency to form intensely communal structures, the early modern period witnessed the growth of our appetite for personal secrecy; indeed, Renaissance England has been singled out as "the birthplace of privacy."[6] Previous eras, however, possessed covert modes that we now lack. While we have inherited the enlightenment's privileging of openness, the early modern period was the last era in which cognoscenti and coteries were often the preferred audience and the philosophic and rhetorical tradition concerning *silence* continued to be vital. Since older traditions of secrecy and corresponding cultural formations were weakening at the same time the culture of privacy was beginning to develop it appears that, as Georg Simmel has hypothesized, the overall "ratio of secrecy" tends to remain constant: "what is originally open becomes secret, and what was originally

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[6]Philippe Ariès, gen. ed. *A History of Private Life.* Vol. III: *Passions of the Renaissance.*

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concealed throws off its mystery."[7] As this shift in mores concerning secrecy was occurring, there was also a major restructuring of the inner domain as people began to conceive of themselves in terms of finite, latent depths and secular selves. Although some work has been done on early modern modes of secrecy and while the emergence of a modern self has been studied, the crucial interrelations between these two areas have only just begun to be explored.

That both deep and flat characters were important to early modern literature appears to reflect a major change in social relations that was taking place at the time. Early modern culture was quite heterogeneous, stressing older types of subgroups,[8] such as coteries, as well as modern ones, such as the nuclear family. This radically transforming society allowed for subject positions that seem related to the medieval heritage (such as Jonsonian humors, or "social selves,"[9] and Shakespeare's easily metamorphosing characters) while simultaneously making possible striking effects of subjective depth that appear proleptic of emerging constructions of the self. As a deeper, less social, more private conception of the self developed in certain circles during the Renaissance, a number of artists realized that to produce a sense of subjective depth the self must be presented as a riddle: an elusive entity not easy to grasp firmly.

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[7]Quoted and trans. Barry Schwartz, "The Social Psychology of Privacy," p. 745; cf. Simmel "Secrecy," *The Sociology of Georg Simmel*, p. 335-6.
[8]On Simmel's theory relating social groups to selfhood see *On Individuality and Social Forms.*
[9]See Lawrence Danson, "Jonsonian Comedy and the Discovery of the Social Self."

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While larger literary contexts will also be discussed, our investigation will often center around the surprisingly radical uses of obfuscation to produce images of subjective depth in Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and Jonson's *Silent Woman*. These innovations in the literary production of subjective depth mark turning points in the careers of these writers and are also important aspects of their participation in the representation and construction of the emerging modern subject. Such experiments should be viewed in relation to early modern modes of secrecy in regard to not only textual content but also theatrical reception. The early modern playwright conceived of the theatrical audience not in our post-enlightenment terms of an "open," homogenous group of individuals, but rather as a collection of relatively discrete interpretive communities. Only the more sophisticated members of these communities were the intended receivers of the innovative and profound portraits presented by such experiments. Other segments of the audience were provided with more popular and well known forms -- adventure and revenge, or farce -- that were simultaneously enacted by the same plays.

Epicoene and *Hamlet* represent dramatic, social, and personal watersheds. Both are innovative dramatic experiments concerning the epistemological effect of withholding knowledge from the audience. On a social level, Shakespeare and Jonson's radical use of obscurity to represent subjective depth reflected and contributed to emerging constructions of the self. On a personal level, after *Epicoene* Jonson became more tolerant and Shakespearean in his attitude toward deception and personality change. After *Hamlet* Shakespeare perhaps began to highlight the psychic inertia which Jonson stressed.

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Before analyzing Shakespeare's method, this project will examine Jonson's more rational approach to questions of selfhood and intimacy and will trace how he came to understand and appreciate the use of deceptive means. Although this order ignores the chronology somewhat, the question of Jonson's views on selfhood and intimacy can be tackled more directly and will provide us with a perspective through which we can attack the hoarier problems that the study of Shakespeare raises. My approach, then, will provide an interdisciplinary context by which we can closely examine key texts, while putting them in relation to diachronic cultural movements concerning intimacy and subjectivity.

This project concerns the interconnections between Shakespeare and Jonson's oeuvres -- a fact that needs to be kept in mind when we subsequently examine them separately. To clarify the significance of subsequent chapters and relations among them, it will be necessary in this introductory one to give not only a general orientation but also a preliminary treatment of my approach. Because one major focus of this dissertation is Shakespeare and Jonson's innovative representations of the subject, some contextual remarks about selfhood will be provided in the next section. Subsequently, I will argue that in the early modern period there occurred a rise not of subjectivity tout court, as au courant materialists often assert, but of *finite* subjectivity. Partial communicative obfuscation, a method that Jonson and Shakespeare both utilized to represent finite subjective depth, will next be examined. The historical context of the plays will then be viewed through the perspective of modes of *secrecy* in the sense of social

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dissociation; much of this section is concerned with providing the sociological basis for the reception theory that will be applied to *Epicoene* and *Hamlet*. Finally, I will offer an introduction to the historical treatment of intimacy -- which may well be the most important type of *secrecy* -- that will be developed in later chapters.

II. *The Self*

To speak of Shakespeare and Jonson's work in terms of the *self* does not mean to retreat to an archaic mode of criticism, for one need not treat this elusive term as an unchanging referent. Post-Bradleyian criticism has corrected the nineteenth-century tendency to treat characters as if they could be independent of the plays. More recently, inspired by the structuralist de-emphasis of the individual and such poststructuralist developments as Derrida's attempt to deconstruct *presence* and Foucault's claim that "man did not exist" before the modern invention of the human sciences and may no longer in the *episteme* that is emerging,[10] critics have attacked the hegemony of a positivist notion of self. Structuralism, modernism, poststructuralism, and postmodernism have succeeded in de-stabilizing the received idea of a centered self, and yet the basic notion has by no means been abolished. While a rigid conception of self as possessing unquestionable boundaries and an unfettered subjectivity is untenable, a more fluid one nevertheless seems to be

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[10]See Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*; Michel, Foucault, *The Order of Things*, p. 344.

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inescapable. Since the *self* appears to be neither unscathed nor destroyed by this century's assaults, the present study will not rely solely on older or newer discourses, indeed not on any single mode exclusively, but rather will draw on various disciplines and approaches.

In common parlance, the *self* means an inner intangible entity which manifests thought and emotion, possesses a history, a disposition to certain types of actions, and conscious and unconscious strata. Despite popular agreement, the academic debate on the self is clouded over by semantic issues, for this notion has different meanings in different contexts. At one extreme some use the term to refer to an entity possessed by many types of living creatures, for as Daniel Dennet remarks, treating even plants as "intentional systems"[11] is often useful in practice. But his attempt to analyze the human self as a set of unintelligent systems, or homunculi, is flawed, since the whole is greater than the sum of these parts. The self may well be a more integrated structure[12] than Dennet and other deconstructors of selfhood allow. Attempts to restrict the term *self* to creatures possessing demonstrated self-awareness are not very helpful, since even chimpanzees and orangutans are able to recognize themselves in a mirror.[13] We no doubt possess different selves than those of other great apes, and yet Clifford Geertz suspects that a cross-cultural definition of a human self may not be feasible.[14]

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[11]Dennett, Daniel. "Conditions of Personhood."

[12]See, for instance, Stephen White, *The Unity of the Self.*

[13]See Gordon. G. Gallup, Jr., "Chimpanzees: Self-Recognition"; Donald Griffin, *Animal Minds*, pp. 249-50.

[14]See Clifford Geertz, "The Impact of the Concept of Culture on the Concept of Man," *The Interpretation of Cultures*, pp. 33-54.

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Geertz moved anthropology away from attempts at understanding culture from the outside -- from behavior -- to examinations of symbolic systems that are similar to interpretations of texts. Such an internal approach to culture has contributed to a relativism that asserts, for instance, that Balinese during religious possession have no self at all. While an appreciation of the views of radically different cultures is of immense importance, a relativist stance about notions of the self should be tempered by the realization that all cultures have impressive cognitive abilities and self-awareness -- including the reflexive capabilities of language -- that seem to imply some notion of selfhood. Freud, some think, moved to dissolve the self into instincts, but ego psychoanalysts have emphasized its solidity; Lacan only partially dissolves the self, for the subject retains some degree of integrity.[15] B. F. Skinner insisted that we should ignore the inner, and yet cognitive scientists and philosophers of mind have returned to the study of consciousness.[16] In their important attempts to decenter the self at times neo-Marxists and Foucauldian theorists have issued declarations that it is a fiction, but the absence of a new master narrative will not let it die.[17] The self, then, has weathered various attempts to wash or wish it away, and though a belief in a fully rational centered self is

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[15]See, for instance, Louis Sass, "The Self and Its Vicissitudes."

[16]See Güzeldere, Güven, "Preface," *The Nature of Consciousness.*

[17]Foucault has himself declared that "man is in the process of perishing." Some Foucauldians, however, such as Dennis Mummy, "Communication, Power, and the Subject," offer a generous interpretation of such exaggerations, and, I would argue, a more nuanced view than Foucault.

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untenable, some decentered notion of selfhood clearly cannot be done in or without.[18]

Viewed from the outside the self possesses character traits and is part of a larger social pattern. While anthropology has made clear that other societies are less ego-centric than ours, nonetheless social psychologists and sociologists have shown that to a large degree we are also constructed by social roles, position, and circumstance. Unlike Stanley Fish, Stephen Knapp, and Walter Benn Michaels, my pragmaticism rejects rigid boundaries between conceptual paradigms. Like the concept of a *game*, which Wittgenstein shows is a set of notions bearing family resemblances with no clear borders, the self should be seen as a union of intertwined notions highlighted by the perspectives of various disciplines and discourses. We should therefore resist attempts to restrict the term to a highly individualistic and autonomous concept existing in only selected societies at certain times, for such academic diction confuses the issue as much as an unexamined notion of an unchanging self. A use of the word that takes in various cultural types affords us a greater ability for comparisons and contrasts, and helps us see that the selves of other cultures and ages are neither the same as nor completely different than ourselves. Moreover such a use should help move us beyond both a rigid conception of selfhood as a walled Cartesian ego and a facile dismissal of it as a fiction.

For strict materialists or behaviorists the inner is an illusion; for idealists it may be all that exists. Language, however, escapes a clear classification into inner and outer, and the philosophical turn

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[18]See Agnes Heller, "Death of the Subject?"

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toward language investigation indicates that this seeming dichotomy is in fact a question of degree. Developing this linguistic turn, pragmatists such as Richard Rorty argue that truth is an attribute only of language, not of a reality outside of the *text* or collective subject.[19] But though reality is not reducible to an ontology, the "hors text" is not, as Derrida claims, nonexistent,[20] for it indirectly affects our language games by favoring hypotheses that *work*. Wittgenstein accounts for this with his much misunderstood notion of the "forms of life," which entail all that "has to be accepted, the given"[21] including what lies outside of our language games. In the thought experiment at the beginning of his *Philosophical Investigations* concerning a natural language consisting of only a few words, the speakers exist in an environment with which their language games interact. The language game "a good interpretation of anything" takes us into the heart of that which it is the interpretation, but this game should not be confused with these encompassing forms of life, which form the body possessing this heart.

Important parallels exist between the work of antifoundational analytic philosophers who follow Wittgenstein and that of postmodern theorists such as Derrida and Foucault,[22] and we will need to draw on both schools. Wittgenstein, however, offers a more nuanced and less reductive approach, which can better dispel the continuing influence of Descartes' dichotomy between world and

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[19]See Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*.
[20]Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, p. 158; see also pp. 30-65.
[21]Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, p. 226.
[22]For a comparison of Wittgenstein's and Derrida's view on this topic, see Jules David Law, "Reading with Wittgenstein and Derrida."

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walled ego by showing that the objective and the subjective are tendencies connected by complementary criteria. Much of what is now commonly thought to take place in our inner world is not as private as we imagine. As Wittgenstein has noted, the "concepts of believing, expecting, hoping are less distantly related to one another than they are to the concept of thinking."[23] One may expect someone *without thinking* about it most of the time, for *expecting* is not purely mental but also has contextual criteria. We can set up a rough spectrum of human activities: those that have a purely physical basis (e.g., running), activities that are mainly social (say, attending a wedding), those both inner and contextual (believing, expecting, hoping), inward ones which usually require social products (for instance, thinking, which includes *identifying* pain), and inward ones which do not (e.g., feeling pain).[24] Even a sensation -- pain for instance -- which our Cartesian heritage conceives as totally private, requires a language of transpersonal equivalencies for us to identify it as "pain." Breaking down the Cartesian walled ego without denying the objective and subjective tendencies, Wittgenstein's fluid view can be the basis of an historicized approach. He can, then, help us realize that the outer and inner are neither one indistinguishable *text* nor totally separate realms that do not overlap.

The consensus among social scientists and proponents of newer approaches is that since societies change over time, the self must also have a history. Many psychoanalysts, however, see the self as a

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[23]Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations* I, p. 152.
[24]On expecting, believing, hoping, and intending, see Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, pp. 152-56; on sensations such as pain, see, pp. 89-112.

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product of the family rather than of the society at large and resist the idea that the self varies greatly from culture to culture and from period to period. The family, however, comes in numerous types (peasant, noble, poor, working-class, affluent, bourgeois, extended, nuclear, single-parent, etc.), and the relative proportions of these types in society and the relation of the family to defining characteristics such as intimacy[25] vary greatly. The family is itself a conduit for forces from larger social entities -- the community, social and economic class, the state[26] -- which thus indirectly help construct and mold the self.

The historical perspective provided by Charles Taylor's *Sources of the Self*, which ranges from classical times to the present, is a great boon to the study of subjectivity and will be drawn upon extensively. While Taylor's historical analysis supplies needed clarity in this notoriously murky area, his personal view of selfhood offered in the introductory chapter is not, however, compelling, since it privileges an intellectualistic and moral view of the self and, as he admits, does not discuss social forces. Oddly enough, Taylor's view of the self as an ethical construct conflicts with his important historical survey: such a view does not, for instance, describe the self of Machiavelli, Nietzsche, and many recent philosophers. Apparently theistically motivated, Taylor is not describing the self but arguing for a moral vision of what it should be. That the self's foundation is

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[25]See *Emotion and Social Change*, ed. Stearns and Stearns; Niklas Luhmann, *Love as Passion: The Codification of Intimacy*; Anthony Giddens, *The Transformation of Intimacy*; Lawrence Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England, 1500-1800*.

[26]See John Brenkman, "Family, Community, Polis: The Freudian Structure of Feeling."

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instead nonmoral is evident from the fact that identity crises concern the ego's inner sense of agency,[27] not ethical quandaries.

While it is not necessary to hold a theistic or idealistic view of the self, neither is it necessary to have a reductively materialistic one, and while it is important to recognize how much inner structures may vary, to deny that people of the past possessed inner lives is to exaggerate their alterity. *Au courant* materialists, who often offer a needed historical context, nevertheless either think subjectivity is always an illusion,[28] or reject the idea of subjectivity in the Renaissance for the most part, claiming that it only arises late in the seventeenth century. In this second camp is Francis Barker, who is correct to critique "bourgeois criticism's" tendency to read its own extreme version of individualistic subjectivity into early modern works, thus erasing "the alterity of this other world" in order "to discover there the same preoccupations and structures as those which govern its own discourse."[29] But Barker reads his own materialist preoccupations into "this other world" when he claims that "Pre-bourgeois subjection does not properly involve subjectivity at all, but a condition of dependent membership in which place and articulation are defined ... by incorporation in the body politic which is the King's body in its social form."[30] Even Barker's admirers concede that it "is misleading to think of the body as a stable

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[27]See Owen Flanagan, "Identity and Strong and Weak Evaluation"; Erickson, *Identity: Youth and Crisis.*

[28]See, for instance, Stephen Mullaney, "Mourning and Misogyny," p. 150; Jonathan Dollimore, *Radical Tragedy.*

[29]Barker, p. 37.

[30]Duncan Salkeld, *Madness and Drama in the Age of Shakespeare*, pp. 57-58. On such fissures, see also William Elton, "Shakespeare and The Thought of His Age."

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referent with which corresponding metaphors of power in the Renaissance -- the body politic and the King's body -- enjoy perfect coincidence."[31] Admitting that some form of subjectivity exists before the bourgeois era, Barker deems it "hollow," not realizing, as we see shortly, that the structure (not the particular contents) of secrecy is crucial.

While cultural materialists and new historicists have marshaled impressive evidence of an historical shift, their overstatements have led medievalists and more careful Renaissance scholars to wonder, for instance, at their "bizarre claims about the absence of 'subjectivity' in 'pre-bourgeois' societies."[32] The assertions of such Renaissance theorists concerning subjectivity do not appear to be theoretically well-informed, nor are the "bizarre claims" of these historicists truly historical, for they are insufficiently aware of the longue durée. As Katherine Maus has demonstrated, a significant degree of inwardness is clearly implied by various cultural modes that developed well before the capitalist explosion in the mid-seventeenth century.[33] While capitalism does help to bring about a new type of subjectivity, it does not make subjectivity itself possible. Moreover, the shift from feudalism to capitalism was in fact quite gradual, taking from the mid-fourteenth to the mid-seventeenth century. Lee Patterson suggests that a wider scope should have prevented these "*au courant* materialists" from making dramatic overstatements:

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[31]Salkeld, p. 57.
[32]David Aers, *Community, Gender, and Individual Identity: English Writing, 1360-1430*, p. 184 n.51; quoted in Patterson, "On the Margin: Postmodernism, Ironic History, and Medieval Studies."
[33]See Maus, *Inwardness and Theater in the English Renaissance.*

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> If these critics had been interested in writing a history of the self, and hence in the subjectivity generated within a precapitalist world, they could have found plenty of relevant medieval material. After all, the dialectic between an inward subjectivity and an external world that alienates it from both itself and its divine source provides the fundamental economy of the medieval idea of selfhood.[34]

Patterson is of course correct that subjectivity was not born in the Renaissance, and we will need to trace many early modern notions, constructions, and traditions back to their medieval and classical roots. While we should be aware of historical continuity, there are, as we will see, numerous reasons to be impressed by the changes in selfhood that culminated in the early modern period. The self changed but did not begin in the Renaissance, nor is it, as Fredrick Jameson has described it, a quaint, old railroad car that will soon be obsolete.[35] Some conception of selfhood will always be around, but this does not mean that it must be based on the Cartesian notion of a "walled ego" or that it is always fundamentally the same. Recent questionings of the nature of the self by postmodernism often are reasonable reactions to the still vital essentialist myth of totally autonomous individuals, but it is unwise to go to the opposite extreme and claim that all our actions are

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[34]Patterson, p. 100.
[35]Jameson, "Deconstruction and the Dialectic."

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scripted by external discourses -- that, as Michel Foucault puts it, "man is in the process of perishing as the being of language continues to shine ever brighter upon our horizon."[36]

That to a significant extent the self is linguistically constructed and not totally free does not imply that it is a programmed zombie whose actions are totally determined. Postmodern discussions of such questions rephrase modern ones, and current extremes that try to eliminate the self were in fact prepared for by B. F. Skinner's reductive behaviorism. The surprise of someone as astute as Stephen Greenblatt in finding that there are "no moments of pure, unfettered subjectivity" is itself surprising, given that, as Max Horkheimer noted, many "have for more than a hundred years abandoned the view that character is to be explained in terms of the completely isolated individual, and they now regard man as at every point a socialized being."[37] An interdisciplinary counter-movement to simplistic notions of selfhood appears to have begun, since not only is a reductive behaviorism no longer popular,[38] but the "psychological and professional barrier against the credibility of studying consciousness in science" has been shattered and "[c]onciousness seems to have become the topic of the decade for philosophy of mind."[39] Whether inspired by Foucault or simplistic interpretations of Marx, theories of mentality or agency that are reductive or

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[36]Foucault, *The Order of Things*, p. 386.
[37]Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning*, p. 256; Horkheimer, "Authority and the Family," p. 69.
[38]For an argument against "defining" the mental by behavior, see, for instance, Donald Davidson, "Mental Events," p. 113.
[39]Güven Güzeldere, "Preface," *The Nature of Consciousness*, pp. xi-xii.

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deterministic (such as the containment theory[40]) are, one would hope, a passing fad in literary studies.

The orthodox conception of the self as an ahistorical given can be rejected even if we accept that a notion of interiority existed prior to the bourgeois era. Maus argues that in England the common law -- which provided some counterbalance to the monarchist propaganda of the King's body that Barker stresses -- developed a complex discourse of interiority; thus a refusal to "underestimate the significance of conceptions of psychological interiority for the English Renaissance" does not "necessitate embracing a naive essentialism about 'human nature,'" for it is possible to "advance a historically self-conscious discussion of subjectivity."[41] The reductive materialism held by many literary theorists has been abandoned even by a growing number of materialist philosophers of mind, who argue for a non-reductive physicalism that views consciousness as an effect of certain biological systems.[42] Though subjectivity has changed form, it has always been with us, for the necessary criteria have always been met: that there is *something it is like to be* a particular organism, that there are experiences (untranslatable personal ones) for which there is only a single point of view, and that there are times when we feel that we *do things* rather than have things happen to us.[43] That early modern societies had notions of interiority does not imply that they saw the subject as fully unified

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[40]See Greenblatt, *Shakespearean Negotiations.*

[41]Maus, "Proof and Consequences: Inwardness and Its Exposure in the English Renaissance," pp. 30-31.

[42]See Davidson, "Mental Events"; see also, for instance, Searle, *Minds, Brains and Science.*

[43]See Thomas Nagel, *Mortal Questions*, and Norton Nelkin, "Subjectivity."

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or the individual as unique, free, or a source of political rights. Moreover, the concept of interiority is complex, allowing for varying degrees of subjective depth, for theistic or secular underpinnings, and for various contents such as political and religious beliefs, criminal, personal and sexual secrets, conscious or unconscious memories of traumatic or mundane occurrences.

III. *The Rise of Finite Subjectivity*

While sophisticated varieties of subjectivity have long existed, a notion of the self that is deep, finite and secular did not become prevalent until the early modern period. That Plato put forth a systematic view of inwardness does not imply that he conceptualized inner being as a finite, deep self. Socrates begins with an introspective question of the form "What is X?" thus initiating an endeavor to discover an ideal, which is viewed as a model for the world of appearances.[44] Thus, Socratic inquiry begins by looking within and eventually arrives at a model for what is without. Such a metaphysical *loop* by which one arrives at the outer by proceeding through the inner also exists for Augustine, the great religious proponent of inwardness, for whom God, rather than ideal forms, is discovered within -- Who in turn creates the outer world.

The Platonic inner realm, though opening to the infinite, had a unified focus -- a tradition of idealism initiated by Socrates that is

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[44]See Raziel Abelson, "Definition," pp. 314-316.

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analyzed by recent theorists such as Joel Fineman[45] and Derrida (in his critique of *presence*). There may have been a counter-tradition of the "rhetorical self"[46] reflected, for instance, in Ovidian metamorphoses, but the dominant classical tradition, fostered by imperial Roman centralizing tendencies, favored a unified vision. While the middle ages retained aspects of an Augustinian perspective, the disintegration of the Roman empire nevertheless caused major changes in subjective structure. The insulated, small social units that were prevalent in the European middle ages correlate with a greater identification with one's social group, decreased affect control, less muting of the drives, and a weak sense of personal property -- tendencies corresponding to a less articulated self conception. In the middle ages, the simple division of labor and the restricted distribution of knowledge fostered certainty and rigidity about social roles. With the coming of greater social complexity, mobility and distribution of knowledge, it was no longer the case that everybody knew who everybody else was and who one was oneself; instead people conceived of themselves in terms of hidden depths and under-the-surface selves.[47] This growth in subjective obfuscation correlates with the Renaissance revolution in the history of manners, which Norbert Elias argues, indicates that the superego underwent such a radical development that a significant degree of "psychogenesis" occurred[48] (more on this below).

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[45]See Fineman, *Shakespeare's Perjured Eye.*
[46]See Richard Lanham, *The Motives of Eloquence.*
[47]See Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality*, p, 151.
[48]See Elias, *The Civilizing Process*, 2 vols.

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While au courant materialists are correct that subjectivity has a history, it is much longer and more complex than they often imagine it to be. While I agree that we need to place subjectivity in relation to social factors that shape it, nonetheless we must not disregard the long-term historical discourse in which notions of inwardness evolved. In this interdisciplinary study of the Renaissance subject I attempt to present a comprehensive approach by exploring the social construction and the discourse contexts of *wit* and *finite subjectivity*. A number of key Renaissance characters such as Jonson's True-Wit, Shakespeare's Hamlet and Marlowe's Faustus are contemplations of what was then called *wit*, which we would term *creative intelligence*. The relationships among such characters, who are not *witty* but instead possess *true wit*, are informative. Although Hamlet, for instance, is not a doctor, like Faustus he attended school at Wittenburg. The combination of *wit* and *burg* in the name of the renowned university town would have suggested to Elizabethans the *city of the mind*. *Wit*, which was primarily a much more profound notion than it has now become, was almost invariably the Renaissance translation of *ingenium*,[49] whose significances include innate quality, character, natural capacity, talents, genius, a genius, a clever person, poets. The Renaissance development of the notion of finite subjectivity is partly indicated by the assimilation of the Roman concept of *ingenium* into what became the dominant native significance of *wit*, "seat of consciousness or thought." This term is a key indicator of the changing system of discourses concerning

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[49]C. S. Lewis, *Studies in Words*, p. 90. The Roman *genius* resembles the Greek *daemon* and the Christian guardian angel. For a discussion of *wit*, see also chapters 2 and 4 below.

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subjectivity, which we shall examine most extensively in chapter 7 (also see chapters 2, 4 and 8). Various classical and medieval notions of the subject were, we will see, combined with ones that arose more recently to form the early modern discourse system.

What I call *finite subjectivity* is a tendency that is to varying degrees consonant either with materialism, with a dualism in which *l'esprit* has lost its connection to the infinite, or even, we shall see in chapters 7 and 8, with antifoundationalism. While the "finite" subject is closely associated with the secular one, they are not synonymous, since an atheist -- Percy Shelly, for instance -- can be a Platonic dualist and therefore a proponent of infinite subjectivity. In the Renaissance the uncoupling of religious and non-religious discourses of subjectivity developed into an important tendency, allowing, for instance, Christian humanists, such as Petrarch, to concern themselves less with metaphysics and to develop the discourse of the finite subject. Similarly, Descartes developed "clear and distinct" ideas of the finite subject that are independent of -- and now often separated from -- his "clear and distinct" ideas of God. Such uncouplings of religious and secular discourses of subjectivity have become common. Both finite and infinite notions of subjectivity are now commonly held by individuals who identify themselves as believers. *Cultural* Jews and Christians often give little thought and at times even little credence to the metaphysical tenets of the religion with which they identify.

That finite subjective depth was to a large degree socially constructed and ideologically developed in the early modern period does not imply -- as some current writers have assumed -- that

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subjectivity tout court came into existence. If subjectivity was not constituted in the Renaissance, it was, however, no longer as automatically assumed to be connected to an infinite "divine source," as we have seen Patterson note was previously the case.[50] Before and during the Reformation and counter-Reformation new versions -- Protestant, Catholic, syncretic[51] -- of the discourse of the infinite basis of the subject developed side by side with an emerging one that entailed a finite vision of subjective depth.

In many Renaissance representations, then, we do not see the birth of subjectivity, but the rise of a concept of intelligence that has lost much of its assurance about a connection to the infinite. While there existed some tendencies in the middle ages toward finite subjectivity, they appear to have culminated in the Renaissance -- as we will see in chapter 6 occurred with the secular discourse of love. In any case they were not impressively developed in medieval England with the possible exception of Chaucer, who was influenced by his visit to Renaissance Italy. Given an implicit virulent scepticism about religious metaphysics among English secular writers due to the notoriously frequent sixteenth-century reversals in the established religion and given that Elizabeth did not like "to make windows into

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[50]Patterson, p. 100, does not distinguish between medieval *finite* and *infinite subjectivity*: "Medieval anthropology defined the subject as desire: as the Augustinian will ... the Boethian *intentio naturalis* ... the scholastic powers of appetition ... or as *amor*.... We can observe this dialectic at work in a wide variety of texts and contexts: in the courtly lyric and grand *chant courtois*... in the confessional Augustinianism visible throughout the period ... [in] the *Letters of Abelard and Heloise*; in the huge body of hagiographical writing ... in Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde* and, especially, *The Canterbury Tales*... in Langland's *Piers Plowman* and Gower's *Confessio Amantis*; in the many chivalric biographies, whether historical ... or fictive .... and so on."

[51]A new syncretism was developed by the Florentine Academy; Saint Augustine's work can be considered an older syncretism, since he infused Christianity with pagan (Platonic) philosophy (more on this in chapter 7).

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men's hearts and secret thoughts,"[52] Renaissance England became fertile ground for the cultural development of notions of finite subjectivity, which also had widespread social causes. We can associate Renaissance *wit* with the rich development by English writers of a notion of finite subjective depth.

Descartes' seemingly epochal skepticism about the outer world and his vision of a self-positing inner domain may be less an abrupt break with the past than a manifestation of a general cultural restructuring. As Stanley Cavell notes, "the advent of skepticism as manifested in Descartes' *Meditations* is already in full existence in Shakespeare"[53] (more on this in chapters 7 and 8). While striking manifestations of a relatively deep, autonomous and particularized ego are present in Shakespeare, we should keep in mind that such figures exist in his work together with flatter characters, which have their own cultural validity. Shakespeare's constructions of subjective depth were not the result of an ability to uncover the true self; such a timeless entity does not exist. Freud, who opined that the poets have had intuitions of a timeless and latent deep self uncovered by psychoanalysis, and Harold Bloom, who justly characterized Freud as a follower of Shakespeare,[54] do not sufficiently appreciate the fact that Shakespeare's works were part of a profound cultural movement that helped to construct the modern finite subject.

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[52]Francis Bacon *Works*, v, 428-9; quoted by William Haugaard, *Elizabeth and the English Reformation*, p. 329.

[53]Cavell, *Disowning Knowledge In Six Plays of Shakespeare*, p. 3; see also Naomi Scheman, "From Hamlet to Maggie Verver: The History and Politics of the Knowing Subject"; Richard Popkin, *The History of Scepticism From Erasmus to Descartes.*

[54]See Bloom, *The Western Canon*, pp. 60, 74-75, 371-394. Cf. chapters 5 and 6 below.

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IV. *Depth and Partial Communicative Obfuscation*

The modern social distribution of secrecy, which privileges the privacy of the individual, is a structural characteristic that may well determine the modern self more than the particular secrets contained by the psyche. In the early modern period a shift took place in the structures of secrecy -- "general affairs," Georg Simmel noted, "became ever more public, and individual affairs ever more secret."[55] Previous eras possessed covert modes that we now lack. While we have inherited the enlightenment's privileging of openness, the Renaissance was the last era in which cognoscenti and coteries were often the preferred audience and the philosophic and rhetorical tradition concerning the uses of *silence* continued to be vital.[56] In the Renaissance quite different types of subjective structures coexisted, reflecting the fact that the tradition of privacy was emerging while older traditions of dissociation that apportioned covert information to small groups were still vital. The heterogeneity of the early modern culture of coteries set in a radically transforming society allowed for subject positions that seem related to the medieval heritage -- such as Jonsonian humours and Shakespeare's easily metamorphosing characters -- while simultaneously making possible striking effects

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[55]"Secrecy" in *The Sociology of George Simmel*, p. 336.

[56]On *silence*, see Raymond Waddington, "The Iconography of Silence and Chapman's Hercules," *JWCI* 33 (1970). On coteries, see Arthur Marotti, *John Donne, Coterie Poet* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1986). On the esoteric tradition, see Edgar Wind, *Pagan Mysteries in the Renaissance* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1958); and the extensive work of Frances Yates.

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of subjective depth that anticipate future constructions of the self. These new subjectivity effects were founded on the increasingly sophisticated ability to obfuscate, which in general is tied to the production of subjective depth.

Although Charles Taylor has admirably described the complex "sources of the self," including the radical transformation of the Western culture of inwardness that occurred during the early modern period, he claims that only later, only with "the expressivist idea of articulating our inner nature, do we see the grounds for construing this inner domain as having *depth*, that is, a domain which reaches farther than we can ever articulate, which still stretches beyond our furthest point of clear expression."[57] A strong tendency toward particularization of the self was, however, already developing in the Renaissance, and though the "expressivist idea" -- which is closely connected to the Romantic notion that each person is unique -- may not have fully blossomed philosophically at the time, early modern literature nevertheless gives us the impression that the construction of the modern version of inner depth has already begun to take place. Taylor's definition of inner depth as a "domain which reaches farther than we can ever articulate" is indeed consonant with Hamlet's claim to "have within that which passes show" (1.2.85).[58] Rather than depending solely on the growth of the "expressivist idea," effects of profound psychic depth may have come about because of the development by early modern writers of a

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[57]Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, p. 389.

[58]All references to the works of Shakespeare are to *The Riverside Shakespeare*.

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radical, structural use of obscurity to represent the social emergence of a more particularized and autonomous, finite self.

Taylor's and Hamlet's descriptions of modern depth imply that a limit to communication is necessary in order to create such an impression: the depth "within ... passes show," it "stretches beyond our furthest point of clear expression." Individuals who consistently appear to reveal all that they are thinking and feeling strike us as simple souls without deep selves. Inwardness, on the other hand, appears to create a communicative impediment. As Ludwig Wittgenstein observed, "[w]hen mien, gesture and circumstance are unambiguous, then the inner seems to be the outer; it is only when we cannot read the outer that an inner seems to be hidden behind it."[59] Obscuration, then, may well be an indispensable tool in the production of an impression of inner depth. An impenetrable barrier would, however, give no hint of anything existing beyond the blockage, and so, *partial* obfuscation is what is needed. Just as an illusion of visual depth may be created in a painting when an object partly blocks or acts as a translucent screen of a second object, a vivid sense of subjective depth may be produced verbally by partial communicative obfuscation.

Partial obfuscation is not, of course, the only tool needed to portray a deep self, but it is an essential one. When sophisticated uses of this method are developed the possibilities for producing an impression of inner depth increase. While monuments of classical subjectivity such as the Socratic dialogues use a riddling method, we have seen in the last section that it is not until the early modern

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[59]Wittgenstein, *Last Writings on the Philosophy of Psychology*, 63e.

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period that the notion of a self that is simultaneously finite and autonomous begins its ascent to hegemony. This shift is partly glimpsed in the humanists' vision of the self as more malleable than it had been previously conceived -- since it would be able to be fashioned by their educational program.[60] Petrarch contributed to the finite deepening of the secular subject through a structural use of secrecy. Moving beyond either classical or Christian coordinates, he was unable to accept unambiguously an Augustinian denial of or Platonic ascendance above the problem of sexual desire, preferring instead to dwell on the fluctuating instability of the lover's will.[61] Petrarch no longer presents the vivid image of the individual's connection to a cosmic order that we find in Dante's *Divine Comedy*, but rather a finite self bounded by earthly desire. Like Dante's *Vita Nuova* on which it was modeled, Petrarch's *Rime Sparse* appears to be a chronological expression of the poet's intimate experience, which needs to be reinterpreted with the passage of time. But by omitting the prose narrative that one finds in the *Vita Nuova*, the *Rime Sparse* creates the genre of the sonnet sequence, which forces the reader to "supply the narrative and psychological inferences."[62] As a landmark in the history of the portrayal of the self the *Rime Sparse* is justly renown. In addition to its more secular standpoint, the deliberately fractured perspective of the *scattered* rhymes supplies the partial obfuscation that we have seen is a crucial requirement for a representation of finite subjective depth. Petrarch's contribution to

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[60]See Greene, "The Flexibility of the Self in Renaissance Literature."
[61]See Robert Durling, ed. *Petrarch's Lyric Poems*, pp. 20-21; Greene, "The Flexibility of the Self in Renaissance Literature," pp. 246-49
[62]Durling, p. 10.

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the construction of the modern paradigm of the self was partly a development of a literary method of obfuscation that provides a sense of finite depth.

The growing complexity of the secular self was fostered by such developments as the Reformation privileging of ordinary life.[63] While Renaissance representations of the particularization of the self reflected such developments, it is also true that partial communicative obfuscation was an essential ingredient in the major literary constructions of the emerging modern subject. An impression of obfuscation is in fact quite useful in presenting a sense of complexity and elusiveness and to counter the assumption that the self can be clearly and definitively seen. Even a complex subject that was clearly known would not give the impression of depth, since depth requires an "outer" that "we cannot read" completely as we have seen Wittgenstein note, and a "domain which reaches farther than we can ever articulate" as Taylor put it. Montaigne's essays are, for instance, literally *attempts* to find new methods that could capture the tentative nature of self-knowledge and thus present us with a portrayal of an elusive, finite deep self that cannot be clearly seen or precisely pinned down.

In England, the end of the sixteenth and beginning of the seventeenth centuries witnessed innovative experiments in the literary use of obscurity, some of which create a sense of subjective depth. Patricia Fumerton, for instance, has shown that rhetorical screens in Sidney's sonnets give us a sense of penetrating to a secret

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[63]See Taylor, pp. 211-302.

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self.[64] But her hypothesis that this method of producing the impression of subjective depth is replaced by psychological realism in early seventeenth-century drama is not at all convincing, since the two modes coexist in various proportions in various genres. In the *Sonnets*, for instance, in some regards Shakespeare carries on the Petrachian tradition in that he combines psychological realism[65] and a vivid sense of the uses of obfuscation and deception, of "how truly words are false," to produce a new notion of subjectivity.[66] In the drama, Marlowe, who provided an intense focus on the function of desire in the emerging structure of the modern self,[67] deliberately obfuscated by offering the audience alternative interpretations.[68] Not until *Hamlet*, however, was the withholding of information from the audience forged into a radical technique for the production of subjective depth (see chapter 8). Jonson's appropriation of roughly the same dramaturgical use of obscurity in a quite different piece, *Epicoene, or The Silent Woman*, enabled him to create his most successful effect of subjective depth.

Perhaps *Hamlet* 's two most famous marks of distinction are that it is widely believed to convey a profound sense of inwardness and critically considered to be extraordinarily problematic. These two characteristics may not be unrelated. The plot of the play centers on the King and his entourage's attempts "to pluck out the heart of

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[64]Fumerton, "'Secret' Arts: Elizabethan Miniatures and Sonnets."
[65]See Ann Ferry, *The "Inward" Language.*
[66]See Fineman's *Shakespeare's Perjured Eye* for an interesting though overstated case for the "invention of poetic subjectivity in *The Sonnets.*"
[67]On Marlowe and the self, see Edward Snow, "Doctor Faustus and the Ends of Desire."
[68]Paul Yachnin made this argument in "Marlowe and the Subject of Tragedy" at the 108th MLA Convention.

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[Hamlet's] mystery" (3.2.365-6) by peering into his mind, and as they do so, we are invited to attempt to do the same. We are given acute glimpses of various features of Hamlet's consciousness, but a clear and comprehensive view is deliberately dashed by obstructions and apparent inconsistencies. Rather than detracting from our impression of the prince's inwardness, however, such partial obfuscation, we have noted, may in fact enhance our sense of psychic depth. Hamlet's interiority is not "hollow," as we have seen Frances Barker assert, for it in fact has an amazing assortment of implicit contents, as the almost infinite variety of psychological, political, and philosophical criticism has revealed. The true hermeneutical problem arises when one attempts to account for this abundance of wealth in the prince's depths.

In his first mention of Oedipal theory Freud singled out two riddle-obsessed dramas, *Oedipus* and *Hamlet* -- the first for its enactment of a primal desire, the second for its signaling a "secular advance of repression in the emotional life of mankind"[69] -- a remark in which he uncharacteristically assumes that the psyche's evolution does not end in prehistory. Hamlet, Freud argues, only identifies with the man who has murdered his father and married his mother, unlike Oedipus who actually commits these deeds. A radical shift in self-construction has indeed taken place. Because Oedipus grew up as an orphan who was unaware that he was one, he cannot have an orthodox Oedipal complex. The play depends not on his hidden knowledge, since he has none, but on dramatic irony, that

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[69]Freud's first mention of Oedipal theory occurs in "Letter 71" that he wrote to Fliess on October 15, 1987; *Standard Edition*, 1:265-266. The quote is from *The Interpretation of Dreams*, p. 264.

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is, on the audience's awareness of his situation. Only at the end does the psychic interior of this character appear to be filled with the Oedipal contents, which are therefore never latent, since they are first unknown even to his unconscious and then horrifyingly conscious.

Shakespeare's play, on the other hand, depends on Hamlet's appearance of having "within that which passes show." The show is able to go on only because we are left to guess his motivation, which is in fact deliberately problematized, for the true aim is a metadramatic one: to achieve a revolutionary effect of psychic depth through dramaturgical riddling. The prince's motivation is deliberately problematized in order to create a new sense of self. It is through a riddling process based on partial obfuscation -- which constitutes a reversal of the device of dramatic irony since the auditor now knows less than the character -- that a revolutionary effect of psychic depth is achieved.

Hamlet represents a virtual explosion of secretive dramaturgical methods, which extend the net of deceptions from the stage into the audience. In this regard, this deceptive drama ushered in a group of innovative works written in the first decade of the seventeenth century in which playwrights intentionally withheld important information from their audiences -- a group that includes *The Silent Woman*, *Philaster*, *The Winter's Tale*, *All's Well That Ends Well*, and *Bussy D'Ambois*.[70] Of these plays, however, only *Epicoene*

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[70]On the first three plays, which obviously surprise their audiences by withholding crucial information, see Victor Oscar Freeburg, *Disguise Plots in Elizabethan Drama*. On *All's Well*, see Bertrand Evans, *Shakespeare's Comedies*, pp. 145-6; on the radically low epistemological position of the audience of

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and *Hamlet* use a radical type of obfuscation to enhance an effect of subjective depth.

As I will argue in the next chapter, in *Epicoene* Jonson obscured his portrait of *True-Wit*, both character and ideal self, intending it exclusively for the "cunning palates" whom he explicitly addressed in the play's prologue.[71] In his drama Jonson usually portrayed "social selves" (roughly equivalent to *comic* humours), which contrast sharply with those Shakespearean characters that give us the impression of psychological complexity, but it is also true that "Jonson never perpetrated a thinner character than ... Sir Andrew Augencheek or than Silvius and Phoebe" and that some of Jonson's "humors can suggest weirdly Shakespearean depths -- witness Morose in *Epicoene*."[72] In his nondramatic poetry, Jonson was quite concerned with fashioning a image of a "centered self" that withstands social pressure,[73] and he attempted to delineate such a "centered self" -- though not successfully -- in the static self-projections of his "comicall satyres."[74] On the other hand, as Thomas Greene has perceptively noted, *Volpone*, "one of the greatest essays we possess on the ontology of selfhood .... asks us to consider the infinite, exhilarating, and vicious freedom to alter the self at will

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Hamlet, see, for instance, his *Shakespeare's Tragic Practice*. On *Bussy*, see Raymond Waddington, *The Mind's Empire*, pp. 1-44 .

[71]All references to Jonson's works are to *Ben Jonson* , ed. C. H. Herford and Percy and Evelyn Simpson, hereafter referred to as H&S.

[72]Lawrence Danson, "Jonsonian Comedy and the Discovery of the Social Self," pp. 186-87. On comic versus true humours (such as Morose), see Henry Snuggs, "The Comic Humours: A New Interpretation"; also see chapter 2 below.

[73]See Thomas Greene, "Ben Jonson and the Centered Self" pp. 325-48.

[74]In the 1616 Folio, Jonson used this term to describe *Every Man Out of His Humour*, *Cynthia's Revels*, and *Poetaster*. On the self-projections, see, for instance, George Parfitt, *Ben Jonson: Public Poet and Private Man*, pp. 36-64.

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once the ideal of moral constancy has been abandoned."[75] True-Wit, when truly seen, is quite exceptional, moving far beyond one-dimensional humour characters by uniting a morally substantial "centered self" with a mercurial *wit* resembling Volpone's almost miraculous mobility of being. Thus, in addition to the effect of subjective depth due to partial obscuration, True-Wit combines "psychic mobility" with a "stable soul," as Harold Bloom requires of a "literary self."[76] Such complexity of character reflects Jonson's multiform artistic personality, which critics have only recently begun to appreciate.[77]

True-Wit's inner nature has not, of course, become -- like Hamlet's -- an enormously popular object of critical speculation. We should not, however, imagine that the deep self that is now generally seen in Hamlet was originally intended for the average playgoer, unless we wish to believe that Shakespeare made a colossal misjudgment. In Shakespeare's time Hamlet was most commonly viewed as a "Kydian avenger";[78] the deeper portrait that we now take for granted only became widely known much later. The different natures of these two characters appealed to and were heralded by two very different ages. While the subtle intellect of the princely Wittenburg scholar was of course acclaimed by the major

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[75]Greene, p. 337.

[76]Bloom, ed. *Hamlet*, p. xii. On True-Wit's sophistication, in addition to my article (referred to in note 12 above) see W. David Kay, "Jonson's Urbane Gallants: Humanistic Contexts for *Epicoene* ."

[77]See Arthur Marotti, "All about Jonson's Poetry," pp. 208-37; Richard Newton, "'Ben./Jonson': The Poet in the Poems," p. 166; E. Pearlman, "Ben Jonson: An Anatomy."

[78]See Paul Conklin, *A History of Hamlet Criticism, 1601-1821* ; cf. Gary Taylor, *Reinventing Shakespeare.* (More on this in chapter 7, below.)

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Romantic critics, "scholar-like" True-Wit, Dryden informs us, was appreciated as Jonson's "best character of a gentleman"[79] by the cognoscenti of the Restoration -- an age which generally preferred Jonson over Shakespeare.[80] But this does not mean that Shakespeare and Jonson were writing solely for a faceless posterity or for themselves, or that the hidden levels of these characters are critical illusions. Just as Jonson expected True-Wit's inner nature to be understood by "cunning palates" in his audience, Shakespeare may have intended Hamlet's novel inwardness to be "caviare" that is not for "the general" but for discerning contemporaries.

To achieve a satisfactory understanding of *Epicoene* and *Hamlet*, it is therefore necessary to posit the existence of a special means of partly obscured communication between playwright and perceptive auditor. At the core of this type of communication is what may be called *dramaturgical riddling* : the presentation of incidents exhibiting seeming incongruities which most miss, dismiss, leave unexplained, or explain away, but which the perspicacious may recognize as deliberately posed riddles. As we shall see in chapter 8, in *Hamlet* this method may also be intended to produce a general effect of depth open to all. Such riddling encourages the transformation of the astute playgoer from a passive spectator into an active participant in the creation of meaning. The possibility of intentional riddles in Shakespeare and Jonson is suggested by the work of various critics -- Bertrand Evans, Norman Rabkin, Terence

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[79] *Essays of John Dryden*, I:174, 142.

[80] See G. E. Bentley, *Shakespeare and Jonson: Their Reputations in the Seventeenth Century Compared* ; Jennifer Brady, "Collaborating with the Forebear: Dryden's Reception of Ben Jonson."

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Hawkes, Andrew Gurr, Jennifer Brady, Richard Dutton, and James Calderwood, for instance -- but has never before been systematically pursued, especially in relation to subjective depth. A demonstration that a riddling process is indeed employed in Jonson's play and that its purpose is to allow "cunning palates" to construct a definition or portrait of True-*Wit* will be provided in chapter 2. A comparison of True-Wit, who is Jonson's only successful "self-projection," with the series of unsatisfactory self-projections that occur in the early comedies indicates that Jonson was able to create his most successful effect of subjective depth only through a riddling use of obfuscation. Similarly, Shakespeare also employs a radical method of indirection when he produces his most startling subjectivity effect. Although he later revisits the problems of subjectivity raised in *Hamlet* in the tragedies that follow, in these plays Shakespeare returns to a more open attitude toward the audience, while in *Hamlet* the audience's awareness is clearly surprisingly low.[81] Thus, it is only in *Hamlet* that Shakespeare not only explores the complexity of psychological states, but also employs a radical method of dramaturgical riddling to enhance the effect of subjective depth.

The riddling processes initiated by *Hamlet* and *Epicoene* are complex. To begin with astute auditors are offered various clues that a riddling process is taking place. In *Epicoene*, for example, True-Wit's name is a clue to the hidden fact that there is a deeper level to this figure: his name is inconsistent with his surface appearance of a witty blunderer. The mention of "cunning palates" in the prologue is a clear hint that there is more to this seeming farce than meets the

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[81]See Bertrand Evans, *Shakespeare's Tragic Practice.*

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eye. Analogously, such lines in *Hamlet* as "by indirections find directions out" and "this bait of falsehood takes this carp of truth" should cause us to suspect that the author of this play may have used a method as subtle as those of his characters. Specifically, Hamlet's comments, "you would pluck out the heart of my mystery" and "I have within that which passes show" suggest that partial obfuscation is used to produce an effect of subjective depth. Moreover, the hairline fracture of dramatic illusion in the reference to the "pioneer" beneath the stage and such paradoxical statements as "Doubt truth to be a liar" intimate that a riddling process is in fact occurring. That critics feel that these plays resemble riddles is not surprising: *Epicoene*, a seeming farce written between serious satires, has been called "enigmatic,"[82] and the question is often asked, What is *Hamlet* really about?

The visit that True-Wit pays Morose and its aftermath, which will be fully discussed in the next chapter, provides our first illustration of dramaturgical riddling. This visit seems at first to be a fortuitous blunder, but the incongruities -- for instance, the seeming inconsistencies in character -- give the perspicacious strong evidence supporting True-Wit's position that it is a masterly subterfuge. If we decipher the subsequent riddles, we discover True-Wit's hidden knowledge of Epicoene's gender and his further, furtive help of Dauphine. This riddling process leads "cunning palates" to an understanding of *True-Wit* 's significance. Epicoene's sexual identity, on the other hand, is a riddle answered by the final scene; that this character does not leave us with a sense of psychological depth is to

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[82]Barish, "Ovid, Juvenal, and *The Silent Woman*," p. 213.

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some degree due to the fact that her nature is exposed without any effort on our part. Only by requiring the perspicacious to discover True-Wit's submerged identity on their own was Jonson able to create the impression of a relatively deep self.

Both *Hamlet* and *Epicoene* employ dramaturgical riddling to construct an inner space. In Shakespeare's play the riddling process appears, however, to be without definite solutions and thus may be termed "open" in contrast to the closed or answerable riddles of Jonson's play. Jonson provides cunning palates with hidden *wit* to discover, while Shakespeare gives them profound questions to probe. Moreover, though True-Wit's ingenuity entails significant flexibility of persona and his discourse is seemingly volatile in philosophic content,[83] Jonson nevertheless attempts to create the impression that, finally, there is a relatively stable moral center to the self. Shakespeare's modus operandi, on the other hand, is to keep the viewer continually off balance. Is Hamlet partly mad or is he pretending? Does he love Ophelia or not? Rather than a sense of a moral center, we are provided with a decentered subjectivity that does not even obey the traditional frontiers of character (more on this in chapters 5 and 8 below).

That constructions of subjective depth such as Hamlet and True-Wit would be created for the stage may seem odd to us. From a late modern or a postmodern outlook, depth appears to be very much a textual effect,[84] which would seem difficult to transmit through the primarily oral medium of theater. The early modern

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[83]See Barish, "Ovid, Juvenal, and *The Silent Woman*"; and chapter 2 below.
[84]See, for instance, Daniel Sibony, "*Hamlet*: A Writing-Effect"; see also chapter 9 below.

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period had an extremely sophisticated oral tradition, which the contemporary stage drew upon and which allowed for the theatrical subjectivity effects. The popular theatrical tradition produced, for instance, the soliloquy, which in Shakespeare's hands became at times a surprisingly complex means to enhance the sense of subjective depth. With the triumph of an enlightenment version of objectivity in theatrical representation, of which Jonson was an early champion, the soliloquy became obsolete. In comparison to partial communicative obfuscation -- which is a method of implication that can be used with dramatic or nondramatic modes -- the soliloquy may not in fact be as versatile or as sophisticated in creating the sense of depth, even though it can of course powerfully enhance the sense of subjectivity. Indeed, if like the Shakespearean soliloquy, the interior monologue of modern novels helps to produce the impression of looking into the consciousness of a character, it is significant that in James Joyce's *Ulysses*, which perhaps represents the culmination of this method, the most stunning subjectivity effects are also produced through indirection, through riddling techniques.[85]

To our modern sensibility the published novel may seem the appropriate place for a revelation of the private sphere of the self, but for the Renaissance the unpublished poem that circulated within a coterie offered a semiprivate place that must have seemed a more appropriate venue for such a private show. There was a virtual taboo of the *showing* of personal meaning to all and sundry as the contemporary "stigma of print" demonstrates.[86] This seems to be

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[85]See, for instance, Robert Frumpkin, "Joyce and Zen."
[86]See J. W. Sanders, "The Stigma of Print."

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reflected in Hamlet's comment, "Be not you ashamed to show, he'll not shame to tell you what it means" (3.2.140-41). It is thus appropriate that Shakespeare circulated the *Sonnets* -- in which he developed an "inward language"[87] -- in manuscript form. Dramaturgical riddling allowed the master playwright to please the "general" while communicating implicitly with "cunning palates," and thus to create a theatrical version of the coterie audience of manuscript culture. If such a modus operandi may be used in the public space of the theater, it may similarly be employed in the public realm of print. In fact the published book has certain advantages in this respect. As staged-centered critics point out, the words of an actor quickly pass by and cannot be retrieved. Only the most astute auditors or those already somewhat in the know will therefore be able to catch such subtleties as the clues to the riddles of Hamlet and True-Wit. While most of whom Heminge and Condell described as "the great Variety of Readers" would also miss such clues, the printed text nevertheless allows a diligent reader to return to and carefully examine key passages.

As we shall see in the final chapter, which treats questions of print, subjectivity, and intimacy, Jonson was clearly quite aware that in comparison to theater, print is a medium that allows for a more intensive mode of study. He tried to give a second life to many of his plays by taking the unusual steps of obtaining possession of the playtexts and carefully transforming them into well-edited printed literature. The boldness of his intention is indicated by the fact that what then were popularly considered *mere* plays constitute the first

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[87]See Anne Ferry, *The "Inward" Language.*

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and most substantial section of the audacious 1616 Folio of his *Works*, a title which drew the sarcasm of some of his contemporaries. While Shakespeare clearly did not show as much interest in having his work published, he may not have been as oblivious to the emerging culture of print as is often asserted. That the second quarto of *Hamlet* was published soon after the undeveloped first quarto, which was half as long, indicates that Shakespeare may have wished to insure that the riddle of subjectivity presented by this crucial play would be available to the reading public in a satisfactory version.

V. *Secrecy, Reception, and Censorship*

The word *secret* derives from the Latin *secernere*, which means "to separate, divide off" (OED 2). All societies have modes of secrecy -- of separating various groups and individuals and dividing information among them -- though these modes often vary greatly. While modern Western society constructs the strongest boundaries of concealment around the individual, less complex social systems tend to parcel covert information out to groups, using such devices as the initiation rite to both conceal and reveal. Even in the West intense personal secrecy was not always the norm, for as we have seen Simmel observe, "general affairs became ever more public, and individual affairs ever more secret." The types and degrees of secrecy involved in individuation are crucial determinants in the construction of the self; the very word *person* derives from *persona*, that is, a "mask used by a player," and thus, a "character or person

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acted" (OED 2). While the modes of secrecy in modern Western societies differ greatly from simpler social systems, in both cases it is not the contents of the secrets that are essential but the structure of the modes of secrecy. As the anthropologist Cesare Poppi notes in his analysis of the taboo structure of initiation rites, "Indeed, initiates are told that the secret they cannot talk about, under sanction of death, is the procedure of initiation. The 'box' -- the 'frame' -- itself becomes what must be protected."[88] Similarly, the structural distribution of secrecy that radically privileges the individual constitutes the modern self perhaps more than the particular secrets contained by the psyche. If the subjective contents and structure are unfamiliar, the subject may be mistakenly seen as "hollow" or its subjectivity may be viewed as "illusory" -- which we have seen some critics have claimed in regard to the early modern period.

In his work, which "remains the most searching analysis of secrecy,"[89] Simmel not only points out the attractiveness, allure, and "fascination of secrecy" and its usefulness in creating a necessary distance among individuals and groups, but also demonstrates how the exchange of information, which is the foundation of social life, necessarily entails concealment. As Thomas Carlyle put it, "In a Symbol there is concealment and yet revelation: here, therefore, by Silence and Speech acting together, comes a double significance."[90]

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[88]Poppi, "Sigma! The Pilgrim's Progress and the logic of Secrecy," p. 198. More on this in chapter 8 below.

[89]T. O. Beidelman, "Secrecy and Society: The Paradox of Knowing and The Knowing of Paradox," p. 42; cf., Simmel, "The Secret and the Secret Society" in *The Sociology of Georg Simmel*, pp. 307-76, and "The Sociology of Secrecy and of Secret Societies," and Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, p.69.

[90]Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus* (1986), p. 199; quoted by Beidelman, p. 42.

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Carlyle in fact appears to be drawing on the Classical and Renaissance tradition concerning the uses of language, which notes that true eloquence combines the proper use of both silence and speech (more on this tradition in chapter 2, below). In our post-enlightenment society, we pride ourselves on our openness, and yet modern society has constructed the individual as a fortress of secrecy, which in some regards restricts as much as it protects.

Arguments that denigrate secrecy, such as those put forth by Sissela Bok,[91] have great force in our era, which was in many ways formed by the Enlightenment tradition of openness. So influential is this prejudice, that even in his recent study entitled *Ben Jonson and the Art of Secrecy*, William Slights emphasizes Jonson's reactions against secrecy more than the *art* referred to in the book's title. While Slights and Bok are aware of the tremendous power of secrecy, they emphasize its power to do harm without sufficiently balancing its power to do good, its necessity, and its critical importance in the construction of the modern subject. It is true that secrecy is used by the powerful to escape accountability for their oppression, but it is also used by the relatively powerless to avoid being manipulated and to oppose those in power. Privacy is itself, of course, personal secrecy. Any sociological model that ignores the pervasive importance and necessity of secrecy between both individuals and groups contains a "serious conceptual weakness".[92] Moreover, a naive position on openness does not take into account that total clarity is

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[91]See Bok, *Secrets* and *Lying*.

[92]Stanton Tefft, "Secrecy, Disclosure and Social Theory," p. 40, notes that this was the case with "symbolic interactions" before it was modified by the "dramaturgical model."

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not always possible, as Wittgenstein and many postmodern theorists have discovered. As I will argue Shakespeare and, eventually, Jonson understood (and as Lacan stresses with his promotion of what he calls the imaginary order[93]), the ability to create illusions is an essential and often productive part of what it means to be human. This becomes increasingly true as society and the strategies necessary to cope with it become more complex.[94]

To assume that we can always tell what is a role and what is the "true self" is to take a simplistic view of the question of truth telling versus deception. When we strip ourselves of our roles, we are also participating to a great degree in a process of "de-selving" (entselbstung), as Simmel put it.[95] This does not mean that the self is an illusion or only a prescripted cultural text, but rather that we play roles that have varying degrees of rightness, and yet any role is not exactly right -- for in many respects it is correct to claim that there is no single human essence.[96] Although to a significant extent our lives are scripted by a cultural *text* it is also true that eventually we acquire some degree of agency to choose between roles and to modify the scripts. Some may even participate in the writing of new cultural scripts by imagining new social roles, which they first "play" on an interior stage. This dialectic between cultural text and

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[93]See, for instance, Lacan, *The Language of the Self.*

[94]Cf. Norbert Elias's analysis in *The Civilizing Process* of the historical development of the superego.

[95]Simmel, "The Secret and the Secret Society," p.373; cf. Schwartz, "The Social Psychology of Privacy," p. 747.

[96]On belief in the role one is playing, and fronts, see Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of the Self in Everyday Life*, 17-66. On the lack of a single human essence, see Geertz, pp. 33-54. Cf. chapters 7 and 8 below.

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individual agent is in fact explored, we shall see, by Jonson and Shakespeare in terms, for instance, of *humour* and *wit*.

Simmel, who has been perhaps the only theorist able to accommodate both individual and social system in the same discursive equation, proposed that individuality may be related to the size of the system(s) in which the subject lives. Often, he noted, there is a direct proportionality between the overarching group and the degree of individuality.[97] Since the individual often is part of various overlapping groups, the relations can be quite complex. The "ratio of secrecy," we have seen, tends to remain constant, even though in the early modern period the terms of this ratio changed drastically, for the medieval world's social boundaries were shifting and the groups holding discursive power were radically changing their character. Unlike either the medieval stress on communal or the modern privileging of the individual, the Renaissance placed a greater emphasis on an intermediate group, the coterie, than we can easily comprehend -- and this social configuration had subtle and relatively unexplored effects on subjective structure. Several decades ago, our appreciation of the importance of the esoteric-exoteric structuring of knowledge and audience during the Renaissance was enhanced by the great wealth of evidence unearthed by such scholars as Frances Yates and Edgar Wind.[98] While one may well take

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[97]See Simmel, *On Individuality and Social Forms*. I would like to thank John Brenkman for pointing out Simmel's uniqueness as a theorist in this respect.
[98]See for instance, Yates, *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition*, *The French Academies of the Sixteenth Century*, and *The Art of Memory* and Wind, *Pagan Mysteries in the Renaissance*. Hilary Gatti, *The Renaissance Drama of Knowledge*, has continued Yates's exploration of Giordano Bruno's relevance to Renaissance England.

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exception to their speculations about particular works,[99] nevertheless the general significance of such an early modern esoteric-exoteric structuring is difficult to refute. More recently, Arthur Marotti's work on John Donne[100] has once again revealed the great importance of coteries in this period.

Our democratic preconceptions make it difficult to understand the viewpoint of early modern writers who at times wished to send different messages to general and more astute auditors. While a writer such as Pablo Neruda, who was able to speak to very different groups with a single voice, is quite exceptional, it may be even more difficult for a writer simultaneously to deliver separate discourses to discrete strata of an audience, as we shall see Shakespeare and Jonson were able to accomplish in some of their works. Erving Goffman notes that "by audience segregation the individual ensures that those before whom he plays one of his parts will not be same individuals before whom he plays a different part in another setting."[101] What is surprising is that Shakespeare and Jonson were in a sense able to play different parts to different audiences without physically segregating them. Such a verbal performance was only possible because it was not spontaneous but scripted by masters of the art of drama who were writing at the crest of a cultural wave, which provided them with tools and the motivation to be *artificers* (significantly, a term that used to have a positive connotation), that is, to produce elaborate artifices.

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[99]For instance, Yates's arguments concerning *Love's Labour's Lost* and *The Tempest* are often not convincing; see *A Study of Love's Labour's Lost* and *Shakespeare's Last Plays.*

[100]See Marotti, *John Donne, Coterie Poet.*

[101]Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life,* p. 49.

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The familiar generalizations that Shakespeare was a *popular* playwright and Jonson a poet "of the surface"[102] can be quite misleading. Shakespeare, after all, wrote most of his nondramatic poetry to be circulated in manuscript among a select coterie. As we will see in chapter 9, the one poem that he wrote for publication, which has come to be called "The Phoenix and Turtle," is a masterpiece composed of riddles of individual and philosophical identity, and begins the "Poeticall Essaies," a collection which Jonson suggested was intended for "deepe eares."[103] Jonson, though attracted to the plain style, also participated in the contemporary fashion for poetic obscurity.[104] The portion of his work that appears to be perspicuous and "of the surface" may not be as easy to understand as it seems. A number of critics have, for instance, argued that he deliberately hid the true intent of his *Epigrammes* from all but his most astute readers.[105] Jonson surely did not consider his work easy to understand, for he made frequent appeals to a select "few," as we see, for instance, in the quotation from Horace on the frontispiece of the 1616 Folio: " -- neque, me ut miretur turba, laboro: Contentus paucis lectoribus" (-- and I do not work so that the crowd will admire me: I am content with the few as my readers).

A selection of Jonson's plays constitute the first and largest section of this folio, which was so concerned with a select "few."

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[102]T. S. Eliot, *Essays On Elizabethan Drama*, p. 66.

[103]"Poeticall Essaies," p. 178; these "Essaies" were published with Robert Chester's *Loves Martyr*, but form a discrete entity with its own title page, dedication, and introductory poems. More on this in chapter 9 below.

[104]See Wesley Trimpi, *Ben Jonson's Poems: A Study of the Plain Style* ; on his obscurity, see Newton, p. 170-75.

[105]See Jennifer Brady, "'Beware the Poet': Authority and Judgment in Jonson's *Epigrammes*," pp. 101-103; Richard Dutton, *Ben Jonson: To the First Folio* , p. 92.

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Theater, however, is usually thought to be different in this regard, since it seems to be a communal experience of a dramatic fable whose essential facts are open to all. That a covert dimension may have been intended exclusively for a small portion of the audience may thus seem to us to be a contradiction of the very nature of theater, but this did not prevent Jonson from attempting to create such a piece. Indeed he explicitly warned that *Epicoene* is not strictly a "play" in the sense of a wholly accessible, dramatized narrative: He predicted in its first prologue that only "cunning" auditors would understand the paradoxical nature of this piece.

The significant amount of audience deception that occurs, for instance, in *The Winter's Tale* suggests that Shakespeare, like Jonson, may have at times reserved a covert dimension of a play for the more astute auditors. Overall, the often multi-level nature of Shakespeare's work supports the possibility that this popular playwright would at times aim not only to satisfy "the general" but also to provide "caviare" exclusively for the discriminating palate. *Hamlet* may well be his revolutionary experiment in this sort of paradoxical drama. To many in its original audience, it was a crowd-pleasing adventure about an heroic "Kydian avenger," but it also appears to contain much that was intended "to please the wiser sort" of that audience, as Gabriel Harvey in fact suggested at the time.[106] Conversely, while we have noted that Jonson was concerned with the opinion of the "few," we should not assume that he was as forgetful of the "general" as his often stormy relations with the public may

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[106]On Hamlet as "Kydian avenger," see Paul Conklin, *A History of Hamlet Criticism*. For the Harvey quotation, see *The Riverside Shakespeare*, p. 1840.

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suggest.[107] Indeed, in addition to possessing a secret intrigue for the perspicacious, *Epicoene* is on the surface an hilarious farce that aims to please the average playgoer. I am therefore not claiming that *Hamlet* and *Epicoene* were intended to be elite dramas, exclusively for one segment of the audience. Rather, these plays offer quite differentiated levels of meaning for different strata of their audience -- separate fare for common "guests" and "cunning palates," as Jonson explicitly states in *Epicoene*'s First Prologue.

"Regrettably," Andrew Gurr notes, "the evidence for multi-level audience reactions has never been studied closely."[108] Only once we have been thoroughly disabused of the prevalent and often unwitting assumption that the contemporary audience formed a unified consciousness, can we begin to understand how playwrights may have fashioned works that manifest surprisingly discrete levels of meaning. The limited ken of particular types of critics (e.g., stage-centered or armchair[109]) and the totalizing interpretive orientations of succeeding ages (e.g., neo-classical or romantic) may have made us miss the fact that there are several relatively discrete and fully developed levels to beguiling dramas such as *Hamlet* or *Epicoene*. In fact, despite the centuries of criticism that have made the profound Hamlet quite well known, the interpretative community that instead

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[107]On his problems with his audience see Barish, "Jonson and the Loathèd Stage." Kay, "The Shaping of Ben Jonson's Career: A Re-examination of Facts and Problems," has shown that the popularity of Jonson's drama has probably been underestimated.

[108]Gurr, "The General and the Caviar: Learned Audiences in the Early Theatre," p. 10.

[109]See *Imaginary Audition: Shakespeare on Stage and Page* for Harry Berger's "attempt to recuperate standard features of armchair practice while maintaining a fairly strict focus on the drama of theatrical and interlocutory relations" (p. 45).

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sees him as an adventure hero may still consist of a large fraction of the play's current spectators. Many viewers of popular film versions, such as the one starring Mel Gibson, may primarily appreciate the play's action-packed plot. Our post-enlightenment and democratic assumptions about openness and equality create a desire in us to believe that the audience is a relatively homogenous whole, all of whom see the same play. Of course our reviewers and critics give the lie to this -- they tell the general public what they *should see*, what is "really there" in the play.

Plato and Aristotle distinguished works by the type of auditor to which they appealed.[110] But until Elizabethan playwrights introduced a vast comprehensiveness and formal heterogeneity into individual works, it was perhaps not as crucial to realize that the same play could attempt to please discrete strata of the audience in very different ways. To some degree this dramatic heterogeneity may have been a response to the contemporary heterogeneity of the audience. Ann Jennalie Cook has shown that the evidence does not support Alfred Harbage's view that the public theaters were frequented solely by artisans and the so-called private theaters solely by the elite, but Gurr has demonstrated that neither does it bear out Cook's claim that only the privileged were able to attend all the theaters.[111] While proportions differed, a fair number from various socio-economic groups appear to have attended both the public and "private" theaters. The only truly *private*theater was the

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[110]See Plato, *Laws* II:658e, Aristotle, *The Poetics*, XXVI:1.

[111]See Gurr, *Playgoing in Shakespeare's London*, pp. 3-4; Harbage, *Shakespeare and The Rival Traditions*; Cook, *The Privileged Playgoers of Shakespeare's London.*

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one found at court.[112] Renaissance England saw the growth of its "entertainment industry" into "big business," and it was the drama that "was the first of the arts to be put on sale to the general public."[113] A play's "saleability depended on its attractiveness to a diverse audience with widely varying tastes drawn from all levels of society."[114] Jonson and Shakespeare's roots in the "middling sort"[115] and their extraordinary social mobility would have aided their awareness of -- and thus ability in a single play to accommodate -- the beliefs and psychology of members of various social strata.

While social class is an important consideration of this study, the grouping of spectators that we will focus on is not the result of a distribution according to rigid class lines. The sophisticated interpretive community probably consisted to a large degree of people from what was then called the "middling sort," and while there was a disproportionate number from the upper class, most of these were nevertheless excluded either by class prejudices, or a lack of familiarity, interest, or astuteness. While excellent work has been done in seeing Shakespeare's plays exclusively in terms of social class, this approach can become rigid and has its limitations. The educational revolution[116] that occurred in sixteenth and seventeenth century England was no doubt a major cause contributing to the development of a sophisticated group of auditors that enjoyed as

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[112]See Stephen Mullaney, *The Place of the Stage*, p. 170; Stephen Orgel, *The Illusion of Power*, p. 6; cf. Harbage's original position, in *Shakespeare's Audience.*

[113]Christopher Hill, *Reformation to Industrial Revolution*, p. 69.

[114]Alvin Kernan, "Shakespeare's and Jonson's View of Public Theatre Audiences," p. 75.

[115]See Theodore Leinwand, "Shakespeare and the Middling Sort."

[116]See Stone, "The Educational Revolution."

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much an increase in intellectually mobility as in social mobility. The community of sophisticated interpreters on which we will focus was created partly by new often humanistic values, partly by education, and partly by transfer of information among its members.

To construct a profile of the segment of the audience that would appreciate the covert dimension of works such as *Hamlet* and *Epicoene*, we can begin with a core group that Stanley Fish described as a "community of the same."[117] As for Jonson, critics who concentrate on his patronage poetry unnecessarily restrict this group to the poet and a few nobleman and noblewomen. In his *Epigrammes* he in fact praised some who were not noble and scathingly satirized some who were. While his relationships with other writers were at times stormy, this should not blind us to the fact that he frequently expressed his respect for a good number -- including Camden, Chapman, Beaumont, Shakespeare, and members of "the sons of Ben." Given his relation to "the sons of Ben," the self-portrait that Jonson constructs in his patronage poetry may have been intended as a *model* for men and women who are not of noble birth but who are nonetheless worthy to join with those few noblemen and noblewomen whose accomplishments show a *vera nobilitas*.[118] Even critics who attempt to view Jonson as purely a creature of the patronage system are forced to admit at times that he did "resist ... the determinations of power within which he was working."[119]

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[117]Fish, "Authors-Readers: Jonson's Community of the Same."
[118]See Michael McCanles, *Jonsonian Discriminations: The Humanist Poet and the Praise of True Nobility.*
[119]Martin Butler, "Jonson's Folio and the Politics of Patronage," p. 387.

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The target audience for the subtle levels of plays by such sophisticated writers as Shakespeare and Jonson would therefore have been larger than a circle of highly respected figures. Two other groups would have been able to gain access to the covert dimension of the works. First, there was a wide circle of cognoscenti: other playwrights, players, various artists related to the theater, the friends of all of these, theater aficionados at the Inns of Court, frequenters of the Mermaid Tavern, "sons of Ben." In addition to those with privileged knowledge, acute intellects would have been able to penetrate to the covert level purely by their wits. Combined together these groups composed an informal community of intelligent viewers -- the "cunning palates," "understanding gentlemen," or "extraordinary" appreciators, as Jonson termed them at various times. This community differed significantly from Frances Yates's hypothetical "school of night,"[120] which, though composed of intellectuals, would have been restricted by hermetic interests, social class, education, and personal connections. Instead, the target audience for covert levels of meaning would have been wider, straddling barriers of social class -- the intellectual vanguard perhaps, but not a purely social elite, nor a truly educational one. Many *understanders* would have, like Shakespeare and Jonson themselves, completed grammar school -- in itself a substantial education -- but would never have matriculated at university.[121]

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[120]See Yates, *A Study of Love's Labour's Lost.*

[121]On *understanders*, see Jonson's Epigram I. On the rigorous curricula of the grammar schools, see T. W. Baldwin, *William Shakspere's Small Latine & Lesse Greeke.*

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Written reactions to plays from members of the "middling sort" or lower social strata were not common, and the few comments that were recorded come mostly from the more privileged. While the thoughts of sophisticated receivers are quite difficult to reconstruct since a relatively small sample of their reactions have survived, the remaining evidence does at least give us a few clues to the identity of some of the members of this group. Members of the Inns of Court were well known to be avid playgoers, stagers of plays, as well as writers, and we would expect that a significant number may have been astute auditors. We can get a feel for the locations in which plays may have been discussed when we notice that the playwright John Marston and the diarist Manningham, who writes of both Jonson and Shakespeare, were mentioned in the records for the same session of the parliament of Middle Temple.[122] Unlike Marston, Jonson and Shakespeare were not, however, primarily concerned with the Inns-of-Court audience,[123] and the members of the Inns that they had great respect for, such as Donne and Beaumont, did not usually like Manningham have careers as barristers. Manningham's diary entries leads us to believe that he was not one of the more perspicacious playgoers. Beaumont, on the other hand, was definitely one of the cognoscenti.

As one of his verse epistles to Jonson makes clear,[124] Beaumont was not only a good friend and admirer of Jonson, but also an appreciator of Shakespeare's work. He recognized that Shakespeare's relatively meager "schollershippe" did not prevent him from showing

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[122]*Middle Temple Records* (8 Feb. 1600), p. 401.
[123]See Philip Finkelpearl, *John Marston of the Middle Temple.*
[124]See E. K. Chambers, *William Shakespeare*, II, 224.

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future generations "how farr sometimes a mortall man may goe." Like Jonson's remark on Shakespeare's "small Latine & lesse Greeke," Beaumont's reference to Shakespeare's comparative lack of learning was meant not to criticize him as later ages would assume, but rather to emphasize his great accomplishments. Although neither attended university, both Shakespeare and Jonson were appreciated by men who had; Camden, for instance, lists Jonson and Shakespeare as among the "pregnant wits of these our times, whom succeeding ages may iustly admire."[125] While such cognoscenti admired Shakespeare and Jonson, exactly what they knew about the hidden levels of the work of these writers must remain a mystery, because of the social and literary customs of the time. While we may well hunger for something from contemporaries on the profound levels of their works, it is not surprising that evaluative generalities and topical remarks are for the most part all we have. Traditions of secrecy were still quite vital, since the Enlightenment privileging of openness had not yet arose. Criticism that probes literary complexity was, moreover, not yet being written: the first extended piece of dramatic criticism in English is Dryden's "Essay of Dramatic Poetry" (1668) -- which, significantly, contains the "Examen of the *Silent Woman*" that we will examine in the following chapter. Beaumont, it should be noted, wrote a poem *On The Silent Woman*, which unfortunately is concerned with defending his friend from accusations of topical reference and not with what he found of value in this seeming farce -- such criticism of the play would have to wait for the Restoration.

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[125]Camden, *Remains Concerning Britain*, p. 8.

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That Jonson and Shakespeare appear to have developed close attachments to members of various social groups argues against reading the covert levels of their plays purely in terms of social class. Indeed, some of the strengths and limitations of these playwrights seem to derive from their attempt to reach a perspective that is not restricted by class. Perhaps as Paul Yachnin argues, at the end of the sixteenth century the players successfully promoted the idea of a disinterested theater in order to win a profitable freedom to present controversial material.[126] Yachnin's thesis would help to account for the existence of the "comedians' liberty" noted by Philip Finkelpearl, the "implicit social contract between authors and authorities" that Anabel Patterson describes, and the "allowance" that Richard Dutton shows the Master of the Revels made for a wide range of expression.

To some degree evasion of censors, either because of topicality or general subversive intent, was a motive for obfuscation for some writers of the period. The evasion of censorship is, however, a negative condition that would not have been able to provide enough motivational force to sustain the pronounced veiling of significance in such major literary accomplishments as the "darke conceit" that Spencer used "to fashion a gentleman"[127] -- or Shakespeare's and Jonson's obscured fashionings of Hamlet and True-Wit. While a playwright at times made controversial topical allusions to add *salt*, we are wrong to "make a libell, which he made a play," as Jonson put it in *Epicoene*'s second prologue, which he tells us was "[o]ccasion'd by some persons impertinent exception." Jonson's allusion in this

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[126]See Yachnin, "The Powerless Theater."
[127]Spenser, "A Letter of the Authors," *The Faerie Queene*, p. 1.

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play to a scandal involving Lady Arabella Stuart, the King's cousin, may have caused theatrical and publishing problems for *Epicoene*[128] (which led to Beaumont's defense noted above). To imagine, however, that the evasion of censorship was the main impetus for the whole covert dimension of this or of most other multilevel plays would be a mistake.

Only in a very unusual case, a pure *pièce à clef* such as Middleton's *Game at Chess* for instance, could topical allusions constitute a complete, complex, covert dimension. The possible topical allusions in such plays as *Measure for Measure* or *Love's Labor's Lost* may perhaps add to covert levels of meaning, but the subtle, metaphorical handling of the larger issues raised indicate that the intent of these possible levels was not at all similar to that of Middleton's literal-minded allegory. Most of the major playwrights appear to have lacked either Middleton's nationalistic fervor or the revolutionary passion needed to undertake a large-scale covert project intended to be immediately subversive. The intense questioning of their drama may have eventually contributed to progressive results,[129] but the authorities had no immediate cause for alarm, especially since the most vocal critics of the stage, the Puritans, were also increasingly opposed to the policies of the monarchy, which was therefore willing to tolerate a surprising degree of "comedians' liberty."

Censorship no doubt contributed to the impetus for the contemporary literary fashion for obfuscation, but so did the general

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[128]See, Edward Partridge, ed. *Epicoene*, pp. 199-202; H&S, 5:144-47; cf. chapter 5 below.
[129]See Dollimore, *Radical Tragedy*.

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climate of political intrigue, as well as other social forces. As Hans-Georg Gadamer asked in response to Leo Strauss's *Persecution and the Art of Writing*, "Is not conscious distortion, camouflage and concealment of the proper meaning an extreme case of a frequent, even normal situation? -- just as persecution ... is only an extreme case when compared with the intentional or unintentional pressure that society and public opinion exercise on human thought."[130] Although in Renaissance England the threat of political censorship was pervasive, it is also true that Freudian repression and Foucauldian discursive codes, which may never reach consciousness, always significantly mold our expression. There is no doubt a whole range of motives -- both conscious and unconscious -- for multi-level modes of expression.

Many motivations and social forces therefore contributed to the development in the Renaissance of extremely subtle methods of communication and obfuscation. To assume or argue that these methods were always turned to purposes that were immediately or narrowly political leaves unexplained how some of the results could appear so powerful and relevant to audiences far removed from the original one in time, place, and culture. Some of these methods and their results may be more appropriately related to deeper and wider social developments. For instance, it may have indeed seemed natural that representations of the emerging conception of a secular self disengaged from society should be presented in a manner that is not open to the general society. In addition to the possibility that

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[130]Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, p. 488; quoted in Patterson, *Censorship and Interpretation*, p. 16, who notes that Lacan "stressing the linguistic strategies of the unconscious in eluding censorship, actually" referred back to Strauss.

