“The Passions of a Discontented Minde”: The Earl of Essex and Elizabethan Literature and Culture

by

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A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Abstract

Where recent criticism has focused disproportionately on drama as social influence, this dissertation investigates early modern thinking about theatre and the powers of spectacle by exploring the motivations and strategies of Robert Devereux, the third Earl of Essex. Although chiefly the subject of political and historical studies of the late Elizabethan period, I argue that he is an exemplary figure in his capacity to illuminate through his writing and that of his contemporaries the emotional and political implications of the major cultural and literary transitions of the late sixteenth century. My argument, articulated through analyses of medicine, psychology, and religion as well as of literature, begins with the proposition that Essex, like those drawn to him, understood the self, politics, and the theatre as transcendent and collective, where the divisions between and among component individuals were, at most, porous. I suggest that he and his contemporaries were well aware of the odds at which he stood with the prevailing modality of individuation; not only do Essex’s own writings express this malaise, but so, too, do those of his immediate and wider circles, most notably Donne, Greville, Bacon, and Shakespeare. Finally, I turn to the theatre itself, placing the theatrical experience of the Essex circle in the context of the same evolving phenomenology, arguing that in this light the political motives of the bespoke performance of Richard II on the eve of Essex’s rebellion are less
revealing than the conspirators’ apparent belief in its potential to rouse its audience to action. In so doing, I both contextualize and limit the utility of “self-fashioning” as a hermeneutic.
Acknowledgments

“Against all the evidence of his senses, the man in love declares that he and his beloved are one, and is prepared to behave as if it were a fact.” This observation is the beginning of Freud’s *Civilization and its Discontents*. Likewise, it quickly became the cornerstone of my dissertation. As I began the preliminary research, I met and fell in love with Ruth Wilson, and my thinking took a new turn: my concern with the struggles of human beings to reckon with the boundaries that they discovered between themselves and others flowed directly from my own discovery that there were none separating me from her. This thesis is little more than a grotesque love letter to her, and if there is any worth in it, it is entirely attributable to the boundlessness of what I feel for her and with her. This thesis, and all the work that went into it, I dedicate wholeheartedly to her. I want to acknowledge my parents, who when I was a child dragged us to the library every Saturday to find new books. This dissertation is the culmination of their dedication as much as it is mine. I have had many wonderful teachers in my life who pushed a love for reading into a more thoughtful place, and without them I would be nowhere. Chief among these, of course, are the members of my thesis committee, Holger Syme and Paul Stevens, and my supervisor Elizabeth Harvey. I approached these three initially because I had participated in their classes and knew first-hand that they were gifted teachers; that they are all incredibly insightful scholars was an invaluable bonus. They have been a source of penetrating and challenging feedback, and I would not have made it to this point without them. This is particularly true of Professor Harvey, whose belief in me was invaluable in those moments where I had none in myself. Thank you. Without the support of my wonderful friends Claire Battershill, Fiona Coll, Heather Jessup, and Dan Newman, I would have set my hair on fire by third year. Regular lunches, not to mention study and writing help, were often the only social lifeline I had, and I cannot possibly communicate how comforting they were throughout this insane process. Lately, I have enjoyed much encouragement from my colleagues and students at the Bishop Strachan school, whose excitement about this process has at times outrun my own. Thanks, dudes! Lastly, the late John Geary has been, for my entire life, a model of genuine love of literature, my inspiration for entering the teaching profession, and the person who showed me that sometimes people do PhDs just because they want to. Sunset and evening star, and one clear call. Although it has been a solitary pursuit, this has been a collaborative effort, and I am grateful to you all. Thank you. Thank you. And again, thank you.
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“The Passions of a Discontented Minde”: The Earl of Essex and Elizabethan Literature and Culture

1 Introduction

In 1586, an English force, led by the Earl of Leicester, laid siege to the Dutch stronghold of Zutphen in the Netherlands, whose Spanish garrison was about to be relieved by a large force, one whose numbers far outweighed the English. Famously, on his way into battle, Sir Philip Sidney noticed a fellow soldier without cuirasses, and disdained to wear his own, reasoning that were he to wear them, he would have an unfair advantage in the battle over his comrade. His gallantry proved fatal when his thigh was pierced by a Spanish spear. As much as we associate the battle with this set of events, however, it was not the only event worthy of note to take place on that particular field on that day. On another front, Leicester’s stepson, the young and unheralded Earl of Essex, then only 17 and as yet untested in any but mock combat, led a cavalry charge against a Spanish position, over and over again rallying his small force and leading them into the teeth of the superior Spanish defences, marvelling friend and foe with his skill with the kirtle-axe, and winning respect and renown even in defeat. For his courage and
gallantry, his step-father knighted him, at last freeing him from the wardship of the state and granting him the title (and significant debts) bequeathed him by his father. In many ways, Essex became a man on that field. Sidney’s act of honour cost him his life, but not before he bequeathed the young Essex his sword and asked him on his deathbed to marry and care for Frances Walsingham, the woman who was about to become Sidney’s widow. As a metaphorical, and in this case nearly literal, changing of the guard, a novelist could not have written it better: from failing hands the paragon of Christian knighthood passes the torch to the successor of his choosing, a dashing and dazzling scion of one of the foremost families in the realm, protégé of the Queen’s favourite, a young man who held all the promise of his nation in his hand and who was every bit equal to the task…until he wasn’t. The nearly literary quality of Essex’s life and career are apparent from the start.

So, too, however, is Essex’s unique relationship with epochal time. His accession to adulthood and to his title, and the panache with which he arrived, seem to propel him forward, ready to assume the expectations that Leicester’s patronage had conferred upon him, taking on the mantle of Protestant knighthood worn by his great benefactors and bearing it proudly on. At the same time, though, he is planted firmly in the past: wielder of the sword of Sidney (and protected by the armour of Leicester, which he inherited two years later), there is always about Essex a sense of nostalgia for an England rooted in the past, even if not an entirely historical one, in a time of chivalry. I suggest that this temporal counterpoise is a crucial aspect of Essex’s rise and fall.
Let us flash ahead ten years. England has sent an expedition to Spain under Essex, who after years of campaigning in France has become the most prominent military leader in the country. Barely missing the Spanish treasure fleet and all its gold, the naval force – including a young John Donne - attacks the country’s main force at Cadiz, sinking two vessels and capturing one more, with the Spanish setting fire to more than thirty ships to prevent their capture by the English. As the soldiers load into rowboats, approaching the shore and enemy fire, Essex doffs his helmet on the grounds that the pikemen about him do not have any. He is the first man out of the boat and into the water, and the first on shore. Once the city is taken, Essex issues strict orders to his soldiers: no churches are to be looted, and the sacking of the city is not to begin until all women and children have been allowed to leave with everything they can carry. Miraculously, these orders are followed, to the amazement of the Spanish king himself, who cannot believe “heretics” to be capable of such honour. For himself, Essex, the poorest earl in England, up to his ears in debt, takes…nothing. On the way home, the fleet stops to sack the town of Faro, where Essex does allow himself one small prize: the books of Bishop Osorius, which on his return to England he gives to his friend Thomas Bodley, who was at the time putting together a small library at Oxford University. Despite the (rather snivelling) claims of his courtly rivals that he has stolen the Queen’s rightful share of the booty, Essex insists that he receive as compensation not money, or land, or perhaps a business monopoly (like that on sweet wines that was already his principal source of income), but instead the title of Earl Marshal, which would grant him rank over all other peers of the realm, but not much else.
I include this story along with the account of Zutphen for several reasons. First, like Zutphen, it shows the rather unusual code of conduct by which Essex lived, and the very unusual set of priorities by which he was led. Like Zutphen, too, it roots him in the past, in ways that (as we shall see) made little sense to his contemporaries. It is also important to establish at the outset that Essex was, in many ways, an exceptional figure. It is easy for us, centuries removed and in the business of making windows into men’s souls, to be suspicious about Essex and all the bloated excrescences of huffpuffery for which he has become known, and understandably so. His last few years – the failure in Ireland and his subsequent humiliation, and of course the rebellion, tend to overshadow his early promise; knowing his life as a totality, we read his eventual failure into his early successes, tainting them with a retroactive cynicism. But we ought not to forget, I think, that he accomplished much, and that for a time, he represented to many in his country very nearly the ideal of what an Englishman could be, and for reasons that ought not to be passed over. Much of what is to come in this investigation will depend upon this imaginative (but hopefully not entirely speculative) exercise.

Needless to say, in the eyes of Englishmen and Englishwomen, Essex could do no wrong. This is the man of whom Spenser writes so effusively in his “Prothalamion”:

Yet therein now doth lodge a noble peer,
Great England's glory, and the world's wide wonder,
Whose dreadful name late through all Spain did thunder,
And Hercules' two pillars standing near
Did make to quake and fear:
Fair branch of honour, flower of chivalry,
That fillest England with thy triumph's fame,
Joy have thou of thy noble victory,
And endless happiness of thine own name
That promiseth the same;
That through thy prowess, and victorious arms,
Thy country may be freed from foreign harms;
And great Eliza's glorious name may ring
Through all the world, fill'd with thy wide alarms,
Which some brave Muse may sing
To ages following. (145-60)

This the man whose square-cut beard (described as “a beard of the general’s cut” in 3.6.76 of *Henry V*) inspired a trend among the fashionable men of London after the success of the mission to Cadiz, so prevalent that it was satirized by Everard Guilpin in Satire 3 of his *Skialetheia*:

I know some of their humorous neere of kin,
Which scorne to speake to one which hath not bin
In one of these last voyages: or to one
Which hauing bin there yet (though he haue none)
Hath not a Cades-beard.

This is the man to whom Shakespeare famously has his Chorus refer in Act 5 of *Henry V*:

But now behold,
In the quick forge and working-house of thought,
How London doth pour out her citizens!
The mayor and all his brethren in best sort,
Like to the senators of the antique Rome,
With the plebeians swarming at their heels,
Go forth and fetch their conquering Caesar in:
As, by a lower but loving likelihood,
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! (22-34)

I do not cite these examples merely to belabour Essex’s popularity. I do so because I want to establish at the outset some sense of the valence of Essex’s life, rise, fall, and death. In the 1590s, Essex was the center of a nearly cult-like following, inspiring something near to worship across many segments of the population. His acts reverberated. This fact becomes crucial the moment we turn our attention from history to literature, which is the focus of this investigation. After all, even if Steven May has argued that the use to which he put them was novel, and even if George Puttenham did single him out as one of the most adept poets of Elizabeth’s court, Essex himself wrote only 11 poems and a short play. And although he would certainly feature prominently in any historical, political, or military account of the last decade of Elizabeth’s reign, I

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1 These account for those works which are extant. Puttenham’s remarks imply a larger body of work, likely circulated at court, and as we’ll see, Essex’s secretary Henry Wotton writes of Essex’s habit of “evaporating his thoughts in a sonnet,” and none of this sort of verse remains to us.

2 For example, the Jesuit Thomas Wright, author of The Passions of the Minde in Generall, had Essex to intercede on his behalf when he was imprisoned in London.
cannot imagine any anthology of the literature of the period including a single one of his works.

I start from the assumption, however, that these facts are irrelevant. Although perhaps not prolific himself, he was the centre of a circle whose output was immense. Shakespeare, Bacon, Greville, Spenser, Drayton, Chapman, Daniel, Peele, Donne, and many more all wrote from various distances in orbit around him, with many of them writing about him directly, and others through veiled analogy. Painters, musicians, historians, natural philosophers, scientists, and divines counted on his patronage and, at times, his protection\(^2\) in order to carry out their work. I argue that the real influence of Essex on the literature of his age is more ephemeral still.

I claim in this dissertation that, if we are to understand Essex, we must consider him as a figure associated with the past. Essex died in 1601, at around the time that most scholars appoint as the end of an era, and I suggest that we look at these two facts palimpsestically, laying Essex overtop a larger process of social change. My argument is that Essex embodied a set of values that might more readily be associated with the medieval period, and that he remained unaffected by the sea change wrought about him, all but untouched by the stirrings of “modernity.” I suggest that to make this argument is to shed much light on the reasons for his actions, his rise, and his fall.

1.1 Periodization and its Discontents

\(^2\) For example, the Jesuit Thomas Wright, author of *The Passions of the Minde in Generall*, had Essex to intercede on his behalf when he was imprisoned in London.
To make this argument, of course, I must assume the facticity and utility of periodization as a hermeneutic, a decision that is shaped by much recent thinking. Eric Hayot, citing Spinoza’s maxim that “every definition is a negation,” warns that the negations inherent in periodization “are the enemy to clear thinking” (*On Literary Worlds* 147) and “merit continued, pessimistic vigilance” (147) in that they limit the nature and the number of connections that we make between texts across time and place. To him, the practice represents “a collective failure of imagination and will on the part of the literary profession” (149). Fredric Jameson, concerned with the inevitability of totalizing narratives, describes it as “intolerable and unacceptable in its very nature, for it attempts to take a point of view on individual events which is well beyond the observational capacities of any individual, and to unify, both horizontally and vertically, hosts of realities whose interrelationships must remain inaccessible and unverifiable, to say the least” (28). And thinking specifically about the separation of medieval and Early Modern, Margreta de Grazia has shown that this particular division “works less as a historical marker than a massive value judgment, determining what matters and what does not” (“The Modern Divide” 453). There are pitfalls on all sides.

Still, no matter the dangers, thinking in periods seems to be unavoidable; as Marshall Brown puts it, “periods are entities we love to hate. Yet we cannot do without them” (309). David Perkins suggests that “we require the concept of a unified period in order to deny it, and this make apparent the local difference, heterogeneity, fluctuation, discontinuity, and strife that are now our preferred categories for understanding any moment of the past” (qtd in Brown 311). Hayot’s four proposals to reinvigorate the field of literary study so ossified by its reliance on periodization bear the marks of his
resignation to the inevitability of the practice: he does not prescribe its elimination, but only a restructuring along different lines than are currently standard. Even Jameson, “while acknowledging the objections to periodization as a philosophical act, nonetheless [finds himself] brought up short against its inevitability: or, in other words…We cannot not periodize” (29).

The consideration of periodic change, then, may be a scholarly evil, but it is a necessary one. Much of the trouble, as I see it, is a problem with time. I have already suggested that one of the major tasks of my project is to place Essex in his time, but this is not enough: we need to think of him as a man in time itself, navigating through the momentous events of his life without the teleological inevitabilities that are so difficult for us – for any first-person observer, for anyone in the present when facing the past – to abandon. To frame my thinking on how such a divestment might be achieved in the context of my research, I begin with the thinking of Pierre Bourdieu. I share Bourdieu’s dissatisfaction with a purely structuralist approach to these questions, one that completely ignores the placement of human beings in time (“science has a time which is not that of practice,” as Bourdieu says in Outline of a Theory of Practice). His objection echoes Weber’s contention that the “post-festum” time of science cannot be in any uncertainty and as such only exists as a totality, which is simply alien from human experience, an experience that is filled with uncertainty. To view a life as a series of decisions made according to certain dogmatic, preconstructed rules, as fixed entity, “formulated, sprawling on a pin, […]pinned and wriggling on the wall,” is simply wrong, and such an approach is guilty of the crime of reductive “theoretical distortion” through
the “tendency to intellectualism” (Bourdieu 1). As Montaigne observed long before J. Alfred Prufrock, the self is never a being, but always, always a becoming. Human beings live in time. This implies the existence, as Judith Butler observes, of a sort of insurmountably asymptotic limitation of our ability to understand the self and some of its motivations, a fact which overly positivist approaches completely disdain. For Bourdieu, the result of totalization is that our accounts of reality slip from being a “model of reality to the reality of a model” (29), from an ever-evolving diachrony to an inert, lifeless synchrony.

1.2 Habitus-forming Behaviour

In an attempt to reconcile an ever-changing self with an objectively structured external world, Bourdieu has suggested what he calls the habitus. It has various definitions. It is a “system of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures… collectively orchestrated without being the product of the orchestrating action of a conductor” (72). It is a “durably installed generated principle of regulated improvisations” (78). It is “a system of lasting, transposable dispositions which, integrating past experiences, functions at every moment as a matrix of perceptions, appreciations, and actions, and makes possible the achievement of infinitely diversified tasks” (83). It is “a system of internalized structures, schemes of perception, conception, and action common to all members of the same group or class and constituting the precondition for all objectification and apperception” (86). It is “the work of inculcation and appropriation necessary in order
for those products of collective history, the objective structures, to succeed in reproducing themselves more or less completely, in the form of durable dispositions, in the organisms (which one can, if one wishes, call individuals) lastingly subjected to the same conditions” (85).

Most importantly, though, the habitus works in time: it structures and is structured by the parameters that exist in the relationships between an individual and his or her society, but in practice, exists not as rules but as strategies, alive and responsive to possibilities, outcomes, and consequences that change from moment to moment.

Bourdieu’s response to Levi-Strauss is illustrative. Levi-Strauss, in repudiating a phenomenological account of the practice of gift exchange, asserts explicitly that native, lived experience of the process is irrelevant next to the exchange as a constructed object, which “constitutes the primary phenomenon, and not the individual operations into which social life breaks it down” (qtd in Bourdieu 4). What we ought to perceive in the ritual of gift exchange, claims Levi-Strauss, are the “mechanical laws” governing the obligation to give, the obligation to give in return, and the obligation to receive. In insisting that such events as gift exchanges need to be considered in time as they unfold, Bourdieu argues that an approach like Levi-Strauss’s “ignore[s] the fact that the agents practice as irreversible a sequence of events that the observer constitutes as reversible” (5). There is an interval between gifts received and given; it cannot be too short or too long. Giving particular gifts, offering services, or paying a visit, can all mean different things at different times and must come at particular moments or on particular occasions (6); “to abolish the interval is also to abolish strategy” (6). It is not merely an “inert gap” between events, but a part of the strategic tempo that is fundamental to the meaning of
the exchange. In ignoring this, in taking the lived experience out of time by totalizing it, the positivist, objectivist approach “excludes even the idea of what it excludes…and in doing so, reif[ies] practices” (9), and nowhere is this more pernicious than when “exerted on practices defined by the fact that their temporal structure, direction, and rhythm are constitutive of their meaning” (9). In short, it is the modus operandi that carries meaning, and not the opus operatum.

History – perhaps more correctly, historicity - for Bourdieu is also explicable in terms of the habitus. In most, the habitus is “turned into nature, ie denied as such” (78) that governs practice. What we call the “unconscious” is “nothing other than the forgetting of history which history itself produces by incorporating the objective structures it produces in the second natures of habitus.” Our own experience with the past is “inveterate” in us, but imperceptibly so; we are more aware, then, of “the most recent attainments of civilization because, being recent, they have not yet had time to settle into our unconscious” (79). The human tendency to consider history through the lens of the modern, and to perceive temporality as nothing more than the precursor to the present moment, is for Bourdieu a function of the chronometry of the structuring work of the habitus: we can only perceive the modern as long as it has not yet been incorporated into the habitus, at which point it becomes, by definition, “unconscious.”

The habitus, then, does not externally impose a set of rules according to which human behaviour is seen to unfold over time. Inculcated by objective conditions, it serves to “engender aspirations and practices objectively compatible with those objective requirements” (78). Because the habitus is “a past which survives in the present and tends to perpetuate itself into the future by making itself present in practices structured
according to its principles” (82), and because it tends to “reproduce the regularities immanent in the objective conditions of the production of [its] generative principle” (78), it would be logical to expect that these irregularities would manifest themselves in the form of individuals whose “aspirations and practices” change at a different rate, or along different lines, from those of the majority, and Bourdieu’s model predicts exactly such anomalies.

Bourdieu describes such cases as evidence of what he calls “hysteresis.” The OED defines hysteresis as “A phenomenon observed in some physical systems, by which changes in a property (e.g. magnetization, or length) lag behind changes in an agent on which they depend (e.g. magnetizing force, or stress), so that the value of the former at any moment depends on the manner of the previous variation of the latter (e.g. whether it was increasing or decreasing in value); any dependence of the value of a property on the past history of the system to which it pertains.” Coined in the late 19th century, it describes some of the behaviours of ferromagnetic substances that depend on their past environment as much as on their present one, a duality that must be taken into account when attempting to predict their behaviour. It suggests that even when the same stimuli are applied to the same substances, they will react differently based on past environments. Of course, magnets and metals are simpler propositions than human beings and the innumerable and intricate energies of the habitus, but the effect is the same: change at a societal level can never proceed in a universally linear fashion, and results are inevitably unpredictable and uneven when taken on an individual basis, even
when the overall and underlying forces of change are applied simultaneously and across strata. And between the “anomalous” individuals and the “normal” society, Bourdieu predicts tension.

What he calls the “hysteresis effect” is “necessarily implied in the logic of the constitution of habitus\(^3\), [since] practices are always liable to incur negative sanctions when the environment with which they are actually confronted is too distant from that to which they are objectively fitted” (78). Those who would fall victim to this phenomenon are governed by habitus “which have been produced by different modes of generation, that is, by conditions of existence which, in imposing different definitions of the impossible, the possible, and the probable, cause one group to experience as natural or reasonable practices or aspirations which another group finds unthinkable or scandalous, and vice versa” (78). When Bourdieu talks of “generation conflicts” (78), then, he refers not to age classes but to differences in the structure and inculcation of habitus so profound that two groups remain mutually incomprehensible.

