

**"Powers of Desire: Specularity and
the Subject of the Tudor State"**

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CSST Working
Paper #79

CRSO Working
Paper #475

May 1992

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Specularity and the Subject of the Tudor State

The subject of the subject has left us, of late, in something of a muddle. Post-modernism has taken the post-enlightenment subject for a standing joke. The "thinking subject," the subject that begins in the mind's consciousness of its own motions and becomes the locus of all cognitive action and the measure of all truth, the subject launched by Cartesian philosophy and reified by Romanticism, this universal and universalizing subject now strikes us as provincial and platitudinous, if too coercive in its workings to be quaint. We have come to regard the "historical subject" as a concept of superior political and explanatory power, and we argue about essence and constructedness, and we try in the midst of our arguments to leave a space for agency, which is to say for narrative--for affect and effect, for memory and change.

In the midst of capitalism's late decline and ironic "triumph," in the midst of theoretical and political developments that sharply dispute the supposed autonomy and coherence of the bourgeois subject, that subject exhibits remarkable durability as a default cognitive and political device. Stories organized and authorized by individual experience (biographical, psychodynamic, parabolic or exemplary) still seem to us (late capitalism's uneasy survivors) to possess uniquely satisfying explanatory capacities. The individual life story remains our chief semantic unit in efforts to make sense of the world.¹ The intellectual prestige of psychoanalysis has endured many vicissitudes in and out of the American academy, but its paradigms and catch-phrases are perpetual money-makers, the stuff of a perdurable, recession-proof franchise. The escalating recourse in the United States to "private life" as the measure of public aptitude testifies to a powerful social investment in the hermeneutic and moral power of biographical "experience." The hearings that ultimately produced the confirmation of Clarence Thomas as Associate Justice of the United States Supreme Court are a recent case in point. On the broadest public platform, in October, 1991, the post-Romantic politics of "authenticity" combined with the post-modern politics of auto- and ethnic biography to produce a high-stakes spectacle of competing and reciprocally discrediting subject projections.² A son of sharecroppers; a daughter of the working poor; family members and confidantes; co-workers and self-appointed "character witnesses"; White House handlers; Senators diversely bound by protocol, self-interest, backstage deals, reputations for laxness or libertinage, and "ideology"; the overdetermined specimens of Washington clientage and patronage: assembled to what end? To produce a television docudrama about contradictory narratives of desire.

These narratives were ostensibly competing on the grounds of inherent plausibility and relevance, but far more salient was their vociferous promotion, their proliferative, insinuating, and diversionary instrumentality, their sheer capacity to occupy airtime and forensic space. Animating and animated by these narratives as they jockeyed for position (Did he do it? Whom did she tell? Why would she telephone? Was she liked? Whose sexual fantasies can John Doggett be said to have starred in?) was also a complex and recursive field of cultural assumptions about gender, professionalism, race, and class. Offscreen, in the closed-door drama of "advice and consent," the narratives of desire were no doubt differently named and differently inflected, but their collision manifestly produced a comparable amount of atmospheric noise. Despite allegations to the contrary, the much-deprecated "process" of

inquiry was by no means a precipitous decline from sober debate-on-the-merits to partisan muckraking. Long before Anita Hill had been heard from, the Thomas nomination had been tactically structured around the slippery, reciprocal authentication of "justice" and "experience." In lieu of juridical experience, the public was offered the (biographical) experience of youthful adversity. In lieu of a considered interpretive position on constitutional law, the public was offered a man who had "never discussed" one of the most controversial Supreme Court decisions (*Roe v. Wade*) of our era. At such a vanishing point, self-reliance is difficult to distinguish from self-fabrication. That the interlineations of "justice" and "experience" are manifold and manipulable was a lesson vividly encapsulated by the three-day, last-ditch, televised interpellation of Clarence Thomas, but the lesson is by no means unique to that portion of the spectacle. American public affairs are everywhere inscribed--and everywhere muddled--by the longing for a seamless narration of self.

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The subject I look to here for leverage (and respite) is a pre-enlightenment one--the subject constituted by and within the Tudor state. The advantage of the Tudor subject, for my purposes, is that it exists across the great Romantic divide and can only return our own notions to us estranged. Early modern Englishmen thought of the subject as a constructed thing, a "creature." One was a creature of God; one might be the creature of a prince or some other mighty patron. Creatureliness as a concept possessed both theological and political valence and was firmly embedded in a hierarchical, indeed a patriarchal, understanding of creation. The sixteenth-century subject was not conceived as the locus of interiority but as a thing of radical and functional contingency. The word subject (from the Latin sub, or "under," and jacere, "to throw") in this period was indissolubly predicated upon subjection, as the OED implacably testifies, and as Raymond Williams and Peter Stallybrass, among others, have lately reminded us.³ Williams and Stallybrass both insist upon the subject's grounding in patterns of dominance-and-subordination. Both are interested in the complex processes of inversion by which the subject and subjectivity acquired their more recent prestige. The watershed that interests Williams is that of German classical philosophy, which promoted the subject to its status as "the active mind or the thinking agent (in ironic contrast with the passive subject of political dominion)" (261). The watershed that interests Stallybrass is that of the English revolution "where, for the first time, the word 'individual' is explicitly used to displace the implication of subjection in the subject" (26). In either scenario, the subject begins as one who is under domination. In either scenario, in our common speech and common moralizing ("he treats her like an object"), the subject occupies the position of privilege. But on top or below, the subject is never outside the structure of subjection; the subject is always inflected by power.

In his own account of subject formation, Louis Althusser invokes a similar structure of dominance and contingency. Althusser's announced project in "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes towards an Investigation)"⁴ is to refine previous Marxist accounts of the reproduction of labor power, a category that comprises physical bodies, a changing body of "skills," and a recursive process of "ideological subjection." "Ideology interpellates [hails, or calls forth] individuals as subjects. . . . By this I mean that, even if it only appears under this name (the subject) with the rise of bourgeois ideology . . . the category of the subject . . . is the constitutive category of all ideology" (170-71). Althusser has been justly criticized for his tendency to construe the interpellation of subjects from above. The functionalist question with which his essay begins (How do the relations of production

reproduce themselves?) tends to produce a deterministic answer, one that scants the counter-hegemonic and contestatory contributions to social- and subject-formation. His class-based analysis of power and vested interest tends to obscure the ideological workings of other functional and symbolic groupings (race, sex, religion, ethnicity) whose imperfect alignments and instabilities now seem to many theorists to be indispensable to any account of social and ideological change.⁵

Althusser insists that the formal structure he describes in "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses" is a universal one: "the formal structure of all ideology is always the same" (177). He accordingly insists that his chief example of subject formation is an arbitrary and wholly typical one, chosen simply for its accessibility "to everyone" (177). But it is a measure of Althusser's theoretical richness--a sign that his answer has considerably complicated the original, functionalist question--that the example he chooses is that of "The Christian Religious Ideology," under which rubric he invokes (as does historical Christianity) figures from both Old and New Testaments. "And Moses, interpellated-called by his Name, having recognized that it 'really' was he who was called by God, recognizes that he is a subject, a subject of God, a subject subjected to God, a subject through the Subject and subjected to the Subject" (179). The authorizing Subject of Christianity is Word made Flesh. The authorized Christian subject is made in the Maker's likeness and recognizes himself in a calling-by-name, or vocation. Interpellation has a specular structure; Althusser says as much (180). But for Althusser, this specularly is a closed circuit, a determined and deterministic process that simultaneously centers and subordinates the subject. "A subjected being, who submits to a higher authority, . . . is . . . stripped of all freedom except that of freely accepting his submission" (180, 182). Despite his documented admiration for Lacan (discussed below), in other words, Althusser clearly has trouble conceiving of the full generative role that Lacan assigns to specularly. But repression and containment, narrowly construed, will not adequately account for the subject whose very interpellation--whose ontological precariousness--provides the ground (the shifting ground) for insubordination, which is to say for agency, and change. Endorsed by the transcendent, founded on secular "interest," or founded on delusion of either kind, subject formation is a mirror trick. But it is a mirror trick that works.⁶

And history is likeness-with-difference. The Tudor subject was always a crux and an interpellation of power. Subject of, subject to, dependent upon: the concept was relational. The bourgeois subject, invented precisely to obscure the workings of power, did not yet exist in sixteenth-century England. The Cartesian subject, invented so that cognitive power might be dissociated from political power, so that "power," in all the material and social formations that interest us now, might be rendered epiphenomenal, the Cartesian subject had not yet thought itself into indispensability. Under the Tudor (and later, the Stuart) regime, Francis Bacon was busy founding a new epistemology, a modern "science" emboldened by the reformed religion, but Bacon's epistemology was grounded in a profound sense of the cognitive constraints upon subject status. Unlike Descartes, Bacon did not begin with and had no plans for the radical promotion of the subject. The man who fashioned himself "the servant and interpreter of Nature"⁷ was all his life the servant and interpreter of factional court politics as well. He was deft, he was a survivor, he was keenly aware of what today we embrace as a truism: subject positions are not only contingent; they are multiple and overlapping. "I consider myself as a common," he once wrote, "and as much as is lawful to be enclosed of a common, so much your Lordship shall be sure to have."⁸ The Lord to

whom Bacon addressed himself was his exuberant and dangerous patron, Robert Devereux, 2nd Earl of Essex, who had some chronic trouble discerning what was lawful in a subject and eventually lost his life on account of it. Bacon, who was in every respect the subtler man, sometimes wrote for the Earl as well as to him. One of these scribal productions will be discussed at some length in the main body of this essay. Another was commissioned while the Earl was under house arrest after his impetuous return from Ireland in 1600. Attempting to reinstate Essex in the Queen's good graces, Bacon wrote a pair of letters, "as if" from Bacon's brother Anthony to Essex, and from Essex to Anthony Bacon in reply. These letters were to be "in secret manner showed to the Queen" as evidence of the Earl's devotion.⁹ "I know," wrote the ghost-written "Essex," "I ought doubly infinitely to be her Majesty's: both jure creationis, for I am her creature, and jure redemptionis, for I know she hath saved me from overthrow."¹⁰ My savior, my creator: the pattern invoked is explicitly the Christian subject formation described--albeit with irreverence--by Althusser. But the ever-precarious relation between Essex's "ought" and his performance is particularly vivid in the present instance. Called forth by a simulated correspondence--a ventriloquized dialogic--the specular creature of royal favor is "doubly infinitely" elusive. "I have spent more hours to make him a good subject to her Majesty," said the longsuffering Bacon, "than ever I spent in my own business."¹¹

In a general theory of ideology, Althusser writes, the structure described will be transhistorical. It is the general theory that most interests Althusser. But every concrete subject--this is the corollary--is inextricably embedded in a complex matrix of cultural filiation. "Ideology has no history" (159, 171). But ideologies--and the subjects they constitute--are inescapably historical. In an effort to recover some of the historical particulars of subject--and social--formation, I'm going to look in this essay at two cultural performances. Both were among the most visible expressions of Elizabethan court culture. Both participated in and helped to codify the erotic discourse that defined and produced the late-Tudor courtly subject,¹² that dominated Elizabethan court politics, and for decades shaped England's effort to formulate its national imperatives and international vulnerabilities. The first of these performances was written by Bacon and staged by the Earl of Essex in 1595. The second was published by Edmund Spenser in 1596. Both the Essex entertainment and The Faerie Queen describe an explicitly specular structure of subject formation, upon which the larger movements of war, statecraft, philosophy, and justice depend. This foundational reflexivity may seem to anticipate Descartes, thinking about thinking. But the Elizabethans thought about the specular subject rather differently. One of their names for it was Narcissus.