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such representations may have carried subversive connotations which were better hidden from general view, the use of subtle methods may have been a way to offer the astute auditor an epistemologically profound experience that could not be provided by other means. Such a use of obscurity would be both "tactical" and "ontological" to use George Steiner's terms, "an intentional technique of retardation and creative uncertainty" that raises "questions about the nature of human speech"[131] and the self.

Trenchant taxonomies of obscurity by formalist theorists such as Steiner[132] are quite important, but to rely solely on the work of such theorists would cause us to lose the crucial perspective provided by a more historically informed approach. Steiner's rather ahistorical discussion of difficulty neglects, for instance, the fact that difficulty is a function of the knowledge and makeup of the receivers and the historical and social context in which reception occurs. The works that we shall examine are difficult not for strictly political or theoretical reasons, but because of what might be termed *polyvocalism.* While this polyvocalism can be seen as a part of Bakhtin's theory of *heteroglossia* and the *polyphonic*[133] -- I will stress the inverse of the usual thrust of these terms, which primarily concern multiple groups speaking through a text. I am, on the other hand, concerned more with the ability of a sophisticated writer to present unconnected discourses to separate groups who may even be simultaneously present. By stressing a single agent, I do not mean to support Harold Bloom's claim that "social energies" never wrote a

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[131]Steiner, "On Difficulty," p. 41.

[132]See also Angus Fletcher, *Colors of the Mind.*

[133]See M. M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination* and *Rabelais and His World:*

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great work,[134] for neither, I believe, did an autonomous subjectivity. The writing process is to varying degrees a collaboration, often quite significantly so for playwrights whose works may develop during rehearsals and performances. Moreover, when the individual writes, she or he does so as a member of various groups who, as Bakhtin stresses, speak through the work to some degree -- and yet the individual may nevertheless use these influences to construct a discourse that is unique and innovative. By arguing that Shakespeare and Jonson's work both reflects and contributes to large social movements concerning the evolution of the self, I hope to strike a balance concerning the question of personal agency versus contextual influence.

By focusing on politics recent critics have not sufficiently examined the intermediate level[135] of early modern mores and subgroups -- of kin, coteries and other associations that were set in the radically transforming society -- and the relation of this level to the subject positions manifested in the early modern literature. This cultural configuration may well be connected to the structure both of the emerging modern subject and of contemporary texts. We will see that rather than being characterizable as either simply exoteric or esoteric, certain major texts reflect within them the particular and changing way that early modern society divided the esoteric from the exoteric. The emerging subject that these texts both reflect and help to construct appear to manifest an analogous reconfiguring of

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[134]See Bloom, *The Western Canon*, p. 62.

[135]This intermediate level is captured to some degree by Pierre Bourdieu's use of *habitus* in *Outline of a Theory of Practice.*

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the barriers between the explicit and implicit, the repressed and conscious, the private and public.

VI. *Intimacy*

Recent historicists, who have explored the possibility that in many cases censorship was a cause for hidden meanings, have shifted the popular interest in secrecy away from questions of esoteric knowledge to questions of politics. We may, however, now underestimate reasons for secrecy that are not strictly political -- including the use of partial communicative obfuscation as an epistemological tool for the construction of subjective depth. As Richard Rambuss has argued, we should be concerned not only with the content of secrets, but also with the "*forms* of secrecy," which may provide "the deep structure of ... texts" and may contribute to "conceptions of subjecthood."[136] Modern *secrecy* -- in the sociological sense I have been using -- aids in hollowing out the subject to create a finite interior space and thus in the formation of the structure of the modern self. The early modern use of secrecy to construct the impression of a finite deep self may therefore be more related to profound social changes than to particular political conditions. Our current modes of secrecy reflect the structural principle of the disengaged, deep self that emerged in the early modern period due to sociological, religious, philosophical, political, legal, literary, and other developments. In particular, the radical method of partial

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[136]Rambuss, *Spenser's Secret Career*, pp. 3-4.

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obfuscation may be an essential literary device to produce the pronounced impression of finite subjective depth in early modern works. This device not only reflected social changes but also helped to disseminate the concept of the finite deep self and to create a society in which such selves became prevalent in educated circles.

Rather than concentrating on political censorship I am more concerned with what we have seen Gadamer describe as the "intentional or unintentional pressure that society and public opinion exercise on human thought" – which is an approach that parallels to some degree recent discussions of Foucauldian discursive codes and of ideology. As I mentioned above, I will focus for the most part on the social structures of *secrecy*, in the broad sense of various means of *social dissociation*. The category of *social dissociation* comprehends both modes of *intimacy* (which I use in the widest sense that includes couples and coteries) and various individualistic modes of being, especially subjectivity.

Current theorists have correctly emphasized how difficult it is to examine the literature of the past without reading our own notions of subjectivity into literary representations. What is not as commonly stressed in current criticism is that it is equally difficult to resist the temptation to read our mores and morals into literary representations of the past. Our system of sexual taboos, including our beliefs about marriage and incest, are much different from the early modern system. Every age is blind to or at least forgiving of its own prejudices. In 1948 Eric Partridge noted that in "the 18th Century" a book like his *Shakespeare's Bawdy* "could have been published; in the Victorian period, not; up till (say) 1930, it would

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have been deprecated; nowadays, it will -- as it should -- be taken very much as a matter of course."[137] While I agree with Partridge that certain eras are on the whole more open to public discussion of sexually than others, the vicissitudes of sexual awareness are much more complex than he realized. Degrees of sexual liberation are relative. We would now, for instance, question how enlightened Partridge really was in 1948, for in light of recent work his discussion of homosexuality appears to be neither sufficiently historicized nor objective. As is now becoming widely realized, since the '60's America has been undergoing a period of dramatic cultural change.[138] This should not, however, prevent us from questioning the sexual freedom of our postmodern era, which has conflicting ideologies of liberation and of moralism, almost inevitably ties sex to violence in the mass media, and allows de facto censorship to inhibit the mass distribution of sophisticated explorations of sexuality.[139]

Compared to the changes in mores in the last few centuries, which were very significant, the paradigm shift at the beginning of the early modern period nevertheless appears to have been of a different order of magnitude. The beginning of early modern era experienced the birth trauma of a new world -- explosions of urbanization and of literacy and print culture, the shattering of the unity of Christendom, the beginning of capitalism, modern science's conflict with religion, and the waves of increasingly radical versions of scepticism that created modern philosophy. The intellectual and

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[137]Partridge, *Shakespeare's Bawdy*, p. vii.
[138]See, for instance, Mark Lilla, "Still Living with '68."
[139]The problems of finding a distributor for the recent film version of Nabokov's *Lolita* is a case in point.

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social turmoil are difficult to overestimate. Underneath these changes, affected by and affecting many of them, was a paradigm shift in the modes of intimacy. As we shall investigate in chapters 3 and 6, the Reformation and counter-Reformation ended the rather tolerant previous expectations about sexuality that, for instance, had allowed brothels to become an acceptable institution. As illegitimacy rates declined dramatically and the nuclear family became the most powerful kinship group, libidinal energies were for the first time efficiently channeled into a consolidated institution of marriage that no longer could be verbally created and informally broken, but instead needed to be publicly performed. The new regime of restraints occurs, significantly, at the very same time that Europe underwent an explosion in the development of manners that indicates a growth in the power of the superego, which we have seen Elias thought worthy to be called "psychogenesis."

Rather than focus on the relation of subjectivity to short-range and reductively political forces as is currently popular, this study will instead concentrate on investigating the literary effects of this paradigm shift in mores. A major part of this shift is tied to the Reformation's and the counter-Reformation's rationalization and consistent enforcement of moral codes that are based on a newly powerful idealized and consolidated conception of marriage -- one that no longer allowed verbal marriage, that is, *sponsalia verba*, especially not its immediately effective (*de praesenti*) clandestine version. In England the new, generally more repressive regime concerning modes of intimacy was spearheaded by the bourgeois Puritans. We will see how Jonson throughout his career and

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Shakespeare in his middle period protested the psychological repression of the new mores that channeled all passion into a consolidated institution of marriage. This sexual regime resulted in the modern ideology of marriage, which eventually became fully hegemonic in the Victorian age. Our current divorce rate points to the ravages that such a powerfully enforced idealization continues to cause.

During the Renaissance the West appears to have experienced its first and therefore most traumatic adjustment to a new sexual regime. What was previously seen as an ideal that was normally impossible to reach was coming to be considered an obtainable reality that was the only acceptable one. Western society was on its way to becoming an anthropological oddity in that this ideology of marriage would be effectively disseminated over a vast area for the first time in human history. This sexual regime, a truly epochal development, was fueled by an amazing network of forces: the Reformation and counter-Reformation, urbanization, the onset of capitalism, the first fully developed surge of literacy and print culture, the beginning of the rise of modern science and technology. The early modern shift in mores is not only directly registered by Jonson and Shakespeare's oeuvres but is also closely connected to the change in subjective structure.

The underlying connection (which will be further examined in chapter 6) between the new regime of mores and the new subjective structure brings together the two major foci of this project. The rise of modern manners and the consolidation and rigidification of modes of intimacy correspond to a growth in the power of the superego and

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a displacement or sublimation of libidinal drives. This obfuscation of desire creates the type of psychic masks that, according to Wittgenstein's structural principle, produces subjective depth: "[w]hen mien, gesture and circumstance are unambiguous, then the inner seems to be the outer; it is only when we cannot read the outer that an inner seems to be hidden behind it." The spread of a subjective paradigm of depth and the historical shift in mores -- both of which we will see are registered in the work of Shakespeare and Jonson -- may, then, be profoundly related. By means of an interdisciplinary perspective that is careful not to be reductive and that takes into account the longue durée, it may be possible to prepare the way for a less parochial view of subjectivity and intimacy than has so far been possible.

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PART TWO

JONSON

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Chapter 2:

SILENCE, WIT, AND WISDOM IN *THE SILENT WOMAN*

I. *Introductory*

During the seventeenth century, Ben Jonson's *Epicoene, or The Silent Woman* (1609) was critically acclaimed by an impressive group of writers, ranging from Francis Beaumont early in the century to John Dryden, William Congreve, and a number of their contemporaries.[1] In his famous "Essay of Dramatic Poesy" (1668), Dryden singled out Jonson's comedy as "the pattern of a perfect play"[2] and, in a special section of the "Essay" entitled "Examen of the *Silent Woman*," praised not only its well-drawn characters and unified structure but also its "noble" intrigue. "The action of the play is entirely one; the end or aim of which is the settling [of] Morose's estate on Dauphine. The intrigue of it is the greatest and most noble of any pure unmixed comedy in any language" (p. 83).

Later critics, however, have found it difficult to explain why *Epicoene* was so highly esteemed in its own century; clearly, the

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[1]See Beaumont's "Upon the *Silent Woman*," published in the 1616 Folio; reprinted in *Ben Jonson*, ed. C. H. Herford and Percy and Evelyn Simpson 11:324, hereafter referred to as H&S; all references to Jonson's works are to H&S. Dryden's views will be discussed presently. Congreve modeled his masterpiece *The Way of The World* after *Epicoene*. Thomas Shadwell and Samuel Pepys also greatly admired *Epicoene*; see Pepys's Diary, 19 September 1668. See also Gerard Langbaine, *An Account of the English Dramatick Poets* (Oxford, 1691), p. 296.

[2]*Essays of John Dryden*, ed. W. P. Ker 1:79. All references to Dryden are to this volume.

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depth of meaning that Dryden found in the "intrigue of it" has not been rediscovered. Although this play was written at the height of Jonson's dramatic powers—between *Volpone* and *The Alchemist*, acknowledged masterworks characterized by their moral and intellectual stature—several commentators have gone so far as to suggest that *Epicoene* is an unedifying farce.[3]

Troubled by the seemingly minor ethical concerns raised by the play's intrigue, critics have been unable to reach a consensus on Jonson's underlying dramatic purpose.[4] The observation Jonas Barish made over thirty years ago remains essentially true: "*The Silent Woman* . . . has suffered the fate of becoming more instead of less enigmatic as time passes."[5] In the present chapter I argue that the "enigmatic" appearance of *The Silent Woman* is not an accident. Rather, as Dryden suggested, beneath the farcical surface action of this disguise drama can be found a more meaningful level of intrigue—designed by Jonson exclusively for the elite audience referred to in the play's first prologue (line 10).

Epicoene is the most deceptive of Jonson's plays. Apart from the many ruses played by the characters on each other, Jonson clearly intended to practice deception on his audience as well, as is evident from the central trick of the plot—Morose's bride turns out to be a man. Written near the end of a decade "of great significance in the development of structure in disguise plays," *Epicoene* represents

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[3]For instance, L. C. Knights, *Drama & Society in the Age of Jonson*, p. 196, dismisses *Epicoene* as "pure entertainment.

[4]See Jonas Barish, "Ovid, Juvenal, and *The Silent Woman*," PMLA 71 (1956): 213; L. G. Salingar, "Farce and Fashion in *The Silent Woman*," *E&S* 20 (1967): 29; Douglas Duncan, *Ben Jonson and the Lucianic Tradition*, p. 166.

[5]Barish, p. 213.

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a radical innovation: For the first time on the English stage, knowledge of a title character's true sex is withheld from the audience until the play's final scene.[6]

Jonson and Dryden both indicate that even after the silent woman's sexual identity is revealed, there remains a further mystery to solve. At the end of the first prologue Jonson promises that after the play is over, it will continue to offer much food for thought:

> Nor is it, onely, while you keepe your seate
> Here, that his [the author's] feast will last; but you shall eate
> A weeke at ord'naries on his broken meat:
> If his Muse be true,
> Who commends her to you.
> (lines 25-29)

In his "Examen of the *Silent Woman*," Dryden remarks on the difficulty in reaching an accurate understanding of this deceptive play. After noting that "the contrivance of the plot . . . is extreme[ly] elaborate," Dryden says that his "Examen" shall leave unexamined the play's covert artistry: "I dare not take upon me to commend the fabric of it, because it is altogether so full of art, that I must unravel every scene in it to commend it as I ought" (p. 86). In *Epicoene*'s second prologue, Jonson notes that a work of art is composed not of "truths, but things (like truths) well fain'd." Although the play has the appearance of a farce, he stresses in this prologue that the purpose of true art's "well fain'd" illusion is not only "to delight" the audience but also "to profit" us morally. Jonson

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[6]See Victor Oscar Freeburg, *Disguise Plots in Elizabethan Drama*, pp. 84-85, 114-117; quotation from p. 84.

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and Dryden are asking us to penetrate the "fabric" of this seemingly unedifying play.

In the play's first prologue, Jonson divides his audience into two strata. As critics have amply pointed out, he first promises to please his common "guests"—a promise he certainly keeps in this hilarious comedy. But critics have almost completely ignored the fact that Jonson also refers to an elite group of astute auditors: "Yet, if those cunning palates hether come, / They shall find guests entreaty, and good roome." Like several characters in this play who "answere . . . not, by speech, but by silence" (II.i.9), Jonson may have wished to convey his moral purpose silently, for the benefit of only "cunning palates," that is, the more sophisticated members of his audience, a group to whom he often appealed throughout his career. Whitefriars, the "private" theater where *Epicoene* was first performed, would have attracted a comparatively high proportion of these discriminating "palates" and was therefore an appropriate setting for a play making unusual demands on the audience's critical discernment. In some of his nondramatic works, Jonson used obfuscation to confine an understanding of his ethical intent to his more astute readers.[7] Yet critics have not suspected that the same may hold true for *Epicoene*, apparently because one does not expect to find secretive methods of communication employed in drama, for this would violate the familiar conception of theater as a communal experience of a dramatic fable whose essential facts are open to all. Jonson has in fact warned us that *Epicoene* is not strictly a "play" in

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[7]See Jennifer Brady, "'Beware the Poet': Authority and Judgment in Jonson's Epigrammes ," *SEL* 23 (1983): 101-103; Richard Dutton, *Ben Jonson: To the First Folio*, p. 92.

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the sense of a wholly accessible, dramatized narrative: He predicts in its first prologue that only "cunning palates" would grasp the paradoxical nature of this experiment, that only they would realize, "Who wrote that piece, could so have wrote a play: / But that, he knew, this was the better way."

Believing this experiment in dramatic technique to be a "better way," Jonson refuses to be restricted by the usual conventions, slyly noting that *The Silent Woman* lies outside the mainstream of the theatrical tradition, which favors spectacle and perspicuous action. And yet, though this antitheatrical "piece" is exceptional, it does not represent a reversal of his customary procedure. The method of obfuscation employed in *The Silent Woman* is only an extreme version of Jonson's common practice of linking a character's name, behavior, and true identity.

II. *Names and Obscurity*

To lift *The Silent Woman* 's veil of secrecy, one needs some familiarity with Jonson's use of names. From early in his career to well after writing *Epicoene*, he often assigned his characters metaphorical names to denote their essences. The artful felicity of many of these names is not at all obvious, often becoming evident only after a thorough investigation of a character's behavior and its dramatic context. Gabriele Jackson concludes: "Repeatedly, apparent inconsistency in naming thus reveals itself as meticulous

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distinction."[8] A character's name may have a recondite or a seemingly ambiguous denotation. More frequently, a character's deceptions may constitute attempts to conceal the dramatic relevance of his or her name from the other characters and even the audience. Jonson clearly intended to present many characters as "puzzles,"[9] employing metaphorical names as clues to their hidden natures.

In this comedy, Jonson has of course created a major puzzle by means of an apt, though recondite, name—Epicoene. In Latin and Greek grammar, epicoene is an adjective describing "nouns which, without changing their grammatical gender, may denote either sex" (OED). According to the OED, the title of Jonson's comedy is the first use in written English of epicoene as a noun ("One who partakes of the characteristics of both sexes"). No doubt, the first audience's view of the silent woman's sexual identity was deliberately obstructed not only by "her" manner and disguise but also by the relative obscurity of epicoene and Jonson's semantically innovative use of this word. Hence, the difficulty of this puzzle and, hence, the surprise when Dauphine removes Epicoene's wig in the final scene. This *coup de théâtre* also uncovers Dauphine's hidden plot. But as critics have noted, True-Wit's significance remains elusive.[10] With the name "True-Wit," a combined form that became current in the seventeenth

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[8]Gabriele Bernhard Jackson, *Vision and Judgment in Ben Jonson's Drama*, p. 61. See also Elke Platz-Waury, "The Characterization Function of Names in Jonson's Comedies," *JDS* 76 (1978): 24–70.

[9]Platz-Waury, p. 25.

[10]See W. David Kay, "Jonson's Urbane Gallants: Humanistic Contexts for Epicoene," *HLQ* 39 (1976): 256; Duncan, p. 177.

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century,[11] this dramatist has created another puzzle to test his audience's wit.

Considered by itself, the word wit in True-Wit's name is ambiguous. To explain the name, critics have had to rely (at least implicitly) on the modern notion of wit—verbal "quickness," a mere "talent for saying brilliant or sparkling things, especially in an amusing way" (OED). We need to remember that in the seventeenth century, wit primarily meant "mental capacity, understanding, reason" (OED). True-Wit's witty facade may seem to suggest the modern sense of this word, but the fact that wit is modified by true implies that it is instead the older, and more profound, primary meaning of wit that Jonson intended. If Jonson had wanted to stress the more recent sense of wit, he would have called this character Quick-Wit or some such name.[12] Following his usual practice, he is making a "meticulous distinction." To this precise scholar, wit 's lighter, secondary meaning surely would not be true wit at all.

In addition to the difficulty of explaining the dramatic relevance of True-Wit's name, there are other indications that Jonson intended to present him as a puzzle, including the paradoxical rhetoric and allusiveness of his discourse and the seeming inconsistency in his behavior. It is no wonder that current evaluations of this character are contradictory, ranging from the belief that he is "a fatuous meddler" to "the impression that he is the

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[11]R. V. Holdsworth, "Antedating and Additions for OED from Epicoene," *N&Q* 28 (1981): 283, notes that the *OED* 's entry for "truewit" (s.v. "true") is antedated by this play's use of the word.

[12]For example, Congreve's Witwoud (literally, a would-be wit) in *The Way of the World* is a dramatization of the secondary meaning of wit. In the dedicatory epistle of his play, Congreve admonishes critics "to distinguish betwixt the Character of a Witwoud and a Truewit."

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chief intriguer of *Epicoene*."[13] True-Wit's successful plots, in which he expedites the action and exposes most of the minor characters, have impressed a number of writers. But others view him as an object of satire because of what they assume to be an inane blunder (the visit he pays Morose early in the play) and his apparent inability to penetrate Epicoene's disguise (he seems to be fooled by Dauphine's stratagem). Such a serious inconsistency in the character that Dryden acclaimed as Jonson's "masterpiece" (p. 174) is most unlikely, especially when one remembers that Jonson is the preeminent and strictest critic of the English Renaissance on the issue of character consistency. There is, in fact, a more likely, though less obvious, alternative interpretation of True-Wit's actions—a reading quite consonant with Jonson's stringent character theory and precise use of names. In this often misleading drama, Jonson has left it to the "cunning palates" in his audience to discover that, in truth, neither True-Wit nor his scholarly creator has erred.

Both the title, *Epicoene*—the one major clue to the innovative surprise ending—and the popular second title, *The Silent Woman*, underscore the play's subtle use of silence and indirect means of expression. In a ground-breaking article examining it in light of Renaissance attitudes toward its central "theme," Huston Hallahan has corrected the previously "accepted belief that speech and silence in *Epicoene* are simple polarities" (with, roughly, the former symbolizing life, the latter death) and has shown that instead,

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[13]J. A. Bryant, *The Compassionate Satirist: Ben Jonson and His Imperfect World*, p. 103; Platz-Waury, p. 35.

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actually "both silence and eloquence offer viable means to wisdom and power."[14]

Dauphine's covert design is to obtain an inheritance, a goal far removed from the use of silence as a means to wisdom, which is the paramount concern of the philosophic and rhetorical tradition on which the play draws. Since the plot centers on his plan to obtain his uncle's estate, a significant moral purpose seems absent from the action of *The Silent Woman*. Dauphine's secretive scheme does not satisfy either the ethical imperatives of the classical and Renaissance tradition concerning silence or Jonson's Horatian aesthetics. But Dauphine is only the nominal hero. It is True-Wit who is the "central and controversial character" of the play.[15] Whereas Dauphine's goal is clear (even his name proclaims him an heir apparent), True-Wit never openly discloses an underlying motive worthy of his name.

Given the classical association of silence with eloquence and truth, and given "the vitality of this association through the Renaissance,"[16] it is not at all improbable that True-Wit, despite his obvious eloquence, would also avail himself of silent means. Ideally, an individual should be able both to speak effectively and to use silence. In *Symbolicae Questiones* (1574), Achille Bocchi's book of emblems, the classical concept that silence is essential to true eloquence is expressed by an engraving depicting Hermes, the god of

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[14]"Silence, Eloquence, and Chatter in Jonson's Epicoene," *HLQ* 40 (1977): 117-18 (emphasis added).
[15]Duncan, p. 177.
[16]Raymond Waddington, "The Iconography of Silence and Chapman's Hercules," *JWCI* 33 (1970): 248.

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eloquence, with his finger to his lips.[17] Similarly, in "Concerning Talkativeness," an established source for Renaissance ideas on speech and silence and one of the best essays of the *Moralia* (referred to in *Epicoene*, I.i.62), Plutarch observes that "the Poet has made the most eloquent Odysseus the most reticent."[18] Current criticism of *Epicoene* fails to take into account that True-Wit's eloquence does not preclude a wise reticence and that the reconciling of these opposites in a single figure was actually a classical and Renaissance ideal.

Unlike Dauphine's acquisitive scheme, True-Wit's artifices are intended to convey silently to the "cunning palates" of Jonson's audience a profound truth, as True-Wit's very name suggests. This conclusion, however surprising it may seem, accords quite well with the tradition concerning silence on which the play draws, for this classical and Renaissance tradition expressly stipulates that wisdom should not "be revealed directly to the lay audience."[19] Paradoxically, *The Silent Woman* has the surface appearance of a noisy—and trivial—"comoedy of affliction" (II.vi.37), but this is only because the play in fact exemplifies "traditional obscurity," which "will become illustratio by dint of the reader's hard thinking."[20] To make Jonson's covert artistry and veiled moral purpose in *Epicoene* "become

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[17]This engraving is reproduced by Hallahan, p. 118; Edgar Wind, *Pagan Mysteries in the Renaissance*, fig. 21; Frances A. Yates, *The Art of Memory*, frontispiece. See also Waddington, p. 258.

[18]"Concerning Talkativeness," trans. W. C. Helmbold, in Plutarch's *Moralia*, 15, 6:417. See Waddington, p. 251n.

[19]Waddington, p. 250. See also Hallahan, p. 119; Wind, pp. 13-19.

[20]Rosemond Tuve, *Elizabethan and Metaphysical Imagery*, p. 137. Although this principle of "traditional obscurity" was used by Tuve primarily in analyzing Renaissance lyric poetry, it is also applicable to works of greater scope such as Spenser's *Faerie Queene* and Chapman's *Bussy D'Ambois*; see Waddington, *The Mind's Empire: Myth and Form in George Chapman's Narrative Poems*, pp. 1-44.

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illustratio," one must begin by uncovering the true significance of True-Wit's puzzling, initial artifice.

III. True-Wit's Visit

The surface action of Epicoene leaves the interpretation of True-Wit's first artifice, his visit to Dauphine's uncle, Morose (II.ii), open to question. Disregarding Dauphine's warning that his friends' pranks will cause him to be disinherited by his uncle, True-Wit bursts in on the noise-hating old man and forces him to listen to reasons for not marrying. When he informs Dauphine and Clerimont of this visit, he is told that Dauphine had earlier entered into an agreement with the silent woman, his "entire friend" (II.iv.42), and that Dauphine himself had planned her marriage to his uncle. True-Wit's visit therefore seems to be a serious blunder that may ruin Dauphine's carefully arranged plan. While Dauphine and Clerimont abuse True-Wit for this seeming blunder, he remains silent until Cutbeard arrives and reports that True-Wit's visit has instead had the opposite effect: it has expedited the marriage. True-Wit now maintains that he intended this favorable outcome and foresaw that it would "necessarily in nature fall out so: my genius is never false to me in these things" (II.iv.75-76). Dauphine, who had been doubtful of True-Wit's talents, now believes in his friend's "genius" and asks, "Sweet True-Wit, forgive me." Clerimont, on the other hand, does not accept True-Wit's explanation and calls him a "strange justifier" of himself. Despite the disagreement between True-Wit's friends over the interpretation of his action, current criticism has accepted

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Clerimont's view without exploring the alternative reading of this putative fortuitous blunder.

True-Wit's many successes throughout the rest of the play establish his "genius" for adroit manipulation of gulls. How then could so clever a man believe he could persuade noise-hating Morose not to marry by tormenting him with reasons? On the other hand, if True-Wit deliberately manipulated Morose's "nature," as he asserts, how could he have previously obtained the necessary knowledge of Dauphine's link to the silent woman? In fact, he probably learned it from Dauphine and Clerimont during the conversation of the three gallants (I.ii), when he was first informed of the silent woman's existence and when he undoubtedly conceived his plan to visit Morose. In this scene, Dauphine and Clerimont attempt to conceal from True-Wit the silent woman's connection to Dauphine, but they drop a number of clues, and True-Wit's behavior demonstrates that he picks up on these clues:

1. Judging from True-Wit's incredulous reaction, his suspicions are clearly aroused by the peculiar news that after Morose's futile, six-month search throughout England for a silent bride, the silent woman has suddenly and mysteriously appeared "lodg'd i' the next street to him."

2. Clerimont discloses that Cutbeard, the agent arranging the marriage, "tells Dauphine all," showing True-Wit that Dauphine has at least an indirect link to the silent woman.

3. Dauphine's behavior is suspicious. He is obviously concerned about the possibility of being disinherited and fears to lose all claim to his inheritance if his uncle marries. Yet when True-Wit suggests

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that they visit the silent woman to "make her talke . . . or if shee will not, wee can give out, at least so much as shall interrupt the treatie," Dauphine refuses, offering the feeblest of excuses. At first, he says that because of some undivulged "business," he is unable to go along, a pretext he quickly drops. Next, he feigns a desire to remain "innocent" of any action that might seem to further his wish to acquire his inheritance. True-Wit immediately mocks this desire to remain "innocent"; he is certainly not convinced by Dauphine's excuses.

4. Clerimont reveals evidence pointing to an artifice when he informs True-Wit that the silent woman is lodged in the house of garrulous Jack Daw, whose name is that of a chattering bird. The situation is too improbable for True-Wit to believe: "The onely talking sir i' th' towne! Jack Daw! And he teach her not to speak—God b'w'you." True-Wit has become progressively more distrustful until he comes to a realization: If Dauphine were to tell his uncle that the silent woman is living with a prattler, it would be "inough of imputation to her," and Dauphine could thereby compel him to break the match immediately. From Dauphine's refusal to prevent the marriage when it would be simple to do so, True-Wit concludes correctly that Dauphine actually wishes the marriage to take place. In fact, Dauphine now fears that True-Wit has discovered his plot: Directly after True-Wit's "abrupt" exit, Dauphine rebukes Clerimont, calling him "a strange open man, to tell every thing, thus."

The likelihood of True-Wit's having discovered Dauphine's desire to have the silent woman marry his uncle sheds a totally different light on the peculiar visit True-Wit pays Morose. As the

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first scene of the play made clear, True-Wit is acquainted with Morose's idiosyncrasies. Armed with knowledge of Morose's character and Dauphine's plan, True-Wit may well have decided to expedite the marriage by applying reverse psychology on stubborn Morose.

All of True-Wit's actions during the visit he pays Morose (II.ii) seem deliberately intended to irritate his host. Pretending to be a messenger from court, he sets the tone, even before entering, by repeatedly blasting a "post horn." When he bursts in, he immediately derides the old man for his treasured silence, causing him to ask, "Whose knave are you!" True-Wit returns the aspersion: "Mine owne knave and your compere." Morose calls for his sword, but True-Wit prevents this by holding him at knife-point. He then forces Morose to listen to a lengthy catalogue of reasons for not marrying. It is difficult to think that True-Wit's manner throughout this visit—the blasts of his post horn, his insulting remarks, his use of force, his seemingly endless speeches—was not actually intended to offend Morose and thus incite him to act contrary to True-Wit's ostensible aim.[21]

True-Wit's argument against marriage uses the standard tricks of vituperative rhetoric: exaggeration of undesirable features, suppression of desirable ones, unfavorable contrasts, the clever turning of a pleasant fact into an unpleasant one. For instance, in his apparent attempt to make all women appear undesirable, True-Wit adroitly distorts the evidence by drawing the worst possible outcome

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[21]As Horace observed, "difficilem et morosum offendet garrulus" in *Satires, Epistles and Ars Poetica*, trans. H. Rushton Fairclough, Satires, II.v.90.

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from each hypothetical case. "If shee be faire, yong, and vegetous, no sweet meats ever drew more flies; all the yellow doublets, and great roses i' the towne will bee there. If foule, and crooked, shee'll bee with them, and buy those doublets and roses, sir" (II.ii.66–70). The fallacy of this reasoning is patent. Although each of these alarming outcomes may seem "no devis'd impossible thing" (II.ii.146–47), not one of them is very probable. By induction from these bleak possibilities, True-Wit arrives at a generalization too broad to be taken seriously: no man should ever marry.

True-Wit's argument in fact was constructed by the playwright so that it would be familiar to his audience as a formal oration based on a paradox.[22] A paradoxical argument such as True-Wit's is an epideictic form that uses rhetorical strategies not for persuasion, "but for pleasantry and amusement."[23] Morose, who speaks of his strict education, would have known of this notoriously fallacious mode of reasoning. It is therefore not surprising that he remains unconvinced by True-Wit's argument and even decides to marry Epicoene "to day, instantly, and not deferre it a minute longer" (II.iv.64–65). Since True-Wit begins with the absurd proposition that suicide by hanging is preferable to marriage, the paradoxical intent of his argument is clear from its inception. In case Morose may have been swayed at some point during the course of the visit, True-Wit ends with a reminder of his initial proposition and, hence, of the underlying

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[22]See William Slights, "Epicoene and the Prose Paradox," *PQ* 49 (1970): 180.
[23]From Fronto's letter to Aurelius Antoninus (A.D. 139), quoted and trans. Henry Miller, "The Paradoxical Encomium with Special Reference to Its Vogue in England, 1600–1800," *MP* 53 (1956): 149. True-Wit's argument against marriage is a mock vituperatio, a type of paradoxical reasoning also found in Jonson's "Fit of Rime Against Rime," H&S, 8:183–84; see Miller, p. 159n.

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absurdity of his paradoxical mode of reasoning: He leaves Morose with a halter as a "remembrance."

As critics have acknowledged about other scenes, during the visit he pays Morose, True-Wit manipulates "paradox knowingly to gain some desired end."[24] Paradoxical reasoning can be considered a type of reverse psychology. While seeming to support an indefensible absurdity, the paradoxical argument is actually intended to make the "opposed truth . . . appeare more cleere and apparant."[25] For instance, in Act III, scene v, as he joins Morose in cursing Cutbeard, True-Wit carries these execrations to such an absurd extreme that Morose reverses his opinion of Cutbeard. Analogously, by repeatedly taking his paradoxical argument against marriage to absurd extremes, "scholar-like" True-Wit (Dryden, p. 174) consciously shapes a lucid reductio ad absurdum of his own hypothesis that no man should marry. Indeed, if True-Wit's intention were to convince Morose not to marry, why does he offer innumerable reasons in support of an untenable generalization—no man should ever marry—when he has previously remarked to his friends that one can easily induce Morose to call off the marriage? Simply informing Morose that the silent woman is boarding with garrulous Jack Daw, who is supposedly teaching her silence, True-Wit has stated, would be "inough of imputation to her" (I.ii.64). That True-Wit does not use this assured means of thwarting the match and instead chooses to assert an untenable generalization can only be based on the fact that he secretly wishes to expedite the marriage.

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[24]Slights, p. 186.

[25]Charles Estienne, "To the friendly Reader" in *The Defense of Contraries*, trans. Anthony Munday (London, 1593).

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Not only is True-Wit's paradoxical argument, like his irritating behavior, designed to cause an adverse reaction, but he repeatedly hints at his true purpose during the course of this visit. "Alas, sir, I am but a messenger: I but tell you, what you must heare. It seemes, your friends are carefull after your soules health, sir, and would have you know the danger (but you may doe your pleasure, for all them, I perswade not, sir)" (II.ii.56-60). If True-Wit actually wished to persuade Morose, he would conceal any connection to an outside party, because True-Wit knows that Morose is very suspicious of Dauphine, blaming him for all the torments that he, Morose, endures (I.ii.8-10). Instead, True-Wit makes clear that he is "but a messenger" for Morose's "friends" and even locates these friends "at court" (II.ii.7), which Morose hates and which his courtly nephew, Sir Dauphine, could be expected to frequent. Morose does, of course, conclude that "'twas done by [Dauphine's] procurement" (II.iv.60-61). Besides this insinuation of his collusion with Dauphine, True-Wit openly encourages stubborn Morose to "doe your pleasure" in spite of these "friends." Furthermore, the statement "I perswade not" seems a verbal wink[26] at the sophisticated auditors to reassure them that True-Wit has come not to persuade but to compel his captive to react adversely to his reasons.

True-Wit's behavior is actually that of a man who is aware of Dauphine's plan to have Morose marry the silent woman and who shrewdly acts to expedite this plan. True-Wit also has a motive for

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[26]This type of dramatic irony recurs when Daw asserts: "Silence in woman, is like speech in man, / Deny 't who can" and Dauphine responds, "Not I, beleeve it" (II.iii.123-25), a double-entendre that deceives Daw into thinking that Dauphine is agreeing when he is in fact disagreeing.

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temporarily concealing the true aim and effect of his visit. While Dauphine had revealed his plan to Clerimont, he tried to hide it from True-Wit, and True-Wit therefore has a strong incentive to mislead Dauphine into believing that his uncle's match has been broken—to punish Dauphine gently for not confiding in him. True-Wit responds to Dauphine's lack of trust by deceiving the worried nephew into believing for a short while that the design he has "beene maturing now these foure moneths" has been "blasted in a minute" (II.iv.38-39). Since his retribution is aptly fitted to Dauphine's offense, True-Wit's justice is indeed poetic: Both he and Dauphine briefly conceal from each other the tricks they are playing on Morose. True-Wit's lesson was not lost on Dauphine, who asks "Sweet True-Wit, forgive me" (II.iv.69). Subsequently, he shows his new faith in his sly friend by accepting and taking part in True-Wit's ruses (IV.v-vi; V.iii), even those that initially seem to be "waking dreames" (IV.vii.42).

Clearly then, the evidence of the text indicates that far from blundering, True-Wit has carried out a masterful subterfuge. Indeed, as we shall see in the next section of this essay, this is the only proposed interpretation consistent with Jonson's dramatic theory and dramaturgical practices.

IV. *Characters of Wit and of Humour*

Readers familiar with Jonson expect a logical consistency in his characters, reflecting his observance of the famous rule of Horace, "servetur ad imum, / qualis ab incepto processerit, et sibi constet," translated by Jonson as:

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looke he keepe his state
Unto the last, as when he first went forth,
Still to be like himself, and hold his worth.
(H&S, VIII: 312-13)

Jonson thereby won the admiration of seventeenth-century critics for "his choice of characters, and maintaining what he had chosen to the end" (Dryden, p. 177). He chose to isolate closely related psychological traits to create characters each of whom manifests a highly specific ethos, a method most easily discernible in (but not restricted to) his characters of true humour. The strict definition of humour, Jonson explains in the Induction to *Every Man Out of His Humour*, derives "by Metaphore" from an imbalance of the four physical humours:

As when some one peculiar quality
Doth so possesse a man, that it doth draw
All his affects, his spirits, and his powers
In their confluctions, all to runne one way,
This may be truly said to be a Humour.

Dryden and Congreve could find no more paradigmatic illustration of true humour than Morose, of whom Congreve wrote in his famous letter to John Dennis (1695): "Let us suppose Morose to be a Man Naturally Splenetick and Melancholly; is there any thing more offensive to one of such a Disposition, than Noise and Clamour? . . . It is his excess of this Humour, that makes him become Ridiculous, and qualifies his character for Comedy. If the Poet had given him, but a Moderate proportion of that Humour, 'tis odds but half the Audience, would have sided with the Character, and have

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Condemn'd the author, for Exposing a Humour which was neither remarkable nor Ridiculous."[27] Morose is "Ridiculous"—i.e., laughable, diverting—in several ways. His excessive hatred of noise is amusing in and of itself; the gallants (and the audience) find pleasure in the mere contemplation of this humour (I.i.143-90). Morose is also comically incongruous, for though he hates the sound of anyone else's voice, he loves to hear himself speak. The most enduring delight arises from the dramatic consequences of this humour.

Morose attempts to become the absolute master of a closed world by exacting silent obedience from his servant Mute, and by marrying a submissive and silent woman, which would enable him to disinherit his nephew, Dauphine. The comic irony of this plan is that his stubbornly single-minded pursuit of his goal makes him the perfect victim of plots and causes his defeat. A true humour entails, as Congreve noted, "a singular and unavoidable manner of doing, or saying anything," as indeed the "excess of this Humour" in Morose makes his behavior predictable. Thus, True-Wit knows how Morose will react to an insolent messenger. Later, after the silent bride has metamorphosed into a talkative wife, True-Wit slyly refers to this basis of certainty (Morose's obstinacy) while satirically congratulating him on his marriage. "I commend your resolution, that (notwithstanding all the dangers I laid afore you, in the voice of a night-crow) would yet goe on, and bee your selfe. It shewes you are a man constant to your own ends, and upright to your purposes, that

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[27]William Congreve, *Letters & Documents*, ed. John Hodges, p. 180; henceforth, all quotations of Congreve are from this letter. On the "Ridiculous," see Henry Snuggs, "The Comic Humours: A New Interpretation" *PMLA* 62 (1947): 114-16. See also Dryden, pp. 83-85.

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would not be put off with left-handed cries" (III.v.15–20). True-Wit is, of course, savoring the irony that the marriage Morose so eagerly pursued is now the cause of all of his pain, but he also seems to be enjoying the fulfillment of his own predictions. If "in the voice of a night crow" one pours "left-handed cries" against marriage into Morose's sensitive ears, one can be confident that the stubborn man will "goe on, and bee" himself, remaining "constant to [his] own ends" by hardening his resolve to marry.

Jonson differentiated the deeply rooted true humour from the popular sense of the word—an eccentric habit or cultivated affectation. He also realized that these more superficial vices, or "comic humours,"[28] were widespread and hence useful to the satiric dramatist who wishes the viewers to "see the times deformitie / Anatomiz'd in every nerve, and sinnew" (Induction to *Every Man Out of His Humour*, lines 120–21). True-Wit manipulates the less obsessed, and somewhat less predictable, comic-humour characters of the play with as much finesse as he secretly manipulates Morose, a true-humour character. The comic-humour character Jack Daw, for instance, is reputed to be a serious scholar capable of teaching Epicoene silence, but he is actually true to his name, as True-Wit immediately perceives: "The onely talking sir i' th' towne" who "pretends onely to learning." In a two-fold, manipulative plot (IV.v–vi), True-Wit uses his thorough understanding of Daw and Daw's sometime friend, the vain and fatuous Amourous La Foole, to accomplish several ends. True-Wit had previously offered to

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[28]See Snuggs, pp. 114–22; Robert Shenk, "The Habits and Ben Jonson's Humours," *JMRS* 8(1978):115–36.

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demonstrate his cunning (desiring, it appears, to show by implication that his first plot had not been a blunder) by obtaining for Dauphine his wish: the affection of the Ladies Collegiates (IV.i.145-52). He accomplishes this by misleading Daw and La Foole into being so terrified of each other that they allow themselves, while blindfolded, to be humiliated by Dauphine (each believing Dauphine to be the feared "foe") as the ladies look on. By this masterstroke, True-Wit is able to expose the cowardice of these "braveries," to punish them for insulting his friend Dauphine (see IV.iv.162-94), and to fulfill his promise to make the ladies fall in love with this friend, who receives full credit for the scheme. In the denouement of this subsidiary plot, the underlying principle remains unchanged: True-Wit can manipulate the ladies because he accurately assesses their characters—"all their actions are governed by crude opinion" (IV.vi.64-65).

True-Wit's power derives from his perspicacity: All of his many displays of "cunning in the nature of Man"[29] are based on an accurate understanding of his victims, a procedure which mirrors Jonson's own method of wit-craft. "In the difference of wits, I have observ'd; there are many notes: And it is a little Maistry to know them: to discerne, what every nature, every disposition will beare: For before wee sow our land, we should plough it" (Disc., p. 584). Here, Jonson employs wit in the sense of "seat of consciousness or thought, the mind" (OED). He also underscores the wit, or perspicacity, needed to differentiate wits by repeatedly using verbs denoting perception: "observ'd," "know," "discerne." Etymologically and in Jonson's

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[29]Jonson, Discoveries, H&S, 8:565 (hereafter cited as Disc.).

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thinking, wit is closely associated with the concept of keen perception leading to knowledge. The verbal form to wit, to see, hence to know—"wot," the present tense, occurs in *Epicoene* (I.i.8)—is akin to the Old High German *wizzan*, to know, the Latin *videre*, to see, the Greek *eidenai*, to know, and *idein*, to see.

La Foole, we are told, is not one "o' the Wits" precisely because he is unable to discern obvious social conventions: "He will salute a Judge upon the bench, and a Bishop in the pulpit, a Lawyer when hee is pleading at the barre, and a Lady when shee is dauncing in a masque, and put her out" (I.iii.30–33). True folly is an extreme case of social myopia. If True-Wit had really intended to convince a hater of noise with endless speeches, insults, and blasts of a post horn, these inane tactics would represent a folly equal to La Foole's. But in Jonson's view, "Contraries are not mixed" (Disc., p. 563), hence true wit must preclude what Congreve called "its opposite, Folly." Therefore True-Wit's reasoning is sound when he argues that he must have expected Morose's adverse reaction, knowing it would benefit his friend's secret plot: "my genius is never false to me in these things. Shew me, how it could be otherwise" (II.iv.76–77).[30]

This by no means implies that a character is infallible if he possesses a percipient *wit*. The astute Volpone, for instance, makes a fatal error that is caused not by stupidity but by his overweening desire to outfox others, an obsession, or humour, expressed by his name. True-Wit's "blunder," on the other hand, could only be the result of an inability to wit (to see, to know) Morose's conspicuous

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[30]C. S. Lewis, *Studies in Words* (London: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1960; rpt. 1967), p. 90, notes that the Latin word *ingenium*, which means "genius," in the seventeenth century was almost invariably translated as "wit."

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hatred of noise, and such blind folly is contrary to True-Wit's nature. As Congreve, who admired Jonson's "great Mastery," remarked, a character's "Follies should be only such, as Mens Humours may incline 'em to; and not Follies intirely abstracted from both Humour and Nature."

Just as a character's name reflects his underlying ethos, so must his speech: "Language most shewes a man: speake that I may see thee" (Disc., p. 625). Denoting both innate intelligence and verbal ability, the "wit" in True-Wit's name underscores the close link between the two. The frequent gullings in Jonson's drama demonstrate at length that words can deceive, but once their dramatic context is understood it becomes evident that even a character's deceptive words are consistent with his or her nature. Often only when the motive for a character's verbal cunning is properly interpreted can one discern that "There cannot be one colour of the mind; an other of the [verbal] wit" (*Disc*., p. 592). Given the intelligence evident in True-Wit's name and in his behavior throughout the rest of the play, during his first plot he could not have temporarily become a chattering fool blind to Morose's conspicuous humour; he must have had an ulterior motive for his seemingly foolish talk, for "A foole may talke, but a wise man speakes, and out of the observation, knowledge, and use of things" (*Disc*., p. 620). Analogously, his words in defense of his alleged blunder must not violate the decorum of his speech.

The defense of his visit to Morose that True-Wit offers his friends (II.iv.67-84) is now generally assumed to be a face-saving lie similar to Falstaff's when he pretends he had recognized Prince Hal

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at Gadshill. But as Dryden emphasized for the benefit of "some enemies of repartie," there is in fact a vast difference between the verbal wit of a Falstaff and a True-Wit: "there are as different characters in wit as in folly. Neither is all kind of wit proper in the mouth of every ingenious person. A witty coward, and a witty brave, must speak differently. Falstaff and the Liar speak not like Don John in Chances, and Valentine in Wit without Money. And Johnson's Truewit in the Silent Woman, is a character different from all of them. Yet it appears, that this one character of wit was more difficult to the author, than all his images of humour in the play" (p. 140). Dryden here distinctly separated True-Wit—Jonson's "best character of a gentleman" (p. 142)—from "images of humour," whereas he described Falstaff as a composite of wit and many humours (see p. 84). Dryden stresses that there is a spectrum of wit spanning the categories of a "witty coward, and a witty brave," and a true wit. Any of these characters of wit may deceive, and yet they are clearly differentiated by their motivations, which derive from their divergent natures. True-Wit's defense of his visit may appear to be similar to Falstaff's "quick evasions" to hide unflattering truths (Dryden, p. 84), but this cannot be the case: Unlike Falstaff, True-Wit is known to be "a very honest fellow" (I.iii.3). Given Jonsonian character consistency, it is simply not possible that True-Wit would change briefly into a "strange justifier of" himself (II.iv.81).

Jonson's conception of truth is central to an accurate understanding of True-Wit. True-Wit's honesty is not a naive commitment to openness. In Act I, scene iii, Dauphine fears that True-Wit's "franke nature . . . is not for secrets"; but Clerimont

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refutes this claim, telling of stratagems in which True-Wit "has beene well trusted, and discharg'd the trust very truely." Deception is a proper means for a Renaissance gentleman if, as Polonius phrased it, "this bait of falsehood takes this carp of truth." True-Wit's subterfuges are justifiable in that they uncover the true natures of the comic-humour characters and further his friend's plan to recover his inheritance. Moreover, all of these deceptions will become, as we shall see, truly honorable and instructive, for True-Wit and Jonson have a deeper purpose. But to appreciate Jonson's silent intent in The Silent Woman, True-Wit's discourse and character must first be clarified.

V. *True-Wit's Philosophical Discourse*

The moral nature of Jonsonian humour theory, which uses satire to root out eccentricity and affectation, is predicated not on a rigid code but on the classical precept of an ethical mean. While True-Wit's urbane interests extend to mistresses and social frivolities, he insists on a sense of proportion and balance. He does not criticize Clerimont for his sexual preferences though he good-heartedly teases him—Clerimont appears to be bisexual, dividing his time "betweene his mistris abroad, and his engle [catamite] at home" (I.i.24–25). Rather, it is Clerimont's obsession with courtship that True-Wit finds objectionable. Clerimont espouses a life totally dedicated to sexuality—a passion unrestrained by his distaste for "th'adulteries of art." Perhaps his putative distaste for feminine artifice is only an affectation, since he seeks the favors of even the

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Ladies Collegiates, the very ladies he disparages for their overuse of cosmetics. In response to his friend's philosophy, True-Wit advocates a more sensible and varied use of one's time, which he does with a wit that is essentially scholarly yet invigorated by courtly wordplay and paradox.

The conversation of the gallants (I.i) opens with a seeming paradox: True-Wit first entreats the pleasure-loving Clerimont "to thinke, and value every article o' your time," but when asked by his friend, "Why, what should a man doe," True-Wit replies, "Why, nothing: or that, which when 'tis done, is as idle." True-Wit's comments may not be as antithetical as they appear. Before the relatively recent notion of intellectual work, the liberal arts belonged to the realm of leisure (in its Aristotelian sense), for by not producing material benefits, they may seem "idle." Far from being incompatible with or unrelated to a proper use of one's time, leisure is in fact closely linked to "the Christian and Western conception of the contemplative life."[31] It thus appears natural for a "scholar-like" man (Dryden, p. 174) to advocate leisure: the Greek word scholë denotes "leisure, hence employment of leisure, study" (*OED*).

Leisure, it should be noted, is a form of silence, the classical notion of an attitude of mind receptive to the full range of one's possibilities.[32] In his attempt to moderate his friend's exclusive attention to sensual pleasure, True-Wit draws on this classical and Renaissance ideal of a true breadth of interests. At first, he tries to tempt Clerimont into merely diversifying his pleasures, but when

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[31]Josef Pieper, Leisure: *The Basis of Culture*, p. 27.
[32]See Pieper, p. 52.

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Clerimont clings to his desire to leave all else except lovemaking until old age when he and his friends will have "shrunke members," True-Wit earnestly exhorts his friend to make better use of his leisure, urging a judicious balance of the various activities proper for a gentleman, for an obsession with a limiting mode of behavior, such as a humour, is a "common disease" causing us to waste our precious time on "vanitie." The amorous Clerimont, still unconvinced, mocks True-Wit for what he misconstrues, perhaps intentionally, as a purely stoic position. Clerimont's inability or unwillingness to understand the subtlety of his friend's view teaches True-Wit that his natural frankness may not be effective even with gentlemen: "Well, sir. If it will not take, I have learn'd to loose as little of my kindnesse, as I can. I'le doe good to no man against his will."

Compelled to discontinue his ethical reflections, True-Wit instead analyzes the aesthetics involved in Clerimont's dislike of cosmetics. In the famous song "Still to be neat," Clerimont expresses his desire for an unadorned "simplicitie" and rages against "th'adulteries of art. / They strike mine eyes, but not my heart." True-Wit is "clearely, o' the other side: I love a good dressing, before any beautie o' the world." Understanding Clerimont's objections, True-Wit acknowledges the dangers of artifice, examining rather ruthlessly what might be hidden beneath "a good dressing." But he also knows that unadorned nature is not always beautiful, so a woman should care for herself as if she were "a delicate garden," accentuating the good points and correcting or even concealing the bad ones.

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True-Wit argues that secrecy is needed in all the arts. He compares a woman's private use of cosmetics to the final stage in creating Aldgate's statues in London, "the cities Love, and Charitie," which "were painted, and burnish'd" on site while hidden from public view by a "canvas." Whether a woman secluded in her boudoir, a painter hidden by a canvas, or, for that matter, an actor screened by a curtain or a poet sequestered in his study—every artificer should keep his or her method of creation concealed, because "Many things, that seeme foule, i' the doing, doe please, done." The poet Clerimont is finally convinced: "Well said, my True-Wit."

Jonson drew from diverse classical sources when he created True-Wit's philosophical position. One commentator believes that "Truewit's speeches veer away from the [urbane] Ovidian and toward the [stoic] Juvenalian mode," although Jonson was determined to "adopt the views of the former."[33] But as others have pointed out, it seems more probable that Jonson in fact intended True-Wit's method to steer a middle course between these two modes[34] – a path similar to "the golden mean" of Jonson's exemplar, Horace. We have seen that in the classical view true eloquence is a skillful blending of silence and speech. Analogously, Horace held that true art is composed of both Nature and Art. "Often it is asked whether a praiseworthy poem be due to Nature or to art. For my part, I do not see of what avail is either study, when not enriched by Nature's vein, or native wit, if untrained; so truly does each claim the other's aid, and make with it a friendly league."[35] Surely Jonson aspired to this "friendly league" in

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[33]Barish, p. 219.
[34]See, for instance, Kay, pp. 255-257.
[35]Horace, "Ars Poetica," in *Satires, Epistles and Ars Poetica*, p. 485.

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his art: "without Art, Nature can ne're bee perfect; &, without Nature, Art can clayme no being" (*Disc.*, p. 639).

True-Wit's remarks in his discussions with Clerimont form parts of a single discourse in which True-Wit is admonishing his friend "to thinke, and value every article o' your time, esteeme it at the true rate, and give all for't" (I.i.29-31) by artfully balancing and enhancing all the activities appropriate for a Renaissance gentleman. Both True-Wit's aesthetics and ethics make use of a Horatian mean. Like Horace, True-Wit does not let his awareness of the ephemeral nature of time and his distaste for squandering time on "vanitie" lead him into an excessive stoicism. He restricts his desires and yet savors life's pleasures—in moderation. Although his two friends fall victim to the madness of eros and excess, True-Wit governs his actions in accordance with the moderation that he advocates, which reflects Jonson's Horatian belief that "Passions are spirituall Rebels, and raise sedition against the understanding" (*Disc* ., 564). Just as True-Wit's moderate view in the opening colloquy contrasts favorably with Clerimont's extreme position, True-Wit's restraint later in the play makes a significant contrast with the indiscriminate sexual appetites of the other two gallants and the Ladies Collegiates, as well as with the various obsessions of the other characters.

True-Wit's philosophical commitment to moderation is an essential feature of Jonson's portrayal of true intelligence, but it is not the most profound lesson to be learned from this character. True-Wit's behavior in the last few scenes of the play in fact exemplifies the classical and Renaissance association of silence with wisdom. As we shall see, True-Wit's argument for secrecy in the arts sheds light

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on this disguise drama's silent significance. For the moment, it may be noted that his argument draws on Renaissance aesthetics and contemporary ideas on silence. Horace's dictum ut pictura poesis, so central to Renaissance aesthetics, was closely tied to the belief that the sister arts, poetry and painting, were "united through the riddle of speech and silence"; the "aphorism attributed by Plutarch to Simonides to the effect that painting is mute poetry and poetry a speaking picture" was a "catch-phrase rooted in the minds of Renaissance humanists."[36] In *Discoveries*, pp. 609–10, Jonson commented on this aphorism, noting that the visual arts illustrate the eloquence of silence. Consequently, it is quite appropriate that True-Wit employs the image of sculpture—the "cities *Love* and *Charitie*"—being painted while hidden from public view by a canvas, in order to convince the poet Clerimont of the artist's need for secrecy.

The traditions concerning silence are familiar to True-Wit. He refers to Pythagoras and Harpocrates (II.ii.3–4), major figures in the traditional lore on silence, and he appears to have read Plutarch's *Moralia* (I.i.62), which contains "Concerning Talkativeness," an important source for Renaissance ideas on this central topos. One way that the characters of *The Silent Woman* apply these ideas is by using silence as a means of control, as Morose's lording it over Mute illustrates. Dauphine improves on his uncle's instruction (in the art of silent manipulation) by adding secrecy, which enables him to launch his design on his uncle's estate. We have seen that in True-Wit's first plot—the visit he pays Morose and his use of this visit to admonish

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[36]Waddington, "Iconography," pp. 255–56. See also Tuve, pp. 50–60; Yates, pp. 27–29,253.

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Dauphine—True-Wit manipulates both uncle and nephew through his use of secrecy.[37] Since True-Wit has turned the tables on Dauphine, the seeming master manipulator of silence, True-Wit's comment on Daw applies to Dauphine as well: It "falls out often . . . that he that thinkes himselfe the master-wit, is the master-foole" (III.vi.48–49). Conversely, "master True-Wit" (IV.vi.48), who only seems "the master-foole," is truly masterful. This implicit pun on the putative master-fool's actually being masterful is relevant to the denouement of the central plot. At the play's end, Dauphine's unveiling of the silent woman's sexual identity seems to surprise True-Wit, making him once more appear foolish. But this wise fool may again have concealed knowledge of his friend's plot and a reason of his own for his seemingly fortuitous actions.

VI. *The "true Artificer"*

True-Wit's first plot precipitates Morose's marriage to Dauphine's silent woman. His last plot convinces Morose that he cannot obtain a divorce on his own and thereby enables Dauphine to obtain a settlement from his uncle in exchange for the dissolution of this painful marriage. The favorable result of True-Wit's final plot, like that of his first, would seem to occur by chance, for again he appears to lack essential information: He manifests no obvious sign of knowing that Epicoene is actually a young man.

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[37]In "Concerning Talkativeness," *Moralia*, 6:425-29 (esp. p. 427), Plutarch illustrates that reticence can be used to punish, a method True-Wit employs when he withholds from Dauphine his true reason for visiting Morose.

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True-Wit's final manipulative artifice (V.iii) comes at a point when the audience has not been made aware of a compelling motive for the action to continue. Since Dauphine has succeeded in marrying Epicoene to his uncle, True-Wit's scheme to prevent Morose from obtaining a divorce seems superfluous. But this scheme is in fact crucial to Dauphine's final surprise. If the day were to end without the extirpation of all of Morose's hopes for divorce, he would "mount the marriage-bed" (III.v.46) and uncover Dauphine's design by discovering Epicoene's sex. Using a fake lawyer and divine to convince Morose that he cannot obtain a divorce on his own, True-Wit's artifice quickly and effectively forces Morose into negotiating with his hated nephew. Is True-Wit's luck so great that he unwittingly causes his friend's design to succeed? Or could he have already discerned Epicoene's sex and hence again be consciously helping Dauphine?

There is one direct "clue to the real sex of the supposed heroine"—her name (H&S, 10:2). Dauphine, who is an educated man but apparently not a man of great learning, gave the silent woman the recondite name Epicoene. Would not True-Wit, that "scholar-like" man steeped in the classics (see Dryden, pp. 174, 140), be expected to pick up on this clue?

Throughout the play, True-Wit slyly reveals his fundamental nature, which we have seen is the ability to wit the true natures of both gulls and gallants. It is True-Wit's perspicacity that enables him to create effective stratagems. A physical disguise should offer this master of simulation little problem; he has disguised Cutbeard and Otter as a lawyer and a divine and realizes the powerful effect a

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costume can have: "Preferment changes any man" (V.iii.4–5). (Even Dauphine acknowledges that True-Wit has instructed him in the art of illusion; see III.iii.95–96.) In the philosophical conversations, in which he advocates secrecy, True-Wit defends a woman's skillful use of illusion and displays his proficiency in precisely the type of knowledge that would be conducive to penetrating Epicoene's disguise. Apropos of Epicoene's disguise, True-Wit is familiar with the use of wigs: He has related how he left a woman with a wig on backward in ignorance of her ludicrous situation (I.i.138). At the end of the play he may similarly choose to conceal a previous awareness of Epicoene's wig.

True-Wit, we have seen, bases his secret plan in visiting Morose not only on his knowledge of Morose's conspicuous hatred of noise but also on his understanding of Dauphine's character. He sees through his friend's pretense of relinquishing all financial interest in his uncle's estate, realizing Dauphine is determined to inherit this estate. Surely True-Wit would also find it suspicious that Dauphine, who has long expected to be sole heir to Morose's fortune, is now satisfied merely to hope for "very ample conditions" from Epicoene (II.iv.44). If Epicoene were a woman, her marriage would give her an indisputable claim on Morose's fortune. Dauphine's alleged arrangement with the silent woman would be difficult, if not impossible, to sustain in a court of law; after all, it is based on fraud, its sole purpose being to deceive Morose. Hence, Dauphine would be quite uncertain of receiving even a portion of his inheritance if Epicoene were not a man. True-Wit can infer that Epicoene must be a

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man, for otherwise it would not have been in Dauphine's best interests to have arranged his uncle's marriage in the first place.

While not spoiling Dauphine's surprise ending, True-Wit's verbal wit clearly indicates his knowledge of Epicoene's gender before it becomes manifest. His knowledge is demonstrated by his prediction that Epicoene shall "make rare sport with Daw, ere night" (III.vi.46), which proves true when Epicoene's true sex is revealed; as True-Wit now quips, when Daw swore he had carnal knowledge of Epicoene he was "lying on her, though not with her!" Moreover, True-Wit observes that the Ladies Collegiates make their preferences known "with most masculine, or rather hermaphroditicall authoritie" (I.i.79–80), correcting himself because they are not truly "masculine" but, more precisely, "hermaphroditicall"; the silent woman's speech, on the other hand, is simply her "masculine, and lowd commanding" (IV.i.9–10), an unqualified description implying that True-Wit realizes Epicoene is not merely "hermaphroditicall " but literally "masculine." Also, by counseling the stubborn man not to "mount the marriage-bed, like a towne-bul, or a mountaine-goate; but stay the due season" (III.v.46–47), True-Wit helps to prevent Morose from prematurely discovering his bride's sex and ruining Dauphine's scheme: True-Wit's words further Dauphine's secret plan and therefore reflect an awareness of his design. At the play's end, True-Wit understandably refrains from claiming credit for intentionally aiding Dauphine, for he does not wish to be denounced again as a "strange justifier" of himself. But unlike Clerimont, who gasps, "A boy!" True-Wit shows no sign of true surprise at the removal of Epicoene's wig and instead launches the play's closing speech with a

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grace more telling than his generous praise for both the secretive Dauphine and the rather inept Clerimont.

True-Wit's functions—spokesman for the author in the philosophical colloquies, commentator on the other characters, covert expediter of the action—tend to "lift" him out of the society of the play.[38] In the play's final speech, when True-Wit metes out justice to the fools, he is acting as a moral commentator and thus an intermediary between the spectators and the characters, a role confirmed by his direct address to the common "Spectators" in his final words. And by stressing in his concluding speech the continuing need for "secrecie" and "silence" even after the final curtain, True-Wit slyly indicates that he has also served as the vehicle for indirect communication between author and perceptive auditor throughout the play.

The motivation of True-Wit, "the best character of a gentleman which Ben Johnson ever made" (Dryden, p. 142), is the assistance, guidance, and education of Dauphine. It can therefore be argued that in the "Examen of the Silent Woman," Dryden was essentially correct in noting that the "action of the play is entirely one; the end or aim of which is the settling [of] Morose's estate on Dauphine" (p. 83). Dryden, however, was not enamored of the dramatic unities, which he knew were merely "mechanic" devices, not the "living beauties of a play" (pp. 212, xlix).[39] He believed, rather, "The first rule . . . in all Dramatic Poetry is to make the moral of the work" (p. 213).

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[38]See Duncan, p. 178; Kay, p. 257; Jonas Barish, *Ben Jonson and the Language of Prose* Comedy, pp. 175-76.

[39]See Ker, ed. *Essays of John Dryden*, pp. xix-xlix; Cedric Reverand, "Dryden's 'Essay of Dramatick Poesie': The Poet and the World of Affairs," *SEL* 22 (1982): 392.

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Therefore, his encomium of Epicoene was not likely to have been based on the unedifying story of a man who tricks his uncle into naming him heir, no matter how unified the "action of the play" may be. In fact it is not the surface "action" but "the intrigue of it" that Dryden judged "the greatest and most noble of any pure unmixed comedy in any language" (p. 83). If Jonson has indeed asked the "cunning palates" of his audience to become literary sleuths, their search for this intrigue's moral significance could serve as a prototype of modern dramatic criticism, which can be viewed as a detective activity. This would help to explain why Dryden embedded the "Examen of the *Silent Woman* " in the "Essay of Dramatic Poesy," the first major piece of dramatic criticism in English.[40]

Unlike Shakespeare's sole surprise ending—in *The Winter's Tale*, which was first performed a year after *Epicoene*—Jonson's ending, the exposure of Epicoene's sex, strikes us as sordid and leaves us feeling unsatisfied with Jonson's story. In True-Wit's closing speech, however, lies Jonson's deeper meaning, and here the truth is concealed from the common viewer at the same time that it is revealed to the more insightful members of the audience. We have noted that True-Wit defends an artist's right to secrecy by observing that the statues of London's "*Love* and *Charitie*" were hidden by a "canvas" as they were being finished. If he has discerned Epicoene's true sex and has thus intentionally expedited Dauphine's plan, then his compliment to Dauphine for having "lurch'd your friends of the better halfe of the garland, by concealing this part of the plot," is actually a noble lie in that it is a covert means to a moral truth: his

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[40]On Dryden's use of secretive methods in the "Essay," see Reverand, p. 384.

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"*Love* and *Charitie*" for his friend. In this way, True-Wit's noble generosity is concealed from Jonson's common "guests" at the same time that it is revealed to the "cunning palates" of the audience. Appropriately, True-Wit is an image of the "true Artificer"—the last and only true wit in Jonson's ten notes "On the difference of wits"—for like a true artificer, he carries his art "as none but Artificers perceive it . . . [others may be] received, or preferr'd before him. He gratulates them and their fortune" (*Disc.*, p. 587). *The Silent Woman*—whose first prologue begins "Truth says," and which may well end with this silent truth of "Love and Charitie"—can be viewed as the odyssey of a man originally of a "franke nature," who searches for more refined ways of expressing the truth until he finally arrives at a graceful humility.

True-Wit's first artifice and final speech illustrate Jonson's use of two major means of indirect communication sanctioned by classical and Renaissance, philosophic and rhetorical traditions: the intentional blunder and the noble lie.[41] During his seeming blunder, the reasons True-Wit gives Morose for not marrying are valid when applied to Morose. Although his manner is intentionally offensive and though the paradoxical form of his argument is deliberately and patently specious, his grim predictions about Morose's marriage prove true, as the recluse painfully learns once his silent bride turns into a talkative and strong-willed wife. True-Wit thus deceives Morose by telling the truth—the same paradoxical trick that occurs in Terence's *Heautontimorumenos*, Chapman's *All Fools* (which is based on Terence's play), and Congreve's *Double Dealer*. Conversely, in the

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[41]See Leo Strauss, *Persecution and the Art of Writing*, pp. 30, 35-37.

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final scene of *Epicoene* when True-Wit humbly denies his knowledge of Dauphine's plot and gracefully awards his friend "the garland," he expresses a moral truth—humility and charity—through the deception of this noble lie. Jonson may have intended both of these artful means—the exaggerated and falsely argued, factual truth that creates a misleading illusion and the noble lie that secretly expresses a noble truth—as complementary metaphors for true art. Realizing that in order "to profit" us morally the poet must steep himself in falsehood, Jonson arrives at a fuller acceptance of the "false" nature of art. As he alerted us in the second prologue, "Poet never credit gained / By writing truths, but things (like truths) well fain'd"—the end or aim of which is the wisdom only true art can impart.

Jonson is often praised for his mastery of dramatic structure and for his moral vision. In *Volpone*, which preceded *Epicoene*, Jonson created a moral drama of an arch deceiver whose sinister motives inexorably bring on his own defeat. In *Epicoene*, if True-Wit's crucial aid to Dauphine were not intentional, if the favorable outcomes of his first and last manipulative artifices were fortuitous, then the central plot would succeed by mere fortune and this play would be an unedifying farce. But in fact, as True-Wit says, "Fortune had not a finger in 't." Actually, Jonson did not momentarily abandon his ethical purpose when he wrote this play. Like *Volpone*, *Epicoene* is a moral drama of a man who can "play the artificer" (*Volpone*, V.ii.111) but, unlike Volpone, True-Wit is the portrait of "a good man" (*Disc.*, p. 563) able to control the action secretly through his knowledge that any event "is in his reason what hee accounts it, and will make it." True-Wit foresees "as well as the starres themselves"

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what "must necessarily in nature fall out" (II.iv.84,75) and does so not through astrology or witchcraft but through a wit-craft that can make a man the master of his own fate. In True-Wit, Jonson has created the enigmatic figure of a moral guide, a masterly culmination of the projections of Jonson's persona in the early comedies: a "true Artificer" who is fluent in all the courtly graces while avoiding all the courtly pretensions.[42] It can in fact be argued that to deny True-Wit's skill and virtue is simply to ignore the ineluctable implications of the metaphorical name True-Wit. To dispute that Jonson's "best character of a gentleman" (Dryden, p. 142) should in the end exemplify charity and courtesy is not to take seriously the moral values Jonson clearly held and took great pains to communicate.

Epicoene's radical use of illusion in rendering sexual identity and moral truth conceals important elements of the intrigue of this bold experiment, which violates the conventions of popular theater by placing the audience on the same level of ignorance as the characters. The dramatic relevance of Epicoene's name does not become apparent until his unveiling at the play's end, an unveiling that sheds light on much of the previous action. The "cunning palates" of the audience are asked to complete this process of revelation on their own by discerning that True-Wit is able to *wit* the truth behind appearances. It is quite fitting that the wisdom of True-Wit is imparted silently, for the tradition on which this play draws teaches that truth is silence. The "noble" intrigue that Dryden found in *The Silent Woman* is in this sense a silent one, and, paradoxically,

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[42]On Jonson's earlier "self projections," see, for instance, George Parfitt, *Ben Jonson: Public Poet and Private Man*, pp. 36–64. On True-Wit as courtier, see Kay, p. 261.

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this eloquent comedy can be considered a "dumbe peece," as Jonson himself asserts in the dedicatory epistle. Early on, True-Wit is maligned for his fortuitous blunder, which is actually a covert masterstroke, and at the play's end he graciously employs a noble lie as a silent means to the truths of "Love and Charitie "—a moral outcome that would have served Jonson well as an august response to his detractors.[43] It need surprise no one that True-Wit—according to Dryden, Jonson's "masterpiece" (p. 174)—was used as a model for many characters in later English comedy.[44] The true wit, grace, and virtue of this intriguing figure may well entitle him to the distinction of being the most impressive and complex of Jonson's comic creations. Indeed, the silent intrigue of True-Wit provides an ethical and aesthetic basis for the preeminent critical reputation that *The Silent Woman* enjoyed in its own century. This deceptive comedy, which brilliantly exploits and covertly defends art's "well fain'd" illusions, merits a serious reconsideration of our assessment of its rightful status in the Jonson canon and a reexamination of its relevance to our understanding of its truly witty author.

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[43]A somewhat similar use of silence occurs in the Apologeticall Dialogue appended to *Poetaster*. Here, Jonson's silence—his refusal at the end of the "war of the theatres" to respond to his detractors directly—represents his decision to sit subsequently above the battle.

[44]See Barish, *Prose Comedy*, p. 185.

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Chapter 3

"MODERNE HAPPINESSE": INTIMACY IN BEN JONSON'S OEUVRE

I. *Introductory*

A major premise of this project is that one can get a handle on the changing configurations of society and selfhood by examining historical variations in modes of secrecy, which I take to include all modes of social dissociation. That the early modern period underwent a reconfiguration of social formations of secrecy is essential to remember as one attempts to understand and evaluate a writer such as Ben Jonson, for he was affected both by older modes of dissociation -- for example, the classical and Renaissance tradition concerning *silence* -- and by their transmutation into modern ones such as individual privacy. In the last chapter we have seen that Jonson drew on the tradition that associated silence with wisdom when he created a dramatic figure of *true wit* that would only be fully visible to "cunning palates." Jonson thereby placed both *wit* (or creative intelligence) and *silence* -- which implies not only wisdom, but also obscurity and thus the capacity to create illusions -- at the center of his representative deep self. In drawing so extensively on the tradition of silence, however, the deep self that Jonson placed on stage was radically obscured. This hidden self was thus not as openly -- and paradoxically -- dramatized as the one that Shakespeare presented in a figure such as Hamlet. While Jonson stressed reason

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more than Shakespeare in his construction of psychological depth, both emphasized an ingenuity that entails a profound involvement in and use of deception.

In this chapter we shall examine how the shifting cultural configurations of secrecy and openness are reflected in Jonson's representations of intimacy in gender relationships. Despite Jonson's anti-theatrical tendency, one also finds in his work an increasingly conscious celebration of various uses of illusion and of their relation to his own art. This is manifested in his surprising appreciation of the cosmetic artifice of women and actors, and of the imaginative agency of tricksters. Jonson's growing interest in the "cosmetic" arts and their relation to his own craft sheds light on his often misunderstood attitude toward women. Specifically, we shall see that a critique of marriage, that is, his misogamy, has often been mistaken for misogyny, largely because of a misunderstanding of his satiric method. A crucial element in comprehending Jonson's attitude concerning both sexual mores and the uses of illusion is his resistance to the austere social practices of bourgeois Puritanism. This Renaissance intellectual, who was so influenced by pagan writers, came to reject the Puritans' development of the Christian view of subjectivity that was dominant during the middle ages, and also their rigorous enforcement of sexual and gender codes. He forwarded instead not only his secular paradigm of selfhood in *True-Wit*, but also a vision of sexual freedom that competed with the restrictive modes of intimacy put forth by Puritanism. It will be helpful to first discuss current approaches to these issues before we examine them in detail.

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Like Plutarch, who we have seen in the last chapter treated both speech and silence as complementary aspects of a single system, Michel Foucault understood that

> Silence itself -- the things one declines to say, or is forbidden to name, the discretion that is required between different speakers -- is less the absolute limit of discourse, the other side from which it is separated by a strict boundary, than an element that functions alongside the things said, with them and in relation to them within over-all strategies.[1]

The "repressive hypothesis," Foucault argues, is mistaken: "modern societies" have not "consigned sex to a shadow existence, but [instead] dedicated themselves to speaking of it *ad infinitum*, while exploiting it as *the* secret."[2] An older *ars erotica* has not so much been repressed but rather has been transformed into a voluble *scientia sexualis*, which exploits the energy of taboos. One may accept either the repressive hypothesis or Foucault's thesis, but in either case it is true that the treatment of sex as "*the* secret" was part of an epochal shift -- of which bourgeois Puritans were the vanguard in England (more on this below). Foucault's claim may, one would hope, initiate a discourse that will reconcile two apparently conflicting notions: Georg Simmel's assertion that after the middle ages "general

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[1]Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, 1:27.
[2]Foucault, p. 35.

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affairs became ever more public, and individual affairs ever more secret"[3] and the recognition that, as Charles Taylor put it, "the expressivist idea of articulating our inner nature"[4] developed greatly in the early modern era, and perhaps reached its culmination in the Romantic period. Our sexual character, like all aspects of our "inner nature," has undergone a radical articulation even though it has at the same time become "ever more secret." Indeed, in our post-enlightenment society openness is touted as a pure virtue, and yet modern Western society constructs its articulated individuals as bastions of secrecy.

Sexuality and individual subjectivity have become what we think of as the most secret parts of ourselves -- the zones of our nature that are most resistant to the scientific method that was developed in the early modern period to read the secrets of the "book of nature." The self, we have noted in chapter one, was not always seen as the depository of our innermost secrets, for it was previously thought of as a conduit to other entities: ideal forms for Plato, God for Augustine. In the early modern period, however, when one looked within one began to see a finite limit, a human self that might be an end in itself, rather than a way to an ideal realm or God. Within this finite limit of the self the "secret" now began to reside -- and eventually there arose the Cartesian "walled" ego as well as the modern, more rigorous codes of sexual and bodily privacy.[5]

The "secret" essences that each culture conceives as the building blocks of understanding differ. As the social structures of

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[3]Simmel, "Secrecy" in *The Sociology of Georg Simmel*, p. 336.
[4]Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, p. 389.
[5]See Norbert Elias, *The Civilizing Process: The History of Manners.*

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secrecy shift, not only are the modes of association and dissociation realigned, but the conceptual tools by which we make sense of the social and physical environment are also refashioned. Homo- and heterosexuality, intimacy within (nuclear) families, monogamy (now "serial"), as well as autonomous subjectivity are part of the "language games" that modern society employs to negotiate current "forms of life" -- to use Wittgenstein's terms.[6] Previous societies conceptualized intimacy and mentality by using different language games with different vocabularies or differently inflected versions of the terms that have remained. Not only are *homo-* and *heterosexuality* nineteenth century coinages, as is well known, but the meaning of other key words and notions have also changed in important ways. *Concubinage* and *clandestine marriage* eventually disappeared and some of their functions were partly taken over by *common law marriage*, while *adultery* -- which originally applied only to a man who successfully coveted his neighbor's wife, but not to husbands who had intercourse with nonmarried women -- eventually acquired a much modified, gender-neutral denotation. Notions of subjectivity and the source of agency transmuted into more secular and autonomous modes, as *soul* and *spirit* were displaced first by *wit* and then *mind*.

While a historical sense is essential, we should not forget that we are nonetheless the product of the past. New Historicists have stressed through the use of distancing anecdotes that we should not assume that human "nature" of the past is essentially the same as

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[6]See Wittgenstein, *The Philosophical Investigations*. The key term "forms of life" has been widely misunderstood; see chapter 1.

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that of the present -- that is, we should not attempt to read our own preconceptions into the belief systems of the past. On the other hand, the structuralist and post-structuralist project, of which new historicism may be considered a part, has, as Eve Sedgwick has argued, a "difficulty in dealing with the diachronic"; it tends to overemphasize the synchronic, at times seeing each era as a separate "episteme" relatively unrelated to previous and subsequent ones.[7] In "Fiction and Friction," for instance, Stephen Greenblatt argues that the Renaissance had a more fluid view of sexuality, a thesis that I shall support, but he does so by stressing the exoticism of the contemporary biological theory that "there are not two radically different sexual structures but only one -- outward and visible in the man, inverted and hidden in the woman."[8] Greenblatt's implicit assumption of a strong linkage between biological theories of sex and cultural notions of gender is not borne out by a diachronic perspective. As Thomas Laqueur remarks, these "Galenic isomorphisms of male and female organs were by the 1850's rearticulated at the embryological level as homologues: the penis and the clitoris, the labia and scrotum, the ovary and the testes, scientists discovered, shared common origins in fetal life"[9] -- and yet rigid Victorian attitudes toward gender were not much affected by this discovery.

Although Greenblatt was familiar with Laqueur's "important" work, he ignored his conclusion that "no historically given set of facts

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[7]Sedgwick, *Between Men*, p. 13; Foucault develops a theory of "epistemes" in *The Order of Things*, but moves away from such an approach in his latter work. Cf. chapter 1.
[8]Greenblatt, "Fiction and Friction," *Shakespearean Negotiations*, p. 77.
[9]Thomas Laqueur, *Making Sex*, p. 10.

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about 'sex' entailed how sexual difference was in fact understood and represented at the time."[10] Rather than emphasize historical divergence, one could as easily stress the similarities between, say, the Renaissance notion that the presence of sufficient "heat" is all that is needed to create the genitals of a male, who would otherwise be a female, and the discovery in the 1950's that it is only the presence of a Y chromosome that causes a human embryo, which would otherwise have become a female, to develop into a male. Our polarized popular notions reflected in the phrase "the *opposite* sex" in fact conflict with current biology that, like Renaissance theory, asserts that males share in a "female" genetic inheritance -- for both sexes have at least one X chromosome.[11]

My critical approach, then, attempts to avoid not only the older habit of reading our own beliefs into the minds of the inhabitants of earlier epochs, but also the more recent tendency to see the past as populated by alien "others" that are totally different than our *selves*. Moreover, while the New Historicism has made advances in the interdisciplinary approach to culture, it has not always combined such an approach with a sufficiently sophisticated view of literary works and their creators. Ben Jonson is an important case in point. The progress that has been made in appreciating Jonson free from distorting comparisons to Shakespeare[12] is now in danger of being rolled back in the process of relating his work to large cultural

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[10]Greenblatt, p. 180 n. 20. Laqueur, p. 19 (Greenblatt is cited in the preface, p. ix).