If we are to be able to apply the hysteresis effect to periodization (which, admittedly, is likely a larger framework than that for which it was intended, elaborated as it was in the context of a single community in Algeria that represented the focus of Bourdieu’s fieldwork in *Outline of a Theory of Practice*) we need to be able to theorize it on a larger scale: for what distinguishes a period from its predecessor if not a massive “generation conflict?” Embedded in his chosen terminology, we find the implicit theorization of periods, but if Bourdieu’s model seems ill-fitted to describe the sudden

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\(^3\) The plural of habitus is also “habitus.”
accelerations or agglomerations of sociocultural change that serve as the blurry boundaries between periods, then we must either change it or hybridize it in some way to strengthen it in the expansion to which I am subjecting it.

1.3 The Structure of Scientific Revolutions

That Bourdieu’s understanding of social change is so rooted in physical science is all the more interesting when placed next to Thomas Kuhn’s *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, which provides an account of the means by which scientific progress takes place. Although we are taught that the march of science has been a straight and steady one, with each new advance built on the foundation laid by its fore-runner, Kuhn insists that it is anything but, with paradigmatic understandings of particular scientific facts proving ineffective, suffering challenges from new paradigms, and at last giving way, consigned to the rubbish piles of scientific history. I’d like to spend some time sketching out the course of Kuhn’s argument, because the process he describes bears directly on the one I am undertaking in this dissertation. And although he confines himself to change as it occurs in an epistemological framework, I do not think that the process he describes needs too much alteration to be applicable to an ontological one.

For a brief moment, long ago, humankind may have lacked a framework through which to understand the physical nature of the world around them. This state, according to Kuhn, was short-lived, and ever since, that understanding has been governed by paradigms, “accepted examples of actual scientific practice...[which] provide models from which spring particular coherent traditions of scientific research” (10). Among
many examples, he cites the Ptolemaic understanding of planetary motion and its Copernican successor, or Newtonian and Einsteinian models of gravitational force. As long as a particular paradigm holds sway, it governs nearly all aspects not only of scientific knowledge, but of scientific inquiry, as well: when one paradigm is ascendant, researchers practice what Kuhn calls “normal science,” defined as “mopping up operations” (24). Essentially, this amounts to exploring fully the implications and limitations of the paradigm, and carrying out its application in the natural world, solving the puzzles it has bequeathed them. For instance, Ptolemaic astronomers plotted the orbits of various celestial bodies in their orbits around the earth, just as contemporary physicists mount experiments designed to explore the bizarre implications of quantum mechanics. The paradigm gains mainstream, almost uncontested status in its community, “revealed in its textbooks, lectures, and laboratory exercises” (43).

Eventually, however, a paradigm may be faced with an anomaly, “the recognition that nature has somehow violated the paradigm-induced expectations that govern normal science” (52-3). If the paradigm cannot be adjusted or understood to account for the anomaly, the community enters a state of crisis and “pronounced professional insecurity” (67-8), giving rise to what Kuhn calls “extraordinary science” (82). In increasing numbers, “more and more of the field’s most eminent [people]” (82) devote themselves to resolving the anomaly, and the reliability of the paradigm is called into question. In this atmosphere, “by concentrating scientific attention upon a narrow area of trouble and by preparing the scientific mind to recognize experimental anomalies for what they are, crisis often proliferates new discoveries” (88). These discoveries go on to form the basis
of a new paradigm, which comes to replace – without necessarily building upon – its predecessor.

There are a number of far-reaching implications to this model of epistemological change. The first is that paradigms, although nominally vehicles to scientific understanding only, are much more complex than that. As Kuhn argues, “neither scientists nor laymen learn to see the world piecemeal or item by item” (128); as something resembling a gestalt-driven understanding of the functioning of the world, “paradigms determine large areas of experience at the same time” (129). The most important example in Kuhn’s formulation is the onset of the Copernican model of planetary motion. In flipping the roles of sun and planet, Copernicans “were not only learning what ‘planet’ meant or what the sun was. Instead, they were changing the meaning of ‘planet’ so that it could continue to make useful distinctions in a world where all celestial bodies, not just the sun, were seen differently from the way they had been seen before” (128-9). Of course, especially in the case of this example, the paradigm shift has far-reaching examples, redefining as it did the relationship of human beings to the universe, but Kuhn does not shy away from the generalization that “when paradigms change, the world itself changes with them...after a revolution scientists are responding to a different world” (111). The fifty years following Copernicus’s paradigm saw an unprecedented wave of discoveries in European astronomy, such as sunspots, comets, and new stars and planets, which had gone unnoticed in the “immutable” Ptolemaic skies.\(^4\) This is attributable to the fact that under the new paradigm scientists looked for

\(^4\) Not, however, in China, where, unfettered by the Ptolemaic paradigm, such events had been recorded for centuries.
different things, despite looking at the same objects through the same instruments. “Confronting the same constellation of objects as before and knowing that he does so,” Kuhn argues, the scientist “necessarily finds them transformed through and through” (122).

In Kuhn’s model, then, change is anything but linear and cumulative, and far from smooth. One paradigm does not simply form the basis of its successor: it is replaced, and along with it all the suppositions not only about the specific property of nature with which it deals, but rather the entire worldview with which it is associated. It is also gradual; there is no single moment when one paradigm can be said conclusively to replace the other. Discovery is a process, not a moment. The result is that the two paradigms co-exist for quite some time, and adherents of each are often at odds with each other. Each uses the language of his own paradigm to defend his own worldview and attack the other, with the result that they are mutually incomprehensible, unable “to make complete contact with each other’s viewpoints” (148). Kuhn’s term for the failure is “incommensurability,” but he takes great pains to assert that neither side is wrong. Instead, each sees the world according to his paradigm, and each paradigm is bound up with a worldview. And given this fact, he compares the transfer of allegiance from one

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5 This is even true, Kuhn argues, for something as apparently clear-cut as a discovery. As an example, he cites the case of Roentgen’s discovery of x-ray radiation: conducting a study of cathode rays, Roentgen noticed that a particular screen across the room glowed when his apparatus was emitting rays; after 7 feverish weeks of testing and investigation, Roentgen announced his discovery. Even then, his announcement was greeted with incredulity; Lord Kelvin, at the time one of the foremost authorities on cathode radiation, declared Roentgen’s findings to be an elaborate hoax, and the scientific establishment as a whole took quite some time to accept the existence of X-rays, as they violated the “entrenched expectations” dictated by the existing paradigm (59). “At what point in Roentgen’s investigation...ought we say that X-rays had been discovered?” asks Kuhn. “We can only say that X-rays emerged in Wurzburg between November 8 and December 28, 1895” (57-8). If something as seemingly instantaneous as a discovery must be perceived as processual and diachronic, then a full-fledged paradigm shift can only be seen over a far greater temporal scale, something approaching decades or even longer.
paradigm to another with “a conversion experience” (151) to which resistance is entirely understandable on the part of those who have spent a lifetime in the service of the previous version. Such men, unlike younger scientists who are trained in the terms of the newer paradigm, are faced with a decision “that can only be made on faith” (158). Many, then, resist indefinitely, and the paradigm shift is only possible when “the last holdouts have died” (152).

It is fair to say that this aspect of Kuhn’s model has been contentious. Many scientists object to the lack of rationalism and freedom that Kuhn seems willing to grant them, arguing that the freedom – and, indeed, the responsibility – to make informed choices between models is precisely what forms the bedrock of science, and of scientific progress. Ian Hacking urges caution in our acceptance of the doctrine of incommensurability; after all, as he observes, high school students learn Newtonian physics, but when they graduate to university they study relativity. Or, put another way, “everybody who converted to Einstein in the early days knew Newtonian mechanics by heart. So what is incommensurable?” (xxi). The point is, of course, well taken. Still, there is no doubt that, presented with precisely the same set of empirical data, Newton and Einstein would perceive entirely different universes; the same could be said for the relativistic (but still mechanical) universe in which Einstein lived and the quantum-controlled one of, say, Heisenberg. For Hacking, the development of sub-disciplines

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6 It is unclear whether Hacking’s use of the word “converted” here is deliberate, as at this point in his introduction to the 50th anniversary edition of Kuhn’s work he has not yet come to discuss the conversion v choice argument. Either implicitly or explicitly, though, the diction is telling.

7 Einstein famously insisted in a letter to Niels Bohr that “God does not play dice with the universe.” Until his death, Einstein never “converted” to the probabilistic model of reality espoused by quantum physicists. But to contemporary physicists, here voiced by Stephen Hawking, it is now a commonplace that “God does
and sub-paradigms in response to anomalies logically leads to a difficulty of communication, if not an outright incommensurability: “as these new sub-disciplines develop, each with its own achievements on which research is modeled, it becomes increasingly difficult for practitioners of one to understand what the other is doing. This is not a deep metaphysical point; it is a familiar fact of life to any working scientist” (xxxii-iii). Whether we call it incommensurability or hysteresis, Kuhn’s model highlights the co-presence of vastly different models of reality, and the difficulties that would be experienced by the adherents of each in mutual comprehension.

The account of scientific history that prevails against which Kuhn very explicitly argues – is the narrative of slow and steady cumulative progress. Where for Bourdieu history is inculcated by the same means as the rest of the habitus, in science that force is concentrated in the system of scientific education, most notably textbooks, from which Kuhn points out nearly all student of science learn until graduate school, which is the first opportunity they have to design their own research questions. Scientists “never learn concepts, laws, and theories in the abstract and by themselves. Instead, these intellectual tools are from the start encountered in a historically and pedagogically prior unit that displays them with and through their applications” (46). Because these textbooks are, too, products of the reigning paradigm and its modes of knowledge and knowledge gathering, they only recognize developments as the beginnings of the modern

play dice with the universe. All the evidence points to him being an inveterate gambler, who throws the dice on every possible occasion.” These scientists could certainly have spoken with each other – and indeed Einstein and Bohr maintained a lively correspondence over the issue – but at heart is the certainty that their universes were very, very different places, each irreconcilable with the other.
things that they develop into; discovering a phenomenon involves “recognizing both that something is and what it is” (55, emphasis Kuhn’s), both of which are unavoidably performed in hindsight. Paradigms which have been superseded, along with all the “normal science” that took place under their auspices, are dismissed as errors, detour from the “correct” path that led to the contemporary paradigm, which there is no reason to doubt. The absolute confidence in the current paradigm (which is, after all, what makes it a paradigm to begin with) allows scientific historians to dismiss the “destruction of a prior paradigm” and the “consequent conflict between competing schools of thought” (96), concentrating instead on an account of “how we got here.”

Not only are accounts of past research filtered through the present paradigm, but so, too, is current and future research (just as the habitus is a structure, but also a structuring structure). For “the man who is striving to solve a problem defined by existing knowledge is not…just looking around. He knows what he wants to achieve, and he designs his instruments and directs his thoughts accordingly” (96). Scientific presentism is thus inevitable.

Although he never explicitly makes the argument, the most relentless subtextual implication of Kuhn’s remarkable work is the temporality of epistemological change. Textbooks, whose limitations he frequently addresses, create the illusion of a stately march from benighted ignorance to the brilliant light of modern science, eliding the nearly combative tensions of pre- and post-revolutionary research. To place paradigm shifts in time, in the lived processes by which they take place, is to shift our attention to the unevenness of the so-called march of progress.
1.4 Hysteresis as Ontological Paradigm Shift

When juxtaposed, Kuhn and Bourdieu’s models of change offer more sites of agreement than of contention. Both insist that models of change constructed post-festum and offering totalizing narratives of what is in reality a temporally contingent process are inadequate to the task. They depict the process of change, represented by the overly presentist or positivist accounts against which both Kuhn and Bourdieu have positioned themselves, as linear and objectified, but both thinkers take pains to re-insert an element of conflict and uncertainty. Both predict contestation between members of the two groups (the changed-from and the changed-into); the “incommensurability” of competing paradigms in Kuhn and Bourdieu’s hysteresis bear striking similarities, and suggest that the process of change has by-products, collateral damage, that there are certain devotees of the former system who are simply unable to absorb the values of the latter, and to whom assimilation is as impossible as comprehension. And both models predict that in the predominant accounts of change a certain element of presentism is inevitable, even as they demonstrate that such totalization amounts to the sanitizing deletion of precisely the collateral damage by which the status quo has achieved its dominance.

I argue that if we borrow conceptually from Kuhn in order to fill in some of the blanks in Bourdieu’s account, what we will find is a surprisingly coherent depiction of periodization. I suggested above that although Bourdieu’s model predicts hysteresis, it does not account for any particularly rapid change, or suggest any reason why it might take place. We can plug in here Kuhn’s formulation: an anomaly appears that cannot be resolved, and cannot be contained within the paradigm, with the result that increasing
numbers of people are forced to concede that the paradigm (and not the studies that gave rise to the anomalous results) is incapable of representing the natural world. This admission triggers a flurry of inquiry, described as “extraordinary science,” one that ultimately leads to the creation (or discovery) of a new paradigm, after which “normal science” resumes the task of mapping the paradigm onto the topography of its subject. In applying this model to ontology, we first must (as did Bourdieu) recognize that where epistemological inquiry is carried out consciously and directly, ontological phenomena for the most part manifest subconsciously. The anomaly, too, rather than the result of some physical experiment, would result from a disharmony between individuals and the structures external to them that structure the habitus; in this way, any sudden change in this relationship could cause a nearly immediate hysteresial reaction in an individual, while particularly sudden and/or far-reaching changes, too fast or too great for the individual habitus to keep pace, would cause hysteresis on a larger scale. Such a phenomenon would amount to an ontological anomaly, triggering in a philosophical way the upsurge in “extraordinary” investigation predicted by Kuhn, which would give rise to an “ontological paradigm shift:” periodization.

There are a number of implications to this model that are of interest in the context of an investigation like the one I am undertaking. First, in this case at least, periodization is not entirely arbitrary. In the case of a large enough anomaly -- which I’ll argue in the chapters to come was certainly in play in the movement from “medieval” to “early modern” -- what amounts to an ontological paradigm shift is far from impossible. Second, though, to fix the exact moment at which such a shift can be said to “take place” is impossible. We saw in Kuhn’s work that it is difficult even to pin down the moment
of “discovery” in the relatively small, sudden, and self-contained case of the X-ray, and that even such a minor paradigm shift did not take place neatly and without pre- and post-revolutionary phases of transition. The roots of the anomaly, as I’ll go on to show, extend far, far into the past. And to assume that any such change took place uniformly and neatly is, of course, untenable. We cannot take change out of time.

1.5 Hysteresis, Incommensurability, and the “Early Modern Divide”

What does this mean, then, for a study of the late 16th century? There is no denying David Aers’ criticism of those strands of Early Modernism that, through “many repressions of heterogeneous practices” managed to reduce an “extraordinarily diversified, complex, and profoundly adaptive culture of discourses and practices” into “a homogeneous, static, and uncomplicated monolith” (178). The notion that the modern came into being with the stroke of Henry Tudor’s pen, or with the first utterance of “To be or not to be” onstage at the Globe, is laughable as Aers and many of his fellow medievalists have protested. So, too, though, is the contention that there has been a stately and uniform glide from, say, the 12th century, through the Reformation, and on to the 21st, a fact to which even many medievalists attest: even as he repudiates the idea of a line of demarcation between the periods, for instance, James Simpson calls attention to the different mindsets pre- and post-Reformation writings of Thomas More and Simon

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8 I’ll devote some time to some of the particulars of Aers’ arguments in chapter 1.
Fish, and refers comfortably to “a stark opposition between a late medieval and an early modern Weltanschauung” (25), to “both sides of the Reformation divide” (20), characterized by a “rupture” (23). Similarly, even as he cautions against an “over-fixation” (222) on the religious Reformation, David Wallace only does so as he demands that its contemporary “historiographical fractures” (223) be given the same scholarly attention. The decisiveness of the language, and the undertone of violence to it (“divide,” “rupture,” “fractures”), even as it is used in the service of denying a clear line of demarcation between the two periods, suggests a period of accelerated change, precisely the sort of vertiginous and cataclysmic advance for which Bourdieu and Kuhn have equipped us, and after which we might logically expect to find hysteresis and incommensurability.

### 1.6 Hysteresis and the “Turn to the Transcendental”

My approach to considering the upheaval of the period might be described as Foucauldian, only insofar as I am less interested in delineating a “particular epistemological space” than I am in using Essex to consider a change in “the network of analogies that transcend[] the traditional proximities” (xi). In other words, this study does not devote itself overmuch to the formation taken by individual belief and practice in the period, but considers instead the extent to which Essex’s story might shed light on the “rules of formulation, which were never formulated in their own right” (xi, emphasis

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9 After all, as John Sommerville reminds us, Henry’s reforms took place in the dizzying space of only 4 years.
added): in effect, the habitus. In so doing, I have been drawn along by the rushing current of that movement that has come to be known as the “turn to religion” in Early Modernism, and it behoves me to take a moment here to position my argument against that backdrop.

Fredric Jameson suggests that religion is “the master-code” in pre-capitalist societies, the “cultural dominant” through which – and only through which – we can achieve an understanding of the various aspects of the cultures of which it forms not only the centre, but the radii that extend outward from it (Religion and Ideology 35). Like Jameson himself, I feel uneasy about the use of the word “religion,” though, only because it has lost in the intervening years so much of the valence it must have when we use it to refer to these societies. To a 21st-century ear, the word is nearly synonymous with “belief,” a word that connotes a “privatized sense” (38) of the relationship between and among individuals and the divine. Such a sense, as I’ll go on to argue at some length, is precisely the locus of the changing rules of formulation in the late Elizabethan period; if “belief” is “an accompaniment of social fragmentation and atomization,” then religion is associated with “the older organic social groups of which [it]…was precisely the organizing ideology and the cement” (38). As Debora Shuger puts it, religion in the period is “not simply politics in disguise” (Habits of Thought in the English Renaissance 6):

Religion during this period supplies the primary language of analysis. It is the cultural matrix for explorations of virtually every topic: kingship, selfhood, rationality, language, marriage, ethics, and so forth. Such subjects are…not marked by religious discourse, but articulated in it; they are considered in relation
to God and the human soul. That is what it means to say that the English Renaissance was a religious culture, not simply a culture whose members generally were religious. (6)

Or, as Kevin Sharpe writes in calling for a more “inter-disciplinary” consideration of the centrality of religion to the period, "Religion was not just about doctrine, liturgy or ecclesiastical government; it was a language, an aesthetic, a structuring of meaning, an identity, a politics." (12).

In granting religion this pride of place as a cultural hermeneutic, we do more than merely satisfying Aers, who quite rightly insists that “one cannot simply write the history of a subject in a culture where Christian beliefs and practices are pervasive without taking Christianity very seriously” (196). We begin to approach the “network of analogies” that combine to shape the habitus of the period, from whose rapid alteration Essex’s exclusion has made him the subject of my study. If, though, religion in this context is more than mere belief, more than just the sum of its component axioms and dogmas, what is it exactly?

To answer that question, I turn first to the account of Ken Jackson and Arthur Marotti of the “Turn to Religion in Early Modern Studies.” In their view, the fundamental influence of the Levinasian emphasis on ethics has filtered into Early Modernism by way of its influence on new historicism. Levinas places the ethical before the epistemological and the ontological, before even subjectivity, arguing that alterity, the experience of the other, precedes all of these considerations. For this to be true, however, as suggested by Derrida and as argued by Badiou in Ethics: An Essay on the Understanding of Evil, there must take place “the epiphany of a properly infinite distance
to the other, the traversal of which is the originary ethical experience” (qtd in Jackson and Marotti 178). Our sense of alterity must transcend finite experience. Levinas names this experience the “Altogether-Other,” but to Badiou it is “quite obviously the ethical name for God”; “whether [we] know it or not,” Badiou writes, and whether we like it or not, it is this Levinasian ethical/religious strain of twentieth-century phenomenology that underwrites much of early modern studies' critical interest in alterity” (Jackson and Marotti 178).10 In other words, at the heart of the “turn to religion” in phenomenology, and thence, via New Historicism, in Early Modern Studies, is the notion of transcendence. Here, as above, religion is not reducible to dogma and commandments, but rather represents the experience with alterity, be it with others or with God.

Like Paul Stevens, then, “by religion I mean, above all, transcendence,” in particular “those epiphanic moments when consciousness breaks through the quotidian or what we might take to be the natural frame of things to experience a new or radically different order of reality, a fullness of being that is for many people entirely coincident with the presence of God” (2). These are the kinds of experiences to which this study will be most attentive, even when the connection may seem distant, as it is in Shuger’s argument that the period’s “political thought…hinges on the local presence of transcendent principles” (Political Theologies 46). After all, I am interested like Foucault in “a network of analogies that transcend[s] the traditional proximities,” which are by definition “to be found only in widely differing theories, concepts, and objects of study” (xi). Like these critics and so many others, what interests me the most about the

10 I cannot claim credit for this analysis, but only for a summary of the work done by Jackson and Marotti; see pp 177-8 of their article.
movement between periods (or generations, or paradigms) is the changing perspective on alterity and selfhood as articulated in cross-disciplinary thinking about transcendence.

It is in implicit recognition of the centrality of transcendence that Shuger posits as the “central problematic” of the time “the placement of boundaries” (Habits of Thought 9) in and between the interpretive categories used as the framework for the construction of the Elizabethan and Jacobean worldview. Early moderns were not merely concerned with the placement of boundaries, observes Shuger, but with their “thickness” (10), and if “in the long run, the movement from premodern to modern thought describes a thickening of boundaries” (11), they were far from solid in the Elizabethan and Jacobean eras. In fact, as Shuger points out, boundaries shifted nearly constantly at the time, with positions at either pole often visibly copresent (11-13).