Some of the most interesting contemporary work on subject-construction has been done of late in gay and lesbian studies and has begun by denaturalizing and historicizing binary-coded cultural and psychological taxonomies based upon "sexual object choice," which is to say, upon the sex, narrowly construed as "same" or "different," of one's sexual partners. In Epistemology of the Closet,¹³ Eve Sedgwick calls our attention to the broad cognitive, political, and affective implications of a regime that construes the "secret" of identity in such binary-coded terms. Where do you really put it when you put it to someone? What is it like to live in a culture that makes such a question the key to differential distributions of public trust, enfranchisement, inheritance rights, and health care? In an earlier era, the question of property rights in female sexuality served as a comparable crux for morality, biological theory, the transfer of wealth, and social stability. In that earlier era--we might

call them the centuries of the cuckold--male and female identity, but especially the male, was grounded in an obsessive focus on feminine chastity: Who's been there when you weren't looking? Who's had her in that secret place, and thus had you? I have written elsewhere about the hermeneutics of cuckoldry--a semiotic system that governed and produced what we now call "identity" during vast stretches of premodern and early modern Europe¹⁴--and about the circles of speculation, proprietary competition, and political faction that were organized by the scandal of the female body in sixteenth-century England.¹⁵ Here I propose to discuss some related inscriptions of social and erotic desire. "Sexual orientation," as the concept organizes twentieth-century subjectivities, cultural production, and political taxonomies, would be a concept quite unrecognizable to the author of The Faerie Queene, but the metaphors and the structures of erotic object choice are central to Spenser's interlocking renditions of dynastic imperative, narrative production, political authority, cognitive and social action.

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On 17 November, 1595, Robert Devereux, second Earl of Essex, presented himself at the annual Accession Day Tilts by means of an allegorical vehicle that was elaborate even by the elaborate standard of Elizabeth's chief holiday. It was customary¹⁶ for tiltyard champions to stage triumphal entrances, setting forth in their chariots and pageant cars, in complimentary speeches addressed to the Queen, and in the imprese with which their shields were ornamented a self-dramatizing tissue of praise and plaint and petition. When, for instance, the Earl of Cumberland was chafing at his failure to acquire the governorship of the Isle of Wight, he fashioned himself in the tiltyard as a Discontented Knight and threatened to retire from service to the monarchy. When Sidney had been supplanted as heir to the Earl of Leicester by the recent birth of Leicester's son, he bore on his shield the device of Hope "dashed through."¹⁷ Thwarted as he chronically felt himself to be in his own personal and public aspirations, Essex in 1595 presented a device or allegory "much comended"¹⁸ by the lookers-on and later described as "his darling piece of love and self-love."¹⁹ The device, composed in large part by Francis Bacon,²⁰ unfolded in two sections: In front of the Queen's viewing stand at Whitehall, where the tilters ordinarily presented themselves and delivered their imprese, or emblematic shields, to the Queen, Essex's page pronounced a complimentary speech and was rewarded with the Queen's glove, which he in turn delivered to his master. Essex then made his entrance as Erophilus, the Knight of Love, his red and white costume emblazoned by the Queen's favor. He was met at the viewing stand by four characters, a Hermit, a Soldier, a Secretary of State, and his own Squire. The first three introduced themselves as followers of Philautia, or Self-Love, and attempted to win the Squire and thus his master to Philautia's cause. Having presented their tokens to the Squire and having endured interruption by various subsidiary figures--a common postboy from London, winded and bemired; a blind Indian prince--Philautia's servants then retired with their burden of allegory for the duration of the tournament. And none too soon: Cumberland, who had entered the tiltyard first in his capacity as Queen's Champion, had all this while been forced to play audience to his own upstaging. Sussex and the other tilters had been unceremoniously left to wait their turn outside the staging area.

Following the tournament and the customary banquet, Essex's entertainment resumed indoors, where the Hermit, the Soldier, and the Secretary attempted to recruit Erophilus for the lives of meditation, martial fame, and policy respectively. Self-love, in other words, is construed in this allegory not chiefly as an affective or inward state but as a series of career

moves, an outward, public promotion of the self-in-service. The choice confronting the Knight of Love is the choice between two derivations of service. Will the path of ambition be self-motivated and self-referential, or will it be mediated by the Queen's patronage? Will public and private labor be derived from the Queen's bounty and refer its progress back to her, or will profession take its shape from self-interest alone? The circulating compliment of courtly patronage harbors a shadowy threat: if the pace of preferment is insufficient to maintain the Queen's subjects in expectation, vocation will be centrifugal, subjection dispersed. The debate among the servants of Philautia and the Squire of Love is largely a debate about referentiality, or competing constructions of shadow and substance. The Soldier, for instance, praises War as the summary event that renders all other forms of action and virtue but pallid imitations: the muses are handmaidens to the man of war and sing his praises; huntsmen, athletes, and tragedians but counterfeit the exemplary action of the battlefield; even Lovers "never [think] their profession sufficiently graced, till they have compared it to a Warfare."²¹ The Secretary, a transparent burlesque of Essex's great antagonist Burghley,²² makes a speech that sounds like an early draft for Polonius: Squire, he advises, let thy master "not trouble himself too laboriously to sound into any matter deeply, or to execute any thing exactly; but let himself make himself cunning rather in the humours and drifts of persons, than in the nature of business and affairs. . . . Let him follow the wisdom of oracles, which uttered that which might ever be applied to the event. . . . To conclude, let him be true to himself" ²³ Predictably enough, the Squire ultimately rejects the blandishments of Self-Love in favor of continued service to the Queen, upon whose kind regard and rich patronage the self-promoting Lover thus offers to throw himself. "My Master's condition," explains the Squire, "seemeth to depend, as the globe of the earth seemeth to hang, in the air; but yet it is firm and stable in itself. . . . Is he denied the hopes of favours to come? He can resort to the remembrance of contentments past. . . . Doth he find the acknowledgement of his affection small? He may find the merit of his affection the greater His falls are like the falls of Antaeus; they renew his strength . . . such is the excellency of her nature, and of his estate."²⁴ Notwithstanding these courtly affectations of indifference to worldly measures of advancement, the psychic economies of knightly petition are clear: a marginal note in Bacon's hand explains that it is nothing less than "the Queen's unkind dealing which may persuade you to self-love."²⁵

Bacon knew whereof he spoke. The most immediate insult to Essex's prestige had been the matter of the Queen's solicitor-generalship. Essex had for some torturous months pitted his personal influence against the full weight of the Cecil faction by promoting Francis Bacon first, and unsuccessfully, for the position of attorney general, then for the newly vacated position of solicitor general. The Queen's young favorite was not one to hedge his bets. "The attorneyship for Francis," he wrote to Robert Cecil, "is that I must have, and in that will I spend all my power, might, authority and annuity, and with tooth and nail defend and procure the same for him against whosoever; and that whosoever getteth this office out of my hand for another, before he have it it shall cost him the coming by."²⁶ Despite these heroics, Essex was flatly denied preferment for his protégé; the patent of office for solicitor general was granted to Sir Thomas Fleming on 5 November, 1595, just 12 days prior to Accession Day.

The ceremonial rhetoric of the tiltyard and the banqueting hall had to be considerably more elastic than Essex's defiant letter to Cecil, if only because its audience was heterogeneous. The Accession Day entertainment addressed itself directly to the Queen, by dumb-

show to a large mixed public (common citizens might and thousands did gain access to the tiltyard for the admission price of one shilling), and at greater length to a factionalized group of courtiers, a group that included the Earl's allies and rivals alike (Burghley, ill, was absent from the festivities in 1595, but his son Robert Cecil was present). In Essex's device, Philautia is explicitly represented as the Queen's competitor, a lover's last recourse if the Queen prove too unkind. But Philautia is also implicitly equated with the Queen in her withholding humour. This equation is shadowed in the ambiguous feminine pronouns of the Squire's final speech on behalf of Erophilus:

Therefore Erophilus's resolution is fixed: he renounceth Philautia, and all her
 enchantments. For her recreation he will confer with his Muse: for her defence and
 honour, he will sacrifice his life in the wars, hoping to be embalmed in the sweet
 odours of her remembrance. To her service will he consecrate all his watchful
 endeavours, and will ever bear in his heart the picture of her beauty; in his actions, of
 her will; and in his fortune, of her grace and favour.

(Nichols, 379)

In every sentence but the first, the pronomial referent is Elizabeth: Erophilus refuses the blandishments of Philautia's servants while appropriating their vocational spheres, choosing to derive vocation from the Queen. But Erophilus's "resolution" requires the endorsement of his putative patroness; he is "fixed" upon hope, whose fulfillment rests with "her." To the Queen, in her bounty, Erophilus offers to dedicate his Muse, his life in the wars, his watchful endeavor. But if the Queen refuses to fill the place that a hopeful pronoun sets aside for her, her subject is condemned to serve Philautia, who is at once the fallback pronomial referent and the fallback patroness. Love and self-love are bound by the specular logic of subjectivity: in his fortune may be seen the picture of her face, or "favour."

Underscoring the work of slippery pronoun reference in Essex's device is the work of gendered allegory. Though love's outward vocation is doubly inscribed as male--Eros, Philus--love's inward collapse is conspicuously female--Philautia. In *Minerva Britanna*, Henry Peacham catalogues a number of imprese known to have been used on Accession Day; among the imprese he prints is a figure of Philautia,²⁷ who gazes into a mirror, her back turned to the symbols of commerce and community. The figure's breasts are bared, no doubt betokening an exhibitionist strain (and contemporary observers have taught us to associate a flagrant display of bosom with England's aging Virgin Queen)²⁸ but suggesting too the bounty and nurture that excessive self-regard sequesters from proper use or circulation. A Queen who is too niggardly of her favors does not merely throw her courtiers into the arms of Philautia; she is Philautia. The default identification is a thwarted suitor's small revenge.

But Bacon was required to hold his own against an overenthusiastic patron as well as against a tightfisted Queen, and he knew danger even when it championed his cause. "I desire your Lordship . . . to think," he warily wrote, "that though I confess I love some things much better than I love your Lordship, as the Queen's service, her quiet and contentment, her honour, her favour, the good of my country, and the like, yet I love few persons better than yourself, both for gratitude's sake, and for your own virtues, which cannot hurt but by accident or abuse."²⁹ He also wrote in Essex's service the "darling piece of love and self-love." Inscribed by Bacon, Erophilus is overdetermined. Eros and Philus conflated make Essex a lover of amorousness, a lover who loves his own motions better than he loves

his mistress, or his cause, or the rules of state and decorum.³⁰ Erophilus in his excess reproduces the self-constituting gaze of Philautia.