[11]An embryo that is, for instance, genotypically XY or "male" may use the information on its X chromosome to become a female if there is a problem with the functioning of the Y chromosome. See R. H. F. Hunter, *Sex Determination, Differentiation, and Intersexuality in Placental Mammals.*

[12]See Jonas Barish's introduction to *Ben Jonson: A Collection of Critical Essays.*

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movements. We can, indeed, we must have it both ways. A criticism that does not underestimate cultural change and the effects it has on the social construction of selfhood can be intelligently combined with one that does not slight the complexities of easily misunderstood figures such as Jonson.

II. *Cosmetics and Gender-Crossings*

There are a number of reasons why serious misunderstandings have arisen concerning Jonson's attitude toward questions of gender. That early modern modes of conceiving intimacy differ from our own has not been sufficiently appreciated, the satiric nature of Jonson's dramatic method is often not taken into account, and gender critics have not looked at a wide spectrum of his work and at the relevant details from his life nor have they sufficiently comprehended the changes that occurred in his art and attitudes. We shall see that Jonson became more tolerant in a number of important ways, and that his moral principles eventually became tempered by his growing self-understanding. The shedding of light on the oversimplifications of recent evaluations of Jonson is intended not to allow a naive phallocentric criticism to return but to pave the way for a more accurate and powerful analysis of the historical roots of modern patriarchal society.

Modes of intimacy have varied significantly over the ages. Drawing on both Christian and classical traditions and molded by such economic and social factors as premodern inheritance laws, the

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structure of feeling in the early modern period was no doubt quite complex, which may help explain the heated debate by recent critics on the nature and the very existence of early modern intimacy.[13] In classical Greece while it is true that a man may have enjoyed an affectionate relationship with his wife, this would not exhaust the possibilities that were legally open to him. He may, for instance, simultaneously have had intimate relationships with his concubine as well as with a courtesan. Rather than relations with women, however, the one a man may have shared with a boy appears to have often merited "the most active focus of reflection and elaboration."[14] Such relationships, which could be erotic, would ideally turn into close friendships that for the most part seemed not to have been sexual. Only in future eras did the focus shift to relations with women and the theme of desire. Perhaps as K. J. Dover has observed, the "Greeks neither inherited nor developed a belief that a divine power had revealed to mankind a code of laws for the regulation of sexual behavior."[15] They instead often stressed keeping to a mean and avoiding excesses of desire, whatever the mode. Although with the coming of Christianity codes of behavior became important (we must, however, be careful not to mistake codes for actual modes of behavior -- as we shall see), sexuality was still not as reified as it now is. That the words "homosexuality" and "heterosexuality" were not coined until the nineteenth century

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[13]See, for instance, Lawrence Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England, 1500-1800*; see also *Emotion and Social Change*, ed. Carol and Peter Stearns. More on this in section IV below.

[14]Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, 2:253.

[15]K. J. Dover, *Greek Homosexuality*, p. 203; quoted by Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, 2:252.

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suggests that previous eras may have had a more fluid view of sexuality that did not categorize people as we now do. A man may have had relations with a boy, but this did not necessarily mean he had an essentially different nature than other people.[16]

In *Epicoene* Jonson's beliefs seem to be influenced by classical and early modern modes of thought that by now have mostly died out. The play opens, significantly, with Clerimont, one of the three gallants at home with his "ingle" -- the boy with whom Clerimont seems to have a relation of the type that we have seen was so important in ancient Greece. This relationship is as much cultural as erotic: the boy sings Clerimont's song, and we may suppose that he is educated by the gallant. Indeed, in certain respects their relationship may have resembled the one between Jonson and Nathan Field, who Jonson told Drummond was "his Schollar & he had read to him the Satyres of Horace & some Epigrammes of Martiall."[17] This is not to say that Field was Jonson's "ingle," but in the early modern mind these two relationships nonetheless may have shared important similarities, since types of desire and friendship were not categorized as rigidly as they are now. When True-Wit enters, he does not castigate his friend Clerimont for his particular actions, but for his excess -- for the fact that he does not take his pleasures in moderation. It is not the particular modes of desire that are censured, but the inability to find and keep to a mean between extremes.[18] What seems to have confused many critics of the play is

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[16]Eve Sedgwick's discussion in *Between Men* of the homosocial is helpful in understanding the more fluid view of sexuality in the Renaissance.
[17]H&S,1:137; cf. David Riggs, *Ben Jonson: A Life*, pp. 207-8.
[18]See my discussion of this in the previous chapter.

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our distance from such classical structures of intimacy, which were also vital in the Renaissance to a significant extent. As Steve Brown has observed, "there is nothing morally repugnant or even very peculiar about an epicene noun: they do occur, and sometimes 'boys' will be 'girls' and 'girls' 'boys.' It may be just in this genial spirit that the comedy is set forth."[19]

The use of current standards to judge questions of sexuality in past eras is fraught with serious difficulties. Modes of intimacy vary, as is suggested by Shakespeare's sonnets, which catalog forms of "love" both commonplace and unfamiliar to us. Charges that Jonson was "homophobic"[20] seem, therefore, to be not only unsupported -- for as Brown shows, Jonson seems quite tolerant -- but also somewhat anachronistic, since the culture did not reify homosexuality and thus it was not as susceptible to attack. Particular actions were, it is true, proscribed by the post-Classical Christian codification of morals, but there was nonetheless much less of a tendency to place those who committed such acts into a separate category of persons. We must differentiate between codes and actual prosecution, for in early times, as now, laws are "unenforced because we want to continue our conduct, and unrepealed because we want to preserve our morals."[21] While before the Reformation it is true that there was "vastly increased volume of municipal law dealing with homosexual behavior," in London, "court records, however, show

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[19]Steve Brown, "The Boyhood of Shakespeare's Heroines: Notes on Gender Ambiguity in the Sixteenth Century," p. 258.

[20]See Phyllis Rackin, "Androgyny, Mimesis, and the Marriage of the Boy Heroine on the English Renaissance Stage," p. 35.

[21]Ralph Slovenko, "Sex Mores and the Enforcement of the Law of Sex Crimes: A Study of the Status Quo," Kansas Law Review 15 (1967): 271; quoted in James Brundage, *Law, Sex and Christian Society in Medieval Europe*, p. 611.

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a surprisingly low incidence of sodomy charges: out of 21,000 defendants recorded between 1470 and 1516, only one was charged with sodomy, and he was excommunicated merely for non appearance."[22]

A fascinating illustration of the divergence between early modern mores and law is the case of Nicholas Udall, the headmaster of Eton College and playwright-master of a company of boy players. In 1541 "Nycolas Uvedale scoolem[aste]r of Eton" was "sent for" by the Privy Council " as suspect ... of a robbery lately comitted at Eton by Thomas Cheney John Horde scolers of the sayd scole and Gregory s[e]rv^{a}nt to the sayd scolem[aste]r, and having certain interrogatoryes ministed unto hym toching sayd fact [and] other felonious trespasses wherof he was suspected, did confesse that [Udall] did comitt buggery w^{t} the sayd Cheney sundry tymes."[23] Udall was convicted under a recent secular law for the "Vice of Buggery," but though the crime was punishable by hanging, he nonetheless went on to found English comedy and to be appointed headmaster of the Westminster School. As Brown notes, despite Udall's flagrant sexual behavior with his boys and his savage beatings, there was "a prevailing indifference both to buggery and to boys."[24] Given such attitudes, it is not too surprising that Jonson was openly tolerant of the "crime" and "sin" of "buggery," as the remark about Clerimont's "ingle" suggests. Moreover, we should reexamine our preconceptions about this writer who many still naively think of

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[22]Brundage, p. 533. Brundage cites Wunderli, *London Church Courts*, pp. 83-84.
[23]*Proceedings and Ordinances of the Privy Council of England*, ed. Harris Nicolas, 7:153.
[24]Brown, p. 248.

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as a strict moralist. In particular, I will question the prevalent view of Jonson's attitudes toward cosmetics, women, and adultery.

Jonson took a strong interest in the production of his plays; he drew attention to this when the "stage-keeper" who begins the Induction of *Bartholomew Fayre* remarks: "I am looking, lest the poet hear me, or his man Master Brome, behind the arras" (ll. 7-8). Like Nathan Field, Richard Brome was first in a subservient position to Jonson, and later went on to become a man of the theater. Field became one of "the most celebrated players"[25] and Brome a playwright and imitator of his former master.[26] Jonson appears to have immersed himself in every aspect of performance and took a keen interest in the welfare of the children who acted in his plays.[27] The boy actors who played women clearly became masters in the art of appearing to be alluring woman. The opportunity to observe the boys behind the scene may well have affected Jonson's attitude toward cosmetics, which appears to have shifted significantly from a stoic disdain to an appreciation of the artistry often involved. By the time Jonson wrote *Epicoene* he clearly came to appreciate such artistry, since in True-Wit's philosophical discourses he associates it with his own art.

Epicoene does indeed contain elements of a satire on cosmetics that some feminists have decried, but alongside such satire there is an appreciative discourse on feminine artistry that critics have had trouble accepting, probably because of their stoic image of Jonson. It is somewhat understandable that Jonson's new-found respect for the

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[25]Riggs, *Ben Jonson*, p. 208.
[26]See E. A. Horsman, ed. *Bartholomew Fair*, p. 6n.
[27]See Riggs, p. 92.

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feminine arts has gone relatively unremarked, since it is put forth by the veiled hero "master True-Wit" (IV.vi.48), who seems at times the "master-fool" until we discover his true nature as the play's "master-wit" (III.vi.48–49). Critics have noted how Jonson's attitude became more courtly as his career progressed and he became a frequenter of courtly circles. But the change was more profound in that he came to realize that his stoic disdain for the "unnatural" was incompatible with his proclivity for cunning artistry. Not only did he become conscious of his own conflicted feelings, but he also began to work them out in this play, which begins with a debate on stoicism and courtliness. Clerimont puts forth the stoic case in the famous song "Still to be neat," but True-Wit answers it and indeed convinces his friend that the secretive art of adornment practiced by women is basically of the same type as the one employed by artists and artisans. As we have seen in the last chapter, True-Wit notes that a woman's desire for secrecy is as defensible as was hanging a "canvas ... afore Aldgate" when the statues of "Love and Charity" were adorned. Jonson's point, then, is not that a natural beauty is better than an adorned one, but that artistry can, when employed discreetly and tastefully, increase the total aggregate of beauty, so to speak. In fashioning the role for an epicene boy actor to first turn into a woman and then back into a boy, the playwright participates in the art of cosmetics himself. *Cosmetic* (or visual) ornament was in fact traditionally associated with rhetorical ornament, which came to include "all figures of speech and all tropes," and is by its very

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etymology linked to an artist's creation of (macro- or micro-*cosmic*) images of *order*.[28]

While Jonson had stoic leanings, the extremely austere position with which critics try to saddle him is instead that of his antagonists: the Puritans who attacked the theater. Jonson was, of course, a conscious artist and proud of his artistry. From his point of view the Puritan attack on the theater is clearly absurd for it contradicts what may be called the pleasure principle of art, the aim of which is -- according to the Horatian doctrine that he expressly made his own -- "to profit and delight." Both his celebration of this principle and his answer to the Puritan attack on the theater are, perhaps, most evident in his last major comedy, *Bartholomew Fayre*. In this play the rebuttal by the puppets of Bussy's attack on the theatrical use of cross-dressing clearly shows Jonson's antagonism to the Puritan point of view, and yet it has nevertheless been interpreted as a strategy to abolish sexual ambiguity. When the puppets lift up their garments to show that there is "neyther Male nor Female amongst us" (5.5.104-5), Jonson may not be avoiding "the dangerous duplicity between sex and gender" as Phyllis Rackin asserts,[29] for this is precisely what the Puritans attempted by their use of the biblical injunction against transvestitism. Instead, he seems to be emphasizing the common ground between the sexes, the human qualities they share such as language, reason, and imagination, which make both men and women specifically human. Such qualities that are shared by the sexes are what enabled the boy actors to portray women convincingly. That

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[28]See Angus Fletcher, "The Cosmic Image," *Allegory*; the quotation is from p. 128.
[29]Rackin, p. 36.

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such portrayals were not mere conventions but actually compelling mimetic representations must be the case, for otherwise the ending of *Epicoene* would not have been a surprise to the first audience.

Rather than attempting to avoid the "dangerous duplicity between sex and gender" in *Epicoene*, Jonson actually revels in gender ambiguity. Indeed, Edward Partridge's classic essay on the allusiveness of the play demonstrates that all characters manifest characteristics of both sexes.[30] This includes even Dauphine, whom Douglas Lanier mistakenly touts as the representation of "masculine silence."[31] Dauphine is, the ladies remark, "judicial in his clothes," though he is "not so superlatively neat as some. . . . That weare purer linnen than our selves, and professe more neatness than the *french hermaphrodite!*" (4.6.26-31). Partridge correctly notes that this implies that Dauphine has some qualities associated with femininity. He incorrectly assumes, however, that the play rebukes Dauphine for violating a norm. Given that Dauphine earns "halfe of the garland" (5.4.225) in this drama, the feminine qualities that he possesses are quite acceptable from the play's perspective. Moreover, an emphasis on *norms* is, as Brown has argued, somewhat anachronistic, for the word and concept did not come into being until the nineteenth century. This accounts somewhat for Partridge's difficulty in finding any norms in the play, for no single mode of behavior is privileged. Rather than advancing a unified normative paradigm, Jonson's humour comedy is a negative method that satirizes "unbalanced temperaments." Moreover, after *Volpone* this satiric method losses

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[30]Partridge, "Epicene."
[31]Lanier, "Masculine Silence: *Epicoene* and Jonsonian Stylistics."

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its moralistic cast (more on this below). Although it continues to satirize "enormities" -- as Over-Doo, the jovial figure of the satirist in *Bartholomew Fayre*, puts it -- Jonsonian humour theory increasingly becomes a tolerant and comprehensive approach to human nature.

The boy actor represents an important site where gender modes are extremely fluid. Clerimont's boy, for instance, is dressed by the Ladies as a woman, and when he resists is called "innocent" (1.1.18). In this society to "be sophisticated (as opposed to innocent) apparently means to be quadri-sexual: a man to both men and women, and a women to both women and men."[32] While *The Silent Woman* no doubt pokes good-humored fun at those who cross gender boundaries, the claim that Jonson is attempting to create an impenetrable wall between the sexes is simply not born out by the play. Indeed, the play offers a refutation of the rigid assignment of separate and non-overlapping qualities to each sex as is entailed in such current notions as "masculine silence." The popular tradition of assigning silence solely to women is hilariously satirized when John Daw, one of the play's two fools, asserts that: "Silence in woman, is like speech in man,/ Deny't who can." Dauphine responds, "Not I, beleeue it," a double-entendre that is meant to trick Daw into thinking that he agrees while signaling to all others his disbelief of such a proposition. Dauphine, it is often noted, is a master of silence (as is True-Wit), which vitiates Daw's simplistic reduction. Moreover, the play makes clear that in the early modern world a perfectly silent women was considered an impossibility that only a total fool or a blind gull can fail to recognize. Such a "prodigy" is desirable only to

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[32]Partridge, p. 127.

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a deeply *humourous* character, a fact that forms the basis of True-Wit's use of reverse psychology on Morose, as we have seen in the last chapter.

Just as a man must use both speech and silence, so must a woman, and thus Morose's demand for a perfectly silent wife is, True-Wit notes, "vn-conscionable" (4.4.46). The popular and simplistic equation "silence = virtue in woman," which Lisa Jardine, for instance, thinks is supported by the play,[33] is in fact expressly denied. Important qualities are not segregated but are possessed by both sexes in the same basic way, and this is pointed out by having the foolish Daw assert the opposite:

> Nor, is't a tale,
> That female vice should be a vertue male,
> Or masculine vice, a female vertue be.

In fact rather than such oppositions, the female virtues may well be the same as the male ones, and the sexes may also share the same vices. For instance, men and women in the play manifest similar affectations of dress and learning. On the other hand, the skillful use of cosmetics is not restricted to either sex, for the character Epicoene himself -- who is clearly not an object of satire -- uses them in the mode of the opposite sex, as do the actors who are portraying women. It is not the use of cosmetics but the overuse and misuse of them that is censured. By having Epicoene use cosmetics artfully for a just end, Jonson appears to be stressing the common ground

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[33]Jardine, *Still Harping On Daughters*, p. 58.

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between the sexes. As Barbara Millard astutely argues, the "discovery of Epicoene is the discovery of the androgynous aspects of human nature."[34]

Lanier's notion that Jonson saw "masculine silence" as an ideal oversimplifies not only his gender consciousness but also the tradition concerning speech and silence that this playwright so brilliantly employed. To reduce Jonson's core beliefs to a masculine ideal of silence ignores the undeniable fact that he was enamored by speech: "*Language* most shewes a man: Speak so that I can see you. It springs out of the most retired, and inmost parts of us, and is the Image of the Parent of it, the mind" (*Disc.*, p. 625). On the other hand, Lanier's thesis that a rigid antagonism exists in *Epicoene* between male and female silence ignores the pact made at the end when True-Wit assures the ladies that they need not fear that Epicoene will reveal feminine secrets learned when in disguise: "we'll undertake for his secrecy, that can speak so well of his silence." And his reductive assertion that "Real men, Jonson argues, prefer their truth raw and unadorned: 'Pure and neat language I love, yet plaine and customary" fails to recognize that silence is traditionally associated with obscurity as well as plainness. By dressing the actor playing the silent women as a boy in *drag* Jonson turned his engines of deception on the audience and created the first surprise ending in English drama (a precedent Shakespeare in *The Winter's Tale* would

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[34]Millard, "'An Acceptable Violence': Sexual Contest in Jonson's *Epicoene*," p. 143. Millard's excellent article does not, however, sufficiently explore the relation between gender role reversal and the use of cosmetics. Richard Barbour, "'When I Acted Young Antinous': Boy Actors and the Erotics of Jonsonian Theater," correctly argues that the boy actors represent sexual flexibility, but is mistaken in his belief that such flexibility ends at the endings of such plays as *Epicoene*.

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soon follow). Despite his propensity for the plain style, Jonson at times clearly liked his truth any way but "raw."

Through an appreciation of gendered illusion, Jonson, then, seems to have developed a significant degree of cross-gender understanding -- and therefore may well have drawn upon what seems to have been the Neo-platonic ideal of androgyny. We should not be overly troubled by the fact that the word "androgyny" did not then exist[35] for the cognate "androgyne" did. Moreover, we should not make the existence of a word the ultimate criteria for the historical existence or nonexistence of a concept, for the semantic use that a particular word is put to may be closely paralleled by the way other words or phrases are employed. This seems to be the case with *androgyny*. Not only does Rackin marshal impressive evidence to support the claim that a closely related concept exists, but the fact that the era felt a need for such a concept is attested to by the fact that Jonson coined the substantive *epicoene* to describe humans "who partakes of the characteristics of both sexes"; the word was previously only a grammatical term that referred to "nouns which, without changing their grammatical gender, may denote either sex" (*OED*). While Rackin correctly notes that a concept close to androgyny did exist though the word did not, she fails to realize that such a concept is not, on the whole, a negative notion in the play, even if it is gently satirized at times. Rather than a concept that is attacked by this genial comedy, androgyny is indeed a powerful element used by both Dauphine in creating the silent woman and Jonson in creating the play.

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[35]See Brown, p. 261.

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III. *Mimesis and Jonson's Attitude Toward Women*

Phyllis Rackin astutely raises the crucial issue of mimesis but then oversimplifies aspects of it. She argues that Shakespeare's heroines often draw on a Neo-platonic ideal of the androgyne, while Jonson's "realistic dramatic technique" "strives to replicate within itself the hierarchical relation that ... society has defined as natural."[36] She believes that in putting forth such ideals as androgyny Shakespeare fits Sidney's description of "the poet [who] lifted up with the vigor of his own invention, doth grow in effect another nature," while Jonson held that the "true Artificer will not run away from nature, as hee were afraid of her, or depart form the likeness of truth" (*Disc.* H&S, 8:587). We have seen, however, that Jonson seemed at times attracted to an "ideal of the androgyne." Rackin, moreover, slights the complexities not only of Jonson's thought but also of the debate, for she ignores the polysemy of the terms involved. About which "nature" and which "truth" are we speaking? And Jonson does not in fact replicate "hierarchical relation that ... society has defined as natural," for he instead creates a hierarchy of characters based on his own value system. Rather than accept the dominant, aristocratic ideology of his society that strove to pass on privilege by birth, he forwarded and developed the discourse of "true nobility," a system that he felt would not disenfranchise

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[36]Rackin, p. 34.

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him.[37] His attitude toward women bore the marks of a complicated and conflicted relation to the patriarchal system, which he strove to negotiate and to some degree change.

To fault Jonson for not creating rounded portrayals of women, or to think him a misogynist because he delineated female faults -- or humours -- is misguided for it implies a fundamental misunderstanding of his dramatic art and its satiric methodology. Shakespearean realism is based on a characterology that may be termed more synthetic -- creating figures by compounding seemingly diverse elements -- while Jonson's satiric method is more analytic, stripping personas down to clusters of related features. In seventeenth-century terms, Shakespeare tends to mix his humours, as Dryden noted occurs with Falstaff,[38] while Jonson tends to separate them. A driving force behind Jonson's selection of personality traits is his desire not to hold an objective mirror up to nature, but instead to let us "see the times deformitie / Anatomiz'd in every nerve, and sinnew" (Induction to *Every Man Out of His Humour*, lines 120-21). The negative qualities -- "the times deformitie" -- of both male and female characters tend to be on display, and positive ones are either not obvious or missing. In a character such as Volpone, for instance, all the moral defects are on view for our edification, but on closer consideration his excellent imagination and intelligence become evident -- a fact that we shall see in the next chapter proved troubling to Jonson. In Jonson's female characters, as in his male ones, we should not be surprised if

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[37]See Michael McCanles, *Jonsonian Discriminations: The Humanist Poet and the Praise of True Nobility.*
[38]Dryden, *Essays*, 1:84.

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their worst features are the easiest ones to see, since the edification achieved by the display of humours was a powerful driving force behind Jonson's art.

Since it was not Jonson's intention to present well rounded characters in the modern or Shakespearean sense, we should not expect to find such portrayals of women. While Jonsonian "realism" anatomizes "the times deformitie" and highlights foibles, if we look carefully we can nonetheless discern a character's admirable qualities and humanity. Once this fact is recognized, it becomes clear that the women characters in Jonsonian drama do not fare any worse than the men. They possess fewer serious moral deformities, and they do not lack characteristics that seem to redeem their faults. In the polarized world of *Volpone* neither of the two woman are part of the landscape of moral degeneracy. Lady Would-be is as foolish and well-meaning as her husband but not "evil"; part of the black humor is that she is insufferable not only to the nefarious Volpone but to us as well. Celia is in fact an exemplar of moral innocence, but perhaps of its blandness as well, as is her male-counterpart Bonario. The representations of both the repulsive side of evil that one finds in the gulls and the problematically attractive side evident in the astute predators are all male.

When the tone of Jonsonian comedy becomes more genial in *Epicoene* Jonson also turns his attention to the question of women. The women in the play are not part of the group of wits at the top of the hierarchy, or of the group of fools and gulls at the bottom, but are members of a new middle group that arises in this play. While having humours that are on display and sharply satirized, characters

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of this middle group are not quasi-human *fleurs du mal* like most figures of *Volpone*, but instead possess redeeming qualities of humanity and intelligence that allow them to participate in the plots of the gallants. Just as Otter and Cutbeard take part in the legalistic gulling of the perfect gull Morose at the play's end, the ladies have a role in the earlier exposé of the pure fools Daw and La Foole. The ladies also actively participate in the central plot by helping to make marriage unbearable to Morose, which paves the way for his acceptance of the deal Dauphine offers to free him from his vows.

The satire of the Ladies Collegiate for their use of cosmetics by no means makes them into unattractive figures, for they are in fact sought after not only by the men of the lower two groups but also by the gallants. Clerimont attempts to gain entry into Madam Haughty's house, while Dauphine is attracted to all the ladies and with True-Wit's help manages to have them all chase after him. Although the ladies' use of cosmetics is satirized to a significant degree, this feminine art is also studied and appreciated by the gallants, as well as by the author, who use it to create the power of both Epicoene and *Epicoene*. Clerimont even reverses himself on the issue of cosmetics: "Methinks the lady Haughty lookes well to day, for all my dispraise of her i' the morning. I think I shall come about to thee again, True-Wit" -- who responds: "I told you right. Women ought to repair the losses time and yeeres haue made i' their features, with dressings" (4.1.32-36). Indeed, in True-Wit's philosophical discourse such artistry is, we have seen in the previous chapter, associated with art. The ladies, then, are not unattractive figures worthy only of scorn as is commonly assumed. As Millard notes, "Jonson's censure of the

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collegiate women is, I think, overemphasized by most critics...Despite the disparaging remarks of the gallants behind the ladies' backs, the ladies are wooed 'up front,' are sharers in the final jokes on [Daw, La Foole, and Morose], and are 'vindicated' in their aggression by Epicoene."[39]

The basis of Jonson's satiric method was to cast a cold eye on all of humankind, but this should not blind us to Jonson's growing tolerance which includes an appreciation of women. To a large degree Jonson's view of women has been misunderstood, because it is connected to what we have seen is his surprising and complex view on cosmetics. We should not, as most critics have done, simply refuse to believe that Jonson could have appreciated what True-Wit calls a "good dressing." Jonas Barish's observation that Jonson mixed Juvenalian satire of the feminine arts with an Ovidian appreciation[40] should be seen not as a confused attitude or an unconscious rejection of the Ovidian but as a refusal by Jonson and True-Wit to blink at the often hidden unpleasant details of the artistic process. Our inability to recognize the possibility of a complex stance toward feminine adornment reveals that in modern ideology, though not in our practice, the stoic values have triumphed in this arena over those of art. Jonson, however, manifested a balanced view of a women's use of cosmetics not only in *Epicoene* but in other works as well. In "A Celebration of Charis," for instance, he depicts what has been called a "fusion of outer beauty and inner nobility"[41] sitting in front of her "idol glass ... To say over every purl / There, or to reform a curl / Or

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[39]Millard, p. 155.
[40]Barish, "Ovid, Juvenile, and *The Silent Woman*."
[41]McCanles, p. 214.

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with secretary Sis / To consult, if fucus this / Be as good as was the last." An intelligent use of adornment is in fact required of both sexes: Charis expects a man to master the proper use of fashion, for she requires that "Well he should his clothes to wear." Only by ignoring such crucial details signaling his complex position can it be claimed that "Jonson fulfilled his reader's expectations by building lyrics upon recognizable stereotypes."[42] The ability to appreciate the arts of bodily adornment in fact became part of the Cavalier tradition that was founded on Jonsonian principles. For despite the stoic tendency toward *unadorned* beauty that is found in this tradition, "sons" of "Saint Ben" such as Robert Herrick were able to praise a woman for "tresses bound / Into an oval, square, or round, / And knit in knots far more that I / Can tell by tongue."[43]

Only critics who are very familiar with Jonsonian comedy begin to understand his pessimistic and yet increasingly tolerant view. Jonson was, of course, limited in that he was a product of a deeply patriarchal culture and at times did not resist the misogyny that was prevalent. As Barbara Smith writes in her astute study of *The Women of Ben Jonson's Poetry*, "Because Jonson obviously could not have a twentieth-century feminist sensibility, his poetry is indicative of his gender-based moral standards, and is an endorsement of socially-constructed gender roles. In the end, however, it becomes clear that Jonson was, at least poetically, as he himself asserted, 'in love/With every vertue' ('Epistle to Katherine, Lady Aubigny')....

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[42]Katherine Henderson and Barbara McManus, *Half Humankind*, p. 111.
[43]Herrick, "Art Above Nature: To Julia" in *Ben Jonson and the Cavalier Poets*, p. 135; his reference to "Saint Ben" is from "His Prayer to Ben Jonson" on the same page.

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Jonson's epideictic poetry ... is not, when viewed as a whole, misanthropic or misogynistic."[44] W. David Kay similarly notes that in *Epicoene* the satire of the foolishness of women is balanced by a "ridicule of male folly and patriarchal tyranny. Morose's marriage to Epicoene, inspired by Libanius' declamation on 'The Unsociable man who Marries a Talkative Woman,' is handled in a quite different spirit from its classical source ... it is Morose's anti-social nature that is stressed, and Truewit rebukes him."[45] While Kay also recognizes that "Jonson articulates through Clerimont the Cavalier ideal of natural beauty," he fails to see that the aesthetic value of "a good dressing," which he dismisses as "erotic fetishism," is also part of the complex ideal that the play puts forth.

Like Kay, Anne Barton offers a number of astute observations mixed with judgments that fail to do justice to the complexity of Jonson's thought.

> The collegiate ladies, women who have banded together in a little single-sex society, living apart from their husbands under rules of their own devising, stir memories of Shakespeare's Academe in *Love's Labour's Lost*. Like Navarre and his bookmen, they are keenly aware of cormorant devouring Time ("ladies should be mindfull of the approach of age, and let no time want his due use ... We are rivers, that cannot be call'd backe", 4.3.40-1), and like Shakespeare's

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[44]Smith, pp. 116-17.
[45]Kay, *Ben Jonson*, p. 107.

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> academics, they aspire to immortality through fame (4.3.26-9). But ... these blue-stocking ladies, as lecherous as sparrows, degrade their own version of Shakespeare's league of study into an opportunity for adultery.[46]

Barton's appreciation for the ladies flags when she unfortunately falls into the same vein of moralistic criticism about which, we shall see, she justifiably complained. Both the ladies collegiates and the gallants are, it should be remembered, adults who are partaking in consensual sex. To judge Jonson's views on marriage we must attempt to free our thinking from still-influential Victorian attitudes that to a large degree represent the eventual victory of the bourgeois Puritan mores to which Jonson objected. Our conceptions of monogamy and adultery are quite modern ones; for instance, the biblical injunction against adultery only banned intercourse between a man and a married woman; "prostitutes, concubines, widows, and maidservants were permitted to men" according to Mosaic law.[47] A reasonable ethical stance on the question of "appropriate sexual partners" is put forth by John Dupré:

> We should surely regard strongly coercive practices, such as rape or sexual slavery, primarily in the light of general ethical principles; perhaps these should also prohibit sexual relations with small children. By

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[46]Barton, p. 125.
[47]Helen Fisher, *Anatomy of Love*, p. 81.

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> contrast, if an issue like adultery is problematic it is not simply as involving sexual relations with another adult person. To understand it as an ethical problem is to integrate that bare description of the act into the network of social values and meanings that constitute marriage in a particular social context. Assuming that, as barely described, the act involved is ethically unproblematic, I take it that adultery is an ethical issue only in the local, culturally specific sense.[48]

IV. *"Th' Adulteries of Art": Marriage and Its Discontents*

Bourgeois critics tend to mistake misogyny for misogamy, a confusion that Charles Lamb noted may well happen.[49] Jonson was in fact not a hater of women or of the "sin" of adultery -- as moralistic critics believe -- but rather a critic of the institution of marriage. As we shall see in section IV, this institution changed in the early modern period and so Jonson was able to contrast earlier forms of intimacy with the modern privileging of stringent monogamy, which the bourgeois Puritans championed. We must take care to disentangle the early public persona of the angry moralist from the increasingly sophisticated private man who was changed by his enlarged range of experience. Rather than proclaiming his disagreements with conventional morality openly, he communicated

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[48]Dupré "Global versus Local Perspectives on Sexual Difference," *Theoretical Perspectives On Sexual Difference*, p. 60.
[49]See the *OED*, s.v. *misogyny*.

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them to Drummond while in his cups – *in vino veritas*, he may have thought -- in what he might have believed were private conversations. He developed, however, his deeply felt intuitions on this subject in a more serious and fair-minded form in his poetry and drama. Obviously dissatisfied with his own marriage, he told Drummond that "He married a wife who was a shrew yet honest, five years he had not bedded with her"(*Conv.* p. 139). Jonson himself was not "honest" (that is, faithful), and there is even evidence that he may have had children out of wedlock.[50] He related to Drummond that "he thought the use of a maide, nothing jn comparison to ye wantoness of a wyfe & would never haue ane other Mistress." In other words, he preferred to have his adulterous relations with married women, whom he prized for their erotic knowledge. Drummond continues: "a man made his own wyfe to Court him, whom he enjoyed two yeares erre he knew of it, & one day finding them by chance Was passingly delighted with it" (*Conv.* p. 140). Jonson was also obviously delighted in this subversion of the institution of monogamy. The wife with whom he had an affair clearly had her husband's approval and Jonson's sympathy. Given such a window on Jonson's values and milieu, we can better make sense of his complex creations.

In the major comedies and afterwards, one finds a significant number of critiques of the modern institution of monogamy. In *Bartholomew Fayre*, for instance, we see a virtual deconstruction of the courtship ritual leading up to marriage. Grace Wellborn carries out a plan to choose between two suitors by having each write a

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[50]See Riggs, p. 153 and Kay, *Ben Jonson: A Literary Life.*

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word on a piece of paper; she will then ask "the next person that comes this way ... which of the two words, he, or she doth approue; and according to that sentence, [I will] fixe my resolution, and affection" (4.3.51-54). Trouble-all, the philosophic madman who will do nothing without a warrant, comes by and is made into the "fortune-teller" marking the name "strangely." Jonson illustrates here that there is no rational "warrant" behind the institution of marriage (a lesson that he also applies to other social conventions[51]). Indeed, the widow Dame Purecraft, who is taken by Trouble-All's divine madness, has her marriage contracted in an equally arbitrary manner. Such aspects of the plot reflect what appears to be Jonson's general intention in this play to illustrate the serious problems involved in -- or even the absurdity of -- attempts to use social institutions to legislate forms of desire.

Jonson's dislike of marriage does not appear to have led him to accept the double standard. Indeed, he repeatedly portrayed women who had excellent cause for adultery, rather than those who broke marriage vows for what might be seen as frivolous reasons. In *Volpone* Celia's husband attempts to force her to sleep with the fox in order to gain his wealth. We are clearly made to feel that she should break her marriage vows and run off with Bonario. Such a scenario is developed into a major plot device in *The Divell is an Asse.* The beautiful Mrs. Fitzdottrel is unworthily matched, and in an audacious scheme Wittipol courts her right in front of her husband. Although obviously an admirable women, she is taken with "the master of such language" (4.6.12). Jonson's public stance prevents him from letting

[51]See Ray Heffner, "Unifying Symbols in the Comedy of Ben Jonson."

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such "sin" to be committed by admirable figures, but as Barton remarks, "Fitzdottrel is so despicable, his wife's predicament so painful, and Wittipol so sympathetic, that it is virtually impossible not to back the cause of adultery."[52]

In *Epicoene* the women characters often attempt to engage in illicit affairs, but the moral censure and righteousness that has been imputed to Jonson may well be a projection of the morality of critics. *Epicoene* appears in fact to put forth a more nuanced moral judgment on the college than the one we have seen Ann Barton make, a judgment diametrically opposed to her tolerant views on *The Divell is an Asse* and on, as we shall see, *The Alchemist*. The women behave like the men -- including not only the fools, but also the gallants, some of whom may become collegiates. Such behavior seems to be the way of the world -- an attitude which partly explains why this play was so important to the Restoration. We are in a world ruled by courtly values, for True-Wit, our moral navigator, seems to have "late slept" on a "courtly lap" (4.1.129). In the philosophical discourse in the play's opening scene, Jonson signals his attitude not only toward cosmetic arts and an artist's secrecy, but also toward adultery. He does so by wrenching the significance of the word when Clerimont argues against "th'adulteries of art." True-Wit (like Jonson) is "clearly o' the side," for he is an apologist in his later lecture (4.1) for the art of courtship and, hence, the art of adultery -- since the collegiates being courted "liue from their husbands; and giue entertainment to all the *Wits* and *Braveries*" (1.1.76-77). Jonson here was the first to employ "adulteries" to signify *adulterations*, a meaning that would

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[52]Barton, p. 226.

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soon become obsolete (*OED*), and thus the word's original and primary meaning is clearly also suggested. (Shakespeare had conversely changed *adulterate* into a verb meaning to commit adultery.) As we have seen is the case with his use of *epicoene*, which by a pun on the grammatical meaning was changed into a new term to suggest that "sometimes 'boys' will be 'girls' and 'girls' 'boys,'" his use of *adulteries* indicates a transgression of the codes that the Puritans were in the process of rigidifying.

After *Volpone*, Jonson's work attains a degree of ethical complexity that moralistic criticism misses or refuses to accept. Not only did Jonson fully develop an ironic Lucianic mode by this time to problematize his meaning,[53] but he also appears to have begun to understand and make use of the lessons of his expanded experience, which by now was gleaned from almost all strata of Jacobean society. His time at court had a complex effect on him -- apparently producing not only a disdain for pretentious lords (see, for instance, Epigram 11) but also an appreciation for a number of courtly trappings. While the bourgeois Puritans probably helped to bring about a "tightening up of the sexual *mores* of the nobility and gentry as a whole in the early seventeenth century," Lawrence Stone notes that "a small minority" centered in James' Court "was moving swiftly in the opposite direction" and reached "a real breakthrough into promiscuity."[54] In general, the liberal sexual morals of the court were consonant with Jonson's behavior and imaginative creations, if

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[53]See Douglas Duncan, *Ben Jonson and the Lucianic Tradition*, though his astute description of Jonson's method is better than his reductive judgment of Jonson's ends.

[54]Stone, *The Crisis of the Aristocracy*, pp. 664-65; cf. Riggs, pp. 119-120.

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not always with his public stance. Two of his patrons -- William Herbert, third Earl of Pembroke, who gave him an annual allowance, and the Earl's first cousin Lady Mary Wroth to whom *The Alchemist* was dedicated -- shared his sexual mores. Pembroke was imprisoned and upon release banished from court by Queen Elizabeth when he refused to marry Mary Fitton, who bore his child. He returned to court after James accession, but despite his marriage in 1604 he continued to be romantically linked to female courtiers. Most noteworthy of these was Lady Wroth, who had two illegitimate children by him.

Jonson became increasingly involved with sophisticated women of the court such as Lady Wroth and Lady Bedford. Although a disagreement with Lady Bedford's friend Cecilia Bulstrode led him to savage court *mores* in "An Epigram on the Court Pucelle," this seemed to be caused by a fit of temper; he later repented for this breach of courtly decorum by writing a laudatory epitaph on her. The epigrams and other poems to noble women, as well as the dedication of *The Alchemist* to Lady Mary Wroth, indicate that Jonson was appreciative of the talents of these accomplished women. In addition to two epigrams Jonson wrote a sonnet to Lady Wroth, which begins: "I that have been a lover, and could shew it ... Since I excribe [copy out] your Sonnets, am become / A better lover and much better Poet" (*Under-wood*, 30). Jonson, who denigrated the sonnet form and the idealizing tendencies of the Petrarchan mode it implies, made a significant exception by writing this sonnet. Indeed, he may well have been influenced by Wroth's sonnets and not only in terms of poetic form. His reference to becoming a "better lover" alludes to the

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first poem of Wroth's sequence "Pamphilia to Amphilanthus," which ends with her waking from a dream in which Venus holds her heart and has Cupid shoot an arrow through it: "I, waking hop'd as dreames itt would depart / Yett since: O mee: a lover I have binn."[55]

Like Jonson, Mary Wroth appears to have been a "lover" primarily by seeking extra-marital intimacy. Her long-lived affair with Pembroke is not too surprising when one considers that her marriage was arranged by her father Sir Robert (Philip Sidney's brother), who remarked that she had serious marital difficulties from the start.[56] Philip Sidney himself, it will be remembered, was in love with Lady Rich, who, though married, lived openly with another man. Mary's husband did not share her literary interests and though Jonson wrote a complimentary epigram on him, he appears to have sided with the wife, for he told Drummond that "my Lady wroth is unworthily maried on a Jealous husband" (H&S,1:142). As Smith remarks, both Jonson and Wroth "were involved in unfulfilling marriages, both were alienated at some time from the court, both were accused of slander, and both had literary interests to which they turned in time of stress."[57]

Jonson also sided with another literary woman, Mary's cousin Elizabeth, the Countess of Rutland, whom he was so taken with that he told Drummond that she "was nothing jnferior to her Father S. P. Sidney in Poesie" (*Conv*, p. 138). Drummond relates that "Ben one day being at table with my Lady Rutland, her husband comming in, accused her that she kept table to poets, of which she wrott a letter

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[55]*The Poems of Lady Mary Wroth*, p. 35.
[56]See Josephine Roberts, ed. *The Poems of Lady Mary Wroth*, pp. 11-12.
[57]Barbara Smith, *The Women of Ben Jonson's Poetry*, p. 71.

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to him which he answered. My Lord intercepted the letter, but never challenged him." Although Jonson remarked that because the suit "was unlawfull" he refused to act as go-between for "Sir Th: Overburie" who "was in love with" Lady Rutland, he was probably asked to do so because he was knowledgeable in such matters. He commented, for instance, on a painting of "Haman courting Esther jn a Bed," which contained the "Verse ... wilt thou Haman be so malitious as to lye wt myne own wyfe jn myne house," by noting that "he himself being once so taken the Good man said, I would not believe yee would abuse my house so" (*Conv*, p. 145). Jonson's poems indeed show a familiarity with the virtues, vices, and details of the world of the noble women (though of course he idealizes somewhat, leaving out details such as the fact that ladies such as Mary Wroth were known to handle her own finances). No hard evidence exists, it is true, to support the contention of the nineteenth-century critic Frederick Fleay that the Celia of Jonson's poems was in fact Lady Wroth.[58] Nevertheless, the possibility that one of Jonson's affairs may have been with an aristocrat is suggested by such poems as "A Celebration of Charis" in which the poet tells the courtly Charis that they should: "Joyne lip to lip, and try; / Each suck other's breath. / And whilst our tongues perplexéd lie, / Let who will think us dead, or wish our death."

As is the case for the male models of virtue in the early plays that Jonson called comical satires, the dramatic female paragons of morality -- Celia in *Volpone*, for instance -- often lack the imagination and life of characters such as Volpone or Subtle who

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[58]See Roberts, p. 16.

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violate or desire to violate moral codes. In his major comedies, Jonson's tolerance of illicit sexuality is suggested not only by the vivacity of the Ladies collegiate, but also by the sympathetic portrait in *The Alchemist* of Dorothee, the male tricksters' "colleague," who is referred to as "DOL Common" since she was Subtle's "punk" (*Doll* is "a shortened pet-form of *Dorothy*"; *OED2*). Dol Common's intelligence and judgment hold together the "venter tripartite" (1.1.135) and her grace and skill seem intended to win us over. Her cosmetic display in impersonating the Fairy Queen is, for instance, a subterfuge as brilliant as those of her confederates. As with Wittipol, whose "braine and spirit" (4.6.13) outweigh any moral scruples that might lead us to condemn him for his adulterous scheme, the "teeming wit" (5.1.16) of the venture tripartite is expected to win our sympathy despite their flouting of societal codes. "The play stares hard at chaos," Barton observes, "with a fascination far more than censure or disgust. Moralistic criticism has been hard on Face and Subtle, and on the complicity with the audience assumed by the former in his Epilogue. Yet the play as a whole suggests, and even seems to endorse, the truth underlying Face's earlier observation that it is 'yet / A kind of moderne happinesse, to have / DOL Common for a great lady'" (4.1.22-4).[59]

While all might not see the social transformations that were taking place as "chaos," Barton nevertheless captures Jonson's uneasy fascination with the social upheavals of his time. The *OED 2* glosses the occurrence of "moderne" in these lines from *The Alchemist* as "everyday," a meaning related to the original sense "now existing,"

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[59]Barton, p. 152-53.

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which came into English at the beginning of the sixteenth century. At the turn of the next century, however, the meaning of this word was shifting to the present one and as other entries in the *OED 2* show, Jonson -- in *Volpone* and *Epicoene* -- used it to indicate the "present time." That Jonson was one of the first writers to use "modern" to indicate the current era in contrast to past ones suggests an awareness of the transformations taking place in his society -- perhaps even of the beginning of a modern sense of time and change. The *OED 2's* gloss does not seem to capture adequately the full illocutionary force of Face's use of the word, which appears to be influenced by the shift in meaning: Jonson may in fact be alluding to the "moderne" transformation of the modes of "happinesse" -- a transformation that began in the Renaissance.

V. *"Moderne Happinesse": Reconfiguring the Private Realm*

As James Brundage has shown, so-called Christian sexual morality was to a large degree forged in the middle ages and bears "little relationship to any statements of Christ," who did not say much "about sexuality."[60] The importance of the medieval heritage should not, however, blind us to how older modes of intimacy began to transmute during the Renaissance into modern ones. A rigorous and consistent attempt to enforce the "Christian" moral code did not take place on a large scale until the Reformation and Counter Reformation. While the medieval Church eventually prohibited priests from

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[60]Brundage, pp. 4-5.

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marrying, their taking of concubines continued to be widespread leading Luther to believe that such a system of chastity was unworkable and to set a precedent by breaking his own vows and taking a nun as a bride. Concubinage among the laity was also a deeply rooted institution, allowing intimacy when factors such as social class ruled out marriage. In fact, it did not begin to be treated severely by legal writers until the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, leading up to its official prohibition, which did not occur until the in the Fifth Lateran Council (1514); the volume of cases suggest, however, that it remained common.[61] During the early modern period the concept of marriage and the social practices regulating sexuality in general were clearly in flux. In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries the rigorous enforcement of modern sexual codes for the laity was generally thought to be close to impossible, for on the continent prostitution became a "public utility"[62] institutionalized as both private and municipal enterprises; in Lucia prostitutes were given citizenship. While London did not allow brothels in the city proper, regulated ones were permitted across the river in a section of Southwark called "Stewside"; there were eighteen such establishments at end of fifteenth century.[63]

At the end of the sixteenth century an attempt was made to pass a draconian law against adultery in the *Reformatio legum* (1590),[64] a proposed code that foundered because of the fear that it

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[61]Brundage, pp. 514-16.
[62]Brundage, p. 521.
[63]See Brundage, p. 523 and Stephen Mullaney, *The Place of the Stage: License, Play, and Power in Renaissance England.*
[64]See Martin Ingram, *Church Courts, Sex and Marriage in England, 1570-1640,* p. 151.

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might have infringed the sexual freedom of aristocrats. The dramatic decline of the illegitimacy ratio during the first half of the seventeenth century indicates that a climate of moral flexibility eventually subsided in England.[65] It was not always clear, however, when a child was illegitimate or not, since spousals *per verba de praesenti* were created merely by the spoken consent of a man and woman. For Catholic Europe the Council of Trent (1563) declared invalid marriages not performed in public before a priest. A similar change occurred in many Protestant countries on the continent. In England, however, the law remained basically unchanged until 1753, despite attempts at reform in middle of the sixteenth century. Clandestine marriage unratified by church or state therefore continued to be tolerated, despite bourgeois Puritan protests. This type of marriage, which included *sponsalia per verba de praesenti*, which took immediate effect, or the conditional *sponsalia per verba de futuro* -- represented a trial or common-law marriage. As I will argue in chapter 6, in his problem plays Shakespeare deconstructs the mythology of companionate marriage put forth in his own romantic comedies. Bourgeois Puritanism's social practices were more consistently critiqued by Jonson.

Chastity had been the religious ideal in the middle ages, and marriage was often considered only as a means of procreation and of avoiding sin. Luther not only rejected the Catholic privileging of chastity in priesthood but also helped to bring a new prestige to

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[65]See G. R. Quaife, *Wanton Wenches and Wayward Wives*, p. 58; Stone, *The Family*, pp. 613-15. Peter Laslett, *Family Life and Illicit Love*, chapter 3, notes a peak around 1600; see also Ingram, p. 158; Ingram's argument (p. 160) against Quaife is not very convincing.

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"holy matrimony." This movement restructured the modes of intimacy in England; during the early modern period, exclusive conjugal affection gradually "replaced celibacy as the officially idealized pattern of heterosexual love."[66] Lawrence Stone has described the shift from the medieval model, which privileged arranged marriages as a means for the aristocracy to contract property-based alliances, to the modern emphasis on the nuclear family and the conjugal couple.[67] Stone's description of the changes that took place in the structure of the family, it is true, is overly schematized; the family, for instance, was not restructured as completely in the small period of time as he claims. Nevertheless, parts of his general argument seem to have significant merit. The type of "moderne happinesse" put forth by companionate marriage did not suddenly become the norm, as Stone suggests, and yet it gradually became more common. Sexuality was increasingly channeled into a consolidated institution of marriage, as all irregular forms were eliminated (more on this in chapter 6). Jonson opposed the Protestant ideology of marriage, which began to shape a new private realm, and proposed alternate modes of "moderne happinesse."

Jonson, we have seen, was not a proponent of chastity, despite the fact that the Catholic Church, which he was a member of for some time, continued to privilege this ideal. On the other hand, he did not agree with the idealization of "holy matrimony" by the Protestants

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[66]Mary Beth Rose, *The Expense of Spirit*, p. 16.

[67]Stone, *The Family*. On the effect of inheritance laws on intimacy, besides Stone see Lisa Jardine, *Still Harping on Daughters*, pp. 68-102. For a discussion of Stone's "monumental" "*ballon d'essai*," see R. B. Outhwaite's introduction to *Marriage and Society*.

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(who paradoxically stripped it of its sacramental status). As critics have realized for some time, it was "the Puritan preachers" -- a group to which Jonson was intellectually, socially, and temperamentally opposed -- "who set forth an ideal pattern of love and marriage" and who even made marriage into the "type and source of all human relations."[68] While the Puritans raised the status of marital love, they attempted to channel all heterosexual intimacy into this institution by rigorously enforcing prohibitions of extramarital relations. For instance, in *Anatomie of Abuses* (1583) Stubbes called for the death penalty for fornication, adultery, and incest (the meaning of which, as we shall see in chapter 6, was then quite different). Puritans were long displeased with what they considered the lax enforcement of sexual morality by the Church Courts. In the Commonwealth's act of 10 May 1650 "for suppressing the detestable sins of incest, adultery and fornication"[69] they made the first two into felonies punishable by death (without benefit of clergy) and the third into a crime carrying the penalty of three months in jail. Jonson was, of course, not alone in finding the conventions of monogamy, which were being strengthened by the puritanical influence, overly restrictive. That his behavior was similar to many of his noble patrons and, no doubt, to many of his fellow artists should make us take his depiction of unconventional modes of intimacy as a reflection of a serious questioning of conventional sexual mores in a changing social landscape. In his

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[68]William Haller and Mallevile Haller, "The Puritan Art of Love," pp. 242, 270. Cf. Rose pp. 29-30; Stone, *The Family*, pp. 135-36.

[69]Firth & Rati, ii. 387-9; quoted in Keith Thomas, "The Puritans and Adultery: The Act of 1650 Reconsidered," p. 257. See also Ingram, *Church Courts*, p. 248.

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plays and poetry, Jonson critiqued puritanical values and offered instead a hard-nosed early modern representation of sexual equality and freedom, which can be taken as his vision of "moderne happinesse" that he preferred to the privileging of an exclusive intimacy in "holy matrimony."

As Lawrence Venuti noted, Jonson's Baconian empiricism caused him to reject conventional poetic forms of dealing with affairs of the heart.[70] "I Write Not of Love," he tells us in the title of the first poem of *The Forrest* -- that is to say, when he approaches the question of intimacy between the sexes he does not do so in the popular romantic mode. In writing "not of love" in a romantic sense, Jonson refuses to falsify the nature of his experience by adopting the bourgeois Puritan ideology that privileges love only in marriage -- an ideology put forth by the Romantic comedies of the late sixteenth century.[71] While Jonson was innovative in his empirical treatment of the relations between the sexes, he was not alone in his reaction against romantic visions. In all the problem plays Shakespeare stresses the serious difficulties in these relations and even seems to react against the idealization of marriage found in his own Romantic comedies. And *Hamlet*, a drama closely related to the problem plays, contains elements of this literary reaction against the values of Romantic comedy, for in this work there is much misogamy, which to some degree has been mistaken for misogyny (more on this in chapter 6), as we have seen has also been the case with Jonson.

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[70]See Venuti, "Why Jonson Wrote Not of Love."
[71]See Rose, *The Expense of Spirit.*

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An analogous conflict of values is seen in the non-dramatic poetry of the era. Intimacy within marriage, while perhaps always possible, for long stretches of history does not appear to have been the focus of emotional interest. In Classical Greece, for instance, we have seen that the privileged mode of intimacy was between males -- at least for the upper stratum of society -- and wives had very low status. It was not until the birth of courtly love that intimacy between a man and a woman achieved an ideologically privileged status, and this mode of intimacy was outside of marriage. Petrarch's sonnet sequence draws on this tradition, for it centers on his non-marital relationship with Laura. These sonnets became a paradigm for the emergent modern sensibility in that the intimacy depicted, while continuing to be idealizing, is conceived in more earthly and sensual terms than the religious love of Dante for Beatrice. Spenser attempted to marry the idealizing tradition of the Petrarchan sonnet sequence to the emergent Puritan ideology by addressing the *Amoretti* to his wife. Jonson's empiricism, on the other hand, is manifested by his steering clear of the Petrarchan sonnet tradition and its tendency to idealize. As we have seen, when Jonson does write a sonnet, it is to Mary Wroth, who notoriously flouted the marriage conventions that bourgeois Puritans were attempting to make more stringent throughout the society. Shakespeare further problematizes this tradition in that he contradicts his precedents by composing idealizing sonnets to a young man and to a dark -- rather than a fair -- lady, as well as by writing poems that reverse the process of idealization.[72]

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[72]See Anne Ferry, *The "Inward" Language* and Joel Fineman, *Shakespeare's*

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Jonson's empirical approach to human nature, which was both pessimistic and tolerant, is evident in his representation of the views of both sexes. There is no ideal man or woman, so each sex must make do in whatever way possible. True-Wit advises men to "loue wisely, and all women: some one for the face, and let her please the eye; another for the skin, and let her please the touch; a third for the voice, and let her please the eare; and where the obiects mixe, let the senses so too" (4.1.140-145). Countering the sexist notion that women do not have "wits," the speaker who Jonson presents "In the Person of Woman Kind" (*Under-wood* 5) offers remarks that complement True-Wit's advice. She begins by astutely noting that the praise of women's beauty is usually brought about for male ends, and then turns the table on mankind:

> Men if you love us, play no more
> The fooles, or Tyrants with your friends,
> To make us still sing o're, and o're,
> Our own false praises, for your ends:
> Wee have both wits, and fancies too,
> And if wee must, let's sing of you.
> Nor doe we doubt, but that we can,
> If wee would search with care, and paine,
> Find some one good, in some one man;

Perjured Eye.

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So going thorough all your straine:
Wee shall at last, of parcells make
One good enough for a songs sake.

Just as True-Wit notes that different parts of various women should be appreciated individually, the women speaker needs to take pieces from different men to make "One good enough for a songs sake." Jonson's anti-romantic empiricism does not degenerate into a conventional one that includes the double-standard. In fact, in *Under-wood* immediately after "In the Person of Woman Kind" there appears "Another: In Defense of Their Inconstancie," which extends to women the same sexual freedom that he allowed himself. From the plays and the poems, then, we can piece together Jonson's vision, which appears to be not only non-sexist but also innovative to the point of being culturally transgressive. Given his ability at times to take a perspective from the other side of the gender boundary and given what we have seen about Jonson's satiric modus operandi, we can now explore the cultural significance of his most developed vision of gender relations, which is found in *The Silent Woman.*

The speculative world suggested by *Epicoene* is in some sense quite realistic, since it reflects certain violations of conventions that existed and that still exist. The Ladies' college is in fact an institutionalization of a social world that Jonson was spending more and more time in. In this type of subculture both women and men are free to have intimate relations outside of marriage. This is indeed not the world -- or, at least, not oniy the world -- of the nobility that Jonson excoriated, but of the aristocrats that he both respected and

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depended upon, as we have seen. Despite the received notion of a moralistic Jonson, we must not forget that he lived a life outside of what we would now consider conventional morality. Both traditional criticism and newer modes resist seeing the gender equality and sexual freedom implicit in the rough-and-tumble vision put forth by *Epicoene*. Only Barbara Millard's description of this world as one of "sexual contest" begins to do justice to this vision. In this game there are elements both of competition and cooperation. True-Wit wages a battle of wits with his friends, but he also lectures them on the arts of winning a woman, for "all women are not to be taken all ways." Similarly, the ladies collegiate compete with each other, but also lecture their new recruits on the secrets of the feminine arts. Clerimont's boy and Epicoene are scouts who are able to pass between these groups. While this is a world of male and female bonding, we should not, however, mistake the contest for a war between the sexes, since a significant amount of cooperation takes place. True-Wit's words of assurance at the play's end that the secrets Epicoene has learned will not be bruited about form one of several examples of cooperation between the homosocial[73] teams.

Jonson conceives of a society in which women would be relatively free both intellectually and sexually. The satiric elements of the depiction of *Epicoene*'s college suggest that this freedom allows them to possess as many humours as the average man, but the Ladies, it should be remembered, are not as benighted as the most foolish males -- La Foole, Daw, and Morose -- for the collegiates are intelligent (if easily led) and attractive. The modes of association that

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[73]On the "homosocial," see Sedgwick, *Between Men*.

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Jonson represents in the College was never institutionalized in the West and appears from an anthropological point of view to be extraordinary. Even More's *Utopia*, quite radical in economic matters, is rather conservative in terms of sexual mores, for here "Adulterers are sentenced to penal servitude of the most unpleasant type."[74]

The affairs of the college are still to some degree surreptitious, even if the general existence of such affairs is widely known.[75] This is why the ladies must be reassured about Epicoene by True-Wit in his final words in character before directly addressing the "Spectators": "let it not trouble you that you haue discour'd any mysteries to this yong gentleman. He is (a'most) of yeeres, & will make a good visitant within this twelue-month. In the meane time, wee'll all vndertake for his secrecie, that can speake so well of his silence." The conduct of the men and women in *Epicoene* is, of course, not unknown in the West where marital laws at times seem "more honored in the breach than in the observance." While the collegiates do not speak as openly about their affairs as the Kuikuru speak of their *ajois*, the college does openly institute a set of values that violates Western hegemonic ideology. Such values, it seems, have never been openly instituted in the West even when they exist covertly. In villages on the Adriatic coast of southern Italy, for instance, middle aged men enter "an elaborate quasi-institutionalized

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[74]More, *Utopia*, p. 104; such a Puritanical subculture still exits in the U. S. Military, which continues to punish some of its members severely for adultery.

[75]onson's conception comes close, perhaps, to the ways of the Kuikuru of the Amazon, for "within months of matrimony" spouses of either sex in this small tribe "begin to take lovers known as *ajois*." (Fisher, p. 77). The sexual attitudes of the collegiates resembles the mores of the Kuikuru in its institutionalization of adultery, although differences of course remain in the exact mode of sexual secrecy; e.g., the Kuikuru speak openly about their *ajois*.

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system of extramarital affairs with local village women," but "a code of absolute silence prevails. Family life must not be undermined."[76]

While such behavior is not openly approved in the West, it is, then, not uncommon in certain regions at certain times. In subcultures not dominated by puritanical values, one may "marry well," that is, for financial reasons, and one may find intimacy -- hetero- or homosexual -- outside of marriage. Even if intimacy exists within marriage, many have been aware that it is a fallacy that "attraction to one person cannot coexist with a serious affection for another."[77] Under the seeming consistency of the Judeo-Christian code there are in fact great differences in sexual mores in the West.[78] Jonson comments on such cultural differences in the contrasting portraits of the two wives in *Volpone*. While the English Lady Would-be is free to roam unfettered, the Italian Celia is locked up in her house in a manner not unlike the one Shylock uses on his daughter. Such cross-cultural comparisons must have become part of the debate that arose in England as puritanical values began to make headway. We have seen that a gross discrepancy in attitudes and customs existed within greater London; indeed, with the rise of Puritanism the differences in sexual mores among diverse groups existing in the same metropolis must have become dramatic. With the rise of the bourgeois Puritan's value system, intimacy was only

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[76]Fisher, pp. 75-76.

[77]Bertrand Russell, *Marriage and Morals*, p. 231.

[78]For instance, in "the Intermountain United States, with its rather conservative or restrictive sex norms due to Mormon influence," 73.4% of males and 78.4% of females of a sample disapprove of "nonmarital coitus under any circumstance" for both sexes. For a Danish sample, on the other hand, 37.6% of males and 41.9% of females disapprove"; Harold Christensen, "A Cross-cultural Comparison of Attitudes Toward Marital Infidelity," p. 226.

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privileged within companionate marriage and a woman's place was only in the home, which became the gravitational center of the private realm of the nuclear family.

That Jonson objected to the rise of this new mode of dissociation is evident from the critique of bourgeois Puritan conjugal values represented, for example, by the marriage of the Otters in *Epicoene.* Tom Otter addresses his wife in the most intimate and loving ways -- calling her Princess, which reflects the new status that the Protestant privileging of marriage offered women in the private realm. But behind her back he abuses her, and she physically abuses him when she catches him. This marriage appears to demonstrate that, as Tom Otter ironically puts it, "he's an ass that will be so uxorious to tie his affections to one circle." Jonson's non-romantic preference for extra-marital intimacy is evident in the contrast between the type of relationship represented by the college to the quite unsatisfactory marriage of the Otters. While the ladies have faults, the role of a collegiate is clearly more desirable than that of a wife, and the values implicit in this role are the same as those of the gallants, who, it is suggested, may eventually become collegiates. Jonson himself appears to have had many of the collegiate values, for we have seen they are expressed in his personal conversations, poetry, and other dramas.

Such a value system may indicate a yearning for a situation somewhat similar to that of courtly lovers. Courtly love may not have been a mere literary convention but instead may have reflected actual social circumstances.[79] Just as Marie de France described the

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[79]See Joan Kelly, *Women, History, and Theory.*

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adulterous wife of an old man as "*franc et noble*" (that is, free),[80] Jonson described the "kind of creature I could most desire" as "fair, and free, and wise," and able to "spin out her own free hours" (Epigram 76). That George Eliot admired Jonson's epigram for presenting the "grander feminine type -- at once sweet, strong, large-thoughted"[81] -- indicates that such a notion became part of a counter-tradition, which Jonson had some part in keeping alive. Jonson's alternative vision of a woman "fair, and free, and wise" is based not only on the tradition of courtly love but also on the original strain of Humanism, which opened the possibilities of secular education to both sexes. (The ideal of an educated woman seems to have gone out of fashion when Castiglione's *Courtier* put forth a paradigm that emphasized female grace.[82]) Jonson did not seek to exclude women from the public realm. Indeed, his "Leges Convivales" explicitly invited choice ("lectae") women to participate in the meetings of choice fellow artists and intellectuals that he presided over in the Apollo Room of the Devil and St. Dunstan Tavern: "3. Eruditi, urbani, hilares, honesti, adsciscuntor. 4. Nec lectae foeminae repudiantor."[83] Once such nondramatic material is taken into account, it becomes evident that beneath the satire of excesses, or humours, the college of *Epicoene* represents a vision of intellectual and sexual freedom for both sexes.

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[80]Lanval, *Les lais de Marie de France*, quoted by Kelly, p. 25.
[81]Eliot *Letters*, VI:360; quoted in Donaldson, ed. *Poems/Ben Jonson*, p. 40.
[82]See Stone, *The Family*, p. 203.
[83]Alexander Brome (1620-66) translated these "leges" as "Let learned, civil, merry men be invited, / And modest, too; nor let the choice ladies be slighted."

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That Jonson's vision at its best does not seek to exclude women from intellectual and social realms appears quite important, for his objections to Puritanism were indeed considerably prescient. Although the Puritan privileging of intimacy within marriage allowed women to rise in status within the private realm, their exclusion from the public sphere was, perhaps, the crucial link in the "mind forg'd manacles" of their oppression. The new Puritan discourse was in ways consonant with traditional Patriarchal values in that men remained in a position of social power in both public and private realms. Even the Enlightenment, which transformed traditional Patriarchal society, put into place what Carole Pateman has called a "fraternal social contract"[84] that continued to exclude women. That Jonson appears to have had a vision of sexual equality is thus all the more impressive. It is true that at times he flirts with sexist values -- either playfully, as in "Song: That Women Are But Mens Shaddowes" (*The Forrest* 8), or in anger, as we have seen with "An Epigram on the Court Pucelle." But when he is serious and direct, rather than satiric or impulsive, he puts forth a profoundly fair-minded vision. Jonson's ideal woman would have both sensual and intellectual virtues, just as his ideal man would. Indeed, Charis we are told, is "Venus, when she smiles, / But she's Juno, when she walks, / And Minerva, when she talks," while her ideal man has "Venus's and Minerva's eyes, / For he must look wanton-wise." Paragons of either sex, in other words, must possess both allure and intelligence, beauty and wisdom. From such a point of view, Jonson's proposal that a woman should have "a learned and a manly soul"

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[84]Pateman, *The Disorder of Woman.*

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(Epigram 76), is anything but sexist -- as Lanier claimed it is -- for such a phrase insists that women possess virtues that phallocentric ideology considers purely male.

The refusal to buy into either the Puritan ideology that claimed that love exists only in marriage or into the double standard may have allowed Jonson to anticipate social changes that would not fully come about for centuries. That Jonson was in relations -- perhaps even intimate ones -- with women who possessed more power than he may have helped him to see himself from the women's point of view -- that is, a formidable intellect with a "mountaine belly, and rockie face," as he puts it in *Under-wood 11.* Anthony Giddens argues that intimate relationships between the sexes that are based on an equality of social power are only now becoming possible on a large scale in the West.[85] Jonson's offering of symmetrical and realistic views of each sex through the eyes of the other and his imagining a system in which women are as sexually and intellectually free as men suggests that he may have begun to envision important aspects of the social world that is finally coming into being -- as an exclusive restriction of intimacy to marriage gradually loses its power.[86]

The college of *Epicoene* when taken together with the related discourse in Jonson's other works provides an image of an institutionalization of a mode of relationship that draws on aspects of early Humanism and on the tradition of courtly love. Such values became a counter-tradition with the rise of Puritan privileging of

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[85]Giddens, *The Transformation of Intimacy.*

[86]Recent study indicate that even American values, which remain greatly influenced by the Puritan heritage, are becoming somewhat less restrictive; see, for instance, Lena Williams's 1996 article "A New Level of Tolerance for Adultery."

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intimacy. Puritan values, after being displaced during Restoration, eventually returned and reached their apex in the nineteenth century[87] (with its enshrinement of domesticity). Now that Victorian values appear to be waning, Jonson's alternative vision may have increasing relevance. That two of the collegiates are referred to as "Madame" -- a title suggesting high rank -- while the third collegiate and the two "Pretenders" are referred to as Mrs. (Mistress), which may be used to address to any women in a position of authority, indicates that Jonson was interested in the extension of sexual privileges previously held exclusively by the aristocracy to the middling sort[88] to which he belonged. Such a liberal view would fit in well with the fact that Jonson, who obviously recognized his own self-worth, subscribed to the notion of "true nobility," a belief consonant with the notion of a meritocracy.

Jonson seems, then, to have envisioned a widening and a transformation of the freedom that aristocratic women enjoyed in the later Middle ages. Such a vision may have been part of his alternative to the new division of life into private and public realms, which may well have brought women less benefits than drawbacks.[89] For while the Puritan privileging of intimacy within marriage has had both its male and female champions, with the large-scale entry of women into the public realm it has become

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[87]On the return of a Puritanical repression in the nineteenth century, see Stone, p. 673.
[88]See Theodore Leinwand, "Shakespeare and the Middling Sort."
[89]See Kelly, "Did Woman have a Renaissance" in *Women, History, and Theory.*

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evident that their exclusion had prevented the possibility of sexual equality.[90]

The Protestant privileging of marriage helped to shape a gendered private realm at the same time that a spirit of acquisitive individualism to a large degree molded the public one. Jonson's critique of the emerging restrictive codes of intimacy complements the critique that L. C. Knights demonstrated[91] he made of bourgeois acquisitiveness -- a social movement also championed in England by bourgeois Puritans. Puritanism was, of course, not a homogeneous movement. The dominant bourgeois forces in fact moved militarily against the radicals of the Puritan revolution. Christopher Hill has documented how Ranterism, for instance, was "an extension downwards of" libertine courtly attitudes.[92] Jonson's negative judgment of the bourgeois Puritan privileging of an exclusive intimacy in monogamy and his opposition to the Protestant ethic and the emerging acquisitive society are in fact surprisingly analogous to the views of some of the Puritan radicals. Given the great esteem in which Jonson was held during the Restoration, his probing of mores may have helped to foster the resistance to bourgeois morality found in the "dialogue" -- described by Hill -- between the radical thinkers of the Protestant Revolution and Restoration sceptics.

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[90]Frederick Engels put forth this view in *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State.* Stone in *Family* instead asserts that the effects of the exclusion of women from the private realm were not on the whole negative, but he is not at all convincing. Luther opined that "Women should remain at home, sit still, keep house, and bear and bring up children" (quoted by Stone, *Family*, p. 203-4).

[91]See Knights, *Drama & Society in the Age of Jonson.*

[92]Hill, *The World Turned Upside Down*, p. 274. See also Stone, *Family*, pp. 221-25. On the complex views of a Puritan such as Milton, see Joseph Wittreich, *Feminist Milton.*

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Chapter 4

PUT TOGETHER AGAINE, LIKE A GREAT GERMANE CLOCKE": AGENCY AND SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION IN JONSON

I. *Selfhood and Construction*

The questions involving marital infidelity and cosmetics that we have explored in the last chapter are related to the issues discussed in chapter 2 concerning the proper use of deception by the Renaissance gallants portrayed in *Epicoene*. There we saw that deception may be justifiable if, as Polonius phrased it, "this bait of falsehood takes this carp of truth." True-Wit's radical use of deception is for Jonson ethically excusable because it reveals the natures of the comic-humour characters and furthers his friend's plan to obtain his rightful inheritance.

His earlier, more austere stance -- which in some ways resembled that of the Puritans he would increasingly censure -- would probably not, however, have permitted such an attitude toward deceit of any kind. That Jonson would come to see such deception as justifiable appears to be indicative of a growing tolerance, which is also manifested in what we have shown in the last chapter is his appreciation of cosmetic artifice and his condoning of non-bourgeois mores. The moral complexity that developed as he penetrated wider spheres of experience appears to have brought

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about an ethical restructuring that affected not only his view of sexual morality, but also his profound development as an *artificer.* The "enormities" of tricksters that bourgeois Puritans' decried was increasingly tolerated by Jonson, who came to condone their deceptions as the attempts of creative agents to negotiate a difficult world. In the next section we shall explore this development in detail by examining the artificers in his plays. First we must explore his characterology, his conception of selfhood, and his developing system of beliefs.

Every Man Out of His Humour, the first of the "comicall satyres," was written at what may be considered an early turning point for Jonson in two somewhat conflicting respects. While this play begins a moralistic stage in his career, it also initiates a process of artistic and psychological development that eventually took him beyond such moralism. In this satire he begins to construct dramatic self-projections that, we shall see, are powerful tools of social critique and yet are also rather flat-footed and reductive figures of the artist as moralist. This formally daring drama may have not been the utter failure as had long been assumed, for as W. David Kay has shown, the play appears to have won Jonson for the first time the acclaim of a sophisticated segment of the audience[1] -- a group that may well have formed part of the "cunning palates" that we discussed in earlier chapters. He thus began to gain entry into the milieu that would eventually help to transform the moralistic cast of his thought, which was a necessary development to prepare the way

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[1]See Kay, "The Shaping of Ben Jonson's Career: A Re-examination of Facts and Problems."

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to the brilliantly sophisticated comedies of his major period. In *Every Man Out* not only does he satirize romantic comedy, which he employed in *Every Man In His Humour*, he initiates a series of innovative comedic experiments that attempt to supersede this genre.

In *Every Man Out* Jonson begins his critique of Puritan companionate marriage, including a satire of this emergent institution's attempt to join the intense narrative of courtly love to the quotidian and often disillusioning experience of a long term formal relationship. This is done in a brilliant manner in Act 2, scene 3 when Sir Puntarvolo has his wife help him play out a fantasy in which they are strangers who court each other in ludicrous language. In a speech that Carlo Buffone tells us is penned by the knight, his wife tells him that it "is be not vsual with me (chiefly in the absence of a husband), to admit any entrance to strangers, yet in the true regard of those innated virtues, and faire parts, which so strive to expresse themselues in you; I am resolu'd to entertaine you to the best of my vnworthy power." Buffone is "impatient of such foppery" of "a tedious chapter of courtship, after sir Lancelot and queene Gvenever" -- that is, of a ridiculous scene modeled on adulterous courtly love. *Every Man Out* is transitional for Jonson in that romantic love is for the first time scathingly satirized (as it will continue to be throughout the most successful part of his play-writing career), but adultery is not tolerated as it is later on. Infidelity is in fact censured not only implicitly in this scene between Puntarvolo and his wife, but also explicitly in another part of the play. Deliro is "besotted" with love for his wife, Fallace, who allows

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the clothes horse Fastitious Brisk to court her. They are caught by Deliro, who then falls out of his "humour" of "love." He throws his wife out, calling her a "lasciuious strumpet" (5.9.17) and sues Brisk, ruining him. A doting husband is thus satirized and attempted adultery is at the same time punished.

Jonson's changing attitude toward adultery should, perhaps, be seen in light of his religious history, which like that of sixteenth-century England oscillated between Protestantism and Catholicism. David Riggs has argued that he "adopted an inflexibly austere moral standard"[2] following his peculiar conversion to Catholicism. He told Drummond that he "took his religion by trust of a priest who Visited him jn Prison" (H&S, 1:139); he was there for killing the actor Gabriel Spencer in a duel. His religious fervor eventually subsided, and Drummond reports that after "12 yeares" he was no longer a "Papist." His conversion to Catholicism may be related to a search for moral absolutes that is reflected in the rather flat footed self-projections that begin in *Every Man Out.* During the period of his great comedies he grew tolerant in a number of areas including sexual morality (as we have seen) and metaphysical dogma. G. M. Pinciss, for instance, has shown that *Bartholomew Fayre* may well include a plea for religious tolerance.[3] His growing tolerance had, I will argue, a profound effect on his creation of characters of *wit* or creative intelligence.

His drift away from the Catholicism does not appear to indicate a return to a belief in Protestantism as much as an increasingly

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[2]Riggs, *Ben Jonson A Life*, p. 54.
[3]Pinciss, "*Bartholomew Fair* and Jonsonian Tolerance."

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secular stance. From an overly subtle religious distinction in an early poem: "Man may securely sinne, but safely never,"[4] Jonson's attitude toward sin changed markedly: "I *know* no disease of the Soule, but *Ignorance*; not of the Arts, and Sciences, but of it selfe" (*Disc.* p. 588). Jonson's "religion" became not one centered on Jesus, but on "truth": "*Truth* is mans proper good; and the onely *immortall* thing, was given to our mortality to use. No good *Christian*, or *Ethnick*, if he be honest, can miss it" (*Disc.* p. 580). Jonson's definition of "truth" changed to allow for what he came to see as justifiable deception and infidelity: his increasingly sophisticated ethics can be conceived as one more based on a secular "truth" than Christianity. That the mature Jonson was not overly influenced by the metaphysics of Christianity should not be surprising, given his psychological investment in pagan thinkers.

Jonson represents a fascinating mixed stance toward the changes that were occurring in intellectual and sexual modes of selfhood and social forms. A fierce individualist and a great classicist, he was a complex combination of traditionalist and innovator:

> I cannot thinke *Nature* is so spent, that she can bring forth nothing worth her former yeares. She is alwayes the same, like herselfe ... I know *Nothing* can conduce more to letters, then to examine the writings of the *Ancients*, and not to rest in their sole Authority, or take all upon trust from them ... For to all the

[4]From "Epos," which was first published as one of the poems appended to Chester's Love's Martyr in 1601; this poem is extant in a manuscript that predates its publication.

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> observations of the past we have our owne experience: which, if wee will use, and apply, wee have better meanes to pronounce. It is true they open'd the gates, and made the way, that went before us; but as Guides, not Commanders: *Non Domini nostri, sed Duces Fuêre.* Truth lyes open to all; it is no mans *severall.* (*Disc.* p. 567)

Jonson's project was a combination of neo-classicism and a Baconian empiricism, which strongly influenced his way of representing intimacy. Jonson, we might say, used the ancients as "Guides, not Commanders" to help him navigate an independent course in the new landscape brought about by such earth shaking developments as the Reformation. His achievement can perhaps be seen as a partial refashioning of the Horatian means available "to profit and delight" -- an uneasy (at times censorious and at times celebratory) exploration of early modern means of profitable thought and of delight through intimacy. His exploration and refashioning of contemporary modes of selfhood involved related issues of sexuality and *wit.* As Eve Sedgwick has argued, during the early modern period *wit* -- in the sense of intellectual conversation -- and sexual intimacy were more interchangeable than they now are.[5]

As the terms for and forms of sexual natures and associations have changed, the terms for the entity that introspects also shifted: from the classical and medieval *anima* and *soul* to the Renaissance *wit,* and finally to the Cartesian *mind* (more on this in chapter 7

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[5]See Sedgwick, *Between Men,* pp. 49-66, especially p. 61.

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below). The intentional obscuration of True-Wit's true "self" that we detailed in chapter 2 demonstrates that Jonson, like Shakespeare, participated in a cultural movement that witnessed the construction of relatively deep models of selfhood. While the question of subjectivity is therefore also important in relation to Jonson, I will nonetheless wait until later chapters to argue against the reductive or eliminativist view of many current influential literary theorists.

Jonson's discussion of issues relating to subjectivity is, of course, in contemporary vocabulary and thus often employs the term *wit*. *Wit*'s original sense, it is important to remember, was creative intelligence -- indeed, as we have seen, this word was the almost invariable translation of *ingenium*. More generally, this word is the privileged term for one's "glassy essence" to use Shakespeare's image. *Wit* is what I have called in the last chapter one of the "secret essences" of Renaissance England. As its more profound connotations were taken over by "mind," the significance of *wit* was devalued in the eighteenth century, a tendency both reflected in and affected by Alexander Pope's definition: "*True Wit* is *Nature* to Advantage drest, / What oft was *Thought*, but ne'er so well *Exprest*."[6] Indeed, Samuel Johnson observed that "Pope's account of wit is undoubtedly erroneous; he depresses it below its natural dignity, and reduces it from strength of thought to happiness of language."[7] While critics from Johnson to C. S. Lewis and William Empson have remarked astutely on the historical flux of *wit's* meaning,[8] the Renaissance dramatic theory of *wit* has nonetheless often been overlooked

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[6]Pope, *Essay on Criticism*, ll. 297-298.
[7]Johnson, "Cowley," *Lives of the English Poets*.
[8]See Empson, *The Structure of Complex Words*; Lewis, *Studies in Words*.

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despite the fact that it is clearly the complement of the more studied dramatic *humour* theory. They in fact should be seen as branches of a single early modern discourse on selfhood, for they were treated as such by seventeenth-century theorists. Dryden, for instance, noted that Falstaff is "a miscellany of humours drawn from so many several men: that wherein he is singular is his wit" and that "True-Wit of *The Silent Woman* was more difficult to the author, than all his images of humour in the play."[9]

While it has long been known that historically drastic changes occurred in the illocutionary force of *wit* and *humour*, the structure of these complex words is still often not fully appreciated. Part of the problem is that many critics wish to pin down the use of these terms in a positivistic manner. Wittgenstein's discussion of "family resemblances"[10] demonstrates, however, that we can never reach the total semantic clarity demanded by logicians such as Frege, but we can nevertheless speak intelligently of non-absolute relationships. It may be useful to consider such complex terms as vital packets of meaning, whose imprecision does not vitiate their usefulness. In the next section we shall closely examine Jonson's exploration of *wit* in his drama and its historical significance in the discourse of selfhood, but first we need to look at the role *humour* plays in this discourse. *Humour* is a multivalent term whose significance was during the Renaissance in the midst of a category change.[11] While it still

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[9]*Essays of John Dryden*, pp. 84, 140.

[10]See Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, p. 32.

[11]In deconstructive terms, we could say that a meaning of *humour* that was originally a "supplement" was in the process of being privileged; see Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*. Derrida's treatment of semantics both sheds light on such issues and unnecessarily obfuscates aspects of them.

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retained some aspects of its Galenic meaning -- which remained important in such works as Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy* -- in the writings of the dramatists, *humour* was not anchored to its medieval or literal meaning, but employed "by *Metaphore*," as Jonson explicitly stressed in the Induction to *Every Man Out of His Humour*. In the hands of dramatists the term began to take on a distinctly modern psychological significance, as Lawrence Danson has shown.