If, then, the view of transcendence borne by religion is the “network of analogies” (Foucault xi) largely responsible for structuring the habitus of the time, and if our consideration of religion is in the main directed towards the experience of transcendence, and if the primary change taking place in it was with respect to the drawing, moving, and thickening of boundaries, then I conclude that if we are to consider in a meaningful way the process of periodization, that these are the processes to which we must turn our attention. The “co-presence” of opposing systems of belief excavated by Shuger corresponds nearly flawlessly with the chaos of change as predicted by Bourdieu and by Kuhn, and I suggest, that as a way of tracking this movement, we might look at figures of incommensurability, at hysteresial vestiges of former states in relation to different aspects of transcendence. As I will argue at some length, I believe that the Earl of Essex is invaluable in this regard.
1.7 Essex and Hysteresis

My own point of entry into this subject is no doubt coloured by my literary background. I am fascinated by the incommensurability of paradigm shifts, by the discord between individuals: two observers looking at exactly the same thing and observing utterly different phenomena, each defending her viewpoint in the language given her by her paradigm, uncomprehending of the other, possessed of a confidence born of experimental and experiential certainty in her position. I am drawn to hysteresis, to the outcast, to the ontological Other, left behind by the march of progress, consigned to nostalgia with the very anomaly of which he is proof, and like it, nothing more than an vestigial obstacle to “modernity.” He is the one who must die, says Kuhn, on the altar of the new paradigm. There is about this sort of figure an irresistibly appealing aura of Aristotelian tragedy, an aura particularly visible around the figure of Essex.

For he is, as I will demonstrate, a man incommensurably out of step with his time, a fact comprehensible through the lens of hysteresis. As we shall see, the dominant narrative of Renaissance subjectivity posits “self-fashioning” as replacing the medieval corporate identity. If early theorists were too quick to describe the “modern” sense of self as merely entering onto the scene, the subsequent outcry from medievalists has certainly corrected the error, demonstrating that the transition began, in smaller and more subtle ways, deep in the medieval period, and decrying the privileging of the early modern period as the “birthplace” of modernity. We cannot infer, however, that if the progress of the subject was not instant, then it was gradual and nearly uniform. If the
former model over-emphasizes periodization, the latter would eschew it entirely. And neither offers any indication that there might have been two paradigms in competition with each other; the former model suggests that one simply gave way to the other, while the latter would suggest a uniform transition, presumably simultaneous in everyone at once, from one state to the other. I reject both hypotheses, on the grounds laid out above: rather, as the transition occurs from one model of subjectivity to the next, we will find both existing side by side, and we will find tension and disharmony between them.

I find this in the Earl of Essex: my contention, then, is not that he was different from many of his contemporaries, but that he was differently. In other words, the differences in the codes and values by which he lived and those of many of the people around him are not merely the result of a different set of priorities, but of an incommensurably different habitus, one that was forged by different structures, and one that structured in different ways. I will consider these ideas against a backdrop of contemporary thoughts about boundaries, and the ways in which they might or might not (and should or should not) be transcended.

In the first chapter, I outline in basic terms the distinction between the two ontological paradigms. In broadest terms, I distinguish between the “authentic” mode, which we would commonly associate with the medieval period, and its “sincere” successor. The former I associate with an ethics of integrity, of wholeness, when membership in a community was a reliable form of self-identification as much as it was of identifying others, and I show that in many ways this identification with a larger entity served as a conduit for passion. The chapter goes on to uncover some of the sympathy for the former, notably in the work of Reformers, who saw in this model of subjectivity
and in its passionate outbursts the possibility of a true and unmediated communion with
God, one that evaporated with the advent of “sincerity” in the Early Modern period.

Chapter 2 goes on to explore some of the implications of the tension on the
literature of the age. I begin with Essex’s own writing, looking at the rhetoric of his
Accession Day play from 1595 as a nearly direct riposte to the rise of individuation, and
examining its relationship to its thematic predecessor, Sidney’s Arcadia. I then
demonstrate how the thinking of these two men is carried on in the poetical writings of
their mutual great friend and follower Fulke Greville; his work, explicitly casting the
lives of Sidney and Essex in the context (if not the terms) of hysteresis, expounds on the
virtues of authenticity as divinely-inspired paradigm, and equates self-fashioning with a
kind of sophistry. I then examine how the conflict he embodies is represented in
literature not directly created among the members of Essex’s coterie, in a reading of
Shakespeare’s Hamlet and of Troilus and Cressida. In considering the ungovernable
passions of various characters in Hamlet, and in considering the juxtaposition of
integration and fragmentation in the figures of Troilus and Cressida and among the
Greeks, I find a certain awareness of the competing paradigms, and at least a sympathy –
if not an outright affinity – for the older ways.

Chapter 3 attempts to apply the same paradigmatic dichotomy to the theatre,
addressing the association most often made with Essex: the performance of Richard II on
the eve of the rebellion. In making the move to the context of the theatre, I discover
meaningful parallels between the “authentic” and “sincere” modes of subjectivity and
what the sociologist Victor Turner has described as the “liminal” and “liminoid”
experiences with theatre. This transition – which Turner explicitly links, in England,
with many of the same “anomalies” that spur the paradigm shift in individual subjectivity – runs along nearly perfectly parallel lines: the liminal (authentic, medieval, corporate) experience with theatre is communal and socializing, where the liminoid (sincere, Early Modern, individuated) is experienced at arm’s length, mediated by rhetorical self-awareness. Although there is little to document these phenomena at the audience level as they unfolded four to five centuries ago, there is a far more contemporary example of the slow social shift from liminal paradigm to liminoid, to be found in post-colonial Africa and its theatre; this movement, oddly, elucidates a scholarly conversation between Donne and Bacon on the two theatrical modes. In this light, just as Essex stands as a hysteresial vestige of the older self-conception, the performance of Richard II is a kind of theatrical hysteresis, one that casts into relief the incommensurability of the two modes.

In placing Essex against this backdrop, I am suggesting more than the simple re-evaluation of a minor literary figure: I am beginning the exploration of an aspect of our understanding of the period that has until now been only suggested. As I’ll go on to show, although many scholars (on both the medieval and the early modern sides of the “modern divide”) pay lip service to the idea of hysteresis, never do they give any sense of what, in practical terms, such a figure might look like and how, in real time, such a process might unfold. While this investigation cannot claim to be a definitive account of every facet of these questions, it does address them squarely, foregrounding an important limitation to the utility of self-fashioning as a hermeneutical tool, and suggesting new sets of tensions that can be uncovered in much of the writing of the period. In so doing,
it argues that the rise and fall of the Earl of Essex are critical to the understanding of many of the features of the period’s literary landscape.
Chapter 1: “Raise up in me a vehement love”

The story is a familiar one: on July 1, 1598, in the midst of a heated argument over the planning of a military expedition to quell rebellion in Ireland, the Earl of Essex contemptuously turned his back on his Queen. In response, the 64-year old Elizabeth arose from her throne, and, in a gesture more befitting an angry schoolmaster than the divine Gloriana, boxed his ears. Incensed, Essex reached for his sword and began to draw, prevented from doing so only by the physical restraint of the Lord Admiral. Swearing that not from her father would he have taken such an insult, England’s Earl Marshal turned his back once more, and without asking or being granted leave, stormed out of the chamber. No matter how many times it is told, the story retains its power to shock: the sheer and naked passion of the moment, unmitigated, unmoderated, and unmodulated by any sense of what we and the Elizabethans alike would call the proper decorum, is breathtaking. Essex’s rashness, in this episode as in so many others at court and elsewhere, was nearly unheard of in the latter years of Elizabeth’s reign, and it suggests a man completely unversed in the policy and craft that were the coins of the political realm. This was not for lack of effort on the part of those nearest to him: his client Francis Bacon, for example, tried for years to wheedle Essex into a more subtle and nuanced program of influence, to no avail.

Modern scholars have attempted in various ways to account for Essex’s failure to exert self-control. There are some, for instance, who have reached back across the centuries and read the violence of his passions, and the extremities between which they
swung, as evidence of an illness, mental or otherwise. A less clinical – and more logical - explanation might mirror Stephen Greenblatt’s account of Sir Walter Ralegh’s insistence on the chivalric as a code of conduct: that he had chosen to perform a “self” of this kind, and had fallen prey to “the dangers of the histrionic sensibility” (Ralegh: The Renaissance Man and his Roles 23), so deeply immersed in his performance that he was unable to be any other way. Frank Whigham would agree: for him, elegant and often passionate dissembling was the cornerstone of the “political arts of self-depiction” deployed by university-educated courtiers, and the sort of persona enacted by Essex was deliberately conceived as a form of rhetoric designed to gain influence by dazzling social sprezzatura (8).

In a critical landscape like our contemporary one, over which Greenblatt’s Renaissance Self-Fashioning still casts a long shadow, this latter interpretation of Essex makes perfect sense. His comportment seems almost too extreme to be explicable in any other way. He did, after all, ride alone to the gates of occupied Lisbon and drive his lance into the gates, challenging all the Spaniards mewed up within to combat over the beauty of their respective mistresses. He did perform dumb shows in the tiltyard and

11 Grace Ioppolo suggests that “his increasingly hurtful and insulting private behavior towards Elizabeth and his impolitic public actions, particularly from 1599 to 1601, were due in part to an increasingly uncontrollable and undiagnosed mental illness” (“The Earl of Essex and the Hulton Letters” in Elizabeth I and the Culture of Writing 65). In his biography of Essex, Robert Lacey observes that after Elizabeth refused to renew Essex’s patent on sweet wines in October of 1600, “Essex’s course went haywire. His behavior had been growing more and more erratic in the course of the last years, and tertiary syphilis seems a plausible clinical explanation for this” (Robert, Earl of Essex: An Elizabethan Icarus 261). There is no substantiation provided for this claim. Karin Coddon asserts that “whether…Essex was actually mad in any clinical sense of the word is not an issue for historicism” (51), but then refers continually to his “madness, whatever its precise pathological nature” (52) as a fundamental assumption of her essay (“Suche Strange Desygn’ s: Madness, Subjectivity, and Treason in Hamlet and Elizabethan Culture.”). Lacey Baldwin Smith argues that “by the time Essex turned to treason, the deterioration in his character had passed beyond the point of hysteria: it was bordering on insanity which led him to confuse the fantasies of his own sick brain with reality” (The Elizabethan World 266).
short scenes at court to clearly self-promotional ends. He did distribute feathers dyed orange (the colour of the House of Essex) to spectators in the tiltyard so that they could wave them in adulation of him. He did write poems that he set to music and performed before the queen, a practice forming part of an enterprise of poetical self-promotion that, according to Stephen May, was unprecedented among courtier poets. And he did, after all, write words like these, taken from a letter to the Queen that Essex wrote while on campaign in Dieppe, dated October 18, 1592:

   In my absence I conceive an assured hope to do something which shall make me worthy of the name of your servant: at my return I will humbly beseech your Majesty that no cause but a great action of your own may draw me out of your sight, for the two windows of your privy chamber shall be the poles of my sphere, where, as long as your Majesty will please to have me, I am fixed and immoveable. When your Majesty thinks that heaven too good for me, I will not fall like a star, but be consumed like a vapour by the same sun that drew me up to such a height. While your majesty gives me leave to say I love you, my fortune is, as my affection—unmatchable. If ever you deny me that liberty, you may end my life, but never shake my constancy; for were the sweetness of your nature turned into the greatest bitterness that could be, it is not in your power, as great a Queen as you are, to make me love you less... I beseech your Majesty receive all wishes of perfect happiness, from your Majesty's most humble, faithful, and affectionate servant. (Bourchier 1.249)
How could anyone possibly “mean” this? It is difficult to see these lines as anything but the calculated recitation of whatever social script was deemed most appropriate given the intended audience and the desired effect.

Were we to see Essex in this way, we would not be alone. As William Camden writes, “some there were which magnified Essex as one that sincerely affected the honour and security of his Countrey. And there were also which taxed him as one that served his owne ambition and the benefit of his followers” (§13). One contemporary satirist, Everard Guilpin, composed the following lines widely accepted to be about Essex, and often suggested as the basis for the description of the Machiavellian Bolingbroke in *Richard 2*:

When great Felix passing through the street,
Vaileth his cap to each one he doth meet,
And when no broom-man that will pray for him,
Shall have less truage than his bonnet's brim,
Who would not think him perfect courtesy?
Or the honey suckle of humility?
The devil he is as soon : he is the devil,
Brightly accoustred to be-mist his evil :
Like a swartrutter's hose his puff thoughts swell
With yeasty ambition : Signor Machiavel
Taught him this mumming trick, with courtesy
To entrench himself with popularity,
And for a writhen face, and body's move,
Be barricadoed in the people's love. (Satire 1 63-76)

To modern eyes and ears, Guilpin certainly seems to have Essex pegged, but it is precisely to the modernity of our eyes and ears that I wish to call attention. As I have pointed out, any significant cultural change can be expected to bring with it an incommensurability born of hysteresis. In the terms of my project, without a corrective, we cannot perceive a habitus different from our own as anything but a slightly skewed embodiment of the conditions that govern our own sense of subjectivity. I argue in this chapter that it is into this trap that many observers, both in Essex’s time and in ours, have fallen. With the help of some imagination – though not, I think, speculation – I will try to reconstruct not only the pre-modern habitus on its own terms, but also some sense of the turmoil that might have accompanied the paradigm shift, and of the trauma of its concomitant hysteresis.

Self-fashioning, as logical a subjective mode as it may be to our sensibilities, was not the only explanation of Essex’s behaviour in the 1590s, nor should it be now. Francis Naunton ascribes Essex’s popularity to his “innate courtesy” (51) in dealing with people of all social stations and in all situations. Camden mentions the Earl’s “innate goodnesse” (1599 § 20). Contemporary scholarship — and, indeed, common sense — would have us ignore the adjective entirely, dismissing this kind of behavior as a performance, and instead have us assess Essex’s courtesy as his form of self-fashioning, as the choice of a particular mode of social interaction, as the creation of a particular persona. But what if Essex’s courtesy really was innate? What if we emphasized the adjective rather than the noun? What if Essex’s self was not fashioned?
This is the position I defend in this chapter. To do so, as I’ve implied, I will be suggesting an important limitation of the utility of self-fashioning as a means of understanding not only the actions of Early Moderns, but of their understanding of themselves. Greenblatt, after all, begins his seminal work with the simple proposition that “in sixteenth-century England there were both selves and a sense that they could be fashioned,” (*RSF* 1) and I will place limits on both assumptions through an examination of Essex. Conventional scholarship would infer that Essex was a man who did not control his emotions; I argue that he could not.

This interpretation, it bears remarking, is much more in keeping with the view of the Earl held by most of his contemporaries, both those in his circle and those in opposition to it. In a letter pleading with Essex to manufacture with more care his courtly image, Bacon aims at “the removing of the impression of your nature to be opinative and not rulable” by exhorting the Earl to pay attention to “the lightest of particulars which are not to be neglected...your habits, apparel, wearings, gestures and the like;” his followers despaired that he would often receive visitors in his nightshirt and attend court in threadbare dress, oblivious to any social niceties around such matters (Bourchier 395, 398; Wotton *Parallel* 6). Essex’s secretary Henry Wotton describes him as “a weak dissembler” who was “no good pupil to my Lord of Leicester, who was wont to put all his emotions in his pocket” (9). To John Donne, who served under Essex in the expedition to Cadiz in 1596 and Wotton’s close friend, Essex was just as incapable of understanding the secreted motivations of others as he was of hiding his own: as he wrote in a letter to Wotton, Essex “need[s] locks for [himself] and keys for others” (qtd in Bald, 108). Wotton’s fellow in Essex’s secretarial pool, the scabrous Oxfordian
classicist Henry Cuffe, despaired that Essex “can hide nothing. He wears his love and
hate on his forehead” (quoted in Camden 1601 §43). Naunton lamented that Essex’
affections (like Elizabeth’s) were “in and out...like an instrument ill-tuned” (118), and
the historian Camden, eyewitness to many of the courtly episodes of Essex’s later life,
describes him as “one that could not cover his affections” (§43). In the words of his
chief courtly rival Robert Cecil:

>To wish him to change from one humour to another were but as if for the cure of
a man in pain, one should advise him to lie on the other side. If from a sanguine
delightful humour of love, he turn to the melancholy retired humour of
contemplation, or a turbulent boiling humour of war, what doth he but change
tyrrants?” (Bourchier 2.108).

There is a paradigm that would explain Essex’s behaviour not as an illness, and
not as an assumed persona, but as an authentic state of self-conception. If a Renaissance
self was characterized by its individuation, and the subsequent ability to shape and
fashion itself, then the pre-modern one is traditionally conceived as corporate, and
subject to definition by the collective entities to which it variously belonged,
transcending a first-person perspective and defining itself instead in terms of its
connections to entities external to its physical containment, but very much part of its self-
conception nonetheless. What I will establish is that Essex was such a pre-modern self,
in a Renaissance court of self-fashioners. Invoking Bourdieu’s ideation of hysteresis as
delineating the development of the habitus, I argue that the movement from corporate,
transcendent self to fashioning Renaissance self is far less synchronic than Greenblatt et
al have implied. I will go on to show that this disparity was as much the reason for
Essex’s successes as it was for his spectacular failure, and I will read his rebellion in its light. I demonstrate that not only was Greenblatt’s premise (that “there were selves and they could be fashioned”) well-known to Essex’s contemporaries, but that so, too, were the limits of its applicability; furthermore, we can see in the literature of Essex’s circle (and in the literary output of the Earl himself) a resistance to the ontological movement that was ongoing, and that the antagonistic co-presence of these different subjectivities is entirely in keeping with Bourdieu’s and Kuhn’s models of change. In this, and in its reflection in the literature of his age, I will position the Earl of Essex as a limit case of self-fashioning.

2.1 Synchrony and Synecdoche

In applying this model, as I have suggested, I pay heed to the warnings of many medievalists, wary of the sort of synchronic models that have plagued the history of subjectivity. Most vociferous in sounding this warning has been David Aers, who has dismissed some or much of the work of many prominent early modernists – including Greenblatt, Francis Barker, Jonathan Dollimore, Catherine Belsey, Jean Howard, and others – as falling into the trap of Burckhardtian synchrony. In addition, he argues that the secular approach of these scholars prevents them from “taking Christianity extremely seriously” (196), which for Aers is absolutely critical if one is to write a “history of the subject in a culture where Christian beliefs and practices are pervasive” (196).

When Aers insists that we perceive modern Western human subjectivity as a process rather than as a state, and as one whose roots snake deeply into the medieval
period, I completely concur. He bemoans the alarming frequency with which Early Modernists accept the idea that *Hamlet* represents the sudden emergence onto the scene of a brand new sense of the human subject; as I will go on to argue in chapter 2, I read the play as evidence of an often adversarial co-presence of subjectivities, akin to the sort of gradation upon which Aers insists. The suggestion that the human subject as we now perceive it leapt fully armed from the head of its medieval forbear is every bit the oversimplification that he describes. As we’ve seen, Bourdieu describes the habitus as being in a constant state of steady change; its “structuring structures” adapt to new social conditions and redefine the parameters of subjectivity, and this subjectivity in turn sets to work, redefining the very forces of redefinition. Stasis is as impossible as sudden translation. If the process in a gradual one, and assuming that Early Modernists are not as ignorant, insular, or indolent as Aers seems to believe, there must be some other reason for the persistent belief that, in the words of Erich Auerbach, subjectivity “was prepared over a long period of time, but in the 16th century it progresses by leaps and bounds” (321).

In part, the supposition that Early Modernists claim the origins of subjectivity for their period might be attributable to the scholarly tendency to believe that “‘everything suddenly changed’ during the period of one’s specialization” (Aers 196). There is something to this line of thought, without doubt. Consider, for instance, these thoughts from Raymond Williams on the 20 months in 1847 and 1848 which saw the publication of, among others, *Dombey and Son, Wuthering Heights, Vanity Fair, Jane Eyre, Town and Country*, and *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*. For Williams, these months represent the emergence of an “unprecedented” and “new kind of consciousness” (9) brought on by the
Industrial Revolution, the struggle for democracy, and increasing urbanization. Through all of these things a drastic change was brought about in “the substance and meaning of community” (11), a “more disturbing question put both to societies and to persons than ever before in history” (12), given that the “knowability” of community was changing in rapid ways. I cannot help but observe that my own basic premise is strikingly similar to that of Williams, and that my own starting assumptions might with little deformation be transplanted two and a half centuries forward in time and placed comfortably and indistinguishably next to his. Were that the case, some Aersian 18th-centuryist might well come along and blame the insularity of my academic training for my obvious ignorance of the formative debts owed to the preceding centuries. So, as Early Modernists, we can perhaps credit Aers’ argument here, and admit to a certain presentism in our own sense of historical entitlement.

There are, however, some valid reasons to accept the premise that the parameters of human subjectivity changed at a greater rate in the late 16th century, and in concert with many medievalists, I have gestured to some of them already. Taking our cue from Aers’ adamance at the centrality of Christianity to the history of subjectivity, the Reformation generally – and the Acts and Oath of Supremacy in particular – surely has no equal. It is not as if post-Reformation England did away entirely with the notion of community: far from it. Great energy was expended in the construction of a new community, national and Protestant in nature. But surely even Aers would concede that the relationship of the individual to his community (and the parameters by which that community came to be defined) underwent change at a dramatic and unprecedented rate in the years following 1534, and that this altered relationship inevitably brought about
changes in the individual’s understanding of himself. As the Foucauldian arguments of Shuger (alongside, either directly or indirectly, so many of the scholars who have made the “turn to religion”) imply, such a change could not take place in the “master code” of the culture on merely dogmatic grounds; it amounts to a wholesale movement from “religious culture to religious faith” (Sommerville 3). If the nature of religious belief changed suddenly, and if the foundation of that system was based on a transcendence that was suddenly replaced with a worldview based on individuation, the results would be – and were, as I will show – every bit as traumatic and chaotic as suggested by the different models of change I have cited.