The derivation of subjectivity and public career from erotic paradigm was not unique to Essex, of course, but was in fact the dominant trope of courtly patronage in Elizabethan England. While the Petrarchan poet constructed both subjectivity and public ambition in a discursive model of desire,³¹ the Elizabethan courtier simultaneously declared his subjection and sued for patronage (subjects must have maintenance) in a Petrarchan address to the Queen.³² Love in this construct is not so much a thing one feels but a thing one does; the object of desire defines a course of ambition, Laura and the laurel perpetually conflated. Having lately clipped the wings of her impetuous favorite, Elizabeth in the tiltyard on 17 November, 1595, at the dawn of the 38th year of her reign, seemed prepared to take the young man back into her graces: she sent him her glove as a token. But after spending the better part of her evening on this business of Self-Love, she was less conciliatory, remarking "that if she had thought their had bene so moch said of her, she wold not haue bene their that Night, and soe went to Bed."³³

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When Spenser published the second installment of The Faerie Queene in 1596, he introduced the new books with stanzas that are commonly read as a reproach to Burghley, who had proved no more sympathetic to England's chief poet than to England's chief romantic hero, the Earl of Essex. Those "that cannot loue," writes Spenser, can little understand love's seminal role in epic action and philosophy. "[A]ll the workes of those wise sages, / And braue exploits which great Heroes wonne, / In loue were either ended or begunne" (IV Proem 2,3).³⁴ For his pattern and chief reader, the poet takes one "that loueth best, / And best is lou'd of all aliue" (IV Proem 4), his Queen. But before she can read the lesson locked in her own "chast breast," Elizabeth must be freed from "vse of awfull Maiestie" (IV Proem 4, 5). The Queen is thus invited to behold her own image in the mirror of the poem; that image differs from Philautia's by being oblique, by requiring the remedial mediation of the poet.³⁵

Spenser proposes a similar specular contract at the outset of Book VI, where etymology--"Of Court it seemes, men Courtesie doe call" (VI i 1)--rehearses a model of cultural production: courtesy in action circulates the image of the court. "From your selfe I doe this vertue bring, / And to your selfe doe it returne againe," writes the poet to his Monarch (VI Proem 7). Virtues ring about her person as do the lords and ladies who adorn her Court, "where courtesies excell" (VI Proem 7). But Spenser's Proem is so conspicuously at odds with itself as to discredit any such sanguine pattern. The present age is an age of corruption, we read; virtue lies hidden; courtesy "is nought but forgerie, / Fashion'd to please the eies of them, that pas, / Which see not perfect things but in a glas" (VI Proem 5).³⁶ The paradigma, or mirror of courtesy, is revealed as the darkened, distorting glass of Pauline epistle. So the poet must attribute to his Lady Queene a "selfe" from which he will derive the lost pattern, a selfe "in whose pure minde, as in a mirrour sheene" (VI Proem 6) the paradigm may be rediscovered. Not the court as it exists, then, but a court ascribed to the inwardness of the Queen, who is thus made subject of and to the Book of Courtesie. Between the distorting glass of a fallen, "passing" age and the flattering glass of poetic praise opens up a space for didactic fable.

Epic action begins with a gaze in the mirror. When Spenser thematizes the gaze, he inscribes Eros as a species of reformed narcissism, the closed embrace broken to allow for

the discursive path of knightly "error" (*errare*, to wander).³⁷ In *The Faerie Queene Book III*, the Knight of Chastity steals into her father's closet and consults a magic glass, endowed by Merlin with prophetic powers. Looking for the future, she sees, "as maydens vse to done" (III ii 23), a knight in shining armor. The instrument that has alerted her father the king to advancing enemies and incipient treasons modulates into "Venus looking glas" (III i 8) and alerts his daughter to invasions of another sort. But this is all in the course of Britomart's second gaze. The first face she sees in the glass is her own, and the second face--the likeness revised--is elusive: the figure that will govern desire and the narrative action spun from desire is a figure she must largely, and in her own person, invent.

Jacques Lacan tells a similar story about the emergence of symbolic agency. In his formulation of a cognitive "mirror stage,"³⁸ Lacan proposes that the child without language--the *infans*--begins its libidinal and linguistic maturation with a double gaze in a mirror. At first the infant believes that the figure in the glass is another; when s/he comes to "recognize" the figure as another *self*, the infant invests that self with all the psychic and physical autonomy the infant lacks and longs for. The evolution of desire begins in narcissism: the self discovered in a reflection comes to govern all the multiple cathexes around which subjectivity forms. Each subsequent object of desire will be an approximation of the figure in the glass, receiving its aura from memory. Of course, the perfected, autonomous self has no more a priori existence than does the illusory "other." The self and the figure in the glass are reciprocally *constituted* by error, are "recognized" as always already existing. "Error," says Lacan, "is the habitual incarnation of the truth."³⁹

The political implications that attend this derivation of subjectivity have not been lost on some of Lacan's most influential readers. "All ideology," writes Louis Althusser, "has the function (which defines it) of 'constituting' concrete individuals as subjects." "Ideology," moreover, "has a material existence."⁴⁰ Lacan's mirror has a material existence, though we would do better to look for it in the concrete practices of class, ethnic, and nationalist identification than in the infinite suggestibility of silver- or amalgam-backed polished glass. Althusser has argued that Lacan and Saussurean linguistics throw an indispensable light on the true subject of Freudian theory, and he writes thus of the Freud restored to us by Lacan: "Freud has discovered for us that . . . the human subject is decentred, constituted by a structure which has no 'centre' either, except in the imaginary misrecognition of the 'ego,' i.e. in the ideological formations in which it 'recognizes' itself. . . . This structure of misrecognition . . . is of particular concern for all investigations into ideology."⁴¹

In *The Faerie Queene* the subject and its etiology are explicitly rendered on a civic scale: subjectivity and national destiny both evolve around an interpolated otherness, a second, "better" likeness that translates into vocation. Once the self in the mirror has been withdrawn and proleptically reconstructed, epic--or civil--action depends for its continuance upon a deferred or suppressed recognition scene. It is this pattern of oblique or occluded likeness--this structure of misrecognition--and its constitutive role for Spenser's political narrative that I wish to trace in the later books of *The Faerie Queene*.

The first installment of *The Faerie Queene* (1590) ended with the embrace of reunited lovers: "Had ye them seene, ye would haue surely thought, / That they had beene that faire Hermaphrodite" (III xii 46; 1590), so closely are Amoret and Scudamour intertwined (their names--linked by *amor*--have always been so). But in the second edition of *The Faerie Queene* (1596) the hermaphroditic embrace is broken to make way for the second half of Spenser's poem, and the poem never achieves this version of closure again. In the wake of

the broken embrace, specular deferrals and suppressions are legion: Britomart fails to recognize the knight in the glass when she meets him on the tournament field; Belpheobe fails to recognize her wounded twin sister; Arthur fails to recognize his lovesick Squire; Scudamour fails to recognize his "virgin bride" after a long a tumultuous separation (unless the lapse is more extreme, and the narrator simply fails to recognize that he has brought his newlyweds together again).⁴² What distinguishes these patterns from comparable patterns in earlier books of *The Faerie Queene*, apart from their sheer number, is the increase of violent intervention. Most notably, two strategic beheadings in Book V preempt the recognition scenes--between Britomart and Radigund, Mercilla and Duessa, female figures all--that disastrously threaten the political agenda of Spenserian Justice.

Britomart's first double gaze in the looking glass plunges her into despair: "Nor man it is, nor other liuing wight . . . But th'only shade and semblant of a knight . . . Hath me subjected to loues cruell law" (III ii 38). "Why make ye," says her nurse, "such Monster of your mind?" (FQ III ii 40). Monstrosity is an analytical concept as well as a recurring figure in *The Faerie Queene*; the deformations that make a monster in this poem may be ethical, cognitive, political, or erotic in origin and import. In the present instance, in the counsel of a superstitious, commonsensical, stereotypical old nurse, those deformations are figured--and implicitly theorized--in erotic terms. The amatory monstrosities Glauce itemizes for Britomart at the beginning of Book III ("Of much more vncouth thing I was affrayd") are those versions of lust that work "contrarie vnto kind" by abrogating the proper distance that ought to obtain between lover and beloved. So Pasiphae, to take one of Glauce's examples, played a "monstrous part" by loving a bull, a creature too remote from kind. So Biblis, who loved a brother, and Myrrha, who loved a father, became monstrous by fixing desire on kindred, who are too close.

Glauce resorts to figures of monstrosity--all of them derived from Ovid--in order to reassure Britomart that her own infatuation is, by contrast, legitimate. But Britomart is not consoled. If an excess of "kindness" between lover and beloved makes desire unnatural or "unkind" in its radical sense, what of the absorption that is closer than incest? It is Britomart who presses this erotic economy to its logical limit and compares her own case to that of Narcissus: "I fonder, then Cephisus foolish child, . . . I fonder loue a shade, the bodie farre exild" (III ii 44). Narrower still than the circuit of incestuous desire is the circuit of self-love. More outlandish than bestiality is the love that links a woman of manifest narrative presence and dynastic consequence (if not of flesh and blood) to a phantom. Britomart is dismayed to find herself in thrall to a creature who is at once too remote (of incommensurate ontological--or representational--status) and too proximate (a product of her own imagination, or another self). "I . . . loue a shade"--an image--"the body farre exild." To which Glauce at last responds with pragmatic advice, her long suit: "No shadow," she staunchly advises, "but a bodie hath in powre" (III ii 45). Britomart does not fret about the syntactical ambiguity (which is it, exactly, that has the other in its power?); she turns this ambiguity into narrative action. Determined now to arm and seek the knight in the mirror, Britomart becomes a knight herself, unfolding the shadow's double corporeality. Breaking the specular entrapment of self-love, she makes desire the motive force of epic quest. Narcissism, reformed, is the inception of agency.⁴³

Needless to say (or nearly), the specter of erotic monstrosity continues to haunt Chastity's progress. In the House of Busirane, lush tapestries and walls of beaten gold anthologize the manifold varieties of monstrous mingling--a maiden with a bull, a maiden

with a ram, a maiden with a serpent, a maiden with a swan, a maiden with a shower of gold—"for loue in thousand monstrous formes doth oft appeare" (III xi 51). In the Temple of Isis, Britomart dreams she is impregnated by a crocodile and gives birth to a lion (V vii 16). A priestly exegete discerns in these bestial tropes an allegorical account of dynastic succession, but his serial equations imperfectly contain the "vncouth" vistas opened up by the dream. The unthinkable leaves a residue. Far from being banished by authorized interpretation, the radical "unkindness" Glauce once described as an antitype to love's legitimate quest continues to shadow that quest from canto to canto. Love's progress takes place as an increasingly subtle negotiation with prohibited analogues.

In Radigund, Britomart encounters just that monster of inversion she has feared to behold in the glass: a woman who prefers her own sex to the other and who falls in love with the image of her own abjection, with Arthegall in drag. Unlacing Radigund's helmet and taking pity on what he beholds, Arthegall has abandoned knightly prerogative and submitted to the "shame" of feminine dress and feminine occupation.⁴⁴ While Spenser's Knight of Justice thus lapses from his proper "semblance" (V vii 41) in the middle of his quest, Britomart upholds that semblance by means of a corrective surrogacy. Britomart has throughout the middle books of *The Faerie Queene* negotiated a double lineage. She has adopted the armor and the example of an enemy (of the Saxon warrior Angela) in order to invent a beloved foe who will become protector and progenitor of her native race. She has revived the lineage of female warriors in order to defend the prerogatives of patriarchy. Her battle-with Radigund has been twice rehearsed--once in the battle between herself and Arthegall, once in the battle between Arthegall and the Amazon. In each case, the unveiling of the feminine face has been fatal to martial action. But just at that juncture on the battlefield where Radigund's helmet would conventionally be unlaced, disrupting dynastic imperative with the reciprocal gaze of gendered common cause or with pity, which has waylaid Arthegall two cantos earlier and will waylay Arthur at Duessa's trial two cantos hence, Britomart "with one stroke both head and helmet cleft[s]" (V vii 34). She cuts off the recognition scene that Elizabethan sovereignty will not bear. She cuts off too the abominable precedent of the Amazonian state:

And changing all that forme of common weale,
The liberty of women did repeale,
Which they had long vsurpt; and them restoring
To mens subiection, did true Iustice deale.
(V vii 42)⁴⁵

Britomart restores the body politic to its "proper" shape by insisting that liberty and subjection are gendered attributes: she separates male from female, legitimate freedom from "vsurpt." Redivided and regrouped around a venerable asymmetry of power, "all" members of the commonwealth adore their conquering Reformer and treat her "as a Goddess" (V vii 42). Britomart reconstructs true Justice as a man, and he promptly leaves her.