Danson has argued convincingly that Jonsonian humour theory prepared the way for the modern discipline of social psychology,[12] and therefore a case might be made for considering Jonson a proto-social constructivist. Many of his early "comicall satyres" concern how social forces mold the individual, and he continues to make such observations for the major part of his career. In *Epicoene*, for instance, Jonson notes how both men and women are constructed by their society. Otter remarks that his wife "takes her selfe asunder still when she goes to bed, into some twentie boxes; and about next day noone is put together againe, like a great *Germane* clocke" (4.2.97-99). Similarly, True-Wit observes after fitting Otter and Cutbeard as "my Diuine, & my Canonist, died their beards and all: the knaves doe not know themselves, they are so exalted, and alter'd. Preferment changes any man" (5.3.2-5).

Jonson, however, not only studied the relatively short term effects of social conditioning, but also created what Congreve called "true" humours[13] such as Morose whose behavior seems the result not of immediate social forces but of conditioning from childhood.

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[12]See Lawrence Danson, "Jonsonian Comedy and the Discovery of the Social Self."

[13]See Congreve, *Letters & Documents*, p. 180.

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Humours are not always easily derivable from social forces. They may be based on close observation of human attributes, but are intended to give only one aspect of an actual personality. Rather than merely seen as social roles, humours at times should also be considered analytic tools contributing to the modern tendency toward the particularization of the self -- which Simmel connected to the growth of the metropolis.[14] This tendency is manifested in the burgeoning of secular self-observation -- as practiced, for instance, by Petrarch and Montaigne -- as well as by the Reformation privileging of ordinary life and by religious self-exploration. It is later manifested in bourgeois diarists such as Samuel Pepys, and eventually develops into the Romantic conception of the uniqueness of the self.[15]

II. *"I loue a teeming wit": Deception, Self-Projection, and Agency*

While Jonson shared many views with modern-day social-constructivists, he did not fall into an eliminative behaviorism, which either ignores or denies the existence of the mind. He was, for instance, not blind to human agency, which he explored through his characters of *wit*. While characters of wit, like those of humour, were not intended to be rounded psychological studies, they partly derived from astute observations. He in fact tried to make sense of

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[14]Simmel, *On Individuality and Social Forms*. See also chapter 5 below.
[15]See Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, pp. 211-390.

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his observations in a ten-part section of *Discoveries* entitled "Ingeniorum discrimina" – which he translates as on "the difference of wits." He begins by asserting that it is a "maistry," that is, a mystery or craft, "to know them," and he ends with a discussion of the "true artificer."[16] Jonson's interest in the exploration of the nature of "artificers" is clear from a discussion elsewhere in *Discoveries* in which he observes that as "[t]here are diverse graces in [painting]; so are there in Artificers." His keen appreciation of an artist's ability to create illusion should alert us to his growing awareness of a psychological kinship with more nefarious artificers. The deceptions of tricksters that bourgeois Puritans attacked are eventually condoned by Jonson as the attempts of creative agents to negotiate a difficult world.

Jonson's *oeuvre* manifests a progressive refinement of techniques of obscurity and secrecy as well as a gradual acceptance of imagination, artful manipulation, and deceit. He moves, we shall see, from the moralistic simplicities and authoritarianism of the earlier satires through Machiavellian tragedy to the more challenging complexities of the great comedies. He expects increased discrimination in his auditors and requires of them greater responsibilities. In *Epicoene* he even restricts full engagement and full awareness of elements of the plot to "cunning palates" in order to provide them with a profound epistemological experience.

Critics have identified in Jonson a stoic tendency to censure obscurity, which is evident in the implicit criticism of many of his characters for masking their intentions. In "Jonson and the Loathèd

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[16]*Disc.* pp. 584-588; see chapter 2 for a discussion of the "true artificer."

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Stage," Jonas Barish points out that this disapprobation of deception entails a censure of role-playing essential to theatricality itself. As Barish goes on to note, however,

> Alongside the well-articulated antitheatricalism ... there lurks a less acknowledged but nonetheless potent theatricalism. The fact that Volpone, Morose, and Sir Epicure all think of the garbing of their paramours as 'art' serves to underscore the resemblance between the costumer's trade and the poet's, the craft of the cosmetician and that of the playwright. By placing the sacred term 'art' in the unhallowed mouths of these characters, Jonson acknowledges the bond between himself and them even as he repudiates it.[17]

Barish has identified in Jonson's drama crucial seemingly contradictory tendencies and he also correctly observes that these conflicts lend "to Jonson's comic masterpieces much of their unique high tension and precarious equilibrium."[18] We need, however, to move beyond registering the existence of such conflicts to an examination of their causes and development.

Jonson's original proclivity for a direct statement of intention can be seen in the relatively simplistic didactics of the early comedies. In fact, his tendency to put forward clear-cut ethical

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[17]Barish, "Jonson and the Loathèd Stage," p. 51.
[18]Barish, "Jonson and the Loathèd Stage," p. 52.

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assertions seems to have increased in the early period. Justice Clement, the authority figure in *Every Man In His Humour*, is the first of Jonson's moralists, but he is also an object of satire for his use of the law to entertain himself.[19] In this respect, Clement seems to prefigure Judge Over-Doo in *Bartholomew Fayre*. He thereby raises moral quandaries that will explored by the major comedies, such as: if even the judge must be judged, how, as Trouble-All puts it, can one find an authoritative "warrant" for one's actions. Jonson, however, may never have reached the level of achievement represented by the major comedies, if the analytic momentum of his work was not built up by means of the rather simplifying satiric vision of social morality put forth by three plays that followed *Every Man In*. In *Every Man Out of His Humour*, *Cynthia's Revels*, and *Poetaster* he creates his first series of innovative experiments in dramatic form, but is only able to do so by suppressing the ethical paradoxes that he earlier began to explore. While in these three plays -- which he termed the "comicall satyres" in the 1616 Folio -- Jonson takes on the mantle of social critic in a dramatic fashion, he is only able to become a self-confidant moral judge by ignoring the conundrums one finds in the ethical arena. If in the comicall satyres he developed into a more powerful critic of society, he also became a less tolerant observer of moral foibles by excluding from judgment the deeper problems of the artist's ethical position. Indeed, from *Every Man Out* through *Volpone* he seemed to believe that he could separate his own art from the art of deception practiced by the characters he was

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[19]See George Parfitt, *Ben Jonson: Public Poet and Private Man*, for a discussion of the early comedies.

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satirizing. While there is evidence of unconscious identification earlier on, I shall argue that only in writing *Epicoene* does he becomes fully conscious of the necessary link between his own art and those of the artificers to whom he was increasingly drawn.

If we look at the series of characters that seem closest to Jonson's self-image, they indeed take on strong ethical characteristics in the comicall satyres. In *Every Man In*, which was written before this period, Jonson seems to have most sympathy with the young poet Lorenzo Junior, who gives a moving apology for poetry at the play's end. In *Poetaster*, on the other hand, while young Ovid, the figure of the "pure" poet, is drawn with a significant degree of sympathy, Jonson does not identify with him. At the beginning of the play, this character might even be mistaken for the hero of the piece, but matters turn sour and Ovid falls from favor not only with Augustus but, it seems, with Jonson as well. While he was writing this play, he seems to have had deeply conflicting attitudes toward the power of poetry. Not only are his reservations concerning the deceptive potential of words reflected in his portrayal of the poetaster, who is forced to regurgitate pretentious coinages, but an inner struggle is suggested by the problematic characterization of Ovid, whom he seems to concede is a true poet. Since in this early period Jonson himself was an "angry young man,[20] he may have felt somewhat drawn to Ovid's rebelliousness. Virgil, on the other hand, may have been perceived as too close to the center of power for Jonson to identify with. Moreover, he was, perhaps, painfully aware

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[20]See E. Pearlman, "Ben Jonson, An Anatomy," and Riggs's chapter on Jonson as an "Angry Young Man," pp. 49-62.

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of his inability to assume the role of epic poet; indeed, when he collected his *Workes*, he had to make due with epigrams, lyric poems, and plays in his attempt to stake his claim as a poet laureate.[21] Jonson, instead, identifies with the satirist Horace.

In all the comicall satyres Jonson presents self-projections that unite aspects of poet and moralist in "lean" satirists. *In Every Man Out of His Humour*, Asper who is the "Presenter" of the Induction and who we are told is the author of the piece, is transformed into Macilente, who is apparently "Ben Jonson out of his humour."[22] Macilente is the traditional Juvenalian satirist. But since this type of character was brimming with anger, he could not be a trusted counselor of rulers, a characteristic that the aspiring Jonson required of his self-projections of this period. Gabriele Bernhard Jackson believes that this double character of the satirist indicates a doubleness in his imagination, which Jonson refused to admit.[23] Intentional, at times paradoxical satire of the satirist is, however, present in "A Fit of Rime against Rime." Since he identifies himself as Asper who metamorphoses into Macilente, it seems difficult not to attribute to him some degree of conscious and good-humored self-mockery. Moreover, Carlo Buffone offers a believable and humorous portrait of the author at the end of the Induction (ll. 334-45).

To deny Jonson a fair allotment of self-awareness would be arrogant and presumptuous, and is a common fallacy into which not only nineteenth-century critics but also many twentieth-century

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[21]See Richard Helgerson, *Self-Crowned Laureates: Spenser, Jonson, Milton, and the Literary System.*
[22]Brinsley Nicholson, ed. *The Best Plays of Ben Jonson, 1:112.*
[23]See *Vision and Judgment in Ben Jonson's Drama* , pp. 38-56.

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commentators have fallen.[24] One should not assume, however, that Jonson was always aware of all aspects of his nature. His increasing self-awareness in fact explains important changes that occurred in his literary career. During the period of the comicall satyres he was able both to identify with and satirize the satirists, and yet he denied any relation to the more troublesome characteristics represented in his drama. Later in his career, he seems to have been able to go far beyond this in that he was even able to use humour character as a means of self-criticism. Edmund Wilson, for instance, was correct to note that Jonson possessed a number of the character traits of Morose in *The Silent Woman.*[25] What Wilson did not realize is that Jonson only partly identified with this character and achieved a hard earned and painful self-understanding by this time in his career. He was therefore probably consciously satirizing his own foibles. That Jonson was eventually capable of such painfully honest self-satire is supported by such poems as "My Picture left in *Scotland.*"

The string of self-projections that Jonson created in the comicall satyres and the corresponding turn toward a more earnest moralism may, we have noted, be associated with a period of religious enthusiasm. While it is true that the comicall satyres reflect his desire to enter a courtly milieu that would eventually profoundly affect his moral bearings, nevertheless characters in these plays such as Crites in *Cynthia's Revels* and Horace of *Poetaster* represent attempts to put forth a clear-cut moral system -- attempts that he

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[24]There are exceptions such as Pearlman, Marotti, and Barish, who have shown that Jonson is much more complex than has generally been allowed.
[25]See Edmund Wilson, "Morose Ben Jonson"; Wilson's reductive thesis has been discredited by E. Pearlman in "Ben Jonson, An Anatomy."

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came to realize were awkward and simplistic. The "war of the theaters," of which *Poetaster* represents a major sally, taught him the dangers of placing such obvious and flat-footed self-projections on stage. In addition to a desire to put the war of the theaters behind him, he may well have realized that the self-projections of the comical satires were relatively rigid and static characters, which provided his critics with easy targets to attack. To avoid this problem, he turned to a more ironic mode by which he could escape the "wolues black iaw and the dull asses hoofe," as he put it the "apologeticall Dialogue" that was appended to *Poetaster*: "since the *Comick* MVSE / Hath prou'd so ominous to me, I will trie / If *Tragœdie* haue a more kind aspect." In this dialogue "the author" comes forward to speak *in propria persona*, perhaps in an attempt to free himself once and for all from his need to dramatize himself openly. Through out the period of the major comedies -- with the notable exception of the obscured figure of True-Wit in *Epicoene* -- he did not satisfy his urge to provide positive portraits of himself on stage. On the other hand, in his patronage poetry, which began at the same time as the series of self-dramatizations in the comicall satryes, he continued to present his unmistakable voice in a direct fashion.

In *Sejanus his Fall*, the surviving tragedy that followed the comicall satryes,[26] Jonson framed a more ironic play in which no character escaped the playwright's censorious ken. Jonson must have felt that his turn to tragedy was a mixed blessing. *Sejanus* was not a popular success and is still often not recognized for what I believe it

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[26]Since we know little about *Richard Crookback*, which he worked on right before *Sejanus*, I will not discuss this tragedy, which he may have abandoned before completion; see Riggs, pp. 98-99.

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is: the first of Jonson's five brilliant dramatic meditations on selfhood and deception. While the four major comedies have won critical acclaim (though all four are not always appreciated) *Sejanus* is not usually grouped with the plays that follow, probably because it is different in genre. With this tragedy, however, Jonson inaugurates a series of penetrating studies of the relation between self and role, which build upon the findings of the comicall satyres concerning the nature of character. As we have seen, the comic humours of the comicall satyres were attempts to understand how the individual is controlled by the social environment. These "satyres" were begun by imagining what would be left of the self when one is put out of one's "humour" -- that is, freed from the social forces that constructed the humour.

Sejanus takes this investigation to a more profound depth by placing it in the context of political tragedy. In this play the Roman citizens who look on helplessly are in one sense closely related to the comic humours, since their agency is paralyzed by the regime of power. Unlike the comic humours, they attempt to hold onto their ethical centers, but in doing so they become helpless onlookers and pawns, and eventually lose the selves that they are trying to conserve. Sejanus, on the other hand, has no ethical core and yet is not controlled by the social environment. He is thus free to manipulate masks and thereby construct a self that is able make a play for agency within the totalitarian power structure. This historical drama not only built on the early comic studies of the social self, but it also prepared the way for Jonson's comic masterworks -- somewhat as Shakespeare's English history plays

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deepened the characterology of the early comedies and laid the basis for his great tragic subjectivities.

Shakespeare -- who clearly was appreciative of Jonson's humour characterology, since he drew on these notions of self in his own work[27] -- must have realized when he acted in *Sejanus* that Jonson began to go beyond this system. By freeing Jonson from his moral moorings, the title character acted as a catalyst that allowed him to begin his profound study of the manipulation of roles that make up the self's alchemy. In a sense, Jonson continues to examine the "double character" that one finds in the figure of the angry satirist-counselor by displacing his concern with the overly reflexive studies of the comicall satyres to the Machiavellian figure of an artificer-henchman. Like the satirist-counselors of the comicall satyres, Sejanus is molded by the power matrices in which he exists. Yet he is able to thrive by deriving agency through the manipulation of the roles that he is dealt. Jonson was able to probe the self to a degree beyond what was possible by direct analyses. The increased ironic distance that tragedy provided freed from the claustrophobia of self-reflexive figures of the poet. His analytic abilities were also unfettered once he was no longer self-conscious. Jonson did not have to worry about being identified as Sejanus. He was therefore free to explore the power of deception that as an artist he was growing to know alarmingly well, but which his self-conscious moralism would prevent him from portraying in obvious self-projections.

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[27]It is well known that *The Merry Wives of Windsor* uses dramatic humours; this approach also clearly influenced various "flat" characters in other Shakespearean plays.

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Paradoxically, since Sejanus must have seemed almost by definition to be "other," Jonson was not morally inhibited from cramming his self-understanding about role playing and deception into this character. In this way, Sejanus is perhaps analogous to Iago, for as Greenblatt remarks, "Shakespeare seems to acknowledge, represent and explore his affinity to the malicious improviser." And just as it true for Shakespeare that "there are characters in his works who can improvise without tragic results, characters who can embrace a mobility of desire,"[28] beginning with his next play Jonson appears to have transmuted the source of psychic energy that was tapped by *Sejanus* to create improvisers whose actions are not of tragic seriousness. In *Volpone* his fascination with the discourse of the self that was unleashed by *Sejanus* was brought into a comedic setting, the arena in which he had most success and had completed most of his experiments in self-construction. The seriousness of the genre seemed to prevent him from bringing to tragedy the experimental freedom represented by the formal breakthroughs of *Every Man Out.* His move to the classical subject matter, after all, entailed a self-consciousness and inhibition about generic precedents. *Volpone*, as has oft been noted, is only a half-way station between tragic and comic genres. During his gradual return to comedy Jonson was able to build on the psychological advances of *Sejanus* as well as on the innovations in self-construction of his humour comedies. Such a union of means appears to have helped him attain the highest plateau in his literary career: the period of the four major comedies.

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[28]Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning*, p. 252.

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After *Sejanus* failed on stage and Jonson returned to comedy in *Volpone*, he continued to mine the vein of satire on secrecy and deception. Jonson had been personally adversely affected by political intrigue. He had to appear in front of the authorities after Guy Fawkes engineered an unsuccessful attempt to blow up Parliament and he landed in jail for the satire of the Scots in *Eastward Ho*. Therefore it is not surprising that *Volpone* seems to be as concerned with the political uses of secrecy -- especially its uses for oppression -- as *Sejanus*. Jonson appeared to believe that he was writing a comic version of *Sejanus*, one in which he did not have as serious a crime to censor, but which was nevertheless a piece that was just as concerned with judgment. William Slights has remarked that

> ... all the characters, not just Volpone, disguise their true desires and intentions in their attempts to control others. The real crux of the matter, then, is not so much Volpone's theatricality as the largely unquestioned assumption that men and women in the world of the play will pursue their own goals in secret. Secrecy is the societally condoned habit of mind that intensifies greed, lust, affectation, and mistrust. The dramatic mimesis of secrecy in *Volpone* is conspiracy, in which a small group schemes together secretly to deceive the rest of society. In each conspiracy Jonson uses techniques of the theater—disguise, plotting, and suspense—to comment satirically on those hidden

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> forms of social intercourse invented and perpetuated by people for self-serving ends.[29]

Slights goes on to relate this to "the inclination toward secrecy in Jonson's London" and his "frustrations in a world that conducts its business under a veil of secrecy."[30] Slights is following Sissela Bok, whom he notes maintains that secrecy is central "to the planning of every form of injury to human beings,"[31] but as we have seen in chapter 1 above, Bok too often ignores the important salutary and laudatory uses of secrecy.

Slights remarks that "the self is conceived of in plays such as *Sejanus* ... as an area of knowledge to be carefully guarded and to be shared only at enormous risk. Secrecy is the last bastion of self-preservation for the imperial minion, Sejanus."[32] What he fails to notice is that with the coming of the modern era, secrecy increasingly becomes an important "bastion of self-preservation" for all. Rather, than relying on the one-sided perspective put forth in Bok's popular books *Secrecy* and *Lying*, it would be wiser to heed the more balanced view presented, for example, by the collection of essays edited by Stanton Tefft entitled *Secrecy: A Cross-Cultural Perspective*. These essays demonstrate in detail that secrecy is not only a tool of the oppressor but also a necessary strategy to enable individuals to withstand the oppression of the modern state. Secrecy is, for instance, essential for the modern individual's and the modern

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[29]Slights, *Ben Jonson and the Art of Secrecy*, p. 59.
[30]Slights, p. 60.
[31]Quoted in Slights, p, 58.
[32]Slights, p. 56.

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family's construction of privacy, as well as the homosexuals' creation of protective "closets" without which historically they would often have been relatively helpless in the face of ideological oppression.

While one may find a sternly satiric attitude toward secrecy exhibited by *Sejanus*, this is not the case for the plays that followed. In these plays there is manifested an increasing awareness of the playwright's affinity to the masterful deceivers. We have seen Barish note "that Volpone, Morose, and Sir Epicure all think of the garbing of their paramours as 'art.'" It is important, however, to distinguish between such examples of identification. In *Volpone* Jonson does not completely own up to this troubling even if partial self-representation. In the play's dedicatory epistle, for instance, he writes that his "special aim" of the play's "catastrophe" was "to put the snaffle in their mouths, that crie out, we neuer punish vice in our enterludes, &c."(ll. 115-16). By the time he wrote *Bartholomew Fayre* Jonson's defense of poetry against such attacks is of quite a different nature. Rather than punishing the artful deceiver, in the later play Jonson uses a puppet show to rebut the case against the drama put forth by the Puritans, here represented by Zeal-of-the-Land Busy. In this way Jonson now implicitly identifies with the artful dodgers of the fair.

As, for instance, Anne Barton argues, trust and friendship were preoccupations of Jonson both in his drama and his non-dramatic poetry.[33] Such concerns are closely related to his aspirations of becoming a counselor to the prince, which he eventually achieved to

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[33]See Barton, *Ben Jonson, dramatist*, p. 204.

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some degree through his career as a writer of Masques.[33] These concerns appear to be behind the importance of counselor figures that we have seen are present in the comicall satyres and that continue to turn up in his drama in various forms well into the period of his major comedies. The minion *Sejanus* is both a counselor and a henchman who tries to usurp the position of his patron, the emperor Tiberius. In *Volpone* a parallel intrigue is played out, for Mosca also makes a play to usurp the position of his patron Volpone.

While Volpone is clearly an enormously successful representation of the version of finite subjectivity that was then termed *wit*, he is in fact equaled by his servant. Mosca is indeed a crucial figure in this play and has been underestimated by the critics. While it is true that Mosca may be based on the clever slaves of Terentian comedy, these characters are, like Mosca, the creators and executors of most of their plays' plots. Except when he sallies forth moved by his lust for Celia or by a schadenfreude to see the suffering of his victims, Volpone usually remains quite sedentary, lying in his bed while Mosca maneuvers the gulls and creates the plots that he savors. Mosca's mobility of mind makes it as difficult for the arm of the law to grab him as it is for a hand to swat a fly. Volpone, on the other hand, seems to escape being trapped more by luck than by his own skills, and it is his own desire to savor his victory over his gulls that leads to his capture. Unlike Sejanus, Mosca

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[33]He continued to feel, however, that he was an outsider, for as he told Drummond, "he heth a minde to be a churchman, & so he might have favour to make one Sermon to the King, he careth not what y^{r}after sould befall him, for he would not flatter though he saw Death" (*Conv.* p. 141).

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is even able to outfox his patron, who is only able to stop Mosca by bringing ruin down on himself, that is, by "mortifying the fox."

In his next comedy, Jonson continues his progress in his project to represent *wit*, or creative intelligence. Just as Mosca and Volpone develop the discourse of character begun in Sejanus, True-Wit, the counselor of the heir Dauphine, goes beyond Volpone and his servant. As we have seen in chapter 2, the silent intrigue of *The Silent Woman* concerns a counselor who is kept out of the confidence loop, who discovers what has been kept from him, and who uses this knowledge to prove his worth. True-Wit not only teaches Dauphine a lesson, if a secret one, about trust, but also successfully ends the play literally by addressing the audience and dramatically by covertly accomplishing his own and his friend's goals. In this play the ethos of the artificers is clearly superior to that of the schemers of the two earlier plays. In True-Wit, the ethical worth represented by the earlier self-projections of the comicall satyres has been united with the ingenuity of the artificers of *Volpone* and *Sejanus*.

Volpone is obviously close to the comicall satyres in tone and even in conception, but unlike these earlier comedies -- and like *Sejanus* -- the leading characters rather than the subsidiary ones are the objects of satire. While this new type of satiric comedy far excelled the previous ones in all aesthetic measures, Jonson nonetheless came upon an impasse. Volpone and Mosca are superbly artful manipulators and yet are morally despicable -- a combination of traits that Jonson appears to have eventually realized is the cause of an ethical dilemma. The very characters we are asked to condemn win our admiration by means of their great ingenuity. Jonson himself

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clearly felt sympathy for the brilliant artificers that he created and may have, understandably, even felt pride in having fashioned their canny impostures. This great comedy's dedicatory epistle to The Two Famous Universities For their Live and Acceptance Shown to his Poem" suggests that he was unable to consciously accept the sympathy that he felt.

The spirited epistle was written with the logic of the comical satires in mind, but *Volpone* neither truly puts "to put the snaffle in their mouths, that crie out, we neuer punish vice in our enterludes"; nor does it "inform men in the best reason for living." Instead, he seems to have unconsciously imbibed the irrational dramatic content of what he would later call "Marlowes *mighty line*." While watching or reading a play such as Marlowe's *Tamburlaine*, one feels a similar mixture of attraction and repulsion for the protagonist. Although we have seen that Jonson was enough of a rebel to protest the emerging sexual code, nonetheless such an outrageous flouting of any traditional sense of justice was not acceptable to him, and he indeed censures *Tamburlaine* in *Discoveries* (H&S, 8:587). His Horatian aesthetics would have caused him to be quite sensitive to the ethical confusions implicit in this type of drama. After *Volpone*, he never again presents us with exquisitely artful deceivers whom we are expected to condemn as outright villains. Indeed, in his next play the master manipulators are not scoundrels but gallants.

The ethical thrust of *Volpone* must have eventually seemed to Jonson to be dangerously ambiguous. Jonson's subtextual identification with Volpone and Mosca is, perhaps, as problematic as Milton's latent sympathy with Satan that Blake famously remarked.

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Like Milton, Jonson felt compelled to punish these figures austerely. He was, however, not as invested in a religious system as Milton, and seemed able to deal with the problem of the existence of evil in a new secular, psychological mode: by denying it status as a essence. In fact he would eventually satirize the conception of an evil metaphysical essence in *The Divell is an Asse.* After *Volpone*, he no longer created attractive figures of unadulterated malevolence, and yet he was nevertheless able to stay close to his original inspiration. He avoided the most serious ethical pitfalls by never again endowing a single character with both a truly malevolent nature and an impressive inventive *wit.* The morally dangerous combination of comedic and tragic elements that we find in *Volpone* is not found in his later work. He was nevertheless able to maintain the analytic power of his humour theory. The *humours*, which in the wide sense that Jonson employed take in most of his creations, are henceforth less morality figures and more studies in character.

After *Volpone* Jonson's characters fall into three basic types. As in *The Fox*, at the bottom of the hierarchy there are the fools and gulls: Daw, La Foole, and Morose in *Epicoene*, Dapper, Drugger, Mammon, Tribulation, Annias in *The Alchemist*, Busy, Bartholomew Cokes in *Bartholomew Fayre.* In *The Alchemist*, which resembles *The Fox* in structure, this is the largest class, but in *Epicoene* and *Bartholomew Fayre* there is a new middle group that is the most populous. These are neither pure fools nor gulls; they are instead fallible figures who are interesting not because of the audacity or magnificence of their foolishness but because they are redeemed to a significant extent by their humanity. In *Epicoene* this includes Tom

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Otter, Cutbeard, and the Ladies Collegiate, in *The Alchemist* Surly, and in *Bartholomew Fayre* the greater part of the persons of the play. At the top of this hierarchy are the wits, who are no longer powerfully malevolent as they are in *Volpone*, but instead are figures that may possess foibles redeemable by their intelligence: the three gallants of *Epicoene*, the venture tripartite as well as Love-Wit of *The Alchemist*, the widow-winning Quarlous of *Bartholomew Fayre*.

In *Epicoene*, Jonson again proffers artist and scholar figures as he did in *Poetaster*, but now these characters are urbane and shrewd artificers. With surprisingly little awkwardness, the poet Clerimont has his boy recite his graceful and thematically relevant lyric; Dauphine invents and instigates the central plot; and subtle and "scholar-like"[34] True-Wit dominates the philosophical conversations and creates and executes most of the subsidiary artifices. We have seen in the chapter 2 that he is not only the authorial spokesman in the philosophical conversations, but also the master-wit secretly responsible for the successful completion of the central action. Since his selfhood is complex and ingeniously obscured, he can be considered both Jonson's deepest character and the culmination of the self-projections of the comical satyres.

Jonson's immediate motivation in creating such a figure may have had to do with the *drama* of True-Wit's reputation. When he attempts to make it known that he had "fore-saw it, as well as the starres themselues" (2.4.84) that Morose would react adversely to his disturbing visit, True-Wit is accused of being a "strange iustifier of"

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[34]Dryden, p. 174.

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himself. At the end True-Wit does not try to claim credit for having enabled Dauphine's project to succeed and instead remains silent fearing that he may be abused once again. These incidents resonate with Jonson's own experience. In the Apologeticall Dialogue appended to *Poetaster*, when the author refuses to "answere ... the libells" of his detractors, his *silence* represents his desire to sit henceforth above the battle. That between *Poetaster* and *Epicoene* Jonson continued to mull over this type of ethical question is clear from the remark in *Volpone* that "calumnies are answer'd best with silence" (2.2.20). The problem of false or exaggerated accusations was not unknown to Jonson. Besides the attacks he suffered in the war of the theaters, it was merely because he was a well-known Catholic recusant that he was called to appear in front of the authorities after Guy Fawkes attempted to blow up Parliament.

In *The Silent Woman* a quite different, much more positive aspect of the theme of secrecy is revealed than the one we find in *Sejanus* and *Volpone*. While in *Sejanus* and to some degree in *Volpone* Jonson critiqued the use of secrecy by conspiratorial individuals, *The Silent Woman* demonstrates that eventually his attitude was by no means a wholesale rejection of the uses of secrecy. As we have seen in chapter 2, throughout *Epicoene* Jonson draws on a classical and Renaissance tradition which insists that silence, when properly used, is a means to wisdom and power. Dauphine's plot offers a vivid illustration of the power of silence, but only when one sees through True-Wit's final deception -- his refusal to take credit for the success of the central plot -- is it possible to understand how the ethical dimension of the tradition is also

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fulfilled. Through this noble lie True-Wit finds a silent means to express his loving friendship and his trustworthiness -- values that we have seen Jonson repeatedly stressed.

The effect of Jonson's new acceptance of the uses of deception can be seen in the tolerance of the tricksters' schemes in the plays that follow *Epicoene*. *The Alchemist*, the comedy written between *Epicoene* and *Bartholomew Fayre*, is steeped in the esoteric tradition. On one level it is a satiric attack on the secretive art of bogus alchemists, who set up a confidence game not unsimilar in structure to the one we find in *Volpone*. Volpone remains in bed as the gulls are handled by Mosca, and Subtle remains in the basement as Face manipulates the clients. Jonson's delight in ingenious deception (and perhaps his appreciation of the lore of alchemy[35]) is, however, evident throughout the play. This delight is incarnated in the character of Love-Wit, who appears to be standing in for the playwright when he tells us that "I loue a teeming wit, as I loue my nourishment" (V.i.16). The plots by the members of the tripartite venture are relatively nefarious, and yet in the fifth act they are more than excused by Love-Wit. None of the plotters are punished and Love-Wit, the master of the house, even joins Face in creating and executing the final schemes.

In the festive atmosphere of *Bartholomew Fayre*, this tolerant attitude toward the use of subterfuges is taken even further. This play has an innovative structure[36] that may well represent a culmination of Jonson's ability to negotiate a messy moral landscape.

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[35]See F. H. Mare's introduction to the Revels edition of *The Alchemist*.
[36]See Freda Townsend, *Apologie for Bartholomew Fayre*.

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While some think that this play expresses cynicism about human nature, it seems much more probable to represent a realistic sympathy for erring humanity based on the understanding that the artist must also steep himself in falsehood. Certainly, Jonson no longer attempts to "put the snaffle in their mouths, that crie out, we neuer punish vice in our enterludes." Quite a turnabout has taken place in Jonson's attitude toward deception. His new aesthetic and moral perspective started with an unconscious sympathy for the artificers of *Sejanus* and *Volpone*, reached in *The Silent Woman* a conscious understanding of the need for deception, and then was brilliantly exploited in the final two major comedies.

Jonson's ability, then, to create a submerged self-projection in the character of True-Wit appears to have enabled him to come to terms with the artist's use of illusion. His success at covertly presenting a dramatic self-image acted as an emotional and psychological catalyst allowing him to arrive at the tolerant attitude toward human shortcomings that one finds in the comedies that followed. His ability psychologically to "own" his delight in deceit leads to his tolerance of the duplicity of the ingenious tricksters and deceivers of *The Alchemist* and *Bartholomew Fayre*. After *Epicoene* the tricksters once again become more culpable. In *The Alchemist* the inner circle of cognoscenti are charlatans. In *Bartholomew Fayre*, the rogues are presided over by a Justice who is a fool. While these comedies do not include a character similar to the elusive self-projection of *The Silent Woman*, we nonetheless sense the presence of a playwright whose astute yet understanding attitude concerning human folly seems similar to True-Wit's, as if his ego is submerged

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only a little below the threshold of the obvious. Jonson's love of *wit* allowed him now to express a conscious sympathy with his artful deceivers and to take a complex aesthetic and ethical stance that represents a significant part of his major achievement.

Rather than use *wit* as we now often do to suggest a mental facility and a faculty enmeshed in the social context, Jonson used this concept to explore the ethical and aesthetic complexities of human agency and -- in its pure or "true" form -- the possibility of a profound, decidedly critical faculty. Indeed, True-Wit's functions -- spokesman for the author in the philosophical colloquies, commentator on the other characters, covert expediter of the action -- tend to "lift" him out of the society of the play.[37] Such disengagement is indeed appropriate for *true wit* viewed as "seat of consciousness or thought, the mind" (*OED*). Aspects of this character, like some aspects of Hamlet,[38] thus seem to represent cultural work contributing to the tendency of the modern self toward an abstract, disengaged subject. Clearly defined and given an epistemological foundation by Descartes and Locke, the disengaged self is closely tied to the Enlightenment conception of reason and generic human nature.[39] The theory and practice of dramatic *wit* may well have contributed to the development of the disengaged self. Dramatic humour theory and practice, on the other hand, contributed to the particularization of the self. Both tendencies -- to particularization and to disengagement -- were essential to the formation of the

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[37]See Douglas Duncan, *Ben Jonson and the Lucianic Tradition*, p. 178; W. David Kay, "Jonson's Urbane Gallants," p. 257; Barish, *Prose Comedy*, pp. 175-76.
[38]See chapters 7 and 8 below; see also Naomi Scheman, "From Hamlet to Maggie Verver," who views Hamlet purely as a disengaged Cartesian subject.
[39]See Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, pp. 143-198.

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modern concept of the self and both helped to make possible modern psychological perspectives.

Given the resurgence of Jonson studies and his ability to explore complex ethical and aesthetic issues, he may, perhaps, eventually secure an impressive position in the canon. He both resisted certain movements of modernity, such as puritanical mores, the Protestant work ethic, and the depiction of emotional landscapes, but he also helped create a secular counter-tradition that also was essential to the development of modernity. This counter-tradition helped a morally sophisticated creative intelligence (or *wit*) replace religious subjectivity and thus played a significant role in the emergent construction of the modern finite subject. His work fostered the vitality of empirical sexual modes that could withstand the increasingly repressive idealizations that institutions were using to enforce social discipline. His non-puritanical visions are becoming more relevant as Western societies begin to question the medieval Christian assumptions that James Brundage has shown still exists in modern secular law concerning marriage and intimacy.[40] And his emphasis on *wit*, which fuses reason and ingenuity, may offer us some guidance in our attempt to go beyond the Romantic celebration of imagination at the cost of logic. His contribution to the construction of early modern modes of intimacy and agency may well have profoundly affected and reflected the ways that early modern

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[40]Brundage, *Law, Sex and Christian Society in Medieval Europe*. Cf. the discussion of Brundage's work in the last chapter.

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individuals adapted to the increased social pressures of the "civilizing process."[41]

[41]See Norbert Elias, *The Civilizing Process*, who, we have seen in chapter 1, argued that the early modern psychic restructuring included a significant growth in the power of the superego (more on this in the chapter 6).

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PART THREE

SHAKESPEARE

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Chapter 5

HAMLET, INTERPRETATION, AND THE HISTORICAL SOCIOLOGY OF DEPTH

I. *Modes of Approaching* Hamlet

From the Romantics and before to recent theorists of various stripes *Hamlet* has long served as a favored means of discussing questions about the nature and history of the self. This text appears to be such a crucial document in the Western history of the evolution of selfhood that even Freud, who usually described changes in subjective structure as taking place before the advent of recorded history, thought that it represents "the secular advance of repression in the emotional life of mankind."[1] Many psychoanalytic critics may nevertheless underestimate the changes in selfhood that the play reflects and to which it contributes, especially since this insight was uncharacteristic of the general thrust of his work. Moreover, while psychoanalysis has shed light on the play's examination of the forces that the family exerts on the individual, it often understates the role played by large-scale social forms. Lacan's marriage of structuralism and psychoanalysis, which he applied to *Hamlet*,[2] does, it is true, take into account social, familial, and phenomenological standpoints. Like Freud, however, he usually under emphasized the historical currents

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[1]Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, p. 264.
[2]Lacan, "Desire and the Interpretation of Desire in *Hamlet*."

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that may well be essential for a satisfying understanding of the play's exploration of the notion of selfhood.

A number of current historicists do, it is true, realize that the play does not offer a representation of a "timeless" self. Unfortunately, they usually either assert that subjectivity is an illusion created by the play's Romantic critics, or offer reductive historiographies about its construction by capitalism *ex nihilo*, as it were. This unfair treatment of subjectivity and its history is made possible both by the reductive theoretical perspective of these au courant materialists and by their obsessively synchronic readings that focus only on the early modern *construction* of the subject.

The perspective of the *longue durée* can, I believe, help us see that this work in fact uses a profound epistemological method to dramatize the passing of infinite versions of subjectivity and the arrival of the finite deep subject. This general thesis will be supported in various ways. In this chapter we will view the play's registering of this arrival through the perspective of historical sociology. In the next we will examine *Hamlet*'s position in Shakespeare's oeuvre in light of the early modern shift in modes of intimacy and in kinship structures. Chapter 7 will look at the play in relation to historical changes in the discourse system concerning subjectivity. The antifoundational version of the finite subject that the play presents, the dramaturgical method it uses to present it, and the current theoretical relevance of this version will be discussed in chapter 8.

In this chapter I will first argue that Shakespeare creates not so much a stable mimetic representation as a linguistic structure that

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allows for a range of deep readings, which entail a significant though bounded degree of indeterminacy. Rather than (re)presenting a mimesis of a deep self with particular contents, *Hamlet* seems to register the traumatic emergence of finite depth. This radically historicized view will be supported by an analysis of the play's imagery in light of the early modern revolution in manners. As we observed in chapter 1, manners appear to be a psychological shielding mechanism, which produces the sense of a finite deep subject. Just as placing a screen that partly blocks an object produces a representation of visual depth, the shielding of drives that manners entail creates the impression of psychological depth. Manners are not, of course, the only means to produce a sense of depth. The play's imagery suggests, we shall see, the internalization of surveillance practices, which, as a number of writers have noted, is related to the historical development of the modern subject. Finally, we will examine how the play's representation of internal structure is enhanced by images that suggest the evolution of complexity in external structures -- both architectural and urban ones.

Approaches that assume *Hamlet* is -- at least on one level -- structured phenomenologically are, I believe, more successful that those that view it as a purely "objective" drama. To put it simply, to a large degree we are made to feel that we are able both to look into the protagonist's consciousness and to see the play-world through his eyes. From his first speech in which he tells us that he "know[s] not 'seems,'" our gaze is somehow as much on what he has "within which passes show" as on external reality, and part of our "objective" experience is Hamlet's "subjective" experience of physical and mental

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events. Any purely mimetic interpretation, then, appears to go against the playwright's intention, and the play cannot be firmly placed in the category of "realistic" drama whether we try to define this in our own or in contemporary terms. From our point of view a play that begins as a ghost story should of course immediately be disqualified as realism. On the other hand, historical "mimeticists" who attempt to adjust for this by placing the play in the context of premodern belief systems are in the end also stymied, for they cannot account for the play's shifting ontology. When the play opens it is true that the audience is presented with a "real" ghost whose existence is verified by a number of observers. This, however, is only preliminary data about the nature of the play-world, for it turns out that what might be called the figurative and ontological foundation of the play is not a static structure but instead develops according to a pattern in which, for instance, the ghost gradually fades out of existence.

To consider the ghost to be in the same ontological system as the human characters in the play, would, I think, be a mistake. In his *Remarks on Colour* Wittgenstein refers to the problems arising from its non mimetic nature by observing that it breaks the rules of our usual language games of the visible: "We might say, the colour of the ghost is that which I must mix on the palette in order to paint it accurately. But how do we determine what the accurate picture is?"[3] The ghost is more an allegory of selfhood than either a physical entity or spiritual one with a physical manifestation, and should not

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[3]Quoted in Peter Hughes, "Painting the Ghost: Wittgenstein, Shakespeare and Textual Representation," pp. 372-73.

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be assigned a certain ontological status. This figure is directly addressed as "thou" but when referred to in the third person "it" is often used rather than he; as Marjorie Garber aptly notes, "'It' is a space of conjecture, to be questioned."[4] This *it* is not an *ego*,[5] for as a subjective representation it functions more as a psychological adjunct, and is thus more analogous to an *id* (literally "it") or a superego. *It* is intended to prepare us for the exploration of selfhood that is centered around Hamlet.

Even in the first act when the ghost appears to many, it speaks only to its son and thus is not fully part of the life-world. While we are asked to take the ghastly occurrence quite serious, we should not assign this phenomenon full objective status, for even after seeing it, Horatio still suspects that the Ghost is an "illusion" (I.i.130). When it returns later, it is only visible to Hamlet, not to his mother, who when asked "Do you see nothing there?" answers "Nothing at all; yet all that is I see" (3.4.132-33). Its visual objectivity has disappeared. Nor is it purely a theatrical phantom, for it breaks the contemporary convention for stage ghosts by not returning at the play's end: it has totally faded away. If Hamlet is a new man, a great innovation in characterization, his father is also a new creature, one "radically different from any ghost that preceded or followed it."[6]

Going against what would seem the obvious evidence provided in the first act, the great textual scholar W. W. Greg even argued that

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[4]Garber, p. 307.
[5]See Garber's comments on the Elizabethan use of *it* (Wofford, p. 308).
[6]Eleanor Prosser, *Hamlet and Revenge* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1967), p. 260.

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the ghost should be seen as Hamlet's hallucination[7] ; that he was able to find sufficient textual support for such a case is only explicable by the shifting ontological landscape. Attempts to explain the ghost's ontology in terms of a religious system are also problematic, for there is contradictory evidence that it may be Protestant, Catholic, or pagan (more on this in the chapter 7). To consider the play a realistic drama in terms of dramatic conventions that would latter reach hegemony, even if one takes into account the religious weltanschauung of the time -- as Dover Wilson famously attempts[8] -- is, I think, even less interesting than Greg's approach, which is at least appreciative of the play's use of the ghost to represent Hamlet's phenomenological viewpoint. Indeed, that the play should not be treated in purely realistic terms is clear from Robert Weimann's *Shakespeare and the Popular Tradition*, which documents the non-mimetic roots of Shakespearean drama.

While the cultural and historical contexts are extremely important in situating the play's dramaturgical method, even such evidence can lead us astray, for Shakespeare generally experiments with his dramatic medium, perhaps no where more than in *Hamlet*. We should thus not assume that he would follow convention. Despite the fact that it is basically a non-narrative mode, one attuned more to "showing" rather than "telling," drama can get across a story in numerous ways, and thus Henry James's remark that there are 5,000,000 ways to tell a tale is pertinent.[9] If at the beginning of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, Joyce can use third-person

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[7]Greg, "Hamlet's Hallucination."
[8]Wilson, *What Happens in Hamlet.*
[9]See Wayne Booth's discussion of this in *The Rhetoric of Fiction.*

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narration to create the effect of a "stream of consciousness," we should not doubt Shakespeare's ability to use drama -- which is a mode that to some degree corresponds to the third-person -- to present us with a powerful document of inwardness. The play's radical use of soliloquies, which violate modern standards of realistic drama, can mean little else than that he wished to do so. Indeed, approaching the effect of a narrative stream of consciousness, the monologues present the contingent twists and turns of the protagonist's train of thought and emotion. Hamlet can contemplate suicide and then change his mind in front of our eyes due to no external cause, but rather due to an internal event: the appearance in his consciousness of the notion that death might not be a peaceful "sleep" that will "end / The heart-ache and the thousand natural shocks / That flesh is heir to," but instead might be a series of nightmarish "dreams" -- this "Must give us pause" (3.1). We need, then, to resist the "default" or usual assumption -- which we tend only to give up when presented with, say, the conventions of twentieth-century modernist drama -- that a play is thoroughly intended as a (re)presentation of an "objective" reality. *Hamlet* appears at times to present us with -- among other things -- something approaching a "stream of consciousness."

Although hard-nosed historical "mimeticists" continue to write impressive volumes[10] in an attempt to explain the conflicting evidence that the play proffers, critics who take a more figurative approach have in general become more influential. Moreover, as Weimann's "study of *Hamlet* attempts to show, Shakespearean

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[10]See, for instance, Arthur McGee, *The Elizabethan Hamlet.*

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mimesis comprehends so many functions that neither the traditional or classical nor the poststructuralist approach to mimesis can do justice to them all."[11] Indeed, the split between mimetic and figurative modes in fact cut across various schools of criticism. Writers influenced by Lacan, for instance, may read the play as symptomatic of psycho-social structures, while other critics that also employ psychoanalysis may treat it quite mimetically and drag various characters into their offices to spend some time on the couch. When the latter approach is applied to characters other than Hamlet -- to decide, for instance, that Ophelia's mental illness was caused by a pregnancy -- we have not progressed much beyond nineteenth-century discussion of cruxes concerning, for instance, the number of children of the Macbeths.[12] In the play-world Ophelia exists as much as a representation of Hamlet's desire -- as "a piece of bait named Ophelia" to use Lacan's provocative description[13] -- as she *lives* in her own right.

When Hamlet is put on the couch, much more interesting speculations may proceed, since he is at the phenomenological center. Partly because we often experience the events and figures of the play-world through Hamlet's eyes, his relationship with others can take on a startling intensity. The love-hate relations with his mother and with Ophelia appear to have the fiery emotional tone that is a standard feature of modern family life (more on the history of

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[11]Weimann, "Mimesis in *Hamlet*," p. 278.

[12]See A. C. Bradley, *Shakespearean Tragedy*, note EE, who, however, attempts to limit the importance of such questions.

[13]Lacan, "Desire and the Interpretation of Desire in *Hamlet*," p. 11. On Freud's use of these two plays see, for instance, Garber, "*Hamlet*: Giving Up the Ghost," *Shakespeare's Ghost Writers*.

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intimacy in the next chapter). Hence the successes of some orthodox psychoanalytic critics of the play, beginning with Freud, who examine the individual in terms of familial intimacy. And if the play has Hamlet as a phenomenological center, then a character such as Gertrude should probably be seen somewhat qua "mother" rather than -- or at least not only as -- a widow who has every right to enjoy her sexuality.[14] Nor, of course, are we made to suffer as much at Polonius's demise as we are at Hamlet's. In fact Hamlet's point of view -- or, rather, the *representation* of his "consciousness" -- appears at times to overflow the bounds of his character; the ghost, for instance, is made *for* Hamlet.

The drama that most helped Freud develop his most fundamental insights may not have been *Oedipus* but *Hamlet.* He named his famous complex after the Greek play because it dramatized the marrying of one's mother and the murder of one's father. Not the actual deeds but rather the desire to commit them is, however, at the center of the complex. As we have seen in chapter one, Oedipus does not in fact have a standard Oedipus complex, since he did not know who his father was when he killed him nor who his mother was when he married her. Although it was not used apparently because of the fear that it would cause confusion, the more accurate term would be "Hamlet complex," for it was this character who Freud believed was the character that best represented a classic Oedipal complex. In its "first explicit introduction" he discusses this complex first in relation only to the

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[14]See Adelman's important discussion of Hamlet, Gertrude, and the phenomenological perspective of the play in her chapter on *Hamlet* in *Suffocating Mothers.*

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audience reaction to the Greek play and then immediately speculates on how Hamlet may be a dramatic representation of the complex.[15] While no Oedipal reading is offered for Oedipus, Freud and Ernest Jones, who first developed Freud's views, accounted for Hamlet's apparent procrastination by arguing that he hesitates in taking his revenge because he identifies with his father's killer.

The views of Freud and Jones rest on a number of axioms. They had to make the assumption that Hamlet implicitly shared what they believed to be universal aggressive tendencies toward the father. There is no explicit textual support for this view, since all of Hamlet's references to the dead king are loving ones. Also, why a Renaissance character rather than a classical one became the best dramatic exemplar of an Oedipal complex was never satisfactorily explained. Freud's remark that "the changed treatment of the same material reveals the whole difference in the mental life of these two widely separated epochs of civilization: the secular advance of repression in the emotional life of mankind" suggests the classical Greeks were not as repressed as the early moderns -- that they were more able to admit, as Jocasta says is common knowledge, that males desire to sleep with their mothers. But the possibility that the ancients were less prone than later ages to repress such desires would not explain why they did not create a classic dramatic representation of the Oedipal complex. Would not they be freer to bring such material to consciousness, since Freud, after all, believed the ancients had such

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[15]See "Letter 71" that Freud wrote to Fliess on October 15, 1987; *Standard Edition*, 1:265-266; quotation on 266n. Ernest Jones, *Hamlet and Oedipus*, offers a somewhat reductive development of Freud's theory. See, for instance, Susanne Wofford, ed. *Hamlet*, pp. 189-192.

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complexes? Freud's remark admitting historical variants in subjectivity is an anomaly, since he almost always places the origins and development of such psychic structures in prehistory. I hope to shed some light on this question later in this chapter when I support Norbert Elise's assertion that Freud's view of selfhood was insufficiently historical, and in the next one when we explore a more historicized version of social structures of repression.[16]

As we have seen in chapters 1 and 3, my approach goes against the grain of structuralist and post-structuralist methodology in that it does not privilege the synchronic over the diachronic. It is, nevertheless, informed by notions from currently popular approaches including psychoanalytic ones, and in fact important synchronic views of selfhood will be drawn upon when we treat *Hamlet* in relation to deep historical currents, which is my primary focus. I shall not offer a particular synchronic interpretation of the play, since I believe that a structural depth is created that may be "filled" by a number of suggestive readings. I do not think, however, that all readings are equal. I would argue that some are not very suggestive and others are even misguided, such as ones that claim that Hamlet is actually a "flat" character and that we misread depth into the play. Although I will not provide one more psychoanalytic reading to fill the structural depth that the play constructs, we will need to discuss both this structure's shape and the indeterminate nature of its contents.

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[16]For an interesting, though not sufficiently historicized discussion of Freud's treatment of *Oedipus* and *Hamlet*, see Garber, pp. 327-28.

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First of all, we should note that the general shape of a structure of compelling deep readings should not be distorted by the gender biases of orthodox Freudianism. Freud's attempt to balance his Oedipal complex for males by theorizing an Electra complex for females ignores the society's gender imbalances and brings to light the problems caused by Freudianism's exclusive focus on the family. While Freud admitted that he was not able to reach a satisfying understanding of female psychology, he believed that the Oedipal theory was a successful approach to the male psyche. Theorizing that a boy's process of identification with his father normally produces a satisfactory resolution of the Oedipal issues, he felt that males usually can thereby reach a healthy mode of entering adulthood more easily than females. Such a view has been convincingly rebutted by Nancy Chodorow,[17] who argues that since a boy's primary care giver is almost always of the opposite sex, he usually has more serious problems in the development of his self-identity than Freud supposed. Girls, on the other hand, are usually able to identify more easily with their primary care givers, and therefore have less severe psychological difficulties in constructing a self-identity.

Such psychoanalytic systems can be applied in a number of ways to *Hamlet*, and competing systems may even be drawn upon to construct a more satisfying interpretation. One may, for instance, agree with Freud that the prince has an unresolved Oedipal complex that entails an obsession with his mother and a wish to kill his

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[17]Chodorow, *Reproducing Mothering* and *Femininities, Masculinities, Sexualities: Freud and Beyond.*

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father, which in turn causes him to identify with the true killer and to hesitate in seeking revenge. Such a view does not necessarily contradict one based on Chodorow's system, for we can say that Hamlet was simultaneously exhibiting a systemic psychological problem of males who normally feel "suffocated" by their mothers and wish to "suffocate" them in turn, as Janet Adelman argues.[18] As a psychoanalytic *mimeticist* we can entertain other possibilities. Rather than focus on Gertrude's -- and the patriarchy's -- effect on her son's development, we could highlight King Hamlet's role and the effect of his absence, as Avi Erlich has done.[19] A structural reading should not only balance emphases on each parent, but should also incorporate perspectives that focus on the family and those that concentrate on the larger social system.

As I discussed in chapter one, orthodox psychoanalytic critics tend to overemphasize the effect of the family for they neglect the fact that to a large degree the family is a conduit of larger social forces.[20] While social psychologists such as George Herbert Mead have been influential at times during this century and at times still are,[21] they have not enjoyed popularity in literary studies as widespread as psychoanalytic theorists. A social approach to selfhood has only relatively recently become popular with American literary

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[18]See Janet Adelman, *Suffocating Mothers.*

[19]In *Hamlet's Absent Father*, p. 220, Erlich believes that rather than wanting "to have killed his father, Hamlet wants his father back"; his subconscious motivation is a need for a paternal authority to counter his incestuous desires.

[20]See, for instance, John Brenkman's valuable discussion of this in "Family, Community, Polis: The Freudian Structure of Feeling."

[21]In *Sources of the Self*, Charles Taylor notes that "borrowed a great deal from George Herbert Mead" (509) and implicitly reveals that he himself was also influenced (525).

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theorists who have been influenced by the Frankfort School and Bakhtin, and, perhaps, most profoundly by Lacan. Lacan's treatment of the child's entry into the figurative or "Symbolic order" is a relatively effective way of integrating the familial focus of orthodox psychoanalysis with an understanding of the larger social construction of the self. Moreover, feminists have found that a useful means to analyze the patriarchy can be constructed with the help of, for instance, the Lacanian notion that the "Law of the Father" and the "Phallus" function as a marker of the gap between signs and what they substitute for. The standard Lacanian approach should, however, be extended.

While Lacan initiated "a promising dialogue ... between psychoanalysis and social theory," John Brenkman convincingly argues that he should have guided "his inquiry further in the direction of the social problematic these formulations hint at."[22] Taking into account a wide variety of findings by other theorists, Brenkman has demonstrated that the process started by Lacan's extension of the Freudian triad into four-term system needs to be completed by adding a fifth term. The five-fold system comprises the child, the symbolic and real-life mother, and the symbolic and real-life father. Rather than stress any one of the relationships in the family romance, a psycho-social *mimeticist* would need, I think, to create a structurally inclusive system balancing and synthesizing interpretations that emphasized each of the five terms. I will later draw on some of these notions from social and psychoanalytic theory, but I will do so in a radically historicized manner. For the play is

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[22]Brenkman, *Straight Male Modern*, p. 83.

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more fruitfully seen not as an attempt to represent a true and timeless mode of selfhood but as the registering of the birth-trauma of the structural possibility of a new deep, yet finite subject. That such a structural and historicized mode of analysis is necessary will become clear if we examine the nature and status of psychoanalysis.

In one sense Harold Bloom is correct when he says that Freud is a follower of Shakespeare,[23] for the structure of the deep self that he constructs in plays such as *Hamlet* is preeminently susceptible to psychoanalytic interpretations. That Hamlet more than any other Renaissance and perhaps any other modern character is the object of "deep" readings suggests that structural depth is indeed created by the play. Reifying the descriptions of depth offered by such readings would, however, be a mistake, for this linguistic structure is polyvocal. The portrayal of selfhood offered provides a deep yet finite structure that is neither formless nor fully defined: a space of interpretive probability that is somewhat analogous to an electron "shell" that gives us a gradated image of possibilities of location. Such relative indefinition is indicated by the fact, for instance, that given "her centrality in the play, it is striking how little we know about Gertrude; even the extent of her involvement in the murder of her husband is left unclear."[24] Various readings, even conflicting ones, seem possible, while many others have very little probability. Particular psychoanalytic readings, such as the ones stressing each of the five "terms," are often suggestive but do not possess such a degree of probability as the general proposition of depth. In fact,

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[23]See Bloom, *The Western Canon*, pp. 60, 74-75, 371-394. Cf. chapters 1 above and 6 below.

[24]Janet Adelman, *Suffocating Mothers*, p. 15. More on this in chapter 8 below.

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such readings possess a significant degree of indeterminacy by their very nature. To get a grasp on the problematic nature of such representations of the psyche, we can begin with Wittgenstein's view of Freudian theory as the story that we moderns most want to tell about ourselves. "Freud in his analysis," Wittgenstein writes, "provides explanations which many are inclined to accept" despite the fact that their unflattering nature may have made people at first "dis-inclined to accept them."[25] We should be careful to note that his view of Freudian language games combines a sense of respect and scepticism.

> I am for instance convinced that my friend was glad to see me. But now, in philosophizing, I say to myself that it could after all be otherwise; maybe he was just pretending. But then I immediately say to myself that, even if he himself were to admit this, I wouldn't be at all certain that he isn't mistaken in thinking that he knows himself. Thus there is an indeterminacy in the entire game.
>
> One could say: In a game in which the rules are indeterminate one *cannot* know who has won and who has lost.
>
> There is a 'why' to which the answer permits no predictions. That's the way it is with animistic explanations, for instance. Many of Freud's

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[25]From "Conversations on Freud," Quoted of Peter Hughes, "Painting the Ghost," p. 376.

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> explanations, or those of Goethe in his theory of colours, are of this kind. The explanation gives us an analogy. And now the phenomenon no longer stands alone; it is connected with others, and we feel reassured.[26]

Analogously, the language "game" of literary interpretation of representations of the psyche is one in which "the rules are indeterminate" to a significant degree -- as I have argued is the case for *Hamlet*. That systems of self-understanding must contain a degree of indeterminacy has in fact long been clear, since this follows from the fact that reflexive statements such as the Cretan paradox -- roughly, "I am a liar" -- may have the form of predications but are neither true nor false. Not surprisingly *Hamlet* indeed contains a form of this paradox: "Doubt truth to be a liar" (2.2.117). While Wittgenstein realized that psychoanalysis produces fewer testable "predictions" than physical science, he admired psychoanalytic discussions "of causality in the operation of feelings" and was reported even to have considered himself a "disciple" or "follower" of Freud.[27]

Wittgenstein demonstrated not that psychoanalysis was bad science, but that it is not the same type of theory as those concerning the physical universe. These different types of theories nevertheless have certain essential characteristics in common. Despite the fact that

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[26]Wittgenstein, *Last Writings on the Philosophy of Psychology: The Inner and the Outer* (Vol. 2), p. 86e.
[27]See the discussion of this in Peter Hughes, "Painting the Ghost," from which the quote and reports are taken.

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scientific theories produce more testable "predictions," even they are not falsifiable, for as Thomas Kuhn has argued, the results of any single experiment can be always accounted for simply by modifying the theory. While a new paradigm is not generally accepted because of any single piece of evidence, this, however, does not mean that it succeeds for no reason. Although the reasons may be obscure, successful theories, whether scientific or not, are selected when they appear to provide the most useful model given all the seriously proposed ones (more on this in chapter 8). As long as no other theory proves more useful in explaining or "connecting" mental phenomenon, psychoanalysis will be "successful." Indeed, it began as a useful development of popular psychology, which has itself proven its usefulness over time.[28] While Foucault's archeology suggests that the "knowledge" such discourses produce are often mere political ideology, this cannot always be the case, for his own theories -- including this very assertion -- fall into this category of discourse.

Psychoanalysis and other theories of intentionality represent our best approaches to a realm that we clearly need to explore. Such discourses must, however, be "liberated" from the expectations placed on the physical sciences, since they do not produce many testable predictions and are thus of a different type. Theorists of intentionality -- whether textual or psychological -- should therefore be especially careful not to reify paradigms. And yet, we need to remember that our theories are not arbitrary but are also selected based on what eventually is widely found to be useful. Our

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[28]See Thomas Nagel's review of *Freud and His Critics*. Besides Nagel's work, see Jonathan Lear, *Open Minded*, for a recent defense of Freudian theory.

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interpretations are not *mere* games, but language games with relatively stable rules. We must not exaggerate the significant degree of indeterminacy and relativism that indeed defines them. This type of language game should be treated in a flexible manner, so that we can switch back and forth among various models when necessary. We must, therefore, also "liberate" our discourses from what Foucault brilliantly demonstrates in "What Is an Author?" is a powerful tendency to validate new findings by an eternal return to such father-originators as Freud and Marx. What we need to be most careful of is that we do not treat any theory of intentionality, even if like deconstruction it claims to be a non-system, as a certain or totalizing foundation.

Given such an understanding of textual and psychological theories as neither purely contingent nor purely logical discourse, but as useful tools if applied with caution, we can draw a number of conclusions for our study. Since our conceptual system is antifoundational and always provisional, my purpose is not only to see *Hamlet* through the lens of (post)modern theory, but also to see theory in the glass of the play. Moreover, the play is not purely representational: it is not simply an objective portrait of people in action. Instead, it strives to do much more. Like Montaigne's *Essays*, it is an attempt to give us an inner view of the emergent, deep, finite self in a reflexive action. To some degree this *self* itself is an action or a predication, rather than a substantive or a subject. For a number of reasons Hamlet gets his wish "that this too too solid[29] flesh would melt, / Thaw and resolve itself into a dew" (1.2.129-30). Psychic

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[29]Other possible readings for this famous crux are "sullied" and "sallied."

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depth is indeed constructed by the play, but this depth is a structure that allows a significant degree of indeterminacy in psychoanalytic readings, which should therefore not be seen as depictions of a "solid" ontology. When we analyze the play's dramaturgical method in chapter 8, we will see that psychic depth is not even constructed by predication but rather by a configuration of interrogatives, that is, by the posing of riddles. First, however, we need to explore another reason why the apparent mimesis does indeed "[t]haw and resolve itself into a dew": the play does not so much give us a picture of a self at a particular time as register the social trauma of the birth of a new type of selfhood.

II. *Historicizing Subjectivity: Manners*

Shakespeare's Hamlet, of course, never existed in the flesh, and even if we assume that this playwright had immense psychological insight it would still be foolish to believe that we have a portrait of a real human being. And while it may well be true that the playwright put a startling amount of himself into Hamlet, the character remains a linguistic construct and it would not be much more true to assert that Shakespeare is Hamlet than it was for Coleridge to claim that he was the melancholy prince. Such considerations suggest the value of recent influential attempts to read the play less mimetically than symptomatically or allegorically (in the wider sense of the term that has taken hold to a large extent due to the work of Angus Fletcher and Paul De Man). Often this is done in a political fashion that does

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not, however, concern itself with the *longue durée*. Annabel Patterson's *Shakespeare and the Popular Voice* is a good example of such a reading, has been justifiably acclaimed, and is one on which I will draw. And yet her use of the play to register Shakespeare's complex political attitudes is not a satisfying explanation of its ability to continually fascinate. Why, after all, should the general reader care very deeply about English Renaissance politics, which may seem as relevant to a postmodern as Hecuba is to Hamlet?

New Historicism has not faced the question of current relevance in a satisfying manner. The degree of contingency in Shakespeare's continually high reputation, though not insignificant, has been overemphasized.[30] While Shakespeare no doubt has been and still is used for political purposes by those in power, this does not explain why it is he and not another writer that continues to be so used. The tendency of (post)structuralism to emphasize the synchronic, which is reflected in the often salubrious focus of new historicism on cultural context, is partly the cause of the problem. Such an emphasis has prevented recent critics from recognizing that there is something in *Hamlet* that continues to fascinate over the ages -- or at least from adequately explaining what it is and why it is there. What most find most interesting is, I think, not this drama's discussion of short-term contemporary politics, but rather our historical relation to its representations and allegories of selfhood and intimacy. Although they have undergone structural changes these representations and allegories continue to be recognizable

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[30]See, for instance, Gary Taylor, *Reinventing Shakespeare*, and Terence Hawkes, "Telmah."

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enough for us to read -- though a degree of misreading, even if minimized, is ineluctable and not insignificant.

An influential attempt to interpret *Hamlet* in terms of such historical and structural changes is presented by Frances Barker in his *Tremulous Body*, which sees the play as registering the effects on modes of selfhood caused by the paradigm shift from a Feudal system to a precapitalist Renaissance nation state. While I agree that the play registers a paradigm shift, I wish to avoid the reductive view of the nature of subjectivity that Barker presents (see chapters 1 above and 8 below). I also wish to propose an alternative to the type of historiography put forth by Barker and other cultural materialists and new historicists.[31] While they often provide important perspectives on the Renaissance self, unfortunately their historiography often seems as reductive as their view of subjectivity and thus as lacking as that of the older school of historicists who they correctly critique for reading into the past bourgeoisie preconceptions about selfhood.

The neo-Marxist thrust of these writers has much to recommend itself in that there was a major paradigm shift in modes of selfhood that is somehow related to the development of a capitalistic economy. The changes in modes of selfhood, however, do not appear to have been solely caused by the shift in economic systems nor was such a shift quite as monolithic as they assume.

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[31]See, for instance, Catherine Belsey, *The Subject of Tragedy* and Jonathan Dollimore, *Radical Tragedy*. While Marjorie Garber follows Barker in claiming that *Hamlet* is "situated on the cusp of the emergence of ... the modern subject" (p. 136 and note 41), she does little to support this claim; rather, like Bloom, she seems more concerned in showing that Freud (as well as Lacan) was a follower of Shakespeare: "For Freud, *Hamlet* ... becomes not the analyzed but the analyst, the *sujet supposé savoir* (p. 171).

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Northern Italy, for instance, never went through a truly feudal middle ages, for many nobles remained in the cities. The roots of the Renaissance were thus not simply the result of the replacement of a feudal economic system by a capitalistic one. When capitalism does replace feudalism, it does so in a number of complex stages. Shakespeare, for instance, cannot be firmly placed in a precapitalistic context, since he was one of the major owners of a joint-stock company that represents a significant proto-capitalistic enterprise. In general, the paradigm shift started earlier, was more gradual, and was more complex than many writers implicitly or explicitly assert.

In this exploration of how the shifts in modes of selfhood and intimacy were registered in *Hamlet* I will not always attempt to distinguish between historical "causes" and "effects," since I do not wish to put forward a totalizing historiography. While the shift in economic systems is one of the most powerful causes of other types of change, one cannot discount other causes such as urbanization (in itself, apart from its economic component), the emergence of print culture, the rise of science and technology, the "cross-fertilization" of cultural modes and ideas, and so on. I will not always tease out the causes and effects, since completely separating them may not be possible. Instead I will argue that there is a wide variety of evidence that indicates that some sort of paradigm shift took place in modes of selfhood; that a corresponding one took place in modes of intimacy; that these shifts are related; that they can fruitfully be approached from a variety of theoretical systems; and that their exploration can offer important insights into *Hamlet*, which both traces the effects of these shifts and itself eventually becomes a model of the deep self

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and therefore a cause for its future development. Indeed, a model of selfhood may not only be an effect but can also become a powerful cause, since when assimilated it can shape one's identity: "the individual realizes it in the very act of internalizing it."[32]

In order to accept that this play offers a representation of a more articulated psychic structure than any previous literary work one need not fully accept Freud's theory that Hamlet's delay was caused by an Oedipal complex and his unconscious identification with Claudius. To attribute such a particularized and developed unconscious to a character requires what seems a somewhat tenuous chain of reasoning probably including the proposition that Shakespeare's part in this was unconscious as well. One wonders if the audience is also supposed to comprehend the Oedipal intrigue unconsciously -- the meaning of such a speculative chain of possibilities should indeed give us pause. We need not, however, believe completely the often partial and overly speculative theories put forth by Freud and some of his followers in order to argue for the psychic depth of this character. Instead, we can see in him clear traces of the historical processes that constructed depth such as the revolution in manners.

A powerful demonstration of the profound changes in selfhood that occurred in historical time has been provided by Norbert Elias's two volume *The Civilizing Process.* In the first volume, *The History of Manners*, he shows that for a long stretch of the late middle ages handbooks of manners implored the reader, for instance, to spit not

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[32]Berger and Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality*, p. 163; see chapter one above.

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over the table but away from it, which indicates that such behavior did not vary significantly. At about the time of Erasmus there began a steep acceleration in the development of Western manners, which relatively soon became recognizably modern, even if specific forms differed somewhat with location and over time. In *Power and Civility*, the second volume of *The Civilizing Process*, Elias argues that if we accept Freud's basic map of internal architecture, then the modern revolution in manners represents evidence for the dramatic growth of the superego, which he attributes to the monopolization of power and taxation by Renaissance nation states. Other cultures, as well as the premodern West, also have (or had) complex codes requiring very significant degrees of restraint and one may thus quibble with Elias's description of the psychic developments as an overall growth in the superego. He has, nonetheless, clearly provided strong evidence that a radical modification in the nature of the self was caused by the major shift in the social system at the beginning of the modern age. Since Elias's analysis of the significance of the early modern accelerated development of manners would not, for instance, sufficiently explain the situation of northern Italy, which as we noted never went through a true Feudal period, it needs to be combined with Simmel's analysis of the effects of the emergent metropolis, which will be discussed subsequently.

Manners help to create depth by being blinds of instinctual drives. In contrast to the common use in the middle ages of relatively blunt and frank means of expression and control, Renaissance manners represent a more subtle mode of restraint. Such restraint produces the impression of depth, for as we have seen

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in the first chapter, Ludwig Wittgenstein has observed that "[w]hen mien, gesture and circumstance are unambiguous, then the inner seems to be the outer; it is only when we cannot read the outer that an inner seems to be hidden behind it."[33] Manners do not totally hide one's intention, but do tend to veil it: they are neither transparent nor opaque, but rather translucent. Since an impenetrable barrier would give no view beyond the screen, such partial obfuscation is exactly what is needed to produce a sense of depth.

Modern manners, Elias has shown, is related to the needs of nobility, who lost much of their former sway in the Renaissance development of the nation state. Manners allowed them to distinguish themselves from the rising bourgeoisie and thereby to recoup some of their lost prestige and power by representing themselves as the only worthy counselors and companions to the monarch.[34] The revival of chivalry can be considered to be part of the general movement that Elias described. While it is true that medieval chivalry entailed highly ritualistic practices, the revival during the Renaissance[35] was nevertheless more related to the development of "manners." The nobility now used chivalric practices in the same way they used their modern highly evolved manners: as a means to distinguish themselves from the bourgeoisie and to advance their interests--not independently as they did in the middle ages but as desirable and useful dependents on monarchical power.

A significant member of the group that wished to separate itself from the bourgeoisie and to rise by his relation to the prince is

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[33]Wittgenstein, *Last Writings on the Philosophy of Psychology*, 63e.
[34]See Elias, *Power and Civility: The Civilizing Process: Volume II.*
[35]See Richard McCoy, *The Rites of Knighthood.*

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the courtier. The most influential portrayal of this figure was of course given by Castiglione's book, which was used as a handbook of courtly manners. *The Courtier* makes clear that courtly manners did not only consist of a guide for behavior during interactions between the sexes. A courtier is a man of worldly affairs as well and aspires to be a political counselor to the prince, which was of course Machiavelli's aim and, for instance, to a significant degree also Jonson's. Castiglione's book, however, also clarifies the important relation that such a figure would have to other disciplines in addition to politics. Its discussion of horsemanship highlights the connection to the military tradition of the knight and Cardinal Bembo's oration stresses the relation to intellectual pursuits. Hamlet clearly was the exemplar of such a figure, for as Ophelia tells us, he possessed the essence of all three categories:

> The courtier's, soldier's, scholar's eye, tongue, sword,
> Th'expectancy and rose of the fair state,
> The glass of fashion and the mould of form,
> Th'observ'd of all observers (3.1.153-56)

Such sophisticated manners are, of course, meant to be observed, and in this sense we may say that Hamlet is in a proto-panopticon, even though rather than there being one observer and many observed, the proportion is reversed. While most of the mass machineries of surveillance that Foucault has shown are so important to modern selfhood were not yet constructed, nonetheless a type of panopticism was developing in certain subcultures. Foucault did

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observe that in general the "classical age did not initiate" the "utilitarian rationalization of detail," and he discussed how panopticism has roots in the social measures taken during plague times.[36] Moreover, he mentions in passing that some of the modern modes of "'disciplining' the population" were begun by the Counter-Reformation, though he neglects the very important role played by developments such as Puritanism that came out of the Reformation.[37] He also neglected to mention that the panopticon in which one observer surveys an ordered and classified series of objects is isomorphic with, for instance, some of the Renaissance occult memory theaters.[38] While there is only one observed and many observers, and so Hamlet appears to be a reverse or photographic negative of a panopticon, he is nevertheless not in a kingly position of absolute power. To be profoundly molded by gazes requires that the object lacks power, for such a lack distinguishes surveillance from awed observation.

The early modern nobility were somewhat in this situation. They lost the absolute sway in their domains that they had in the middle ages and evolved into a group who only had a relative degree of power. And yet, they were still on view, still very much the "observ'd of all observers." They thus appear to have been molded by practices that are somewhat similar to those that would help bring about the radical internalization of external surveillance systems in other groups such as the Protestant bourgeoisie. That

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[36]Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, p. 139 and pp. 195-200.
[37]Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, p. 212. We have discussed the important role of Puritanism in disciplining the population in the last chapter.
[38]See Frances Yates, *The Art of Memory* and *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition*.

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modern manners were passed from the nobility to the bourgeoisie indeed supports this connection. Hamlet is not a representative of the assured and powerful aristocrat who though the "observ'd of all observers" was powerful enough not to be affected in the same way as members of a modern panopticon. He was not, we should remember, the heir apparent, for he did not become King when his father died. Claudius was instead "elected" and despite his promise that Hamlet would succeed, this uncle/stepfather, who is "little more than kin, and less than kind" (1.2.65), is not to be trusted. He has after all, as Hamlet later notes, "Popp'd in between th'election and my hopes" (5.2.65), and he suggests that despite "the voice of the King himself for [his] succession in Denmark" he feels that "I lack advancement" (3.2.331-33). Hamlet, then, is to some degree a representative of the relatively disempowered nobility. That this group developed modern manners, which were then passed on to the bourgeoisie, suggests that it began to experience the types of forces that would later create on a large scale the conditions for a specifically modern type of inwardness in the bourgeoisie. Thus we can say that Hamlet is one "who is subjected to a field of visibility, and who knows it"; as Foucault notes about an individual in such a position, he "assumes responsibility for the constraints of power; he makes them play spontaneously upon himself; he inscribes in himself the power relation in which he simultaneously plays both roles; he becomes the principle of his own subjection."[39]

Shakespeare was not a member of this group despite his pretensions to nobility, which were expressed, for instance, in his

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[39]Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, pp. 202-203.

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obtaining a coat of arms for his father. While he was, instead, one of the "middling sort,"[40] he was, nevertheless, in a good position to understand such a group for two reasons. He was often able to be a close observer of this type of "observ'd," as is clear from the intimate tone of the prefatory epistle that dedicates *The Rape of Lucrece* to Southampton and from his sonnets. His own socioeconomic subject position is also very significant in this regard. In addition to being a proto-capitalist and thus related to members of the bourgeoisie who were beginning to develop some modern modes of inwardness, Shakespeare's role in the emergent modern theater often placed him in the position of a relatively powerless "observ'd of all observers." His subject position was therefore not unrelated to that of groups that were beginning to develop modern modes of inwardness. My approach, then, to the complex development of modern modes of selfhood cannot be reduced to any one of the important discourses constructed by recent neo-Marxists and poststructuralists and yet draws significantly on them.

That *Hamlet* is quite susceptible to some modes of Foucauldian analysis is quite appropriate, for not only is the play partly about the internalization of emergent technologies of surveillance, but both the protagonist of the play and the poststructuralist himself seem at times so fascinated by observing the pathways of power that all sense of agency is paralyzed. While it is important to study the ways that selves are to a great degree constructed by discourses of power/knowledge, this does not mean that all freedom and agency -- whether intellectual or political -- is illusory. If all too often Foucault

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[40]See Theodore Leinwand, "Shakespeare and the Middling Sort."

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is correct that "truth" is a mere power effect, it is not always so, for otherwise we would need to dismiss his statement itself as merely one more means to power and thus containing no truth. Such extreme statements are half-truths that when taken at face value distort and partially paralyze the search for knowledge.

Similarly, statements about the early modern origin and imminent demise of "man," such as the one Foucault makes at the end of *The Order of Things*, may well be not only over dramatic but quite harmful. They encourage us to see the evolution of thought as discourse paradigms that come in and out of fashion without much relation among them. While the systems put forth by Foucauldians, neo-Marxists, and revisionists often represent important advances in our knowledge, we need to be careful to discard the exaggerations and to use only what is compelling in them. Such a nuanced approach realizes, for instance, that while the self, inwardness, and intimacy do not come into existence in the early modern period, the changes they underwent were indeed profound. Disciplines of selfhood have always existed but the modern mode, which more radically internalizes the increasingly coercive external observing structures, began to take form in a number of Renaissance subcultures, such as the disempowered nobility, the theatrical world, the proto-bourgeoisie, the emergent metropolis, and puritan communities.

Hamlet and Hamlet, then, reflect a revolution in the modes of selfhood, which is related to, among other things, the revolution in manners Elias demonstrated took place in the Renaissance. The manners of this "glass of fashion" were, Ophelia tells us, exquisitely good, but we see that at times they turn exquisitely bad. The point is

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that they are almost always exquisite, that is, highly sophisticated. When he is rude to Polonius he is so because his manners are no longer those of a diplomat but of a scholar, or rather, an intellectual sceptical of mere forms. His bad manners, like his madness, which are at times hardly distinguishable, always have a "method in" them. When he kills Polonius by mistake he easily dismisses it as simply a faux pas -- "Thou wretched, rash, intruding fool, farewell. / I took thee for thy better" (3.4.31) -- and we almost let him do so, since in some sense he is right that the counselor was a "tedious old fool." As new historicists and cultural materialists have emphasized, we should avoid anachronistically reading our own conceptions of selfhood into the early modern past. We should not, for instance, make the mistake characteristic of bourgeois critics and think that Polonius has value in himself, for this is to read into the play the Enlightenment ideal that all men are created equal and/or the Romantic ideal that each of us is an individual who is unique and therefore valuable.[41]

Nevertheless, Shakespeare does, I think, wish his audience to see Hamlet's exquisitely bad manners as a mistake, but not on these general Enlightenment or Romantic principles, since they were of course not accepted or even articulated yet. A Renaissance type of individualism did of course exist, but the individual is glorified not because of any abstract principle but for his accomplishments -- as a prince, counselor, writer, scholar, painter, sculptor, or natural philosopher. This in itself is quite a paradigm shift in modes of

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[41]See Charles Taylor's discussion of the development of these notions in *Sources of the Self.*

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selfhood from medieval times, when *anonymous* had been an author of the very top rank; she or he appears to have lost much of her talent in the Renaissance. And yet from a Renaissance perspective as from the medieval one, the innately worthy element of the person continues to be not an integral part of the human being but rather a detachable spirit or soul. Renaissance individualism does not entail the assumption that all human beings are innately worthy because we are "equal" or that we are all worthy because we are radically individualized -- that is "unique." A generic soul may be worthy of hell -- and a Faustus or a Tamberlane may distinguish himself even in this regard from what Hamlet calls the "general" (2.2.433). This "quintessence of dust" (2.2.308) does not often manifest the dignity described in Pico Della Mirandola's famous oration.

Shakespeare's audience, therefore, is expected to figure out eventually that the manslaughter of Polonius is not just a breach of manners but a serious mistake, not because he is a fellow human being, but because he is constructed to be more interesting, and thus possesses something of value; this is, however, not immediately obvious. He is, after all, a scholastic fool, who is tripped up by the sound of his own words: "And now remains / that we find out the cause of this effect, / Or rather say the cause of this defect, / For this effect defective comes by cause." We begin to glimpse his worth when we realize that his verbosity contains its own critique -- "brevity is the soul of wit." This I take as more than a straight-forward use of dramatic irony, for his words at times indicate there may be an unintentional wisdom beneath their surface foolishness. He manifests such a "soul of wit" when he lets drop not only the key

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to Hamlet's method in, for instance, the play-within-the-play -- "Your bait of falsehood takes this carp of truth" -- but also the key to Shakespeare's in this drama: "By indirections find directions out."