Of course, the “discovery of the New World” and its peoples must have caused an instant and fundamental shift in the European’s understanding of himself. And we do not refer to a “scientific evolution” but a “revolution”; the Baconian project to consign God to second causes — as I’ll discuss further below — had implications nearly unimaginable even a few decades prior. The other forces spurring the transition from one period to the next (the loosening of traditional class boundaries, urbanization, mercantilism and its concomitant globalization) might have picked up speed at an unheard of rate in the 16th century — in fact they did — and were we compartmentalizing the effect each had on the change in the human subject, we would side with Aers in finding their roots in the medieval period, or before. But if we consider these things in a more archeological way,12 and if we find that all of them are in concert shivered by a seismic alteration in the

12 I use the term, of course, in its Foucauldian sense, to indicate “an epistemological space specific to a particular period,” a “positive unconscious of knowledge: a level that eludes the consciousness of the scientist and yet is part of scientific discourse” (xi).
fundamental context into which all epistemological processes take place, a sudden paradigm shift is clearly visible. There is always the inexorable march of the habitus, both bearing and borne by the unremitting and glacial movement of social and individual forces, but there are also cataclysmic events that catalyze the reactions of which hysteresis is the remainder.

2.2 *Sources of the Self* and the Sources of the Self: Augustine, Charles Taylor and Renaissance Self-Fashioning

Aers insists that “the place to which anyone seeking to write a history of interiority and the subject must return is St Augustine’s *Confessions*” (182). Following the “magnificent study” (183) of *The Sources of the Self* by Charles Taylor, Aers argues that Augustine’s emphasis on the “inward” man is vital to the understanding of medieval subjectivity.

Consider his line of reasoning:

Central to the *Confessions* is an approach that remains basic throughout the Augustinian tradition – in the Middle Ages as in the early-modern period. Namely, that the journey to God demands a move from the outer person to the inner, while in the very activity of an introspective search for self-knowledge we may hope to encounter God. (Aers 183)

This passage is critical not only to my disagreement with Aers’ reasoning, but to what I believe to be a misunderstanding of Augustine.
Taylor argues that human consciousness acquired, at least in the Western tradition, a self-awareness, a “radical reflexivity” (171) over time. The possession of first-person perspective and the personal narrative arises as it is remembered (and constructed) by the experiencer, becoming the locus of what we know as the self. Like Aers, Taylor traces the development of this reflexivity back to the writings of Augustine, but there is an important distinction to be made: for Augustine, reflexivity is useful as a way to find God, for at the centre of every individual is the infinite divine. “Augustine’s concern was to show that God is to be found not just in the world but also and more importantly at the very foundations of the person (to use modern language),” observes Taylor. “God is to be found in the intimacy of self-presence” (134). The move inward, then, is only a way to move outward, and an exploration of one’s individual self serves only to map on a microcosmic level the terrain of the most macroscopic form, mode, and definition of existence. In this model, “it is not reflexivity which is evil;…evil is when this reflexivity is closed in on itself” (139), when the self becomes the end, and not simply the means, of understanding.

For Taylor, the decisive moment in the severance of this compact was the Reformation, after which the understanding of the church as a corporate body became anathema, and its mediating role was rejected along with its version of the sacred. The result is that “each person stands alone in relation to God: his or her fate – salvation or damnation – is separately decided” (216). This movement coincides for Taylor with the Baconian revolution, which – in addition to the relegation of divinity to the realm of second causes – achieved a “transvaluation of values, which is also the reversal of a previous hierarchy” played out in the opposition between “the citizen ethic” and “the
aristocratic ethic of honour, whose origins lay in the life of warrior castes.” As part of
the glorification of “ordinary life,” much of which is driven by the Puritan idea of the
calling that each person was assigned by God, “the ethic of honour and glory…is
subjected to a withering critique in the 17th century. Its goals are denounced as vainglory
and vanity, and the fruits of an almost childish presumption” (212-214).

Although I agree with Aers, then, that an understanding of Augustine is
fundamentally important, we read the text in very different ways. The problem as I see it
is that Aers makes no distinction between interiority and subjectivity. There is no doubt
that Augustine differentiates between the inner and the outer person. The position that
interiority was invented wholesale in 1599 is untenable. This is not to say, though, that
Augustine either perceives or advocates the individuation of the inner self; in fact, he
does entirely the opposite. As I’ll show below in a discussion of the value of the
passions, in the City of God Augustine explicitly and repeatedly identifies this sort of
individuation with sinfulness rooted in pride, with a turning away from God, with, to use
Taylor’s language, a reflexivity that “closes in on itself.” 13 As Aers himself observes, the
movement inwards is meant as a means to find God, who dwells in the soul within; it is
absolutely not meant as a form of detachment from the all-encompassing divine. In the
words of one critic, “the ultimate goal of such a turn is the realization of the commonness
of one’s nature with that of what is beyond. In a sense, the true objective of the turn
towards the self is the ultimate incorporation of it to a higher principle” (Eksen 135).
The movement inwards in Augustine, then, might be (as Aers insists) a very definite

13 Put another way, in terms taken from Shuger’s work, what had been a self only barely by a
psychological boundary that was at most porous becomes clearly demarcated and insular.
form of interiority, but it is a movement diametrically away from individual subjectivity. The two cannot be equated. Inwards is outwards. And as I’ll go on to argue at some length, it is in the early modern period that what we call “self-fashioning” gains prominence, precisely in the “turning inwards” so abhorred by Augustine.

In short, Augustine — like many medieval thinkers\(^{14}\) — sees his inner self as though it were synecdochal with God, and through God, with others. It is in this fact, I think, that Aers’ analysis breaks down. I argue in this chapter that the synecdochism that governed the inner life of individuals gave rise to the communal sense of self with which we so frequently associate the medieval subject.

2.3 The Pageantic Self

A number of studies of the medieval period make precisely this claim, that the lived experience of medievals was in various ways synecdochally constituted. David Gary Shaw concludes that “the self-conscious, voluble ‘self-fashioning’ that Stephen Greenblatt long ago made famous has a most un-medieval quality to it” (6). In describing the operation of what he calls “the social self” in the context of the cathedral city of Wells from 1375 to 1520, Shaw concludes that “in 1400, your meaning was your name and what it conjured in the mouths and ears of your companions. You were a

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\(^{14}\) I’ll demonstrate shortly with readings of works by Hoccleve, More, à Kempis, and of “The Dream of the Rood.”
bundle of perceptions in other people’s minds” (125). By examining court transcripts and the transactions of the town’s various guilds, Shaw concludes that the principal dispositions of life were fidelity, honour, and hierarchy, all of which were socially constituted and relentlessly inculcated. The worst punishment that could be levied by a guild, for example, was expulsion, which would in these terms amount to more than an enforced change of vocation or address; it would represent the full-scale cancellation of identity, which any citizen of Wells would have been powerless to overcome. In isolation, as I’ll show, nobody cut off from the collective in such a fashion could have fashioned a self to replace the one he had been given, and of which he had been stripped.

Shaw reports that the courts of Wells adjudicated a disproportionately large number (from our perspective, anyway) of cases of slander, a term that cast a considerably broader net than it does today and one which was taken more seriously, because in a culture in which the public self was the only self, a public attack on one’s reputation amounted to an assault on one’s very identity, on one’s most basic unit of personal existence. In Wells, “there was no room for the purely ‘personal’ self. It was channelled and cajoled and caressed out of this posture towards religious and social ends…There was no permanent place for the simple, private self” (204).

This anathematization of the individual self accounts for the feverish medieval preoccupation with the “glitteringly and cruelly public” (Huizinga 1). Identity must be acted out publicly in order for it to exist, but so, too, must everything else, as described by Johan Huizinga: “the administration of justice, the sales of goods, weddings and funerals – all announced themselves through processions, shouts, lamentations, and music” (1). Huizinga cites the “powerfully suggestive” (19) signs, colours, emblems,
devices, and mottoes that announced political allegiance, to which we might add the insistence that clothing were an entirely reliable indicator not only of social station, but of personal identity. It was this complete – and completely public – identification with the corporate body that made every man “not [his] own man, but more of a man nevertheless” (Shaw 156).

The same insistence on public manifestation is perceptible in more intimate relationships, as well, especially at court. For instance, Huizinga cites the institutionalization of the “princely mignon” (such as the relationship between Orsino and Cesario in *Twelfth Night*) as an example of the ways in which intimate relationships were formalized and turned into spectacle, a practice made manifest in the relationship between Elizabeth and Essex. Although Huizinga presents the case as exemplary of the unbounded and public nature of (especially courtly) relationships, it is precisely the kind of behavior that Greenblatt describes as “Petrarchan politics” (*RSF* 166). Like Essex, whose love of spectacle in the tiltyard, on the battlefield, and in print I will discuss below, Elizabeth believed “to the point of religious conviction in display, ceremony, and decorum, the whole theatrical apparatus of royal power” (167). To Greenblatt, though, this is little more than a “romantic fiction” (166) used by Elizabeth as a means of political control, a woman’s only weapon in a world of men.

From across the hysteresial divide, this conclusion seems as logical as it is misguided, falling into precisely the trap predicted by Bourdieu, and the one I am trying to skirt in our understanding of Essex with this discussion. It seems incomprehensible that such displays could be at once completely public and at the same time entirely genuine; surely, all of this must be rehearsed and deliberate? To read the period through
the lens of self-fashioning is to come to this conclusion: those of us who formulate ourselves tend to look with suspicion on ostentation, emotional or otherwise. But it is in this case that we must discard this lens if we are to see clearly. What Elizabeth and her father demonstrated was a way of being, not a way of being Queen. That selves were formed relationally does not mean that they were calculated with relationality in mind.

In Greenblatt’s analysis, Thomas More saw the theatricality of Henry’s court and decided that its members were “theatrically mad: [...] there is nothing in our culture... to suggest even faintly this frantic passion for dressing up” (RSF 28). Greenblatt ascribes Tudor theatricality, however, to the value Henry’s court in particular placed on “superabundance, variety, intricacy, and overpowering insistence on cost,” asserting that “the more conspicuous the consumption the better” (28). Insofar as such displays served as expressions of the shared “person” of the court and — in a context like the Field of the Cloth of Gold — of the country, this reading makes sense.

This pageantic, theatrical sense of self signals the dangers of presentist hermeneutics to an understanding of Essex and his age. Pre-moderns, and Essex, do seem “theatrically mad.” But to express oneself in public, theatrical, spectacular terms was as close to self-fashioning as such a man could have come. To be was to be pageantic. Little wonder that during Essex’s imprisonment, one of his most significant causes of concern was the fate of his reputation:

“I am gnawed on and torn by the vilest creatures upon earth. The prating tavern hunter speaks of me what he list: the frantic libeler writes of me what he list; already they print me, and make me speak to the world; and shortly they will play me in what forms they list upon the stage” (Bourchier 2.99).
For Essex, being and being discussed were one and the same. In a discussion of a very different case of the public adjudication of identity, the case of Martin Guerre, Greenblatt writes that “there is no layer deeper, more authentic, than theatrical self-presentation” (“Psychoanalysis and Renaissance Culture” 192). As exemplified in the case of Essex, I agree with him. As I’ll discuss in the next chapter, when one perceives boundaries between oneself and one’s community as either porous or non-existent, the experience of affect is synonymous and coincident with its outward presentation.

The manifestation of incommensurability in the inability of figures like More, Bacon, or Essex to understand the self-conceptions of people around them is a powerful indicator of what Shuger calls the “co-presence” of drastically different models of subjectivity. We simply cannot point to a calendar year and make a uniform assessment of the human subject, any more than we could pick on year at which it changed from one mode to another. The transition on which I am focused, one whose central question was the existence and thickness of various boundaries epistemological, existential, and theosophical, was more chaotic and adversarial. Before turning our attention squarely to Essex and the light he might shed on it (and it on him) though, I want to take a little more time to tease out the workings of this changing perspective on transcendence.

2.4 Individuation and its Discontents

There are, of course, many, many studies that attempt to model or elucidate the “corporate” identity of medieval English societies. Frederic Maitland and Ernst Kantorowicz, for instance, have traced the descent of the “mystical” idea of the “King’s
Two Bodies” from the religious to the secular and political sphere. From the sociological side, scholars like Victor Turner and Emile Durkheim, to whom I will turn in Chapter 3, have suggested broader models of corporate identity that offer valuable insight into the workings of such a society. Recently, the work of Henry Turner has interestingly suggested that the corporation might provide a useful model for thinking about a group without boundaries: “the church, universities, guilds, towns, cities, religious confraternities, joint-stock companies: all were corporations” (“Corporations” 154), in which “the category of personhood function[ed] as a conceptual envelope, a formal principle of both extension and intension that can ‘cover’ many different singular bodies so that they may be substituted for one another and be arranged in an order of subordination within a single group formation” (“Corporate Ego” 115). What was such a person like, though? What effect would this sort of self-understanding have on an individual? To begin to try to make this assessment, I turn first to Freud.

Like this study of Essex, Freud’s Civilization and its Discontents begins with the consideration of a particular sort of self-identification with infinity: the “oceanic feeling” associated with religion, “a feeling of indissoluble connection, of belonging inseparably to the external world as a whole” (723). He postulates that in infants, unable to differentiate between the objects of the external world and their own feelings, the ego encompasses all of existence; with maturation comes the detachment of external objects and ego, which leaves the delineated sense of self of which most of us are aware. As a result, “the ego-feeling we are aware of now is this only a shrunken residue of a much more inclusive – indeed, and all-embracing – feeling which corresponded to a more
intimate bond between the ego and the world around it” (725). This feeling lurks within us as “a piece of unconquerable nature” (735), periodically manifesting itself as a “strange attitude of hostility to civilization” (735).

No matter how far we progress in this direction, “the feeling of happiness derived from the satisfaction of a wild instinctual impulse untamed by the ego is incomparably more intense than that derived from sating an instinct that has been tamed” (731). The observation of another in the act of indulging these impulses holds a vicarious experience of the freedom from superego that we associate with the wild and free earlier self. This is no way to build a society, however. If the free and haphazard satisfaction of these untamed impulses was allowed, life would amount to little more than the strongest exerting their will over the weakest; and so, in a movement that Freud deems “the decisive step of civilization” (740), a majority, stronger than any individual, comes together whose power is set up as “right,” standing against the “brute force” of the individual. The “essence” of civilization, then, “lies in the fact that the members of the community restrict themselves in the possibility of their satisfaction, whereas the individual knew no such restrictions” (740). The strongest of these drives, for Freud, is the “inclination to aggression” (750), which “reigned without limit in primitive times” (751); the civilization of humankind is the history of its struggle to give up the satisfaction associated with this inclination. Eventually, after relentless external pressure by the external authority of the community, “aggressiveness is introjected, internalized,” and, “like a garrison in a conquered city” (756), it takes up residence in the psyche of the individual as the superego, where it is a constant reminder that contravention of shared values will cost the individual the love and company of the community. Once this
second phase has occurred, says Freud, “the phenomena of conscience...reach a higher stage” (757).

This process of individuation, for Freud, both causes and parallels the subjective development that is a concomitant of the process of “civilization.” Every person moves from corporation to individual as a result of dispositions inculcated by larger social groups; the roots of Bourdieu’s “structuring structures” are clearly visible here. With that in mind, were we to hypothesize hysteresis in Freud’s model, we would be left with an individual characterized by aggression and prone to wild impulses, one who feels himself as connected with — and in many ways constituted by — the people and world around him. Not possessed of a superego, still counting on the pressures of the collective to provide curbs and countermeasures to the uncontrolled indulgence of these wild and powerful impulses, such a figure would stand in stark relief to the more modulated population around him. To them, however, such a figure would hold a vicarious fascination, for his extremes of emotion and action would represent a vicarious return to a more primordial self. In short, the figure would resemble Essex.

This assessment is borne out by Freud’s thinking about group psychology, as well as that of current scholars.15 Freud points to several differences in the feelings, thinking,
and actions of individuals who have attached themselves to groups. The first is a
tendency to “yield to instincts which, had he been alone, [an individual] would perforce
have kept under restraint. He will be the less disposed to check himself…From our point
of view we need not attribute so much importance to the appearance of new
characteristics. For us it would be enough to say that in a group the individual is brought
under conditions which allow him to throw off the repressions” (Group Psychology and
the Analysis of the Ego 6-7). In addition, Freud points to what he calls the tendency to
“contagion” in groups, which is the notion that a strong feeling evinced on the part of one
member quickly spreads, and is taken up by other members even if it runs contrary to
their own individual sentiments: “in a group every sentiment and act is contagious, and
contagious to such a degree that an individual readily sacrifices his personal interest to
the collective interest. This is an aptitude very contrary to his nature, and of which a man
is scarcely capable, except when he makes part of a group” (10-11). He argues that there
is in a group setting a suggestibility akin to hypnosis, such that actions are carried out
with an “irresistible impetuosity” (12). The result of all these characteristics is that an

Seattle, Genoa, and in Greece, she argues for a more democratic model of “we-experience” than Freud had
postulated. Still, the main tenets of the internal psychological workings of individuals in groups are
current, and as his text is foundational, I have chosen to use it, buttressing it as needed with current
scholarship on the subject. One further caveat, pertaining both to Freud and to group psychology as a
whole: all of the available scholarship on this topic has been carried out in the last century or so (Freud’s
work was published in 1921). The result is that it invariably applies to individuals who join groups, rather
than a member of a collective who, either suddenly or over time, finds himself as an individual. The
journal of the rather ominous-sounding Division 49 of the American Psychological Association, that
branch dealing with group psychology, opened the first issue of its journal with the declaration of its focus
on “groups in a range of contexts, including ad hoc groups and cliques (eg gangs), organizational units (eg
performance teams), self-help groups (eg Alcoholics Anonymous), and learning groups (eg workshops)”
(Forsyth 1). Freud’s main exemplars were the church and the army. Nowhere does any of this body of
thought consider the group mentality as a starting point. To think about this scholarship, then, in the
context of a movement from a group-formed identity through a process of individuation, is to apply it back
across the hysteresial divide, and caution is called for.
individual “goes directly to extremes; if a suspicion is expressed, it is instantly changed into an incontrovertible certainty; a trace of antipathy is turned into furious hatred (16). Likewise, a spirit of fraternity or love or courage is quickly spread from one member of the group to another, and each individual takes on this quality as his or her own; the “extreme and unmeasured intensification of every emotion” (16), be it destructive or constructive, is a hallmark of group membership.

As I have suggested, much recent thought has tended to support these aspects of Freud’s thinking. While the immediate consequence of his work was that “theories of the rational, self-contained individual came to dominate social psychological discourse, accompanied by an increasing reluctance to investigate intra-group affective responses” (Parkin-Gounelas 7) an “affective turn” (8) has taken root across the disciplines interested in the psychology and physiology of human beings in groups. The neuroscientist Antonio Damasio, for example, has focused on the presence of “mirror neurons” in the frontal and parietal lobes of the brain, which serve to synchronize one person’s motor system with another, triggering a mimetic response (115-6). Teresa Brennan has discovered endocrinal responses in individuals in groups that make it more difficult for them to resist Freudian “contagion,” research that she claims “supports the realization that the environment, especially the environment in the form of other people, changes human endocrinology, not the other way around. It also changes the affects accompanying the hormones” (73). It is at the physical and physiological level, and not only at the psychological level, that identification with groups alters human behavior.

From a more purely psychological perspective, in summarizing attempts to discover “how [it is] that people become so attached – so passionately attached – to each
other and to the groups that they belong to” (Reicher 67, emphasis his) Stephen Reicher points to a reform of the LeBonian and Freudian emphasis on the loss of individual identity. The most important transition that occurs when people become members of a group is a “cognitive transformation”: “they shift from thinking of themselves in terms of personal identity to thinking of themselves in terms of social identity” (76, emphasis his). Once this fundamental alteration has taken place, the self is not unitary, but rather a “complex system” (77), which leads not to a loss of behavioural control (as Freud implies) but a “shift in [its] bases” (77). It is not that people become more or less rational, but that the “self” in “self-interest” changes (77). Other members of the group cease to be seen as “other” and “become part of one’s collective self” (78).

There is, inarguably, an affective dimension to the cognitive transformation involved in group identification: “crowds are indeed passionate affairs,” Reicher reports (79). But where LeBon and Freud would look upon this as a suspicious sacrifice of individual agency, Reicher insists that “the crowd is one of the few occasions where people gain agency (80), by “creating a social reality that implements core collective values and beliefs” (81). The creation of a bond between members “is not a matter of self-abnegation but rather of self-extension” (82). In a way that I will explore in Essex’s writing, refusing to fashion an individual self is a powerful method of self-fashioning: as the bases of behavioural control are shifted in the process, so too are the bases of self-conception, and insisting on triangulating one’s identity is every bit as definitive an act of agency as is the refusal to do so.
Freud considers what he calls the “artificial” groups of the Catholic Church and the Army, and the former is perhaps most relevant to my thinking here: no-one is given the choice of whether or not to belong, and departure requires approval and is met with various unfavourable consequences. In the case of the church, the main binding force is the “illusion” that all members are joined together by love, and that Christ “loves all the individuals in the group with an equal love” (42), which provides all members with a sense of democratized solidarity. Of course, Freud was referring to the realities of his own era, and certainly never meant his analysis as an explication of the 16th century. It would be unfair to describe the feeling of Christ’s love four centuries prior as an “illusion,” forming as it did the bedrock of religious practice as well as so many other interactions between and among people and the world around them. In fact, it is the church, and through it Christ’s love, that forms the all-encompassing parameters of relational identity, providing ready-made channels for the outward expansion of each member’s understanding of the parameters of his or her sense of subjectivity.