Spenser waves the flag of patriarchy, as did his female monarch, at particularly trying junctures:⁴⁶ the allegory that attempts to distinguish a political and erotic career from outlandishness on the one hand and excessive inbreeding or narcissism on the other is fraught with tribulation. The very partner who will bind Britomart to conjugal and dynastic service himself wanders among strangers and is materially elusive:

Ne soothlich is it easie for to read,
 Where now on earth, or how he may be found;
 For he ne wonneth in one certaine stead,
 But restlesse walketh all the world around . . .
 (III ii 14)

Like Redcrosse Knight and Prince Arthur, like the Earl of Essex and the self-styled laureate Edmund Spenser, Arthegall makes his place in the commonwealth while serving, or improvising, the interests and imperatives of that commonwealth abroad. Arthegall's expatriation dates back to his infancy, when he was abducted by the demigoddess Astraea and taught to practice justice among wild animals (among people, justice is harder to administer). Britomart's task is to repatriate the changeling Knight of Justice so that he may defend his homeland, now estranged, against invaders. Having "invented," or discovered, her knight in a glass, Britomart must "invent" him in another sense: must conjure the body that the shadow "hath in powre" (III ii 45). And here is where excessive kinship rivals excessive strangeness as a peril to her quest. The knight that "fittest she for loue could find" (III ii 14) is a knight whose image she advances and preserves in her own person, as "in a glas," even when he allows his own likeness to lapse (V vii 38, discussed above), a knight whose confirmed narrative presence she greets with the joy of a newly delivered mother (III ii 11). The self-confirming circle of specular precipitation threatens to become no more than a delusory mirror trick; the second, exogamous likeness in the glass, to become no more than another version of the narcissistic first. Britomart "makes" the man she loves, makes him and her "selfe" in a single mold, the lady and the knight incorporate. Pygmalion and Narcissus are after all consanguineous, as anyone may read in Ovid's Metamorphoses.

In thrall to an Amazon, Arthegall assumes the abjection of women's clothing and women's work. When Britomart makes her way to his prison and beholds the state of "her owne Loue"--a beloved and a love in which self and other, man and woman, "proper" and imposed are confounded--she turns her head aside in "secrete shame" (V vii 38). She "revives" only when she has clothed her knight anew, restoring him to "manly hew" and "semblance glad" (V vii 40-41). Turning from her lover's body natural to the Amazonian body politic, encountering in the "common weale" the same "disfiguring" and "unnatural" dislocation of normative attributes she has encountered in the imprisoned knight, Britomart emphatically reasserts the old hierarchical organization of gender, an organization manifestly problematized by her own allegorical career.⁴⁷

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The hermaphroditic embrace with which the 1590 Faerie Queene concludes is broken to allow for epic's continuing action. Amoret and Scudamour are never so decisively reunited again, but the figure they once made is dispersed and displaced throughout the longer Faerie Queene. A hermaphroditic Venus presides over the story Scudamour tells in place of recognizing Amoret in the Book of Friendship (IV x 41). A double Idol--Isis/Osiris, man/wife, sister/brother, maiden/beast--presides over Britomart's vision in the Temple of Isis (V vii 6). An inscrutable Nature--endowed by veils and rumor with attributes that are both male and female, beautiful and terrible--presides over the trial of Mutability (VII vii 5-6). Despite the imperfectly absorbed and domesticated terror these figures imply, Venus, Isis/Osiris, and Nature function in these scenes as beneficent deities, signifying plenitude. But when the double sex unveils and assumes an explicitly political contour--as when

Radigund's person and Radigund's state threaten the reciprocal unfolding of gendered Chastity and gendered Justice, Britain's vested disposition of property rights--Spenser marks the double sex for destruction.

A case in point is the "monster" that lives beneath the altar of idolatry in the occupied Netherlands. Monstrously compounded--with the face of a maiden, the voice of a man, the body of a dog, a lion's claws, a dragon's tail, an eagle's wings--this creature feeds on the carcasses of sacrificial victims (V x 29, V xi 20) and signifies the Spanish Inquisition (V x 27). Like Error in the Book of Holiness, she takes the feminine pronoun and she discharges horrifying effluvia from her "hellish sinke" or "wombe" (I i 22, V xi 31). Ever ready to seize upon an antipapist pun, Spenser calls her a "deformed Masse" (V xi 32). Prince Arthur kills her when he liberates the Lowlands. Thus far, Spenser's propaganda contribution to the international Protestant cause seems clear, if overwrought: the Inquisition, ostensibly mobilized to root out doctrinal error, in fact feeds upon and propagates error; its role is predatory.

More complex hermeneutically are the monster's explicit links to the Theban Sphinx and to the story of Oedipus:

Much like in foulnesses and deformity
 Vnto that Monster, whom the Theban Knight,
 The Father of that fatall progeny,
 Made kill her selfe for very hearts despight,
 That he had red her Riddle, which no wight
 Could euer loose, but suffred deadly doole.
 So also did this Monster vse like slight
 To many a one, which came vnto her schoole,
 Whom she did put to death, deceiued like a foole.
 (V xi 25)

Among the faults of the Inquisition, Spenser's allegory implies, is to inquire too closely into conscience. Whatever the answer it elicits--a losing or a "loosing" one--the Inquisitor's "schoole" is deadly. In England, the Elizabethan Settlement had been specifically designed to avoid such overscrupulous examination. When a 1563 statute prescribed execution for a second refusal of the supremacy oath, the Queen ordered her archbishop to ensure that no one was asked to take the oath twice.⁴⁸ On matters pertaining to the interrogation of the Reformation subject, or the "commandment of men's faiths," Francis Bacon glossed her actions thus:

Her majesty (not liking to make windows into men's hearts and secret thoughts, except the abundance of them did overflow into overt and express acts and affirmations,) tempered her law so, as it restraineth only manifest disobedience in impugning and impeaching advisedly and maliciously her Majesty's supreme power, and maintaining a foreign jurisdiction.⁴⁹

We have some sense of Spenser's attitude toward "foreign jurisdiction" in the British sphere, but to what extent did he endorse Elizabeth's circumspection in the matter of private faith? The Elizabethan Settlement had proved a bitter disappointment to Protestant Reformers

in England, a half-measure whose apparently ad hoc nature gradually hardened into an unacceptable new order as, decade after decade, Elizabeth refused to tamper with the substance of a compromise enacted during the first years of her reign. (And when she drew a hard line, as in the matter of ecclesiastical vestments, it was as likely as not to be on the side of tradition.) Among Spenser's patrons were England's chief exemplars of Protestant chivalry: Sidney received his death wound fighting against Catholic Spain at the battle of Zutphen; Leicester commanded the English forces in the Lowlands with considerable pomp and was for a time installed as governor there; Essex challenged the Spaniards at Lisbon to single combat in the name of his mistress, he led the English capture of Cadiz, and as governor-general he waged war in Ireland. But the militancy of these powerful men was much more conspicuous in matters of foreign policy than in matters of ecclesiastical reform. And their campaign to advance the cause of international Protestantism is difficult to distinguish from their campaigns for personal advancement.⁵⁰

Spenser's stakes in the Reformation of Western Christendom are neither clearer than those of his patrons nor necessarily consistent: he contrives an allegory that seems to commend both his sovereign's tacit domestic policy (don't ask if you don't want to hear the answer) and the more militant foreign policy that others envisioned for her. When Elizabeth finally committed English troops to the defense of the Netherlands in 1585, a move she had been resisting for nine years, she explained her decision as an effort to protect the Dutch from an Inquisition, but "this," writes Christopher Haigh, "was a propaganda smoke-screen."⁵¹ Spenser's parable about the Sphinx of the Inquisition inevitably highlights the problematic intersections of private conscience and state violence. If the parable plays fast and loose with sixteenth-century history, what is the History it prefers? Prince Arthur answers the Sphinx not with words but, emphatically, with the sword. Prince Arthur was, or will be, a consummate British hero, but the Faerie Queene who makes him so is manifestly the stuff of dreams.⁵²

According to legend, the Sphinx's riddle was as heterogeneous as her person.⁵³ Oedipus was able to answer the Sphinx's riddle because in the figure of monstrous admixture (What walks on four legs in the morning, two legs at noon, and three legs in the evening?) he recognized the diachronic parable of the human, recognized, that is to say, a version of the self. The punishment for answering the monster's riddle is to fulfill the correlative riddle of the monstrous self: rewarded with a kingdom, the parricide sleeps with his mother and engenders a "fatal" and incestuous progeny. As Tiresias prophesies in *Oedipus Rex*:

He shall be proved father and brother both
to his own children in his house; to her
that gave him birth, a son and husband both;
a fellow sower in his father's bed
with that same father that he murdered.⁵⁴

Completing the structure of overdetermination, the unnatural father, brother, and son shall leave his native city blinded, "tapping his way before him with a stick" (36). He shall leave, that is, on three legs.⁵⁵ Tiresias, blind himself, knows a blind man when he sees one. In Ovid we may read about the prophecy that first made Tiresias famous: asked to reveal the fate of Narcissus, Tiresias foretold that the boy would thrive as long as he "did not know himself," "si se non noverit."⁵⁶ (The Latin verb--noscere--means to recognize or merely,

and more ominously, to inquire into). In Sophocles, Tiresias also prophecies a fatal recognition scene: when he knows himself, says the prophet, the king shall know himself to be the enemy. Oedipus is Narcissus made political, made civic, made a matter of collective destiny. Between one recognition scene (answering the riddle of the Sphinx) and the next (answering the riddle of prophecy: I am the incestuous parricide) is the space for monarchic succession, the space for a kingdom to sicken, to be rescued, and to sicken again.⁵⁷

Book Five of The Faerie Queene is the book in which Spenser's allegory works most strenuously to accommodate history. Spenser's Book of Justice augments the habitual ungainliness of pastoral-historical, comical-allegorical, epic Petrarchan romance (Polonius might be his publicist) with an unprecedented burden of political propaganda. Specifically Spenser undertakes to render the recent history of Britain's erratic struggle against Catholic forces in France and the Lowlands and the largely botched colonial subjection of Ireland as a parable about the triumph of international Protestantism. This necessitates a great deal of tactical amnesia.

Alan Liu has reminded us of late that the structure of historical inquiry is by its very nature circular: "Historical explanation, in order to be satisfying, must at some point round back to tautology."⁵⁸ The historical subject submits himself to the discipline of the temporal other, the material elsewhere, only to discern at last the lineaments of the impending or the alternative self. If historiography assesses itself by means of its capacity to account for change, this simply means that the recognition scene of history occurs by way of a long and complex circuit of defamiliarization. History writes itself as rigorous digression, so that the recognition scene, when it comes, comes with the force of discovery and plausibility. The home we find in the narrative we make has to convince us that it is something more than the short circuit of solipsism. To "recognize" the self in the subject of history is to invent the self as part of a collective, and as memory. We turn to the past in order to put a face on the future.

Those who wished to know history while it was still the future might at one time go to Delphi, where the oracle spoke diversely to diverse inquirers. But "Know thyself," read the Delphic inscription, always the same. What kind of self is it that the Delphic inscription posits? Spenser's answer, like Bacon's, and like Shakespeare's, was less sentimental than our own.⁵⁹ In the Essex entertainment of 1596, the Statesman quite frankly equates self-knowledge with self-interest, and is willing to let the whole edifice of knowledge and power rest on the narrow foundation of tautology:

For himself [Erophilus], let him set for matters of commodity and strength, though they be joined with envy. Let him not trouble himself too laboriously to sound into any matter deeply, or to execute any thing exactly; but let himself make himself cunning rather in the humours and drifts of persons, than in the nature of business and affairs. . . . In his counsels . . . let him follow the wisdom of the oracles, which uttered that which might ever be applied to the event. . . . To conclude, let him be true to himself.⁶⁰

Like Polonius, whose counsel to another young-man-on-the-make will bear distinct traces of this counsel to Essex/Erophilus, Bacon's Statesman outlines a species of worldly opportunism that rests upon a cipher. The "self" that defines truth-in-action, that gives motive and shape and organizing telos to "service," is a place-holder, a structural necessity, perfectly sub-

stanceless. In Bacon's text, the very oracles are hedging opportunists: their "wisdom" amounts to no more than a canny circularity; their utterances "might ever be applied to the event."