The killing of this "tedious old fool" should, then, leave a bad taste in one's mouth, and this first becomes obvious when we realize that his death is partly "the cause of this defect" that we painfully observe in his daughter and that leads to her demise. That it was more than bad form to kill the old fool is, however, not fully driven home until Hamlet meets the one character who has neither good or bad manners. The grave-digger has, we might say, no manners at all to speak of, for this character is clearly from a social stratum that the revolution in manners has not yet touched. His bluntness shows Hamlet that there is a more honest way of treating the very question that he has been using the tools of civilized society to approach: one's mortality -- the question, that is, of whether to exist or not. By contemplating the skull of Yorick, who he tells us "bore me on his back a thousand times" and whom "I have kissed I know not how oft," Hamlet is able to begin to accept the relation that his own *skull* bears to others. For the first time the social web that he feels caught in seems one that can be nurturing without being suffocating -- he sees that a deep and long-lasting attachment can be different than the one he has with his mother.[42]

As Anabel Patterson has observed, Hamlet's language changes after this encounter,[43] and I would argue that his manners change as well. He cannot give up his manners -- which are the trappings of

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[42]On his relation to his mother, see Adelman, *Suffocating Mothers.*
[43]See Patterson's "Caviar and the General: Hamlet and the Popular Theater" in *Shakespeare and the Popular Voice.*

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civilization -- and become like the grave-digger, for he cannot turn back or free himself from what Elias called the "civilizing process." But his manners are, perhaps, no longer exquisitely good or bad as much as exquisitely questionable, as we see in his next encounter, which is with Laertes. Hamlet's seeming unawareness of the basic facts of the matter -- he killed the poor man's father -- gives us the impression of one who is sleepwalking. One might be tempted to opine that he now *unconsciously* realizes that this man is his *double*, a son avenging his father's wrongful murder, and therefore feels so close to Laertes that he cannot for the moment understand his bad manners toward him: "What is the reason that you use me thus? I lov'd you ever. But it is no matter" (5.1.284-85). Rather than portraying this absurd remark as an unconscious act, it might be better to suggest that it is a preparation for the discourse on selfhood and madness to come. For it is not, of course, "no matter" but a great one, and before their duel in the next scene we are given a significant insight into the depth of Hamlet's civilized nature, though it is expressed in a paradoxical way.

The "double-vision" that Hamlet sees when he looks at the reflection of his own plight in the man whose plight he has caused leads to a doubleness within. Before the duel Hamlet tells Laertes that:

> What I have done
> That might your nature, honour, and exception
> Roughly awake, I here proclaim was madness.
> Was't Hamlet wrong'd Laertes? Never Hamlet.

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> If Hamlet from himself be ta'en away,
> And when he's not himself does wrong Laertes,
> Then Hamlet does it not, Hamlet denies it.
> Who does it then? His madness. If't be so,
> Hamlet is of the faction that is wrong'd;
> His madness is poor Hamlet's enemy. (5.2.226-235)

Hamlet has previously told us that "I am mad north-north-west. When the wind is southerly, I know a hawk from a handsaw" (2.2.374-75). At times he does indeed seem close to madness, as when he is with Ophelia, and at other times he is clearly only pretending to be so -- for instance, when he is with Polonius. In chapters 7 and 8 we will see that such conflicting data fits into what seems to be an intentional pattern created by the playwright. For now we may note that Hamlet's separation of his inwardness into sane and mad homunculi, each with opposing and autonomous agency, is of course related to an attempt to disavow the insane self, but the correspondences between civilized/uncivilized and sane/insane may not be what we would expect. The "civilized" deep self appears now not to be considered sanity but rather a madness causing him to behave as a civilized prince is expected to behave, that is, to act without worrying too much about the life of a mere underling. The healthy "uncivilized" Hamlet that is now growing appears to have been cleansed of such "civilized" presuppositions by his encounter with the grave-digger, who seems to act as a catalyst for his transformation as much as "poor Tom," "the thing itself: unaccomodated man" (3.4.106-7), is for Lear's. In general Hamlet

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represents civilized man becoming highly individuated, separating himself from his social group to a degree never before seen. This is taken so far that Hamlet, in his revulsion for what the civilizing process has made him, now wishes to separate himself from his civilized deep self that was created by "the secular advance of repression in the emotional life of mankind." He thereby appears to reach a state suggestive of what we call schizophrenic psychosis.[44]

While this scene demonstrates that a psychic depth is clearly being suggested by the play, nevertheless Shakespeare was not discovering the "timeless" nature of the self later rearticulated by Freud -- as Bloom believes he was -- but rather was creating a linguistic structure to explore the consequences of the deep, finite, and secular self that was coming into being at the time. The radically historicized nature of my reading may be clarified if we consider Hamlet's encounter with Osric, a man who has exquisite manners as well. In this foppish courtier Hamlet sees the forms of modern civilization without any of its substance. He plays with Osric's obsession with the structural system of manners, with the mere forms, making him repeatedly take his hat off and then put it back on again. To gauge the degree that manners plays in the social construction of selfhood we should remember that this semiotic system encompasses or overlaps others, such as the fashion system as we see with Osric's hat. Indeed genital nudity, one of our strongest

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[44]Karin Coddon, "'Suche Strange Desygns': Madness, Subjectivity, and Treason in *Hamlet* and Elizabethan Culture," sees a resonance with Essex's unbalanced behavior and suggests such madness functions to clear an interior *space* for subjective agency in the discourses of power. While I agree that the cultural discourses of madness change, her somewhat totalizing view of power's effect on the subject does not sufficiently account for the significant agency that existed before and during the Renaissance.

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taboos, is simply the null marker of the metasystem of manners and fashion. Thus the seriousness of the whimsical game that Hamlet plays with Osric should not be underestimated.

In this fop, as in Laertes whom he comes to tell Hamlet about, he cannot help but see himself, since he also has been constructed by civilized manners, whether he tries to reject or accept them. This common link is first hinted at by his ability to mimic and even outdo Osric's convoluted forms of politeness, so that even such a man is at a loss at times to glean the meaning expressed.

> *Ham.* ... Why do we wrap the gentleman in our rawer breath?
> *Osr.* Sir?

Hamlet's language, though usually striving for much more substance, is nevertheless made of the same basic fabric as Osric's. This identification, more importantly, is also suggested by the startling imagery of doubling that the fop incites. Hamlet's trope that "his semblable is his mirror" (5.2.118) not only implies Laertes' uniqueness -- that the only person like him is his own mirror image -- but also points to the personal and historic paradox of selfhood with which Hamlet is struggling. That this highly reflexive image is offered to Osric but refers to Laertes hints at the play's web of doubling.

Hamlet's image -- "his semblable is his mirror" -- could, perhaps, be dismissed as not truly significant if it stood alone, but instead it fits all too well into the play's well-known pattern of figures of doubling This include the killings of fathers by both

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Hamlet and Claudius, the attempts by Hamlet and Laertes to take revenge for such killings, the circling back in that Hamlet is the target of Laertes' revenge as Claudius is of Hamlet's -- and if we believe Freud, Hamlet's wish to kill his own father and thus his identification with Claudius. These twinned images are weirdly reflected "tropically" (3.2.232), as in a fun-house mirror, in the double-tiered play-within-the play -- the dumb show and the "mousetrap" -- which creates the suggestion of a *mise en abyme.*

Such a dizzying progression of reflexive troping may be intimately connected to the struggle of identity that the play (re)presents in that it may be symptomatic of a social version of the mirror stage about which Lacan theorized.[45] Just as an infant painfully divides herself from her mother/world, so the finite deep self that emerged in the Renaissance separated itself from what had been the more communally defined identity of the middle ages -- a process that initiated the early modern cultural movement toward the uniqueness and autonomy of the subject. And just as the infant's process of separation is accomplished through the use of the mirror image of another, in his representative struggle Hamlet appears able to reach a profound understanding -- of how identity and agency exist and yet are socially constructed -- only by passing through a process of doubling that is analogous to a mirror stage. In this way the trauma of the early modern radical separation of subject from metasystem appears to be registered in the startlingly reflexive image he proffers to Osric and in all the well-known figures of reflexive doubling that run through the play.

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[45]See Lacan, "The Mirror Stage as Formative of the Function of the I," *Écrits.*

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The tropes of doubling that the play famously proffers indeed suggest a trauma of identification through otherness: as Hamlet tells Osric, for a man" to know [another] man is to know himself" (5.137-38). Hamlet appears, then, to be showing symptoms of the social trauma caused by the emergence of modern psychic deep structure. The early modern revolution in selfhood is, we shall see, manifested in other ways besides highly developed manners, which I have emphasized because it allows us to focus on the form of the structure rather than particular contents whether psychoanalytic or of other types. We have also touched on other manifestations, such as highly developed internalized surveillance mechanisms, though I will not be able to do more than note that these are expressed in many ways, such as the startling development of the genres of literary self-examination including religious autobiography, secular diaries, and philosophical introspection. All these markers of depth reflect a radical process that Elias terms "psychogenesis," which is registered in this play on both a personal and a social level. We witness the human suffering caused the protagonist's "birth" as a new type of creature: a psychically deep individual bearing early symptoms of the problems of modern autonomy and uniqueness. And we read the traces of the large-scale upheaval brought on by the birth of secular individualism. Since in some sense each subject must still pass through a version of this during the process of socialization into postmodern civilization -- one that is, however, less dramatic, because society is not going through an analogous transformation as well -- *Hamlet* continues to possess enormous relevance and popularity.

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III. *Historicizing Subjectivity: Inner and Outer Complexity*

In Act 2 scene 2 a startling web of connected images is woven that, like the chain of doubling tropes, is indicative of the way the play registers the birth of modern finite and deep selfhood. This series stresses the emergence of a psychic structural complexity that reflects developments in architecture and urbanization. Near the middle of this scene Hamlet engages in repartee with Guildenstern and Rosencrantz, who are mirror-image courtiers that appear to be not so much individuated characters as another doubling figure that constitutes a troping on the very idea of individuality. More importantly, they illicit from "My most dear lord," "My honoured lord" a representation of what is issuing forth from the process of "psychogenesis" during the early modern "mirror stage." The catalyst for this -- the labor inducer, so to speak -- is the news the old friends bring that "the world's grown honest," which Hamlet realizes would mean "Then is doomsday near. But your news is not true." These friends of his youth, he clearly sees, live "[i]n the secret parts of Fortune." He realizes, that is, that they are sent to spy on him: he will soon ask: "Were you not sent for?" The play's intense discourse of secrecy and selfhood is here taken to a higher emotional pitch. The "observ'd of all observers" apparently feels compelled to discuss with these spies his philosophical obsessions despite their dangerous political overtones.

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Given that he not only feels oppressed but also scrupulously watched, his confinement must not seem like the oblivion of a medieval dungeon; instead he appears to suggest an experience close to the one offered by a modern panopticon when he tells us "Denmark's a prison." To this the *doubled* courtier responds, "Then is the world one." An image of complexly articulated architecture, which we shall shortly see reflects the compartmentalization of living space that was taking place, is now proffered: "A goodly one, in which there are many confines, wards, and dungeons, Denmark being o'th' worst." When the courtier(s) disagree, the true significance of this dark conceit comes to light: "nothing is either good or bad but thinking makes it so. To me it is a prison." The true issue, then, is the question of subjectivity, and the prison imagery appears to constitute a trope for the modern self that has begun to internalize the mechanisms of surveillance. Indeed, that we are not only speaking about a prison or a political state, but also of the question of subjectivity is immediately indicated by Hamlet's next image: "I could be bounded in a nutshell and count myself a king of infinite space -- were it not that I have bad dreams."

The fully politicized courtiers, however, only see one possible interpretation: "Which dreams indeed are ambition." What Hamlet instead wishes to discuss is not material conditions but the question of the nature of the mind: "A dream itself is but a shadow" -- an apparent allusion to Plato's famous conceit. While it is true that these subjects are not diametrically opposed, since a change in the structure of consciousness is to a significant degree brought about by material conditions, nevertheless the political-materialist bent of the

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courtiers blinds them to any understanding of the trauma that is both metamorphosing and obsessing Hamlet's mind. In their very attempt to dismiss such ethereal philosophizing as "But a shadow's shadow," the courtiers paradoxically proffer the most vivid image of the nonvisible. The use of such a brilliant image, "a shadow's shadow," as a trope for "ambition" and thus it would seem for philosophical intentionality by someone who does not glimpse its full significance appears to illustrate a motif in this play. We have observed the same ironic method of placing significant words in the mouth of one who cannot comprehend them employed with Polonius. The suggestiveness of the courtiers' words runs counter to their intention, however; with such blinkered minds, Hamlet "cannot reason," but instead suggests, "Shall we to th'court."

Rather than go to the actual place, Hamlet has in mind that they deal with courtly affairs: he forces them to admit that they are spying on him: "My lord, we were sent for." He decides to "tell [them] why" so that their "secrecy to the King and Queen" will remain intact: "I have of late, but wherefore I know not, lost all my mirth." Hamlet's melancholy is, of course, both political and philosophical. The political question is, to put it simply, why he delays in acting his revenge on the King. My central thesis is that such a delay does not so much have a psychologically mimetic cause, as Freud argues, but rather a metadramatic and historical one. It allows Shakespeare to depict, evaluate, debate, and register the consequences of the painful birth of the early modern self. The question of Renaissance selfhood is in fact exactly what the obsessed prince insists on boring his friends with, so that when he finally catches himself he realizes that they

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cannot refrain from smiling at him. What has caused them to smile is his famous oration that attempts to press not only on his "friends" but the audience as well his interests, his prioritizing of "mind over matter":

> ... this goodly frame the earth seems to me a sterile promontory, this most excellent canopy the air, look you, this brave o'erhanging firmament, this majestical roof fretted with golden fire, why it appeareth nothing to me but a foul and pestilent congregation of vapours. What a piece of work is a man, how noble in reason, how infinite in faculties, in form and moving how express and admirable, in action how like an angel, in apprehension how like a god: the beauty of the world, the paragon of animals -- and yet, to me, what is this quintessence of dust? Man delights not me -- nor woman neither, though by your smiling you seem to say so.

The problem of "man" or "woman" is the question of what separates this "paragon" from the rest of the "animals," that is, the question of how the mind, which is "noble in reason" and "infinite in faculties" and thus makes a human "like an angel," can be tied to this "quintessence of dust." From a religious perspective the soul, which is conceived as part of the Godhead and thus both a conscious *monitor* and a record of the holiness or sinfulness of one's actions, is seen as a "supplement" (in the Derridian sense, and thus an "essential" one) to the flesh. In the secularized discourse initiated in the early modern

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period, consciousness can no longer be as easily explained away as part of the soul, for in this new language game one can no longer as surely make a reference to such a system of religious metaphysics and mysteries. This problem did not arise slowly in a gradual process of secularization, but instead was quickly and intensely thrown to the fore by the early modern radical exacerbation of scepticism[46] that was to a great degree brought on by the Reformation's shattering of the unity of belief.

We should, however, be somewhat leery of such an assignation of causality characteristic of the history of ideas, for it is even less satisfying and more reductive than the use of an explanatory system that refers questions of subjectivity to an unexamined materialist ideology (more on this in chapter 7). My historiography, as I explained earlier, attempts to remain open to multiple explanatory systems. Since I do, however, wish to give preference to material considerations without ignoring the profound significance and the causal power of systems of belief, I shall discuss metaphysics later and first offer a Simmelian perspective, which is a necessary complement to the insights on the history of selfhood that we gleaned from Elias and Foucault. Fortuitously, the part of Simmel's work that I wish to focus on is a discussion of a topic that is glanced at in the next section of the scene that we have been analyzing. Rosencrantz claims that his smile was brought about not by Hamlet's speechifying but rather by the arrival of "the tragedians of the city." And it "was in the city" that Hamlet last saw them.

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[46]See Richard Popkin, *The History of Scepticism From Erasmus to Descartes*

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The question of the "city" is a significant one in the play, for two reasons. The unnamed city in this scene is followed by references to London. A use of other cities to refer to London was of course common. The other city of importance in this play is Wittenberg, which is the university center where Hamlet is studying and the famed center of the Reformation. Since, as we have seen in previous chapters, the key word *wit* had as a primary denotation "mind," the city's name would literally mean to an Elizabethan ear "city of the mind." The allusions to the urban in the play would therefore combine references to the mind, the Reformation, and the new world of the *metropolis*. This complex of references is especially significant, since the historical sociology of Simmel demonstrates that the emergence of the metropolis was a major factor in early modern changes in selfhood.[47] It is important to place his ideas on urbanization within his general theoretical framework. The significance of such work may be glimpsed if we realize that Foucault's panopticon "effect" -- the internalization of systems of surveillance -- is, for instance, made possible to a significant degree by the new modes of social observation, intimacy, and estrangement brought on by the growth of the metropolis.

Simmel argues that the size of the social group to which one belongs has a profound effect on the nature of human personality, and that the magnitude of the increase in population density

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[47]See Simmel, *On Individuality and Social Forms*, and my discussion of his work in chapters 1 and 3 above. Some work has been done relating his treatment of the birth of the metropolis to the literature of the English Renaissance; see, for instance, Lawrence Manley, *Literature and Culture in Early Modern London*. Although Simmel's work is resurfacing, perhaps most interest has been aroused by *The Philosophy of Money*.

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occurring in the birth of the metropolis brought about a qualitative change. The changes in the self brought about by the increase in group size and density that occurs with the emergence of modern urbanization could not have failed to be noticed by astute observers. When Shakespeare transformed a legend about a Danish prince into an inquiry into the nature of selfhood, the major changes in the self caused by London's fast-paced urbanization may well have come to mind.[48] Simmel notes that under such conditions the desire to separate oneself from the mass of fellow beings increases greatly. In small tribes identity is to a large degree constituted by identification with the community, while in a metropolis the desire to define oneself on one's own terms develops radically.[49] This is clearly relevant to the trauma of the birth of the deep self that I am arguing is registered in *Hamlet*. From a Simmelian perspective, Hamlet's brooding words suggesting mental and architectural complexity, compartmentalization, and articulation, as well as radical subjectivity and separateness constitute a unified and interrelated expression of early modern developments.

An isomorphism exists, I am suggesting, among Hamlet's representation of Denmark -- which is a reverse synecdoche for the royal castle -- as a prison; the image of the world as a prison "in which there are many confines, wards, and dungeons"; and his reference to the mind without which nothing is "good or bad" and which can be "bounded in a nutshell" while still being "a king of

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[48]For discussions of the qualitative effects of quantitative growth, in addition to Manley's work see, for instance, Lawrence Stone, "The Educational Revolution in England, 1560-1640" and *The Crisis of the Aristocracy, 1558-1641*.
[49]See Simmel, *On Individuality and Social Forms* and *The Sociology of Gerog Simmel*.

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infinite space." We should first observe the modern character of these remarks. Giordano Bruno had, for instance, only recently imagined the universe to be infinite rather than closed, and thus the conception of "infinite space" breaks with the medieval vision of a closed universe. These images also suggest, however, the result of a long historical process of increasing "architectural" articulation of the psyche that is reflected in the history of the actual use of space. As Patricia Fumerton has noted:

> A desire for privacy -- for isolation from the public -- drove medieval lords from the large hall to the more private great chamber above. And what happened? The great chamber often grew as large as the hall and even more ceremonial. So the lord withdrew into a room within the great chamber. But then the withdrawing room became a dining room as well, so he withdrew for privacy further within, and within, and within. By the second half of the seventeenth century, private closets had become so public that lords and ladies were driven to add closets onto their closets, all in the search for privacy.[50]

Hamlet's imagery reflects the cultural movement manifested in the increasing complexity of mental, architectural, and urban structure. We have seen in the first chapter that the simple medieval division of labor and the restrictions on the distribution of

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[50]Fumerton, *Cultural Aesthetics*, p. 128.

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knowledge resulted in more certain and rigid social roles. With the early modern advent of greater social complexity, mobility and distribution of knowledge, everybody no longer "knows who everybody else is and who he is himself"; instead all now "conceive of themselves in terms of 'hidden depths' .... and 'under-the-surface' selves."[51] Given such social trends, it would be quite understandable that Shakespeare would offer images of architectural complexity to suggest the emergence of the "under-the-surface" self. Moreover, at the time *Hamlet* was written the long-term early modern cultural shift in selfhood was beginning to take a radical turn, for the cultural climate was quickly moving toward what Fumerton has described as the heightened "experience of emptiness, brokenness, and alienation in Jacobean subjectivity that created its dark revision of Elizabethan cultural exchange."[52] Hamlet's dark images of psychic complexity, then, fit very well into the growth in architectural and psychic "detachment" that Fumerton describes and into Simmel's detailed descriptions of the radical particularization of personality that are brought about by the development of the metropolis.

The early modern self was formed by overlapping processes of particularization and detachment. In general the medieval subject appears to have lacked a high degree of such qualities and was more a product of generic and rigid roles, more accepting of anonymity, and more melded with the community. Certainly the medieval self underwent a process of individuation, and yet this was not taken to the extremes that was to become characteristic of the West in the

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[51]Berger and Luckmann, p, 151.
[52]Fumerton, pp. 112-13.

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modern era; instead it took a large part of its identity from its membership in the social group -- as is the case, for instance, in traditional Balinese society.[53] This historical movement toward particularization and detachment is not only reflected in architecture but also in a wide range of other types of cultural production. Charles Taylor, for instance, has demonstrated in detail that the same movement can be traced in the history of philosophy. The process of particularization continued into the Romantic era and developed what Taylor has called the unique "expressive" self.[54] The process of detachment also continued, developing, for instance, Descartes "walled ego," as well as the idea of separate and equal individuals before the law and separate, and free agents in the capitalist economy.

In imaginative literature this movement is reflected in, for instance, the development of highly individuated voice in the genre of the sonnet sequence and in the accelerated development of characterology in English Renaissance drama beginning with Marlowe. Jonson's drama, we have seen, presents an important manifestation of such a paradigm shift; for example, the highly particularized "true humour" Morose, illustrates a general trend in his work to catalog personality traits and problems, even if the isolation of related groups of traits make them seem not as three-dimensional as some of Shakespeare's. *Epicoene* in fact has been studied along with other city comedies in the context of Simmel's detailing of how such characteristics are created by the metropolis.

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[53]See Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures.*
[54]See Taylor, *Sources of the Self.* See also chapter 1 and 3 above.

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We should not be so restricted by such genre boundaries, for Simmel's work on the effect of the metropolis also sheds light on *Hamlet*, even though it is not in a city comedy.

Jonson's method, I have observed in the last chapter, is more analytic than Shakespeare's in that the younger writer tends to separate trends such as the particularization of personality, in his dramatic humours, and psychological detachment, in his characters of wit (though these also reflect a higher degree of particularization than they are usually given credit for). True-Wit, we have seen, is a representation of a self who is at ease with his highly autonomous subjectivity. In this sense he is somewhat unlike Hamlet, who struggles painfully in an attempt to reach autonomy, separation, agency and a more radical type of psychic depth. We may say that the trauma of the early modern paradigm shift, rather than the resultant self, is dramatized in Shakespeare's play. The way that *Hamlet* treats the issue of separation, or autonomy, will be examined further when we examine the polarization of the subjective-objective spectrum and the implicit rise of the problem of other minds. First we need to explore how the radical separation of the self from society is intimately related to the early modern revolution in modes of intimacy.

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Chapter 6

HISTORICIZING INTIMACY IN SHAKESPEARE'S OEUVRE

> If it is impossible to study literature apart from an epoch's entire culture, it is even more fatal to encapsulate a literary phenomenon in the single epoch of its creation, in its own contemporaneity, so to speak. We usually strive to explain a writer and his work precisely through his own time and the most recent past .... Yet the artwork extends its root into the distant past. Great literary works are prepared for by centuries...
>
> M. M. Bakhtin, "Response to a Question from Novy Mir"

I. *Introductory*

Hamlet's treatment of intimacy is notoriously suggestive and problematic. If this drama seems to provide us with insights into relatively timeless features of human relations, this may be at least partly due to the fact that it was written during a paradigm shift in modes of social association. The play may be able to achieve such emotional power, because Shakespeare was able to compare coexisting, yet competing regimes of social mores. To obtain a sufficiently historicized frame of reference *Hamlet* needs to be

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examined in light of long-term changes in sexual and marital prohibitions, modes of kinship, the enforcement of moral codes, and the institution of marriage. As Bakhtin remarks, "the artwork extends its root into the distant past. Great literary works are prepared for by centuries." The play registers the last shift in Western mores that constitutes a major modification of the nature of our system of kinship, sexual morals, and gender. Since depth psychology depends on the system of intimacy, the psychoanalytic mode of interpreting *Hamlet* needs to be rethought.

The historical shift in modes of intimacy involves changes in the modes both of kinship and of sexual relationship. In the next section of this chapter we will see that the deep emotional structure of the play concerns the change in kinship taboos from those of the extended family to those of the nuclear family. In section 3 we will explore how the play registers the early modern consolidation of modes of sexual intimacy in an idealized institution of marriage. *Hamlet* reacts to the historical shift in social relations subtly and even irrationally, and we will be able to begin to tease out the underlying factors only by placing it in the context of Shakespeare's other works. Therefore it is necessary to widen our focus and consider the outline of his *oeuvre* in terms of his changing treatment of intimacy. He treats intimacy quite differently in different periods. A view of the general pattern will shed light on how this tragedy, which was written when his deeply held assumptions were being drastically transformed, initiates a new direction in his career. This will lead us in the final section of this chapter to examine differences and similarities between Shakespeare's representations of male and

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female subjectivities, and connections among economic structures, modes of intimacy, and depth.

In the first part of the last chapter, I argued that the type of subjective depth that developed in early modern Europe should be seen as a structural potential rather than an ontologically "solid" set of facts. Approaches drawing on standard depth psychology, it is true, are too often overly speculative, treating potentials and partial tendencies in a universal and ontologically "solid" manner. But if we do not reify terms and if we realize its necessarily speculative, incomplete, and significantly indeterminate nature, then the Freudian paradigm offers invaluable material for an historicized analysis of Western selfhood. As Western society approaches the modern system of kinship, morals, and gender construction, Oedipal theory, we will see, becomes more useful.

Hamlet has been able to serve as a paradigm for modern psychoanalytic theory, because it relates the finite deep self to the family romance. Freud's theory that Hamlet identifies with Claudius in that they both wished to kill Gertrude's husband and then marry her needs, however, to be historicized by placing it in the context of the changing sexual mores of the times. Janet Adelman does this to some extent in her important psychoanalytic study *Suffocating Mothers*. She argues that Hamlet manifests not only an unresolved Oedipal complex but also an unresolved pre-Oedipal one centered on his mother's sexuality, which is the main difficulty in his development of a stable identity.

Adelman provides historical evidence for widespread early modern pre-Oedipal trauma -- such as unnecessary dependence on

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wet nurses who separated child from mother. She does not, however, demonstrate that such practices were actually new, and they may in fact have been a development of medieval ones. Nor does she take into account the recent work on the attempts by Puritans to engineer the fluid dynamics of breast feeding, which conflicts with her conclusions. Most importantly, all such practices need to be viewed in light of a more general paradigm shift in mores. Adelman does not clarify how the practices she discusses are part of larger cultural patterns and thus may give an exaggerated significance to her intriguing but incomplete evidence. I will also view the construction of the modern subject in psychoanalytic terms, but I will explore a more comprehensive and long-range shift in modes of intimacy.

We should keep in mind that the received notion that modern institutions of marriage and the family are based on a Judeo-Christian foundation is difficult to defend once we realize that Christ said little about sexuality and marriage[1] -- clearly not enough to create the basis of the so-called "Christian" notion of family values. He shared most of the assumptions of his culture, and ancient Jewish mores bear little resemblance to our own. The biblical prohibition of adultery only referred to other men's wives, not to other women such as widows and servants. Monogamy was not enforced in biblical times, for it was in fact the German-Jewish Talmudist Gershon ben Judah (960-1028) who first banned polygyny for the Jews.[2] While the church was also influenced by various ascetic philosophies and

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[1]See James Brundage, *Law, Sex and Christian Society in Medieval Europe*, pp. 4-5. Cf. chapter 3 above.

[2]Jack Goody, *The Development of the Family and Marriage in Europe*, p. 80n. The ban originally applied only to the Ashkenazi.

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religions of the Mediterranean, monogamy -- which the rhetor St. Augustine was the strongest early defender of -- was, like the dowry, a custom that Christians appear to have adopted from pagan Rome.[3] Our system of marriage prohibitions are not closely related to the Mosaic model, and in general the modern laws governing marriage were formed during the middle ages.[4]

The modern codes governing marriage and kinship form the social basis for a Freudian self, which was not, then, always fully in place. Only a sufficiently complex historical perspective on the prerequisites for an Oedipal structure of feeling will enable us evaluate the admittedly suggestive psychoanalytic mode of reading *Hamlet*. For the Freudian version of the family romance to have widespread validity, an intense emotional focus must be put on the nuclear family, which must exist as a very isolated structure. England appears to have been exceptional in that since late Anglo-Saxon times there seems to have been a surprising preference for conjugal households, rather than ones housing extended kinship groups. Alan Macfarlane believes that England was the last bastion of an older pattern that was never fully submerged by the mores of Roman civilization as it was on the continent.[5]

Macfarlane and others, such as Ralph Houlbrooke and Martin Ingram, who form what we may call the continuity school, have justly critiqued the exaggerated description of the degree and speed of changes in the structure of the family and emotions put forth by

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[3]See Goody, p. 85.
[4]See Brundage and Goody.
[5]See Macfarlane, *The Culture of Capitalism*, pp. 137-38.

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such writers as Lawrence Stone.[6] But if conjugal households had long been common in England, early modern developments -- such as the dramatic rise of urbanization, mobility, and capitalist structures -- nevertheless increased the isolation of the nuclear family significantly. Similarly, while the roots of individualism extend far back into the past,[7] a significant development in autonomy occurred in the Renaissance. And while the history of romantic love is a long one,[8] nonetheless only with the Reformation was there a hegemonic privileging of the anthropologically idiosyncratic union of romantic passion and marriage, which is usually a pragmatic institution. Sex and marriage, which are hardly ever closely associated since marriage is usually an economic arrangement, started to become inextricably linked in the prevailing ideology, and this regime began to be enforced with a distinctly modern consistency and rigor. Indeed, to explain some of these modern developments, Macfarlane even has to revert to fundamental ideas of Marx, Engels, and Weber, who were among the first to put forth theories of revolutionary early modern change in the nature of the family and the self.[9]

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[6]Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England, 1500-1800.* For a critique of Stone see, for instance, Ralph Houlbrooke, *The English Family 1450-1700*, pp. 1-16; Macfarlane, pp. 129-134. Ingram's work is discussed below.

[7]See, for instance, R. Howard Bloch, *Medieval French Literature and Law*, p. 225, on the significant degree of liberation that the individual achieved in the twelfth century.

[8]See for instance, C. S. Lewis, *The Allegory of Love*; Macfarlane, pp. 123-143.

[9]Macfarlane, pp. 140-142. Macfarlane exaggerates the degree of continuity when he flatly claims that individualism, the market mentality, and high mobility had long existed in England (p. 137). He does not note, for instance, that the demographic data--which Houlbrooke is impressed by (pp. 26-29)--demonstrates a dramatic rise in mobility and that cultural developments imply a rise in individualism. See also Peter Stearns's introduction to *Emotion and Social Change.* Cf. Marx, *Capital* and *Pre-Capitalist Economic Formations*; Engels, *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*; Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism.*

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We need, then, to be careful to combine elements of continuity and change in a manner that does not revert to the reductive historiographies of either school. We should realize, for instance, that while a pattern of conjugal households survived as a "cultural oddity" in England, this basic structure of social dissociation was nonetheless radically developed and "very widely disseminated" in the early modern and modern periods.[10] Like biological evolution, cultural change is opportunistic, seizing, for instance, upon a cultural oddity of the Germanic past and using it as the basis of the modern bourgeois system of mores. Even though the forces that create the modern system have roots that in England go far back in the historical record, long-term changes did in fact culminate in the Renaissance and a significant shift did take place in early modern times. Rather than the quick and total revolutions of family structure that Stone's basically synchronic study of the family described, the early modern period should be seen as the era of the last major stage of the long-term transformation of the Western kinship/moral/gender system.

II. *Incest Taboos, Kinship Systems, and* Hamlet

The construction of the modern institution of the family was not completed by the time of Shakespeare but had entered its final phase. The representation of intimacy in *Hamlet* appears to be

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[10]Quotation from Marfarlane, p. 142, who does not, however, appreciate how much this "cultural oddity" was transformed in the early modern period.

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related to this traumatic transition. Even if it had long existed, the conjugal family, which almost universally has less rights than the extended family or kinship group,[11] became relatively more autonomous and isolated in this era of high mobility and urbanization. Freud's theory that the play's power comes from the representation of Hamlet's Oedipal desires needs to be put in such an historical context. His reading -- which was expounded somewhat reductively by Ernest Jones[12] -- is that Hamlet delays in taking his revenge because he shares with Claudius the desire to murder King Hamlet and then marry his wife. While Freud and Jones were correct to draw attention to the play's focus on sexual matters, we should keep in mind that Hamlet refers to his father only in a loving manner. That this character implicitly shares putative universal aggressive tendencies toward the father is an extratextual assumption that is not even necessary for a psychoanalytic reading.[13] Even in terms of modes of intimacy, which psychoanalysis studies too often concentrate on without examining the overarching system that constructs them, Freud's concern with the Oedipal sexual prohibition is much too narrow of a focus that reflects a lack of a sufficiently historicized perspective. For the family romance that the play presents is one that taps into not only taboos involving the nuclear family but also ones of the extended family.

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[11]See Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Elementary Structures of Kinship* and "The Family."

[12]As we saw in the last chapter, Freud mentioned his theory about *Hamlet* during his "first explicit introduction" of the Oedipal complex, in "Letter 71" that he wrote to Fliess on October 15, 1987; *Standard Edition*, 1:265-266. See also Ernest Jones, "The Œdipus-Complex as an Explanation of Hamlet's Mystery" and *Hamlet and Oedipus*.

[13]See Avi Erlich, *Hamlet's Absent Father*.

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This drama has quite a number of explicit references[14] to a very different type of incest than Hamlet's hypothetical sexual desire for his mother. The play might implicitly suggest the issue of sexual intimacy between mother and son, but "th'incestuous pleasure of his bed" that it explicitly treats is the sexual intimacy between brother- and sister-in-law.. The ghost appears to consider the breach of this contemporary incest taboo at least as serious as adultery and lust: "That incestuous, that adulterate beast"; "let not the royal bed of Denmark be / A couch for luxury and damned incest." The play's emotional dynamics are in fact initiated not within the nuclear family but by a breach of this incest taboo that concerns the extended kinship structure. This type of incest was then quite notorious. Shakespeare's audience would have taken it much more seriously than we now do. Current discourse about the deep Oedipal structure of the play needs to be modified by an understanding of the changing system of incest prohibitions in England.

Critics have apparently not sufficiently appreciated the significance of the crucial fact that Claudius and Gertrude's marriage violated exactly the same prohibition as Henry VIII's marriage to his first wife, Catherine of Aragon. Like Gertrude, Catherine was the widow of her husband's dead brother. Although this erstwhile defender of the faith had been given a dispensation by the Pope to marry Catherine, Henry tried to demonstrate that his marriage was contrary to God's laws, over which the Pope had no power. He consulted Catholic, Protestant and Jewish theologians from all over Europe, and received contradictory opinions, for the bible suggests

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[14]See 1.2.157, 1.5.42, 1.5.83, 3.3.90.

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contrary injunctions. Leviticus indicates that such a marriage should be prohibited -- "You shall not uncover the nakedness of your brother's wife; she is your brother's nakedness" (18:16). Deuteronomy, on the other hand, enjoined the brother to enter this leviratic marriage: "If brothers dwell together, and one of them dies and has no son, the wife of the dead shall not be married outside the family to a stranger; her husband's brother shall go in to her, and take her as his wife, and perform the duty of a husband's brother to her. And the first son whom she bears shall succeed to the name of the brother who is dead" (25:5-6). Henry's desire for an heir initiated powerful practices that caused the Levitical prohibition to be surprisingly vital in early modern England. *Hamlet*'s treatment of the incest system needs to be seen in light of the contemporary strength of this prohibition.

That the taboo initiating the psychological action of the play is not the prohibition of sex between mother and son, but between brother- and sister-in-law, suggests that the play is concerned about the shift in mores from those concerning the extended family to those centered on the nuclear family and the resultant Oedipal conflicts. Freud argues that the play's emotional power derives from the prohibition of relations between parents and children, since he believes this is the "kernel of the super-ego": "The authority of the father or of the parents is introjected into the ego and there forms the kernel of the super-ego, which takes its severity from the father, perpetuates his prohibition against incest, and so insures the ego against a recurrence of the libidinal object cathexis."[15] But in

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[15]Quoted in Marjorie Garber, *Shakespeare's Ghost Writers*, p. 131.

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traditional systems the "authority" not of the father alone, but of the extended kinship system was the preeminent power. Therefore, the structure of the super-ego would have changed significantly over time. While it is true that, as Ralph Houlbrooke observes, except in the northern districts "since late Anglo-Saxon times if not before, kinship ties had been relatively weak in England,"[16] this is only in contrast with the extremely strong kinship systems that existed elsewhere in the British isles and on the continent. With the dramatic increases of social mobility and urbanization, the rise of the market economy, and the Reformation's effect on kinship (which we will examine shortly), the substantial extended kinship ties that existed even in medieval England deteriorated and the isolation of the nuclear family became more severe.

That a violation of an extended-kinship taboo -- and not the imagined violation of the Oedipal prohibition -- is the first issue of depth psychology raised by the play is quite significant, no matter how much each "authority" contributed to "the kernel of the superego" at the time. Fundamental issues concerning not one incest taboo but the whole system of taboos provide a major source of the lasting and universal interest and power on which the play draws. Currently, theorizations of non-nuclear structures of family authority are not very popular, but the issues involved border on those dealt with by social psychology.[17] Lacan's notions, such as the *phallus*, generally extend nuclear family dynamics to deal with the socialization of authority. He does not, however, sufficiently

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[16]Houlbrooke, p. 50.

[17]here is much of interest for contemporary discussions of the self in, for instance, George H. Mead, *Mind, Self, and Society*; cf. Charles Taylor, p. 36, 525.

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historicize his system. A more historicized account is provided by critical theory.

In "Authority and the Family," for instance, Max Horkheimer notes that when the family "has shrunk to being a consumer community" the father is no longer "immediately seen in his productive social achievement." Instead, "his position is acquired essentially by the money he brings in .... Because of this separation in space and time between professional and familial life, every bourgeois father may in social life have a very modest position and have to bend the knee to others, yet at home will be the master and exercise the highly important function of accustoming his children to discretion and obedience."[18] That *Hamlet*'s treatment of intimacy reflects the fact that it was written in an early modern metropolis that was beginning to witness the shift in the modes of internalizing authority that Horkheimer describes may be partly behind this psychodrama's ability to sustain its surprising resonance over time.

A satisfactory reading of this play must take into account the early modern shift in kinship structure, since both an extended family prohibition and the Oedipal taboo are part of the play's structure of feeling. Hamlet's concern about his mother's sex life is no doubt disturbing -- "Not this, by no means, that I bid you do: / Let the bloat King tempt you again to bed" -- even though the Oedipal significance is partly veiled by the curiously indirect syntax of his imperative and by his pragmatic fear that the King will "Make you to ravel all this matter out / That I essentially am not in madness / But mad in craft" (3.4.183-90). To assert that psychoanalytic

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[18]Max Horkheimer, "Authority and the Family," *Critical Theory*, p. 108.

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interpretations have exaggerated the universal significance of the Oedipal taboo is not to deny it has power. We need to realize, however, that this power may vary significantly from society to society and from historical period to historical period. The prohibition of sexual relations between mother and son is clearly deeply rooted; it even exists in the animal kingdom when the offspring is raised by the parent. Indeed, at the evolutionary origins of biological sex there exists an imperative for genetic variation, which is violated by such a union. There can be little doubt of the power of this taboo and thus of the suggestiveness of Freud's interpretation of the play.

Freud's reading is, however, too reductive, even in terms of deep emotional structure. For Freud and his followers have focused too exclusively on this taboo and have tended to see it in absolute terms. Claude Levi-Strauss observed that like the sexual division of labor, the system of incest taboos exhibits a significant degree of arbitrariness -- in that it varies greatly from culture to culture -- and yet in some form both of these prohibitions are universally obeyed. Their purpose is, he believes, to impart a degree of organization to elementary kinship systems, and so particular customs are arbitrary though some system of mores is necessary.[19] Sex with close blood relatives may seem to us to have the force of a universal prohibition, but in fact close marriage was a common custom of Germanic pagan culture, as it was in much of the world. Levi-Strauss notes that "while consanguineous marriages are likely to bring ill effects in a society which has consistently avoided them

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[19]See Lévi-Strauss *The Elementary Structures of Kinship.*

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in the past, the danger would be much smaller if the prohibition had never existed, since this would have given ample opportunity for the harmful hereditary characters to become apparent and be automatically eliminated through selection."[20]

We assume that the difference in age adds strength to the mother-son taboo, but in fact some cultures consider it proper for an adult to bring up an infant spouse. Such a long-term relation is thought to increase the bonds of marital affection. When Jocasta tells Oedipus that everyone knows that boys dream of sleeping with their mothers, this does not seem to be as shocking to her sensibility as to our modern one. Oedipus, the self-made man, is not as ready as his mother to accept the situation, but he seems to be more concerned with public shame than internal guilt, for he does not have *Hamletian* depth. We have observed in previous chapters that Oedipus cannot have an Oedipal complex, since he does not know who his biological parents are. That he was not raised by his mother would seem to diminish any biological force of the taboo, which in the animal kingdom is often imprinted after birth.

Dramatic and literary characters from earlier eras do not have as well-developed finite depths as those of the early modern period. The lack of highly developed subjective depth in premodern characters appears to be partly related to the fact that the cultural construction of the necessary structure of feelings was only being completed in the early modern period. While Freud's perspective is usually a-historical, he nevertheless realized that *Hamlet* represents "the secular advance of repression in the emotional life of

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[20]Lévi-Strauss, 276.

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mankind."[21] Such repression may well be needed for modern depth. That the play includes both nuclear and extended family taboos reflects the fact that it registers the social trauma of the final major adjustment in the West's kinship system, which supplied the necessary repression. The play is able to treat such issues with what seems to us great power because the representation of Hamlet's psychological make-up begins to resemble our own, even if it is not identical to our own. An historical approach to the emotions is needed, for we need to examine the ways and the degree in which the cultural underpinnings of Hamlet's structure of feelings both agree with and differ from our own.

Although marital prohibitions extended in the middles ages to distant relations of various types, they were too complex and impractical to be enforced rigorously and consistently until the Reformation's simplified code dealt a powerful blow to older secular mores (more on this shortly). With the de-emphasis of the extended kinship structures and the Reformation's effect on the institution of marriage there developed an exclusive and maddeningly intense focus on nuclear-family incest taboos. Hamlet represents a sensibility that approaches ours but that also retains a connection to older extended family taboos, for he clearly does not share our tolerance for marriages between brother- and sister-in-laws. If we take into account the strength of cultural forces, we may be able to understand better the underlying assumptions that affect Hamlet's mood. At the beginning of the play he has no reason to suspect Claudius, and yet

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[21]Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, p. 264; see the discussion in chapter 3 above.

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he has cultural reasons to be upset by the marriage. His wearing "the trappings and the suits of woe" (1.2.86) for long after his father's death may not only be based on the fact that he has lost a father. His dislike of his uncle may be caused by more than an objective comparison between the two. Indeed, the idealized and extreme comparison he uses -- "Hyperion to a satyr" (1.2.140) -- does not appear to have a sufficient foundation in Claudius's relatively civilized behavior. Non-"objective" prejudices appear to be at work.

The contemporary audience would have been better prepared for Hamlet's extreme mood in Act 1 scene 2 than we are, since the cultural bias against the union of his mother and uncle gained great power not only in Henry VIII's reign but also during Elizabeth's. Unlike the legitimacy of her predecessor Mary, which was based on the validity of the leviratic marriage of Henry and Catherine, Elizabeth's was based on the Levitical prohibition of this same marriage. The Church of England therefore strengthened the prohibition of the type of marriage into which Claudius and Gertrude have entered.[22] Such culturally formed biases may well be a significant part of the dramatic foundation for Hamlet's disgust with the leviratic marriage of his mother to her brother-in-law. His intense mood needs to be seen in the context of all significant contemporary mores of intimacy, since there often does not appear to us to be a sufficient "objective correlative" for it.[23] (Similarly, we shall shortly also explore his seemingly irrational attitude toward

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[22]See Goody, 168-79.

[23]T. S. Eliot, "*Hamlet*," p. 48; cf. Jacqueline Rose's useful "Hamlet--The *Mona Lisa* of Literature," 187.

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marriage in relation to the ideological consolidation of older modes of intimacy in the Reformation's modified version of this institution.)

The Levitical prohibition became the law of the land, even though there were "experts" who disagreed, such the German Protestant theologian Bucer, who came to Cambridge to teach when invited by Thomas Krammer. Bucer had asserted "that if God had made such a dispensation for the purpose 'of raising up seed to his Brother,' then others too were permitted to marry within these degrees."[24] The question of the marriage prohibition also affects issues of succession in the play, for if Claudius would raise "up seed to his Brother," Hamlet would be passed over. Deuteronomy, which Bucer followed rather than Leviticus, would seem to enjoin the King's brother to bear a son by Gertrude, and thus to put another possible obstacle between Hamlet and the throne. Although his uncle tries to assure him that he is "the most immediate to our throne" (1.2.109), Hamlet's anxieties surface when he later remarks, "I lack advancement" (3.2.331), and that Claudius "Popp'd in between th'election and my hopes" (5.2.65) and .

While the anxieties concerning the changing system of incest taboos have a political relevance, that Denmark's throne, unlike the English one, is won by "election" suggests that the play does not present a purely a localized political allegory. The play appears not to be as concerned with particular political structures as with social mores, including the relative importance of bonds strictly defined by blood compared to those involving affection. The very first words

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[24]Goody, p. 170, who takes the quote from G. Burnet, *The History of the Reformation of the Church of England* (Dublin, 1730; 1st ed., London 1715), V. I, p. 69.

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that Hamlet utters, which are a reaction to Claudius's address of him as "my cousin ... and my son," are indeed significant in this regard: "little more than kin, and less than kind" (1.2.64-65). The contrast between purely consanguine relations and those that involve other bonds is stressed, since unlike *kin*, the word *kind* implies affection. Our modern obsessive focus on the emotional bonds between parents and children was only gradually taking effect, and other traditional connections were still important. Even in medieval England, which we have seen was somewhat exceptional in this regard, there were relatively strong bonds among members of the extended family, as well as among members of the household who were not related by blood, such as adopted children.

While the traditional extended kinship structure was de-emphasized by the medieval church, it tried to replace this structure not by the nuclear family, but by spiritual kinship -- e.g., brotherhoods and sisterhoods in Christ, *Il Papa*, priests as fathers, *mother* superiors, godfathers and godmothers. Jack Goody argues that this was mainly because it wished to weaken the traditional practice of making one's heirs one's consanguines, affines, and adopted children and to encourage the well-to-do to leave their wealth to the church instead. The church's set of prohibitions -- which at one time extended to the seventh degree but was reduced to the fourth -- applied not only to consanguines, but also to adopted relatives, affines, who are related by marriage, and even "spiritual kin," who are related through godparents (or "gossips"). This extensive set of prohibitions made it quite likely that the church

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would by default be made the heir to the wealth of believers, a financial strategy that met with rather startling success.

The Reformation entailed a setback for this financial strategy of the church. The Protestants stressed the importance of immediate blood relations and attacked the Catholic system involving marital prohibitions or "bans." The reformers saw that there was a financial motive -- that the church benefited from issuing of dispensations -- even if they were not aware of the more indirect strategy that Goody points out. The system of social ties that evolved in the middle ages was dealt a powerful blow in the Renaissance. "Henry VIII's matrimonial entanglements and the Reformation led to" the curtailment of most of the prohibitions on marrying blood relatives, affines, or *spiritual* kin. "From 1540, by virtue of a parliamentary statute, spiritual ties and all but the two closest degrees of kinship and affinity ceased to be obstacles to marriage."[25] Although a secular model of relationship regained overwhelming power during the Reformation, there was not a return to the medieval secular paradigm that even in England gave significant authority to extended kinship groups. Rather, a new regime was born that intensely focused on the nuclear family, which is a major requirement of the Oedipal model. To a significant degree *Hamlet*'s exploration of the emotional consequences of kinship dramatizes this paradigm shift.

That Hamlet responds with "little more than kin, and less than kind" to Claudius's address of him as "my cousin Hamlet, and my son" provides us with insights into how Shakespeare was able to depict the psychological effects caused by the changes in the kinship

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[25]Houlbrooke, p. 40.

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system. It is, for instance, suggestive of the older kinship system that "cousin" could refer to a variety of relationships, including that of nephew-uncle. The shift in emphasis to the nuclear family in which parent-child relation becomes all important is thus mirrored in the change in Hamlet's status from "cousin" to "son." To some extent this drama is about Hamlet's paradigmatic attempt to reach agency, autonomy, and a radical individuality, which is connected to his attempt to extricate himself psychologically from his kinship group.

The play contrasts his quest for independence with the obedience of the more traditional Ophelia. She is, of course, manipulated by her father and Claudius, who use her as part of their project of getting Hamlet fully under control. This plan to control him partly explains why Hamlet rejects the love of Ophelia, and the seemingly unconnected romantic subplot is therefore tied to the main political and philosophical intrigue by the theme of autonomy. The significance and nature of the group in which Hamlet is embedded is not clear, however, since his nuclear family *is* the political state, and since the sense of family as only *kin* -- that is, blood relations -- was at this time in competition with the one suggested by *kind*, which denoted the "members of a family united in community of feeling."[26] The word *kind* suggests the original and then still vital sense of *family*, which refers to all in a household, including servants, affines, and adopted children.

While the issue of the influence of the kinship group is raised by the play, Hamlet's poor treatment of Ophelia is not fully explicable

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[26]Harold Jenkins, ed. *Hamlet*, p. 183n. On the original sense of family, see Horkheimer, p. 105.

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as a reaction to her manipulation by Polonius and Claudius, for before the plan to use her is hatched, Ophelia already has reported that his behavior is quite odd: "as I was sewing in my closed, / Lord Hamlet, with his doublet all unbrac'd, / No hat upon his head, his stockings foul'd, Ungarter'd and down-gyved to his ankle, / Pale as his shirt, his knees knocking each other, / And with a look so piteous in purport / As if he had been loosed out of hell / To speak horrors, he comes before me" (2.1.77-84). Dover Wilson attempts to tidy up the problems of motivation by recommending that Hamlet's entrance in Act 2, scene 2 be moved up so that he overhears Polonius's plan to spy on the lovers.[27] While this would increase the motivation for Hamlet's troubling behavior towards Ophelia in the scene we soon witness, there is "no authority"[28] for such a change, nor would it explain the earlier behavior that Ophelia reports. His later abusive words towards Ophelia -- "get thee to a nunnery," for instance -- therefore remains problematic, especially given that he eventually vehemently affirms that he "lov'd Ophelia." Hamlet's notoriously conflicted behavior may partly be a reflection of coexisting but conflicting systems of mores centering on but not limited to competing visions of marriage.

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[27]Wilson, What *Happens in Hamlet*, pp. 101-14.
[28]Jenkins, ed. *Hamlet*, p. 464.

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III. *The Restructuring of Intimacy and the Transformation of Marriage*

Conceptions of kinship affect conceptions of marriage. This is evident, for instance, in the medieval secular model of marriage, which stressed importance of the views of the kinship group in deciding who a group member should marry. That young lovers such as Hamlet and Ophelia should have their way was, however, not unheard of, since the consent of the partners involved was at times thought to be implied by the Roman conception of marriage as a contract. During the middle ages the church often used this Roman idea to counter the Germanic notion that marriage consisted of consummation and cohabitation. The synthesis of the Roman and Germanic notions forms the legal basis of the modern Western conception of the institution, which requires both consummation and a contract freely entered into.[29] During the early modern period a range of conflicting visions of marriage continued to coexist and the institution was still in great flux.

Polonius and his son take an older view of marriage that was favored by nobility in that they counsel Ophelia not to entertain the possibility of marrying Hamlet, for as Laertes puts it, "he himself is subject to his birth" (1.3.18). Gertrude, on the other hand, reveals that she had hoped that Ophelia "shouldst have been my Hamlet's wife" (5.1.237), which suggests that she was not a believer in the medieval noble version of marriage. We should note, however, that Ophelia was part of the household, and thus is partly *kind* if not *kin*,

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[29]See Brundage on these conceptions of marriage.

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and Gertrude's attitude may reflect the tendency for traditional "endogamous" or "in-marriage."[30] Since competing conceptions of marriage were vital during this period, her hope that Hamlet and Ophelia's courtship could lead to a union was not unrealistic, even though it went against the still powerful noble model. Clearly the play draws on and brings to our attention competing visions of marriage, which was entering the final stage of its major development in the early modern period.

The Roman model, it is true, allowed for the possibility of contractual and perhaps even consensual marriage, and companionate marriage, which some have thought to be a Protestant invention, may have long existed in some form. We should not, however, assume that our conception of marriage as one of romantic and sexual love freely entered into was always the norm. Not only did the medieval secular version of marriage insist on the rights of the kinship group in forming marriages, but despite the medieval Church's championing of contractual marriage, it did not by any means privilege sexual love in marriage. To the church marriage was an institution for reproduction, and some influential medieval clerics considered coitus performed for pleasure to always be fornication, whether the persons involved were married or not. The unquestioned positive value we now place on the sexual pleasure of married couples is for the most part a result of the Reformation (more on this below). While it may seem at first glance that the privileging of sex in marriage represented a step forward in sexual

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[30]See Goody, p. 31. Following Stone, social historians often use "endogamy" to refer to marriage within the same social group or geographical area, rather than only within the same tribe or clan.

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matters, we need to realize that it is closely tied to the restrictive bourgeois system. The Reformation and counter-Reformation ideologically consolidated various libidinal channels in the institution of marriage by successfully excluding "irregular" modes of intimacy and by consistently enforcing such ideological norms. This represented a consolidation and a Weberian rationalization that implied new types of repression.

Levi-Strauss has remarked that "among most people, marriage has very little to do with the satisfaction of the sexual urge, since the social set-up provides for many opportunities which can be not only external to marriage, but even contradictory to it." Therefore, that a powerful ideology of what may be called *married chastity* came into existence in the early modern period is quite startling, and we need to resist the currently dominant ideology that views it as natural. In the early modern period what we now call irregular forms of intimacy gradually became no longer implicitly accepted by prevailing secular opinion, and the new sexual regime of the bourgeoisie rose to hegemony. Freud remarked about this regime that "[w]e can demonstrate with ease that what the world calls its code of morals demands more sacrifices than it is worth, and that its behavior is neither dictated by honesty nor instituted with wisdom."[31] Unfortunately, unlike such figures as Levi-Strauss or Freud, literary critics have tended not even to consider the relative value of our system of marriage and have usually judged intimacy in decidedly bourgeois terms.

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[31]Freud, *A General Introduction to Psychoanalysis.*

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Foucault may be right that "modern societies" have not "consigned sex to a shadow existence, but dedicated themselves to speaking of it *ad infinitum*, while exploiting it as *the* secret." His work nonetheless confirms that the early modern period witnessed the birth of a new attitude toward sex and of a regime of repressive practices. The treatment of sex as "*the* secret" was part of an epochal shift of which bourgeois Puritans were the vanguard in England. This trauma left old England less merry to a degree not well appreciated. The mores of this bourgeoisie, who differ from radical Puritans not only in mores but in politics and dogma, include strict moralism and discipline, the idealization and consolidation of the institution of marriage, and the isolation of a patriarchal private realm. In his middle period, we shall see, Shakespeare questioned the idealization of marriage, and *Hamlet* registers the trauma of the shift in mores of which this idealization is part.

This play appears to reflect a liminal awareness that while early modern society was becoming increasingly rational, irrationality was not eliminated but was swept deep within us. When the play was written, a repressed mode of dealing with sexuality was being championed by bourgeois Puritans, but the older mores were still extant in both upper and lower social strata. Hamlet registers this war of mores by tellingly swinging back and forth between a sexually liberated mode and the new, more repressed one. He sounds at times like a Puritan preacher: "God hath given you one face and you make yourselves another. You jig and amble, and ... make your wantonness your ignorance." He also admits, however, "I could accuse

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me of such things that it were better my mother had not borne me" and illustrates "such things":

> *Ham.* Lady, shall I lie in your lap?
> *Oph.* No, my lord.
> *Ham.* I mean, my head upon your lap.
> *Oph.* Ay, my lord.
> *Ham.* Do you think I meant country matters?
> *Oph.* I think nothing, my lord.
> *Ham.* That's a fair thought to lie between a maid's legs

Such "country" matters reveal country manners, which are emphasized by the popular pun on the first syllable of this word. This frank attitude toward sexuality was traditional not only for the lower stratum and such manners were common among adults and children. We are lucky to have the physician of Henri IV's record of the young Louis XIII's life. When he was not yet one, Louis "laughed uproariously when his nanny waggled his cock with her fingers," and when slightly older "made everybody kiss his cock," which amused all. "The Marquise de Verneuil often put her hand under his coat; he got his nanny to lay him on her bed where she played with him, putting her hand under his coat" Servants and royalty acted in the same manner. "The Queen, touching his cock, said: 'Son, I am holding your spout.'"[32]

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[32]Heroard, *Journal sur l'enfance et la jeunesse de Louis XIII*, quoted by Philippe Ariès, *Centuries of Childhood*, pp. 100-1.

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Philippe Ariès remarks: "There is no reason to believe that the moral climate was any different in other families, whether of nobles or commoners; the practice of associating children with the sexual ribaldries of adults formed part of contemporary manners," which, we have seen in previous chapters, Norbert Elias demonstrated were being revolutionized in this era. Ariès continues, "This lack of reserve with regard to children surprises us: we raise our eyebrows at the outspoken talk but even more at the bold gestures, the physical contacts, about which it is easy to imagine what a modern psycho-analyst would say. The psycho-analyst would be wrong. The attitude to sex, and doubtless sex itself, varies according to environment, and consequently according to period and mentality. Nowadays the physical contacts described by Heroard would strike us as bordering on sexual perversion and nobody would dare to indulge in them publicly. This was not the case at the beginning of the seventeenth century"[33] -- at least in milieus little influenced by the emergent modern paradigm.

While, like Stone, Ariès at times exaggerated the degree of historical change, this should not blind us to the fact that the above remarks concerning the historical changes in attitudes toward sexuality appear to have significant validity. His claim that sexual freedom was also common in the lower classes, is, for instance, supported by G. R. Quaife, who has shown in detail that such mores were also those of the countryside. After his in-depth study of one area in England and his survey of other work, Quaife concludes that there were "three competing sexual norms -- Christian morality (the

[33]Ariès, p. 103.

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blueprint for respectable women), male freedom (the guide lines for 'respectable' men) and amoralism -- for the majority,"[34] which of course obtained for most women as well as men.

Along with a wide acceptance of illicit sexuality went nonbourgeois modes of dealing with illegitimacy. As Gloucester suggests at the opening of *King Lear*, "the whoreson must be acknowledg'd." Edmund would later argue at length that there is no necessary connection -- etymological or otherwise -- between *base* and *bastard*. Illegitimacy in the premodern world was more an accepted rather than a repressed fact of life, and the maintenance of an illegitimate child was more evenly shared by father and mother than it was later on. If events had taken a different turn, if when the church's hegemony waned religious means of repression had not been replaced by bourgeois morality, Edmund's wish that not only "nature," his "goddess," but the rest of the "gods" would "stand up for bastards!" (1.2.1,22) may have come to pass. We should be careful not to reduce *Lear* to a fairy tale that simplistically equates bastardy with baseness; the play may in fact suggest that social hypocrisy frustrated Edmund's hopes and unfortunately turned him toward "evil." That a relatively tolerant view of illegitimacy was common before the early modern period is clear from the example of fifteenth-century France, which has been called a bastardocracy, for it was the golden age for the illegitimate children of the great nobility.

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[34]Quaife, *Wanton Wenches and Wayward Wives*, p. 179.

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Lear's discourses on the "natural" and the "legitimate" is initiated at its very beginning by a play on *conception* as both the power to form ideas and the inception of pregnancy:

> *Kent.* Is not this your son, my lord?
> *Glou.* His breeding, sir, hath been at my charge. I have so often blush'd to acknowledge him, that now I am braz'd to't.
> *Kent.* I cannot conceive you.
> *Glou.* Sir, this young fellow's mother could; whereupon she grew round-womb'd, and had indeed, sir, a son for her cradle ere she had a husband for her bed.

Significantly, the word *conception* stirs up the same concerns in *Hamlet*:

> *Ham.* For if the sun breed maggots in a dead dog, being a good kissing carrion -- Have you a daughter?
> *Pol.* I have, my lord.
> *Ham.* Let her not walk i'th' sun. Conception is a blessing, but as your daughter may conceive -- friend, look to't.

The tendency of all flesh to become "good kissing carrion" -- that is, toward frank reproduction -- is anxiously contemplated. The play seems to ask: How should the Reformation demands for sexual restraint be negotiated? Should one, as in Mediterranean regions, seriously restrict female liberties -- "Let her not walk i'th' sun"? An anxious contemplation of the troubling possibility that England would

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have to resort to customs associated with Catholic countries seems to be reflected in Hamlet's troubled and troubling remark to Ophelia: "get thee to a nunnery." His attitude might therefore suggest that the play registers an anguished protest over the new, more repressed secular modes of restricting intimacy -- especially since it begins a period in which, as we shall see, he critiqued the new mores. *Hamlet*'s tumultuous questioning of the codes governing sexual intimacies appears to bear fruit in the terrible insights of both the great tragedies and the undervalued problem plays that will follow.

Older as well as more recent commentators on the questions of mores raised by Shakespearean drama often focus solely on particular contemporary occurrences, such as the publication of Stubbes' *Anatomie of Abuses* (1583) and of Nashe's reaction, *The Anatomie of Absurdities* (1590). While giving the appearance of solid findings, their commentary in fact tends to lack a comprehensive historical perspective and thus implicitly encourages the reading of modern moral assumptions into texts of the past. When questions of mores are approached by traditional critics, Victorian moralism distorts the historical perspective. On the other hand, when questions of mores are approached in the synchronic manner popularized by structuralism, which is supposed to prevent such errors, we in fact fare little better, because the limited time frame considered also fails to provide the necessary historical perspective. This is apparently why critics have been generally unaware of *Hamlet*'s anguished reaction to the massive "friction" between overlapping sexual paradigms -- as a tolerant secular "amoral" mode waned and

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gradually a new more "rational" and consistent mode became prevalent.

Such changes were, for instance, evident in 1576 when justices were given the power "to examine the circumstances of the birth of a bastard child and to punish the offenders."[35] In 1610 this was supplemented by a law that sent mothers of such children to the house of correction for a year. If we consult only Martin Ingram, currently the most prestigious social historian of the period, we will not be able obtain the necessary historical perspective. Indeed, the paradigm shift in mores that these laws were part of may not be sufficiently appreciated by literary critics, partly because commentators too often uncritically depend on the impressive but somewhat conservative work of Ingram, a member of the continuity school who considers only the early modern period. Ingram attacks Quaife's conclusions[36] and generally argues that so-called Christian morality had long been effective. While Quaife's geographically restricted view may not adequately register the decline in amoralism, Ingram's chronologically limited one unfairly downplays the significance of contemporary amoral behavior. James Brundage's *Law, Sex and Christian Society in Medieval Europe*, in fact extends into the Renaissance and therefore offers a more reliable perspective.

As we have seen in chapter three, Brundage's comprehensive study indicates that a rigorous and consistent regime of enforcement of what we call the Christian moral code did not take place on a large scale until the Reformation and Counter Reformation, which in this

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[35]Ingram, p.152.
[36]Ingram, pp. 159-60.

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regard did not work at cross purposes. The Jesuits were in fact also called Puritans.[37] After it lost its monopoly, Catholicism could no longer afford to be as lax in its enforcement of a stringent moral code as it often was in the middle ages. Before the Reformation, the rigorous enforcement of morality was thought to be close to impossible and prostitution was even institutionalized on the continent as a "public utility."[38] While brothels were not allowed in London, regulated ones were permitted across the river in a section of Southwark called "Stewside"; eighteen existed at end of fifteenth century.[39] In *Measure for Measure* the Puritan Angelo attacks such "stews," and presses for the death penalty for fornication. In the war of mores the Puritan bourgeoisie acted like storm troopers for the new repressive regime. They tried to pass a Draconian moral code unsuccessfully in the *Reformatio Legum* of 1590 and successfully in the Act of 1650, which set the penalty for adultery at death.[40] Stubbes had suggested in *Anatomie of Abuses* (1583) that not only adultery but also fornication should be punishable by death. Such pressure for "reform" from those who believed justice was sleeping is reflected in Angelo's remark: "The Law hath not been dead, though it hath slept" (2.2.90).

Hamlet's language that breaches "country matters," like the "crude" talk of the gravedigger, represents the frank manner of dealing with sexual issues that the Puritans attacked. A number of

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[37]Arthur Marrotti provided me with this information.
[38]Brundage, p. 521.
[39]See Brundage, p. 523 and Stephen Mullaney, *The Place of the Stage: License, Play, and Power in Renaissance England.*
[40]See Ingram, p. 151; Keith Thomas, "The Puritans and Adultery: The Act of 1650 Reconsidered." Cf. chapter 3 and below.

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the play's famous problems reflect the social trauma that occurred when so-called Christian morality began to be stringently enforced. It is not only Hamlet who appears to be bifurcated by such conflicting systems of mores. The social turmoil also seems to be partly responsible for driving Ophelia into a state of madness, which in the new regime became perhaps the only state in which a women was able to speak in a sexually frank manner. This paradigm shift represents a relative repression of what Bakhtin termed the *carnivalesque*, which employs profound humor to deal with bodily matters.[41] Foucault's general observation that the "space of tolerance"[42] in interpreting the law was drastically diminished in the modern age obtains for sexual matters as well. In the premodern world there was a much greater amount of "tolerated illegality" and the change in attitudes toward sexual morality can be compared to the shift from the concept of "landed property" in which allowances were made for irregular practices to "absolute property" in which the new bourgeois owners would not let such allowances to be made.[43] Such a shift is quite pertinent to an historical understanding of the institution of marriage, since in certain important respects it is a sexist system of sexual property and ownership -- a "traffic in women."[44] This system was modified by the Puritan bourgeoisie.

The "Puritan preachers" have long been identified as the ones "who set forth an ideal pattern of love and marriage" and who even

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[41]See, for instance, Michael Bristol, "'Funeral Bak'd-Meats': Carnival and the Carnivalesque in *Hamlet*."
[42]Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, p. 82.
[43]Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, p. 85.
[44]See Gayle Rubin, "The Traffic in Women"; gender issues will be discussed further below.

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made marriage into the "type and source of all human relations."[45] The idealized institution became the only one possible with the decline in acceptance of concubinage and of clandestine marriage -- which at times amounted to what we might call "shacking up." In 1604, for instance, a law was passed against bigamy in an attempt to prevent those who had married secretly from remarrying after a separation.[46] While we have an understandable prejudice against concubinage, in the medieval secular system (which in Renaissance England still retained some of its vitality) it was an acceptable solution for a woman in love with, as Polonius put it, "a prince out of her star." These older modes had previously been generally accepted and had been long defended by the courts. Since to moderns there is not a sufficient "objective correlative"[47] for Hamlet's brooding obsession with marriage, it may be partly related to the conflict between the increasingly hegemonic bourgeois mores and older sexual flexibility. Shakespeare himself may have felt caught in this conflict. He was a bourgeois gentil homme in Stratford, but he tells us in Sonnet 152 that in London he was "forsworn."

The medieval Church eventually prohibited priests from marrying, but their taking of concubines continued to be widespread, leading Luther to believe that such a system of chastity was unworkable and to set an important precedent by breaking his own vows and marrying an ex-nun. While this is generally known, the importance of the consolidation of older modes of intimacy in a

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[45]William Haller and Mallevile Haller, "The Puritan Art of Love," pp. 242, 270. Cf. Rose pp. 29-30; Stone, *The Family*, pp. 135-36.
[46]See Ingram, p. 149.
[47]See T. S. Eliot, "*Hamlet,*"

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rationalized (in Weber's sense) institution of marriage is not, however, well appreciated. Concubinage for the laity, which permitted intimacy when factors such as social class ruled out marriage, was not officially prohibited until the Fifth Lateran Council in 1514; the volume of cases, however, suggests that it remained common.[48] In England, the *Reformatio Legum* in 1590 foundered because of the fear that it might infringe the sexual freedom of aristocrats, but the dramatic decline of the illegitimacy ratio during the first half of the seventeenth century indicates that a climate of moral flexibility eventually subsided.[49]

Whether a child was illegitimate was not always clear, however, since spousals were created merely by the spoken consent of a man and woman -- either taking effect immediately (*per verba de praesenti*) or conditionally (*per verba de futuro*). While in 1563 the Council of Trent declared invalid marriages not publicly performed before a priest and while a similar change occurred in Protestant countries on the continent, in England clandestine marriage continued to be tolerated until 1753, and represented a trial or common-law marriage. Spousals *per verba de praesenti* and *per verba de futuro* were, however, attacked by bourgeois Puritan and were in continual need of defense. *Measure for Measure*, we will see, offered such a defense.

The power of *Hamlet* and other plays of Shakespeare's middle period may be related to their questioning of the modern regime of

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[48]Brundage, p. 514-16.

[49]Peter Laslett, *Family Life and Illicit Love*, chapter 3, whose sample of 98 parishes shows a decline in the illegitimacy ratios after 1600, which suggests that the paradigm shift slowly took hold. See also Stone, pp. 613-15; Ingram, p. 158.

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enforcement and consolidation of modes of intimacy. Skepticism concerning the new ideology, which yoked together romantic love and the formerly pragmatic institution of marriage, may be suggested by Hamlet's love letter. He asks Ophelia to doubt all -- that "the stars are fire," that "the sun doth move." He even asks her to doubt, that is, suspect, "truth to be a liar." He then asks that she does not let this flood of doubt dampen their romance: "But never doubt I love." That the word *doubt* is itself troublingly equivocal -- suggesting both distrust of the validity of the claim and fear that it may be true -- should raise our suspicious concerning the import of this letter.

Hamlet's skepticism about all that is in the physical and mental universes cannot be contained, despite his attempt to make *love* safe from doubt. After all, doubt is thrown on his intentions concerning Ophelia. Laertes tells his sister: "For Hamlet, and the trifling of his favour, / Hold it a fashion and a toy in blood, / A violet in the youth of primy nature, / Forward, not permanent, sweet, not lasting, / The perfume and suppliance of a minute, / No More" (1.3.5-9). When Ophelia tells Polonius that Hamlet has "of late made many tenders / Of his affection to me," Laertes' advice is seconded by her father's command not to "believe his vows; for they are brokers / Not of that dye which their investments show, / But mere implorators of unholy suits, / Breathing like sanctified and pious bawds / The better to beguile." Hamlet's emphasis on the act of doubting needs to be viewed in the context of the important contemporary changes in the cultural conduits available for libidinal energy. His anguished behavior and thoughts are evidence that he is exhibiting the

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irrational effects of passion, which were more notorious before the new ideology of marriage eventually was able to tame it considerably, for sexual love had previously been seen as a temporary madness. The play may attempt to stir up doubts not only about this character's state of mind but also about the new form marriage was taking.

The flux in modes of intimacy sheds light on famous critical problems, such as Hamlet's contradictory impulses. We see him, for instance, tell Ophelia "get thee to a nunnery" and then later on tell Laertes that he "lov'd Ophelia. Forty thousand brothers / Could not with all their quantity of love / Make up my sum" (5.1.264-66). His behavior at times clearly implies great affection for his mother and for Ophelia, and this needs to be seen together with such vitriolic words as "If thou dost marry, I'll give thee this plague for thy dowry: be thou chaste as ice, as pure snow, thou shalt not escape calumny." Some of these famously contradictory expressions of emotion can be better understood once we realize that they do not only involve misogynist elements of the culture but also imply a questioning of the transformed institution of marriage.

While the cultural underpinnings and psychological causes of such misogyny have been fruitfully explored by recent commentators,[50] we should be careful to realize that some of what seems to us to be misogyny may actually be misogamy, as we have seen is also the case for Jonson. For even when he is closest to a truly mad state of mind -- when his frustrated love for Ophelia appears to have driven nearly him to distraction -- Hamlet expresses

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[50]See for instance, Adelman, *Suffocating Mothers.*

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a hatred of marriage that should not be mistaken for a hatred of women: "Go to, I'll no more on't, it hath made me mad. I say we will have no mo marriages. Those that are married already--all but one--shall live; the rest shall keep as they are." Hamlet is of course referring to the marriage between his mother and Claudius, and we are thus also led to suspect that such issues might be one of the causes behind his notoriously obsessive treatment of his mother.

Such conflicts appear to be initiated by the contrast between the supposedly ideal marriage of his parents and the one in which his mother becomes entangled. Rather than seeing this from our perspective, we need to understand the historical developments about which Shakespeare appears to have had a change of heart. Hamlet's nostalgia for the ideal marriage of his parents before his father's death may be connected to Shakespeare's disappointment with the Puritan idealization of marriage that, as Mary Beth Rose has noted, he had celebrated earlier in his career.[51] While Hamlet's dislike of his mother's second marriage may have somewhat soured the prospect of marrying Ophelia, this does not seem to be a sufficient explanation, since many a child of a bad marriage decide to marry and "do it right." Rather than use his mother's second marriage as a cautionary example not to be followed, he instead quite abruptly rejects the institution tout court. "I say we will have no mo marriages" -- indeed seems to lash out at the new, less flexible modes of intimacy. The concern over the institution of marriage expressed in *Hamlet* is part of a pattern in Shakespeare's plays,

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[51]See Rose, *The Expense of Spirit*, chapter 1.

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which includes increasingly ominous broken nuptials[52] that begin to occur as the middle period approaches.

That *Hamlet* questions the new modes of intimacy is supported by the fact that the play indeed fits into a clear pattern set by Shakespeare's other works. His early, romantic comedies celebrated the Puritan's idealization, which refashioned the medieval invention of courtly love, from an extramarital affair into the modern conception that sees love and marriage as inextricably linked -- as, well, a horse and carriage. Other Elizabethan expressions of the revised notion of love include Spenser's *Amoretti*, which -- unlike previous famous sonnet sequences -- was written to the poet's wife. Shakespeare's series of romantic comedies end with an ominous dose of skepticism. Benedick of *Much Ado About Nothing* is such a vociferous hater of marriage that, even though he is eventually won over, his name now signifies this attitude.

In the problem plays the difficulties of marriage become much more serious. *All's Well That Ends Well* is the story of Helena's attempt to overcome a troubled union's profound difficulties, which give the lie to the idealized notion. Her magic touch cures the King but cannot make her husband love her. The emerging ideology that ascribes a magical effect to marital love is also questioned by the unromantic treatment of love in *Measure For Measure*, which we will return to shortly. The scathing view of intimacy in the next problem play, *Troilus and Cressida*, is generally consonant with the tragic treatment of love and marriage in the tragedies. *Hamlet* has at times been considered one of the problem plays, and its interest in the

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[52]See Carol Neely, *Broken Nuptials in Shakespeare's Plays.*

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problems of marriage is similar to the concerns of these tragicomedies. If we choose to view *Hamlet* as one of the great tragedies, it does not change matters. Mary Beth Rose is, I think, correct to conclude that in the tragedies a rise in the status of women in marriage is reflected by a new "heroics of love."[53] It is equally important to realize, however, that -- like *Hamlet* -- *Othello, Lear, Macbeth,* nonetheless stress the problems of marriage, not its idealization. The critique of the romantic ideology of marriage that we see in the plays of his middle period indicates that Shakespeare came to feel sympathy with Jonson's sceptical stance toward romance and the new modes of social association (see chapter 3 above). In Shakespeare's middle period, as in Jonson's works in general, there is clearly a significant resistance to the new regime.

The change in Shakespeare's treatment of marriage from a celebration of the new romantic conception of the institution to a more skeptical view suggests that he eventually delineated some of the less obvious negative consequences of the new regime. In comparison to the medieval privileging of the religious ascetic life, early modern ideology grants a higher status to libidinal energy in return for the anthropologically unusual attempt to funnel all sexuality into marriage. The reigning ideology no longer tries to make everyone believe Paul's position that while it is better to marry than to burn in hell, it is best to remain single and celibate. Instead Luther made it possible to believe without embarrassment that it is better to marry than to pine away in a monastery or convent.

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[53]See Rose, *The Expense of Spirit,* chapter 3.

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While the Protestant view may seem more accepting of sexuality, it is important to see it as only one aspect of a regime that is generally intolerant. Puritans, for instance, wished to bring about a strict enforcement of secular laws, that is, to replace medieval religious asceticism with a modern more secular one, for they attempted to have the jurisdiction of sexual violations moved from church courts to less forgiving secular ones. This split between the legal and moral is vividly illustrated in *Measure for Measure*, which like *Hamlet* has elicited a "remarkable diversity of opinions."[54] To some extent Shakespeare is seen through the mores of the age. The modern ideological configuration of the private and public began to attain truly hegemonic status at the onset of the nineteenth century, which enshrined domesticity as the new secular religion. This shift may be suggested by the fact that before the new codes of intimacy reached such power, Samuel Johnson, drawing on classical values, could still find "the light or comick part" of *Measure* "very natural and pleasing, while afterwards Coleridge thought the comic elements of play were "disgusting" and the serious ones "horrible."[55] Critics continue to unconsciously read our still relatively hegemonic bourgeois morality into the early modern period. Special care is necessary, since overlapping paradigms of intimacy existed during this era.

Hamlet words to Ophelia "get thee to a nunnery" may be equivocal since *nunnery* could refer sarcastically to a house of ill-repute.[56] This suggests that *Hamlet*'s problematic treatment of

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[54]J. W. Lever, ed. *Measure for Measure*, p. lv.
[55]Quotations from Lever, p. lv-lvi.
[56]See Jenkins, ed. Hamlet, p. 282n.

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intimacy may be clarified somewhat by examining *Measure for Measure*, which deals explicitly with both convents and brothels and which in terms of intimacy may seen as a companion piece to the somewhat earlier drama. Mistress Overdone's remark "here's a change indeed in the commonwealth" recalls "the language of Elizabethan reform tracts"[57] and appears to be a reference to the paradigm shift in sexual mores. *Measure* registers a protest against both Protestant and Catholic "Puritans" -- both the zeal and hypocrisy of Angelo and the excesses of Isabella, who sees a "more strict restraint" as one of the convent's "privileges" (1.4.1,4). The Catholic asceticism of the convent is rejected together with the Puritan program of a rigid enforcement of *married chastity* -- a program whose extremes are illustrated by Angelo's equation of the clandestine marriage of Claudio and Juliet with adultery and by his belief that this sin merits capital punishment to be meted out by the secular authorities.

Measure appears to contain an apology for clandestine marriage, since the "precise"[58] Angelo's Draconian regime, which is suggestive of the *Reformatio Legum* of 1590, attacks spousals *per verba de praesenti*. The action of this play provides a critique of the Catholic and Protestant insistence that lovers must wait for a church wedding before sexual intimacy.[59] Instead, the play appears to favor

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[57]Lever, p. 13n.

[58]Angelo clearly is associated with Puritan mores and is explicitly described as "precise" in 1.3.50. In lines 93 and 96 of Act 3, scene 1, he again appears to be called "precise," which seems the best explanation for the crux "prenzie "; cf. Lever, p. 72n.

[59]I therefore disagree with the traditional view that "Shakespeare's plays apparently take the Church's view" on this (J. H. P. Pafford, ed. *The Winter's Tale*, p. 21n). Cf. D. P. Harding, "Elizabethan Betrothals and *Measure for Measure*" and Mary Lascelles, *Shakespeare's* Measure for Measure, pp. 119-121.

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are the flexible popular mores that allowed immediate consummation after plighting troth, which was the deeply ingrained custom of the countryside that molded Shakespeare's sensibility. The documents on his marriage to Anne Hathaway and on the birth of his first child indicate that Shakespeare himself followed such mores.[60] Angelo, who had made a verbal contract with Marina and who propositions Isabella, is clearly shown to be hypocritical in considering Claudio's consummated *de praesenti* marriage to be fornication and to condemn the poor man to death.

Our view of such mores need to be informed by a historical understanding of the complex differences and parallels between our time and Shakespeare's. The new ideology of marriage would eventually succeed in making such intimacy into fornication. On the other hand, the play's *measured* critique of extreme measures inspired by religion would eventually be vindicated by the society's rejection of such excesses. The play does not merely object to what we see as excesses. It also does not support what we might think is a moderate notion: the consolidation of all modes of intimacy in public marriage. Instead, it favors the older, more flexible, and then still vital custom of clandestine marriage.