2.5 Infinity and Medieval Subjectivity

With this in mind, I’d like to try to suggest something like a “phenomenology of the transcendent self.” It is remarkable how much, despite the many and reasonable objections that have been raised to it, the Freudian model predicts conditions of

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16 In this context, “artificial” refers to the “certain external force” that is used to hold them together (42).
17 This love is, for Freud, a revision of the libidinalizing force that governs the creation and operation of all groups, including the army.
subjectivity that resemble a state of being suggested by Huizinga et al. I’d like to draw special attention to the ways in which religion, as the binding force of a certain kind of social identity, might have served to foster the transcendent worldview that co-existed with the “self-fashioned” one, and to try to tease out some of the ways that such a worldview might have operated along Freudian lines as a “structuring structure” (Bourdieu 72) that defined the parameters of the self. To begin, I consider the *Imitatio Christi* of Thomas à Kempis [1441].

The work was translated no less than thirteen times between 1500 and 1700, and the most popular version — by Thomas Rogers — was reprinted “nearly every other year between 1580 and 1609” (Perry 366). Nandra Perry has argued, along lines parallel to those that I am drawing, that the enduring popularity of the work in England throughout the Renaissance “is a reminder that the ‘self-fashionings’ of Ralegh, Marlowe, and Shakespeare coexisted with more traditional…models of subjectivity” (366-7). For à Kempis, these traditional models begin with a burning, passionate love for God:

> A great crie in the eares to God, is the ardent affection of the mind, while it saies; O my God, my love, thou art all mine, I am whollie thine. Raise up in me a vehement love, that I may taste with the inner mouth of mine hart, how sweet it is to love, and to swimme as it were in the streames of love. Grant that I may so burne in love that through the heate of desire may exceed my selfe: that I making the ballad of love, followe thee my lover aloft, and set forth thy praises with such a zeale, that even my heart may faint againe: that I maie love thee more than my selfe; yea neither love my selfe, nor anie other that love thee unfeinedlie, but in
thee, and for thee, even as the law of love that shineth out of thee commandeth, 
and doth require. (123–24)

The diction is nearly Petrarchan in its intensity, but ironically the intensity of the love for 
God is what allows for a tranquility of communion with him, which is the basis for à 
Kempis’ understanding of a self. It is not a “stoical self-sufficiency” (Perry 384) that 
leads to control of the passions, but its diametric opposite: communion with the 
infiniteness of the divine:

For so it falleth out, that one and the same man, maie abide unmooved, among so 
manifold events, if the single eie of his minde be directed continuallie upon me. 
And the more pure the eie of his mind is, the more constantlie dooth he abide in 
the midst of storms. But manie have this sight of theirs troubled, so that easily 
they looke upon everie pleasure objected; and hardlie can one be found without 
all blemish of self-love... Therefore the eie of the mind must bee purged, that it 
may bee simple and right, and cast upon mee altogether, notwithstanding the 
manifolde diversitie of things which come between. (197)

There is a sense that human beings must actively turn to the divine, to infinity – they 
must “purge their eyes.” This amounts to almost a complete rejection of a conception of 
the self both as individual and as individuated. A man must “forsake himselfe, and going 
wholie out of himselfe, reteine no peece of selfe, or private love within him” (100). 
Once this is done, Christ becomes the core of the human self, but also takes up residence 
in the world in general. “If you seek for Jesus in all things,” writes à Kempis, “you will 
surely find him” (100).
One example of this tendency in action is the medieval love of symbolism. Huizinga has traced the ways in which “symbolism was very nearly the life’s breath of medieval thought” (249), which he characterized as “the deliberate desire to indicate the relationship of things to the highest point of reference, to their ethical ideality and their general significance” (250). As I’ll argue in chapter 3, this has important implications for our understanding of the theatre in transition from medieval to Renaissance models, but here, I call attention to its ontological element. God’s immanence in all things, including every person, meant that every person and every thing was linked together in an incredibly dense network of inter-relatedness, but of inter-beingness as well, in the manner I’ve shown to be delineated by Augustine.

Similar forces and transitions were at work in the so-called “12th-century Renaissance” in England, and a consideration of them is illuminating. M.E. Chenu argues that the period, accompanied by a marked transformation in the material conditions of life, the more active mobility of people and goods in a market economy, and new techniques of production and commerce, led to a dramatic shift in consciousness; first, he says, humans “discovered” nature, in the sense that they began to see it as something separate from them, and as something they could master; second, we began to separate our works from it. In the words of one medieval philosopher, “Can one consider things manufactured by man — footgear, cheese, and like products — as works of God?” (39). Once this question was asked, Chenu suggests, man “rid himself of the childish fancies of animism and of the habit of seeing divinity in the marvels of

18 The similarity of this description of the 12th-century Renaissance in England with the trends we associate with its 15th- and 16th-century counterpart is striking. It provides further evidence that there is no stately, linear development of the habitus.
nature. The sacred realm which he secularized by this process no longer possessed any properly religious value for him” (44-5).

There is evidence, though, that this development, to the extent that it spread and lasted, was new. Consider, for instance, the Old English poem “The Dream of the Rood” (c. 700). The poem tells the story of the crucifixion from the perspective of Christ’s cross, as represented to a dreamer who comes to understand its shifting and complex role in the Christian narrative of salvation. The poem is incredibly complex and difficult to pin down. It adopts first the perspective of its nameless dreamer, then that of the rood itself, then flits back to that of the dreamer. Christ is variously depicted both as a conquering military hero and as a sacrificial victim. Even the poem’s title suggests a duality: is the poem meant to be about the dreamer’s dream of the rood, or about the rood’s dream? The rood itself is identified variously with the dreamer and humanity generally, with Christ, and with Mary.

Translation of the poem offers a number of problems, most evident when we consider the various words having to do with wood in the poem. When “beam” and “wudu” can mean either “wood” or “cross,” when “treow” could refer either to a tree or to the cross, when the same word (“rod”) might refer to a gallows or a cross, what is to be done? It would represent a serious injury to the poem were we to insist that these uncertainties be resolved in favour of any one meaning. The solution, vexing as it might be, that best conveys the intentions of the poem is that these signs remain uncollapsed; the words mean all of the above, simultaneously. In the substance of wood are present

19 In fairness, the title was added by editors and is not present in the Vercelli manuscript where the poem is preserved.
all of the above: the cross, the gallows, a tree, and more, all held together and exploited by the nameless poet.

Such a reading opens the poem to a richness of meaning otherwise unavailable, and has the effect of turning the poem into a palimpsest, wherein the wealth of various traditions and interpretive valences are allowed to present themselves simultaneously, and all are equally accessible through the welcoming openness of the ambiguous rood. The most obvious connection made in this way is that between the Christian cross and the Hebrew Tree of Life. As William Stevens points out, this connection was one that Bede was fond of making. Among Bede’s exegetical works, Stevens has found descriptions of many Old Testament trees and wooden structures or instruments as types of the cross: the wood carried by Isaac to the site of his putative execution, the ark, David’s staff and harp, the pomegranate tree where Saul rested his army, the pulpit from which Ezra addressed his people, and more (64). In a similar vein, Louis Leiter points to the “Crux Fidelis,” sung at Good Friday services, as an example of the density of the network of signification ascribed to trees by the Anglo-Saxons:

Tree which solely was found worthy
Earth’s great victim to sustain
Harbour from the raging tempest
Ark, that saved the world again
Tree with sacred blood anointed
Of the lamb for sinners slain. (111)

The song, as Leiter suggests, synecdochally links the crucifixion to its types in the ark and the lintelposts of the Jewish Passover, laying the one tradition over top of the
other and connecting them through the multi-valence of the rood symbol. The story contains resonances, as well, of the story from the apocryphal Gospel of Nicodemus that describes Seth’s visit to Eden in search of a cure for the ailing Adam. Given a seed (or, in some version, a twig) from the Edenic tree, Seth plants what will grow into the tree that provides the wood for Christ’s cross, more firmly cementing the union of these traditions. Not to belabour the point, but were the rood fixed as “tree” or as “cross,” this union would never take place.

In addition to these Biblical contexts, however, the rood’s duality inscribes a more local layer onto the palimpsest of the poem. Stevens and Richard North have outlined the ways in which the poem evokes the ancient Norse myth of Yggdrasill, the “World Tree,” whose roots extended deep into the earth and whose branches reached out among the stars. In some versions of the Odin myth, it is from this tree that Odin hangs for nine days after sacrificing himself for humanity; the implications here for “The Dream of the Rood” are obvious.

This is more than a subtle use of metonymy. There is reason to believe that it is a reflection of a very different mindset, one to which the figure of synecdoche is more than merely literary. God was in wood, and trees, and the cross, and the gallows, and the Tree of Life, and the Ark, and the lintelposts. Each was present in the others.

What I am presenting, then, is a way of seeing: Reicher suggests a neo-Freudian cognitive transformation that takes place upon entry into a group, one that results in a change in recognition about the limits of subjectivity and a shift in the bases of behavioural control. He makes this argument based on 20th- and 21st-century data, to apply to 21st-century individuals; my postulation here is that in order to understand
Essex’s cultural moment, we must reverse-engineer the process. Rather than a individuated culture where single subjects join groups, let us consider a culture where group social identity, on the bases I’ve been describing, was the norm, and where, in increasing numbers, for all the reasons and in all the ways described by Greenblatt, Sommerville, and the rest, members were finding the once-porous boundaries between themselves and their community drawing tighter and less permeable. This change would not be uniform, and would result in a continuum wherein these two senses of not only selves but selfhood itself stood starkly apart from each other. It is in this context that I wish to consider Essex.

2.6 Donne v Bacon: Incommensurability

To try to convey some sense of the ways in which these two subjectivities were co-present in his time, then, at the turn of the 16th century, I turn to two of its most prominent voices, those of John Donne and Francis Bacon. Both men, as we’ve seen, found themselves in orbit around Essex, Donne as a solider in the Essex-led Cadiz expedition and as friend to Henry Wotton, secretary to the earl, and Bacon as an oft-frustrated adviser and later as prosecutor. I identify Donne as inheritor of the tradition of à Kempis, with a worldview rooted in transcendence, in boundaries that, to the extent that they existed at all, were characterized by their porousness; Bacon, for his part,
believed in the categorization, ramification, and anatomization of knowledge, as his diagrams in *The Advancement of Learning* make clear:

If a pre-modern mind identified one thing as part of another, and the individuated, self-fashioned Renaissance mind learned to identify things as representative of others; in short, the movement is from synecdoche to semiotics. As we’ve seen, in Augustinian terms this phenomenology took on a moral aspect, associated with lapsarian abruption from the divine. That some understanding existed at the time of the co-existence of these two phenomenologies is clear, from the juxtaposition of the ideologies of Francis Bacon and John Donne, particularly when it comes to epistemology. In *The Advancement of Learning*, Bacon claims that “certain it is that God worketh nothing in nature but by second causes: and if [anyone] would have it otherwise believed, it is mere imposture” (1:6). Still, by scientific study, Bacon claimed, we could come to know God indirectly: “I cannot but be raised to this persuasion, that this third period of time will far surpass that

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of the Grecian and Roman learning”, because the “property of time is ever more and more to disclose truth” (Advancement of Learning 417).

This view is diametrically opposite to Donne’s position: for him, true knowledge resides only in the receding past. Speaking of the Fall, Donne writes that “That first marriage was our funeral” (“First Anniversary” 105), and now “We are born ruinous” (95). Therefore, Baconian natural philosophy is, for Donne, eschatology, moving us closer and closer to ultimate fragmentation, best captured in some of his most famous lines:

And new Philosophy calls all in doubt,
The Element of fire is quite put out;
The Sun is lost, and th’earth, and no man’s wit
Can well direct him where to looke for it.
And freely men confesse that this world’s spent,
When in the Planets and the Firmament
They seeke so many new; then see that this
Is crumbled out againe to his Atomies.
‘Tis all in pieces, all coherence gone;
All just supply, and all Relation. (206-214)

It is worth noting that it is not with the acquisition of knowledge that Donne associates corruption; far from it. No-one with as “hydroptique” a thirst as Donne’s, soaking up the intricacies of Copernican as well as Ptolemaic astronomy, anatomy, alchemy, geography and cartography, and the minutiae of Scripture and theology could ever possibly hope to stave off learning, even were he to think it sinful. Rather, for
Donne, knowledge is both the subject and object of study, and both take place through and in God. “Be hydroptique,” he encourages us, but “serve thy thirst, with God’s safe-sealing Bowle” (“Second Anniversary” 46-48). On the other hand, though, the study of embodied and immanent divinity, moved by and through love and wonder, with “the sight of God, in fulnesse...[as] both the object and the wit” (441-2) ensures that we absorb the “essentiall” rather than “accidentall joyes” (385). In this way, we can become “with God’s presence... acquainted so, / (Hearing and speaking to him) as to know / His face in any naturall Stone, or Tree, / Better than when in Images [it] bee” (451-4); we perceive what Elaine Scarry has called God’s “volitional materialism” (71) – his immanence. It is in this sort of epistemology that Donne seeks to restore “coherence” and “just relation.”

In a notably Augustinian moment, individuated subjectivity disappears, replaced with a universally shared, infinitely embodied consciousness in God, and of God, one strikingly reminiscent of the model I have described as “pre-modern.” The alternative, Baconian model, in which God exists separately from nature, evanescent rather than immanent, is for Donne nothing less than the wilful ignorance of God, about the consequences of which he is predictably dire: “Though Thou have afforded me these signes of restitution, yet if I confide in them, and beginne to say, all was but a naturall accident, and nature begins to discharge her selfe...my hope shall vanish because it is not in thee” (“Devotions Upon Emergent Occasions”, Works 454). To Donne, even metaphor is proof of the immanence of God. In Expostulation XIX of the Devotions Upon Emergent Occasions, he famously addresses his creator as “a direct God, may I not say a literall God, a God that wouldst be understood literally...But thou art also...a
figurative, a metaphoricall God too” (450). This offers Donne the chance to interact with God in many forms. God is present in the words of Scripture both as metaphor — in the Bible’s “remote and precious metaphors, such extentions, such spreadings, such Curtaines of Allegories, such Third Heavens of Hyperboles, so harmonious eloquutions” (450) — but also in a literal way; “[The Bible] is he” (Essays on Divinity 17).

For Donne, God is all-embodied and all-immanent, and the true subject and the true object of all human action. As Donne preached from the pulpit, “Neither doth God extend himself to all, that he may gather from all, but that he may gather all, and all might meet in him, and enjoy him. So, God is all center, as that he looks to all, and so, all circumference, as that he embraces all” (Sermons VII 247). He urges his congregation to learn – and to learn to see – in this way. “Goe out, Goe forth, abroad,” he exhorts, “to consider God in his works; Goe as farre as you can, stop not in yourselves, nor stop not in any other, till you come to God himself’ (Sermons VIII 122).

I argue that we can read much of Donne’s verse as an extension of this synecdochal mode of sight. His often tortuous conceits, rather than being metaphors, are more truly synecdoches, in that tenor and vehicle are both God. The ideas are not, as Dr. Johnson complains, heterogeneous, nor are they “yoked by violence together” (200). To those of us who exist in a post-Cartesian world of schism and classification, it must always seem that they are, but only because we experience the world with a semiotical eye; to someone like Donne, who sees the world synecdochally, no yokes are needed to things that sit comfortably together. As an example, since they are singled out by Johnson as being among Donne’s most vexing, take these difficult lines from “Obsequies to the Lord Harrington”, in which Donne apostrophaically addresses his soul:
Thou at this midnight, and as soone
As that Sunne rises to mee, midnight’s noone,
All the world growes transparent, and I see
Through all, both Church and State, in seeing thee;
And I discerne, by favour of this light,
My selfe, the hardest object of the sight.
God is the glasse; as thou when thou dost see
Him who sees all, seest all concerning thee...
Though God be our true glasse, through which we see
All, since the beginning of all things is hee,
Yet are the trunks which doe to us derive
Things, in proportion fit, by perspective,
Deeds of good men; for by their living here,
Vertues, indeed remote, seeme to be neare. (l. 25-40)
To Donne, for whom everything is an expression of God, this all makes sense. Through his soul, ie God, the world is transparent, and he sees through it all, and sees, at the centre of its every facet, God. God is a mirror, for when he sees God, he sees all concerning himself and his soul, for they are one and the same. And God is a telescope, because through him we see all things more clearly. Good men and their deeds are also trunks (telescopes), because in them we see God immanent. I do not mean to suggest for an instant that these lines are among Donne’s finest, or that seeing them as expressions of wonder at God’s transcendent immanence makes them easy. Johnson asks dismissively “Who but Donne would have thought that a good man is a telescope?” (206). I answer:
many people, though perhaps not in Johnson’s era. Thanks to a gradual phenomenological shift Donne was one of a dwindling few who shared in this synecdochal sort of thinking, and in the early 17th century he was perhaps its most ardent and eloquent voice, but this is not to say that his mindset arose in some sort of mental vacuum.

To be a part of the world, for Donne, is synecdoche: it is to act and to be acted upon, all as part of a community in the all-encompassing divine. God’s volitional materialism is the agent by which a sense of unity is achieved, and by which all the faithful are compelled through action to revitalize it. To sunder oneself from the great community is to render oneself powerless in the face of one’s own ruination. Donne’s sermons, as well as his art, are deeply immersed in this sort of sight, and invest themselves in inviting his audience to partake in it.

Unsurprisingly, Bacon would have met these contentions with scorn. While Bacon shares Donne’s belief in the existence of an infinite God, he argues that “each of us has his own private cave or den, which breaks up and falsifies the light of Nature” (Novum Organum 54), with the result that all experience is necessarily individual and empirical. The physical boundary between each individual person and the world around him is for Bacon metaphysical, as well, in that it serves to sever transcendence. There is only one person per cave, and there is one cave per person. In our isolation, though, the “restlessness” of human understanding creates “of necessity the thought…that there is something beyond” (58), even when there is not, merely from the human need to understand. This “immoderation of our mind” imposes a need for generalities, resulting
in the mistaken perception of “final causes, which have relation entirely to human nature rather than to the universe, and thus have corrupted philosophy to an extraordinary degree” (59) by a “combination of superstition and theology” (71).

When Bacon speaks of telescopes, then, there is no trace of Donne’s synecdoche; it is with excitement at the “closer commerce with the heavenly bodies” (226) they permit, and nothing more. He marvels at the celestial phenomena observable through “Galileo’s remarkable efforts”: the existence of separate galaxies, the “small stars circling in dance around the planet Jupiter,” the light and dark sides of the moon and the spots on the sun (226). Although Bacon’s delight in observation and knowledge is as clear as Donne’s, for Bacon these are “instances of First Information” (224) only, in that they aid our senses, from whose perceptions is constructed the only “straight, reliable, and well-built way” (224) to understanding. The idea that God would exist in a stone or a tree is, for Bacon, the worst kind of superstition, one that stands in the way of true understanding; it is nothing but mere theatre.21

2.7 Abruption and Panic

With this dichotomy in mind, I’d like to propose a thought experiment. Consider for a moment an individual who sees the world synecdochally: socially, he sees himself as constituted by — and constitutive of — a group, whose identity he takes as his own,

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21 Chapter 3 will concern itself primarily with the implications of these very different worldviews on our understanding of the theatre of the period generally, but more specifically on the importance of the famous performance of Richard 2 at the Globe on February 7, 1601.
and who feels linked through a transcendent worldview with God, and with the people and places around him. He experiences the world as a first-person observer, certainly, but more often than not, the first-person becomes plural, and he feels a strong and literal identification with everything around him. Wherever he is, whomever he is with, and whatever he is doing, he feels a comforting interconnection joining all things together. Then, imagine that connection is broken. People around him are impenetrable masks. What had been manifestations of God’s love are now rocks and trees. Every effort to expand his sense of self outwards fails, rebuffed by an impenetrable barrier that bounds him inside himself. What would that be like?

For Freud, the dread of this sort of separation, of the disintegration of a group, represents the greatest fear of its members. When this happens, “each individual is only solicitous on his own account, and without any consideration for the rest” (46); the result is what Freud describes as “a gigantic and senseless” sense of panic (46), one whose intensity defies rational explanation. Freud’s explanation for its scope is that it represents the fear of the cessation of all emotional ties that bind an individual to others. His ultimate example, but one which remains for him elusive and theoretical, would be the break-up of a religious group. In the absence of a historical case with which to furnish himself, he cites a work of fiction, an English novel called When It Was Dark, which Freud says “gave a clever and, as it seems to me, a convincing picture of such a possibility and its consequences” (49).22 The “convulsion in European civilization and

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22 When It Was Dark: The Story of a Great Conspiracy by Guy Thorne was published in 1902. It tells the story of a plot by a wealthy Jewish merchant to plant evidence that would discredit the Christian belief in the resurrection. It succeeds for some time, causing widespread panic and an outbreak of crime and violence, until the conspiracy is brought to light.
[the] extraordinary increase in all crimes and acts of violence” (50) seem to Freud to be accurate approximations of what might result.

We, of course, as Early Modernists, could suggest a case study to Freud; the Reformation, revising as it did the standards and measures by which the negotiations between individual and collective were undertaken, might well provide some material. It is only a short step from this thinking to William Bouwsma’s contention, in surveying the sense of anxiety he detects in the late Middle Ages and through the formation of Early Modern culture, that its cause was the growing “doubt [of] the very existence of boundaries;” anxiety was “an inevitable response to the growing inability of an inherited culture to invest experience with meaning” (230).