To cast Polonius and the Statesman as parodic figures is to imply that their constructions of truth and of self (the thing one is somehow true to) are not the only ones, that somewhere there exists a philosophy or a praxis of which theirs is the mere burlesque. In Bacon's speculative and political writings, scientific project and public affairs are at once the making and the release from self. The self is indistinguishable from its career, but in a sense quite opposite to that of Philautia's Statesman or Shakespeare's Polonius. The self is contingent, the creature of an order that exceeds it. The "truth" of the self, insofar as Bacon would recognize such a concept, depends upon its own distrust of preemptive recognition scenes.

Bacon is often invoked as the father of positivism or "scientific method," but the project Bacon proposed, in writings like The Advancement of Learning and The New Organon, is considerably more provisional and more poignant than the legacy of the Royal Society would suggest. Bacon was convinced that human cognition was at odds with human cognitive equipment, that the tools we have to see with are ill suited to vision, as likely to impede as to facilitate understanding, that the human appetite for shapeliness of sentence and of theory is a preemptive appetite, one that obscures understanding. His notion of scientific method thus involves the repeated rupturing of the self and its scripted meanings or "idols," a dogged undermining of the ground upon which we stand and seem to ourselves to understand. As a key player in the political and patronage systems of the late Tudor and early Stuart monarchies, Bacon had perforce to evolve a theatrical or performative notion of human agency. Bacon's natural and political philosophies derive their daunting momentum, I would argue, from what he perceives to be the reciprocal inaptitudes of self and knowledge. Action is vanity's antidote, say the writings, and action is also the better vanity.

In De Sapientia Veterum, or The Wisdom of the Ancients (1609), Bacon's immensely popular moralization of ancient myths and fables, the author devotes his fourth interpretation to "Narcissus, or Philautia (Self-Love)." Those who "fall in love as it were with themselves," writes Bacon, are those who fail to mature into civic life:

With this state of mind there is commonly joined an indisposition to appear much in public or engage in business Therefore they commonly live a solitary, private, and shadowed life; with a small circle of chosen companions, all devoted admirers till being by such habits gradually depraved and puffed up, and besotted at last with self-admiration, they fall into such a sloth and listlessness that they grow utterly stupid, and lose all vigour and alacrity. And it was a beautiful thought to choose the flower of spring as an emblem of characters like this: characters which in the opening of their career flourish and are talked of, but disappoint in maturity the promise of their youth. . . . men of this disposition turn out utterly useless and good for nothing whatever; and anything that yields no fruit, but like the way of a ship in the sea passes and leaves no trace, was by the ancients held sacred to the shades and infernal gods.⁶¹

De Sapientia Veterum was first published in 1609, eight years after Essex's death. It reads, on one of its faces, as a belated valediction to Bacon's former mentor, the dashing young

courtier who flourished so magnificently under Elizabeth, only to withdraw into a circle of flatterers and conspirators at Essex House during the last year of his life. It was of course more politic than accurate to suggest that the Earl's spectacular decline was a motion that left "no trace."

Burlesque is not the only perspective from which the autonomous self seems to dissolve. The self Narcissus finally knows is the self deprived of itself by a redundancy of presence: "My plentie makes me poore," he says in Ovid.⁶² The self Oedipus finally "knows" is precisely the "event," that to which the oracles "might ever be applied." His fate unfolded before him, the King sees not the record of coherent intentionality, nor even of ambition (Oedipus' most willful act--his flight from Corinth--was an effort to escape fate) but the sheer relational circumstances of identity: the man who killed his father and married his mother and fathered monsters of incest.

The political centerpiece of Spenser's Book of Justice, so delicate as to require simultaneous unfolding and effacement, is the trial and execution of Mary Queen of Scots. Spenser makes the allegorized trial a launching ground for larger adventures, a preliminary site for training political sensibility before the liberation of the Lowlands, France, and Ireland can be carried out. (If the figures of "Belge," "Burbon," and "Irena" stand with exceptional directness for the Lowlands, France, and Ireland, the allegorical logic that subsumes them nearly buckles under the burden of intransigent public affairs. The Irena rescued from oppression, for example, is an Ireland "rescued" from every vestige of its native culture, an Ireland of the [British] mind, the colonialist's blank page.)⁶³ Arthur receives the quest of Belge in Mercilla's court. This is to insist that the story of Mary Stuart be read as part of the larger and concerted threat of international Catholicism. England's challenge to Catholicism rested upon the touchy issue of succession. When Henry VIII put aside his first wife and broke with papal authority, he willy nilly made way for an English Reformation as well as for a new heir to the throne: both encountered fierce challenges to their legitimacy. Though Elizabeth reigned for 45 years, her childlessness meant that the succession question never really settled down.

In the last years of Elizabeth's reign, when Spenser wrote the Book of Justice, King James of Scotland had become the heir apparent, but not the heir anointed. James, like Britomart, boasted a double lineage (in his case, both Tudor and Stuart) that was at once his strength and his liability. James, like Elizabeth, had to negotiate the scandal of one parent conspiring in the death of the other, the scandal of a mother beheaded as a notorious strumpet and a traitor to the throne of England. For James as for Elizabeth, the unbroken lineage of divine right monarchy was based on selective memory and strategic amnesia. Mary Stuart was an impediment for them both. To deprive conspirators domestic and foreign of their perpetual figurehead, Elizabeth had at last to cut off the recognition scene (sister monarch, mother whore) that would be fatal to Justice. James himself had some vested interest in seeing his troublesome mother dead, so long as he was required neither to acknowledge her guilt nor to blame his adopted mother, Elizabeth, for her demise. In Spenser's Book of Justice, Arthur, who is always prepared to see some shadow of the Faerie Queene in any pretty face, is sorely troubled by pity for Mary allegorized, until the spectacle of her trespasses (murder, sedition, incontinence, adultery, impiety--many of these had been specifically disallowed as evidence in Mary's actual trial) makes him repent "his former fancies ruth" (V ix 49). As False Florimell vanishes before the True Florimell ("Like the true saint beside the image set," V iii 24), so Mary-as-Duessa simply melts away before

Mercilla, the true image of the Tudor Queen. Or so she seems to be disposed of. Scrupulously relegated to the white space between cantos in the Book of Justice, as all of Spenser's readers knew, was another bloody severance of crown and body natural.

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At the end of a trying decade, Essex lost his head as well. He had come back a popular hero from the expedition to Cadiz only to endure the Queen's reproach over the size of Spanish bounty. He had quarreled with Elizabeth over the disposition of Ireland, had turned his back on her in the Council, and had threatened to draw his sword in her presence; he had been slapped and banished from Court and forgiven. He took his turn at last in the debacle of the Irish campaign, encountered a predictable quagmire,⁶⁴ and on 28 September, 1599, returned unauthorized to London and made his way to the Queen's private bedchamber, where he found her uncorseted, unbewigged, unpainted, and generally unequipped to soften the spectacle made by sixty-six years of strenuous living. He saw the Queen three times that day and never again.

In the fourteen months that followed, during successive periods of imprisonment, house arrest, and exile from Court, Essex addressed to Elizabeth a series of letters that sound for all the world like overheated versions of Erophilus: "for till I may appear in your gracious presence, and kiss your Majesty's fair, correcting hand, time itself is a perpetual night, and the whole world but a sepulchre unto your Majesty's humblest vassal."⁶⁵ Erotic compliment groans with more than the usual burden of praise-and-petition. The Queen remarked to Francis Bacon that she had received from Essex "some very dutiful letters," but "when she took it to be the abundance of the heart, she found it to be but a preparative to a suit for the renewing of his farm of sweet wines."⁶⁶ The monopoly on sweet wines constituted Essex's chief source of income at this time, and he was heavily in debt. When the Queen allowed the monopoly to expire at Michaelmas, Essex threw caution to the winds. The handsome young man who had for so long found in Elizabeth a flattering endorsement of his own inflated self-image, was heard to remark that she had become "no lesse crooked in minde than in body."⁶⁷ He approached the King of Scotland with importunate advice about staking claim to the English succession. He folded the king's reply in a little black bag which he theatrically wore about his neck and theatrically burned on the evening of his failed rebellion. His confederates later testified that Essex aspired to be king himself; he had long "affected popularity."⁶⁸ In rumor and the popular imagination, the Earl was at the center of two conflicting scenarios (the accession of James, the accession of Robert Devereux) for the rescue of England from the unnatural stranglehold of a declining female monarchy. In the event, when his hand was forced on the morning of 8 February, 1601, Essex marched not to Whitehall but to the city, where he had been told that his cause would be echoed and augmented by a popular uprising. But he did not meet with the reflection he sought in the multitude that loved him.

Elizabeth's last decade was a time of widespread disaffection--her subjects were burdened with oppressive taxation, successive years of crop failure and plague visitation, with costly and indecisive wars, factionalism at court, depressed trade, and recurrent social instability. One irreverent historian has recently summarized the last Tudor reign as "thirty years of illusion, followed by fifteen of disillusion"⁶⁹; the mirror of Elizabethan subjectivity was showing the fault lines of age. Elizabeth was less often to be seen in public in these later years. Raleigh called her "a lady whom time had surprised."⁷⁰ There was public grumbling about the annual Accession Day celebrations, which had to be defended against charges of

idolatry. At the same time and on the other hand, the privy council had to contend with public bell-rings and prayers on behalf of the Earl of Essex and in 1600 had to prohibit the spontaneous engraving and distribution of his picture.⁷¹ Essex's capacity to capture popular affection was at this time unparalleled. Spenser seems to have participated in the general enthusiasm, catching Essex's image in mirrors more than one: in Calidore's disseminations of courtliness and in Arthegall's rescue of Burbon, in the "flower of Cheualrie," "Great Englands glory" praised in the Prothalamion, and in the great man proposed for governor of Ireland in the View--"suche an one I Coualde name," the poet writes, "vppon whom the ey of all Englande is fixed and our laste hopes now rest."⁷²

Sentenced to a savage and spectacular death--Essex was condemned to be hanged, cut down alive, disembowelled, and quartered--England's last hope remained defiant: "I think it fitting that my poor quarters, which have done her Majesty true service in divers parts of the world, should now at the last be sacrificed and disposed of at her Majesty's pleasure."⁷³ But when his private chaplain constrained the Earl to contemplate eternal death, Essex broke down completely. He owned and renounced, owned in order to renounce, his treasonous ambition and his treasonous friends. He named names in abundance, especially warning the Queen against his own sister, Lady Rich. The grisly spectacle of public quartering was translated to private beheading.⁷⁴ On the scaffold as in the tiltyard, Essex propounded a self that referred itself to an Other. In the constructed reflexivity of the penitential gaze, Essex revived the referential likeness he had invoked five years earlier in his performance of Love and Self-Love.⁷⁵

The stakes were no longer a solicitor generalship or a farm of sweet wines, and Majesty was no longer a woman. Facing death, Essex prayed aloud for his enemies; a Christian who refused forgiveness to others could scarcely expect to claim forgiveness for himself. Orthodoxy taught that even the foremost popular hero of his age shared a single stamp of divinity, and a common stamp of sin, with his fellow creatures. Elizabethan court politics, however, had taught the Earl and his enemies to embellish ontological equivalence by means of an elaborate, emulative competition in private grandeur and public "service."⁷⁶ The Earl had for years been first among equals and imitators, the pattern for courtly address, the most conspicuous and insubordinate subject of late Tudor England. In his last public appearance, love and self-interest conjoined in a gesture of forgiveness that was perfectly conventional, as was the doctrine of likeness it invoked and was predicated upon. But in a remarkable piece of syntactical ambiguity, a skeptic may still discern the echo of extravagant self-regard: Forgive them, Essex prayed on the scaffold, because "they bear the image of God as well as myself."⁷⁷ "As well as I do," we would like him to say. But the fact was that his enemies and competitors bore something of Essex's image as well. They had no choice: he was the mirror of manhood for his age. "A subject of God, a subject subjected to God, a subject through the Subject and subjected to the Subject."⁷⁸ Essex was always tempted to construe himself a subject in the upper case. This does not mean that his scaffold speech was a piece of simple hypocrisy. Essex lived on a fault line, where two incommensurate constructions of subject status collided. What Althusser writes in the spirit of demystification (Althusser is bound to a different faith) about "the Christian religious ideology," Essex and his contemporaries were still prepared to write in blood: "those who have recognized God, and have recognized themselves in Him, will be saved."⁷⁹

NOTES

1. Think, for example, of the exemplary stories of private suffering we routinely invoke to hallow or indict nationalist and ethnic aspiration. In the realm of high- and leisure-cultural production, even as the European novel dismantled such homage to the Aristotelian unities as it had ever erected (a linear beginning, middle, end), even as historians were refusing to tell us with any straightforwardness what it was that happened in the past, even as literary critics were fleeing from such concepts as authorial intention and unity of voice, the American appetite for biography--both popular and academic--soared.