The bed trick that is planned by the Duke and carried out by Marina and Isabella -- all clearly characters who are not meant to be seen as nefarious -- attest to the strength in Shakespeare's mind of an informal contract created by verbal consent. Angelo's had also made such a contract to Marina and its validity is the only

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[60]The license for the marriage was issued 27 November 1582 and Susanna, Shakespeare's oldest child, was christened only six months later on 26 May 1583.

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justification for the murky deception of causing him to sleep with someone he thinks is in fact another woman. The same exact bed trick had been used in *All's Well That Ends Well* and in this play the deception is again carried out by the virtuous: Helena, Diana, and all the Florentine women. The rejection of a strict and simplistic moralism and the acceptance of the complexity of the moral universe is in fact what informs Shakespeare's vision of the tragic as well.[61]

Only the tragedies and the tragicomedies extensively grapple with such painful moral questions. The complex engagement with questions of deception in these plays parallels the moral strengths that we have seen are exhibited by Jonson's major comedies. If the treatment of intimacy found in Shakespeare's romantic comedies is unsurpassed in terms of aesthetic pleasure, the treatment found in his problem plays is, perhaps, more intellectually bracing. Indeed, the dark comedies of the middle period probe questions of sexual intimacy with a freedom unparalleled in Shakespeare's oeuvre. From this perspective, George Bernard Shaw's preference for the problem comedies is quite understandable, and these plays may well be *problem plays* in the Shavian sense, since they profoundly explore social problems. As Shaw noted in the preface to *Plays Unpleasant*, "in such unpopular plays as All's Well, Measure for Measure, and Troilus and Cressida, we find [Shakespeare] ready and willing to start at the twentieth century if the seventeenth would only let him."[62]

In the problem plays in the wider sense -- including not only the dark middle comedies, but also *Hamlet* -- Shakespeare

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[61]See, for instance, A. C. Bradley's discussion in *Shakespearean Tragedy* of how Shakespeare's vision rejects simplistic moral visions such as poetic justice.
[62]Shaw, *Plays Unpleasant*, p. 22.

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interrogates the notion of sexual honesty in a way that is equaled in his *oeuvre* only by the sonnets at the end of his sequence. The questioning of bourgeois morality of the problem plays is at times agonizing and at other times has the tone of a sophisticate. In the treatment of sexual deception in the final sonnets the tone similarly vacillates between the poles of the anguished "Two loves have I of comfort and despair" (144) and the more composed "In loving thee thou know'st I am forsworn" (152). Sonnet 138 may be one of the most controlled yet probing questionings of love:

> When my love swears that she is made of truth,
> I do believe her though I know she lies,
> That she might think me some untutored youth,
> Unlearnèd in the world false subtleties
>
> ...
>
> O love's best habit is in seeming trust,
> And age in love loves not to have years told.
> Therefore I lie with her, and she with me,
> And in our faults by lies we flattered be.

Here honesty is clearly not the best policy. Such travels -- at times fearful and at times urbane -- into the murky night of truth and deception in love provided the road map for the explorations of issues of sexual intimacy that we find in the problem plays.

In addition to *Measure*'s verbal spousals and bed trick, the indication at the end of a nonromantic betrothal between the Duke and Isabella also suggests an appreciation and perhaps a desire for

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the continuation of older modes of intimacy. But this coupling -- like the other marriages at the end, which are made by force rather than love -- is nevertheless quite troubling in its apparent acceptance of a frank trumping of affection by power. This abrupt and puzzling suggestion of marriage appears neither to be in step with the modern trend, nor to offer a viable alternative. What is clear is that in Shakespeare's middle period the possibility of an escape into the "green world" of the romantic comedies no longer exists to facilitate a "healthy" adjustment to the restraints of bourgeois idealized marriage and to make a neat happy ending possible. In the problem plays we are no longer left with a sense that the playwright reached a sure idea of what the future either should or may bring in terms of intimacy. In *Hamlet* and other plays of the middle period we see a tortured questioning of the new paradigm of intimacy that had been celebrated in the festive, romantic comedies -- and even in the romantic tragedy *Romeo and Juliet.*

Shakespeare eventually may well have tired of the intellectual and moral rigors of the middle period's questionings of desire, for at least by the time he wrote *The Tempest* he returned to the insistence that the external forms be satisfied. *The Tempest* offers a darker version of the green world of the early comedies that is presided over by an authority figure, who tellingly insists that even though their nuptials were celebrated in an elaborate wedding masque, the young lovers must wait for consummation until after a more public church ceremony. In his middle period, then, Shakespeare grapples with the change in mores, but he does not seem to arrive at a definite solution to problems of intimacy. Nor does he seem to reach

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a clear understanding of the connections between his troubling insights and the underlying social trends, which we now need to examine.

IV. *Intimacy, Depth, and Capitalism*

While the Reformation and counter-Reformation both participated in the new regime of consistent enforcement of morals, Protestantism had a larger part to play than Catholicism in the formation of new modes of social association. Catholicism, it is true, did not prohibit the rise of a capitalistic structures in, for instance, northern Italy. Nonetheless, the rise of Protestantism provided cultural features that were especially useful to a system that saw the ability to dispose of capital as an end in itself and as a substitute "for a life centered on earthly or even heavenly happiness."[63] While under medieval Catholicism one needed to obey the Church, in the new regime the church holds less secular power, and one needs instead to obey a modified set of mores, and to work. The ability to dispose of capital, considered as an end in itself, does not, however, provide enough psychic force to bind individuals to the alienating regime of Capitalist society. To do so, libidinal energy had to be harnessed in a more efficient way than was previously possible. This was accomplished by the new modes of intimacy. Infatuation and passionate love of some form, often outside of marriage, can exist

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[63]Horkheimer, p. 99. Cf. Weber, *The Protestant Ethic.*

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without capitalism, but "whether capitalism could have existed, or could continue to exist, without love" is "questionable."[64]

With the breakdown of extended kinship structures due to the rise of capitalism and the modern metropolis, the ideological fusion of romantic love and monogamy provided a needed adhesive to bind together the nuclear family. The private realm becomes more isolated and begins a development that will gradually lead to the nineteenth-century cult of the domestic. With the growth of urban culture a smaller proportion of the population consists of women and men working together in the fields. The wife now more often stays at home to create a domestic realm whose function is increasingly not only to bring up children but also to provide a needed emotional function. The male wage earner, who now suffers the trauma of being a commodity in the capitalist market, needs to be constantly healed emotionally.[65] This, in fact, appears to be the purpose of the new intense focus on the domestic realm, which now is seen as the isolated locus for both romance and "the family romance." Bourgeois morality, the reconfiguration of private and public, and the consolidation of modes of intimacy in a modified institution of marriage all helped to construct individuals who would accept the new discipline of work. As Herbert Marcuse has noted, historically, "the reduction of Eros to procreative-monogamic sexuality (which completes the subjection of the pleasure principle to the reality

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[64]Macfarlane, p. 143. Cf. his discussion of Weber on p. 140.

[65]While to be a serf was, of course, no better, than to be a laborer, the new economic "freedoms" of capitalism are often questionable ones.

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principle) is consummated only when the individual has become a subject-object of labor in the apparatus of his society."[66]

Shakespeare in his middle period, at least, and Jonson both appear to protest against the psychological repression of the new set of mores -- all passion is channeled into marriage, sex and marriage are synonymous -- that was needed for the emergent capitalistic market. In England this early modern development did not have to start from scratch, for it was based on what we have seen was an ancient Germanic "oddity" of social association that survived on this somewhat isolated island. This seems to be part of the reason why British culture offered the psychological prerequisites for the early development of the industrial revolution.[67] This historical contingency also helps to explain how an essentially modern libidinal structure was able to make a dramatically early appearance in *Hamlet*.

The rise of a more repressed mode of social association connected with this libidinal structure is closely related to the appearance of a new type of subjective depth. The development of any internalized repressive function -- that is, an element of the superego -- constitutes a shielding effect, which in turn creates a sense of depth. Since in the more repressed modern regime sexual urges are more hidden, Wittgenstein's structural principle of depth obtains: "When mien, gesture and circumstance are unambiguous, then the inner seems to be the outer; it is only when we cannot read

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[66]Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization*, p. 82.
[67]In addition to Macfarlane, see, for instance, David Landes, *The Wealth and Poverty of Nations*.

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the outer that an inner seems to be hidden behind it."[68] We have seen in the last chapter that the increase in obfuscation represented by the Renaissance rise in manners contributed to the production of depth. The early modern shift in mores similarly contributed to a new version of subjectivity, for the increase of sexually repressive forces also "deepened" the finite, secular self.

While the pressure produced by the new repression was allowed to be expressed at times within the nuclear family, which took on a more intense emotional tenor, in public a partial facade was required, and such a translucent veil produces the impression that "an inner seems to be hidden behind it." The consolidation and rigidification of modes of intimacy that took place during the Reformation and Counter-reformation is thus related to the development of the secretive self that is represented in *Hamlet.* As we have seen Freud correctly observe, this play is a startling representation of "the secular advance of repression in the emotional life of mankind" -- though he never explicitly articulates the relation of this repression to a structural conception of depth.

Shakespeare's early comedies demonstrate an understanding of the allure of the Protestant acceptance of marital coitus joined with the Puritan idealization of the institution of marriage. The middle plays clarify the drawbacks of the new regime of intimacy of which this reconfiguration of the social practices involving marriage is part. Although Shakespeare's plays seem to manifest insights concerning the modern regime, they do not suggest, however, an understanding of the interrelations of the regime's parts. They do not articulate the

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[68]Wittgenstein, *Last Writings on the Philosophy of Psychology*, 63e.

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relationship between the modes of intimacy, of which they astutely assessed the emotional foundation, and Hamlet's deep self. Some of their most profound insights -- into the emergent version of psychic depth and into emotional consequences of extended and nuclear family taboos -- seem to be unrelated. Therefore it is not surprising that Shakespeare did not realize that they are in fact closely connected.

Somewhat paradoxically, Shakespeare in Hamlet and Jonson in True-Wit appear to celebrate the new finite deep self that is to a large degree constructed by the very modes of association that they critique. There is of course no reason to expect that they would have been able to see the relation between the rise of more repressive social forces and the appearance of a new form of psychological depth. While to perceive the relation between these phenomena would have required the social theory developed in future centuries, each would individually have been discernible, especially since they were set off by the contrast they made with the corresponding features of the still vital older regime of mores.

Stephen Greenblatt has claimed that "psychoanalysis was, in effect, made possible by (among other things) the legal and literary proceedings of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries."[69] I, on the other hand, have tried to show that while there are indeed prerequisites for depth psychology, mores are more important than "legal proceedings." The "literary proceedings" that Greenblatt stresses were in fact only one expression of the culmination of

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[69]Greenblatt, "Psychoanalysis and Renaissance Culture," p. 142; cf. chapter 1 above.

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cultural developments that have roots that go far back in time. While law may affect behavior, often of more importance than written laws are mores that determine their enforcement, their interpretation, and the system of cultural assumptions, which can vividly color public opinion.[70] The changes not in law but in mores -- in modes of intimacy, of association and dissociation -- made a crucial contribution to the final stage of the construction of the finite depth that underlies the *Hamletian* self.

The new repressive mores, which contributed to the construction of finite depth, were, we have seen, championed by the Puritan middle stratum, while the older mores survived longer in the least and most elevated segments of the social hierarchy. This agrees with our exploration in the last chapter of how the middle social stratum -- in conjunction with the disempowered nobility -- were in a favorable situation for the construction of depth. Moreover, the correlation that we observed in the last chapter between urbanization and depth is partly explained by the secular restriction of drives required of city dwellers, for Wittgenstein's structural principle would apply to such restrictions just as it does to the new more repressed modes of intimacy. The amorality that Quaife found in the non-urbanized peasant masses and that Stone found in a segment of the upper classes agrees with our association of depth with other more repressed segments of the population. The relation between social position and finite depth is not, however, a simple one, since cultural mobility, which generally increased with social

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[70]See, for instance, our discussion in chapter 3 of law in connection with Nicholas Udall.

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status, appears to have allowed the dissemination of deep models of selfhood.

Social position does not deterministically predict the possession of depth, especially since there may have been a mimetic desire for depth in those who recognized it in others or in characters. As we have seen in chapter 1, a model of selfhood, when internalized, affects identity: "If a psychology becomes socially established ... it tends to realize itself forcefully in the phenomena it purports to interpret.... the individual realizes it in the very act of internalizing it."[71] Since depth may be culturally transmitted, it is important to avoid a reductive view that sees social forces and economic subject positions as ineluctably determining a modern version of psychic depth. If the cultural conditions are favorable, once a certain type of depth has become common it can be transmitted beyond the groups in which economic forces contributed to its construction. Plays such as *Hamlet* and *Epicoene* are in fact means of transmitting finite depth. This transmission is not unrestricted, since a certain amount of ingenuity or of knowledge obtained from an interpretive community is needed to identify the subjective paradigms being proffered. That Shakespeare and Jonson were unusually socially mobile may have placed them in a subject position that allowed them to create works that transmitted subjective paradigms through effective conduits.

The new subjective paradigms appear to have been able to cross not only economic boundaries but ones of gender as well.

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[71]Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality*, p. 163. On "mimetic desire," see the work of René Girard.

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Before we examine how this may have been the case, we need to discuss how social forces tended to construct the new type of depth more in men than in women. The new market forces, which we have seen played a part in constructing depth, found men easier to exploit as workers, because employers did not feel obliged to take care of their children as they did with women workers.[72] Women appear to have lost status as social adults and became instead *domestic* adults -- at least to a greater degree than had previously been the case. New economic relations caused what can be considered a new type of *traffic* in women to arise, and to a great extent women were excluded from participating in the rise of economic individualism. Growing challenges to hierarchical structures would eventually culminate in what may be considered the replacement of a patriarchal society with one based more on a fraternal social contract that continued, however, to exclude women.[73] The culture of capitalism employed some of the same the means of oppressing women that had been common in the more traditional earlier culture,[74] but there were changes as well.

While for both sexes the new paradigm may have required greater sexual repression, women appear to have suffered more in this regard. In the old regime, which had a proportionally smaller middle segment, women of the lower and upper social strata were often sexually demonstrative and assertive. While the ideology of both regimes attempted to restrain women's sexuality more than

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[72]See Karen Sacks, "Engels Revisted"; Engels, *The Origin of the Family*; and Alice Clark, *Working Life of Women in the Seventeenth Century.*
[73]See Carole Pateman, *The Disorder of Woman* and the discussion of this in the last chapter.
[74]See Rubin, "The Traffic in Women."

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men's, in the new regime the enforcement was more consistent and rigid, and therefore misogynist ideology became more effective. That Ophelia can only express her sexuality when mad[75] may be related to the play's modernity. Hamlet, on the other hand, only flirts with madness and his sexuality is less restrained when he takes on "country" manners. Moreover, his sublimated energies are not forced into as destructive channels, and his creative projects -- the play-within-the play, for instance -- seem to be associated with at least agonistic if not purely healthy possibilities for subjective fulfillment. These differences in male and female selfhood, which significantly increased in the early modern period, are related both to the changing sexist premises of society and to modern problems in the modeling of the female psyche. Freud had to abandon his attempt to create a mirror image of the Oedipal complex for the female -- the Electra complex -- and his later work in this area is not compelling. Poststructural and other types of feminists, have begun to clarify many of the gender-related assumptions, mistakes, and biases of orthodox psychoanalysis.

Although early modern selves are, like modern ones, profoundly gendered, the general movement toward depth nevertheless included both men and women. That women as a group were clearly oppressed in the new paradigm does not imply they lacked subjective depth. In fact the increase in sexual repression is, as we have seen, one prerequisite for an increase in depth, though there is not a simple correlation between these two phenomena. Historical tendencies in male and female selfhood are not unrelated

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[75]See Neely, pp. 102-4.

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and general movements may well affect both. For instance, early modern female lyric voices and characters -- like male ones -- manifest a new, finite depth, as is clear, for instance, in the sonnet sequence of Lady Mary Wroth and in characters such as Cleopatra, Desdemona, Helena, and the Duchess of Malfi. The new "heroics of love," which is especially evident in plays such as *Othello* and *Anthony and Cleopatra*, seem to be clearly connected to the sense of depth. That Gertrude is like Hamlet himself an enigmatic figure -- in that a number of conflicting interior motives are suggested[76] -- indicates that she may to some degree also satisfy Wittgenstein's structural principle of depth.

The appearance of such women and such female characters seem to be related to various social movements as well as to the cultural transmission of depth. Early versions of humanism encouraged the education of women,[77] and even though the cultural ideal changed from an educated women to a gracious one, due perhaps to the effect of Castilionge's *Courtier*, nevertheless cultural possibilities for women to develop depth continued to exist. The rise in the status of women within the reconfigured private realm must have contributed to their ability to develop an *expressivist* self to a some degree. The economic and political oppression that women continued to suffer did not place insurmountable obstacles in the way of their development of any type of depth, though it did severely limit their ability to develop their own powerful paradigms and to transmit them. The dramatic rise during the early modern

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[76]See Adelman's discussion of this in her chapter on *Hamlet* in *Suffocating Mothers*. More on this in chapter 8, below.
[77]See chapter three above.

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period in the number of secular women writers seems to bear out significant subjective development despite the hegemonic sexist ideology.

For both women and men the coming of more restrictive modes of intimacy brought about an increase in sublimation of libidinal energy, though men had more channels open to them that were conducive to subjective achievements. The new restraints on modes of personal intimacy agree in their effect with the more social type of restrictions involving manners and urbanization, which also applied to both sexes. Sublimation is not fueled by the diversion of only sexual energy, for civilized manners and urban restraints appear to have produced psychological veils that led to structural depth. Norbert Elias has shown that the revolution in manners involves restrictions on and the molding and channeling of nonsexual drives, such as hunger and violent impulses. Georg Simmel's work demonstrates that non-sexual restrictions increased as more people lived in ever denser metropolises such as London, which grew dramatically at this time.

The early modern sexually repressive practices, which were more effective than medieval ones since they were more secularized, can in fact be considered only one part of the new urbane system of manners. The restrictions placed on various types of energy promoted prodigious sublimation, which perhaps paradoxically stimulated the free-thinking behind the Renaissance flowering of culture. As Freud suggested, the most civilized society may be the most repressive and repressed one,[78] and we need to ponder the

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[78]See Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents.*

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troubling possibility that when our drives are restricted we become more intellectually motivated -- that "mind-forg'd manacles" stimulate the search for new modes of subjective freedom. When we have to obey a more stringent system of manners, we may have more sublimated energy to open up new subjective options. In the next two chapters we will examine some of the consequences of a social landscape populated by deep finite selves who explored the new possibilities of finite subjectivity.

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Chapter 7

HAMLET AND THE HISTORICAL DISCOURSES OF SUBJECTIVITY

I. *Heterodoxy and How Not To Be*

In the last two chapters historicized versions of sociology and psychoanalysis were used to examine how Shakespeare's oeuvre registers the early modern paradigm shift and the construction of the finite subject. We will now turn to the particular position that *Hamlet* holds within the historical discourses of subjectivity. This play, I will argue, dramatizes the transition from the infinite metaphysics of the middle ages to a cultural view of the subject. The indirect presentation of increasingly heterodox and finite perspectives and the conflicts surrounding the fading, disembodied soul of Hamlet's father create a pattern that may be best explained as a dramatization of the rise of finite subjectivity in the discourse system. The play also appears to reflect the early modern objectification of the body, which complements the development of finite subjectivity, since together these movements produced the polarized subjective-objective spectrum that continues to mold our perspective. These findings will allow us to explore in the next chapter how the play negotiates the emergent phenomenological landscape with a method that can shed light on still unresolved theoretical problems .

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E. M. W. Tillyard's claim that Shakespeare's works reveal an unwavering acceptance of a monolithic "Elizabethan world picture" is no longer popular. Despite their tendency to stress their differences, new historicists, cultural materialists and their critics often agree about Shakespeare's perspectivism -- his tendency to take various points of view, to try on different beliefs.[1] In many of his plays various vivid perspectives are presented by various characters. For a good while in *Hamlet* we are even allowed to sympathize with the point of view of Claudius, his nephew's "mighty opposite" (5.2.62), since he often speaks quite reasonably and we do not receive definitive evidence of his guilt until the third scene of the third act when we overhear him praying. This drama places the spectator on a shockingly low level of awareness in comparison to the plays that came before and in fact represents a turning point in Shakespeare's career in terms of the epistemological positioning of the audience.[2]

Various devices, such as soliloquies, encourage us from early on to see everything through Hamlet's eyes. Indeed, as I have argued in chapter 5, he is the play's phenomenological center. Perspectivism nevertheless dominates this play, for this phenomenological center tries out different roles -- various class personas, for instance -- and reads himself and others in terms of various discourses.[3] We have

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[1]See, for instance, Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning*, pp. 222-54; Jonathan Goldberg, *James I and the Politics of Literature*, p. 230; Graham Bradshaw, *Shakespeare's Scepticism*, pp. 50-94. Bradshaw, *Misrepresentations*, pp. 1-8, complains that more fashionable schools of criticism often ignore such agreement and forget that the questioning of Tillyard's "picture" began even when it was quite popular. For a traditional questioning of Tillyard, see, for instance, William Elton, "Shakespeare and The Thought of His Age."

[2]See Bertrand Evans, *Shakespeare's Tragic Practice* and *Shakespeare's Comedies.*

[3]See Annabel Patterson, *Shakespeare and the Popular Voice*; Engle, pp. 60-73.

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seen an example of this in the last chapter when we examined how Hamlet exhibits conflicting systems of mores, playing at times the puritan preacher and at others the sexually liberated young card. Radically questioning orthodoxies, the play explores several systems of belief, which implies not so much a disinclination to take a firm stand, but rather a pragmatism. As Lars Engle notes, Shakespeare's pragmatism has been mistakenly viewed as his "not having a namable philosophy, seen in traditional terms as a set of essentialist commitments."[4]

Throughout Shakespeare's career we see a fluidity in his metaphysical speculations that supports Keats' notion that he "possessed so enormously ... *Negative Capability.*" This does not mean, however, that he never seriously considered particular positions and we need to keep in mind the field of ontological possibility over which his plays range freely. To assume that he unthinkingly accepted the hegemonic tenets of Anglicanism is no longer as popular as it once was. This was, after all, a new religion, or at least a new via media, that was itself in more flux than even Christianity as a whole, which was reeling from the effects of the Reformation. To make such an assumption is to underestimate this highly imaginative thinker's ability to entertain a wide scope of speculations. He indeed appears to have flirted with various metaphysical systems.

The view of Frances Yates and her followers[5] that Shakespeare subscribed to a hermetic philosophy may well be more plausible than the assertion that he held orthodox beliefs. The spiritual

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[4]Engle, *Shakespearean Pragmatism*, p. 55. More on this in the next chapter.
[5]See, for instance, Yates, *Shakespeare's Last Plays*, and Hilary Gatti, *The Renaissance Drama of Knowledge.*

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possibilities that seemed to excite his imagination the most were not orthodox Christian visions, but instead rather pagan ones, whether indigenous, classical, or hermetic -- Puck, the witches in *Macbeth*, the ghosts of Banquo and Caesar, the magus Prospero and Ariel. If he ever became a staunch follower of the hermetic tradition it would have been at the very end of his career.[6] Such a proposition does not, however, sufficiently account for the diversity of the perspectives that he assumes throughout his life, including at the end. His middle period has often been seen as a time of intense questioning. While he was clearly interested in the transcendent, his acceptance of orthodox religious solutions appears generally to wane as his career progressed. We have seen in the last chapter that though earlier in his career he celebrated the Reformation's reconfiguration of modes of intimacy, in his middle period he came to question this. With this doubt about religious codes of intimacy appears to have come an anguished probing of orthodox metaphysics, as is clearly evident from the fact that *King Lear* is less a Christian than a pagan tragedy.[7]

Hamlet's treatment of the metaphysical points to its engagement in the widespread questioning of this sceptical age. Shakespeare, however, only intends such doubt for an esoteric audience -- not so much believers in occult philosophy, but a general class of fellow artists and intellectuals who did not unthinkingly accept received opinions.[8] This dramatic duplicity has misled many commentators. Recently, for instance, various misconceptions about

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[6]Yates attempt to associate Shakespeare's early work with the hermeticism (see *A Study of Love's Labour's Lost*) was not as successful as her attempt to link the last plays with it.

[7]See William Elton, *King Lear and the Gods*.

[8]The esoteric is described more fully in section V of chapter 1 above.

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subjectivity in *Hamlet* have arisen that are caused by the failure to appreciate the significance of the fact that, like *Epicoene*, *Hamlet* is in some regards two plays in one. Although we will see that this work dramatizes the passing of infinite subjectivity, it is simultaneously an adventure crafted to satisfy the ordinary viewer.

Recent critics have begun to rediscover what Paul Conklin had noted long ago: to most contemporaries Hamlet was a "Kydian avenger" and the play was a revenge tragedy much like *The Spanish Tragedy*.[9] Margreta Di Grazia, for example, claims that "until the end of the eighteenth century, there is no evidence that [*Hamlet*] raised questions of interiority and subjectivity."[10] While most contemporaries indeed ignored such questions, nonetheless Di Grazia may have exaggerated the supposed lack of evidence. Gabriel Harvey, for instance, suspected that there was much in the play "to please the wiser sort"[11] -- viewers who would be attuned to the new paradigm of selfhood that Montaigne was making popular among the intelligentsia. Hamlet in fact believes that opinion of "the judicious" should "o'erweigh a whole theatre of others" (3.2. 26-28). That the questions of interiority that this play raises were little discussed when it was written is not surprising, since extended essays in dramatic criticism were not produced in England until the Restoration.[12]

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[9]See Paul Conklin, *A History of Hamlet Criticism, 1601-1821.*

[10]Di Grazia, "The Motive for Interiority: Shakespeare's Sonnets and *Hamlet*," p. 431.

[11]*The Riverside Shakespeare*, p. 1840. On multileveled audiences, see chapters 1 and 2 above.

[12]See the discussion of Dryden's "Essay of Dramatic Poesy" (1668) in chapter 2; also cf. chapter 1.

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Like Jonson in *Epicoene* -- which we have seen presents Dauphine as the orthodox hero for the exoteric audience and True-Wit as the deeper figure for "cunning palates" -- Shakespeare needed to please both the "wiser sort" and the populace, if his play was to be a true success.[13] *Hamlet*, however, employs one character to represent both an orthodox hero for the populace and an innovative *wit* possessing finite depth for sceptics. The method of Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* is quite similar, for it also collapses esoteric and exoteric functions into the protagonist: Faustus was, and perhaps still is, a negative *exemplum* for the religious and an admirable quester for the sceptical. The representation of subjective depth may, then, have originally been the "caviare" that Hamlet noted was not for "the general" (2.2.437). When the social conditions for depth became widespread and profound subjective paradigms were transmitted across large segments of the population, Shakespeare's tragedy only then became the very icon of depth in the popular imagination. By the Romantic period Charles Lamb noted that the "celebrated soliloquy in Hamlet, beginning 'To be or not to be' ... has been so handled and pawed about by declamatory boys and men, and torn so inhumanly from its living place and principle of continuity in the play, till it is become to me a perfect dead member."[14]

The "To be" passage has become the most celebrated soliloquy in literature and for good reason: it is the paradigmatic example of what Charles Taylor has called the "expressivist self" -- a version of

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[13]Cf. chapters 1 and 2 above for a general discussion of this; for a discussion of *Hamlet*'s appeal to various classes, see Annabel Patterson, *Shakespeare and the Popular Voice*, chapter 1.

[14]*Charles Lamb on Shakespeare*, pp. 27-8.

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selfhood that rose to a hegemonic position in the Romantic period. We have seen that the cultural tendency toward subjective depth was picking up momentum for centuries. Thus it is quite possible that what was to be reduced to a cliché in the Romantic period was an innovative paradigm to the Elizabethans. Such "caviare" that was visible only to "the wiser sort" could not, however, hold the attention of the general audience, and thus the soliloquy needed another purpose that embedded it in the action. Some auditors may have assumed that this soliloquy is only -- as James Hirsh argues[15] -- a feigned "interior monologue," given that Ophelia is on stage when it is delivered. Hamlet may have intentionally let his soliloquy be heard, especially since he seems to conclude correctly that Polonius is hiding, for he asks Ophelia "Where's your father?" (3.1.130-1). The common auditor may have believed that Hamlet was only pretending that he was not capable of decisive action -- "And thus the native hue of resolution / Is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought" -- in order to mislead Claudius into thinking that he was not to be feared.

While Hamlet's soliloquy has this dramatic purpose, that Shakespeare could have -- as Hirsh suggests -- intended this and his other speeches to be only plot devices and nothing else is, however, not really possible. If Hirsh and Di Grazia are correct, how could centuries of readers and auditors have taken such material as a representation of inwardness? If no basis exists in the play, why would not future eras instead read such an "expressivist self" into

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[15]See Hirsh, "Shakespeare and the History of Soliloquies" and "The 'To Be or Not to Be' Scene and the Conventions of Shakespearean Drama."

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any other work of this or other previous periods -- why not, say, into *Everyman.*

Such "resonance" clearly could not have occurred by chance. "That *Hamlet* has," a recent writer observes, "compelled and inspired the Western imagination for nearly four centuries is surely a most important fact about the play.... this suggests why it will not do to 'explain' Hamlet's melancholy with reference to Timothy Bright or Burton .... Similarly, everything that *Hamlet* does not have in common with so-called revenge plays ... must be vastly more important than any connections."[16] There must exist a very significant basis in the play for the subjectivity that future eras have seen in it and some intention in the playwright, even if an unconscious one, to express a vision of the deep subject. Considering the extensive textual evidence for a representation of subjective depth, the most plausible solution is that Shakespeare wished to create a model of an emerging type of selfhood for the benefit of himself and "the wiser sort" -- especially fellow sceptical artists and intellectuals.

In the "To be" speech Shakespeare poses a riddle that the common spectator can dismiss as a feigned belief, or that the more sophisticated can take as a clue to a doctrinally dangerous level of the play that presents the new sceptical version of selfhood. The speech begins by contemplating the problem of suicide at length and in a very unchristian manner. First suicide is seen as a "nobler" alternative than "to suffer / The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune," for it entails violent action: "to take arms against a sea of troubles / And by opposing end them." Soon it appears to Hamlet

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[16]Graham Bradshaw, *Shakespeare's Scepticism*, p. 100.

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that to "end / The heart-ache and the thousand natural shock / That flesh is heir to" is even "a consummation / Devoutly to be wish'd." For the sophisticated auditor the mention of the word "consummation" when discussing the possibility of one's own death would immediately have brought to mind the Vulgate's translation of Christ's final words in *John*, "consummatum est." For devout Christians, an allusion to Christ's last words during a virtual celebration of suicide could be nothing less than heresy, worthy of a pagan sensibility such as the one of his only true friend, Horatio, who describes himself as "more an antique Roman than a Dane" (V.ii.346).

Hamlet's consideration of what might come after death indeed seems more pagan than Christian. He speculates that death will be either an oblivion -- which he views, like Socrates in his *Apology*, as an outcome "Devoutly to be wish'd" -- or an another world that like Homer, he thinks of as a vague land of shadows where existence is a miserable dream. To conceive the possibility of the survival of consciousness after death, as Hamlet does, by imagining only unremittingly bleak possibilities is quite surprising, for one would expect some mention of the heavenly goal for which all Christians are supposedly striving. Even the terrifying possibilities that he considers have no Christian resonance, for they lack any suggestion of the punishment for sins.

Hamlet does of course make references at times to religious beliefs, but the power that such a belief system has over him varies noticeably. In the first act an urge to commit suicide is squashed by his conscience: "O that this too too sullied flesh would melt, Thaw and resolve itself into a dew, / or that the Everlasting had not fix'd / His

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canon 'gainst self-slaughter. O God! God!" (1.2.129-132). These sentiments about suicide contrast quite sharply with the ones that we have seen him express in the third act. It is true that in the "To be" passage there is also a suggestion of "conscience," but its meaning is very dubious for several reasons. In this passage when he feels restrained from ending his life it no longer seems to be clearly from religious sentiments. When he says that "Thus conscience does make cowards of us all" he is referring to "the dread of something after death ... that we know not of." This no longer implies Christian belief at all. As A. C. Bradley noted, what seems to make us all cowards is an alternate meaning of the word, what we would now call "consciousness,"[17] that is, "thinking too precisely on th'event," as Hamlet would later put it. While this meaning fits the context much better, nevertheless even if moral judgment is intended by this word it is judged quite negatively as merely a maker of "cowards" -- which is consonant with Laertes' consignment of "conscience ... to the profoundest pit" (4.5.132).

Even the use of Christian belief to stop Hamlet from avenging his father (3.3.) is, paradoxically, not religious at all. His fear that if he slays Claudius his soul would go to heaven is indeed the very antithesis of a Christian conscience. Most other references to Christian belief also suggest heterodoxy. The issue of suicide is, for instance, also given a scathingly unorthodox treatment in Laertes' debate with the priest over Ophelia's burial. Although she did not commit suicide, her death is thought "doubtful" and the intercession

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[17]On the critical debate on "conscience" vs. "conscious" see Jenkins, ed., *Hamlet*, p. 492.

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of the royal family is needed even for her to merit "maimed rites" (5.1.212). The representative of the religious establishment deserves, as Laertes puts it, to lie "howling" when Ophelia is a "minist'ring angel." References to angels are in fact consistently treated in a sceptical manner. That Horatio, the most "pagan" of the characters, for instance, hopes that "flights of angels sing" dead Hamlet to his "rest" is doubly odd. This comment not only conflicts with his scepticism but also with Hamlet's own expectation that "the rest is silence," which seems to be an image of oblivion that agrees with his "To be" speech. The play's ending indeed suggests Hamlet will live on less in heaven than in the human speech community, in the stories told about him. Overall, this tragedy appears to emphasize his assimilation into the secular community and to point away from religious metaphysics.

When Hamlet looks within, the connection to an infinite God that Augustine developed and that became a pillar of Christian tradition is not visible, or at least not very significant. To Hamlet there is subjective depth, but increasingly as the play progresses it is no longer of the traditional infinite kind, for there is no evidence of an inward sighting of God. Nor is there much hope of Christian redemption or justice. In the "To be" passage the only continuation of consciousness that he can see in "that sleep of death" are "dreams" that "Must give us pause -- there's the respect / That makes calamity of so long life." Without any contrast to heaven, this would not be a Christian hell, which is based on the absence of God and salvation. Instead, such dreams are only what might prevent one from making his "quietus / With a bare bodkin." To contemporary auditors, who

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were free of the assumptions that centuries of fame force on us, this speech might have seemed heretical indeed. Hamlet is, however, not presented as a warning, a negative example not to be followed, as Marlowe's Faustus might be taken. Instead, he is celebrated as an heroic, if hesitating young prince. Shakespeare may well have felt the need to build a significant degree of "deniability" into this passage. Ophelia was clearly somewhere on stage, and Hamlet feared, correctly, that her father may have been eavesdropping. That Shakespeare attempted to ensure that the speech's heretical scepticism could be dismissed as a ploy is in fact demonstrated by a glaring inconsistency.

Hamlet describes the possibility of the afterlife as "The undiscover'd country, from whose bourn / No traveler returns." Did not the play begin, however, with his father as a "traveler" returning from that very same "undiscover'd country"? This "puzzles the will," as he immediately notes, but not only in the sense of paralyzing the mind. For this comment appears to be nothing less than an egregious inconsistency and thus a puzzle presented to "the wiser sort" -- much as we have seen that the egregious inconsistency in True-Wit's behavior constitutes a riddle presented to "cunning palates."[18] On the other hand, although the speech was spoken by the heroic prince, believers could take it as a ploy intended to deceive his uncle into thinking that he knows nothing of the Ghost. Pious auditors can assume that Hamlet feared that information was picked up by his uncle's spies.[19] He seemed worried about this possibility when he

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[18]See chapter 2, above.
[19]See Hirsh, p. 13.

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swore the King's Guard to secrecy at the end of the first act. In this way Shakespeare could shake off responsibility for such an heretical passage. The Christian references may, then, obscure the play's underlying freethinking. Either Hamlet's speculations provide a blatantly irreligious perspective, or at the very least increasingly focus on the finite due to an uncoupling of subjectivity from religious metaphysics (see chapter 1, above).

That Hamlet's thoughts about death do not constitute a mere plot device and instead represent a direction that Shakespeare's mind tended to take in this period becomes clear if we examine the speculations about the afterlife in *Measure for Measure*. Like the Duke's treatment of death -- which refers, for instance, to Epicurean atomic theory ("For thou exists on many a thousand grains" [3.1.20]) -- Claudio's notions about what exists after death do not follow Christian dogma, but instead are "tinged with a Lucretian scepticism."[20] While contemplating death Claudio does not begin with an image of the Christian soul leaving the body, but rather of consciousness lingering in the body, not knowing where to go: "Ay, but to die, and go we know not where; / To lie in cold obstruction, and to rot; /This sensible warm motion to become / A kneaded clod" (3.1.117-19).

When Claudio does imagine his soul suffering in the afterlife it is not suggestive of Christian versions of punishment but instead of "classical descriptions of Hades."[21] He in fact explicitly characterizes his speculations as "lawless," that is, not warranted by Christian

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[20]Lever, ed. *Measure for Measure*, p. 74n.
[21]Lever, p. 74n.

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doctrine. Hamlet's speculations clearly run parallel to Claudio's. Unlike Hamlet, however, Claudio was not presented as a heroic figure, and so his "lawless" speculations can be more easily dismissed. On the other hand, the remarks that Claudio is offered by the prestigious Duke disguised as a monk are a traditional mixture of Christian and pagan consolations and thus are more acceptable.

Shakespeare did not come up with the idea of addressing two audiences simultaneously in order safely present dangerous material on stage,[22] for Marlowe had prepared the way. In *Doctor Faustus* he used material worthy of a medieval morality play to construct what might seem to be a warning against striving after too much knowledge -- a moral dear to the heart of any devout reader of *Genesis*. On a first reading of *Faustus* -- by, for instance, undergraduates who know little about Marlowe or his other works -- this moral is almost inevitably gleaned. Such a conclusion, however, neither agrees with the pattern suggested by his oeuvre or his biography. Faustus seems instead one more overreacher[23] uneasily celebrated, yet celebrated nonetheless. The intellectually adventurous spirit and the love of danger evident in Faustus -- who like Hamlet is closely associated with Wittenburg, the "city of the mind"[24] -- appears not unlike the character of Marlowe himself, who was only allowed to graduate Cambridge when the privy council informed the college that he was in a Catholic city because he was a spy on the Queen's business. Marlowe's intense interest in characters

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[22]See also Leo Strauss, *Persecution and the Art of Writing* and the discussion in chapter 2 above of intentional blunders and noble lies.
[23]See Harry Levin, *The Overreacher*.
[24]On the significance of *Wittenburg* see chapter 1 above.

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who transgress conventional codes seems to unify his work, making Kyd's posthumous accusation of him as an atheist appear plausible.

If Marlowe was indeed a freethinker, then *Faustus* may be profoundly ironic, satirizing medieval devils and celebrating an intellectual hero who faces the possibility of hell itself. The seemingly crude comic scenes are indeed consonant with a satire of medieval drama. The final eloquent soliloquy, in which he sees "where Christ's blood streams in the firmament," provides deniability for the constant stream of heretical actions. Even though at this time entry into a Christian hell is being dramatized, pagan possibilities continue to be put forward, and within the final speech a platform for a comparative consideration of various belief systems seems to be set up. In the middle of a seeming proof of Christian metaphysics, we are made to contemplate: "Pythagoras' *metempsychosis*, were that true / This soul should fly from me, and I be changed / Unto some brutish beast. /All beasts are happy, for when they die / Their souls are soon dissolved in elements."

The reference in this speech to *Amores* -- "O lente, lente, currite noctis equi" -- would have brought to mind what the Renaissance saw as a powerful alternative to Puritanism, for Ovid represented something like the values of "sweetness and light" that Matthew Arnold opposed to puritan moralism. While devout Christians were appreciating the moral exemplum of Faustus's demise, the sceptical were free to see the final scene from the ironic perspective of comparative religion, which would have encouraged the celebration of his courage in the face of the orthodox threat of hell. Like Marlowe, Shakespeare may be presenting for cognoscenti a

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freethinking hero in a figurative dramatization of the passing of orthodox belief. Heterodox figures such as Giordano Bruno may have influenced such characters,[25] but we should not underestimate the independent nature of the speculations of such dramatists, who cannot be easily confined to any school of thought. The exploratory nature of the speculations in *Hamlet* is vividly illustrated by the figure of the ghost.

II. *The Fading of the Ghost and the Rise of Finite Subjectivity*

In *Hamlet* various positions are put forth not haphazardly but in an order that reflects the historical shift from traditional and occult views concerning subjectivity to a belief in human culture rather than in any "infinite" guarantee of religious or (neo)Platonic metaphysics. In the first act the ghost brings religion and the afterlife to center stage. But contradictory Christian and pagan references and the fact that the ghost fades from the play suggest that the passing of infinite subjectivity is in fact being dramatized. By the end of the play inwardness appears to be uncoupled from the infinite represented by a visible ghost, and subjectivity seems to take up residence in the cultural finite.

As the play progresses this eidolon loses ontological integrity and its significance appears to become more and more an expressive

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[25]See Hilary Gatti, *The Renaissance Drama of Knowledge*; Frances Yates, *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition.*

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vehicle that is not slavishly tied to an "objective" representation of the metaphysical.[26] In the end this figure is more metaphorical than literal and is assimilated into the subjectivity effect that *surrounds* the character of Hamlet. That a ghost story like *Hamlet* was able to escape the category of the revenge tragedy and become instead the first modern tragedy with perhaps unequaled psychological suggestiveness was only possible because of the unprecedented ontological fluidity of this (non)character. The ghost can be considered a thought experiment in consciousness that makes the play's profound treatment of selfhood possible.

This apparition is, no doubt, intended to make an impressive and even eerie impression on the spectators, but its appearance is not without comic relief. While the first act was intended to awe believers with a theatrical effect more shocking than previous dramatic representations of the metaphysical, Shakespeare succeeded in having it both ways. For the comic relief at the act's end demonstrates that nonbelievers would not have to swallow a "realistic" portrayal of a supernatural occurrence. At the beginning of the play this figure almost functions as a major character. The mockingly familiar tone that Hamlet takes toward it at the end of the first act when he addresses it as "Truepenny" and "old mole" is, however, a fitting farewell for a being who will only return as Hamlet's hallucination invisible to Gertrude.

The metadramatic reference to the "pioneer" digging in "the cellerage" (1.5.171,159) is a clear wink to knowing spectators, though one not broad enough to damage the suspension of disbelief. As

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[26]In chapter 5 I argued against seeing the play in purely mimetic terms.

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Harold Jenkins notes, "'under the stage' is the traditional theatrical location of hell, with possibilities of a kind mockingly suggested in Dekker's *News from Hell*, 'Hell being under every one of their stages, the players ... might with a false trap door have slipped [the devil] down, and there kept him, as a laughing-stock to all their yawning spectators.'"[27] In the urbane milieu of theatrical professionals, a sceptical approach to metaphysical representation is to be expected. Such an approach is apparent in both tragic treatments, such as *Hamlet* and *Doctor Faustus*, and comic ones, such as *News from Hell* and Jonson's *The Devil is an Ass.*

If the pious were able to appreciate the scenes that proffer the terror of the metaphysical, upon closer examination it becomes evident that the play nevertheless turns over all relevant conventions. Religious belief is treated with an attitude that is at times comic and at times serious, but even during the serious treatments there is a pattern of what seems purposely contradictory evidence indicating that behind the play there does not lurk the sensibility of an orthodox believer.

At first Horatio attempts to place the Ghost in an ancient pagan setting: "A little ere the mightiest Julius fell ... the sheeted dead / Did squeak and gibber in the Roman streets" (1.1.117-9). The command that his son revenge his death is indeed not a Christian one, but rather an appeal to a traditionally pagan type of filial affection. If the ghost is pagan, however, why does it employ Christian images to describe its state at death -- "Unhousel'd, disappointed, unanel'd"? Christian belief is also suggested by its description of how it is

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[27]Jenkins, p. 458.

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"confin'd to fast in fires, / Till the foul crimes done in my days of nature / Are burnt and purg'd away" (1.5.11-13). Hamlet even refers to St. Patrick, the keeper of purgatory.[28] Christian souls in purgatory, however, are supposed to be holy, genuinely repentant, inspired by charity.[29] Such criteria are clearly not satisfied by the elder Hamlet's revenge-seeking ghost. Indeed, unlike a soul in purgatory, this specter does not ask for prayers from Hamlet or from Horatio, who expressly offers to do "any good thing ... That may to thee do ease, and grace to me" (1.1.133-34).

Protestant dogma did not accept the existence of purgatory. The evidence against this specter coming from such a region is not surprising -- after all, it was a created for a stage in England, which was at least officially Protestant, and Hamlet and Horatio are scholars from Wittenberg, the home of Luther. Both Protestants and Catholics believed that human souls did not return from heaven.[30] The only metaphysical possibility left is the still popular thesis[31] that this eidolon escapes nightly from hell. Life in hell may be suggested by the image of a "prison house" but hell is everlasting, and in this location sins would never be "burnt and purged away." To assume that it lies when it says its sins will be purged does not solve the problem, for the Ghost does not have the necessary infernal motivation. Such a visitor, one would suppose, would not want a man who has murdered his brother to be punished for this crime. Nor

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[28]See Eleanor Prosser, *Hamlet and Revenge*, p. 141.
[29]See Roy Battenhouse, *Shakespearean Tragedy*, p. 239.
[30]See Prosser, pp. 102-4.
[31]In her influential study Prosser claimed that the ghost is a demon. In his relatively recent *The Elizabethan Hamlet* Arthur McGee argues that it is dead soul from hell.

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would he feel protective toward his ex-wife. While Hamlet may have cause to suspect that "The spirit that I have seen / May be a devil" (2.2.594-95), we hear Claudius's confession and thus should know better. Hamlet's early intuition that it is an "honest ghost" (1.5.144) is eventually confirmed and he comes to trust "the ghost's word for a thousand pound" (3.2.280-81). The provenance of this revenge-seeking specter is therefore not hell and remains radically uncertain.

The ineluctable conclusion that forces itself upon us is not unlike Gödel's famous paradoxical theorem: any religious system explaining the ghost cannot be both complete and consistent. In terms of traditional ontology, this figure inhabits the shadowy edge of discourse, what might be considered the region of the *parergon*,[32] the frame or border which seems to be outside a conceptual world but which is in fact part of it. Hamlet's famous rebuke of his friend's scepticism, "There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, / Than are dreamt of in your philosophy" (I.v.174-75), is too often construed to mean that we should view the Ghost in terms of an established religious system. Instead, we should "as a stranger give it welcome." If we are asked to doubt even Horatio's scepticism, then, a fortiori, we should also be sceptical of other established systems. This vision reflects metaphysical conflicts that are far too human for it to be an instrument of either divine justice or infernal injustice. There is in fact no need to place it in a religious "prison house"; it appears to be defined by its ability to escape nightly from such confinement.

The ghost begins as a sign pointing to another world, though exactly which other world is never clear, for it is never assimilated

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[32]See Derrida, *The Truth in Painting*, pp. 37-118.

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into any particular religious system. As the play progresses, its relation to the human world is increasingly stressed. This turn away from the infinite is visible at the end of the first act when the ghost's significance begins to seem more political than religious. First Marcellus remarks that "Something is rotten in the state of Denmark" (1.4.90) and then Hamlet opines that "The time is out of joint" (1.5.196). The inconsistencies are also part of a pattern that points to a shift in interest to the human world and finite versions of subjectivity. It begins as a tragic force issuing from an other worldly domain but declines through a series of stages until the inexplicable "form and cause" (3.4.126) of terror and pity emanates more from this world than the next. At the beginning of the play, when the ghost is at the highest point of its shifting ontology, there is an attempt to make "belief take hold" in the spectators, but afterwards our belief has a tendency to disappear. Even in the first act there are hints of its gradual diminution of existence. We are allowed to examine the Ghost quite carefully -- in fact, too carefully, for sufficient time is provided for scepticism to creep into our minds. As Mozart commented, "If the speech of the Ghost in *Hamlet* were not so long, it would be more effective."[33]

Even when the ghost is at the height of its ontological curve -- when it is observed by a group -- it is not fully present in the social world, for it is only seen, not heard by the King's guard. Group "visions," we should remember, still occur; the Virgin Mary, for instance, was recently "seen" by many on the exterior surface of a modern building. To be socially present even an entity visible to a

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[33]Quoted by Bradshaw, *Shakespeare's Scepticism*, p. 121.

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group must react -- either with speech or by other means -- when prompted. This specter, however, only reacts when it is alone with Hamlet. On the other hand, at the end of the first act when the word "swear" is heard by many, it is visually absent. Its theatricality is, we have seen, highlighted in this scene by the fact that the voice emanates from the traditional locale of stage ghosts and by jocular tone that Hamlet uses to address it. When it does return, it can only muster enough being to be an hallucination invisible to Gertrude, and though Hamlet sees and hears it he does not act on its renewed call for revenge any more than he did to the original one. Finally, its absence at the play's end when stage ghosts are expected to return is as significant as any of its appearances. Its diminishing presence is part of a larger pattern in the play that, we will see, reflects the rise of a finite notion of subjectivity in contemporary metaphysical discourse.

Recent theoretical approaches that wish to say that the text *deconstructs* standard belief systems do not realize that it does so for a specific historical reason. Approaches that read the play's contradictory indications of belief as merely attempts to escape censorship, or as mysteriously proleptic of the onset of a full-scale capitalism are also ultimately unsatisfying, since they do not adequately account for the social and literary historical data. On the other hand, an older approach that dismisses the inconsistencies as mere contingency and sees Shakespeare as a Christian humanist is not convincing, for it does not sufficiently explain the play's pattern of diminishing belief and tends to reify Christianity into a stable conceptual system.

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We have seen in previous chapters that what is often thought of as a relatively unchanging core of Christian moral dogma was in fact a system that was in flux in the Renaissance -- and the same applies to the system of metaphysical ideology. Christianity's porous assimilation of pagan features often makes it impossible to ascertain what is and what is not truly Christian. To see Shakespeare as either fully a believer or a disbeliever in any conceptual system may well oversimplify, since either approach assumes that there was a stable set of beliefs to accept or reject. An approach that positions the play in a more complex manner in the shifting discourses of subjectivity is clearly needed. I will therefore argue that *Hamlet* treats the modern subject in so compelling and yet so baffling a manner, because it dramatizes the emergence of a finite version of subjectivity from a discourse system composed of infinite ones.

To appreciate *Hamlet*'s exploration of modes of subjectivity we need first to stymie the inclination to assume that the early modern period was dominated by the monolithic metaphysics implied by the term "Christian humanism." In fact the era's system of metaphysical ideologies were complex and in tremendous flux . The play's fluidity of belief is consonant with the era of religious upheaval in which Shakespeare lived. England changed official religions not once but repeatedly and many found it hard to preserve a set of unwavering beliefs. Christian unity of belief was shattered by the Reformation, which eventually made possible the heterodoxy of, for instance, radical Puritans during the Revolution.[34] Scepticism about established religions and the metaphysical promises that they make

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[34]See Christopher Hill, *The World Turned Upside Down.*

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does not, of course, imply atheism, for one may believe in many ways. Many ways not to believe or to believe less literally also exist, and there was clearly an erosion of orthodox certainty among segments of the English intelligentsia. In addition to the growth of heterodox Christian speculations, the empiricism of Francis Bacon, the cosmopolitan viewpoint evident in the intellectual connections of Walter Raleigh, and the contemporary sophisticated versions of hermeticism all represent intellectual experimentation of a type that was much more radical than was possible in the Christian middle ages.

The Anglican campaign to coerce church attendance often met with blatant expressions of disrespect, encouraging a general sense of scepticism about the forms. Elizabeth's wish not "to make windows into men's hearts and secret thoughts"[35] constitutes a startling sanctioning of the uncoupling of the more cultural and outward signs of religious conformity from inward belief. As we have seen in chapter 1, such an uncoupling is a feature of the emergence of finite subjectivity. The dramatic increase of churchgoers who were able to ignore metaphysical doctrine helped to make Renaissance England fertile ground for the development of finite subjectivity perhaps as much as the virulent and widespread religious scepticism. Such nominal members of churches lack strong metaphysical beliefs but desire for themselves and their children the sense of community, the feeling of belonging, and the moral structure that the cultural aspects of a religion provide.

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[35]Francis Bacon reported Elizabeth's remark; Bacon *Works*, v, 428-9; quoted by William Haugaard, *Elizabeth and the English Reformation*, p. 329.

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The versions of finite subjectivity that were developing were generally more of a private affair than the new types of infinite subjectivity of the bourgeois Puritans. Bourgeois Puritan expressions of inwardness, such as conversion narratives, were often formulaic and semi-public in that they were shared with the congregation. The inward-looking selves that sprung up in these small groups do not in fact constitute as modern a trend as the development of finite subjectivity, for as Georg Simmel argued, truly modern selfhood entails a radical contrast between an immense group and the individual.[36]

Historically, how did finite versions of subjectivity arise in a discourse system that had been dominated by infinite ones? As we have seen in previous chapters, in England finite subjectivity became associated with the notion of *wit*, which drew on contemporary developments, indigenous sources, and a classical notion, for it was closely associated with *ingenium*. Although the classical concept of *ingenium* derived from the Roman tutelar deity *genius*, even its links to this polytheistic and thus relatively diffuse infinite source was pretty much erased by the time the notion was recouped in the Renaissance. In the middle ages the pagan conception of *ingenium* had been supplanted first by Augustine's Christian-Platonic dualism and then by the scholastic "Augustinian/Aristotelian synthesis," both of which stressed a subjective connection to a monotheistic infinite.

In contrast to Plato's conception, Aristotle's notion of the psyche (*anima* in Latin or *soul* in English) as the organizing principle

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[36]See Georg Simmel, "Group Expansion and the Development of Individuality" in *On Individuality and Social Forms.*

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did not entail an inward path to the infinite: "the soul is that by which, primarily, we live perceive, and think; therefore it is a sort of definition or form, not a matter or substratum.... the soul neither exists apart from body nor is a body; it is not a body, but something belonging to a body."[37] The Augustinian/ Aristotelian synthesis of the scholastics, however, attributed varying aspects of *substance* to the soul. This rational and spiritual *substance* was both of this world and a medium to another[38] -- and as with Augustine's Platonism, when it looked within, it found the infinite. The great medieval theorists of subjectivity were, after all, deeply religious monks who believed the "soul" was not only the single source of reason and life but also a spiritual essence that would survive after death. Infinite subjectivity is even evident in the original version of Averroism, a type of Aristotelianism which asserted that a single universal principle -- in effect one mind -- empowered all human bodies with thought.

In addition to medieval versions of subjectivity, a range of speculative developments in Renaissance Italy were influential in early modern England. The Italian intelligentsia had long resisted Christian orthodoxy -- Venice, for instance, was a bastion of anti-clericalism -- and many accepted the Averroists' vision of impersonal immortality. The rise of Florentine humanism had complex effects on the intellectual climate. In some respects, by rebelling against the

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[37]Aristotle, *De Anima*, p. 216.

[38]See Haldane, pp. 334-36. On Augustine's inwardness, see Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self*. While a drift toward scepticism is visible in Duns Scotus's doubt that the soul could be proven immortal by reason alone and in William of Ockham's outright denial that it could be so proven, the medieval discourse system was nonetheless dominated by *infinite* subjectivity.

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communalism of Italian Aristotelianism and championing personal and individualistic values, humanism can be seen as a partial encouragement of a move toward the finite subject, which also implies an individualistic vision. On the other hand, while humanists such as Marsilio Ficino saw contemplative inwardness as central to human life, he and other member of the Florentine Academy developed the orthodox discourse of subjectivity in an unorthodox manner.

By combining an Augustinian-Platonic dualism with the neo-Platonism of Plotinus, Ficino -- together with Pico della Mirandola, who put forth a religious synchronism -- opened up a somewhat new inward path to the infinite. The Italian Aristotelians responded to Ficino's attack on Averroism not by accepting his (neo)Platonic religious modernism, but by "reorganizing their own naturalistic and scientific thought around a more individualistic conception of man."[39] Once Aristotle began to be studied in the original language, the literal unity of the intellect was not able to be defended and Averroism became instead a general vision of "knowledge and a freedom from theological compromise."[40] Perhaps the most important champion of the new Aristotelianism was Pietro Pomponazzi, who avoided mind-body dualism in a way that is close to the mode of some present-day property dualists.[41] The new Aristotelianism's finite version of subjectivity had a great effect on early modern empiricism, and its

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[39]John Herman Randall, "Introduction to Pietro Pomponazzi" in *The Renaissance Philosophy of Man*, p. 258.
[40]Randall, "Pomponazzi." p. 259.
[41]On Ficino and Pompanzano, see Haldane, p. 337, and *The Renaissance Philosophy of Man*, ed. Cassirer et al. On Ficino's hermeticism, see Frances Yates, *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition*.

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influence on the intellectual climate of Europe may have been as profound in ways as that of neo-Platonism.[42]

To understand the significance of *Hamlet*'s problematical treatment of selfhood it is necessary to place it within the comprehensive system of subjectivity that includes both intellectual and popular discourses. Not following any one school of thought, the play draws on the strands of the comprehensive system that were heterodox and sceptical. Not settling into any particular system, it registers the shifting currents of metaphysics including Christian as well as indigenous and classical pagan ones. That various religions were drawn upon in constructing the ghost suggests a syncretism and therefore Pico's influence. Its fading nature, on the other hand, points to the more sceptical notions of the new Aristotelianism. Its shifting ontology does not definitely reflect either a disbelief in ghosts, such as we see in Dun Scotus's *The Discovery of Witchcraft*, or some type of belief, such as is evident in King James's writings. Instead this eidolon represents an attempt to come to terms with both an attraction toward and a shift of interest away from belief. Shakespeare's roots in the countryside suggest a reason for an attraction to indigenous paganism and a sceptical folk-resistance to the hegemonic systems of subjectivity.[43] On the other hand, the immense learning of the plays demonstrate that his rigorous grammar school education[44] only began a process that continued

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[42]See, for instance, Randall, "The Development of Scientific Method in The School of Padua." More on this in chapter 8.
[43]See Michael Bristol, "'Funeral Bak'd-Meats': Carnival and the Carnivalesque in *Hamlet*."
[44]See T. W. Baldwin, *William Shakspere's Small Latine & Lesse Greeke*.

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through his reading and conversation until he absorbed the most sophisticated intellectual currents of his day.

Rather than developing a consistent religious or secular metaphysics, *Hamlet* may seem to ride roughshod over contemporary philosophical and theological distinctions. Like Averroism's final significance, the play represents to some degree a vision of "knowledge and a freedom from theological compromise." In passages such as, "What piece of work is a man, how noble in reason, how infinite in faculties, ... in apprehension how like a god" (2.2.303-6), we are presented with a version of infinite subjectivity that is suggestive of Pico's *On the Dignity of Man* and *Heptalplus.*[45] This allusion to an infinite source is, however, more than counterbalanced by images of the self cut off from such a source and instead creating its own universe: "I could be bounded in a nutshell and count myself a king of infinite space" (2.2.254-55).

The value system that follows from the latter perspective is radically subjective and relativistic, as is the one that follows from: "What is a man / If his chief good and market of his time / Be but to sleep and feed? A beast, no more." This comment, which seems like a retort to the vision of "man" as "infinite in faculties," implies relativistic "market" values, though Shakespeare, we will see, appears able to accept such relativism without falling into a reductive world view.[46] The radical relativism of *Troilus and*

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[45]See Jenkins, 469-70.

[46]Jenkins, p. 126 notes that the second comment seems to be a "retort" to the former one. The phrase "market of his time" is so suggestive of the relativistic market values that Engle sees as the basis of pragmatism that he used it as the subtitle of *Shakespearean Pragmatism.* He opines, p. 2, that Hamlet's remark demonstrates that "for him at least the idea of living in a marketplace does not reduce life to concentration on its material conditions and comforts."

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Cressida.,[47] where nothing is "aught but as 'tis valued" (2.2.52), is seen in other remarks by Hamlet as well -- for instance, "there is nothing either good or bad but thinking makes it so." The pattern suggesting a drift toward finite subjectivity that is evident in Hamlet's remarks concerning concepts of "man" is the same one we have seen both in his speculations on what might come after death and in the variable presence of the ghost. Each of these aspects of the play registers the historical emergence of finite subjectivity.

Shakespeare does not seem so much to do without reaching "after fact & reason" as Keats suggested but rather reached after them in seemingly contradictory ways. We are offered manifestations of superstitions and the voicing of an explicit critique of "superstition" -- not only by Horatio but also, for instance, by Hotspur in *1 Henry 4* and by Paulina in *The Winter's Tale*. The ghost's shifting ontology is not surprising when we remember that if Owen Glendower in *1Henry 4* cannot raise spirits as he says he can, Prospero can. *Hamlet* occupies a key position in Shakespeare's treatments of subjectivity in that it tries to come to terms with all the varieties of belief that are put forth in his oeuvre. Not only in a comedy, such as *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, but even in *The Tragedy of Macbeth* he seems to be quite taken with "spirits," especially since the witches' predictions are born out at the end. On the other hand, Hamlet's "father's spirit" is raised and then not only allowed to fade but eventually made to seem much less

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[47]See Jonathan Dollimore, *Radical Tragedy*, Linda Charnes, *Notorious Identity*; Engle, pp. 147-63; and William Elton, "Shakespeare's Ulysses and the Problem of Value."

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consequential than the son's modern *esprit* that is developed so extensively throughout the play.

Hamlet appears to represent a radical search for a way to negotiate among various systems of belief that attracted the author. Eventually, this search bears fruit in the startling finesse with which the final plays are able to negotiate the transcendent and the literal. In the surprise ending of *The Winter's Tale*, for instance, spiritualist magic is explicitly used as a metaphor for a modern conception of art that this romance developed earlier in its famous discourse on art and nature. And if the plot of *The Tempest* seems to validate a spiritualist or hermetic point of view, the play provides a perspicuous metaphorical reading of its own magic.

Shakespeare clearly moved toward a more sceptical world view in the middle plays. The desire for a nonreductive approach to subjectivity that I believe becomes evident in *Hamlet* may have propelled him to develop a secular understanding of transcendence in the romances. That the fading of the ghost may be related to Hamlet's turn inward and may be part of the play's dramatization of the historical rise of finite subjectivity is suggested by the allusions to this specter in *The Winter's Tale*. Paulina's playful warning that if Leontes took a second spouse he would be haunted by Hermione's "ghost" saying "Remember mine" (V.1.63,67) has long been recognized as a reference to *Hamlet*. That the remark is part of an interchange concerning a hypothetical comparison between first and second spouses, which is of course central to the earlier play, makes the allusion unmistakable. Both works are concerned with the possibility of the miraculous transcendence of the natural, but the

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lack of truly supernatural occurrences in the later play clearly points to an interest in the rise of a finite, cultural transcendence. When the miraculous returns in a seeming literal way in *The Tempest*, it has the trappings of a metaphorical representation of the artist and his powers.[48] Increasingly, Shakespeare seems to be involved with a heterodox investigation of subjectivity, but he also increasingly wished -- in Paulina's words -- that we "do not say 'tis superstition" (5.3.43).

The figurative treatment of transcendence in the romances may well be prepared for by the dramatization of the passing of infinite subjectivity in *Hamlet*. The basic desire for a cultural transcendence seems to have long been on Shakespeare's mind, since it appears to be explored in a somewhat more conventional and therefore preliminary manner in *The Sonnets*. The speaker, for instance, repeatedly claims that despite "[d]evouring time," his paradoxically unidentified "love shall in my verse ever live" (19) rather than in heaven. The obsessiveness and intellectual energy of with which this theme is treated point to an import beyond the mere playing of variations on sonnet conventions.

Given the Renaissance politicization of religious and metaphysical questions, Shakespeare had to worry that others would not say about his metaphysical exploration "'tis superstition." Metaphysical speculations were often severely inhibited, and public expressions of "superstition" could be dangerous. The theocratic designs of Girolamo Savonarola thwarted the growth of Florentine

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[48]I do not consider *Pericles* and *Cymbelline*, since these seem to represent only tentative positions leading to the great romances.

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neo-Platonism. The Counter-Reformation increasingly blocked developments in Christian metaphysics, for speculations were much more readily labeled heresy and therefore discouraged from even being put forward. The Fifth Lateran Council (1513), for instance, denounced the Averroism and Alexandrism on which Pomponazzi's philosophy was based. Later on the Inquisition burned the hermetic philosopher Giordano Bruno and moved against the dangerous implications of empiricism by showing Galileo the machines of torture.

The Protestant Reformation, on the other hand, attempted to cleanse Christianity of pagan philosophy, to simplify Christian metaphysics by attacking the saints and purgatory, and to develop a new inwardness that stressed a more literate (and often literal) and less ritualistic relation to the infinite. The metaphysical turmoil had varied effects, one of which was to encourage the sceptical to move away from visions of the infinite and to concentrate on the finite. If the Reformation and Counter-Reformation made the expression of heterodox and nonChristian metaphysical speculations more dangerous, many privately continued to speculate and expressed such speculations indirectly. Although for obvious reasons these occurrences are not easily verifiable,[49] freethinkers like Shakespeare often seem to have used "indirections" to help us "find directions out."

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[49]To assert, for instance, that Montaigne was fundamentally a Catholic, as M. A. Screech's introduction to *The Complete Essays*, even though he is clearly taken with a virulent scepticism is to misread the necessary pretense of orthodoxy that he felt he needed to make at times.

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Shakespeare was able to consider an amazing range of sources for selfhood without fully investing belief in any one. In *Measure for Measure*, for instance, we are offered a bourgeois Puritan subject in Angelo and the contemporary version of scholastic subjectivity in Isabella, as her use of use "glassy essence" (2.2.120) indicates: "proud man, / Dress'd in a little brief authority, / Most ignorant of what he is assured -- / His glassy essence -- like an angry ape / Plays such fantastic tricks before high heaven / As makes the angels weep; who, with our spleens, Would all themselves laugh mortal." The Florentine Academy's updating of the infinite subjectivity of the scholastics may also be alluded to, since the references to the ability of humans to fall to "apes"[50] or rise to "angels" points to Pico's *On the Dignity of Man.* As we have seen in the last chapter, neither Angelo's nor Isabella's versions of religious interiority will be validated by the play. And yet they are seriously considered and appear to have affected Shakespeare's vision of subjectivity. He seems able to treat theories of *soul* in the same respectful yet nonliteral way that he treats the hermetic vision of spirits in *The Tempest.*

The language of religious inwardness that is put forth in *Measure* -- "... Go to your bosom, / Knock there, and ask your heart what it doth know / That's like my brother's fault" -- is developed in *Hamlet* in nonreligious terms: "you would pluck out the heart of my mystery." In contrast to *Measure, Hamlet* does not merely contain a mixture of different traditions of subjectivity, but instead dramatizes their transmutation into a radically modern subjectivity. That

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[50]Althouh the ape was frequently associated with fantastic tricks, the contrast with "angels" makes the allusion to ideas of the Florentine Academy seem quite clear.

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Shakespeare was able astutely to compare and contrast a wide range of approaches to subjectivity -- religious, secular, intellectual, popular -- enabled him to develop an innovative pragmatism of the self (more on this in the next chapter).

Hamlet, then, seems to register the complex historical changes in the discourse system concerning subjectivity. Older versions of the infinite *soul* -- whether the impersonal one of the early Averroists or the more individuated one of the orthodox scholastics -- were losing their strength and though newer versions of religious subjectivity were developing, they coexisted with emergent finite conceptions that were tied in England to notions of *wit* and *ingenium*. After the Renaissance, the diminished power of various versions of infinite subjectivity -- scholastic, syncretic, or the original Averroist -- would provide the conceptual space for the full development of our finite notions of *mind* and *consciousness*. Shakespeare wrote at a time of exceptional ontological turmoil when the ideologies of infinite subjectivity were quickly losing power but had not yet been supplanted by what would become the relatively hegemonic ideology of Cartesian dualism. The ghost represents an infinite version of subjectivity that diverges from the Augustine-Platonic synthesis. This heterodox exploration of dualism can be seen as a thought experiment that considers what a disembodied consciousness would look like. Its fading and assimilation into the subjectivity effect surrounding Hamlet appears to outline the process of passing through preliminary stages on the way to the modern regime of belief.

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Even though Hamlet was never a soldier, he is buried in armor, which suggests that the ghost does not return at the end because he is to take its place. That in death he resembles his father's spirit, who walked in armor at the play's opening, signals that the ghost is assimilated into his subjectivity effect and that archaic modes are supplanted by more modern ones. At the end, he does not appear to return to belief, even to a fideism, as is often assumed. His remarks on the need to "let be" because "[t]here is special providence in the fall of sparrow" implies that he finally accepts the way of the world, but not necessarily any particular religion. That he accepted fideism -- which denies that there can be a rational basis of Christianity and yet counsels that one should nonetheless make a leap of faith -- as some feel, is not probable especially since, as one writer notes, this theology was "never really convincing."[51]

While Hamlet's sceptical journey does not end in the present hegemonic belief of the academy, materialistic atheism, this should not blind us to the fact that it is a metaphysical quest that is independent of any orthodoxy. That he dies in a dual and is buried in armor places him finally in a cultural context, not a religious one. His dying wish is not for prayers for his soul but for his story to be told so that he will live on in the social world. The play's shift away from a *soul* grounded in scholastic metaphysics and toward a cultural version of subjectivity is symbolized by the metamorphosis of the spirit of his father into a linguistic representation in the play-within-the play, which will be examined in the next chapter when we look

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[51]Screech, ed. *The Complete Essays* (of Montaigne), p. xxxvii. While I agree with Screech that fideism was not very compelling, I disagree that this means that this implies that Montaigne was an orthodox Catholic.

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at exactly how a finite subject is constructed by the play. First we need to investigate how it participates in the reconfiguration of the subjective-objective spectrum.

III. *The* Tertium Quid *and the Subjective-Objective Spectrum*

In Plato's *Dialogues* Timaeus applied the rule of the mean to the four elements:

> God in the beginning of creation made the body of the universe to consist of fire and earth. But two things cannot be rightly put together without a third; there must be some bond of union between them. ... as the world must be solid, and solid bodies are always compacted not by one mean but by two, God placed water and air in the mean between fire and earth ...
> (*Timaeus* 31-32)

From this passage the medieval world and, to some degree, the Renaissance world drew the lesson that it "is not possible to passe from one extreme to another but by a meane," as Timothie Bright remarked in *Treatise of Melancholy* (1586). In the middle ages triads became popular and a *tertium quid* was needed to mediate between the extremes of body and soul. This tertium quid was to a large

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degree supplied by special *spirits*, which Milton saw rising from the blood "like gentle breaths from rivers pure"[52] and which Bright called "a true love knot to couple ... a more divine nature than the heavens with a base clod of earth."[53] According to Bartholomaeus Angilicus in the *De Proprietatibus* (thirteenth century), in the liver a "smoke" arises and is "pured" into natural spirit, which propels the blood "into all the limbs."[54] In the head it is "more pured" into *vital spirit*, which then "worketh in the artery veins the pulses of life." Being "made subtle" in the brain, it becomes *animal spirit*, some remaining here for the *inward wits*, some moving into the spinal marrow to provide for voluntary motion, and some flowing to the "limbs of feeling" (sense organs).

The medieval hegemonic discourse of subjectivity was quite religious in character, despite classical influences, and left a powerful tradition that is still somewhat evident in the multiple senses of *soul*. In the Renaissance this discourse continued to be vital and the psycho-physical theories of the tertium quid remained linked to it. Spirits are "like souls," Donne tells us in "The Ecstasy": "blood labours to beget / Spirits, as like souls as it can, / Because such fingers need to knit / That subtle knot, which makes us man." The integrated religious and medical tradition was elaborated by the Jesuit Thomas Wright, who was concerned with spirits because of their relation to the moral and religious control of the "passions." The influence of the older hegemonic discourse is clear in Wright's *Passions of the Minde*

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[52]Milton, *Paradise Lost*, 5, 804.
[53]Bright quoted by C. S. Lewis, "*The Discarded Image*, p. 168.
[54]*De Proprietatibus* was Englished by Trevisa. See Lewis; quotes from pp. 167-68.

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(1601), since he intermingled references to scholastic notions of the soul with discussions of spirits, passions and humours, which he tells us "flock to the hart in passions." The study of spirits, then, overlapped not only scholastic discourse but also the Galenic quasi-medical theory of humours, as even the title of Bright's volume indicates.

Since Father Wright was primarily concerned with morals, the heart, conceived of as "the peculiar place where that Passions allodge" (59), was crucial to his view of "the passions of the minde": "as the brayne fitteth best for the softnesse and moysture, to receiue the formes and prints of obiects for vnderstanding; euen so the heart endued with most fierie spirites fitteth best for affecting" (62). The spirits, which create what we would call consciousness, together with the heart, appear to be at least as important to Wright's conception of the "minde" as the brain: "in sleepe the purer spirits are recalled into the inner partes of the bodie, leauing the eyes destitute of spirites, and abandoned of force, which presently in waking returne againe: euen so I conceiue, the heart, prepared by nature, to disgest the blood sent from the liuer" (65). That such discourse is used by writers like Donne and Milton is not too surprising, since they, like Wright, were quite concerned with a moral and religious understanding of the passions. What was most modern in the early modern period, however, usually involved tendencies to uncouple religious and secular discourses and to streamline and eventually eliminate the tertium quid. That Robert Burton, the author of *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, was a clergyman helps to explain why he

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went against the modern tide in the seventeenth century by developing a literal humour theory to such an impressive extent.

As we have seen in earlier chapters, firmly secular writers such as Jonson, Chapman, Shakespeare, and eventually Congreve developed a discourse of humour psychology that employed old terms in new ways. Jonson was, for instance, well aware of psycho-physical theories concerning spirits and the imbalance of humours: "when some one peculiar quality / Doth so possesse a man ... it doth draw / All his affects, his spirits, and his powers / In their confluctions, all to runne one way" (prologue to *Every Man In His Humour*). He explicitly stressed, however, that he would use *humour* only "by Metaphore" a thus would develop the new, non-medical psychology of dramatic "humours" (that was already popularized by Chapman) -- a crucial fact that critics have failed to appreciate. Like Jonson, Shakespeare would at times refer to medieval humour theory, as when he describes Horatio as one "whose blood and judgment are so well commeddled" that he "is not passion's slave" (3.2.69,72). Bright similarly noted how a "just proportion" in the "mixture of the elements" or "humours" would "breedeth an indifferency to all passions." That Shakespeare and Jonson at times mentioned such traditional notions is, however, of much less overall significance than their transformation or neglect of these notions in their innovative approaches to psychology.

After attempts at a literal application of Galenic notions to Shakespeare's and Jonson's representations of selfhood proved ultimately unsatisfying, older critics remained in a quandary about what to make of humours. Now that the memory of such failure is

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fading, we must guard against relapsing into the same type of error. New historicists who isolate the theories of such writers as Wright and then present them as a synchronic system -- an *episteme*, as Foucault called it -- obscure the medieval sources and miss that the discourse of the tertium quid was increasingly doubted. Like Tillyard's Elizabethan world picture, much of what is *thickly described* by current synchronic approaches appears to have been increasingly contested, as more secular and empirical writers began to treat spirits and the tertium quid sceptically.

Shakespeare and Jonson were part of the movement to develop new approaches to the philosophy of psychology that would eventually radically transform the older discourse. They did not draw unthinkingly on traditional concepts, as older critics tended to assume, and they did not construct a system with no relation to past or future, as current synchronic critics are prone to assert. Nor did Shakespeare create a modern psychology *ex nihilo*, as some critics are disposed to claim. Rather, by de-emphasizing the tertium quid and streamlining and modifying elements such as the quasi-physical humours these dramatists helped to transform the medieval psycho-physical discourse into an almost purely psychological one. Only in this way can we adequately historicize the research concerning Shakespeare and Jonson's innovations in social and individual psychology.

The movement of which these writers were a part eventually would split the mind and body radically, and preliminary moves in that direction are clearly visible in their work. While some archaic notions such as a desire for an intermediary between mind and body

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would be retained by these dramatists, the same was the case for the new philosophers and scientists. Our Kuhnian notion of a paradigm shift are very useful only if we do not oversimplify the transitions that take place -- Kepler and Newton, after all, were highly skilled astrologers. Paradigms do not shift without a period of conceptual flux in which traditional notions may be gradually eliminated or transformed as scepticism about them increases.

Scepticism about traditional theories of the mind-body relation is evident, for instance, in *As You Like It.* Rosalind knows the psycho-physical "marks" of love, but her lover does not have them: "A lean cheek, which you have not; a blue eye and sunken, which you have not; an unquestionable spirit, which you have not; a beard neglected, which you have not" (3.2.372-76) Rosalind refers to the traditional theory that reduces love to "merely a madness" only to reduce this theory itself to absurdity: "Love ... deserves as well a dark house and a whip as madmen do; and the reason why they are not so punish'd and cur'd is, that the lunacy is so ordinary that the whippers are in love too." She disparages the psycho-physical theory of this illness and in fact prefers a talking cure: "I profess curing it by counsel." The play is able to describe with breathtaking astuteness the *marks* of modern love by telling us what it is not: the medieval quasi-medical version. The modern notion did not evolve from Galenic psycho-physical theories, but instead represents the Reformation's transmutation of courtly love -- as we have seen in chapters 3 and 6.

The transitional period of which Shakespeare and Jonson are part comprehend several stages that do not end with Descartes. The

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"father" of modern philosophy wished to find the real tertium quid, and proposed that the mind and body met in the pineal gland, the function of which was (and still is) unknown. He could have seen in the renderings of Andreas Vesalius, the Fleming considered the originator of modern anatomy, that this gland is centrally situated (in the middle of the back of the brain) and sits on a stalk in relative isolation. Nor is Descartes free of the religious discourse of subjectivity and indeed provides a proof of God's existence in the best scholastic tradition. He considered theology as certain as mathematics, but since the revealed truths of religion were not accessible to our intellect, he began his exposition on subjectivity with the "certain" foundation of logic. What impelled the new philosophy forward was that his exposition uncoupled finite and infinite discourses, allowing subsequent philosophers to jettison the latter. The work of the "father" of modern philosophy clearly does not represent a complete break with older discursive traditions.

Like other early modern writers concerned with questions of the philosophy of psychology, Descartes struggled to find ways to accommodate in his representations of the psyche the perspectives offered by the new empirical anatomy begun by Vesalius. The "body and soul" would eventually be replaced by the disjunct "mind and body" without reference to a tertium quid of *spirits*, *humours*, or *passions* -- or the pineal gland -- but in the mean time there was considerable conceptual flux characterized by a diminishing dependence on or a streamlining of such notions. If we wish to fix a point of origin for modern discourses of either materialism or dualism, it should probably be neither Hobbes nor Descartes, but

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Vesalius, who turned away from Galen after being a supporter. Vesalius not only revived the practice of human dissection that had not been done since Galen and founded the famous Paduan school of anatomy. He also led a revolt against Galen, which encouraged a fresh consideration of the physical body in and of itself and a re-theorization of its relation to the subject. The impact of the new anatomy on English dramatists, including Shakespeare,[55] appears to have been as strong as it was on Descartes.

In addition to the pattern of multiple strands in *Hamlet* that we have seen reflects the rise of finite subjectivity, there is evidence that this play registers the movement toward the modern conception of the disjunct mind and body. The emerging paradigm may well be behind the play's startling discourse of the body, as its creation of an important neologism indicates. According to the OED2 the first application of "machine" to the body occurs at the end of Hamlet's love letter to Ophelia: "Thine evermore, most dear lady, whilst this *machine* is to him" (2.2.122-23; my emphasis). That this letter contains references to contemporary developments in natural philosophy -- "Doubt thou the stars are fire / Doubt that the sun doth move" -- suggests that it is indeed possible that the innovative use of *machine* in fact represents a conceptual stage that prepares for the radical disjunction of physical body and finite mind. The word had entered English in the middle of the fifteenth century as a verb meaning "to contrive, plot" and only very recently, in the middle of

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[55]David Bevington led a session at the 112 MLA (1996) on "Dissection and Drama in Sixteenth-Century England" that included J. Duke Pesta's "Hamlet's Anatomical lesson: The Graveyard and the Theater of Dissection." Pesta argued compellingly for the importance of Vesalius, but unfortunately he put forth a materialistic philosophy of mind that was reductive.