What if the abruption is even more sudden? Again, contemporary researchers tend to buttress Freud’s account. Based on their research of individuals expelled from groups or ostracized by their members, Jean Twenge and Roy Baumeister report that such people typically respond aggressively, with anger and resentment, even self-defeating behaviours. Another group of researchers, starting from the assumption that group membership is a means of self-expansion, ascribe these negative consequences to the fact that social exclusion represents an “attack on one’s sense of self” (McLaughlin-Volpe et al 117).

I want to try to explore this process in the context of the time and the society that is my main focus in this project. If we oppose a sort of pre-modern mindset, characterized by a transcendentalist, palimpsestic, collective phenomenology, with a “Renaissance” version based in large part on self-fashioning within a community more dedicated to the individual as he exists within the collective, and if we postulate an
uneven movement from one to the other characterized by hysteresial co-presence and often by incommensurability, it should not be surprising that we would find examples of precisely the sort of abruptions, dread, and anxiety that I have described. Before suggesting that Essex might well be understood in light of these models, though, I’d like to offer a few other case studies to set the stage; given my argument thus far, it comes as no surprise that literary examples of just this kind of tension abound.

2.8 Thomas Hoccleve and Thomas More

Thomas Hoccleve’s *Compleinte* (c. 1419) is a fascinating poem for many reasons, not least of which is the understanding of selfhood that it implies. The poem is a personal account not of the mental illness that had afflicted Hoccleve for a space of 5 years prior to its composition, in which “the substaunce of my memorie / Wente to pleie as for a certain space” (l. 50-51), but of the distress he feels in his return to sanity, after God “made it for to retourne into the place / Whens it cam” (54-55). The source of the poet’s frustration is that he finds it impossible to convince anyone that he has regained his wits, that “though that my wit were hoom come agein, / Men wolde it not so undirstonde or take” (64-65). This is not for lack of effort on his part; on the contrary, Hoccleve claims to have done everything possible to present himself to his community in the “sanest,” most appealing manner he could:

My spirites labouriden euere ful bisily
To peinte countenaunce, chere, and look,
For that men spake of me so wonderingly,
And for the very shame and feer I quook. (148-151)

“Peinting countenaunce, chere, and look” represents Hoccleve’s attempt to fashion a self with which to greet the world. Even in private, Hoccleve rehearses in the mirror his public expression, trying in vain to determine what it is about his appearance that might fail to impress his neighbours, and attempting to construct the outward persona of normalcy, and still, he fails:

And in my chaumbre at home whanne that I was,
Mysilfe alone I in this wise wrought.
I streite into my mirror and my glas
To loke howe that of me my chere thought,
If any othir were it than it ought.
For fain wolde I if it not had bene right
Amendid it to my kunnynge and might.
Many a sauté made I to this mirror,
Thinking if that I looke in this manere
Among folke as I nowe do, noon errour
Of suspecte look may in my face appere.
This countinaunce, I am sure, and this chere
If I it for the use is no thing reprievable
To hem that han conceitis reasonable. (155-168)

The failure of his “kunnynge and might,” I suggest, represents his inability to engage in the very “manipulative, artful process” (RSF 2) — the same process Hoccleve calls “peinting countenaunce” — that we have come to know as self-fashioning. That
Hoccleve was unable to manage a presentation of his own mental health should not come as a terrible surprise, though, when we consider that his understanding of his illness was almost completely circumscribed by his sense of its experience by other observers:

Men seiden I looked as a wilde steer,
And so my looke aboute I gan to throwe.
Min heed to hie, another seide, I beer;
‘Ful bukkish is his brayn, wel may I trowe.’[…]
Another spake and of me seide also,
My feet weren ay wavynge to and fro
Whanne that I stoned shulde and with men talke,
And that myn yen soughten every halke. (120-134)

This is not to say, of course, that Hoccleve has no experience of his own interior self. Far from it. In fact, “algatis howe so be my countinaunce, / Debaat is nowe noon bitwixe me and my wit” (246-7); his suffering rather results from his inability to represent this self to others in a way that they will not misconstrue. He fears to respond in anger, “leste that men of me deme wolde and sein, / ‘Se howe this man is fallen in agein’” (181-2). Neither can he withdraw from the daily interactions that are causing his pain, though, for “if that I note be sen amonge the prees, / Men deme wole that I myn heed hyde / And am worse than I am” (190-2). Every expression of his interior understanding of himself, no matter what form it takes, will be subsumed in the social understanding of his identity. However he conceives of his “self,” it is not only as that part of him that reasons.

The conclusion of the poem finds Hoccleve, resigned to the failure of his attempts to fashion a public face for himself, longing for death: “sithen my good fortune hath
chaungid hir chere, / Hie tyme is me to crepe into my grave…This troublly liif hath al to longe endurid” (260-1, 302). He is only able to continue when, happening upon a book wherein Reason counsels an afflicted man to offer his sufferings to God and to see them as part of his plan, he finds a theophanic peace:

For evere sithen sett have I the lesse
By the peoples ymaginacioun,
Talkine this and that of my siknesse
Wich cam of Goddis visitacioun. (379-82)

Hoccleve’s case highlights several themes that recur throughout this chapter. First, it reveals a sense of self almost entirely understood as belonging to a corporate, communal entity. This is, of course, entirely in keeping with the traditional narrative not only of self-fashioning, but of western self-conception, that I have outlined. Second, though, we see here the abruption of an individual from that community by a traumatic event. In its wake, Hoccleve is forced to adapt to life as an individual, for which he finds himself unequipped; a sense of an individuated self has been thrust upon him, and though he is aware of his ability to fashion it, the community around him has entirely circumscribed his power. What follows is a sense of disjunction, of alienation, giving rise to a rush of fear and anguish intensified by the inability of the individual to re-forge the links that once bound him. It is, it seems, impossible to “re-learn” corporation, a lapsarian subjectivity that we see repeatedly articulated in the literature of the 1590s.

What we also see, however, is a relatively complex understanding of self-fashioning as a natural result of the abruption of individual from community, and of its complete inadequacy to the task of re-absorption. Hoccleve’s first instinct upon
recovering his wits is to “perform” sanity for his neighbours, to “peinte countenaunce, chere, and look.” If there was anything new about self-fashioning in the 15th century, there certainly was not in the 16th; I will demonstrate a tradition of thought given to self-fashioning and its implications that stretches back far earlier. What we see, however, is the opposite of hysteresis. We find in Hoccleve a man capable of self-fashioning, but who has no use for the skill, who wants only to resume the identity assigned (and then revoked) by his community. For the community’s part, they cannot conceive of Hoccleve, or anyone else, as an individual capable of negotiating ontology on his own terms. They have not yet been inculcated with the necessary dispositions, to use Bourdieu’s terms. As such, Hoccleve and his community fail utterly to understand each other.

Interestingly, Hoccleve’s trajectory runs almost exactly parallel to that of Sir Thomas More decades later, and it upon More’s tale that Greenblatt builds his case for self-fashioning. The story is by now as familiar as it has been influential: More, dismayed at the prospect of the moral compromise inevitable upon his acceptance of a role in Henry’s inner sanctum, and surrounded by a society theatricalised with a relentlessness beyond the capacity of modern mind to fully grasp, turns to self-dramatization both as a means of self-presentation and of self-preservation. The abruption that severs More from his corporate understanding of himself may be decidedly more political than Hoccleve’s illness, but his attempts to “peinte countenaunce” are strikingly similar to Hoccleve’s, even if they are somewhat more successful.
And like Hoccleve before him, the only purpose to which More bends his self-fashioning is to negate entirely the individuation that gave it rise. As Greenblatt observes, More’s Utopia enacts “the dream of a cancellation of identity itself” (RSF 32). In Utopia, “the greatest moral force in men’s lives is respect for public opinion” (51), and as a result only the fear of shame is enough to compel most citizens to respect its laws. Likewise, “that which is not manifested in public behaviour has little claim to existence and hence is not the serious concern of the community” (53). Even religious belief “is a social phenomenon, the shared conviction of the community, the consensus fidelium” (60). The features of Utopia that so fascinate Greenblatt – its namelessness, its uniformity, its circumscription of individual identity by social definition – seem precisely to be the features of the corporate body to which More, like Hoccleve, longs desperately to return.

While it is certainly fruitful to position More’s self-dramatization as a form of the “kunnynge and might” Hoccleve fails to deploy in his attempts to fashion himself, imbricated in this sense of progress to the Western ideal of self-definition is the agonizing narrative of irretrievable loss. More has gained ontological tools that can fend off the sort of fatal despondency that afflicted Hoccleve — he has learned better to “peinte countenaunce” — but in the end dreams only of applying them to the same end: conformity between his own interior sense of himself and his socially proscribed identity. His self-fashioning is, I would argue, no more effective than was Hoccleve’s before him, and he proved just as unable to restore his union with the collective self with which he tried and failed to identify himself. Of course, there are other considerations in More’s case: as much as he yearned to shed the burden of self-creation, he stood apart for
reasons of conscience, at least towards the end of his life, and made the decision himself, even if he saw no other choice. And with regard to his refusal to sign the oath, he too discovered that any declaration would be circumscribed; silence proved his only recourse. What is of particular interest, I think, is that for neither man is the act of simply fashioning a self a satisfactory response to circumstances. These are what Kuhn would refer to as “anomalous” cases: they cannot be accounted for by contemporary models. It is only once similar cases begin to multiply (brought on by the many changes in the formative structures of the habitus) that the paradigm begins to shift, and men like those documented as having “fashioned selves” are able to recognize in themselves and in each other the beginnings of a new phenomenology and a new kind of community. For Hoccleve and More, though, bereft of a transcendent self and forced into individuation, the only comfort is to be found in God and in a renewed relationship with him, one that is defined not by submission to his will, but by submersion into it. The self must be cancelled, and if the community as its primary object refuses it, God will not.

2.9 Sidney’s Arcadia and the Prismatic Self

We see a similar phenomenon in operation in the New Arcadia of Sir Philip Sidney. The numerous connections between Sidney and Essex are well known: contemporary sources report that Essex’s father Walter, the First Earl, referred to Sidney as his son “by adoption” (Sidney Papers 1.168). Essex’s sister Penelope was the Stella of Sidney’s famous sonnets. Sidney bequeathed to Essex his sword, which Essex wielded as much metaphorically as physically throughout his life, possessed of the same militant
Protestantism as Sidney. He even went so far as to marry Sidney’s widow, Frances. Both men were even known for the extravagance of their emotional outbursts, particularly for hot tempers. Little wonder that Fulke Greville, who spent most of the latter part of the 16th century firmly in the orbit of the two men, devotes significant energy to a defence of Essex in his hagiography of Sidney, which I’ll discuss in some detail in chapter 2. So it cannot be surprising that many of the concerns about identity that govern Essex’s play arise in Sidney’s prose romance, as well.

Given its pastoral setting, we might expect that the main characters of the work would experience a freedom to fashion themselves as they see fit, free from the circumscriptions of courtly civility, where characters doff circumscription with their ruff collars in favour of self-expression and goatskins. Sidney describes what is, in effect, a pastoral kingdom: King Basileus has abandoned his palace and lives in a house in the woods, and takes his meals with his family seated on the floor in a garden house, entertained by birdsong and regaled by a machine that makes rainbows indoors. He has dismissed his councillors and admits only a priest and twenty shepherds whose company he enjoys, and has entrusted the care of his daughter Pamela to a clownish shepherd, Dametas. There are no class conflicts in Arcadia (there are violent ones among the neighbouring Laecedaemonians) because, we are assured, Arcadian shepherds own their own sheep, and are so wise that Musidorus “in their conference found wits as might better become such shepherds as Homer speaks of” (24). True to form, Arcadia features a number of courtly refugees, “whom inward melancholies having made weary of the world’s eyes have come to spend their lives among the country people of Arcadia.” Superficially, this is a kingdom of self-fashioners: with no social or economic
constraints, the citizens of Basileus’ kingdom are precisely who they have chosen to be.
Or so it seems.

For what we encounter anything but this sort of existential playground: instead, we find a nightmarish mindscape where the ability to focus an identity is lost in the absence of an authority figure. Sidney’s version of the pastoral involves repeatedly hiding his chivalric heroes in disguises within disguises — conventional, to be sure, but no less telling. Rather than achieving any measure of freedom, Musidorus and Pyrocles are forced to take on the identities of Palladius and Daiphantus, respectively, who then disguise themselves as the shepherd Dorus and the Amazon Zelmane. (These disguises are in turn borrowed identities: Daiphantus was the assumed name of the maiden Zelmane, who disguised herself as a man to serve Pyrocles, her unrequited love, while Palladius died in love with Zelmane.) Both Musidorus/Palladius/Dorus and Pyrocles/Daiaphantus/Zelmane wish to tilt for their ladies in Phalantus’ joust, so they assume yet another set of identities, “Zelmane” as the Ill-Apparelled Knight and “Dorus” as the Black Knight. The black armour worn by the latter is yet another disguise put on by Musidorus when seeking Pyrocles through the countryside, though Musidorus later abandoned it and put on the dented armour of Amphialus which he found lying on the ground; he is then attacked by someone else wearing his discarded black armour who thinks that he is Amphialus. This summary is likely confusing, but then, that is the point: in the shifting disguises and identities and names, it becomes almost impossible to keep track of who is who. The armour and disguises, then, act almost as surrogate selves, self-fashioned, to be sure, but often as much imprisoning the knights as freeing them, preventing them from wooing the women they love as themselves, and even leading to
their inadvertent confrontation on the Laecedemonian battlefield when each fails to recognize the other. Musidorus is even forced to tell his own life story to Pamela in the third person, for fear of improperly revealing himself to her. Sidney’s pastoral, then, serves to prismatically refract the self rather than solidifying it.

It is not only the reader who is confused; the narrator persistently refers to Zelmane as “she,” even though the readers — and, eventually, the other characters — come to know that “she” is actually Pyrocles in drag. In fact, Zelmane can refer to “herself” as being “transformed in show, but more transformed in mind,” and the actions of our heroes in Book 3 certainly seem to bear this out: seduction and kidnapping, and the charges of rape that come along with them, are actions more suited to satyrs than noble knights, and the disorder threatens to worsen until corrected by the arrival of King Euarchus of Macedonia, to whose near omnipotent and omniscient sense of judgment all characters submit. That done, the false identities disappear, and the “selves” they have represented melt away, leaving only the “real” men, concretized by the presence of a “proper” monarch and the power of his court.

The problems seem to arise because the supposedly perfect knights, in the absence of an outward force to give shape to their identities, cannot control their desires. The most terrifying instance is Musidorus’ contemplation of rape as he stands over the sleeping Pamela, interrupted only by the intrusion of some shepherds, but that is just one example; the poem repeatedly “presents us throughout with characters who lose a sense of their own identity under the strain of desire” (Hager 9). Hager argues that the “purposely confused” (1) personae of the New Arcadia are deliberately crafted by Sidney, in response to the rise of self-fashioning as a practice both social and courtly: “it
is dissembling for the purpose of showing us how we can lose ourselves in self-fashoning” (9). But it is not by self-fashioning that Sidney’s heroes lose themselves; it is because self-fashioning is a skill that they do not possess, and as a result, they have no selves at all. The text suggests that the court acts as a force to stabilize a sense of self; like a suit of armour, say, it protects what is inside, but at the same time it effectively becomes that self, suggesting that identity — insofar as it exists at court, anyway — is unable to survive separation from the allegiance under whose pressure it condenses into a recognizable form. This external pressure, and not a self-generated, rational set of controls, is what curbs the passions. The court, then, acts as a colonizer of the self, re-shaping all that it finds in its own image, and it is the return of courtly authority in all its glory in the person of Euarchus that reconstitutes identity and casts off all disguises and “false” exteriors. The pastoral kingdom is no more, but the multiplicity of selves collapses (or would, in the fullness of a completed work), in the presence of the authority figure that heretofore has been entirely absent from the story. In Greville’s view, as I’ll go on to demonstrate, Sidney’s decision to make “the integrity of this forrain King an image of more constant, pure, and higher strain, than nature makes those ordinary mouldes” (The Life of Sir Philip Sidney 16) was part of a larger plan associated with an unfashioned and unfashionable self; he, like Sidney and like Essex, understood a self as given, defined by authority. The hysteretic disconnection from this mooring is rather more terrifying than liberating.

Richard McCoy’s contention, then, that the lack of emotional control in Arcadia is a literary representation of Sidney’s rebellion against the “code of obedience” governing relationships between Elizabeth and her courtiers misses the mark. Certainly,
as McCoy suggests, the work examines “the social constraints on individual impulse, problems of royal government and rebellion, and the difficult balance between autonomy and obedience (21). That these ideas are also of primary concern to anyone interested in the Earl of Essex is no coincidence. I’ll explore the relationship in more detail below in a discussion of *Hamlet*, but for now suffice it to say that it is not the presence of authority that chafes for men like Sidney, Essex, and their literary avatars, but rather its absence. It is not too much external control that leads to lack of control of the passions, but too little, for these men have not acquired the skills to fashion their own selves. They have no idea how to construct boundaries around themselves; they know only transcendence, and yearn for it, hearken towards it. The divisions between themselves and others are porous, and they are held together by a hydrostatic social pressure. When it is removed, they spill out. For such men, unable to fashion and control himself, nothing is more calming than submersion into an infinite authority, and nothing more traumatizing than being asked to live without one.

### 2.10 Robert Devereux, Second Earl of Essex

At last, we arrive at the case of Essex. As I’ve been arguing by implication, I place him squarely in the “pre-modern” side of the existential ledger. Those very behaviours that made him so ineffective as a subtle Machiavel at court, and so often such simple prey for the Cecils, were the very ones that made him so beloved of the commons, and both loved and feared by his queen: his mercurial nature, the depth of his passions, the totality of his commitment to whatever cause engaged him — these are all associated
with a mind that perceives itself as socially constructed, and one that is utterly unable to comprehend another way to enter the world.

So, too, is an absolute dedication to his queen, an ideology Essex expresses over and over in his personal writing. On those frequent occasions when he had cause to doubt Elizabeth’s affection, either because his absence left him open to the slanderous backbiting of the court or because his actions had led him into disfavour, his recourse is to remind her not of the effectiveness of his advice in the Council, or of his military record, or even of those occasions when they had played cards into the wee hours of the morning; it is to renew his submission to her authority (which, to be fair, he seems to have forgotten with alarming frequency in the throes of his passions). Grace Ioppolo has observed that in these periods of disfavour, Essex is far more likely to sign his letters to Elizabeth by referring to himself as her “humblest vassal,” reinforcing his own submission and subordination.  He also repeatedly takes pains to remind her that more than anyone else in the realm, his service to her has been characterized by zeal. In a letter to the Privy Council in June of 1596, excusing himself for some clerical omissions, Essex protests that “besides my faults, my very faith and zeal, which are the best things in me, do make me commit errors” (Bourchier 349), continuing that “your lordships will call that zeal that makes a man constant in a good counsel, that would be passion in an evil or a doubtful” (352). To Essex, in other words, errors committed in rashness are the price that must be paid for true and faithful service, of which rashness and zeal are the cornerstones. In another letter, he writes that “I was carried by this zeal so fast, as I

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23 See also Gajda 154.
forgot those reverend forms that I should have used, yet I had rather have had my heart out of my body, than this zeal out of my heart” (356). Numbering himself among, for example, those “that with most care and zeal do serve you,” Essex during his imprisonment throws himself upon Elizabeth’s mercy, asking that she “witness, how faithfully I do vow to dedicate the rest of my life, next after my highest duty, in obedience, faith, and zeal to your majesty, without…admitting any other worldly care; and whatsoever your majesty resolveth to do with me, I shall live and die your majesty's humblest vassal” (368).

In fact, this emphasis on zealous submission is a fairly constant feature of Essex’s relationship with monarchy: in correspondence with James, he vows “such as I am, and all whatsoever I am… I consecrate unto you regal throne,” asking James’ indulgence of any of his political shortcomings on the grounds that “I took in hand to play the statesman rather out of the zeal I bore to so just a cause, than out of any overweening humour of mine own sufficiency.” (Birch 1.176). What else would we expect of a self whose identity is entirely subsumed by the authority to which it so energetically seeks to submit? What but the sort of unregulated self about which we have speculated might perceive complete emotional abandon, without regard for, or conception of, self-interest as a calling card?

The obvious hurdle to this account of Essex is, of course, his rebellion, but it makes little sense to believe that there was such a thing, although it certainly does appear as if there was. Brian Vickers attempts to justify Bacon’s betrayal of Essex by asking us to “consider what the rule of Essex would have represented” (xvii). This suggestion is only worthwhile if we conclude that it was a genuine attempt at a coup d’état, but there is
little reason to believe that this was the case. In fact, even in his most abject moments of confession, when he divulged the names of his co-conspirators (to the disgust of some of them), refused to see any visitors including his wife, and threw himself on God’s mercy, the plan he confessed for his rebellion was to remove from Elizabeth’s presence those caterpillars of the commonwealth who kept him from her and try them before Parliament, and to cement James as heir to the throne. His ambitions did not tend to the assumption of the reins of the kingdom. If not a grab for power, though, what would possess a man so desperate to serve a monarch to take up a sword and storm her castle at the head of a military force?