2. These hearings were a national obsession two months ago but will no doubt quickly dim. Against that dimming, then, a thumbnail (and a partisan) chronology of the salient events: Clarence Thomas, a forty-three-year-old conservative black jurist, who had worked in the Department of Education, had headed the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, and had served, for a single year, on the Federal Court of Appeals, was in July of 1991 nominated by President Bush to a seat on the Supreme Court of the United States. This opening on the court had been occasioned by the retirement of Thurgood Marshall, an eminent black jurist with a long history of activism in the cause of civil rights, including many years of service as special counsel to the NAACP, as a United States Circuit judge, as Solicitor General under President Johnson, and, for twenty-four years, as an Associate Justice of the Supreme Court. Throughout the nomination period, Thomas's supporters emphasized his biography as the chief of his qualifications: the judge, a son of sharecroppers, had fought poverty and racism to graduate from Yale Law School and assume public office. The confirmation hearings conducted by the Senate Judiciary Committee (September 10-20, 1991) were much animated by the issues of affirmative action and abortion, widely perceived to be the pivotal issues facing the court in the 1990's and the issues that had governed the President's nomination (Thomas was unambiguously on the record as an opponent of affirmative action and was suspected of opposing abortion rights as well). During four days of questioning, Thomas professed to have no opinion on *Roe vs. Wade*, the Supreme Court decision which had extended to abortion the right to privacy established by an earlier decision, *Griswold v. Connecticut*. Questioned about his praise for an article in which Lewis Lehrman argues that fetuses have an inalienable right to life under the Declaration of Independence, Thomas replied that he had not really read the article and had praised it in order to please an audience of conservative Republicans at the Heritage Foundation (see Polonius, below). On October 27, 1991, the Senate Judiciary Committee voted 7 to 7 on the Thomas nomination and sent it to the full Senate without a recommendation.

Two days before the scheduled vote on the Senate floor, word was leaked to a political correspondent for National Public Radio that the Judiciary Committee had withheld from public purview a damaging accusation of sexual harassment. A former assistant to Judge Thomas at the Department of Education and the EEOC, a thirty-five-year-old black woman who was currently a law professor at the University of Oklahoma, had testified to congressional aides and subsequently to the FBI that Clarence Thomas had repeatedly subjected her to sexual harassment on the job. Public furor eventuated in a second round of hearings, these televised, conducted under the constraint of a seven-day delay in the Senate vote, and deliberately divorced from official Senate procedures: though conducted by the

Senate Judiciary committee, the hearings were neither an official part of that committee's deliberations (there would be no second committee vote) nor a part of the full Senate floor debate. In the course of 72 hours, Clarence Thomas testified twice, Anita Hill once. Hill's story was corroborated by three persons in whom she had confided during and soon after the alleged sexual harassments and by the results of a lie detector test, which was reported in the press but not in the public hearings. Thomas was supported by witnesses (and interrogators) who praised his character and constructed alternative--and contradictory--narratives to impugn Hill's motives (she had romantic designs on Thomas and was seeking the revenge of a woman scorned; she was excessively ambitious and eager for the notoriety that would accrue to her as the result of Senate testimony; she was the pawn of left-wing conspirators; she was delusional). John Doggett, a former co-worker, came forward to claim that he, too, had been the object of Hill's erotic obsessions. In the end, Clarence Thomas was confirmed on the full Senate floor by a vote of 52 to 48. Opinion polls conducted immediately after the televised hearings revealed that fully two-thirds of the American public, including two-thirds of American women, believed Clarence Thomas to be telling the truth and believed Anita Hill to be lying.

3. Raymond Williams, Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976), 259-64; Peter Stallybrass, "Shakespeare, the Individual, and the Text," forthcoming in Cultural Studies, ed. Larry Grossberg, Cary Nelson, and Paula Treichla (London and New York: Routledge, 1991). In his entry on subjectivity and the subject in Keywords, Williams traces the reciprocal constitution of "subject" and "object" positions in the history of Western philosophy and social thought. Stallybrass traces the reciprocal, and contestatory, emergence of two conceptions of "individuality"--that of indivisibility, or the "indistinguishable relation between parts" (3), and that of autonomy, "the separation of the part from the whole" (3). Prior to the seventeenth-century, Stallybrass argues, the concept of individuality existed exclusively in the specialized realm of Trinitarian dogma: "hye and indyvyduall Trynyte" (2). It is in the writing of an English Leveller, imprisoned by Cromwell in 1646, that a radical reconstruction of selfhood and property rights leaves its first literary trace (27). In Chaucer and the Subject of History (Madison: Univ. of Wisconsin Press, 1991), Lee Patterson traces the emergence of affective subjectivity from the dominance-and-subordination patterns of feudal estate theory. Patterson and Stallybrass employ different vocabularies and differently distribute their political suspicions and hopefulness, but they do share a common task: both wish to explode the standard high-cultural and literary chronologies that celebrate the modern self as the creation of Renaissance humanism.

4. Louis Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes towards an Investigation)," Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays, trans. Ben Brewster (New York and London: Monthly Review Press, 1971), 127-86. Given the scale of the debate this essay has generated, it is worth noting the speculative emphasis of Althusser's subtitle.

5. For a critique of Althusser that also reconfirms his continuing importance for Marxist theories of ideology, see Terry E. Boswell, Edgar V. Kiser, and Kathryn A. Baker, "Recent Developments in Marxist Theories of Ideology" (Insurgent Sociologist 13:4 [Summer 1986]: 5-22) which usefully summarizes the recent (1973 and after) revisionist arguments of Nicos Poulantzas, Goran Therborn, Ernesto Laclau, and John Urry.

For an applied discussion of Althusser, with specific reference to the multiple positionings of the Renaissance theatrical, and theatre-going, subject, see Jean E. Howard, "Scripts and/versus Playhouses: Ideological Production and the Renaissance Public Stage," Renaissance Drama n.s. 20 (1989): 31-49.

6. The same might be said (and often was in sixteenth-century England) of erotic love. The specular inception of love was a paradigm the Renaissance traced back at least as far as Plato and mixed with a heavy dose of Petrarch. It is this paradigm that, to my mind, Jean Howard overlooks in her Althusserian reading of Beatrice and Benedick ("Renaissance Antitheatricality and the Politics of Gender and Rank in Much Ado about Nothing," Shakespeare Reproduced: The Text in History & Ideology, ed. Jean E. Howard and Marion F. O'Connor [New York and London: Methuen, 1987], 163-87). Howard is a very supple critic of the Renaissance stage and of Althusser, and her emphasis upon Don Pedro's theatrical production of Beatrice and Benedick as lovers is a valuable corrective to sentimental Shakespeareans who ignore "power's power to determine truth" (179). But sexual love was always already a recognition scene for the Elizabethans: the construction of desire as memory.

7. The Works of Francis Bacon, ed. James Spedding, Robert Leslie Ellis, and Douglas Denon Heath (15 vols.) (Boston: Taggard and Thompson, 1860-64); passage cited from "The New Organon," Works 8:67.

8. The Letters and the Life of Francis Bacon, 7 vols., ed. James Spedding (London: Longman, Green, Longman, and Roberts, 1861-74), 1:373.

9. The Letters and the Life of Francis Bacon, 2:196.

10. The Letters and the Life of Francis Bacon, 2:201.

11. G. B. Harrison, The Life and Death of Robert Devereux Earl of Essex (New York: Henry Holt, 1937), 306-07. I hasten to add that Bacon did not speak these words disinterestedly or in tranquil hindsight, but at Essex's trial for high treason in 1601. As one of the Queen's learned counsel, Bacon was called upon to participate in the Earl's prosecution. When Bacon charged Essex with unlawful rebellion, the Earl responded with what he took to be a deadly riposte: "Mr. Bacon . . . pretending to be my friend . . . drew for me a letter most artificially in my name, and another in his brother Mr. Anthony Bacon's name . . . and by them it will appear what conceit Mr. Bacon at that time had of those men and of me, though he here coloureth and pleadeth to the contrary" (306). This counterattack backfired, as of course it must have done. A public figure is ill-advised to turn in public on his speechwriters.

12. On the fascinating and far more elusive topic of erotic subject formation outside the proximate purview of the court, see Louis Montrose's brilliant essay, "'Shaping Fantasies': Figurations of Gender and Power in Elizabethan Culture," Representing the English Renaissance, ed. Stephen Greenblatt (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 31-64. Montrose examines the Queen's erotic immanence not only in court performances and colonialist manifestos but also, for instance, in the dreamlife and private diary of the

astrologer Simon Forman and in the distracted behavior of a lunatic sailor, Abraham Edwardes.

13. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, Epistemology of the Closet (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1990).

14. Little children still make horns behind one another's backs, but the symbolism--at least in the United States--is purely vestigial. Children learn early about the dynamics of mockery and humiliation, and children learn early that dignity resides somehow in sexual property rights ("your mother" is a fighting phrase), but children in contemporary America do not speak of cuckolds.

Early modern Europe held no patents, of course, on asymmetrically gendered schemes of public ridicule, proprietorship, and social identification. In China (on the mainland as well as in Taiwan and Hong Kong) a man whose wife is thought to be unfaithful is said to be a "turtle" or to be "wearing a green hat." These figures of speech are current, not vestigial, though the latter, for instance, dates back to the Yuan Dynasty (1280-1368). During this period, brothels in China were customarily identified by green lanterns, and the Mongolian rulers of the Yuan Dynasty stipulated that the relatives of prostitutes, who might otherwise pass without stigma, be required to wear green headgear. Thence, by association, it came to be said of a deceived husband that he was "wearing a green hat." My thanks to Zhang Zhilian, Jiwei Ci, and Zhu Hong for their patient explications.

15. "Protestant Erotics: Idolatry and Interpretation in Spenser's Faerie Queene," ELH 58 (1991): 1-34, and "The Body in Question: Anne Boleyn, Amy Robsart, and the Tudor Commonwealth," unpublished.

16. The English tournament had evolved from an ill-regulated and often bloody mass engagement in the 12th century to a lavish vehicle for court pageantry and civic festival in the 15th. The tournaments, with their accompanying banquets, dances, rich prizes and caparisons, musicians, and allegorical presentations, declined markedly during the last years of Henry VIII but were actively revived under Elizabeth. Sir Henry Lee, the Queen's Champion until his retirement in 1590, is credited with introducing tournaments as part of the annual Elizabethan Accession Day festivities, probably sometime between 1569 and 1577. For a history of the tournament in England, see Alan Young, Tudor and Jacobean Tournaments (London: George Philip, 1987). On the Accession Day tournaments in particular see Roy Strong, The Cult of Elizabeth: Elizabethan Portraiture and Pageantry (London: Thames and Hudson, 1977), 129-62, and Frances A. Yates, Astrea: The Imperial Theme in the Sixteenth Century (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1975), 88-111.