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the sixteenth, as a noun referring to "a structure of any kind, material or immaterial." To clarify the significance of the play's innovative usage we can consider the contrast with the history of *engine*, another key term for the conceptualization of the subjective-objective spectrum.

In Latin *machina* can indicate either ingenuity or the physical result of ingenuity, while *ingenium* refers solely to a mental faculty. Since it derives from *ingenium*, in English *engine* had long been inextricably tied to the notion of ingenuity, and in fact was used to refer to a faculty, a meaning it has now lost: Chaucer, for instance, thought that "a man hath sapiences three, / Memorie, *engyn*, and intellect also."[56] The word was also employed to describe nature in general as an admirable mechanism with inevitable religious or spiritual overtones. Sir Thomas More, for instance, describes "god [as] eyther maker or gouernour or both, of al this hole *engine* of the world" (OED2; my emphasis). When Timothie Bright employed *engine* to refer to the body it was in reference to its animation by the soul and in the general context of the intermediaries of the spirits.

That Hamlet uses *machine* rather than *engine* is significant, since the former is much further removed from suggestions of mentation. His description of his body as a "machine" is surprisingly modern in that it appears free of the suggestion of *esprit* -- either religious or mental. Instead, "whilst this machine is to him" points to a large and unmediated distance between "machine" and "him" -- the body and the self.

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[56]Chaucer, "The Second Nun's Tale," ll. 338-39; my emphasis.

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The increasing cultural distance between subjective and objective that is suggested by the innovative use of *machine* is also evident in a more general way in *Hamlet*'s celebrated contribution to the Renaissance movement to "hold as 'twere the mirror up to nature" (3.2.22). That a play in which a ghost is, in Dover Wilson's words, "the linchpin" of the plot -- "remove it and the play falls to pieces"[57] -- is considered the first *modern* tragedy is indeed odd. The play's innovations in realism are clearly not in its revenge plot, but in its *characterology*. While *character* was not used to mean "the sum of moral and mental qualities that distinguish an individual" until the middle of the seventeenth century, nevertheless early modern dramatists such as Marlowe and Shakespeare employed it in innovative ways that begin to approach the modern usage (see the OED2). More importantly, such dramatists implicitly developed the modern notion of finite selfhood in psychologically profound *dramatis personae*. This psychological objectivity is born of the ability to study the self in itself by escaping the medieval discourses of either the *soul*, or of humours and spirits (that is, of the tertium quid).

Since the development of modern literary objectivity parallels the development of objective perspective by poetry's sister art, the Horatian dictum *ut pictura poesis* appears to apply to the divergence of the objective and subjective perspectives in the Renaissance. The visual artist "who sets himself to imitate nature" also "sees himself as standing over against the object" -- a development that Charles Taylor's historical survey shows represents a significant stage in the

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[57]Wilson, *What Happens in Hamlet*, p. 52.

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construction of the modern self.[58] The icons and odd perspectives of medieval paintings manifest a world view that did not see the objective and subjective as radically separate but rather as part of one realm. The holy spirit permeated all souls and all physical bodies, supplying a reality more compelling than was offered by the apparition of solid matter.

Hamlet helps to move contemporary discourse toward both the integrity of the subject and the objectivity of the physical, which are complementary developments in the construction of the modern paradigm. The contemplation of the Vesalian "machine" that contains the *wit* becomes more intense as the play progresses, and a watershed is reached with the discourse on Polonius's body.

> A certain convocation of politic worms are e'en at him. Your worm is your only emperor for diet: we fat all creatures else to fat us, and we fat ourselves for maggots. ... A man may fish with the worm that hath eat of a king, and eat of the fish that hath fed of that worm ... [which is] to show you how a king may go a progress through the guts of beggar. (5.3.19-31)

The political leveling that began with the disillusioning examination of the performance of power in Shakespeare history plays is developed here and will continue later -- in, for instance, King Lear's vision of "the thing itself: unaccomodated man" (3.4.106-7). Such

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[58]Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, p. 201.

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passages in *Hamlet* reflect, however, not only a political leveling, but also the cultural objectification of the body.

The play's discourse of the body reaches a high point in the gravedigger's scene, which new historicists, cultural materialists and Bakhtinians have fruitfully mined for political significance. Following Anabel Patterson, I have in chapter 5 stressed Hamlet's intermediary and mobile political significance, and thus agree with her about his complex relation to the gravedigger, whose subversive perspective is able to see through hegemonic ideology.[59] But the gravedigger and Hamlet's *materialization* of discourse is also part of the rise of the new paradigm of "mind and body" that would itself eventually become hegemonic. When Hamlet sees the skull that once might have belonged to a "courtier" but now is "my Lady Worm's, chopless and knocked about the mazard with a sexton's spade," the "fine revolution" is both political and cultural. The wheel of fortune brings down even Alexander, whose "noble dust" might have no more noble a function than the "stopping of a bung-hole." The traditional moral is retained that the rest of us will, a fortiori, also have the same end. What is new here is not so much the political import, but the construction of the objectified body that can contain the finite subject. There is a lack of the religious adjunct to such thoughts on mortality, as had previously been common since Boethius's *Consolation of Philosophy* -- a lack that helps to propel the play toward the new paradigm.

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[59]See Patterson, *Shakespeare and the Popular Voice*. Also see Michael Bristol, "'Funeral Bak'd-Meats,' who even suggests a rewriting that leaves the gravedigger on stage to remind us of his perspective.

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The image of Hamlet attempting to imagine how Yurick's *spirit* could exist in his skull, which represents a powerful culmination of the play's innovative discourse of the body, has deservedly become an icon in Western culture. An intense probing of the contrast between consciousness and the body as "machine" is repeatedly suggested by Hamlet's words throughout the play, from his speculations on "this quintessence of dust" to the present tense of "I am dead" at the play's end. The new paradigm that this discourse is moving toward is also reflected in imagery elsewhere in Shakespeare -- in, for instance, *The Sonnets*, which represent a radical exploration of finite subjectivity that complements the plays.[60] The paired sonnets 44 and 45, for instance, begin with what appears to be a startling reference to the new dualistic paradigm: "If the dull substance of my flesh were thought / Injurious distance should not stop my way." These two poems, which look forward to the emerging paradigm and backward to the older one that they were transforming, refer to and break the discursive rules of the Galenic system, for the associations they make are streamlined and dispense with the complications of the traditional theory: "air" becomes thought, and "fire" desire.

The questions raised by the dramatic contrast between a living mind and a lifeless body, which provide the intellectual excitement of the graveyard scene, are suggested by Sonnet 30. A stunning legal image suggesting the complexity of the mind -- "the sessions of sweet silent thought," which is able to "summon up remembrance of

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[60]See Anne Ferry, *The "Inward" Language* and Joel Fineman, *Shakespeare's Perjured Eye.*

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things past" -- is contrasted with "death's dateless nights." Images such as "dateless nights" hint at a secular contemplation of an oblivious consciousness in death. This notion is also suggested by *Hamlet* -- "I am dead," the "To be" speech -- and by passages in other plays, such as Claudio's "To lie in cold obstruction, and to rot; / This sensible warm motion to become / A kneaded clod." Such conceptions of death lack the standard connection to the infinite, as does the representation in Sonnet 27 of dream "consciousness." In this poem the dream, which was seen traditionally as a little "sleep of death" that afforded a window into the infinite, is given a treatment suggestive of Cartesian dualism: "then begins a journey in my head / To work my mind, when body's work's expired. / For then my thoughts, from far where I abide / Intend a zealous pilgrimage to thee."

The phrase "work my mind" indicates that in Sonnet 27 Shakespeare conceives of an active function for *mind*, which had been seen as a relatively passive faculty closely tied to memory. "Memory" is in fact the original overall significance of this *mind*, and the now more common "psychical being" only developed later on. The OED2 lists a few occurrences before the Renaissance of the particular meaning that is now hegemonic ("the seat of a person's consciousness, thoughts, volitions and feelings"), but these do not appear to possess the active sense that we associate with *mind*.[61] Although the OED2 ignores the occurrence in Sonnet 27, the second reference that it lists that is active and clearly independent of

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[61]The first reference that the OED2 gives that is clearly active and not tied to memory is from 1530.

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memory is from *The Merry Wives of Windsor*: "while other sports are tasking of their minds." Shakespeare seems to have helped shift *mind* toward its present connotations.

Renaissance English had the alternatives of *soul*, *wit*, and *mind* to describe various shades of subjectivity. While the scholastic *soul* was losing its power and *mind* was still in the process of shifting toward a more comprehensive meaning, *wit* was for the time being the dominant mode of expressing subjectivity, as we see, say, in *Troilus*'s description of Ajax wearing "his wit in his belly and his guts in his head" (2.1.73-4). Medieval cognitive faculties included five outer wits (or senses), at times five inner ones, and a "common wit," which was believed to judge the operation of and integrate the data from the senses.[62] In the Renaissance as this medieval faculty psychology was dying a speedy death, the multiple *wits* were streamlined and replaced by *true wit* -- much as dramatists to a large degree supplanted the four humours by a purely psychological notion of *humour*. Secular thinkers began to conceive of the *wit* as disconnected from and yet somehow existing in a body increasingly objectified by contemporary anatomy, as the word lost its traditional associations and with them any direct or indirect connection to the infinite. This conceptual process did not represent only a consolidation, but also a pulling apart of the subjective and the objective that eventually eliminated the tertium quid.

Once *wit* was no longer tied to medieval faculty psychology it became an early modern type of finite subjectivity and thereby opened up a field of semantic possibility, as we see in Shakespeare's

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[62]On the common wit, see Lewis, p. 164.

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Sonnet 23, "O learn to read what silent love had writ. To hear with eyes belongs to love's fine wit." Here *wit*, as also in Jonson's "true" and "teeming" *wit*, signifies *creative intelligence*. The emerging integrity of the psychological, which is visible in the new usages of *humour* and *wit*, and the objectification of the physical, which is evident in *Hamlet*'s discourses on the body and the new significance it gives *machine*, were part of a general movement that would eventually replace Galenic and scholastic theory by modern psychology and philosophy -- much as astrology would be superseded by astronomy and alchemy by chemistry. The Renaissance discourse of subjectivity seems to have acted as a catalyst in the production of Descartes' new dualism and Locke's "punctual self,"[63] as well as Hobbes's attempt at a materialistic understanding of mentation.

As the hegemonic term for subjectivity changed from *soul* to *wit* to *mind* there were conceptual losses and gains. When *wit* deteriorated in the Enlightenment to "What oft was *Thought*, but ne'er so well *Exprest*,"[64] its core significance of "creative intelligence" gave way to a *mind* that has little sense of a higher agency. The Cartesian, Lockian, and Humean conceptions of *mind* merely registered the experiences of the world. After Hume deconstructed the earlier notion of a "simple soul" that was at the bottom of Cartesian certainty about mentation, what was left was the Lockian emphasis on a faculty in which "ideas" are always mere copies of "impressions." As Colin McGinn remarks, "Hume mistakenly thought

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[63]See Taylor, pp. 159- 176.

[64]Pope, *Essay on Criticism*, ll. 297-298. Cf. chapters 1, 2 and 4 above.

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that human minds were Humean ... (perhaps dogs and monkeys have Humean minds)"; Hume's view of intelligence neglects our ability to form concepts of what is not "perceptually presented to the subject," such as "unobservables" like "the properties of atoms."[65] Renaissance *wit* is close in ways to the more active conception of finite intelligence that is now being rediscovered by current theorists, who are struggling to move past the ideologies of subjectivity that dominated the modern era.

During the early modern period, various cohesive forces lost much of their power as scepticism about the tertium quid grew, the medieval consensus on the subject's connection to an infinite was shattered, and the traditional social associations that we examined in previous chapters were weakened. A Cartesian walled ego was positioned in a Vesalian body to which it had little relation -- a perspective consonant with the social disjunctions that were spurred on by the economic individualism and the dramatically increased cultural mobility that flourished in the new metropolis. As the subjective-objective spectrum became radically polarized, not only did ties between mind and body weaken, but also those between minds, a state of affairs that was eventually registered in philosophy by the problem of other minds. If these tendencies would become more developed and obvious later on, they were nonetheless already present to a significant extent in the English Renaissance.

While *Hamlet* participated in the movement that was polarizing the subjective-objective spectrum, it was able to draw on a more powerful notion of finite subjectivity, since *wit* had not yet

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[65]McGinn, "Can We Solve the Mind-Body Problem," p. 531.

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deteriorated and been replaced by Enlightenment *mind*. The play is thereby able to grapple in an exceptionally promising manner with the problems brought on by the new phenomenological landscape. In the next chapter we will examine exactly how the play constructs its startlingly modern deep self and how it is able to identify and even make an important attempt to find a way of coping with the problem of other minds. (In chapter 9 we will see that "The Phoenix and Turtle" grapples with the same basic problem in terms of print culture.) Before we can appreciate how Shakespeare's exploration of subjectivity is still relevant, we need to examine modern and postmodern paradigms, especially since behind the current debate on Renaissance subjectivity are unstated reductive and conflicting views on the meaning of this elusive term.

If we ask Heidegger's question, "What is the being of the entity?" not only of metaphysicians but also of cultural periods, we see that the elements of the medieval paradigm -- the infinite soul, the non-objectified "flesh," the tertium quid -- as well as uniquely early modern elements, such as true wit and dramatic humour, have experienced an historical loss of being, so to speak. In the modern era both terms of Cartesian dualism -- the objectified body and the finite self -- rose to a dominant ontological status. The ascent of Newtonian physicalism and capitalistic "materialism" joined together to encourage the obsessive reification of a physical world of decreasing moral significance. For a while this was balanced by an equal drift toward the *esprit*, that was begun by the cogito, taken to a logical extreme by Bishop Berkeley and made by Hegel into a world

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spirit that resembles an historicized version of the universal intellect of the Averroists.

Eventually, all forms of idealism, including Hegelianism, would lose their sway, due to factors such as the increasing power of Newtonian physicalism and Marx's "inverted pyramid," as well the democratic currents behind Marx's conceptual move. Husserlian phenomenology represented a significant advance over Hegel's *Phanomenologie des Geistes*, but his attempt to remain within phenomena proved ultimately unsuccessful in that it could not supplant Cartesian dualism, with which he was allied in crucial ways.[66] Husserl's failure to cope satisfactorily with the problem of other minds indicates that the "entity" that was truly given "being" was not *phenomena*, a paradigm that was supposed to supplant the objective and subjective entities, but rather the subject.

Like the Renaissance, the postmodern era seems to be a time of transition in that we are still grappling with aspects of Cartesian dualism. While two other entities -- power and language -- are now attempting to fill the ontological vacuum, how these terms are used by postmodern theory remains problematical. The resultant ontological flux creates a strong tendency to slide back to one of the modern terms: the obsessively reified body. To construct a satisfying approach to both *Hamlet* and current theory, we need to draw and build on a number of coordinated breakthroughs in the understanding of these "entities." To do so, however, we must be careful to avoid current obstacles to such progress, the most formidable of which is a powerful cultural tendency toward a naive

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[66]See Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations.*

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and reductive materialism. After Hegel's "pyramid" was inverted by Marx, scientific materialism and related democratic ideological forces joined, paradoxically, with Newtonian physicalism and capitalistic "materialism" to create a *materialization* of discourse that is almost irresistible. After centuries of psychomachia, modern physicalism, which was provided with its original impetus by Vesalius and first conceived of as a totalizing system by Hobbes, has become the hegemonic paradigm, though there are still some significant holdouts both among the poststructuralists and the analytics.

Anglo-American philosophy of psychology for the most part remains under the spell of the "physical," despite the fact that repeated attempts to eliminate the self, from Skinner onward, have proven unsuccessful. Functionalism, which sees mental states and events as causally mediating between sensory input and ensuing behavior, is in some respects an analytic version of structuralism, but like its continental cousin, it has experienced serious problems. Functionalism's identity thesis, which asserts that mental states and events are identical with neurophysiological ones, has, for instance, suffered a blow when Hilary Putnam argued that "twin earth" and indexical examples show that two people could be molecularly identical and yet differ in beliefs and desires, depending on their environments and histories.[67] For such reasons, consciousness has made a recent comeback in analytic philosophy. Nevertheless, it has been justly remarked that influential writers such as Daniel Dennet often do not so much attempt to explain consciousness, as to explain

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[67]See Putnam, "The Meaning of Meaning." See also Saul Kripke's critique, "The Identity Thesis," and Ned Block, "Troubles with Functionalism."

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it away. While Anglo-Americans have put forward non-reductive versions of physicalism as well as other alternate approaches, nevertheless "eliminativism" about consciousness and subjectivity remains a powerful tendency.

One might think that the continentals would be free of such problems, since they come out of a tradition molded by Nietzsche's philosophy of power and Husserl's phenomenology. Instead, their current bias toward the "body" in fact has much in common with that of the analytics toward the physical. Foucault's theorization of discourse, which has produced trenchant "archeologies," would seem to privilege both of the promising postmodern "entities" -- power and language. Unfortunately, his dictum that truth is a power effect remains theoretically self-contradictory: Is this maxim itself a power effect, and if so why should it be believed? His mute gesturing toward Nietzsche when confronted with such questions indicates the weakness of this approach.[68] Foucauldian discourse does not put any significant agency in opposition to power, which dissolves necessary distinctions and leaves us, as Jurgen Habermas noted, with a theory not unlike a vague *Lebensphilosophie*.[69]

Foucault's lack of theoretical clarity has encouraged a drift back to an over-reification of the body. American postmodernists too often genuflect to and even base their approaches on French formulations -- such as "a body without organs" -- that are reminiscent of Heidegger's obscurantism, while openly admitting a lack of theoretical clarity or even true comprehension. In the current

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[68]See Foucault, *Power/Knowledge*.
[69]See Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*.

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obsession with the body and material culture, the physical has become a privileged semiotic marker that trumps all others. The pendulum has swung to the opposite extreme from the time when Berkeley's elimination of the material with the dictum *esse est percipi* did not seem absurd. Now the equally reductive *esse est esse corporeus* does not appear unworthy of consideration.

Although many Anglo-American philosophers cannot escape physicalism because they remain under the thrall of classical physics, rigorous pragmatists such as W. V. Quine realize not only that the physical is itself constructed from "observation statements" but also that relativistic quantum mechanics has eviscerated the Newtonian universe of substance, leaving probability clouds lacking any solidity.[70] Since a totalizing physicalist paradigm is not supported by current science, which has not produced any viable alternative model, it is incumbent on us to return to what we "know" by ordinary experience, which gives equal credence to solid objects and to psychic states. If we proceed not from logic but ordinary language, which Wittgenstein has shown is the only logical starting point, we must posit as much "being" in a pain as in a table.

The subject has direct knowledge of the existence of pain, and though my pain cannot be experienced directly by others, a table cannot be "directly" experienced at all, for it must be conceptually constructed. *Pain*, however, is on a different epistemological level depending on if it is mine (that is, the subject's) or yours (another mind's). On the other hand, experiences of a table are not on such radically different epistemological levels--even if we are considering

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[70]See Quine, *The Pursuit of Truth*.

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your and my experiences. Observations of a table can be more easily compared, theorized, and tested. Each type of entity, then, has ontological strengths and weaknesses. The most elementary type of subjectivity, "what it is like to be" an organism as Thomas Nagel put it,[71] should be, therefore be allowed no more nor no less *being* than *objectivity*. Moreover, conceptual consciousness must be taken as a "hard" fact, since any attempt to deny its existence is immediately self-contradictory. If we are adamant about retaining physicalism, at the very least it must be nonreductive or if we desire a monism, it must be "analogous," as Donald Davidson has shown.[72] Any compelling theory of consciousness would have to relate phenomenology, neuroscience, and psychology/ cognitive science.[73]

The most well-known pragmatic re-theorizing of the subjective-objective spectrum is, perhaps, Derrida's attempt to deconstruct the inner/outer distinction. His progress in moving beyond ontological explanations to Freudian and the literary ones[74] have not, however, been successful enough to prevent the theoretical confusion that has resulted. His totalizing vision of *écriture* and the *trace* may in fact betray a return to ontological presuppositions, as even some of his supporters fear.[75] The denial of the existence of the "hors text" suggests an implicit tendency toward an idealism not

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[71]See Nagel, "What is It Like to Be a Bat?"
[72]See Davidson, "Mental Events."
[73]See Owen Flanagan, "Prospects for a Unified Theory of Consciousness."
[74]See Samuel Wheeler, "Wittgenstein as Conservative Deconstructor" and Jules David Law, "Reading with Wittgenstein and Derrida."
[75]Rorty, whose believes analytic philosophy has reached a cul de sac and who has generally sided with the continentals (see "Bertrand Russell"), nevertheless called Derrida an "ontotheologist"; this criticism was made earlier by Fredric Jameson in *The Prison-House of Language*, pp. 173-86.

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dissimilar to the one we have noted in Husserl's phenomenology. The difference between the two is that the textualist ideology accepts as its "entity" what amounts to a communal rather than an individual consciousness. Derrida's attractions to nominalism and an all-encompassing *text* reflects tendencies that are alternately anarchic and totalizing.[76] While he has popularized the fact that an escape from Cartesian dualism is possible, unfortunately he never acknowledged or successfully built on the earlier progress of Wittgenstein.

Wittgenstein has "deconstructed" the inner/outer distinction in a much more *constructive* manner than Derrida by demonstrating that there are "intermediate cases"[77] Rather than being disjoint regions, the inner and outer are instead so intimately connected that they are often impossible to separate. A disposition, such as "to expect someone to arrive," may be a content of consciousness yet continues to exist when it is not, for it is also integrated with the "outer." The sway of physicalism has caused even the analytic school that Wittgenstein helped to found to insufficiently appreciate his "grammatical" analysis of dispositions.[78] Such an analysis restructures our view of the "landscape" by showing the overlaps of and interrelations between the physical, social, and personal.

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[76]On deconstruction as nominalism, see Jameson, *Postmodernism*, pp. 217-59. On Derrida's tendencies, see Wheeler. On the inadequacies of nominalism, see Raziel Abelson, "Definition"; cf. the next chapter.

[77]Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, p. 49.

[78]Wittgenstein took seriously G. E. Moore's appeal to physical appearances, but answered this challenge in *On Certainty* with as much clarity as was possible, though claims of his "obscurity" nevertheless continue, apparently due to either deeply engrained materialist biases or hidden agendas. For instance, when Rorty, who has sided with explicit proponents of obscurity, calls Wittgenstein obscure (see "Bertrand Russell") one cannot help but wonder about his motivation.

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As we have seen in chapter 1, a rough spectrum of human activities can be outlined: those that have a purely physical basis (e.g., running), activities that are mainly social (say, attending a wedding), those both inner and contextual (believing, expecting, hoping), inward ones which usually require social products (for instance, thinking, which includes *identifying* pain), and inward ones that do not (e.g., *feeling* pain).[79] The premoderns may well have been correct that it "is not possible to passe from one extreme to another but by a meane." Although Wittgenstein's pragmatism will not take us too much further (due to what we will see are his misconceptions about "logical criteria"), his gradated map of the psycho-physical landscape will allow us in the next chapter to probe the method of subjective representation employed by Shakespeare, whom he considered "more a *creator of language* than a poet."[80]

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[79]On the "grammar" of expecting, believing, hoping, and intending, see Wittgenstein, pp. 152-56; on sensations such as pain, see, pp. 89-112. Cf. Law, pp. 153-55.

[80]Wittgenstein, "Vermischte Bermerkungen," in *Werkausgabe* VIII, 568; quoted and trans. Peter Hughes, "Painting the Ghost: Wittgenstein, Shakespeare, and Textual Representation," p. 381.

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Chapter 8

HAMLET, ANTIFOUNDATIONALISM, AND THE PROBLEM OF OTHER MINDS

I. *Scepticism, Pragmatism, and Antifoundationalism*

In the last chapter we observed how *Hamlet* appears to dramatize an historical shift in the discourse system toward finite subjectivity. In previous ones we saw that it may register the historical changes in social practices that made this shift possible. At the end of the last chapter we noted how one may take a pragmatic perspective on the subjective-objective spectrum that dispenses with an ontological foundation. We will see shortly that there are historical reasons why such a current philosophical perspective may be close to Shakespeare's view of the self. In the following section we will explore how *Hamlet* constructs an antifoundational subject, that is, one that seems to exist without a guaranteed ontological foundation. The play does so through dramaturgical riddling: the deliberate presentation of incidents exhibiting seeming incongruities that permit only the perspicacious to decipher a hidden intention. These incongruities have, I think, a double function: besides producing an obscured representation of an antifoundational subject, they also give all auditors the impression of a general type of subjective depth. To cope with the semiotic difficulties presented by a phenomenological landscape peopled by deep subjects the play appears to use a version of the hypothetical-deductive method. In

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the final section extensive evidence for this claim will be provided and its theoretical significance will be will teased out.

Problems surrounding *Hamlet* have become inextricably intertwined with the question of subjectivity, which may well constitute the most significant stumbling block in the way of the play's critics. In the past commentators read an Enlightenment essentialism into Renaissance subjectivity or viewed it primarily in religious terms. Poststructuralism has provided useful insights, but if there have been theoretical advances there have also been setbacks, and a compelling approach has not surfaced. Indeed, many writers currently see subjectivity solely as a product of capitalism and some allow reductive philosophical tenets to deny its very existence. Given the ultimately unsatisfying condition of the postmodern study of subjectivity, the tendency by a number of critics to turn away from pure theory is somewhat understandable.[1]

Theory nevertheless continues to be indispensable to literary and cultural critics interested in subjectivity. When such research is now undertook, however, continental versions of anti-foundationalism are frequently treated as an unquestioned foundation. Current critics are at times liable to the same critique that poststructuralists effectively leveled against essentialists -- that a theoretically unexamined approach results in reading one's presuppositions about subjectivity into the past. Interdisciplinary research may be forwarded and many would, perhaps, be less prone to accept continental theories uncritically, if more commentators

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[1]See Stephen Knapp and Walter Benn Michaels, "Against Theory" and the other essays in *Against Theory*, ed. Mitchell. Cf. Paul De Man, *The Resistance to Theory*.

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appreciated how the linguistic thrust of poststructuralism runs parallel in many respects to the linguistic turn in analytic philosophy, which Wittgenstein's antifoundationalism initiated.

Unfortunately, Derrida, probably the most influential continental theorist on such matters, never made the parallels between his work and Wittgenstein's obvious and instead engaged in a polarizing debate with John Searle, who was unfairly assumed to be representative of the diversity of analytic philosophy.[2] After all, Searle's claim in *Speech Acts* to reduce the number of "things" that can be done with words to a few categories runs directly counter to Wittgenstein's insights into the multiplicity of language games. At the end of the last chapter and throughout this one I attempt to develop the selective and critical synthesis of Anglo-American and continental anti-foundationalism that was outlined in chapter 1. Such a perspective is consonant with the non-totalizing, sociological and psychoanalytic approach to the historical rise of finite subjectivity that was developed in previous chapters.

Despite its progressive appearance, current literary research often lacks sufficient independence and rigor to question its theoretical sources, which may well separate it from the spirit of radical doubt that is the strength both of twentieth-century thought and of the Renaissance sceptical revolution[3] in which Shakespeare at

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[2]For the Derrida-Searle debate, see the first several issues of *Diacritics* and Derrida, *Limited Inc.* In *Against Deconstruction* John Ellis notes that in 1966 Derrida began to denounce a positivist view of meaning that he claimed was "universal" even though this view had already "been dismembered" by Wittgenstein, Firth, Sapir, Whorf, and others (p. 38). See also Graham Bradshaw, *Misrepresentations*, p. 7. Jules David Law, "Reading with Wittgenstein and Derrida" is much less critical of Derrida, while noting that his views often run parallel to Wittgenstein's.

[3]See Richard Popkin, *The History of Scepticism From Erasmus to Descartes.*

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times played a part. If literary studies can move beyond the current polarization of the debate on subjectivity, a theoretically informed cultural criticism that better exploits recent interdisciplinary advances may become possible. New historicism, for instance, has advanced current research by encouraging us to give up the unidirectional approach of influence studies and instead to situate literature in an interdisciplinary manner in the cultural system. Impressive strides have been made toward viewing writers not as mere products of other writers or of figures in other disciplines but as agents that can produce significant effects in the overarching system.

The Renaissance search for sophisticated modes of dealing with a revolutionary explosion of doubt connects the births of modern philosophy, modern science, and modern literature -- each of which may well have influenced the others. The perspective of a theoretically astute cultural criticism should help us see Shakespeare in his middle period as a sceptical thinker who did not merely register influences, but, as Keats suggested, explored ways of existing in doubt: "Shakespeare possessed so enormously ... *Negative Capability*, that is when man is capable of being in uncertainties, Mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact & reason." Scepticism is indeed the philosophical movement that proposes ways of existing "in uncertainties, Mysteries, doubts" without "reaching after" overly speculative systems to ease the anxiety.

While critics have long attempted to identify sceptical influences on Shakespeare, Stanley Cavell has moved us past influence studies by suggesting that he should also be seen in

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relation to subsequent developments: "the advent of scepticism as manifested in Descartes' *Meditations* is already in full existence in Shakespeare."[4] Shakespeare should indeed be placed in relation to Descartes' initiation of modern philosophy, especially since the long-term social changes that we have examined in earlier chapters provided the basis for the subjective deepening that is manifested in the work of both writers. Cavell's insight is therefore quite important, even though there are significant differences between Shakespearean and Cartesian scepticism.

Shakespeare's version of Renaissance scepticism may in fact be more analogous to current types of pragmatism than to Cartesian scepticism. Both pragmatic theory and the earlier versions of scepticism do not attempt to create a single secure basis either in religious faith or in reason's claim of certainty.[5] Sceptics of Shakespeare's era, such as Michel de Montaigne and Francisco Sanchez,[6] attempted to find ways of existing in a world about which nothing is known for certain. Descartes put forth a scepticism that may seem more radical than the Renaissance version, since he explicitly questioned the very existence of the outer world, but he only did so because he believed that he had a strategy for saving knowledge: one cannot, he believed, logically doubt that one doubts,

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[4]Cavell, *Disowning Knowledge In Six Plays of Shakespeare*, p. 3; see also Naomi Scheman, "From Hamlet to Maggie Verver: The History and Politics of the Knowing Subject."

[5]In *Shakespearean Pragmatism* Lars Engle makes a similar argument (more on this shortly).

[6]See Sanchez, *That Nothing Is Known (Quod Nihil Scitur)*.

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so, *cogito ergo sum.* In this way he tried to construct a brilliantly clear method of reasoning and even a basis for a belief in God.[7]

While the method of Renaissance sceptics was not as analytic as Descartes', his strategy was not as unprecedented as is now often supposed, since as his contemporaries pointed out Augustine claimed somewhat analogously, *Si fallor sum* ([Even] if I err, I am).[8] Augustine's version also finds certainty in subjectivity, but his use of *fallor* stresses experience rather than thought and refers more to Christian ethics than to secular epistemology. These differences highlight the contrasting social and historical contexts of the Roman rhetor/church father -- who at the advent of a theocratic age helped to construct a religion that offered a new type of search "in interiore homine"[9] -- and the "father" of modern philosophy, who at the beginning of a more secular era produced speculations about subjectivity that, as we have seen in the previous chapter, could be easily uncoupled from their putatively religious purpose.

All such dreams of subjective certainty would eventually die -- though it would take centuries after David Hume dealt the mortal blow for them to do so. As Hume argued when he deconstructed personal identity,[10] that doubting (or experience) is occurring does not imply a self existing over time linking diverse mental phenomena, and thus arguments such as Descartes' and Augustine's

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[7]See Descartes, *Discourse on the Method and The Meditations.* See also the discussion of Descartes in the last chapter.
[8]Augustine, *Di Civitate Dei* XI, 26; see John Haldane, "History: Medieval and Renaissance Philosophy of Mind," p. 335.
[9]See Charles Taylor's discussion of Augustine in *Sources of the Self*, pp. 127-142.
[10]See Hume, "Our Idea of Identity" and "Personal Identity" in *A Treatise of Human Nature.*

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do not really discover a secure basis. (That one cannot prove the existence of a unified ego does not, however, mean that the self does not exist at all, as some postmoderns and reductive analytics would have us believe, but instead that the cogitating walled ego does not represent a logical point of certainty, clarity, and unity on which to found one's system of belief.) Eventually, even Kant's epistemological project to rescue "thought from the slough of scepticism into which he" felt "that the empiricism of Hume was bound to lead"[11] suffered serious setbacks when, for instance, Einstein's relativity demonstrated that the "category" of Euclidean space was not an ineluctable modality. Attempts to rescue some type of rational certainty have become increasingly less influential, and current pragmatists -- including both analytic and continental ones -- no longer believe that any logical foundation exists.

Even though Shakespeare does not find a self-grounding basis for the subject, Cavell is correct that his implicit mode of doubt approaches Descartes' explicit one in the radicalness of his scepticism. The issue for both is no longer "how to conduct oneself best in an uncertain world; the issue suggested is how to live at all in a groundless world."[12] Indeed, Descartes' crucial method of suspecting that all is a dream is one that Shakespeare had apparently long contemplated. He was clearly better than most in imagining such a state of affairs, for he wrote a whole comedy on the analogy of life and *A Midsummer's Night's Dream*, which illustrates how it is "past the wit of man to say what dream it was." His understanding of

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[11]Samuel Monk, *The Sublime*, p. 4.
[12]Cavell, p. 3.

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Descartes' sceptical train of thought is also reflected in his ability to compare convincingly the "interim" between "the acting of a dreadful thing / And the first motion" -- a time when one would be most awake -- to "a phantasma, or a hideous dream" (*Julius Caesar*, 2.1.63-65). Similarly, *Hamlet* takes a serious view of "bad dreams," for they are treated as the most apt trope for ambition (2.2.254-62) and are crucial to what we have seen in the last chapter are heterodox views of death (3.1.64-88). After a lifetime of entertaining such parallels he made a remarkably precise observation about the substance of phenomenal consciousness: "We are such stuff / As dreams are made on; and our little life / Is rounded with a sleep" (*Tempest*, 4.1.156-58).

Although this playwright mulled over how life is like a dream, he seems to have been able to doubt radically without the comfort supplied by thinking that a secure basis for the deep self can be found. Shakespearean selfhood is often not as essentialist as Descartes' version, which was the basis of Enlightenment notions of the subject, but the connection between them is nonetheless strong in that both writers created vivid representations of *finite* subjective depth. *Hamlet* does not provide us with either a medieval version of selfhood or an Enlightenment one, for it's view of subjectivity is much more sceptical than the older perspective and more dynamic than the later one. Like Jonson, Shakespeare uses *dramaturgical riddling* to create characters that represent the finite subjective depth that spread slowly across the social landscape. His method is, however, significantly different than that of the younger writer, who in *Epicoene* constructed a centered if hidden representation of

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selfhood that is closer to the Enlightenment notion. The representation of subjectivity that we find in *Hamlet* instead shares with Montaigne's a vision of the fluidity of the self and a realization that any attempt to understand subjectivity ineluctably involves significant uncertainty and paradox.

Cavell may be right that Shakespeare goes beyond Montaigne in the radicalness of his scepticism, for like Descartes, he appears not merely to cast doubt on external sources of selfhood, but to conceive of a subject who exists in a groundless world. Nonetheless, unlike Descartes, he describes a self that is even without a self-reflexive logical foundation. For Shakespeare, character is, we shall see, never stable, never able to stand on either an internal or external foundation, but instead discovers itself only when it is in motion -- that is, when it performs. Such a kinetic and performative conception of selfhood, which was made possible by the studies of the theatrical nature of the self in his earlier plays, brought him to a cultural rather than a metaphysical understanding of subjectivity, which allowed him in *Hamlet* to initiate an unequaled series of tragedies. This play appears to present a version of selfhood grounded neither in the walled ego, nor an infinite source (such as God or a Platonic realm of forms), nor a physical world. Instead, it primarily sees the subject as constructed by the culture's "web of belief" -- to use W. V. Quine's phrase[13] -- which includes ordinary language. Such a perspective, I will argue, is employed by this drama to cope with emergent problems of scepticism.

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[13]Quine, *The Web of Belief.* See also Sandra Harding, ed. *Can Theories Be Refuted?: Essays on the Duhem-Quine Thesis.*

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Like the work of current schools of antifoundationalism, *Hamlet* suggests that the ego is not an assured platform and that we often need to figure ourselves out much as we need to figure out others. Shakespeare takes a more linguistic than logical perspective on the self, for he does not posit that individual subjectivity provides a rational foundation of certainty. Unlike Descartes he does not demand some point of certainty -- a demand that has raised the standards for what constitutes philosophic *knowing*. As Wittgenstein argued, a sceptic of the Cartesian variety does not employ the rules of ordinary of language, which in fact determine the meaning of such terms as *knowing*. We need "to bring words back from their metaphysical to their everyday usage."[14] That Wittgenstein called Shakespeare "more a *creator of language* than a poet"[15] suggests that he may well have been close to such an understanding of the primacy of language over the logic of the walled ego. Shakespeare's dependence on the cultural web of language as a source of the self, we will see, may be consonant not only with the general project of analytic philosophers who have followed Wittgenstein's linguistic turn but also with that of (post)structuralists who follow Saussure.

My view that Shakespeare's unCartesian yet radical doubt has much in common with both poststructuralist and analytic versions of antifoundationalism is in agreement to a some extent with the position put forth by Lars Engle in *Shakespearean Pragmatism*. Engle's equation of pragmatism with the paradigm shift toward

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[14]Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, section 116.
[15]Wittgenstein, "Vermischte Bermerkungen," in *Werkausgabe* VIII, 568; quoted and trans. Peter Hughes, "Painting the Ghost: Wittgenstein, Shakespeare, and Textual Representation," p. 381.

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market values partly fits into the sociological historiography that I present in other chapters, though my wider perspective takes into account such causes as urbanization, the revolution in manners, and the rise of print culture. His stress on the competition of values, moreover, has parallels with my emphasis later in this chapter of the competition of hypotheses. I nevertheless have serious reservations about Engle's total equation of pragmatism with a philosophy of the market. Markets make non-economic values "relative," but only to economic ones, for they evaluate everything according to their own standard -- that of the materialistic "bottom-line," which ultimately is neither truly relativistic nor very Shakespearean. Shakespeare's pragmatism is better seen as the construction of an antifoundational subject and an attempt to come to terms with the epistemological consequences of the emergent phenomenological landscape.

Our discussion in the last chapter of the polarization of the subjective-objective spectrum was made possible by a Wittgensteinian approach to the phenomenological landscape that dispenses with any absolute semiotic marker, such as the essentialist intention of the older critics, the subjectless body of au courant materialists, or *l'écriture* of the textualists. Such an antifoundational perspective may be able to avoid both essentialist and postmodern misconceptions concerning Renaissance subjectivity and may allow us to understand better the nature of Shakespeare's pragmatism. Since the subjective-objective spectrum was in the process of being polarized when *Hamlet* was written, conceptual tools may have been available for a contrasting analysis of the premodern and modern paradigms of selfhood. The overlap of paradigms may have

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highlighted the modern problems that emerged as the power waned of traditional forces uniting not only body and soul but also subjects.

In the new phenomenological landscape of deep selves, information about the contents and nature of other minds became more difficult to obtain. As the subject receded into an objectified body and the inner connection to a communal infinite became less tenable, the individual became culturally isolated, which aggravated the implicit problem of other minds. The startling exploration that we are offered of Hamlet's subjective isolation beginning with the "I know not 'seems'" speech is in fact the one thing certain about this play and cannot be adequately accounted for without reference to the emergence of the polarized subjective-objective spectrum. In the third section of this chapter substantial evidence will be provided to show that the play repeatedly tackles the new semiotic difficulties by making and testing hypotheses, and thereby offers a method of dealing with the phenomenological landscape that approximates the one that Galileo applied to the physical one. Confronted with the modern epistemological situation, Shakespeare, I will argue, made two interrelated theoretical advances: an antifoundational version of finite depth and a pragmatic method of hypothetical deduction able to cope with the emergent problem of other minds.

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II. *Dramaturgical Riddling and Antifoundational Representation*

In the last chapter we discussed the play's dramatization of the historical transmutation of the "infinite" subject, such as the *soul* of Hamlet's father, into a finite, linguistic one. Shakespeare's desire to use experimental means to construct the subject is highlighted by the fact that he created innovative representations of a father in an age in which one's identity was closely tied to the identity of one's parents. The ghost is in fact not the only experiment in identity and paternal identification. After the first act this eidolon returns only as what appears to be Hamlet's hallucination, since it is invisible to his mother, but his "father" is represented in a more substantial manner given the dramatic context: as a theatrical character. In the play-within-the-play, which is centrally located in the action, we are offered a reappearance of the father that may be as problematic as his ghostly presence / absence, especially since this representation leads to an important crux: Why does the King not react to the dumb show?[16] Paradoxically, the dumb show is a riddle not because it is a symbolic and somewhat mysterious drama as was usually the case, but because it is a simple and direct rehearsal of the play, *The Murder of Gonzago*, that follows.

The dumb show and the play's overall use of dramaturgical riddling should be seen both in the historical context of the tradition of speech and silence, and in relation to current discourses such as

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[16]W. W. Robeson's review of various theories, "Did the King see the Dumb Show?" leaves the issue unresolved.

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semiotics and pragmatics. The dumb show draws on the traditional association of silence with implied power and mysterious wisdom that we saw in chapter 2 was so important in creating True-Wit. Indeed, it is a power play that is intended to puzzle: "What means this, my lord?" Ophelia asks. Hamlet employs Shakespeare's usual method of taking an older piece and turning it to his own purposes, and like the playwright he a poet -- in the original sense of a *maker* -- not so much of plot as of character. He is provided with the plot -- if not from *The Mousetrap* or *The Murder of Gonzago* then from the Ghost's story -- and uses it not only to create a metadrama to catch the king's conscience but also to try to construct himself as a revenger. For he tells the audience that it is not the brother of the player king but rather "one Lucianus, nephew to the King" who is "the murderer [that] gets the love of Gonzago's wife." His identification of the nephew -- and thus of his own *role* -- as the murderer of a king may be a veiled threat to Claudius. One might wish to speculate that the implied identification of himself as a killer of a king indicates Oedipal depths and an unconscious sympathy with Claudius's *role*. What we can be quite sure of is that this identification implies an inner world, for it clearly invites our speculation.

The ghostly subject has migrated from the infinite to the human world, but its mystery has come with it. The play-within-the-play may represent the assimilation of his father to Hamlet's subjectivity effect -- a reading supported by the fact that, unlike in the extant sources, in Shakespeare's version these characters share

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the same name.[17] The mystery that the ghostly father brings with it comes to lodge in the center of the finite self, helping to produce the impression of depth. The riddling sense of the unknown by which Nicholas of Cusa defined the godhead is now associated with the construction of character and the possibilities of secular culture. The dumb show may contribute to what appears to be the play's use of riddling to represent a particular version of the finite subject.

The most extensive use of a riddling method to create the effect of inner depth is in the construction of Hamlet's subjectivity, but we are also invited to speculate to a significant degree about other "selves" in the play. While, for instance, we come to know much about the King's character, clear proof of his guilt comes rather late, indicating a significant degree of intentional ambiguity. That even the opinionated editor of the Arden Edition can only suggest that the King should appear "inscrutable" to the audience when he watches the dumb show[18] points to the playwright's conscious use of communicative obfuscation to create a sense of depth.

To a surprising extent mental inscrutability is not only the point of this exercise but also of the main plot. Hamlet and Claudius try to peer into each other's minds, and as they do so, we peak over their shoulders. At times we are given glimpses of a fragment of a mind, but often our view is deliberately obstructed. This dramaturgical use of Wittgenstein's structural principle of depth -- "When mien, gesture and circumstance are unambiguous, then the inner seems to be the outer; it is only when we cannot read the outer

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[17]For suggestive remarks on this, see James Calderwood, *To Be And Not To Be.*
[18]Harold Jenkins, ed. *Hamlet*, p. 505.

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that an inner seems to be hidden behind it"[19] -- is consonant with the social applications discussed in previous chapters.

The same dramaturgical method that we will see is used to construct Hamlet is also utilized in creating Gertrude. The ghost implies that she commits adultery before her husband is murdered, and yet the question of her guilt is never explicitly resolved, nor are we ever given a clear answer about the possibility of her involvement in the murder. Similarly, we are left uncertain about the relative strength of her allegiances to her son and her new husband. A traditional understanding of character cannot account for the fact that we are so unsure about such important contents of this character's psyche, for as Janet Adelman observed, "[g]iven her centrality in the play, it is striking how little we know about Gertrude."[20]

The play's construction of such characters represents the culmination of earlier experiments with the use of partial obfuscation to create a sense of depth. *The Merchant of Venice*, for instance, opens with an invitation to speculate on Antonio's inner landscape: "I know not why I am so sad ... how I caught it, found it, or came by it / What stuff 'tis made of, whereof it is born, / I am to learn." In later plays, Shakespeare continued to use this method. The obscure speeches of Leontes in *The Winter's Tale* (for instance, in 1.2) are clearly intended to suggest the irrational nature of jealousy and thus to give the impression of subjective depth. Without knowledge of key contents of consciousness, it is clearly not possible to apply a

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[19]Wittgenstein, *Last Writings on the Philosophy of Psychology*, 63e.
[20]Adelman, *Suffocating Mothers*, p. 15.

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positivist notion of selfhood to these intriguing figures (which of course does not mean that Shakespeare always or even usually employed the structural principle of depth in constructing characters).

At the center of the many seemingly incongruous aspects of *Hamlet* that appear to enhance its subjectivity effect are the paradoxes of the title character. Rather than attempting to pin down the protagonist's "true" feelings or to deny that the presentation of these paradoxes was Shakespeare's intention, we should recognize that they are open riddles posed to produce the impression of a decentered psyche. We already have good reason to take Hamlet seriously when he tells Laertes that his behavior with Ophelia was "madness," for she reported that he came to her early on "with his doublet all unbrac'd, / No hat upon his head, his stockings foul'd, Ungarter'd and down-gyved to his ankle, / Pale as his shirt, his knees knocking each other, / And with a look so piteous in purport / As if he had been loosed out of hell." We are, of course, also given good reason to believe that he has put on an "antic disposition," that his madness is all a pretense.[21]

Such conflicts fit into a pattern with other personal information -- such as contradictory evidence on his putative love for Ophelia, which is both avowed and disavowed. The intention behind this pattern is confirmed by comparing the play to the rendering of the plot by the sources. Unlike Hamlet, Amleth has a clear motive to pretend to be mad, for it is no secret that his father was murdered by his uncle, who claimed that this deed was justified. Amleth has to

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[21]Cf. the discussion of madness in chapter 5.

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pretend to be insane so that his uncle would not act to pre-empt his taking of revenge. Since Shakespeare removed the main character's motivation to appear mad,[22] he appears to have deliberately problematized his behavior and thereby enhanced the subjectivity effect.

Hamlet's method of producing a revolutionary sense of self is a structural one that goes beyond traditional conceptual boundaries, such as a positivist notion of character. Any attempt to account for the questions concerning either Hamlet's avowed and disavowed love or his sanity/insanity by a standard understanding of character-construction should be suspect, especially given the intention to explore the nature of the subject evident in the startlingly innovative device of the various manifestations of King Hamlet. That Shakespeare goes well beyond the orthodox boundaries of character is indeed suggested by the dramatic associations of father and son. In the first act, the uncanny sympathy between their minds is illustrated by Hamlet's intuition of his father's dread message: "O my prophetic soul." All the paradoxes that we examined above and in the last chapter concerning the *non* character of King Hamlet -- the crux concerning his stage representation, his ghost's contradictory provenance and ontology, the blatant ignoring of the fact that he is a "traveler" who has returned from the "undiscover'd country" -- have the same goal: to enhance our sense of inner space, a purpose closely tied to the intention behind the paradoxes surrounding his son.

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[22]The possibility that the author of the *Ur-Hamlet*,, who may well have been Kyd, was the one to remove such motivation is very slight, since what we know about this lost play does not indicate such subtlety.

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Although the subjectivity effect centers on the decentered psyche of Hamlet, it is not limited to the standard frontiers of character.

The play may well represent the most extensive use of dramaturgical riddling to enhance a subjectivity effect in the history of drama. Riddling to create the sense of depth is not an isolated phenomenon, but rather a structural method that employs both other figures in the play and various aspects of the central character: his actions (Why does he not revenge his father's death?), his psychological state (Does he become somewhat mad?), his emotional life (Does he love Ophelia? Does he have Oedipal desires for his parents?). We are given images of his complexity -- a "nutshell" containing "infinite space," a "madness" that forms a separate "faction" from the *true* Hamlet. The play goes beyond such startling yet static representations of selfhood by also offering both a passive experience of a fluid subjectivity and, as we will see in the next section, an interactive one. While both are created through dramaturgical riddling, these experiences are nonetheless differentiated by whether one accepts the role of a mere spectator or of a more active *cunning palate*, and will be treated separately.

The use made of dramaturgical riddling by *Epicoene* is quite different than the one made by *Hamlet*. With *Epicoene*, once we understand the riddle of True-Wit's name, we obtain an image of a deep and centered self, for Jonson's version of finite subjectivity is a rational one. Although *true wit* is a "teeming" or creative intelligence rather than the passive *mind* theorized in the Enlightenment, yet like such a mind, Jonson's version of wit reflects a somewhat simplistic notion of truth. This construction of the subject thinks that it knows

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its own true nature, and therefore, like a modern essentialist mind, feels it has a rational foundation. If the Enlightenment mind had a vivid sense of the externally groundless nature of the self, it nevertheless recouped a foundation by the self-reflexive sleight of hand of the cogito. Like his Enlightenment admirers, Jonson felt that he had knowledge of the "Truth": "*Truth* is mans proper good; and the onely *immortall* thing, was given to our mortality to use" (*Discoveries*, p. 580). Shakespeare, on the other hand, is not obsessed with Truth, and his perspective is somewhat akin to a postmodern relativism, as we see, for instance, when he writes, "I do believe her, though I know she lies" (Sonnet 138).[23]

Shakespeare's representation of subjective depth is constructed by a method of dramaturgical riddling that is somewhat less secretive in intent, though more subtle in effect than the one used to create the hidden portrait of *True-Wit*. As we noted in chapter 1, in *Hamlet* the riddling process appears to be without definite solutions and thus may be termed "open" in contrast to Jonson's closed or answerable riddles. Jonson provides cunning palates with hidden *wit* to discover, while Shakespeare gives them profound questions to probe. The average auditor of *Hamlet* is, however, also allowed to experience part of its subjectivity effect.

The general image of the self that we have seen this play produce through riddling is clearly more fluid than the Jonsonian one. Shakespeare was, after all, much more influenced by Montaigne's fluid representation of subjectivity.

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[23]On the radical relativism of *The Sonnets*, see Joel Fineman, *Shakespeare's Perjured Eye*. Cf. the discussion of *The Sonnets* in Chapter 1 above.

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> Constancy itself is nothing but a more languid rocking to and fro. I am unable to stabilize my subject ... I grasp it as it is now, at this moment when I am lingering over it. I am not portraying being but becoming ... Authors communicate themselves to the public by some peculiar mark foreign to themselves; I -- the first to do so -- by my universal being, not as a grammarian, poet or juisconsult, but as Michel de Montaigne. If all complain that I talk too much about myself, I complain that they never even think about their own selves.[24]

Not only does Hamlet similarly try to free himself from standard roles, but also the intentionally irresolvable uncertainty surrounding the Hamletian self indicates that it is as fluid as the one Montaigne describes.

The more thoughtful auditors can appreciate how such subjective fluidity is developed through a process of profound questioning. Cavell may be correct that Shakespeare's vision is more radical than Montaigne's in that for him, as for Descartes, the phenomenological landscape is not merely uncertain but groundless. But the subjective perspective that he provides is also more antifoundational than Descartes', since he appears to dispense with the infinite source of the subject without constructing a finite basis.

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[24]Montaigne, "On repenting," pp. 108-9.

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Such an antifoundational fluidity that goes beyond a rational if groundless subject appears precisely to be what Shakespeare asks us to ponder when, for instance, he has Hamlet write to Ophelia, "Doubt truth to be a liar." Ontological questions of the *true* nature of inner reality are ineluctably tied to problems of value and meaning, and the play's relativism engages these as well: "there is nothing either good or bad but thinking makes it so."

A considered relativism that is open to the complexities of existence appears to underlie Shakespeare's understanding of ethical and ontological issues, allowing his view of subjectivity to be consonant with notions of selfhood that have arisen since the fall of Cartesian foundational logic. Unlike Descartes, he seems to have appreciated that the paradoxes of self-reflexivity go beyond logic. Hamlet's "Doubt truth to be a liar," for instance, appears to be a poetic reformulation of the Cretan Liar's paradox -- roughly, if "I am lying" is true, then it must be false, and if false, then it must be true. (Twentieth century revolutions in the antifoundational nature of logic -- such as Gödel's Theorem -- similarly draw on this ancient paradox of self-reflexivity.) Shakespeare explores the paradoxes of phenomenal consciousness without either searching for a logical foundation or denying the self's existence. His appreciation of the paradoxes of self-reflexivity surrounding the speaking subject resembles the pragmatic realization that phenomenal consciousness cannot be given a non-circular definition, even though our acquaintance with it should lead us to accept its existence.[25]

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[25]See William James, "The Stream Of Consciousness"; see also Ned Block, "Begging the Question against Phenomenal Consciousness," p. 175.

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Such insights into the nature of the subject are found in promising recent work by some of the analytic philosophers who have returned to an acceptance of the existence of consciousness. Many Anlgo-Americans, it is true, continue to put forth eliminativist or radically behaviorist views, and some, like Daniel Dennet, only accept consciousness in order to explain it away. But the perspectives of a number of recent analytics are more appreciative of the fact that a term such as "*consciousness* is a hybrid or better, a mongrel concept"[26] that unites various significances. In terms of such notions as the speaking subject we will see that postmoderns often bring needed sophistication to the debate. On the other hand, like many analytics, their materialist underpinnings are usually reductive and tend to obscure the nature of the historical transmutations of subjectivity or even to deny its existence. A successful approach to the issues of selfhood raised by *Hamlet* therefore needs to be informed by an antifoundational understanding of subjectivity and consciousness that draws selectively on various sources.

Both the postmodern theory that posits that the subject is constructed by power and the one that sees it as being formed by language have made important contributions, but each has also done harm when it is treated as a totalizing system. Cultural materialists, Foucauldians, and Marxists have cut through veils of ideology about the subject, but nevertheless often fail to understand its structural nature and too often reduce it to a mere power effect. Since *Hamlet* uses dramaturgical riddling to construct a subject indirectly, one

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[26]Block, "On a Confusion about a Function of Consciousness," p. 381 (my italics).

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cannot be certain of any subjective content, but this does not really matter, for it is structural depth that is crucial in this respect. Given such a non-positivist understanding of selfhood, recent complaints by cultural materialists that Hamlet qua subject is "hollow" can be seen to be misguided. Although Francis Barker is correct that the play's construction of inner space is not filled with a bourgeois "Pypsian text," we should not therefore believe that at "the centre of Hamlet, in the interior of his mystery, there is in short nothing."[27] There is, we have noted in recent chapters, a plethora of contents that are suggested; the lack of certainty about the contents is in fact the very defining condition of depth. The structural nature of subjectivity is even suggested by the political analysis of subject positions.

Anthropological research can help us make sense of the structural nature of subject. In his analysis of the taboo structure of initiation rites Cesare Poppi notes that "initiates are told that the secret they cannot talk about, under sanction of death, is the procedure of initiation. The 'box' -- the 'frame' -- itself becomes what must be protected."[28] What makes them "initiates" is not the content of secrecy but its structure. *Hamlet*'s method is analogously structural, since it constructs the self not so much by subjective contents but rather by the way its use of riddling distributes and hides information. The subjective structure that the play presents is, of course, a modern one in that it apportions more secrecy to the individual than to larger subgroups such as "initiates."

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[27]Barker, *Tremulous Body*, p. 37.
[28]Poppi, "Sigma! The Pilgrim's Progress and the logic of Secrecy," p. 198. Cf. Chapter 1 above.

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Recent theorists who focus less on the large-scale power structure and more on the intermediate level of language have provided crucial insights into the structural nature of the subject (though they, on the other hand, lack a sufficient appreciation of historical change that we have seen is also crucial). Shakespeare's characters give us the impression that rather than being based on an external infinite source, the subject is created more through its own language -- a perspective that agrees well both continental poststructuralists and Anglo-American theorists who have turned toward linguistic analysis and a *performative* view of subjectivity.[29] Combining the linguistic breakthroughs of both schools can help us clear up common misunderstandings about the nature of the "selves" constructed by this playwright whom, we have seen, Wittgenstein called a "*creator of language.*"

James Hirsh asserts that until "the middle of the seventeenth century, soliloquies in European drama represented speeches by characters and did not represent the thoughts of characters. When neoclassical canons of taste replaced Renaissance canons, it became 'unnatural' for a character to talk to himself or herself, and dramatists began to employ a new kind of soliloquy that represented thought (and that was actually an interior monologue, even though that term was not introduced until much later)."[30] Hirsh is correct that an historical shift has occurred, but he does not seem to be aware of the complexity of the issues involved. While the Restoration

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[29]See Austin, *How to Do Things With Words.* Some of his Anglo-American progeny, such as Searle, it is true, derived a more reductive lesson from J. L. Austin's stress on *performative* subjectivity than the poststructuralists.
[30]Hirsh, ""Shakespeare and the History of Soliloquies," p. 1.

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felt that the Renaissance convention of the soliloquy was "unnatural," this was because of the inception of a concept of a walled and unified deep subject and the neoclassical cult of "objectivity."

To understand the function of the soliloquy, we need to begin with the realization that the self is neither an illusion nor a simple soul cordoned off from the objective realm. Not only is the subjective realm integrated with the objective one, it is to a significant degree formed in an intersubjective context during an introjection of the *other*. Poststructuralists and others are correct to insist that the subject is never constructed in isolation, and thus the essentialist conception of a walled ego is not tenable. Whether or not Lacan's account of the mirror stage is valid, before a human is fully a subject, she or he clearly incorporates the other.[31] Socialization is not a secondary process but part of ego formation. An intersubjective point of view is one of the "forms of life," which entail all that "has to be accepted, the given," as is clear from our ability to use pronouns.[32] As the subject finds her way within the linguistic structure, she develops a conceptual consciousness that requires the restraining of desire and the development of a superego (which is a part of our psychic architecture that, we have seen, became significantly more complex in the Renaissance[33]). An internalization of a doubleness is

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[31]See Lacan, "The Mirror Stage as Formative of the Function of the I" and *The Language of the Self.*

[32]Quote from Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, p. 226. On the use of pronouns, see Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action* and "Communicative versus Subject-Centered Reason" (in *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*).

[33]Cf. the discussion in Chapter 5 above of the relevance of Norbert Elias's work to *Hamlet.*

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at the origin of human *consciousness*, as is suggested by the very etymology of this word: "to know with others."

The Shakespearean soliloquy is therefore not truly unnatural, but rather draws on an understanding of the internal complexity of the speaking subject. Sane people do in fact talk to themselves. We usually do not do so audibly only because of social conventions. Similarly, before the full development of the culture of literacy, people would read to themselves *out loud*. Eventually it became the norm to read silently, just as earlier it had become the norm to think silently. As we now appear to be gradually giving up the Enlightenment's notion of the centered subject, the soliloquy is perhaps becoming more effective, which is not to say that this device is completely naturalistic. Like any valuable mode of representation, the soliloquy is not so much a *mimesis* as an artifice pointing to a valid insight into the workings of the self. Rather than being an overly artificial device as the Enlightenment assumed, the soliloquy allowed Shakespeare to explore the linguistic nature of subjectivity. The doubleness of consciousness implicit in the soliloquy is consonant with *Hamlet*'s famous use of doubling (the historical and sociological significance of which we explored in chapter 5).

Current versions of the subject that consider it a manifestly linguistic construct, as a *story* told about the self, provide significant insights not only into the use of the soliloquy, but also to a whole level of the play's representation of the subject, for such "stories" are frequently put forth. Osric, Hamlet tells us, is a rustic churl who because he is "spacious in the possession of dirt" has come to court: "Let a beast be lord of beasts and his crib shall stand at the king's

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mess." Horatio, he observes, is one who "in suff'ring all ... suffers nothing" and therefore is not "passion's slave." In the last scene Horatio attempts to return the favor by acceding to his friend's request to "tell my story," though what he tells is merely a summary of actions. While linguistic understandings of the subject have important uses they also have serious limitations.

Our discussion of dramaturgical riddling in *Hamlet* and *Epicoene* lead to an vision of the self derived by implication. Postmodern discussions of otherness and the manifestly linguistic construction of the self bring us a long way in understanding modes of subjective representation such as the soliloquy, but they nevertheless fail to be helpful approaches to such aspects of subjectivity. Derridian distinctions between a speaking and logocentric subject and a textual version of subjectivity are, for instance, misleading in this area. Socrates does not in fact deny the existence of a textual subject in the *Phaedrus*, the dialogue on which Derrida's critique of *presence* hinges. When Phaedrus hides Lysias's "actual discourse" under his cloak, Socrates refuses to let him "practice [his] oratory on me when Lysias himself is here present. Come now, show it me" (228e). To Socrates *presence* is not purely oral, and thus not merely an illusion caused by *hearing oneself speak*,[34] since it includes a textual effect -- "Lysias himself is here present" in a text. Socrates realizes, however, that written works cannot always respond to questions not previously considered, as a living self can.

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[34]See Derrida, *Of Grammatology*.

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In his debate with Searle Derrida appreciates such flexibility, since he capitalizes on the impossibility of placing discourse in a permanent context. Yet he never admits that the ability to adjust is derived from the implied living Jacques Derrida who makes such a discourse, not from a subjectless *écriture*. Socrates, it is true, privileges speech over "literary works on whose phrases [one] spends hours, twisting them this way and that, pasting them together and pulling them apart" (278e) But like Socrates, who wishes to find "important truth of permanent validity" (277d), Derrida betrays an obsession with permanence. He redefines *écriture* to mean something very much like permanence and then privileges this term. His attempted antifoundationalism, as we have seen in the last chapter, has been justly critiqued as being in fact *onthotheological*.[35]

Since in its use of dramaturgical riddling *Hamlet* goes beyond views that reduce the subject to a manifestly linguistic construct, Shakespeare's understanding of selfhood may well be more pragmatic than poststructuralist and analytic ones. These tend to be so awed by language's impressive power that they over stress its role in subjective construction. Although it is true that the self is to a great extent linguistically constructed, it is not fully reducible to a story, as a number of continental and analytic philosophers would have us believe.

As the ancient tradition realized, silence is part of true eloquence, for one does not communicate merely in words. Paul Grice's theory of implication[36] attempts to recoup such an

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[35]Rorty made this critique; see Law, p. 166.
[36]See Grice, "Logic and Conversation."

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understanding, by demonstrating how words are always dependent on a silent context. The use of dramaturgical riddling in both *Hamlet* and *Epicoene* indeed indicate that in addition to language a shrewd use of silent implication is essential to a sophisticated construction of character. Continental versions of semiotics, it is true, begin to approach such a view, since they explore the realization that there are other systems of signification besides natural language. Although often helpful, the use of *text* by the continentals as a trope for a large range of semiotic systems is, however, more limited than is usually realized. Recently even some poststructuralists are beginning to suspect that the textual metaphor is wearing thin.[37]

An ideology that sees nothing but *text* has serious drawbacks, for it has lost crucial distinctions, rendering it less able to negotiate the nonlinguistic context. Derrida's dictum that "il n'y a pas de hors texte" -- no matter how subtly it is interpreted or defended -- has had the effect of a totalizing dream. More helpful is the approach that Wittgenstein put forth in the *Philosophical Investigations*, which situates the birth of language in a socio-physical environment -- in the "forms of life." These, we have seen, are clearly not merely a collection of "language games," as is often assumed, but instead constitute the concrete contexts in which language takes form.[38]

Postmoderns are correct to contest the Enlightenment's development of the idealist project of exaggerating the disjunction between thought and language, meaning and rhetoric -- making the former of each of these pairs into a pure essence, which is only later

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[37]For instance, in a recent talk at Barnard Julia Kristeva expressed an incipient awareness of such limitations.
[38]See Chapters 1 and 7 above.

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put into language. On the other hand, if thought is not a separate realm from language, nevertheless, logical and pictorial reasoning can exist without language. Unfortunately, postmodern *textualists*, often completely confound thought and language. Wittgenstein realized that higher thought and language are basically indistinguishable, but unlike Derrida he was careful not to collapse these categories. At one time, he believed that "think" might "mean something like 'talk to itself,'" but he stressed that he "rejected this later": "'Talking' (whether out loud or silently) and 'thinking' are not concepts of the same kind; even though they are in close connexion."[39]

In understanding complex representations of subjectivity that we find in such works as *Hamlet*, we need to keep in mind not only linguistic but also non-linguistic factors. Postmodern positions such as the one that claims subjectivity is caused merely by the slippage between signifier and signified have probably harmed literary discussions of the self more than they have helped. The unexpressed thoughts of a character, the silent implications that can be drawn from his actions, situation, and words become especially important in a play that employs dramaturgical riddling. Complicated human thought can take place only in language, but we often think nonlinguistically, unconsciously making basic deductions or merely registering images and sensations.

The existence of a significant nonlinguistic ability to think is suggested by current findings in comparative psychology, which indicate, for instance, that the intelligence of apes may not be very different from that of retarded human beings; the devices invented

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[39]See Wittgenstein, *The Philosophical Investigations*, pp. 16 and 217.

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to help one group communicate have also proven helpful to the other. It should be obvious that even a cat thinks to some degree when it sees a mouse go into one end of a pipe and then predicts -- as it actions demonstrate -- that it will come out the other end. To say that the self is a linguistic or even a semiotic construct, provides an approach to much of its higher nature, but ignores or de-emphasizes a range of crucial elements that are not purely linguistic -- basic thinking, phenomenal consciousness, the will, as well as biological and other physical givens that may be integrated fully, partly, or not at all into our conscious and unconscious semiotic structures.

Hamlet's use of dramaturgical riddling demonstrates that neither the *speaking* or *written* subject is a sufficient paradigm of selfhood, for the play engages an implied world beyond language to construct a deep and fluid antifoundational subject. Without the ability to place language into an appropriate nonlinguistic context it degenerates into mere "words, words, words," as Hamlet suggests. Language is able to permeate a large range of the subjective-objective spectrum, but it cannot successfully replace this spectrum. Rather than reduce everything to *écriture*, we should see all forms of language as part of a culture's "web of belief," which has been tested over time (though ordinary language is by no means infallible) by engaging nonlinguistic forms of life. Text cannot become its own context without the loss of too much clarity, which is a necessary but relative aspect of meaning, as we will see in the next section.

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III. *Hypothetical Deduction and the Problem of Other Minds*

When we use a culture's web of belief to negotiate the forms of life our degree of success often depends on how amenable these forms are to our semiotic tool kit. When the web of belief is an effective tool, we may negotiate the world by interpreting others, that is, by treating them as linguistic constructs. All is not easily reducible to such constructs, for at times it is not easy to ascertain how to "dissolve" others into language in a satisfactory manner. The problem of coping with other minds that are not easily reducible to language appears to be the central theoretical concern of *Hamlet*, for the attempts of the central characters to interpret others (including the non-character of the ghost) drive them to their wits' end. Besides the ghost, Hamlet cannot read his stepfather, his mother, and even perhaps Ophelia, who first accepts his advances and then rejects them. All of these characters that Hamlet is interested in, as well as Polonius, Guildenstern and Rosencrantz, cannot, on the other hand, successfully interpret Hamlet.

Naturally enough, characters often draw conclusions about others from their observations -- for instance, Hamlet constructs descriptive sketches of Horatio and Osric, while Ophelia does the same for Hamlet:

> The courtier's, soldier's, scholar's eye, tongue, sword,
> Th'expectancy and rose of the fair state,
> The glass of fashion and the mould of form,
> Th'observ'd of all observers

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When simple observation does not yield the desired results, characters may resort to spying: Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are, for instance, sent to spy on Hamlet in that they are "disguised" as friends.

When passive spying does not work, the characters resort to experiments that are intended to supply the needed information. What appears to be employed in such cases is a version of the hypothetical-deduction method applied to phenomenological rather than physical data. Polonius describes such a method to Reynaldo as he prepares him for such an information gathering intervention. He is not to be a passive spy, but rather is to offer Laertes' friends in Paris various hypotheses about his behavior -- "What forgeries you please." By testing such hypotheses on these friends and gauging their reactions, Reynaldo should be able to deduce a fair idea of Laertes' character.

> Your bait of falsehood takes this carp of truth;
> And thus do we of wisdom and of reach,
> With windlasses and with assays of bias,
> By indirections find directions out. (2.1.63-66)

Such an indirect method is also used on Hamlet when Guildenstern and Rosencrantz's direct observation fails. The queen thought that Rosencrantz would "assay" Hamlet, but their efforts did not get much beyond passive observation. Polonius and the king therefore design a more active information gathering project.

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Polonius will "loose my daughter to" Hamlet, as he and the king hide "behind an arras" (2.2.162-63). The experimental *apparatus* is specially arranged:

> ... Read on this book,
> That show of such an exercise may colour
> Your loneliness. -- We are oft to blame in this,
> 'Tis too much prov'd, that with devotion's visage
> And pious action we do sugar o'er
> The devil himself. (3.1.44-49)

Claudius and his counselor withdraw to observe the results of this experiment, which need, however, to be interpreted. The king concludes that Polonius's hypothesis was wrong.

> Love? His affections do not that way tend,
> Nor what he spake, though it lack'd form a little,
> Was not like madness. There's something in his soul
> O'er which his melancholy sits on brood
> And I do doubt the hatch and the disclose
> Will be some danger. (3.1.164-169)

Polonius disagrees, "But yet do I believe / The origin and commencement of his grief / Sprung from neglected love."

The hypothesis has been tested, but conflicting deductions can be drawn. Another scheme to pry into the contents of Hamlet's consciousness is therefore proposed, also with an observer that is

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hidden so as not to affect the results. Instead of Ophelia this time, Polonius proposes that Gertrude be employed: "Let his queen-mother all alone entreat him / To show his grief, let her be round with him, / And I'll be plac'd, so please you, in the ear / Of all conference." In each experiment an emotionally potent "bait of falsehood" is used in an attempt to catch a "carp of truth."

Not to be outdone, Hamlet sets up his own elaborate experiment, a trial by theater of both king and ghost. He has the "players / Play something like the murder of my father / Before mine uncle. I'll observe his looks; / I'll tent him to the quick" (2.2.590-93). To be sure that this interlude resembles the ghost's story, he modifies it by "a speech of some dozen or sixteen lines, which I would set down and insert in't" (2.2.535-36). He even decides on the criteria that he will use to judge the results, for as we have seen, experimental data may be open to interpretation: "If a do blench, / I know my course." His own observations of the results, he realizes, may be biased or otherwise faulty, and so he recruits Horatio, whose "judgment" he most trusts, to "Observe my uncle. If his occulted guilt / Do not itself unkennel in one speech, / It is a damned ghost that we have seen" and his hypotheses, that is, his "imaginations are as foul / as Vulcan's stithy" (3.2.80-84). Although he does not act on them, Hamlet's experiment, unlike those of Polonius and the King, produces what seem to be definitive results: "O good Horatio, I'll take the ghost's word for a thousand pound. Didst perceive?" "Very well, my lord." "Upon the talk of the poisoning?" "I did very well note him" (3.2.280-84).

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The king and the ghost are not the only ones *tried by theater*,[40] for like *Epicoene*, *Hamlet* represents a test of the audience. Such a method distinguishes the passive auditor from "cunning palates," who are encouraged to become involved in a search for meaning. The Hamlet seen by such perceptive spectators is not so much a character as a means to a theoretical search for the meaning of selfhood. If we are not to remain mere receivers of the effect of depth created by dramaturgical riddling, we must make hypotheses to explain the evidence. Although we cannot set up an experiment, we can construct hypotheses, select dramatic data to test them, sift out the significant information, and then rephrase and modify our hypotheses until they explain as much of the play as possible. The playwright appears to have been concerned that the perspicacious would embark on a search for meaning, for Ophelia raises the problem of dramatic interpretation. She asks Hamlet the meaning of the enigmatic dumb show -- a question repeated when the "prologue" comes out: "Will a tell us what this show meant?" -- to which no simple answer is provided.

Unlike passive observation, experimental intervention is a relatively violent use of the phenomenal landscape, and the play indeed appears to offer an appropriate image of such an interpretive process. After Guildenstern tries to hide behind manners ("if my duty be too bold, my love is too unmannerly"), Hamlet refuses to allow such obfuscation ("I do not well understand that") and then offers a metaphor for the hermeneutic process at the center of the

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[40]William Elton described the-play-within-in-the-play in this manner.

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play. He had called for recorders, and when the players enter with them, he asks Guildenstern,

> Will you play upon this pipe? ... It is as easy as lying. ... You would play upon me, you would seem to know my stops, you would pluck out the heart of my mystery, you would sound me from my lowest note to the top of my compass .... Call me what instrument you will, though you fret me, you cannot play upon me. (3.2.340-63)

We are left in the same position as Guildenstern and Rosencrantz, who can never be sure of what is inside Hamlet but are unable to cease wondering. Unlike them, however, we do not need to know the contents of his mind, for even our passive uncertainty has a dramatic purpose: the production of a modern sense of depth. An active search is, however, the only way that we can derive the most intriguing image of the self that the play has to offer.

Hamlet's "bait of falsehood" -- the play-within-the-play -- is not any less devious than that of his childhood friends. The interrogation of Hamlet by Guildenstern and Rosencrantz appears to serve as a model for the audience's own questioning. We are asked to take this character and play him like a flute, as it were. Hamlet also, after all, tries "to pluck out the heart of [the] mystery" of just about everyone he comes in contact with, Claudius, Gertrude, Osric, the gravedigger, Guildenstern and Rosencrantz, Horatio. When his mother

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attempts to plumb his depths, for instance, he turns the experiment into a search for the true Gertrude instead.

> Queen: Hamlet, thou has thy father much offended.
> Hamlet: Mother, you have my father much offended.
> Queen. Come, come, you answer with an idle tongue.
> Hamlet. Go, go, you question with a wicked tongue.

His attempt to "Set you up a glass" for his mother "[w]here you may see the inmost part of you" appears to have some success. Even though he never seems to learn for certain whether she committed adultery or whether she was involved in the murder of his father, Gertrude does admit, "Thou turn'st my eyes into my very soul, / And there I see such black and grained spots / As will not leave their tinct."

Hamlet, of course, does not only lead Gertrude to look within but ventures to do the same, and not only in his soliloquies. Since we see the play though his eyes, the drama is to a significant degree his phenomenological landscape, and therefore the testing of his world is also a testing of himself: rather than a devil or a soul from purgatory, the *spirit* he sees is in certain respects his own. The play is constructed around interrelated interrogatory explorations: What is the nature of the ghost? What is the nature of the metaphysical universe? This inquisitorial process culminates in the riddle: What is the nature of the self? When he looks within, he cannot fully formulate himself linguistically, for self-interrogation is not a clear-cut question-and-answer session, but instead an essaying, as

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Montaigne put it, a messy testing process, a series of experiments to tease out an understanding that at best can only be relatively more satisfactory than what was known before.

From both the inside and out, the self appears as an informational system, a structure of knowledge and ignorance, a system of interlocking information caches and deficits.[41] As we have seen in previous chapters, the structural distribution of secrecy and knowledge depends on the social system. During the Renaissance, as the West underwent historic changes, it began to distribute a much larger share of secrecy to the smallest subgroups -- the nuclear family and the self (see chapter 1 above). The very form and nature of knowledge changed, as the subjective-objective spectrum became polarized and the subject receded into an objectified body. The traditional connections to the infinite were no longer as easily found, as the Reformation shattered Christian unity, and in many quarters the search for a finite type of certainty began to supersede the search for an infinite one. What qualified as knowledge became uncertain, the epistemological standards were raised, and a radical doubt arose about the ability to know others. This phenomenological landscape that was reconfigured by sceptical forces clearly appears to be represented in *Hamlet*.

The characters cannot be sure of what would ordinarily be taken for granted, for they do not know the most crucial elements of the consciousness of the people who are supposed to be nearest to

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[41]The murkiness of the inner landscape apparently caused Robert Ellrodt in "Self-Consciousness in Montaigne and Shakespeare" to conclude that not much self-consciousness exists in Shakespeare, a rather absurd conclusion. As Harold Bloom notes, for instance, characters change when listening to their own discourse, which is a sure sign of self-consciousness.

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them. Hamlet's mother and stepfather do not know their own son, and continually seek ways to "assay" him. He, on the other hand, needs to go to extraordinary lengths to find out about his immediate family -- his uncle-stepfather, his mother, and even what seems to be his father. For to find out what is on his "father's" mind, he has to risk his life and sanity:

> What if it tempt you toward the flood, my lord,
> Or to the dreadful summit of the cliff
> That beetles o'er his base into the sea,
> And there assume some other horrible form
> Which might deprive your sovereignty of reason
> And draw you into madness?

Such an epistemological situation suggests that the play does indeed treat issues related to the philosophical problem of other minds. How can any knowledge of any other mind be certain, if one knows little about those to whom one is most nearly related? If one does not know crucial facts about even those so close, the very existence of others is put in question, as Cavell has shown is often the case in Shakespeare's oeuvre. To navigate this epistemological landscape we have seen that a powerful investigative method is used. Before I will argue that *Hamlet*'s application of hypothetical-deduction to the problem of other minds is a theoretical advance that has important current relevance, we first need to examine this method's historical context.

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As we have noted in the last chapter, the transformation of the medieval conceptual system into the modern one was not a simple one. Empiricism was, for instance, by no means unknown in the middle ages, but when evidence was lacking there was often a hasty turn to metaphysics. Modern experimental science did not really do away with metaphysics, as is commonly asserted, for it is impossible to study the physical without resorting to the nonphysical. Theoretical components necessarily remained -- such as hypotheses as well as mathematics, which was traditionally seen as an occult science. Modern science did not have as clear-cut a beginning as is popularly believed. Advances in northern Italy only gradually led to a new synthesis of the empirical and the theoretical that culminated in Galileo's breakthrough in method.

The England of Shakespeare's time took part in this general movement. Walter Raleigh, for instance, was in touch with several of the major continental figures, and Francis Bacon made substantial contributions. Bacon, it is true, misjudged the usefulness of mathematics and his explicit theorization of method depends too much on the naive view that observation by itself creates theories. Nevertheless, in practice he did conduct experiments in various areas and then made deductions from the results to form new hypotheses.[42] Baconian empiricism clearly affected a number of writers, Jonson included.[43] That interest in developing a modern experimental method existed in England helps to explain how

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[42]See Loren Eiseley, *The Man Who Saw Through Time*, and Paolo Rossi, *Francis Bacon: From Magic to Science*. See also *Francis Bacon's Natural Philosophy: A New Source: A Transcription of Manuscript Hardwick 72A*.
[43]See Lawrence Venuti, "Why Jonson Wrote Not of Love." Cf. Chapter 3 above.

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Shakespeare could have applied hypothetical-deduction to the phenomenological landscape, which he viewed in a relatively modern manner, especially after reading Montaigne. Although he may have been influenced by developments in science, we shall see shortly that he could have discovered such a method through his involvement in non-scientific subject areas. His use of hypothetical-deduction on phenomenological data is part of an early modern paradigm shift in both methods and objects of study.

Although hypothetical-deduction is usually associated with a quest for certainty, it is instead superbly fitted to a world that is radically uncertain and groundless. This method did not, after all, fall with the demise of the Cartesian obsession with certainty and the Newtonian deterministic understanding of the world. Instead, it was the means by which modern physics dispensed with causality and determinism. Rorty may be right that rather than glorifying Descartes' "preservation of the Platonic idea that our most distinctively human faculty was our ability to manipulate 'clear and distinct ideas,'" modern culture may have been better off if "Bacon -- the prophet of self-assertion, as opposed to self-grounding -- had been taken more seriously."[44] He is, however, mistaken to think that it is "Galilean mechanics, analytic geometry, mathematical optics, and the like" that is at fault. The problem is not mathematics per se, but its use in a quasi-religious program to reach certainty. Mathematics, after all, has also been successfully used to describe the probabilistic and non-causal world of quantum physics.

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[44]Rorty, "Habermas and Lyotard on Postmodernity," p. 172.