In the days immediately preceding his uprising, after a year of house arrest, and after Elizabeth had declined to renew his monopoly on the farm of sweet wines, effectively bankrupting him, his mood swings grew increasingly violent. John Harington wrote at the time:

He shifteth from sorrow and repentance to rage and rebellion so suddenly, as well proveth him devoid of good reason as of right mind…His speeches of the Queen become no man who hath mens sana in corpore sano…the man’s spirit seemeth tossed to and fro, like the waves of a troubled sea.” (179)

The sea that is troubled here is the infinity with which Essex felt himself to be incorporate, the same “oceanic feeling” that drove Freud’s ruminations. I argue that his violent mood swings, far from some mental illness, are the pangs of his disconnection from the authority to which he had anchored himself; without that fixity, his tempestuous passions had nothing to check their unfettered expression. Just as Sidney’s knights
regressed to a bestial nature, and just as Hoccleve lost his will to live, Essex lost his self-control. The only way for him to regain it — to regain himself and his self — was to try, frantically if necessary, to return to the infinity from which he had been severed. The rebellion, then, in this light is an attempt not to force the Queen to submit to him, but rather to force the Queen to accept his submission to her. Without it, Essex has nowhere to moor himself, and he is nothing — and no-one — but his passions, as predicted by Freud and those who have come after him. It is an act of existential — and most assuredly not political — desperation.\(^{24}\) This explains Essex’s curious and ultimately catastrophic decision to make for the city of London rather than proceeding directly to the unguarded court with his hundreds of armed followers; his concerns were not simply strategic. In his mind, the enterprise needed to be enacted publicly, as it was tied up with his pageantic sense of himself as a zealously devoted member of a corporate body, as unwilling as unable to fashion himself.

In Essex, then, and in his rebellion, are evidenced the throes of hysteresis and the anguish of incommensurability, as a subjectivity coalesced by external pressures watches those forces weaken or vanish, and struggles in vain with the self-containment for which it is completely unequipped. In many ways, this argument flies directly in the face of

\(^{24}\) This is not to suggest, of course, that many of those who egged Essex on, and who followed him at the beginning of the rebellion only to desert him soon afterwards, were similarly motivated. In fact, nearly every contemporary observer, including Camden, Naunton, and Wotton, takes great pains to assert the parasitic relationship between the Earl and these followers, who in these accounts are held largely responsible for manipulating Essex. Essex himself, in the poem in the Tower the night before his execution, “The Passions of a Discontented Minde,” wishes that he had been “removed to some close cave” (l. 253), far from the “ill-bewitching company” that “brings / Deep provocation, whence great danger springs” (257-8).
conceptualizations of self-fashioning. Greenblatt’s model, and the governing understanding, dictates that individuals first come to understand themselves as individuals, enclosed and bounded from their larger communities, then that they explore and know this individuality, and define it on their own terms. There is another response to individuation, however, in which the individual subject seeks to fashion itself not by strengthening its sense of itself as individual, but by utterly submerging itself into a collective. Although it often ends in failure, this is, in a sense, a form of self-fashioning. In the next chapter, I’ll read some of Essex’s writing, and some of the writing of his coterie and his contemporaries, to discern how it serves to advance the values by which he lived, and at how his charismatic influence over some of his contemporaries served to circulate the collective understanding of selfhood as a rival subjectivity to the self-fashioning that has been so heavily chronicled.
Chapter 2: “The Melting Hailstone and the Solid Pearl”

In the previous chapter, I reviewed the characteristics of a transcendent sense of self, one that I characterize as synecdochal, and considered Essex in light of Bourdieu’s hysteresis effect as a vestige of a model of self-conception that was inexorably eroding and losing currency in the ontological economies of the Renaissance. What I propose to undertake in this chapter is some suggestion of how this transitional phase, as well as a resistance to the change, might have been made present in the literature of the age, in particular those works written by Essex and by those whom he most affected. My starting assumption is that Essex was a man of immense influence on the literary culture of his time — not only as an author, and not only, as we’ll see later on, as a patron and a dedicatee of works on all subjects and across all disciplines, but also as a cynosural source of inspiration. With David Bevington, who with wry patience has outlined the ways in which nearly every Shakespearean play can be — and has been — shown to contain a keen and subtle topical analogy of Essex, I am less interested in exploring the specifics of what dramatic events and characters correspond to which historical ones, and more in discussing relationships “in terms of ideas and platforms rather than personalities” (1-26). Essex’s own writings, and those that he inspires, present not only the model of a transcending self, but an argument for its superiority. I argue that the concomitant qualities in Essex — and, with his fall, their loss, in the eyes of many — were made present in his own work as well as in that of his immediate circle, and then
more broadly, in an attempt to memorialize (if not to revitalize) the model of selfhood he represented.

In this chapter, I am perhaps most concerned with the ways in which Essex, as an author and as a totem for a set of values, might be seen in the context of what Shuger called the “co-presence” of these differing “habits of thought.” In his public and private writings, as well as in his deeds, Essex identified and was identified with the worldview I have described as synechdochal, one that we would associate with the medieval period, and I am interested in this chapter in the extent to which his values came into conflict — and were brought into conflict — with the more individuated subjectivity we have come to associate with the Renaissance.

3.1 Essex as Author

The conflict between paradigms of subjectivity is explicitly staged in Essex’s writing. As part of the Queen’s Accession Day festivities on November 17, 1595, for instance, Essex famously presented a brief play, which started with a dumb-show in the tiltyard, and then continued with a brief scene in the Presence chamber later in the day. Here is how one contemporary witness describes the event:

25 I discuss this in more detail in my introduction.

26 There is about the authorship of this play a good deal of debate. Spedding (and, following him, Vickers) asserts that Bacon wrote the play alone, based on the discovery of a manuscript copy in his hand. Hammer has discovered another copy in the hand of Edward Reynolds, Essex’s most trusted secretary, and claims authorship for Essex and his circle. Steven May suggests a collaboration. The two extant first-hand
My Lord of Essex's device is much commended in these late triumphs. Some pretty while before he came in himself to the tilt, he sent his page with some speech to the queen, who returned with her Majesty's glove. And when he came himself, he was met with an old Hermit, a Secretary of State, a brave Soldier, and an Esquire. The first presented him with a book of meditations; the second with political discourses; the third with orations of brave-fought battles; the fourth was but his own follower, to whom the other three imparted much of their purpose before he came in. [They] devised with him, persuading him to this or that course of life, according to their inclinations.

Comes into the tiltyard unthought upon the ordinary postboy of London, a ragged villain all bemired, upon a poor lean jade, galloping and blowing for life, and delivered the Secretary a packet of letters, which he presently offered my Lord of Essex; and with this dumb show our eyes were fed for that time. In the after-supper, before the Queen, they first delivered a well-penned speech to move this worthy knight to leave his vain following of Love, and to betake him to heavenly meditation: the secretaries all tending to have him follow matters of state, the soldiers persuading him to the war; but the esquire answered them all, and concluded with an excellent but too plain English, that this knight would never forsake his mistress's love, whose reports, those of Roland Whyte and Henry Wotton (himself a member of Essex’s secretariat) both ascribe authorship to Essex. I have not seen the manuscripts, but on balance, I find it entirely implausible that Essex should not have been involved at all (as is claimed by the two Baconian scholars), and I feel quite certain that he was behind the content, if not the particulars of diction and syntax.
Virtue made all his thoughts divine, whose Wisdom taught him all true policy, whose Beauty and Worth were at all times able to make him fit to command armies. (*Sidney Papers* 1.362)

The knightly subject of the disputation is named Erophilus, the “lover of love,” while the hermit, the warrior, and the statesman are all emissaries of Philautia, or Self-Love. Thus, the psychomachic debate is not merely over the superiority of a particular vocation as the proper mode of service, but over something significantly deeper, namely the question of what ought to be the focus of human endeavour: how are we to understand the nature of our relationship to the wider community, and to the authority which governs it, here presented as the Queen? The hermit argues that life is, in essence, a mental prison, wherein we become servants to the objects of our efforts, “mired up with the compass of one beauty or person” (61). In dedicating himself to a peaceful life of free-ranging contemplation, he will win immortality: “the monuments of wit survive the monuments of power,” he says, and “the gardens of the Muses keep the privilege of the golden age; they ever flourish and are in league with time” (62). More crucially, though, this course will make Erophilus a better subject to his Mistress, because “the gift of the Muses will enworthy him in his love, and where he now looks on his mistress’s outside with the eyes of sense, which are dazzled and amazed, he shall then behold her high perfections and heavenly mind with the eyes of judgment, which grow stronger by more nearly and more directly viewing such an object” (62).

The soldier’s argument follows along roughly parallel lines. After dismissing the hermit with his certainty that Erophilus would “rather be a falcon, a bird of prey, than a singing-bird in a cage” (62), he offers a defence of “the military profession” as “the truest
and perfectest practice of all virtues,” in that “where all other places and professions require but their several virtues, a brave leader in the wars must be accomplished with all” (63). Again, this is seen as a form of service. The soldier advises that if Erophilus “be resolved in the pursuit of his love, let him aspire to it by the noblest means. For ladies…will quickly discern a champion fit to wear their glove, from a page not worthy to carry their pantofle” (63).

For the statesman, “contemplation is a dream, love a trance, and the humour of war is raving. These be shifts of humour, but no reclaiming to reason” (63-4). If Erophilus’ true desire is service, claims the statesman, then a life of politics is the best route to follow: “let the instructions to employed men, the relations of ambassadors, the treaties between princes, and actions of the present time, be the books he reads…let policy be the chief, and almost the only thing he intends” (64). That done, the statesman promises, “when his mistress shall perceives that his endeavours are [to] become a true supporter of her, a discharge of her care, a watchman of her person, a scholar of her wisdom, an instrument of her operation, and a conduit of her virtue, this with his diligences, accesses, humility, and patience, may move her to give him further degrees and approaches to her favour” (65). In short, then, individuals ought to fashion themselves as servants of a particular sort, and then bend their service to the glory of their Queen. Even at their most individuated, it bears belabouring here that none of the speakers advocates anything but noble service of Erophilus’ mistress. They do not aim to tempt him to sin, or to switch his allegiance to some other ideal or monarch. To all of them, in a highly Protestant turn of mind, each has an individual destiny to which he
must bend himself, and once perfected on a personal level, he can serve his mistress best. The debate among them is not over whether to fashion themselves, but as what.

That these three personae were chosen is scarcely surprising, insofar as they did represent Essex’s own proclivities. Recalling his initial reluctance to be drawn as a teenager — as he was, by his step-father the Earl of Leicester — from the comforts of his family’s estates in Wales, Essex recalled his “bookish disposition,” and his secretary Henry Wotton was of the opinion that Essex would have been quite happy to stay in Wales and devote his life to study (1). And as Paul Hammer has observed, Essex spent time even until almost the end of his life involved in private study with Henry Savile and William Barlow of such varied interests as the classics, magnetism, and theories of navigation. His fondness for the military life needs no explanation: as he put it, “That generally I am affected to the men of warre, it should not be strange to any reasonable man: Every man loveth those of his own profession…and I, since her Majesty hath yearly used my service in her late actions, must rechon myself to the number of her men of war” (Apologie). He was still a year or so away from his swearing in to the Privy Council, so it is perhaps not too surprising that the account of the statesman is rather less compelling than the others, or that it seems to suggest a Cecil-like courtier: part of the statesman’s counsel is that Erophilus “not trouble himself too laboriously to sound anything too deeply, or to execute anything exactly; but let him make himself cunning rather;” as it is that he always “take the side which is likeliest to be followed, than that which is soundest and best, that everything may seem to be carried by his direction.” Still, there is no doubt that Essex was pulled in each of these directions; the hermit, the soldier, and the statesman were drawn from within.
What is telling, though, is the manner of the Squire’s dismissal of the three interlocutors, and by extension, of Essex’s inner turmoil about how to fashion himself. Although the Squire quickly condemns the ideologies on their own grounds, claiming that they have attempted respectively “to turn resolved Erophilus into a statua deprived of action, or into a vulture attending about dead bodies, or into a monster with a double heart,” the squire refuses to “vouchsafe to combat [them] one by one” (66). He proclaims that the love of his mistress is the highest calling, in and of itself: that love is superior to knowledge, the lover superior to the soldier, and, most importantly, single-minded devotion superior to the “several servitudes” of the statesman. For him, what is important is not the manner of service, but the very state of servitude itself, that is the noblest of all callings. Even if the objective of all three disciplines is, in the end, the service and glory of his mistress, the Squire renounces them all in Erophilus’ name as “enchantments” of Philautia:

For [his mistress’] recreation, he will confer with his muse; for her defence and honour, he will sacrifice his love in the wars...to her service he will consecrate all his watchful endeavours; and will ever bear in her heart the picture of her beauty, in his actions of her will, and in his fortune of her grace and favour. (67)

Who is Erophilus? He is the lover of his mistress. What is Erophilus? He is the lover of his mistress. That is all. Rather than fashioning himself based on his own proclivities and then dedicating that self to the service of a sovereign, Erophilus’s identity is no more than, as his name suggests, “lover”: next to his total devotion to his mistress, and identity of his own fashioning is dismissed as “the difference between the melting hail-stone and the solid pearl” (68). The submission to authority is the fashioner of the self; the self is
fashioned precisely in its refusal to fashion, in its refusal to close itself off or to erect boundaries around itself. The play is structured to as to highlight, as its climax, this very refusal: not only does it serve as a very public proclamation (self-serving as it may be) of Essex’s devotion to Elizabeth, but it also issues a challenge to courtly self-fashioning and to the burgeoning forces of individuation that give it rise. As much as it is a work of self-aggrandizing propaganda, it is an act of cultural defiance.

3.2 Sincerity and Authenticity

Part of the objection to self-fashioning, of course, is the knowledge that any interaction with another could be with an artfully fashioned, and therefore ephemeral and provisional self, one that will last no longer than perhaps even a conversation. Iago is obviously the ultimate embodiment of this fear, but he was a dramatization of a set of concerns that were all too real. In a letter to his employer Robert Sidney, Rowland Whyte writes from Elizabeth’s court on Michaelmas 1599, that “As God help me, it is a very dangerous time here…a man cannot tell how to govern himself…For here is such observing and prying into mens’ actions, that I hold them happy and blessed who live away” (2.128). Whyte’s diction is revealing: it is not into words that courtiers pry. Actions, by definition, do not speak for themselves. Always, there is a hidden self, one that must be guarded and kept secret in oneself, and one that must be observed and pried into in others. The relationship between “inner self” and outward actions, then, becomes in the Renaissance the focus of unprecedented investigation.
To make this observation is not to suggest that the awareness of an inner and an outer person was new. Medieval, as Aers and others have reminded us, were certainly aware of the importance of a harmony between inner feelings — the homo interior — and outer expression, but to describe it they used the word *concordia*; as John Martin observes, the sense of harmony the term implied was based on the assumption that God existed inside every person, and that to accord one’s actions with one’s inner self was to accord them with God, and with his larger plan for creation (1327ff). When, through course of the fragmentation I’ve been discussing, this tie was cut, the word “sincerity” began to take its place, which prior to the 16th century was used to describe purity, and was applied to substances (like wine, for instance, or wax), rather than to people. The difference was crucial. Martin observes that

Unlike *concordia*, which insisted on identity or similitude between God and the human person, on the one hand, and between the heart and the tongue, on the other, sincerity was an ethic of difference. To be sure, it preserved the ideal of harmony between the heart and the tongue, but the heart was now viewed not as a microcosm of a greater whole but rather as an individual entity. (1332-3)

It is certainly no coincidence that the use of the word “fashion” as a way of designating the forming of a self (*RSF* 2) is roughly coeval; both arise from Taylor’s “radical reflexivity.” The flipside of the increased self-consciousness about the manipulability of human identity is the increased consciousness of identity that is not manipulated, and the appreciation of “unfeigned” interaction between individuals: sincerity.

In short, the same forces that beget self-fashioning beget sincerity, as we can see in the writings of many Early Modern thinkers on the topic. Montaigne, for instance,
insists that dissimulation is the greatest evil of his age, not only avowing his own sincerity throughout the essays, but insisting upon it as a governing principle for all human relations. He also asserts the necessity of actively “setting aside” his famous arriere-boutique, and “establishing there our true liberty” (270). Sincerity must be achieved. Castiglione’s sprezzatura is likewise an “affected” sincerity, one that must be achieved with practice and training, in secret if necessary, in a much more anodyne formulation of the rather more cynical view of the value (or lack thereof) of sincerity expressed in Machiavelli. In literature, George Puttenham values the same skills; a courtier, whose job it is “in plain terms, cunningly to be able to dissemble” (250), should aim in verse to “disguise and cloak it as it may not appear, nor seem to proceed from him by any study or trade of rules, but to be his natural” (253). All of this stands in contrast with More’s understanding: in Utopia, “there are no arriere-boutiques because there are no boutiques to begin with” (RSF 47). But if sincerity is a development, what does it follow?

As we have seen, the pageantic mode of self-expression has been described as one than which “there is no layer deeper, more authentic” (“Psychoanalysis and Renaissance Culture” 192). Greenblatt’s diction here is more telling than he means it to be. He describes the sort of theatrical self-presentation native to the synecdochal self as “authentic,” when, as we’ve seen, the individuated self is better described as “sincere.” I argue that the distinction between these terms is critical, and is caused by the same broad cultural movements that I have examined already. For if, as we’ve seen, sincerity is an “ethic of difference” brought into being by the “radical reflexivity” that enabled self-fashioning, we need a term to describe the “ethic of integration” that I associate with the
pre-reflexive self. That term, I suggest, is “authenticity.” In exploring the difference between the terms, and the ontologies they represent, I lean heavily on the work of Lionel Trilling, the first to explore the distinction:

The word [sincerity] as we now use it refers primarily to a congruence between avowal and actual feeling. Is it really possible, does it make sense, to say that the value put upon this congruence became, at a given moment in history, a new element of the moral life? Surely it is as old as speech and gesture?...I subdue this skepticism by reflecting that the word cannot be applied to a person without regard to his cultural circumstances. (2-3)

Claiming that the word “authenticity” is, like many important terms, “best not talked about if they are to retain any force of meaning” (120), Trilling is maddeningly vague in his definition. As a paradigm, though, he cites Wordsworth’s poem “Michael,” in which an elderly shepherd has lost his son to the lures of city life carries on with the construction of a sheepfold the two of them had begun together, and whose neighbours report that some days he sits there all day long without lifting up a single stone. “It would be beyond absurdity,” Trilling says, “it would be a kind of indecency, to raise the suggestion of the sincerity of this grief even in order to affirm it. Indeed, the impossibility of our raising such a question is of the essence of our experience of the poem. Michael says nothing; he expresses nothing…There is no within and without: he and his grief are one. We may not, then, speak of sincerity…The word we employ…is ‘authenticity’” (93).

It bears mentioning that in Trilling’s conception, as in that of Charles Taylor and most critics, authenticity is “a child of the Romantic period” (The Ethics of Authenticity
25). This is unsurprising: the “spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings” certainly sounds a lot like a model of the self I’ve been describing, as does the use of the language of “men in a state of vivid sensation” and “prompted by passion” (Wordsworth 240). So, in relying heavily on the distinction between sincerity and authenticity, I am arguing for a far earlier establishment of this model of selfhood than has been suggested. I am also suggesting links between authenticity and much of the critical work that has been done on the passions in the period. For if individuated radical reflexivity allows for self-fashioning, it does so because reason becomes associated with self-definition, as it was in much humanist pedagogy. The extreme of this tendency is the well-documented revival of Stoicism in the period, but as Richard Strier has argued, a concomitant of this renewed dedication to complete rational control of the passions was an insistence on their value. As I’ll demonstrate below, many of the defences of passion might just as easily be read as longings for the authenticity that was gradually – but inexorably – being supplanted by sincerity as an ethos of self-categorization.

For indeed, there was certainly an Early Modern appreciation of authenticity, even though the word would not have been used to describe it. A significant current of Reformist thought, for instance, decries not only insincerity, but rather the entire shift in self-hood that created the axis whose negative pole it formed. In “Preface to the Psalms” in his German Bible of 1528, Martin Luther insisted that this book was of particular value, more so than other moral tales, because it “preserves, not the trivial and ordinary things said by the saints, but their deepest and noblest utterances, those which they used when speaking in full earnest and all urgency to God. It not only tells us what they say about their work and conduct, but it also lays bare their hearts…It enables us to see into
their hearts and understand the nature of their thoughts.” For Luther, the fact that the Psalms were spoken in passion, in the throes of a fully felt emotion, is what lends them value:

A man who is in the grip of fear or distress speaks of disaster in a quite different way from one who is filled with happiness; and a man who is filled with joy speaks and sings about happiness quite differently from one who is in the grip of fear. They say that when a sorrowing man laughs or a happy man weeps, his laughter and weeping do not come from the heart. In other words, these men do not lay bare, or speak of things which lie in the bottom of their hearts.

*(Preface to the Psalms 38-9, qtd in Martin 1330)*

Likewise, Calvin placed a special emphasis on the Psalms, which he called “The Anatomy of All Parts of the Soul,” because for him the passion with which they were uttered proved that the “prophets themselves [were] talking to God, because they lay bare all their inmost thoughts…a rare and surpassing benefit, when, every lurking-place having been explored, the heart is brought into the light cleansed from hypocrisy, that most noisome pest” *(A Commentary on the Psalms 16)*. As a fruitful point of comparison, consider Milton’s dismissal of the Psalms in *Tenure of Kings and Magistrates*, in which we read that the “pathetickall words of a Psalme can be no certaine decision to a poynt that hath abundantly more certain rules to goe by” (258-9). This amounts to a far more Aquinian brand of self-fashioning: Aquinas had argued that “a good life consists in good deeds” and “in order to do good deeds, it matters not only what a man does but also how he does it; to wit, that he do it from right choice and not merely from impulse or passion” (qtd in Martin 1323). As Strier points out, both Luther and
Calvin wrote disparagingly of Stoicism, on the grounds that this “iron philosophy” failed to imitate Christ, who wept, groaned, and instructed his disciples in the same way (30-32). His tearful passion was, for these thinkers, evidence of not only his complete humanity, but of his authenticity. I’ll discuss tears in some detail shortly, but for the moment I observe only that this is reminiscent of Huizinga’s discovery of a “surplus of tears” in medieval history, when “an unmediated emotional state…vented itself in genuine tears” (8). “Jesus wept” may have been the shortest verse in the Authorized Version, but in this light, it is one of the most fundamental. In the words of John Donne, for whom as we’ll see the verse was at the core of Christ’s humanity, “there is not a shorter verse in the Bible, nor a larger Text” (*Sermons* 4.324-5).