17. It is Camden, in his Remaines (1605), who interprets the famous speravi device as referring to the fruit of Leicester's recent union with Lettice Knollys (see Remains Concerning Britain, ed. R. D. Dunn [Toronto, 1984], 190). Alan Young has recently argued that Sidney is unlikely to have staged such a blatant insult to his uncle in front of the Queen, especially since Leicester's marriage had already provoked her great wrath. Young therefore proposes that Sidney used the device not in 1579 but in 1581, not in reference to the Dudley inheritance but in reference to his own disgrace with Elizabeth (he had addressed to her a highly partisan letter on the matter of the French marriage). See Young, 134. Whatever the

immediate occasion for Sidney's dashed hope, the general point is judiciously summarized by Roy Strong: "An autobiographical element was . . . a standard ingredient of the tournament entry" (Cult of Elizabeth, 141).

18. Rowland Whyte, Esq, to Sir Robert Sidney, printed in Arthur Collins, Letters and Memorials of State (London: Printed for T. Osborne, in Gray's Inn, 1746), 362.

19. Sir Henry Wotton, cited in Strong (note 16), 141.

20. Various versions of the text have survived, albeit in fragments. Chief among these are some papers in Bacon's hand, to be found among Bishop Gibson's papers in the manuscript library at Lambeth. John Nichols, in The Progresses and Public Processions of Queen Elizabeth, Vol. 3 (London, 1823; rpt. New York: Burt Franklin, n.d.), prints these as "Speeches delivered upon the occasion of the Earl of Essex's Device, drawn up by Mr. Francis Bacon," as previously published by Dr. Birch, in "Letters, Speeches, etc. of Francis Bacon Lord Viscount of St. Alban etc., 1763." The Accession Day entertainment, including drafts and fragments, is more fully represented in The Letters and the Life of Francis Bacon, 1:374-92. Of the four set speeches delivered before the Queen in the "after-supper," as described by Rowland Whyte, Spedding opines, "there can be no reasonable doubt that the . . . speeches were written by Bacon" (Letters and Life 1:386). For additional records of the 1595 celebrations, see the Calendar of State Papers: Domestic, 1595-97 ed. Mary Anne Everett Green (London: Longmans, Green, Reader, and Dyer, 1869), 131-34, and George Peele's poetic redaction in "Anglorum Ferae," Works, ed A. H. Bullen, 2 vols. (London, 1888; rpt. Port Washington, NY: Kennikat Press, 1966), 2:339-56.

21. I quote the version published by John Nichols in The Progresses and Public Processions of Queen Elizabeth, 3:374.

22. On the parodies of Burghley and his son Robert Cecil to be found in the Accession Day device, see Alan Young, Tudor and Jacobean Tournaments (London: George Philip, 1987), 174-75.

23. Nichols, 3:376.

24. Nichols, 3:377-78.

25. Strong (note 16), 141.

26. Christopher Haigh, Elizabeth I (London and New York: Longman, 1988), 101.

27. "[A]nd one speculates," writes Roy Strong, "whether this was Essex's emblem for the 1595 tilt." Strong reprints the impresa in The Cult of Elizabeth, 145. Beginning sometime in the 1580's, imprese shields were hung after tournaments in a special waterside gallery at Whitehall, where they were viewed and described by Thomas Platter, William Camden, and John Manningham, among others. See Roy Strong, 144, and Alan Young, 128.

28. Perhaps the most famous of these accounts--made famous chiefly by the influential work of Louis Adrian Montrose (notes 12 and 32)--is the journal of André Hurault, Sieur de Maisse, who describes Elizabeth thus: "She was strangely attired in a dress of silver cloth, white and crimson, or silver 'gauze', as they call it. . . . She kept the front of her dress open, and one could see the whole of her bosom, and passing law, and often she would open the front of this robe with her hands as if she was too hot. . . . Her bosom is somewhat wrinkled as well as [one can see for] the collar that she wears around her neck, but lower down her flesh is exceedingly white and delicate, so far as one could see." De Maisse: A Journal of All That Was Accomplished by Monsieur de Maisse Ambassador in England from King Henri IV to Queene Elizabeth Anno Domini 1597, trans. G. B. Harrison (London: Nonesuch, 1931), 25.

29. The Letters and the Life of Francis Bacon 2:191.

30. "A lover of amorousness": this translation is Alan Young's (Tudor and Jacobean Tournaments, 172). As to the love of his own motions, Essex perpetually flew on waxen wings. When the Earl assiduously ignored Bacon's advice to stay out of Ireland at all costs and had obtained the Queen's commission to conduct her Irish wars, Bacon exhorted him to remember that "merit is worthier than fame . . . and . . . obedience is better than sacrifice." Proceed, wrote Bacon, "upon express warrant, and not upon good intention," for the exceeding of instructions "may not only procure in case of adverse accident a dangerous disavow; but also in case of prosperous success be subject to interpretation, as if all were not referred to the right end" (The Letters and the Life of Francis Bacon 2:132; italics mine). The referentiality that bound the Queen and her subjects was always better described by Bacon than observed by the Earl.

31. See John Freccero, "The Fig Tree and the Laurel: Petrarch's Poetics," in Literary Theory/Renaissance Texts, ed. Patricia Parker and David Quint (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), 20-32. In Shakespeare's Perjured Eye: The Invention of Poetic Subjectivity in the Sonnets (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), Joel Fineman argues that Shakespeare's anti-Petrarchan sonnets "introduce into literature a subjectivity altogether novel in the history of lyric" (48), but this argument is most forceful when all vestiges of ontological precariousness are forcefully erased from the earlier Petrarchan heritage: "In the traditional sonnet the poet presupposes or anticipates the correspondence, ultimately the identification, of his ego and his ego ideal: he is therefore a full self, incipiently or virtually present to himself by virtue of the admiration instantiated by his visionary speech" (25). This assessment seems to me to coarsen beyond recognition the structure of Petrarchan desire, and the subjectivity that has been, throughout the Petrarchan tradition, predicated upon absence.

32. On the Cult of Elizabeth and the politics of its Petrarchan rhetoric, see Frances A. Yates (note 16), Roy Strong (note 16), Louis Adrian Montrose, "The Elizabethan Subject and the Spenserian Text," in Literary Theory/Renaissance Texts, ed. Patricia Parker and David Quint (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1986), 303-40; Louis Adrian Montrose, "Shaping Fantasies" (note 12), 31-64; and Linda Gregerson, "Protestant Erotics" (note 15).

33. Rowland Whyte, in Collins, 362.

34. Quotations from Spenser's works are drawn from The Works of Edmund Spenser, II Vols., ed. Edwin Greenlaw et al. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1932-57).
35. On the political, psychoanalytic, and semiotic construction of specularity in The Faerie Queene, see David Lee Miller, The Poem's Two Bodies: The Poetics of the 1590 Faerie Queene (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988).
36. On the disintegration of the courtly ideal in Book VI of The Faerie Queene, and on the intimate relationship between courtliness, or courtesy, and allegory, see Jacqueline T. Miller, "The Courtly Figure: Spenser's Anatomy of Allegory," Studies in English Literature 31 (1991): 51-68.
37. The etymological story is a commonplace: "discourse" derives from discurrere (to run back and forth) as "error" or errancy derive from errare (to wander). The nomenclature for cognitive or linguistic process derives from the concrete realm of physical action. But in this case etymology also implies a story of genre: Spenser's epic proceeds by means of allegory and romance. The discursive play of meaning and an errant narrative revise the martial clarity of epic action and the epic equations of hero and state.
38. Jacques Lacan, "The Mirror Stage as Formative of the Function of the I as Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience," Ecrits, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Norton), 1-7.
39. Jacques Lacan, "Truth emerges from the mistake," The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book I, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. John Forrester (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 261-72; passage cited 263.
40. Louis Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses," 171, 165.
41. Louis Althusser, "Freud and Lacan," Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays, trans. Ben Brewster (London and New York: Monthly Review Press), 189-219; passage cited 218-19.
42. Whether the lapse is Scudamour's or Spenser's, the mechanics of effacement and substitution are surely significant here: at the very point where he might be expected to look up and recognize his long-lost virgin bride, Scudamour instead tells the tale of how he won her and acquired his eponymous shield. He describes how he stole Amoret from the Temple of Venus and, stealing her, became the shield of love (scudo + amore; see Hamilton, 402). He tells, that is, the tale of his own origin. The lady whose capture--whose rape--was the foundation of his knighthood appears to have vaporized, and in her stead emerges the script of parthenogenesis--the male narrative voice inventing itself. Hence it is that the raped bride remains a virgin (Gk. parthenos). The narrative of origin supplants the recognition scene and supplants as well the hermaphroditic embrace that marked the reunion of Scudamour and Amoret in the 1590 Faerie Queene (III xii 45-6). In Scudamour's tale, it is the "Goddesse selfe" (IV x 39), or Venus, who is, "they say, . . . both kinds in one" (IV x 41). This is the goddess who "laughs" at the violation of her own temple, whom Scudamour perceives to "fauour my pretence" (IV x 56). Pretence or not, the covering story of male vocation is a

revisionary tale that "long were to tell" and "that harder may be ended, then begonne" (IV x 3). History and the history of The Faerie Queene affirm as much.

43. And narcissism, unreformed, is inimical to action. In 16th and 17th century England, Narcissus was a figure for stasis, for listlessness and withdrawal from public "business," for "anything that yields no fruit" ("Narcissus; or Philautia [Self-Love]," in Of the Wisdom of the Ancients, The Works of Francis Bacon 13:90; see discussion below). The relationship of self-love to public or narrative action has not always been constructed so. For a very different, and later, cultural rendition of "self-love," see the highly productive activity--productive because non-procreative, described by Eve Sedgwick in "Jane Austen and the Masturbating Girl," Critical Inquiry 17 (Summer 1991): 818-37.

44. Shame runs rampant in the Book of Justice. It is especially prominent in those narrative passages associated with Radigund: she makes knights choose between a shameful life and shameful death (V iv 28, 29, 32, 34, 39; V v 18, 20, 21); she breaks women's "shamefast" band (V v 25); she confesses her love despite dread of shame (V v 30) and finds "great shame" and "greater shame" in wooing unsuccessfully (V v 48). But shame is pervasive elsewhere as well: The Squire in Squalid Weed chooses to endure shame for the sake of his Lady (V i 27); Florimell turns aside for shame at Braggadocchio's boasting (V iii 16); Braggadocchio is publicly shamed (V iii 36); Arthegall is ashamed to draw his sword on a woman (V iv 24); Britomart accuses Arthegall of shameful bondage (V vi 11) and endures "secret shame" when the specific nature of that bondage is revealed to her (V vii 38); Samient is treated shamefully by Adicia (V viii 22, 23); Geryoneo and his Idol found their murderous rites in shame (V xi 19); Burbon abandons his shield in shame (V xi 46, 52); Arthegall stoops to avoid shame (V xii 19). Shame occurs as an unregulated, contagious specular identification; it sees its own likeness everywhere. Justice requires the alienation of the other; shame is its womanish "secret" (V vii 38). The secret is pervasive: in the whole narrative of Justice, only cantos 9 and 10 are free from the explicit mention of "shame," and this is arguably because specular identification here is not absent but too great. In the gap between cantos 9 and 10, one sovereign queen commands the death of another, who is kin. Mary Stuart had been executed nearly a decade before the Book of Justice appeared in print, but her death is still unmentionable. Her head had been cut off (like Radigund's) so that the sisterly gaze of recognition might be cut off too.

45. On the ambivalent status of Amazonian myth during the reign of England's female prince, see Louis Adrian Montrose, "Shaping Fantasies" (note 12), and "The Work of Gender in the Discourse of Discovery," Representations 33 (Winter 1991): 1-41.