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Hypothetical-deduction is, then, an anti-foundational mode that is neither Cartesian nor Platonic. Galileo's use of mathematics with the experimental method draws at least as much on the empirical neo-Aristotelianism that was being developed in Padua as on Florentine neo-Platonism.[45] This mode of theorization, if correctly understood, is a process that abjures certainty, despite current attempts to distort the history of pragmatism by equating Descartes' dream of infallible reason with the experimental method. Hypothetical-deduction is in fact part of the history of anti-foundational pragmatism, as is clear from the work of the nineteenth-century scientist and originator of semiotics Charles Pierce. In the twentieth century the experimental method has indeed been separated from Cartesian dreams of certainty by such pragmatists as Quine, who understands the necessity of this, given the probabilistic and non-representational results of modern physics.[46]

Underlying the hypothetical method is a general process which compares seriously competing hypotheses.[47] The general praxis on which hypothetical-deduction if founded does not seem to be restricted to individual scientists or even to the sciences, but instead is visible in a number of historical processes. The competition of

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[45]To correct the association of Galileo's method with Platonism, see , John Herman Randall, "The Development of Scientific Method in the School of Padua," who argues that this method was based on the development of a pragmatic neo-Aristotelianism. Cf. the last chapter.

[46]See Quine, *The Pursuit of Truth*, e.g., pp. 20-21, 34-36; see also, Larry Laudan, *Science and Relativism.*

[47]See Andre Mirabelli, "Belief and Incremental Confirmation of One Hypothesis Relative to Another."; A. W. F. Edwards, *Likelihood.* Mirabelli and Edwards give a more convincing account of theory formation than the one assumed by the standard Neyman-Pearson theory of hypothesis testing used in statistics.

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values visible in market economies seems to be a version of a competition of hypotheses. To this extent, Lars Engle is justified in associating Shakespeare's pragmatism with a market philosophy. While a free-market system allows for a limited competition of values, it does not, however, allow a democratic competition between various economic systems. Laissez-faire capitalism is a hypothesis that seems to have failed in the nineteenth-century just as command economies appear to have failed in the twentieth. The competition of economic systems has led, instead, to hybrid social democracies that have combines markets with governmental restraints and interventions. The praxis underlying hypothetical-deduction appears visible in even larger processes, such as in natural selection, which in a sense represents a competition of physical hypotheses that are tested by the contingencies of the environment. In that this method is to some degree implicit in natural processes, it might be more just to say that it was discovered rather than invented.

The application of hypothetical-deduction to the phenomenological landscape that one finds in *Hamlet* appears to be more than of historical interest, for it could represent a significant contribution to current theory. Shakespeare's use of this procedure may well be attributable to the fact that he was an astute pragmatist in his representation of human experience and thought. C. S. Chihara and J. A. Fodor have compellingly argued that "much everyday conceptualization depends on the exploitation of theories and explanatory models in terms of which experience is integrated and

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understood."[48] While Shakespeare seemed to have little interests in the sciences, he was quite concerned with language, which also seems to partake of the praxis underlying hypothetical deduction. As Chirara and Fodor observe, "the correct view of the functioning of ordinary language mental predicates would assimilate applying them to the sorts of processes of theoretical inference operative in scientific psychological explanation. If this is correct, the primary difference between ordinary and scientific uses of psychological predicates would be just that the processes of inference which are made explicitly in the latter case remain implicit in the former."

Each natural language, together with its corresponding implicit cultural codes, is a conceptual system that acts as a web of belief to "catch a carp" -- or perhaps insects -- "of truth," to use Polonius' words. The conceptual system of a culture has hypotheses that function in various ways. Each language game is a section of the conceptual system, that is only partially a nominalist structure for it is also partially a web of belief. Ordinary language is not composed only of conventions[49] but instead is partly made up of hypotheses that have been tested over the ages. The best *conventional* description of how language engages both the inner and the outer is Wittgenstein's theory of logical criteria, which Chihara and Fodor have shown can be described as "logical behaviorism" (not to be confused with the radical Skinnerian one that misguided ly ignores the inner domain). Logical behaviorism, which was further developed

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[48]Chihara, and J. A. Fodor. "Operationalism and Ordinary Language" p. 201. To support their argument, they cite, for instance, Jean Piaget, *The Child's Conception of the World.*

[49]See Raziel Abelson, "Definition."

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by Norman Malcolm, claims, for instance, that the criteria for having dreamed are dream reports. These reports, it is asserted, determine the rules for the relevant language-game, which in turn determine the meaning of "dream."[50] Such a view is, however, counter-intuitive, for it cannot explain, for instance, how one could forget that and what one dreamed. In fact, Chihara and Fodor show that the notion of *dreaming* is not determined by logical criteria but instead is a theoretical inference based on a variety of information, some of which can even be confirmed.[51]

Like the concept of the dream, the *self* is the best hypothesis that ordinary language has come up with to "work" with both the phenomenological and the intersubjective givens. Such an inductive procedure to handle the discrepant "grammars" of inner and outer data has been of enormous value, creating a platform of popular psychology on which, as Thomas Nagel argued, the more formal psychological advances of this century have been based.[52] The various cultural languages have both structural and substantive isomorphisms and differences. Hypotheses such as the self and the dream vary from culture to culture, but there is a common core meaning that has been arrived at by most languages. Other types of cultural hypotheses, such as religious ones, cannot be as thoroughly tested. Even though the self is, like god(s), a hypothesis, it is a much more useful one, for it interacts with experience in more immediate

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[50]See Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, pp. 184, 222-23; Norman Malcolm, "The Concept of Dreaming," and *Dreaming*.
[51]Chihara and Fodor, p. 200, see also pp. 188-192.
[52]See Nagel, "Freud and His Critics" and *Mortal Questions*.

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ways, ways that "work" for us immensely. Rorty's call for a new "polytheism" seems to reflect a somewhat related perspective.

For informational systems (such as cultures or selves), which may have different internal codes, to communicate there must be some intermediary, some means to bridge the gap, some semiotic tertium quid, so to speak. Otherwise interpretation becomes, as Quine has shown, radically uncertain.[53] When the cultural disjunctions increase, as we have seen they did in the Renaissance, such problems of translation come to the fore. But it is not only at such historical times that the powerful semiotic device of hypothetical deduction becomes necessary. When there is not a developed language of any kind to deal with a newly discovered conceptual area, a process of concept formation must take place that goes beyond mere conventional naming, for the web of belief that is formed must *work*.

The meaningful tools that are developed are not precise or Platonically preexistent ideas, but are *uses*, as Wittgenstein's thought experiment at the beginning of the *Philosophical Investigation* demonstrates. His misguided notion of logical criteria indicates, however, that he may not have realized how radical his notion that meaning is use truly is. Rather than needing satisfying precise logical criteria, meanings are determined by weaker conditions, for they are formed by the selection of whatever hypothesis of those imagined seems to work best. Such an intuition about the meaning of meaning is behind the more pragmatic if vague idea of "family resemblances" that Wittgenstein developed when he realized that Frege's quest for perfect clarity was an impossible one.

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[53]See Quine, *Ontological Relativity and Other Essays*, and *The Pursuit of Truth*.

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Hamlet appears to reflect the realization that at its core meaning is not precise "vehicle." For instance, during his visit to her closet, Hamlet never learns the contents of his mother's mind. After he kills Polonius, he offers a hypothesis about his mother's action, "A bloody deed. Almost as bad, good mother / As kill a king and marry his brother." Her reaction, "As kill a king?" does not provide a conclusive result to this testing of his hypothesis. He never learns whether his mother was involved in the murder; nor does he learn if she had committed adultery beforehand. But such uncertainty does not prevent him from reaching some sort of understanding with her, which constitutes a vague working hypothesis that is useful to them both. Even the way that Gertrude proceeds to act when she is with Claudius does not exhibit a clear intention. We do not know if she takes her son's advice nor if her report that he is "Mad as the sea and wind when both contend" is to protect him or is close to her actual belief. She and her son come to a working alliance despite much ignorance of each others inner contents. The play is indeed full of such ambiguity and its significance may well be about navigating an ocean of uncertainty. It finds a means to knowledge even when truth and vagueness are inextricably intertwined and meaning is not absolute but quite relative to its use.

Such pragmatism may be necessary because meaning is by its very nature vague, and it may be possible because meaning is not non-existent--or infinitely deferrable, which amounts to the same thing. While we need to give up the "dream of reason" -- the dream of absolute precision of intention possessed by "secure" Cartesian walled egos -- we should not, I believe, replace it with the Derrida's

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notion of an infinite deferral of meaning, which is only possessed by disembodied *texts*. For practical purposes significance takes form in contexts neither of ego-centric certainty nor of infinite textural uncertainty, but within a finite, if fluctuating, semantic field. My approach to the intentionally obscure world that *Hamlet* presents takes into account that there is indeed an ineluctable vagueness or imprecision in both communication and in the individual's understanding of her own meaning. Such a state of affairs does not, however, prevent a pragmatic use of language. Meaning is a vehicle by which we negotiate the world. It is not precise nor undecidable. All that is needed is enough clarity so that we can get along in the world, so that we find hypotheses that work sufficiently.

Semantics needs to be understood structurally, not substantively. A meaning is a finite entity nor an infinite and unreachable regression. Instead it may resemble a singularity that can never be reached but which can approached in a limiting process. We feel we know what someone *means* when we are given progressively more useful responses to our queries until we are close enough to this singularity to function. Meaning is a relatively local property of the semantic field, for unrelated significances have little effect. In this way we can model how meaning is neither exact, as positivists claim, nor infinitely deferred, as deconstruction teaches.

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PART FOUR

SHAKESPEARE AND JONSON

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Chapter 9

THREE EPILOGUES ON SUBJECTIVITY, INTIMACY, AND PRINT CULTURE

I. *Introductory: Literary Systems and the States of* Hamlet

During Shakespeare and Jonson's lifetimes print culture was undergoing a radical development.[1] While moveable type was invented a century and a half before, scribal publication still continued to be vital for a century afterward.[2] The "literary" system, by which I mean all the forms that verbal creative expression can take, was being dramatically transformed and the modern regime was not yet in place. The system then comprised of a vibrant oral culture, for which poems and interludes could be written without thought of publication, and three competing modes of "publication," that is, of making public: manuscript circulation, theatrical performance, and print publication.[3] Manuscript circulation was, perhaps, nearest to the borderline between publication and private expression, for a manuscript could be either produced by the writer for semiprivate coteries or by scribes for the general public. In addition to the literary system, the social status of writers and of literature was also in great flux. The professions of the dramatist and

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[1]See Elizabeth Eisenstein, *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change.*
[2]See Harold Love, *Scribal Publication in Seventeenth Century England.*
[3]See, for instance, Arthur Marrotti, *Manuscript, Print, and the English Renaissance Lyric.*

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of "laureate" were being re-established, and poetry and drama, after long being denigrated, was being defended.[4]

Some writers, such as John Donne, treated poetry mainly as an ephemeral means for social and political advancement.[5] Jonson, on the other hand, attempted to become a "self-crowned laureate."[6] -- an attempt that included a campaign to raise the status of contemporary drama from a popular form of entertainment to respectable literature. The early publication history of his writing demonstrates that Shakespeare's attitudes concerning print partakes more of an older ethos than Jonson's. We therefore find them more difficult to understand. The difficulty in appreciating how thoroughly our mentality has been shaped by print culture has led to simplistic judgments concerning Shakespeare's attitudes toward print. Our examination of "The Phoenix and the Turtle" will demonstrate that his dislike of print is often exaggerated and that his views were much more complex than commonly assumed. He was clearly not as much a Luddite about the print revolution as Donne, who actively resisted any attempt to publish his poetry.[1]

Daniel Sibony's "*Hamlet*: A Writing-Effect" is an example of the intriguing but insufficiently historicized attempt by French poststructuralism to come to terms with questions of expressive media -- in the widest sense of the term. A more historicized approach is provided by Walter Ong's discussion of residually oral

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[4]See Gerald Eades Bentley, *The Profession of Dramatist in Shakespeare's Time, 1590-1642*. Besides Sidney's *Defense of Poesy*, see, for instance, the Samuel Daniel's *A Defense of Ryme* and Jonson's less formal defenses, such as the one at the end of *Everyman in His Humour*.

[5]See, for instance, Marotti, *John Donne, Coterie Poet*.

[6]See Richard Helgerson, *Self-Crowned Laureates*.

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cultures in *Orality and Literacy*, but the varying degrees and kinds of a culture's orality and the complex interactions of media have still not been sufficiently theorized. Theater is a peculiar mixture of media of expressions, since plays are written, and often printed, but are performed orally. Renaissance culture was still quite oral and subjectivity effects were commonly transmitted in theaters, as they were in churches. The contemporary media culture appears to have made possible this great epoch of tragedy and of drama in general.

Print culture was, however, shifting subjectivity's center of gravity further toward writing. Jonson seemed to realize that the cultural basis for theater of the very highest order was deteriorating. He was determined to transfer his theatrical accomplishment to the most prestigious form of print, the folio. Unfazed by the ridicule he must have known such a move would draw, he published mere plays in a folio and called them *Workes*, which seemed to contemporaries to be a contradiction in terms. He also played a major role in the publication of the next set of plays to be issued in folio -- Shakespeare's. These plays, especially his great tragedies, were perfect candidates for the transformation of theatrical subjectivity into textual effects -- a transformation that eventually would give ideologues of the *texts* such as Sibony a basis for their theories. Not only Shakespeare and his fellow share-holders but, I will argue, Jonson as well eventually took advantage of the publishing opportunity that was presented by the older writer's powerful accomplishment in dramatic subjectivity.

The early publication history of *Hamlet*, which we shall examine shortly, shows that Shakespeare may well have been quite

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interested in this play's life not only on the stage but also on the page. Although he was preeminently a man of the theater, he appears not to have been indifferent to the shift of this most famous of all subjectivity effects from the theater to the book. Both modern and postmodern attitudes toward textual scholarship need to be questioned, for Shakespeare's fluid view of what constitutes a "work" appears to contrast not only with modern editorial attitudes, but also with poststructuralist ones. The next section of this chapter will provide a reading of the poem now called "The Phoenix and Turtle" -- the only piece he wrote expressly for publication -- which will help us begin to conceive his complex attitudes toward print. Shakespeare may have been influenced by Jonson, who had an impressive effect on the course that print culture was to take. Jonson's influence on the older writer appears to be evident, for instance, in their joint participation in the "Poetical Essaies" appended to *Loves Martyr* to which Shakespeare contributed "The Phoenix and Turtle." Jonson had connections to John Salisbury for whom the "Poetical Essaies" were written and may have helped organize the project. In the final section, we will explore how Jonson's involvement in the publication of Shakespeare's First Folio indicates that he came to view the older playwright as an important ally in his attempt to create a new conception of the *author*. The first folios of Jonson and Shakespeare appears to have affected the part that the emergence of print culture played in the modern subject's *construction* (a relative term that is useful if we keep in mind the antifoundational understanding of the subject developed in previous chapters).

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Three of the six early texts of *Hamlet* interest scholars: Q1 (the first quarto, 1603), Q2 (the second quarto, end of 1604), and F1 (the first folio, 1623). The major divergence is between Q1 -- a so-called "bad" quarto -- and the other two versions. The title page of Q1 notes that "it hath beene diuerse times acted by his Highnesse seruants in the Cittie of London: as also in the two Vniuersities of Cambridge and Oxford, and elsewhere." The early publication history of *Hamlet* suggests that Shakespeare was not unconcerned about the life that his play was beginning to have beyond the confines of the theater. That Q2 was published so soon after the Q1 indicates that he did not want this play to be know by the bad quarto. There are a number of theories about the nature of Q1. Some believe that it is a road version, while others think that it was a memorial construction, and still others think that it is an earlier version of the play.[7] Any one of these hypotheses is in fact unable to explain all the evidence adequately. Only a synthesis of these hypotheses will suffice: Q1 was memorially constructed from the performance of not just of a road version but an early, substantially different version. This master work did not flow from Shakespeare's pen without a blot, but instead went through a series of stages. The evidence of F1 indicates that the process of revision continued even after the publication of the second quarto.

F1 and Q2 determine the *play* as it is commonly know, from which Q1 diverges drastically (more on the concept of a "play"

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[7]See Steven Urkowitz, "'Well-sayd olde Mole': Burying Three *Hamlets* in Modern Editions."

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shortly). There are a number of characteristics that distinguish Q1 from Q2 or F1. Q1 is about half the size (2,200 type lines to Q2's 3800) and is verbally inferior to the other two versions. Many poetic and rhetorical "effects" are missing, and it only captures the essence of the action. The "nunnery scene" and with it the "To be or not to be" soliloquy are in the second "act" instead of the "third" (Q1 was not divided into acts); the "fishmonger" dialogue comes later. Q1 has a unique scene between Horatio and the Queen, merging three episodes of the other versions. The Polonius character is called Corambis; Reynaldo is Montano. While the first act of Q1 is similar to that of either of the other versions, its final two acts differ extensively. The divergence between Q1 and the other states is so drastic it they cannot be handled by the conventional methods of textural criticism.

Many critics believe that Q1 was an unauthorized version created from memory by an actor who played the part of Marcellus. A number of the reasons that have been presented in support of this theory seem quite convincing. The reconstruction process is evident in Q1 in the substitution of commonplace synonyms for rarer words. The speeches of Marcellus and of the characters on stage at the same time are more faithfully rendered than those of the other roles. In Q1 there is a recollection and anticipation of phrases at a distance from where they belong.

Given the force of these arguments, it is surprising that the opposing faction, which sees Q1 as originating as an authorized road version, can also make a good case. The fact that Q1 was printed for Nicholas Ling, as Q2 was, suggests that it should have some authority. Its status is also enhanced by W. W. Greg's demonstration that an

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exemplar of Q1 was used by the compositors of Q2.[8] Furthermore, it is difficult to conceive how the name of such an important character as Polonius could have been forgotten by an actor who played Marcellus.[9] It thus appears that a wholesale acceptance of either theory would be ill-advised.

While Q1 is not the lost *Ur-Hamlet*, this older play, which was probably by Kid, may well have strongly influenced it.[10] Q1 may have been memorially reconstructed from the performance of an early version of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, one which, like the *Ur-Hamlet*, is now lost. The name "Corambis" is strong evidence that Q1 was not simply based on a road version of Q2.[11] The lost version would have been closer to the *Ur-Hamlet.* This, for instance, might account for the different position of the nunnery scene in Q1. No simpler solution appears to be acceptable.

While the internal evidence clearly demonstrates that Q1 is not an authorial text, Ling's involvement in its publication and its use in the publication of Q2 is indeed odd. Shakespeare's company may have acquired, or *recaptured* this originally unauthorized version from a troupe that was touring the provinces (perhaps the troupe was threatened with prosecution). The company then may have found it convenient to perform Q1 as Shakespeare continued to work on the longer version; it may also have sufficed whenever a shorter play was desirable. Q1 was perhaps printed in order to prevent a

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[8]See Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor, *William Shakespeare: A Textual Companion*, p. 396.
[9]See Albert B. Weiner, ed., *Hamlet: The First Quarto, 1603*, pp. 7-45.
[10]See Wells and Taylor, p. 398.
[11] See Weiner, p. 51.

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truly pirated version from being published while *Hamlet* was still popular on stage. When *Hamlet* became somewhat less popular on stage, Q2 was then printed. With the inferior Q1 already published with his name on the title-page, Shakespeare may have begun to advocate the publication of "the true and perfect Coppie" (title page of Q2) as soon as he was satisfied with it. There may have been a pecuniary motive for publishing the same "work" in different versions. Nonetheless, a major motivation may well have been Shakespeare's desire to see the good version of the play take on a second life in the increasingly important world of print.

In the past critics usually assumed that the change from Q2 to F1 reflects a debasement of the text. As a number of critics now argue, however, F1 probably incorporates authorial second thoughts.[12] In Q2, for instance, Gertrude instructs Hamlet through a "lord" to attempt a reconciliation with Laertes, while in F1 the lord does not appear. This was probably not caused by a prompter's frugality, as was previously assumed, for the role could easily be doubled. Rather, it shows that Hamlet is self-motivated in F1 to attempt the reconciliation. Such a change in motivation would seem to be an authorial decision. F1 may incorporate some of the second thoughts that Shakespeare had as he continued to see the play performed and as he received suggestions from his colleagues.

The expectations that have been formed by late modern print culture may well prevent us from realizing that Shakespeare may well have continued to take a strong interest in how this work would

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[12]See, for instance, Wells and Taylor, p. 400. For a proponent of the view that F1 reflects a debasement of the text, see Harold Jenkins, ed., *Hamlet*.

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be received not only on stage but also on the page. That Shakespeare appears to have provided his foul papers rather than a fair copy to printers is not at all as significant as is generally thought. That he would provided foul papers is quite understandable given that he was a busy theater professional with attitudes formed by a vibrant residually oral culture that did not make the demands that radically modern print culture would eventually make even of playscripts. His culture was not as finicky as we are in requiring precisely rendered and visually regular printed texts -- as is clear, for instance, from the irregular use of type on numerous contemporary title pages.

Recent developments in textual scholarship have corrected the older view that Shakespeare never modified the play after a draft was written and that the versions we have reflect debasements of a pristine original one. On the other hand, the current fervor to deconstruct *Hamlet*'s conflated text into multiple versions appears to over stress the significance of these developments. The public will continue to demand conflated versions, and with good reason. While postmodern attempts to undo the editorial conflations of the versions of *Hamlet* have decentered our notions of the text, ironically the value of such attempts is limited by the postmodern dictum that it is impossible to return to an originary text.

Elizabethans did not consider the full "ontology" of the work to reside in any one printed version or even in all of them together. A play could be "published" in different versions and by different organs of the "literary" system -- either on stage or on page -- and yet it continued to be considered a single work. It might exist in

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different printed or acting (or acted) versions without completely losing its identity. Recent attempts to dissolve the work into different texts or even into different performances[13] are to some degree misguided in that they are searching for a point of ontological certainty and stasis that does not exist. As Ong has suggested, the postmodern textualists appear to be as much product of a print culture mentality as the proponents of the theory of a single originary text.[14] A *play* is neither simply a text nor a group of performances but a mongrel concept and needs to be understood much in the same way that we have shown in the last chapter such terms as *subjectivity, consciousness, self,* and *dream* should be seen -- as a hypothesis of ordinary language that has been shown to be useful. We need an antifoundational theory of literature, for a work's "being" should reside less in any one language game -- whether textual, theatrical, or social,[15] whether of a print or of a more residually oral culture -- than in the union of various language games.

As we shall see at the end of this chapter, Shakespeare's literary achievement is unfinished. The play does not exist merely in the text, as both modern and postmodern ideologies often assume, but in the greater social community, and we always need to "complete" a playtext, Shakespeare's just more so than most others. As David Kastan has argued in a recent MLA session I organized on "Shakespeare and the Transmission of Texts," there are no originary

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[13]See Leah Marcus, *Puzzling Shakespeare.*
[14]See Ong, *Orality and Literacy.*
[15]For a social theory of ontology, see Jerome McGann, *A Critique of Modern Textual Criticism.*

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Shakespearean texts that exist without some sort of editorial intervention.[16] Eventually, we will need to accept that editorial art is itself a part of nature -- to use a trope from *The Winter's Tale* -- and that it is necessary editorially to renew texts from the past for use in the current age, just as it is necessary to reinterpret them on stage.

That aspects of what we think of as *Hamlet* exist in some printed versions, but not in others,[17] is only as disturbing as the fact that not all aspects exist in each acting version. The play no more fully exists in its textual materiality than it does in an eternal Platonic heaven of forms. If, for instance, all texts of a poem were destroyed and then if it was reconstructed from memory, we would not be troubled by this. And yet in terms of a literal *text*, the poem would have gone in and out of existence. *Hamlet*'s existence is, then, not fully accounted for by its textual versions, nor does it fully exist only in its performances. This play has always lived in the greater social community, which includes its texts and the theatrical and critical traditions. That Shakespeare expected that his play would be kept alive indefinitely in various performed versions helped to make the exact state of the printed text less important to him than it is to us. In the next section we will see that he tried to conceive of the shift that the culture was in the process of making toward a positioning subjectivity in the printed text. We, on the other hand, need to consider the possibility that more might exist than is conceived of by our modern and postmodern ideologies of textuality.

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[16]Kastan, "Mechanics of Culture: Editing Shakespeare Today."
[17]See, for instance, Paul Werstine, "The Textual Mystery of *Hamlet*"; Barbara Mowat, "The Form of *Hamlet*'s Fortunes."

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II. *"If what parts, can so remaine": Subjectivity, Intimacy and Print Culture in "The Phoenix and Turtle"*

The poem now called "The Phoenix and Turtle" was given that title over two centuries after it was originally published[18] in 1601 as the first of the *Poeticall Essaies* appended to Robert Chester's *Loves Martyr.* Since all of the *Poeticall Essaies* are based on Chester's "Subiect,"[19] the union of the Phoenix and a Turtledove, the name does not distinguish Shakespeare's contribution and is inappropriate. A title may be an abstract or a "request for the floor"[20] and affects our assumptions. This title, which is inappropriate for its original context, may have made the notorious critical mystery surrounding this poem more difficult to dispel. We may be better served by following the convention for an untitled poem -- that is, refer to it by its first line, "Let the bird of lowdest lay." Indeed, the title it was given in the nineteenth century is part of the poem's decontextualization and assimilation into print culture, which assumes that works do not "depend for their relevance on prior discourse."[21] In fact no work is truly "contextually detachable" since Western literature itself is a culturally-specific, evolving, contextualizing system. That "Let the bird of loudest lay" is untitled is partly a throwback to oral culture, but is more indicative of the

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[18]It was given this title in 1807; see *The Riverside Shakespeare*, p. 1798.
[19]*Loves Martyr* (London, 1601), title page. All quotations from the *Poeticall Essaies* are from this edition of *Loves Martyr* ; the original spelling, punctuation, and capitalization are retained.
[20]Mary Louise Pratt, *Toward a Speech Act Theory of Literary Discourse*, p. 114.
[21]Pratt, p. 148.

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fact that Shakespeare, as always, wrote this poem for a specific context. Each of his relatively short pieces of verse was placed in a complex relation to a larger work -- a play, a sonnet sequence, a minor epic, or, in this case, "poetical essaies" appended to a long poem.

The "poeticall essaies," a description clearly suggesting experimentation, were "Done," we are told, "by the best and chiefest of our moderne writers"[22] -- Shakespeare, Marston, Chapman, and Jonson. They were given their own title page and prefatory poems and form a separate textual entity that was the main attraction of the whole volume, which was reissued in 1611. The "Invocatio" calls the muses "Thespian Deities,"[23] indicating that the contributors were all dramatists, and there appears to have been a spirit of competition. The phrase "the bird of loudest lay" may be an allusion to this agon, since besides "the song of birds" and "a short poem" *lay* also meant "a wager" (OED). Shakespeare seems to wager slyly that his *lay* will be the "lowdest" or most impressive. That Marston and Jonson contributed additional poems at some point suggests that after this dazzling performance, they felt pressed to acquit themselves honorably.

The poets clearly were free to apply and vary at will Chester's myth of the union of the Phoenix and Turtle, since they used it in conflicting ways. Shakespeare contradicts Chester's "Conclusion,"[24] and Marston refers to Shakespeare's "mouing *Epicidium*" only to

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[22]*Loves Martyr*, p. 167.
[23]This use of "Thespian" antedates the *OED* 's first entry by 71 years.
[24]Matchett, *The Phoenix and the Turtle: Shakespeare's Poem and Chester's* Loues Martyr (The Hague: Mouton & Co, 1965), p. 77.

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explain why he will refute its claim that the birds left "no posteritie." The conflicts among the *Poeticall Essaies* have not been satisfactorily explained, nor have the riddles and intentionally puzzling shifts of tone within "Let the bird of lowdest lay." Heinrich Straumann's positing of interleaved levels of meaning in the work[25] has been somewhat helpful, but even this comprehensive principle is not able to adequately clear up the critical problems. If the turtle represents the English people and the phoenix Queen Elizabeth,[26] as some claim, why do Shakespeare and Marston disagree on whether they left "posteritie." The reference to "two dead birds" at the poem's conclusion does not agree in tone with this hypothesis, nor in content, for though Elizabeth was thought to be near death, surely the people were not. Nor can those who see the poem as an uncharacteristic idealizing, Neoplatonic exercise[27] account for the deflating "two dead birds."

We can only arrive at a satisfactory reading of this poem, which I. A. Richards called the most mysterious one in English,[28] if we fix our eyes firmly on the original context. Like *Loves Martyr*, the *Poeticall Essaies* were dedicated to "Sir Iohn Salisburie," a recently knighted nobleman who was a writer and a friend of writers and

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[25]Straumann, *Phönix und Taube.*

[26]See, for instance, Anthea Hume, "*Love's Martyr*, 'The Phoenix and the Turtle,' and the Aftermath of the Essex Rebellion." The most successful political reading of the poem is given in Richard McCoy's "The Sacrificial Sonnets."

[27]See, for instance, Robert Ellrodt, "An Anatomy of 'The Phoenix and the Turtle'"; A. Alvarez, "The Phoenix and the Turtle."

[28]Richards, "The Sense of Poetry: Shakespeare's 'The Phoenix and the Turtle,'" p. 86.

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who was particularly interested in theater.[29] While the evidence internal and external to the *Poeticall Essaies* suggest that Jonson, Marston, and Chapman had connections to Salisbury or hopes of profitable self-ingratiation, Shakespeare was already very successful and did not need to genuflect in the rich knight's direction. He apparently felt free to do as he pleased, realizing that Chester's self-indulgent piece was ridiculous but that the central conceit was suggestive and also revisionary, for the phoenix was supposed to die alone.

Once Shakespeare agreed to contribute to this project, he was no doubt influenced by the extraordinary nature of his task: the writing of a short poem expressly for print. Writers, we have seen, conceptualized the literary system as consisting of several subsystems. They often wrote for private oral presentation without the thought of publication. If they wished to "publish," that is, make their work public, they had three possible outlets: the clearly public modes of theatrical performance and print publication and the semi-public one of manuscript circulation. Manuscripts were either circulated in coteries or more widely distributed with the help of professional scribes. While there was never really a stigma attached to print per se, for those with social aspirations there *was* a stigma associated with exposing oneself to all and sundry and a fear of making public material that was thought to be unworthy or private.[30] Shakespeare apparently considered his sonnets to be of a private nature for some circulated in manuscript for years before

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[29]See G. Bonnard, "Shakespeare's Contribution to R. Chester's 'Love's Martyr"; John Buxton, "Two Dead Birds: A Note on 'The Phoenix and Turtle.'"
[30]Sanders, J. W. "The Stigma of Print."

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they were published. While he accepted that his plays would become public when performed, in Sonnet 111 he nevertheless chides "fortune ... That did not better for [his] life provide / Than public means which public manners breeds." Plays were thought not truly worthy of print, until Jonson began to change this by publishing his in a Folio and calling them *Workes.*

In their dedication "To the great Variety of Readers" Heminge and Condell made no bones about their eagerness for the First Folio to sell well: "what euer you do, Buy." If "the Author himselfe had liu'd to haue set forth, and ouerseen his owne writings," however, he may have been more wary than they let on, since as these acting colleagues noted, the buyers "will stand for [their] privileges ... to read, and censure." Works made public in the popular theater were not judged as severely as printed literary texts. As a dramatist, Shakespeare never seemed to betray a fear of criticism, but when "Venus and Adonis" was published Shakespeare composed a dedicatory epistle that expresses his fear of the world's "censure" and proclaims that he wrote the piece to please the Earl of Southampton. Though it was a popular success, he may have been, like Hamlet, more wary of making "the judicious grieve, the censure of the which one must in your allowance o'erweigh a whole theatre of others" (3.2.26-28). He even felt the need to promise a "graver labour," apparently *The Rape of Lucrece*, which has a more intimate and apparently deeply-felt dedication to Southampton. Although these minor epics were of a genre thought worthy of print, their dedications suggest they were written to gain Southampton's patronage rather than with the "great Variety of Readers" in mind.

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Unlike these minor epics, "Let the bird of lowdest Lay" is a short poem composed without a great earl in mind and one that lacked his social protection. Instead, it was expressly written for print and exposed unprotected to the censure of the "great Variety of Readers," even though its subject of an ideal love would have been thought to require a more private venue. Shakespeare may have felt some means was necessary to protect the work from what Hamlet calls "the general" on whom "caviare" is wasted. Such means would present its content exclusively to the "deepe eares" Jonson addresses in a subsequent Poeticall Essay. Shakespeare achieves this by presenting abstruse material in a profoundly riddling fashion. He in fact thematizes the social issues that arose during the shift to print culture.

The first section creates a sense of privacy by ordering that certain birds be present at the fiery union and others be excluded. The readers are immediately subjected to an analogous process, since the first line begins a test that will exclude the less astute from the ceremony of intimacy. The riddle presented to the original readers was different, however, than the one modern critics think exists. Modern commentators worry over the identity of the bird of loudest lay, and yet it was not until 1878 that a critic, namely Alexander Grosart, argued that the Phoenix cannot be present at the beginning of the poem, because it is later said to be dead.[31] Since such a view assumes a poem to be a visual text that allows one to return to the

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[31]Grosart, ed. *Love's Martyr*; Grosart guessed that it might be the nightingale. Osbert Sitwell, "'The Sole Arabian Tree,'" pp. 199, 206, suggested that it is the peacock. Ronald Bates "Shakespeare's 'The Phoenix and the Turtle,'" p. 26, believed it to be the cock.

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beginning, rather than an oral presentation in which the direction of time precludes such movement, only the radically spatial reasoning brought about by the reading habits of modern print culture has caused us to doubt the identity of this bird. As Walter Ong has stressed, "readers whose norms and expectancies for formal discourse are governed by a residually oral mindset relate to a text quite different [sic] from readers whose sense of style is radically textual."[32]

While many embraced Grosart's view, there have been exceptions including T. W. Baldwin, who believes the bird of loudest lay is the Phoenix, because in Lactantius, it is a song bird with an unmatched wondrous voice.[33] An Elizabethan would in fact have immediately identified this bird as the Phoenix by its conventional location on the sole Arabian tree.[34] Only when the poem is wrenched from its original context and entitled "The Phoenix and Turtle" is this obscured, for Shakespeare's untitled contribution follows two Phoenix-obsessed prefatory ones, which do not even mention the Turtle, making it natural for the star of this wonderfully mismatched couple to appear alone at the poem's opening.

Murray Copland believes that the "bird of lowdest lay" refers to "whatever bird is noisiest,"[35] and that the poem begins with this creature being ordered to mount the perch of the dead Phoenix and

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[32]Ong, p. 171.

[33]Baldwin, *TLS* (14 June 1941):287.

[34]Even M. C. Bradbrook, "The Phoenix and the Turtle," who believes it is not the Phoenix, nevertheless admits that "the bird which an Elizabethan would expect to find here is the Phoenix, the usual inhabitant of the sole Arabian tree."

[35]Murray Copland, "The Dead Phoenix," p. 284.

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act as herald for its funeral. The syntax, however, does not support this reading. The normal order of phrases to express this intent would be not as we find it, but rather: "Let the bird of lowdest lay / Herald sad and trumpet be / On the sole *Arabian* tree." Although there are other inversions -- "sad" follows the noun it modifies and "be" comes after the noun phrase it would usually precede -- they make no semantic difference. That "On the sole *Arabian* tree" immediately follows "the bird of lowdest lay" implies that this bird is being identified, and so, syntactical considerations point to the Phoenix.

To decide whether the Phoenix is the bird of loudest lay one must depend either on evidence given at the beginning of the work or on evidence given later. A conclusion based on a train of reasoning from what occurs later in the work -- where we are told that "Reason" is "in itselfe confounded" and "Love hath Reason, Reason none" -- appears risky. That the Phoenix is not alive later on should not cause us to jump to the conclusion that it is dead at the opening. Robert Ellrodt believes that Shakespeare intentionally begins the work on a note of mystery.[36] When we first read the opening lines, however, we are given no cause to doubt that the bird we meet here is the Phoenix. According to the rules that Paul Grice has shown obtain for normal communication, Shakespeare *implicates* that it is the Phoenix, since "he has done nothing to stop [us] thinking that" it is.[37] The assumption that Shakespeare wanted the reader to return to the beginning of the work to correct a deliberately misleading

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[36]Ellrodt, p. 107.
[37]Grice, "Logic and Conversation," p. 31. Cf. Pratt, 152-158.

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impression is difficult to support. Why would he first lead us to believe that it is the Phoenix and then change course and expect us to accept that it is some other bird?

Assuming that it dies before the work begins, Wilson Knight thought the bird of loudest lay is the Phoenix reborn from its ashes, but this, he admitted, "weakens the point and pathos."[38] Peter Dronke was the first to recognize both that the bird of lowdest lay is the Phoenix and that "there is nothing in the later part of the poem which suggests that the Phoenix has died before the poem begins."[39] Heinrich Straumann, whose earlier *Phönix und Taube* remains an influential treatment of the poem, changed his position on this question and accepted Dronke's "illuminating" argument.[40] The possible sources indeed suggest that the Phoenix would ask pious birds to come watch the funeral-rite and "mutual flame."[41] That this immolation occurs within this poem is confirmed when Marston reacts to Shakespeare's piece by referring to "yonder flame." The original riddle, then, is not to identify the bird of loudest lay on the sole Arabian tree, since such a periphrasis for the Phoenix should be clear. Rather the problem is to recognize that the symbolic fusion of Turtledove and Phoenix is an obscured event in the poem.

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[38]Knight, *The Shakespearean Tempest*, p. 325; see also *The Mutual Flame*, pp. 203-4

[39]Dronke, "The Phoenix and the Turtle," pp. 209, 214. Straumann, "'The Phoenix and The Turtle' in Its Dramatic Context," p. 497n

[40]Straumann, "'The Phoenix and The Turtle' in Its Dramatic Context," p. 497n.

[41]For instance, John Buxton, "Two Dead Birds: A Note on 'The Phoenix and Turtle,'" p.50-51, remarks that "in Greek 'phoenix' was the name both of the legendary bird and of a palm-tree. The bird on the sole Arabian tree is the Phoenix.... in the medieval tradition of the birds attending a Requiem Mass, the Phoenix summons the birds to the ceremony of her death."

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If the Phoenix is present in the first section, the immolation must take place around the sixth stanza before the Anthem describes the fiery fusion in the past tense, though the exact location is unclear. The work's anagogy,[42] or the *driving upward* of significance, may well preclude a description of a physical conflagration with an exact spatial or textual position. After all, the Anthem's celebration of an "intuition of the lovers' oneness" may well be "far more metaphysical than [even] Ficino's."[43] Given the original punctuation, the Anthem, which may be sung by the birds, might not begin until after this stanza. The speaker of "Loue and Constancy is dead" would then be the poet, and the work would be "an allegory about the disruption of the Platonic system on which the world is based"[44] -- precisely the type of metaphysical fireworks one would expect in a mythical immolation. "Loue and Constancy is dead" may be a report of the abstract and instantaneous immolation as it takes place; it may signify both the lovers' fusion——as implied by the singular *is* ——and the appropriate metaphysical fireworks.

At the end of the sixth stanza, "hence" is used in an odd spatial manner to point to a physical place: "*Phœnix* and the *Turtle* fled, / In a mutuall flame from *hence*." Its primary temporal sense, however, reinforces the fact that the Phoenix and the Turtle have just fled into a mutual flame from *hence* forward, from this moment onward. Conversely, the stanza begins with a spatial word that seems to refer to a temporal event: "*Here* the Antheme doth commence." It is

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[42]See Patricia Parker, "Anagogic Metaphor: Breaking Down the Wall of Partition."
[43]Ellrodt, p. 104.
[44]Matchett, p. 41.

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essential, if rather startling, to realize that this line cannot represent an utterance occurring purely within the fictive world.

"*Here* the Antheme doth commence" cannot be a performative beginning the Anthem, much as "Let the games begin!" initiates "the games," since the use of the spatial *here* is incorrect. If this were so the pronouncement should have been: *now* the Anthem doth commence. The use of *here* in its temporal sense of "at this point ... in the action" (OED) would be a metadramatic one that would be unbearably self-conscious: why would one use *here* to refer -- from within the action -- to a point in the action? The use of "here" thus only makes sense if it refers to a point in the *text* and thus to the work's textuality. The reference frames for the imagined event and for the reading of the work merge. Indeed, because the function of indexicals[45] such as "now" and "here" is not to describe or name something, but to point to something, only by means of a single perspective shared by speaker and reader is it possible to understand the crucial sixth stanza.

The sense of a shared perspective is also created by the use of imperatives in the first and forth stanzas. "Let the bird of loudest lay," for example, may be taken not only as an odd third-person imperative to a bird but also as a proposal that we imagine a hypothetical situation: "If the Phoenix is the herald at its own funeral." A bird is appointed and simultaneously the reader is requested to imagine a world, the speech act making sense in the fiction of speaker and birds *and* in the society of writer and readers.

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[45]See Yehoshua Bar-Hillel, "Indexical Expressions," *Mind* 63 (1954):359-379; Richard Gale, "Indexical Signs, Egocentric Particulars and Token-reflexive Words," *Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (New York: Macmillan, 1967):151-157.

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As Robert Weimann has shown, a *figurenposition* that faces a point halfway between audience and fictive world is common in Shakespeare's plays; such a *figurenposition* derives from a non-mimetic popular tradition and is formed through the use of meta-dramatic comments, asides, and soliloquies.[46] Like Hamlet when he alludes to the "cellarage" beneath the stage, the poem's speaker at times faces away from the fiction.

One theorist believes that all fictional discourse is nonserious in that an author *pretends* to make assertions in the sense of engaging "in a performance ... without any intent to deceive."[47] While this statement is problematic and probably not fully defensible, it does identify an important condition that has some application. Shakespeare might be flouting such a condition by making a *serious* request to the reader -- at the same time that he *pretends* to address birds. Although most imperatives to the reader are not serious, the directions in this poem to imagine a scene are, since they should be carried out. This playwright would have been very familiar with works that contain a mixture of speech act types, for a playtext has both pseudo-assertions and serious directions to actors as to how they are to pretend.[48] Directions to readers to carry out acts of imagination are as serious as directions to actors. Like a playtext, "Let the bird of loudest lay" bridges the gap between fictive and "real" worlds.

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[46]See Weimann, *Shakespeare and the Popular Tradition in the Theater.*
[47]John Searle, "The Logical Status of Fictional Discourse," *NLH* 6 (1975):324. Although there may well be more compelling theories about fictional discourse by both analytic and poststructuralist theorists, Searle's essay is interesting and has stimulated important debate.
[48]See Searle, p. 328.

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The performative utterances of the first six stanzas suggest that the work should not be viewed as a speaker's account of an action that occurs at a different time and place. The proper venue for the symbolic action may in fact be the theater of the reader's imagination, since some of the speech acts may be read both as occurring in an avian world and as a direct address of the readers requesting that we imagine what is later called the "Tragique Scene." Such a possibility would permit a merging of reference frames for the imagined event and the reading of the work. As Richard Gale remarks in an article that builds on Wittgenstein's discussion of time-language, "for successful tensed communication" to take place "both speaker and hearer must have a unique temporal perspective in the same time-series to which the event being designated as past, present or future belongs."[49] Because, as Gale notes, the "function of words such as 'now' and 'here' is not to describe or name something, but to point to something,"[50] only by means of a single perspective shared by speaker and reader does it seem possible to understand the indexicals of the crucial sixth stanza.

That the first six stanzas employ indexicals and polysemous imperatives to bring about a merging of the perspectives of fictive and meta-worlds suggests a reason why the invisible immolation is indistinguishable from the beginning of the Anthem. The speech act of performing the Anthem represents an intersubjective communion between singer and auditor that is mirrored in the union of the Phoenix and Turtle: in both cases there are "two distincts, division

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[49]Richard Gale, "Is It Now Now?" p. 97.
[50]Gale, p. 98.

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none," as the Anthem puts it. The possibility thus arises that behind the poem's emotive force and shifting tone was the quotidian yet metaphysical union of the minds of live performer and auditor. Such an insight can help us understand the otherwise inexplicable sense of loss and semi-ironic ending of the *Threnos.*

We have seen in the last two chapters that as social forces of cohesion failed, the connections between subjects weakened. This emergent phenomenological landscape is exemplified by the print paradigm in which the writer communicates with faceless readers. The poem appears to dramatize the creation of a sense of intimacy in an abstract world of radical intersubjective divides, which are indeed characteristic of modern print culture. Moreover, given his disparagement of "public means," Shakespeare would have felt that intimacy created by the performance of his work would have been highly charged by the transgressive nature of its occurring in public. He may well have wondered if the printed dissemination of his work could create such an exhilarating intimacy between a writer and a distant reader. What has come down to us from him is often based on his "foul papers" that represent, in a sense, the artifacts of the live performance. In these "cinders" in this "urn" many have indeed found the "Beautie, Truth, and Raritie, / Grace in all simplicitie" that the *Threnos* mentions. And yet the living performance was an everyday occurrence and so the performer and auditor could appropriately be seen as merely "two dead birds" from the perspective of the reader of the play.

I am not suggesting, however, that we make a reductive identification, but that the emotional wellspring of the poem's

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changes in tone may be found in this playwright's experience of the cultural shift from stage to page, to use Harry Berger's phrase.[51] As Angus Fletcher has shown, "pure" allegory as we find it need not be made into a cryptogram for the union of either historical figures or abstract entities.[52] Shakespeare understood that the death of such Platonic qualities as Beauty, Truth, Rarity, and Grace could never be brought about by the death of lovers -- not Salisbury and his wife, not Elizabeth and Essex or the people. This sense of loss is better explained by the profound cultural shifts that were taking place.

Just as we are familiar with the changes being brought about by the development of cyberspace, Shakespeare would have been aware of the various contemporary media shifts. He participated in and greatly profited from the revolution that transformed a marginal theater into a medium with impressive organs such as the Globe. While moveable type was invented a century and a half before, scribal publication continued to be vital for a century afterward.[53] To write a short poem to be printed rather than spoken on stage or circulated in manuscript would have struck Shakespeare as quite odd. Since *Venus and Adonis* 's eroticism was somewhat scandalous and *Lucrece* was not an overwhelmingly successful attempt at a more serious accomplishment, he may have become particularly wary of the open and boundless world of print. His culture, however, was transforming from a residually oral one in which theater and manuscript transmission was near the hub to a modern one in which print was central. He could not have been unaware that print was

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[51]Berger, *Imaginary Audition.*
[52]See Fletcher, *Allegory,* pp. 28-30.
[53]See Harold Love, *Scribal Publication in Seventeenth Century England.*

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becoming the privileged medium and might offer him a means to see "If what parts, can so remaine," to use the Anthem's words.

This cultural shift may well be behind the poem's emotional structure, since it was the only one he wrote with distant readers utmost in his mind. "Beautie, Truth, and Raritie, / Grace in all simplicitie" might seem "Here enclosed, in cinders," because the printed text disseminated to "the great variety of readers" would appear to someone from a residually oral culture to be the mere ashes of the *presence* of an oral speech act immersed in a vibrant world. A text, after all, is not a living being and cannot really adjust to a changing world, which may be why Socrates, who was much closer to a purely oral culture, did not write.[54] Shakespeare, while still part of a residually oral culture, was not quite so pessimistic. Paradoxically, even if "Truth may seeme, but cannot be, / Beautie Bragge, but tis not she," nonetheless, there are still those "That are either true or faire" who may "To this vrne ... repaire" and "For these dead Birds, sigh a prayer." For only by the living breath, as it were, of select readers can the lived intimacy that the printed words are artifacts of be somewhat recouped. Shakespeare may well have glanced at the transmutation of a more oral construction of the subject into one that uses textual effects as a paradigm for subjectivity. What seems certain is that there is only one way to account for the odd indexicals and imperatives, the sacred union sung by the Anthem, the sense of tragic loss in the *Threnos*, and the semi-ironic reference to two "dead birds" at the end: By associating the mystical union of Phoenix and Turtle with a quotidian, yet

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[54]See the last chapter on Socrates and *écriture*.

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metaphysical joining of the minds of performer and auditor that leaves a trace in print .

III. *"My beloued ... And what he hath left us": Jonson's Relation to Shakespeare and The First Folio*

When Jonson was first approached -- probably by Heminge and Condell -- about becoming involved with the production of Shakespeare's First Folio (1623) he could have viewed the enterprise in either of two ways. On one hand, he could have considered First Folio a competitor with the Folio edition of his plays and poems. No other folio containing plays appeared since the publication of Jonson's *Workes* in 1616, the year of Shakespeare's death. Shakespeare's Folio, which was even more risky than his own in that it consisted only of plays, was the first true rival of *Workes*,[55] and Jonson could have taken an adversarial stance toward it. On the other hand, he could have seen the Folio as an ally in his attempt to have his daring reification of plays as *workes* accepted by the culture. Jonson clearly needed such allies, since he was ridiculed for publishing his plays in a prestigious folio. Contemporary drama was not at all accepted as serious literature. The Bodleian Library, for instance, decided not to collect stage plays, even though in 1610 the

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[55]For a discussion of one of Jonson's contributions to the First Folio that emphasizes rivalry, see Robert Evans, *Ben Jonson and the Poetics of Patronage*, pp. 181-2, 212.

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Stationers' Company began to send it a copy of every book printed in England.[56]

Jonson chose to be of immense help to Heminge and Condell's project by contributing poems, editorial advice, and prestige. By associating his scholarly reputation with Shakespeare's Folio, he lent invaluable support to the launching of this publishing venture. On perusing this Folio we first encounter Jonson's "To The Reader" imploring us not to look for Shakespeare in the engraving on the facing title page: "Reader, looke / Not on his Picture, but his Booke." This poem introduces readers to the "true" author -- not the person who writes, but the construct we create by reading his works and by absorbing the extratextual cultural information about this figure.[57] This is, of course, just the beginning of Jonson's introduction.

Immediately after Heminge and Condell's dedicatory epistles and before the commendatory poems by others we encounter one of Jonson's greatest poems, "To the memory of my beloued, The Author Mr. William Shakespeare: And what he hath left us." Jonson's investment of intellectual energy went far beyond even his impressive poetic contribution, for the First Folio manifests clear signs of his substantial editorial input. The "light pointing" or "playhouse punctuation" usually used for plays were, for instance, abandoned and instead "the so-called logical pointing that Jonson had employed in his *Workes* were adopted."[58] The punctuation, use of parentheses, and the prefatory material follows the paradigm of

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[56]See G. E. Bentley, *The Profession of Dramatist in Shakespeare's Time: 1590-1642*, pp. 51-53.
[57]See Michel Foucault's "What is an Author?"
[58]David Riggs, *Ben Jonson: A Life*, p. 276.

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Workes.. The phrase that he criticized in *Discoveries* -- "Caesar never did wrong, but with just cause" -- was replaced with a more logical formulation. Jonson seems to have been the guiding literary spirit of the folio publication of Shakespeare's plays.[59]

Jonson may have seen Shakespeare's Folio as a means to help him ensure that his own daring *Workes* would become a lasting achievement. The rival folio was seen as an "ally." While his literary reputation had risen in the years after his *Workes* appeared, he may well have continued to feel somewhat insecure about this audacious move, for his reification of *play* as *work* was no doubt still in an unstable state. His involvement with Shakespeare's Folio seems to have enabled him to come to terms with his complex relation to Shakespeare. Unlike many critics of later eras, he appears to have realized that his affinities with Shakespeare outweighed any antagonisms.

Critical opinion of "To the memory of my beloued, The Author Mr. William Shakespeare: And what he hath left us" has been polarized for centuries. Some follow Dryden and detect a strong satiric element; others agree with Pope and find nothing of the kind.[60] What appears to be indisputable is that any reading of the poem depends on one's assessment of Jonson's attitude toward his long and complicated relationship with Shakespeare. In the poem not

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[59]Besides Riggs, see also Sara Van Den Berg, "'The Paths I Meant unto Thy Praise': Jonson's Poem for Shakespeare," p. 207; A. C. Partridge, *Orthography in Shakespeare and Elizabethan Drama*, pp. 130-40.

[60]For Dryden's view, see *Essays of John Dryden*, 2:18-19. T. J. B. Spencer, "Ben Jonson on his beloved, The Author Mr. William Shakespeare," pp. 22-40, defends Dryden's reading of the poem. For Pope's view, see Spence's *Observations, Anecdotes, and Characters*, No. 67 (i.29), and *Eighteenth Century Essays on Shakespeare*, ed. Smith, p. 51. Van Den Berg, pp. 207-218, makes an excellent argument for Pope's view of the poem.

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only are we offered an image of Shakespeare, but Jonson also presents a self-image,[61] as he had been doing in his poetry for decades. Throughout his life, his self-image often seems to be closely related to his view of the older playwright, and he appears to have used a conception of Shakespeare to help him define his own critical issues. While some critics assert that Shakespeare provided "a convenient contrast to himself,"[62] such generalizations may lead to a simplistic and distorted view of his position. A review of his relation to Shakespeare will indicate that it was not simple and static but instead multi-dimensional and often in flux, like his own personality and career.[63] Eventually he appears to have realized that he had a number of affinities with the older writer. By 1623, Jonson may well have come to consider the author of the First Folio, like the book itself, more an ally than a "mighty opposite."[64]

Rather than providing us with the Romantics' neat and simple contrast between a noble bard and a nasty poetaster, what we know of Jonson's relationship with Shakespeare suggests that there were numerous crosscurrents. In the prologue to *Every Man in His Humour* (1598), Jonson criticizes violations of the dramatic "unities" such as Shakespeare had often committed. And yet, the older man was listed first among the "principall Comoedians" in this play. In this piece, as in *The Case is Altered* (1597), there are affinities with Shakespeare's early romantic comedies. Jonson's use of "humours" in *Every Man in*

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[61]Van Den Berg, p. 208, notes "the presence of both men in the poem."
[62]Spencer, p. 22.
[63]See E. Pearlman, "Ben Jonson: An Anatomy."
[64]*Hamlet*, 5.2.62.

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does not set him off from contemporary dramatists, as had once been assumed; rather, he built on Chapman's work.[65] Shakespeare's characters are, of course, usually more complex, but this is not inconsistent with the fact that he often drew on the theory of dramatic humour and wit that Jonson was to develop further than any other writer.[66] For instance, not only is the Falstaff in *The Merry Wives of Windsor* a humour character, as is commonly noted, but in the wider sense that we explored in earlier chapters, the great Falstaff of the Henriad is not only "a miscellany of humours" but simultaneously singular in his wit, as Dryden noted.[67] With *Every Man out of His Humour*, Jonson did, however, attempt to separate himself from other dramatists by stressing intellectual content, as is evident in the speeches in the Induction of Asper, the presenter or "author." This perspicuous attempt at self-presentation occurs at the same time that Jonson was first presenting himself in his patronage poetry.

While Jonson's skill at presenting himself in poetry aided him in becoming the preeminent patronage poet of the age, his attempts to create obvious self-images in his drama led to a cul-de-sac. In spite of a vigorous impulse to present a positive self-image in his comical satires culminating in Horace of *Poetaster* that he wrote during the War of the Theaters, he seems to have eventually realized that on stage these figures were both awkward and vulnerable to attack.[68] Shakespeare, it seems, may have become involved in the

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[65]See W. David Kay, "The Shaping of Ben Jonson's Career," pp. 227-229.
[66]See chapters 2 and 4 above.
[67]Dryden, 2:84.
[68]See chapter 4 above.

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War of the Theaters, for Ajax in *Troilus and Cressida* may be a satire on Jonson.[69] But as the Poetomachia died down, Jonson remained true to the promise he made in the *Apologeticall Dialogue* appended to *Poetaster* to subsequently sit above the fray. His reference in this *Dialogue* to "Some better natures" who were "drawne" into the fray may partly be a reference to Shakespeare. That Shakespeare acted in Jonson's *Sejanus* in 1603 indicates that if there had been a serious breach between the two men, it was now past.

Perhaps the condition of their relationship at the end of the War of the Theaters is reflected in the "Poeticall Essaies" appended to Robert Chester's *Love's Martyr* to which both men contributed. This supplemental section, we have seen, has its own dated title page and seems to have been intended as a separate textual entity. After the anonymous "Invocatio, Ad Apollinem & Pierides," Shakespeare begins the signed "workes" with the untitled poem now referred to as "The Phoenix and Turtle." This uncharacteristically metaphysical piece has a characteristic blend of serious ardor and deflating humor. As if not to be outdone, Jonson ends the "Diverse Poeticall Essaies," with a flourish of poems. First we are prepared by the "Prœludium" for the "Epos" (changed to "Epode" when reprinted in *The Forrest*).[70] This "Epos" shares with "The Phoenix and Turtle" an almost obsessive concern for purity, though Jonson's piece is quite different in tone and does not reach the lyric heights of Shakespeare's. In what seems

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[69]See William Elton, "*Shakespeare's Portrait of Ajax in Troilus and Cressida*," pp. 744-48.

[70]The first entry in the *OED* for the use of *epos* is from the nineteenth century when it took on its present meaning of "epic." At the end of the "Prœludium" (which in *The Forrest* loses its title and is shifted into the first person singular), Jonson refers to the "Epos" as "an Epode" (a type of lyric poem or an incantation).

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to be an afterthought (since, for example, his name appears after both the first two and the last two poems), Jonson then added "The Phœnix Analysde" and an "Ode," as if to ensure that his contribution would stand up well in comparison. The competition appears to have been fierce and yet within civil bounds. This cultured civility is consonant with the fact that the playwrights were making a foray into a type of poetry that the "Invocatio" tells us was not for patronage: "No Mercenarie hope did bring them forth, / They tread not in that servile Gate."

In the period of his great comedies, Jonson abandoned the use of obvious self-images and developed a more subtle dramatic technique. While the style of these comedies is uniquely his own, his aesthetic relation to Shakespeare appears to have become more vital at this time. He turned away from purely satiric comedy and took on a more tolerant attitude toward deception. In the major comedies he in fact seems to come close to achieving Shakespearean sophistication in his attitude concerning the use of illusion. *Bartholomew Fair* (1614), his last major comedy, is his most festive one. Even though -- or perhaps because -- he has come to a generous and Shakespearean attitude that intimates an affinity between artists and artificers, in the Induction he felt the need to distinguish himself from the older playwright by alluding to *The Tempest*, while grumbling about improbable plots. While his major comedies manifest a strong affinity with Shakespeare's sophisticated attitude toward deception, his realistic bent set him at odds with the genre of Romance that the older playwright was now exploring. Even this clear difference between the dramatists would eventually disappear. At the end of

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his career he returned to the romantic plot elements that he flirted with when he began to write.[71] As Jonson's drama developed, on the deepest level his oeuvre appears to have become more consonant with basic attitudes of the older writer. Jonson seems to have eventually become aware of this complex sympathy, even though his independent spirit often struggled against such a recognition

In 1623 when asked to contribute commendatory poems to the First Folio, Jonson was cognizant of many interactions with the author over the years, most of which we will never come to know. But we can discover many of their exchanges of ideas by examining what they have left us. Consider, for instance, one aspect of the unexampled development of dramatic structure in the first decade of the seventeenth century: the practice of deception on the audience. In *All's Well That Ends Well* Shakespeare begins to experiment with this unconventional technique,[72] in *Epicoene* Jonson greatly develops it, and in *The Winter's Tale* Shakespeare endows it with unexpected metaphorical significance. These writers did not work in isolated environments, but rather built on each other's ideas. When Jonson perused the First Folio in 1623, it may have seemed less like an insular and closed book and more like a burgeoning text with offshoots that intertwined with the work of other writers including his own. As poststructuralists have argued, a book can never be a closed entity, though its physical appearance may trick us into thinking that it is; any text is actually an "intertext." Perhaps to the

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[71]See Anne Barton's discussion of Jonson's return to Romance in *Ben Jonson, Dramatist.*

[72]See Bertrand Evans, *Shakespeare's Comedies*, pp. 145-166.

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(re-)inventor of the book, as Richard C. Newton fashions Jonson,[73] standing at the threshold of the modern age before the reification of new textual forms had calcified, this truth may have been more obvious.

Although as Sonnet 111 illustrates, Shakespeare, like Jonson, was quite sensitive to the stigma of the theater, he never ceased for long to write for it. The younger man explored more socially prestigious modes, but he too never truly abandoned drama, though there was a significant hiatus in his dramatic production. While Jonas Barish demonstrated that Jonson had an anti-theatrical tendency,[74] this was balanced by a pro-dramatic one. From the publication of *Every Man out of His Humour* in 1600 in a carefully proofread edition, which was quite unusual at the time,[75] to the inclusion of plays in his *Workes* and his involvement with the First Folio, Jonson consistently attempted to raise the status of drama. His literary ambitions and the channels in which his talents flowed left him little choice. Unlike Spenser and Milton who had equally high literary aspirations, he never wrote an epic, though he spoke of doing so. During the Renaissance, it was not an a priori truth that drama possessed a lower status than epic poetry. Theoretically, tragedy held as high a place as the epic in the hierarchy of literary forms, and comedy was valued for its ability to reform manners.[76] Gabriel Harvey had even tried to convince Spenser to shift his efforts from

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[73]Newton, "Jonson and the (Re-)Invention of the Book."
[74]See Barish, "Jonson and the Loathèd Stage."
[75]See G. B. Harrison, "Books and Readers, 1599-1603," *Library*, 4th ser. 14 (1933): 7-8; Kay, p. 230.
[76]See Richard Helgerson, *Self-Crowned Laureates*, p. 149.

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epic poetry to comedy, since "it hath been the usual practice of the most exquisite and odd wits in all nations ... rather to show and advance themselves that way than any other."[77] But by the time Jonson appeared on the scene, the association of drama with Sophocles, Seneca, Menander, Aristophanes, Plautus, and Terence had been obscured and its good name had been damaged by the numerous mediocre and inferior plays that were then popular.

The status of drama was no longer high, but Jonson did not give up hope. His *Workes* in fact suggest that he intended to stake his claim to laureate status more on his dramatic *oeuvre* than on his poetry. "The Catalogue" of his *Workes* does indeed indicate that he considered the plays his most important and substantial creation. If he had wished, he could have positioned *The Forrestor Epigrammes* at the beginning of his book. The Catalogue's selective and considered ordering clearly was not intended merely to show his development. He must have knew that the first major section of any book holds a crucial position for the reader, and his placement of plays in this position is clearly quite significant. The emphasis on the dramatic works is also evident in the title page's elaborate engraving. At the bottom right of this page there is a representation of an ancient theater (labeled a "visurium") and centrally placed, right above the title, there is a rendering of an impressive modern "Theatrum." The implication is clear: the modern stage has the means to rise to the prestige of the ancient one.

If the drama was to be successfully moved from the public stage to prestigious folios, contemporary plays would need to win a

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[77]Quoted by Helgerson, pp. 149-50.

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reputation as fit objects of serious study. Jonson was too shrewd to imagine that he would be able to engineer this single-handedly. He was in need of allies of the highest rank, playwrights whose work when transferred to the printed page would not be seen as scurrilous entertainment that should never have left the "loathéd stage." This famous phase from his poetic reaction to a theatrical failure indicates, it is true, an anti-theatrical impulse, but one that was more than offset by a love of drama -- in all senses of the word. He eventually returned to the theater and he never doubted the value of his dramatic achievement. To privilege either the literary, which used to be the common critical tendency, or the theatrical, as is now becoming fashionable,[78] may be to set up a false opposition.

In addition to the fact that Jonson's greatest achievement was as a dramatist, his remarks in his prefaces, plays, poems and in *Discoveries* allow him to be considered the first major modern English theorist and critics of drama, even though dramatic criticism was not yet an established form.[79] While it is true that he was he a neo-classical theorist, his insights go far beyond his classicism. He was not a slavish follower of the ancients, whom he believed "open'd the gates, and made the way, that went before us; but as Guides, not Commanders: *Non Domini nostri, sed Duces Fuêre.* Truth lyes open to all; it is no mans *severall*" (*Disc.* p. 567).[80] Such an attitude is reflected in his dramatic criticism, which extended far beyond his

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[78]See, for instance, Timothy Murray, "From Foul Sheets to Legitimate Model: Antitheater, Text, Ben Jonson."

[79]The first extended piece of dramatic criticism in English is Dryden's "Essay of Dramatic Poesy," which was published in 1668. See chapter 2 above.

[80]Cf. chapter 4 above.

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much-noted emphasis on the neo-classical unities.[81] His plays draw on and yet transform completely classical models and in fact represent an attempt to forge a fully modern conception of drama. Indeed, he realized that "no Imitator, ever grew up to his *Author.*" It is thus understandable how his critical genius led him to become the first appreciator of the true status of Shakespeare's oeuvre. Both of Jonson's commendatory poems demonstrate that when he read the First Folio he realized that it would bear up well under prolonged critical scrutiny. Indeed, this is why he calls "forth thund'ring Æschilus, / Euripides, and Sophocles" in his tribute. In Shakespeare he came to recognize a vital ally in his quest to restore to drama its lost dignity.

Jonson's shorter contribution to the First Folio, "To the Reader," may provide an important clue to his true attitude toward the text. This poem, we have seen, is in the most prominent of positions: When we open the Folio, it is what we first read, before even Heminge and Condell's "Epistle Dedicatorie" to Pembroke and Montgomery. While praising "the Graver" of Shakespeare's portrait, Jonson introduces the topic of art versus nature, which he will later return to in his great tribute to Shakespeare. Drawing on the tradition *ut pictura poesis*, he shifts our attention to the literary arts. He instructs the "Reader, looke / Not on his Picture, but his Book," for it is by looking at "the Print" that we will see what will "surpasse / All, that was ever writ in brasse." The shift from the image of the body to "the Print" -- that is, to the literary -- parallels the movement from the human presence of a dramatic performance to

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[81]See chapter 2 above.

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the to the bodiless *text* that exists, in Emily Dickinson's phase, "where the meanings are." Unlike Heminge and Condell, Jonson is not concerned with promoting the sale of the Folio. Rather, he appears to be fostering the transformation of a "playwright" into an "author," a process with which he was exceptionally well acquainted; he was clearly a pioneer in this area.

Dryden referred to "Johnson's verses to the memory of Shakespeare" as "an insolent, sparing, and invidious panegyric."[82] While Dryden often had many important insights into Jonson's work, we should not accept this assessment without question. His proximity to Jonson may not have been an unmitigated benefit, for it may have made it difficult for him to put this writer's disturbing personality into proper perspective. It has, after all, taken us several centuries to begin to begin to come to terms with Jonson's provocative attitude and behavior. We now know, for instance, how "invidious" the poem's phrase "small *Latine*, and lesse *Greeke*" may *seem*, even though Jonson's intent in these words may well have been misconstrued. If we consider this phrase in the context of the poem and allow for Jonson's immense learning and pride, his phrase in fact seems quite natural. He is simply suggesting that though the older writer's understanding of the Greeks and Romans was not as comprehensive as his own, this did not prevent Shakespeare's "nature" -- his natural talent -- and his "art" from equaling those of the greatest classical playwrights. That Jonson expected such candor to add force of the

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[82]Dryden, 2:18; cf. Spencer, p. 30.

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panegyric appears clear from the rhetorical structure of the whole piece.

In an attempt to defend Dryden's view of "To the memory of my beloued," it has been compared to Jonson's verses to Drayton and Donne.[83] In fact it bears only a superficial resemblance to the poem to Drayton and though the comparison to those to Donne is apt, we will see that this in fact contradicts Dryden's view. The beginning of the piece to Drayton -- "It hath beene question'd Michael, If I bee / A Friend at all; or, if at all, to thee" (H&S, 8:396) -- has a tone quite different from the tribute to Shakespeare, which soon ascends to: "I confesse thy writings to be such, / As neither Man, nor Muse, can praise too much." When the piece to Drayton does rise to praise, it seems more taken with the material that Drayton treats than with his treatment. Jonson's remark that Drayton's "long verses pleased him not" can in fact be reconciled with this poem without too much difficulty. The commendatory verse to Drayton is quite conventional. The poem to Shakespeare, however, is, as Anne Barton observed, "well out of the class of most tributes of the kind,"[84] and appears sincere in its need to "confesse" that a previous judgment had to be adjusted.

Jonson's relation to Shakespeare can be clarified if we examine the somewhat similar one he had with Donne. Jonson voices his disagreements with both Shakespeare and Donne, but this honesty does not contradict his expressions of admiration. His two epigrams

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[83]Spencer, pp. 28-29.
[84]Barton, *Ben Jonson, Dramatist*, p. 258.

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on Donne[85] resemble in tone his tribute to Shakespeare. Jonson believed that Donne was "the first poet in the world in some things," and even memorized one of Donne's elegies. He sent all his poems to Donne for his opinion, which he valued highly (see "Epigram XCVI"). His great respect for Donne is not irreconcilable with his critical comments. His remark to Drummond "that Done for not keeping of accent deserved hanging" was made when he was in his cups and was intended somewhat humorously. While this comment does express a reservation, the extreme punishment it recommends should of course not be taken at face value and therefore a humorous tone seems unmistakable.

The suggestion "that Done himself for not being understood would perish," which one critic construed as a "severe censure,"[86] appears intended rather to express a fear that Donne's notorious obscurity might cause his achievement to be lost to posterity -- a possibility increased by the fact that this poet actively prevented his own poems from being published. None of his remarks contradicts his belief that Donne was "the first poet in the world in some things," for his view seems complex, not inconsistent. That he objected to his friend's "not keeping of the accent" and believed him to be a difficult poet to understand does not vitiate his extremely high judgment of Donne's accomplishment.

In reading Jonson's poems to Shakespeare and Donne we encounter the same dilemma that arises when examining his poems

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[85]For his Epigrams on Donne (XCVI and XXIII), see H&S 8: 34, 62. Jonson's other remarks about Donne quoted in this paragraph are from H&S, I: 133, 135, 138.

[86]Spencer, p. 28.

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to patrons. How can we judge the poet's sincerity when the social context called for a substantial degree of flattery? When Jonson asserts that he is telling the truth, the social code suggests that he may be insincere. Within this coded language system, the proposition "I am telling the truth" becomes as problematical as the Cretan Liar's Paradox, "I am lying." While critics find it tempting to interpret all protestations of sincerity as coded insincerity, this would make it structurally impossible for the literal truth to be accepted at face value. If a writer wished to express his honest admiration of his subject, he would not be able to do so. We must be careful not to let our cynicism blind us to the subtle nuances that would allow us to decipher this code. While the question of sincerity may be formally undecidable within this coded language system and while we can never be certain whether the poet is telling the truth, there may be indications both internal and external to a poem that can help us test the probability of our hypotheses.

That Jonson's tribute to Shakespeare was written as a commendatory poem has caused some commentators to suspect that it's praise is merely conventional and to agree with Dryden that it was an "invidious panegyric." Such a hypothesis is not, however, in harmony either with the stage of development that Jonson reached as an artist by 1623, or with his long and complex relationship with Shakespeare. While a spiteful gesture of this nature agrees with what would become the Romantic myth of Jonson as Shakespeare's malignant antagonist, it does not seem consonant with the figure of an author who was able to produce a "mature and multi-

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dimensional"[87] *oeuvre* The hypothesis also does not agree with much of the internal evidence, such as the poem's superiority to conventional commendatory verses. Moreover, internal evidence of a more local nature does not support this hypothesis. For example, in order to make the diction of the poem seem consistent with Dryden's description of it as "sparing," one writer has attempted to decode the phrase "Soule of the Age!" "Here *soul* means 'darling,'" we are informed; we are allegedly misled by the fact that "To a modern reader the ringing phrase ... sounds like the late eighteenth-century notion of *Zeit-Geist*, the 'Spirit of the Age.'"[88] This conjecture is not born out by a close examination of the etymological evidence. While the combined formed "soul's-darling" existed at the time, by itself *soul* apparently never meant "darling." The expression "Soule of the Age!" in fact suggests the sense: "The essential, fundamental, or animating part, element, or feature of something" (OED) a sense we also see in *Henry 5* (4.1.4). Indeed, the phrase "soul of the world" (after the Latin, "anima mundi") was current, as Shakespeare's Sonnet 107 illustrates: "Not mine own fears, nor the prophetic soul / Of the wide world, dreaming on things to come ..."

Jonson's tribute registers how he was stunned on first seeing the full scope of Shakespeare's genius. Eventually, after he had recovered from the shock and his neo-classical critical proclivities reasserted themselves, he would stress the unevenness of achievement that he saw in Shakespeare's work and de-emphasize its ability to reach great heights. To be fair to Jonson, even with the

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[87]Pearlman, p. 365.
[88]Spencer, p. 32.

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benefit of centuries of intense critical mining of the work's hidden beauties, I think, a dispassionate judgment must admit that there is significant unevenness of accomplishment and that it is in fact impossible for this not to be the case. In *Discoveries* Jonson recounted how he had objected to "the Players" assertion that

> it was an honour to *Shakespeare,* that in his writing, (whatsoever he penn'd) hee never blotted out line. My answer hath beene, Would he had blotted a thousand. Which they thought a malevolent speech. I had not told posterity this, but for their ignorance, who choose that circumstance to commend their friend by, wherein he most faulted. And to justifie mine owne candor, (for I lov'd the man, and doe honour his memory (on this side Idolatry) as much as any.) ... hee redeemed his vices, with his vertues. There was ever more in him to be praysed, then to be pardoned." (H&S, 8: 583-84)

The significance for Jonson of this attempt to come to terms with the older writer is suggested by the fact that this section, "De Shakespeare nostrat," immediately precedes in *Discoveries* the one on *the difference of wits,* "Ingeniorum discrimin," that we have seen in chapters 2 and 4 contains his most insightful discussion of creative intelligence.

In the dedication "To the great Variety of Readers," Heminge and Condell did indeed claim that they "have scarse received from

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him a blot in his papers." The unfinished state and the inconsistencies of many of the plays in the Folio indicate, however, that shortcomings in fact existed in his foul papers, as well as in his fair copies. Jonson's deflation of the myth of Shakespeare's miraculous ability to avoid the imperfections that are entailed in the creative process is as important now as it was then. Editors and the readers of the Folio must use their imaginations to transform "what he hath left us" into a *lisible* text, if the playwright is to become an Author, if he is to be at home in his new venue, the theater of the mind.[89] The *author*, we are discovering, is actually not as dead as we imagined and in fact represents a useful means to negotiate our cultural heritage. This does not, however, imply that authority -- even Shakespeare's -- should not be questioned or that the "past" need not be conceived by the present.

We should not feel too uneasy about the fact that Shakespeare's accomplishment is imperfect and must be completed by editors and readers. While contemporary attempts to deconstruct conflated editions of his plays are quite valuable, that they in fact continue a process that began in the eighteenth century suggests that any process of return to originary texts will never reach a point of certainty. We must be content with the fact that an objective grasp of "Shakespeare" will never be attained, and that he will instead always live in the current interpretative community. Especially to a modern sensibility transformed by the revolution of print culture, his work

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[89]The contemporary interest in this "change of venue" may be reflected by Robert Fludd's illustration--in his *History of the Two Worlds* (1619)--of a "Memory Theater" that may be based on the Globe; see Frances Yates, *The Art of Memory*, pp. 342-367.

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will always appear unfinished and will cry out for editorial and critical intervention.

Unlike a standard eulogy, "To the memory of my beloued" achieves great power by blending reservations with praise. In this way it reflects not only Jonson's complex relationship with the older playwright, but also the complex experience he underwent when he saw for the first time what Shakespeare "hath left us." His tribute integrates an expression of his sudden awareness of the extent of Shakespeare's achievement with a confirmation that the myth of errorless composition is false. His refusal to idolize Shakespeare and "what he has left us," his insistence that lines were blotted, adds a ring of honesty to his claim in his tribute that Shakespeare's "living line" surpassed "Marlowes mighty line." The mixture of beauties and imperfections in the First Folio moved Jonson to stress not only the astonishing result, but also the complex process of creation:

> ...he
> Who casts to write a living line, must sweat,
> (Such as thine are) and strike the second heat
> Upon the Muses anvile: turne the same,
> (And himselfe with it) that he thinkes to frame
> Or for the lawrell, he may gaine a scorne,
> For a good *Poet's* made, as well as borne.

When Jonson first read the First Folio he may have been able to accept the devastating splendor of its greatest conceptions only because he knew that it contained significant blemishes, editorial and

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otherwise. While he would continue to voice reservations, he came to believe that the older poet "made" himself so well that his "Volumes light" would shine "for all time" and perhaps would help his own *Workes* do the same.

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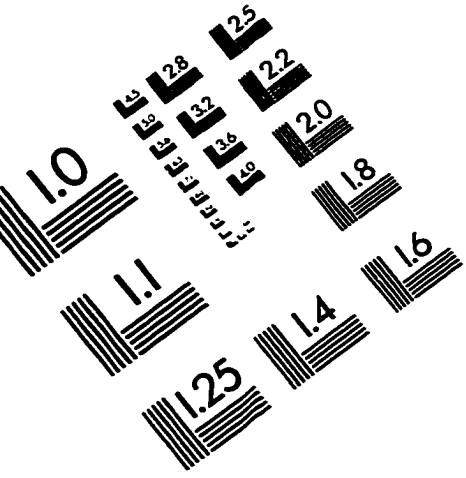

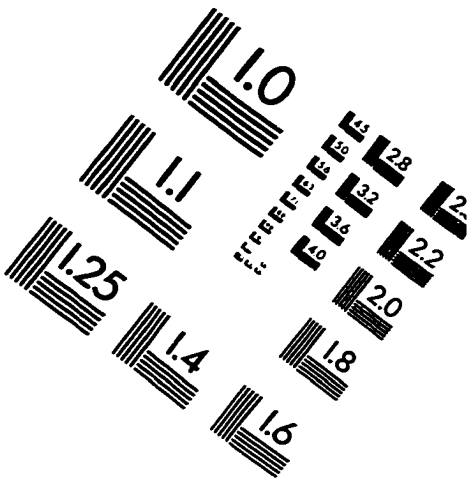

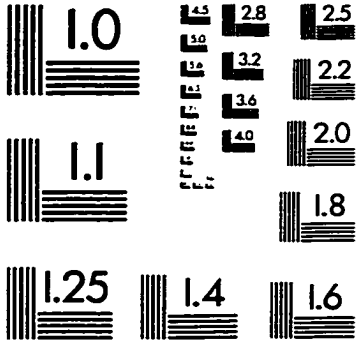

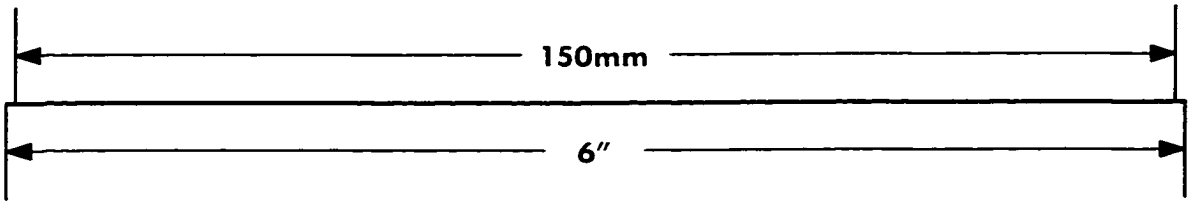

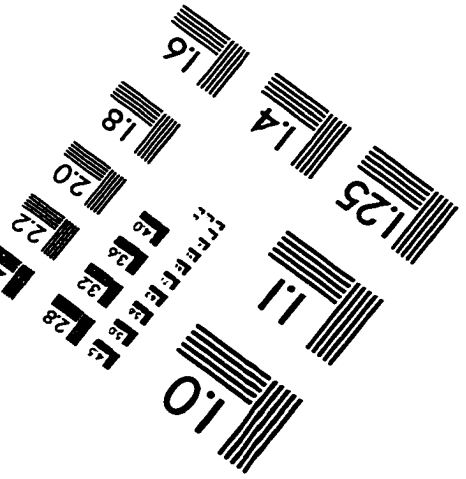

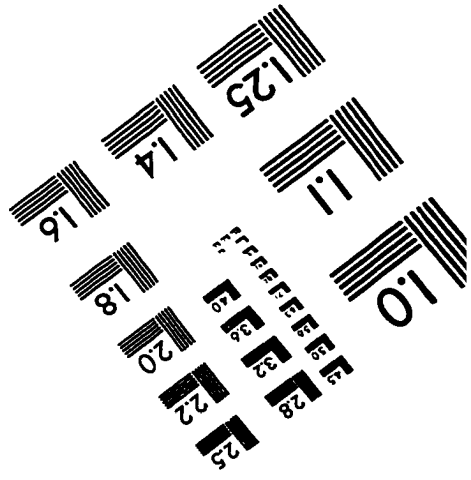

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