46. Elizabeth habitually invoked the authority of Henry VIII, for instance, in her early confrontations with Parliament. "Though I be a woman," she said to a Parliamentary delegation in 1563, "yet I have as good a courage answerable to my place as ever my father had" (Haigh, 21). Above all, Parliament pressed her on the matters of marriage and the royal succession. Of her response to these importunities in 1559 ("I have beene ever perswaded, that I was borne by God to consider, and, above all things, doe those which appertaine unto his glory"), Louis Montrose has written: "The queen legitimates her desire for autonomy among men by invoking a higher patriarchal authority--not that of her earthly father but that of her heavenly father, the ultimate ground of her sovereignty" ("The

Elizabethan Subject and the Spenserian Text" [note 32], 310). Most famous of Elizabeth's salutes to patriarchy are the words she addressed to her assembled troops at Tilbury in 1588, while the Spanish Armada was bearing down on England: "I know I have the body of a weak and feeble woman, but I have the heart and stomach of a king, and of a king of England too" (cited in J. E. Neale, Queen Elizabeth [1934, rpt. London: The Reprint Society, 1942], 279).

47. As Thomas Laqueur has demonstrated, the allegorists and lady knights are not the only players who have been hard pressed to maintain a stable opposition of male and female at the foundation of western civilization. Twentieth-century feminist discourse has persuasively (though not without dissent) challenged the essentialized binary division of humankind by invoking the more comprehensive cultural codings and cultural constructions of "gender." Laqueur has shown those binary divisions to be precarious in the very realm we had assumed to be self-evident: in the body, as construed by the anatomists, the physiologists, and the healers for more than two thousand years. See Thomas Laqueur, Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990).

48. Haigh (note 26), 38.

49. "Certain Observations Made upon a Libel Published This Present Year, 1592," in The Letters and the Life of Francis Bacon, 1:146-208; passage cited 178.

50. For an account of Leicester's ill-fated adventures in the Lowlands, see R. C. Strong and J. A. Van Dorsten, Leicester's Triumph. London: Oxford University Press, 1964. Despite the Earl's much-publicized and protracted vaunting of the Protestant cause, his personal aspirations had not always been tied to the rout of the Spanish and the humbling of the Roman Catholic church. When, in early 1561, the newly widowed Robert Dudley still had hopes of marrying the Queen of England, he appears to have initiated some delicate negotiations with the Spanish Ambassador: might Philip II be willing to support such a marriage if Dudley and the Queen would work toward a restoration of catholicism in England? Though Cecil outmaneuvered Dudley in this business as in so many others, modern scholars do not appear to assume that the far-fetched Spanish scheme was entirely of Cecil's imagining. See Christopher Haigh, 12-13; DNB 6:114.

51. Haigh (note 26), 38.

52. On the reciprocal precipitation of Arthur and his Faerie Queene and for an elegant psychogenetic account of allegory's "vanishing point," see "Arthur's Dream" in David Miller (note 35), 120-63.

53. The mythological sphinx originated in Egypt, probably as a type of the king, with the head of a man and the body of a lion. In Near Eastern mythology and subsequently in Greek literature, the sphinx was transformed into a female (see The Oxford Classical Dictionary, ed. N.G.L. Hammond and H.H. Scullard. 2nd ed. [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970], 1009). In the Historical and Poetic Dictionary appended to his Thesaurus Linguae Romanae et Britannicae (London, 1565; facsimile rpt. Menston, England: Scholar Press, 1969), Thomas Cooper identifies the sphinx as "a monster which had the head and handes of a mayden, the

bodie of a dogge, wynges lyke a byrde, nayles like a lyon, a tayle like a dragon, the voyce of a man, whiche proposed to men subtil questions." In one passage Cooper refers to the sphinx as a female (Q^o); elsewhere he refers to the beast as male (G²). Spenser's sphinx also resembles that in Comes (Mythologiae 9.18). For these and other references, see A. C. Hamilton, ed., The Faerie Queene (New York: Longman, 1977), 606n. In Of the Wisdom of the Ancients (1609), Francis Bacon construes the sphinx as an allegory of "Science; especially in its application to practical life." "In figure and aspect it is represented as many-shaped, in allusion to the immense variety of matter with which it deals. . . . Claws, sharp and hooked, are ascribed to it with great elegance, because the axioms and arguments of science penetrate and hold fast the mind, so that it has no means of evasion or escape" As to its riddles, "unless they be solved and disposed of, they strangely torment and worry the mind, pulling it first this way and then that, and fairly tearing it to pieces. . . . Nor is that other point to be passed over, that the Sphinx was subdued by a lame man with club feet; for men generally proceed too fast and in too great a hurry to the solution of the Sphinx's riddles" (Works, 6:756-7). Bacon, like Spenser, strongly associates the sphinx's hermeneutic with the expedients of secular power, but far from taking the sphinx to represent a corrupted or transgressive mode of knowing, Bacon attributes her monstrosity to the fallibilities of human cognition: "The riddles of the Sphinx have always a twofold condition attached to them; distraction and laceration of mind, if you fail to solve them; if you succeed, a kingdom" (757).

54. "Oedipus the King," trans. David Grene, Sophocles I, ed. David Grene and Richard Lattimore (New York: Modern Library, n.d.), 13-90; passage cited 36. Subsequent citations appear in the text.

55. Three-leggedness prefigures death. Insofar as a walking stick signifies decrepitude, this seems obvious enough. But the malformed feet that give Oedipus his name are reminders that he was three-legged once before. In an effort to short-circuit the oracle that foretold his own death, King Laius caused the infant Oedipus to be exposed on Mt. Cithaeron, his feet joined together by a stake. The Corinthian shepherd who loosed the feet restored the child to the normal, mortal circumlocution: four legs, two legs, three.

56. Ovid, Metamorphoses, 3rd ed., 2 vols., trans. Frank Justus Miller, Loeb Classical Library, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1977), 3:348.

57. The kingdom, Thebes, is the kingdom founded by Cadmus in Book III of the Metamorphoses, the book in which Ovid tells the story of Narcissus. The manifold intertextual links between that book and Oedipus Rex are not limited to the structures of formal prophecy. Of Cadmus at the height of his powers, Ovid's narrator says what the Sophoclean chorus says of Oedipus, Cadmus' heir and great-great grandson: Count no man happy until his death (Metamorphoses 3.136-7, Oedipus Rex, 90). The saying ultimately derives from Solon (c.640 - c.558 B.C.); see Herodotus, Book I.32.

On "the profound circularity of Thebanness" (76), on the fascinating medieval versions of the Theban story and their indebtedness to Statius (Thebiad) and Seneca (Oedipus) as well as to Ovid, see Lee Patterson, Chaucer and the Subject of History (Madison: Univ. of Wisconsin Press, 1991), esp. chapters 1 and 8.

58. Alan Liu, "The Power of Formalism: The New Historicism," ELH 56, No. 4 (Winter 1989), 721-71.

59. Which is not to say that our post-Romantic tenderness for "authenticity" or the post-modern politics of autobiography have somehow inoculated us against self-fabrication of the most opportunistic sort. On the contrary, as the spectacle of late-twentieth-century American politics makes clear, sentimentality and ruthless opportunism are deeply complicit.

On the academic and literary politics of authenticity, and on the interpretive and promotional embarrassments caused by self-fabrication, see Henry Louis Gates, Jr., "'Authenticity,' or the Lesson of Little Tree," The New York Times Book Review (November 24, 1991): 1, 26-30.

60. Nichols (note 20), 3:376.

61. Bacon, Works, 13:89-90.

62. Metamorphoses 3:466-67, Golding translation (1567; rpt. New York: Macmillan, 1965, ed. John Frederick Nims), 37.

63. And, lest I seem to have idealized Francis Bacon, I hasten to add that his estimate of Ireland was as ruthless as Spenser's own. It was no delicacy on the matter of colonial aggression but merely a shrewd assessment of character and court politics that caused Bacon to counsel Essex so strenuously against military action in Ireland. Once the Earl had irrevocably committed himself, Bacon willingly extolled the "justice" of "the cause": "it being no ambitious war against foreigners, but a recovery of subjects . . . and a recovery of them not only to obedience, but to humanity and policy, from more than Indian barbarism" (The Letters and the Life of Francis Bacon, 2:130; italics mine).

64. Nor was this ignominy made easier to bear when the tide of events in Ireland promptly, albeit temporarily, turned. In February 1599/1600, Essex's duelling antagonist, friend, and sometime co-conspirator Charles Blount, Lord Mountjoy, succeeded the Earl as head of the English forces in Ireland and launched a series of exhilarating military victories against Tyrone. On Mountjoy's successes in Ireland, see G. B. Harrison, The Life and Death of Robert Devereux, Earl of Essex (New York: Henry Holt, 1937), 257-59, 273, 278.

65. Harrison, 273.

66. Bacon reports her comments in a letter addressed to the Earl of Devonshire (formerly Lord Mountjoy) and published in 1604. See "Sir Francis Bacon His Apologie, in Certaine Imputations Concerning the Late Earl of Essex," The Letters and the Life of Francis Bacon 3:156. Just prior to this point in the Apologie, Bacon recalls that "I drew for him [Essex] by his appointment some letters to her Majesty," the Earl "alleging that by his long restraint he was grown almost a stranger to the Queen's present conceits . . . and sure I am that for the space of six weeks or two months it prospered so well, as I expected continually for his restoring to his attendance" (155). It seems very likely that the "dutiful letters" read by the Queen had in fact been written by Francis Bacon.

67. William Camden, Annales: or, The History of the Most Renowned and victorious Princesse Elizabeth, Late Queene of England, trans. R.N., Gent, 3rd ed. (London, 1635), 536.

68. Harrison (note 64), 279.

69. Haigh, 164.

70. Haigh, 165.

71. Haigh, 161.

72. A View of the Present State of Ireland, in Works, 10:228. See also Alexander C. Judson, The Life of Edmund Spenser, in Works, 11:186-87.

Shakespeare hedged his own topical references to Essex in Ireland with the much greater caution of the subjunctive mood:

Were now the general of our gracious Empress,
As in good time he may, from Ireland coming,
Bringing rebellion broached on his sword,
How many would the peaceful city quit,
To welcome him!

(Henry V V.Ch.30-34; cited in McCoy, 5)

Essex did bring rebellion back from Ireland, though very much to the discomfort of his Empress and, as has been discussed, of the peaceful city he had hoped would turn out on his behalf.

73. Harrison (note 64), 313.

74. Essex "thanked the Queene that she had granted he should not bee publicly executed, lest his minde which was now settled might bee disturbed with the acclamations of the people, protesting that he had now learned how vaine is the blast of popular favor" Camden, 550.

75. For a broader discussion of the penitential gaze and the scaffold speeches whose conventions it governed, see J. A. Sharpe, "'Last Dying Speeches': Religion, Ideology and Public Execution in Seventeenth-Century England," Past and Present 107 (1986): 144-67, and Lacey Baldwin Smith, "English Treason Trials and Confessions in the Sixteenth-Century," Journal of the History of Ideas 15 (1954): 471-98. Diverging remarkably from these conventions are the scaffold speeches Frances E. Dolan discusses in "'Home-Rebels and House-Traitors': Murderous Wives in Early Modern England," The Yale Journal of Law and the Humanities 4.1 (Winter 1992), forthcoming. In the popular accounts of women who were executed for killing their husbands (a crime then defined as petty treason), in the speeches attributed to these women, and in the subject positions these speeches inevitably construct, Dolan discovers a powerful fracturing of legal and cultural orthodoxy. Her essay is part of a larger study of domestic violence in early modern England (Dangerous Familiars: Popular Accounts of Domestic Crime in England, 1550-1700; in progress).

76. Eric S. Mallin, "Emulous Factions and the Collapse of Chivalry: Troilus and Cressida," Representations 29 (Winter 1990): 145-79.
77. Harrison, 325.
78. Louis Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses" (note 4), 179.
79. "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses," 180.

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