Much of the Reformation thinking on these matters bears the influence of Augustine. Obviously, a man who would pray that God “grant me chastity, but not yet” (*Confessions* 145) knows something about indulging his passions, and while the Confessions are an account of his attempts to control his lust, there is never any sense that it is passion itself that is sinful, but rather the will that directs it. In fact, Augustine wants to “bride [the passions], and turn them to righteous uses” (*City of God* 285). Citing the example of Christ, who “exercised emotions where he felt they should be exercised,” and St Paul, who “vituperated and abominated some who were, as he said, ‘without natural affection’” (454), Augustine scorns the Stoical attempt to eliminate passion, dismissing it as “ungodly pride”: “If some, with a vanity monstrous in proportion to its rarity, have become enamoured of themselves because they can be stimulated and excited by no emotion, moved or bent by no affection, such persons rather lose all humanity than obtain true tranquility” (456). The danger in passion, for
Augustine, is in self-fashioning, in the human conception of itself as separate from God. Post-lapsarian man “turned towards himself, his being became more contracted than it was when he clave to Him who supremely is. Accordingly, to exist in himself, that is, to be his own satisfaction after abandoning God, is not quite to become a non-entity, but to approximate that” (460). We find this sentiment nearly verbatim in Luther, for whom the worst part of “fleshliness” is the tendency of man to become “incurvatus in se,” or “curved in upon himself” (qtd in Strier 28); too much inwardness, too much self-fashioning, is the root of evil. Passion exercised as a function of solely human will is tantamount to self-erasure; the citizens of the City of God are identifiable by their humility and submission. In God, passionate expression is not necessarily to be subjected to reason, as was the case in Eden, where Adam and Eve “were never moved in opposition to a holy will toward any object from which it was necessary that they should be withheld by the restraining bridle of reason” (467).

As we’ve seen, morality is circumscribed entirely by questions of agency, which is the product of a relationship with infinity — in this case, God. Sincerity is an ethic of difference, and even the best and most humble “fleshly” man can only hope to imitate God with a diseased will. No matter how well-meaning, no matter how sincere, the inward-curving of the self here, for the Reformers, can only lead to sin. Little wonder that Luther compared the “saints of the Papists” to the Stoics (Strier 30). It is only in the unmediated union of self and infinity that the possibility of genuine prelapsarian goodness exists, and tellingly, it is only from this union that the passions can be cast in a spiritually salubrious light. The doctrine of grace, then, can in many ways be seen as the
harbinger of an age of self-fashioning, insofar as it is only necessary to “curved” selves; the Reformers have regretfully given up on authenticity.

3.3 Authenticity and Galenic Medicine

That authenticity gave way to sincerity is not simply a matter of rhetoric and of religious and dogmatic reformation. It is certainly true that the decentralization of the role of the church in salvation, as well as the many other concurrent destabilizing factors, served to shiver or to alter the relationship between individual and collective, to spur the cognitive transformation necessary to change the ways in which people and groups considered their relationships between and among each other. But such a phenomenological shift must be localized, too, in the body, in lived experience. After all, as Bourdieu reminds us, the habitus is not acquired by discourse, but physically, by what he calls “body hexis” (75). This might occur through “verbal products such as proverbs, sayings, gnomic poems, songs or riddles or in objects such as tools, the house or the village, or in practices such as games, contexts of honour, gift exchange or rites” (88), or through riddles, ritual contests, games, challenges, or duels (88-9), or simply through reading and imitating the body language of adults that children perceive and internalize, all subconsciously, the systems and values that they will then go on to reproduce. There is a more powerful way, though, in which the habitus is learned and internalized:

It is in the dialectical relationship between a body and a space structured according to the mythico-ritual oppositions that one finds the form par excellence.
of the structural apprenticeship which leads to the embodying of the structures of
the world, that is, the appropriating by the world of a body thus enabled to
appropriate the world…Inhabited space\textsuperscript{27}…is the principal locus for the
objectification of the generative schemes; and, through the intermediaries of the
divisions and hierarchies it sets up between things, persons, and practices, this
tangible classifying system continuously inculcates and reinforces the taxonomic
principles. (89)

It is highly relevant to my thinking that so much of the habitus is acquired
through the negotiations that take place between the individual and the space around her,
and the connection between this observation and the sense of synecdoche that I described
in the previous chapter is clear. What is of particular interest here, however, is the
rootedness of this relationship in the physical body and in its relationship to other bodies,
and to the environment with which it contends and interacts and through which it moves.
With this in mind, before moving on to discuss more of Essex’s work as well as some
that he inspired or influenced, I pause to demonstrate that the same movement from
transcendence to individuation that governed religion, science, ontology, and so much
else in the period also underlies the individual’s understanding of – and experience with
– her own body.

There is already a body of thought that suggests precisely these parallels, and it is
to be found in the consideration of faculty medicine. Gail Kern Paster has argued that
the men and women of early modern Europe experienced both the physical and the

\textsuperscript{27} In the context of Bourdieu’s field work in Algeria, upon which his articulation of the habitus is based,
the most important physical space was the house, which was constructed and inhabited in ways specifically
analogous to religious belief.
psychological in humoral terms, as well as the most “basic social interpellations” (7). The body that served as the locus for these private and public interactions was, she reminds us, “characterized by corporeal fluidity, openness, and porous boundaries” (8). In addition to the fungibility of all the body’s fluids, this meant that the body was “transpirable and trans-fluxible”\(^{28}\) (9), so much so that the body’s balance “differed from day to day as the body took in food and air, processed them, and released them” (9). In this way, the body is “capable of absorbing and being physically altered by the world around it,” to the extent that it is “not distinctly separable from it” (13). Among the causes (and also the treatments) of melancholy, Burton lists in his *Anatomy of Melancholy*, in addition to diet and evacuation, air, exercise, sleeping, and waking as factors; (189) by paying attention to one’s inner state, and by according it in appropriate ways with one’s environment, one can, in a very real way, shape oneself. Thomas Wright suggests that there is “a naturall inclination to Vertue and to honestie much more palpable and easie to be percyved in these colder Countries, than in those hotter Climates” of, for instance, Spain and Italy (v), so in physical ways, character could only exist across the spectrum established by environmental conditions. For Timothy Bright, melancholy is “a part of blood” (4); although all the food we eat “seemeth to appeare uniforme,” it is actually “compounded,” and once consumed, is separated into its component parts by the “natural furnace” within us (4). The humours, being “entertained by nourishments inclining to like dispositions” (5), fluctuate based on diet as well as environment: quite literally, we are what we eat.

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\(^{28}\) She is here citing Crooke, who is in turn citing Hippocrates.
Michael Schoenfeldt has ingeniously blended this line of thought with new historicism, and suggested that through diet and evacuation, through ingestion and purgation, followers of Galenic systems could engage in “very literal acts of self-fashioning” (*Bodies and Selves* 11). Taking advantage of frequent and complex interactions with his environment, an individual could draw for himself “the parameters of individual subjectivity” (15). In making this elegant argument, Schoenfeldt uses lines of thought strikingly parallel to ones I have sketched out above. Galenic medicine, he observes, “led individuals to a kind of radical introspection…whose focus was physiological as well as psychological” (22). While the wording is reminiscent of Taylor’s “radical reflexivity,” the ideas are divergent in revealing ways. Taylor’s reflexivity, which marks for him the point at which the transcendent and the individuated (or, perhaps, the authentic and the sincere) subjectivities part ways, involves the discovery of the individual self as existing independently of the world and community of which it had formerly been a component part: in effect, it marks the drawing of significant and impermeable boundaries around the self. The Galenic body, says Schoenfeldt, “achieves health not by shutting itself off from the world around it but by carefully monitoring and manipulating the inevitable and literal influences of the outside world” (22). In effect, the Galenic body is incapable of shutting out the world around it, because it is inseparable from it. A truly transpirable body is almost entirely porous, as much the product of what is without as within.

Tellingly, the most dangerous passion to these thinkers was the one that threatened Essex in his play, Philautia, or self-love. Wright calls it “the nurse, mother, or stepdame of all inordinate affections” (11) from which “sprung all the evils…that pester
the world” (13). He compares two loves: one of God, that “builds the city of Jerusalem,” and one of self, that is responsible for Babylon (14). It represents, then, the opposite of the all-embracing, the outward-reaching, and is the result of a sensual turning inward, a placing of one’s pleasure at the centre of one’s being. Burton describes self-love is one of the devil’s “three great nets” (182),²⁹ and like Wright, sees it in Augustinian terms, as “proceed[ing] inwardly from ourselves” (183). Just as bad as those who see themselves as a “purer and more precious metal” are those who “contemn all praise and glory” but who “in that contempt are more proud than any man living” (185). Self-love is treated with such suspicion for the same reason that Augustine contemns a “turning inward”: namely, because it amounts to the drawing of a boundary around an individual that separates her from the corporate body to which she belongs and by which she is made.

This is not, I am strenuously arguing, a poetical metaphor, at least not for some (although it certainly became that and was used in those ways as time and phenomenological tide moved on). The differences are not tricks of language. As Schoenfeldt puts it:

[It was] a historical moment when the scientific language of analysis had not yet been separated from the sensory language of experience. Whereas our post-Cartesian ontology imagines psychological inwardness and physiological materialism as necessarily separate realms of existence, and thus renders corporeal language for emotion highly metaphorical, the Galenic regime of humoral self that supplies these writers with much of their vocabulary of

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²⁹ The others are pride and vainglory. All three can be seen as a “turning inwards,” in that they all have in common an overemphasis on individuated self-conception at the expense of a subjectivity triangulated by external bases.
inwardness demanded the invasion of social and psychological realms by biological and environmental processes. (8)
Paster is equally adamant that even though “the signifiers of humoralism could easily be dismissed as dead metaphors or inconsequential idioms,” we must take them at face value, because “to employ the language of an otherwise outmoded bodily self-experience is to be formed in part by it” (7). Given the fundamental importance of hexis in the internalization of the habitus, then, these bodies — these microcosms of a universe seen in synecdoche — which were so completely different from our own, stood in for a universe and a social constellation that in many ways barely resembles our own.

In the context of my argument, there are two important implications to be drawn from these observations. The first is that the kind of introspection that such a body would undertake would be, like the Augustinian model I recounted in the previous chapter, in reality an extrospection, or, better yet, an intraspection. Interiority, in Galenic terms as much as in Augustinian ones, is not the same as subjectivity; to know oneself truly, according to such a synecdochal and transcendent episteme and ontology, would be to know oneself as part of a larger world: in effect, as a larger self. À Kempis made the same claim in his theosophy. In political terms, this is the same argument Essex makes in his play. Knowing oneself as an individual, separate from one’s polity, and then pledging oneself fully and completely in service to it and to its monarch is a very, very far cry from knowing and experiencing that polity directly as self-component and as a self-expansion, just as knowing oneself as a person being in a warm place is nothing like knowing oneself as a person being made by being in a warm place. Synecdoche works on all levels.
Secondly, we saw above that Calvin and Luther, following Augustine, saw the passions as a representation of a subjectivity that I have described as authentic. I make it explicit here that the Galenic model reaches the same conclusion. The mutability implied by a transpirable, humoral self suggests “a notion of the self as highly wrought by emotions” (Marshall 18). In other words, “bodily condition, subjective state, and psychological character are in this earlier regime fully imbricated” (Schoenfeldt 1). The passions are the self, or at least they are fundamental to it. As Taylor argues:

Melancholia is black bile. That’s what it means. Today we might think of the relationship expressed in this term as a psycho-physical causal one. An excess of a substance, black bile, in our system tends to bring on melancholy. We acknowledge a host of such relationships, so this one is easily understandable to us, even though our notions of organic chemistry are very different from those of our ancestors. But in fact there is an important difference between this account and the traditional theory of the humours. On the earlier view, black bile didn’t just cause melancholy; melancholy somehow resides in it. The substance embodies this significance….Black bile is melancholy, and not just in virtue of a psycho-physical causal link. (Sources of the Self 189)

Although Cartesianism would position the passions as inimical to self-realization, in the humoral model they are indistinguishable from reason, as Augustine suggested that they were in Eden. Burton writes that the appetite was “once well agreeing with reason, and there was an excellent consent betwixt them, but that is now dissolved, they often jar, reason is overborne by passion: as so many wild horses run away with a chariot, and will not be curbed” (107). After the fall, though, “appetite is many times rebellions
within us, and will not be contained” (107), and “thence come all those head-strong passions, violent perturbations of the mind, and many times vitious habits, customs, [and] feral diseases” (108). In short, there is a lapsarian element to the struggle between reason and passion, and made manifest in Burton’s writings is the Augustinian belief that the struggle is the result of the fragmentation of the human psyche brought on by an abruption from absolute authority. For Thomas Wright, the “inordinate motions of the passions” and “their preuenting of reason, their rebellion to virtue are thornie briars sprung from the infected roote of original sinne” (2). For Timothy Bright, our “immortal nature, which proceeded from the breath of God, and is of a more noble race” (119) disappeared with the fall, and now the human body is “subject to earthly and elementary changes” and “corporal contagion” (119) such as those which cause unhealthy imbalances in the humours. In all cases, the struggle between passion and reason is the by-product of the dissolution of a whole that existed in Eden. The true practice of Galenic medicine, then, could be seen as an attempt to undo the fall, to return to Donne’s “coherence” and “just relation,” in that by seeking harmony of the inner self through harmonious and balanced relations with the outside environment, human beings could theoretically return to something resembling a prelapsarian, Edenic identity.

I have implied that the “dissolution” to which these thinkers is referring is the fragmentation and individuation that marked the period: As Gail Kern Paster, Katherine Rowe, and Mary Floyd-Wilson have described, “late Renaissance neurophilosophy revised Galenic models of emotion, refashioning the more volatile Galenic body into an arena of self-possession, volition, and executive control” (15-16), and the unruly
passions, like so many other things, are left to the outside of the new boundaries drawn in the process.\textsuperscript{30}

Norbert Elias provides a detailed account of the ways in which advancing thresholds of shame in the period, particularly at court, served to demarcate these new boundaries outside of which the passions were meant to be forced, and in so doing, gives us some sense of the chaos and incommensurability that resulted:

Much of what appears contradictory to us - the intensity of their piety, the violence of their fear of hell, their guilt feelings, their penitence, the immense outbursts of joy and gaiety, the sudden flaring and the uncontrollable force of their hatred and belligerence - all these, like the rapid changes of mood, are in reality symptoms of tone and the same structuring of the emotional life. The

\textsuperscript{30} I would be remiss were I to fail to acknowledge the important objections of Barbara Rosenwein to the framework on which my subsequent argument relies. To her, this “grand narrative…cannot stand. It is based on a debunked theory of the emotions and its concomitant, but flawed, notion of progressive self-restraint” (845). Insofar as – per her interpretation – 20\textsuperscript{th} century historians of emotion have tended to condescend to medieval emotions as “childish,” and have tended to construct an image of medieval as overly passionate merely as a foil against which to illuminate the Renaissance (self-fashioning) man of rational control, I share her uneasiness with the traditional model of the growing moderation of emotion over time. However, I do not believe that such a model is necessarily based, as she contends, on a “hydraulic” model, according to which emotion has an on-off switch whose control is suddenly learned in the Renaissance. Likewise, her suggestion that variants in emotional display can be accounted for by the membership of every person, but particularly those in the medieval period, in many “separate emotional communities” (844) is eminently sensible, and is supported by the work of, among others, David Gary Shaw, whose work I have cited. What it does not account for, however, is the consensus among medievalists that the emotional distances between the poles of such displays are so much greater than contemporary ones. Sarah McNamer, for example, in her study of the development of compassion in the later medieval period, observes that many devotional poems “may strike the modern reader as overwrought or sentimental – as lacking in the kind of restraint or decorum that would make them appealing” (2). To observe the preference of medieval readers for emotional displays that would strike their modern counterparts as extreme is not to condemn the former as unevolved or “childish” models of a presentist teleological ideal. To fail to imagine (or at least to fail to imagine the possibility of) an entirely different set of parameters through which the world might be experienced, however, is to fall victim to precisely the misunderstanding that Bourdieu predicts in his model of historical change; as we are reminded by Huizinga, who bears many of the whips and scorns of Rosenwein’s re-reading, “we have to transpose ourselves into this [medieval] impressionability of mind, into this sensitivity to tears and spiritual repentance, into this susceptibility, before we can judge how colourful and intensive life was then” (7). The refusal to make this imaginative leap, then, is to indulge in the very presentism of which Rosenwein accuses Huizinga, Elias, Freud, and the rest.
drives, the emotions were vented more freely, more directly, more openly than later. It is only to us…that the unveiled intensity…appears to be contradictory. … Whoever did not love or hate to the utmost in this society, whoever could not stand their ground in the play of passions, could go into a monastery; in worldly life they were just as lost as were, conversely, in later society, and particularly at court, persons who could not curb their passions, could not conceal and “civilize” their affects. (2.168)

The result is the impossibly labyrinthine series of social negotiations we would now associate with the Renaissance court, where ordinary people are scrutinized as Iago-like deceivers, where “I am not what I am” becomes the by-word of human relationships, where any display of emotion or change of expression is consumed as though it were an entry in some dictionary of conduct, and where, on the other side of the same coin, every effort is then made to reveal nothing, to show no emotion, to give no indication as to one’s “interior” emotions. In the words of one contemporary observer, “a perfect courtier can command his gestures, his eyes, and his countenance; he is profound and impenetrable; he seems to overlook every injury; he smiles on his enemies, controls his temper, disguises his passions, belies his inclinations, and both speaks and acts against his opinions” (La Bruyere 183-4). If everyone is doing this, then everyone, too, must suspect everyone else of doing the same; the borderline paranoia of Elizabeth’s court is entirely understandable. So, too, is the inevitable, hysteresial failure of Essex in such an environment: as Camden observed about Essex amid the subtle machinations of his courtly rivals, “What need many words? Hee, though hee were of a lively and quicke understanding, either perceived not, or would not perceive these practices” (§ 3).
3.4 Tears, the Self, and Essex as Poet

In this context, I turn to Essex’s longest extant poem, and to consider it from the perspective of the passions, particularly as they might have manifested in tears. Huizinga observes that in a medieval person, an “unmediated emotional state…vented itself in genuine tears” (8). Tears streamed at sermons, occasions of mourning, in the presence of the mysteries of faith, and even at secular festivals: in Huizinga’s findings, they are a marker of the authentic medieval self. By the time of the Renaissance, however, Marjorie Lange has discovered that “tears divide the weeper from the community, isolate her or him (more usually her) in an unhealthy way” (3). In addition, in the Renaissance “the most pervasive problem with tears is their potential for being shed hypocritically,” in that, as with any other emotion in the period, only “God and the weeper know for certain” (3). The result is that tears “increasingly were distrusted” (3), for reasons that Luther made clear in the excerpts above. In considering them, I again point out the movement from authenticity to sincerity: in the medieval period, tears “mysteriously connected one person with another or bound a person to God” (4). By the end of the 17th century, though, “tears are apt to inaugurate separation, becoming transparent walls shielding observers from the feelings of the weeper” (4). Along the Galenic lines I traced above, what was once a communal expression of passion has become an individuated and unknowable state.

31 At this moment, he is referring to the emotional response to the entry of a prince into a town, the accounts of which are filled with examples of open weeping.
Much of the movement is a function of changing understandings of the body and of human physiology. Earlier, as we’ve seen, there were no such things as “psychological conditions”; every behaviour – be it physical or mental – was rooted in the human body, and “no essential separation was assumed” (41). Timothy Bright, for instance, wrote in 1586 that although there are many physical similarities between laughter and tears, and even though extreme passions can prevent their shedding, “tears cannot be counterfeited, because they rise not of any action or facultie voluntarie but naturall” (148). In order for them to appear, “it is necessarie that both braine and hart be disposed in a kind of sympathie” (132-3); when they do, weepers “readily signifie their inward passion by that dolorous outward gesture and action” (134). As the humoral model lost currency, the “perceived inseparability of cause from process” (Lange 30) associated with the former fell out of favour. By 1662, Nicolaus Steno was unwilling to attach any deep emotional significance to tears at all:

As far as the beasts are concerned, since they have also these glands and these vessels, more abundant humour emanating from the angles of the eyes can also produce a kind of tears (which is very often observed) which must deserve the name of tears as well as that which spreads out from the eyes of men, without emotion, as a result of abundance of substance alone, of irritation, or of a defect of the organ. I thus reckon that tears are nothing else than a humour destined to irrigate the eye arriving more abundantly. (413)

Besides being a mundane behaviour that humans share with beasts, to Steno they are anything but reliable indicators of genuine sentiment. “It is in our power to suppress oncoming tears for a while,” he observes, and “it is easy to produce them at will for
young ladies who have trained their eyes to weep” (415). During this period, then, “the interconnectedness that humours theory embraced has been largely abandoned,” and “the distance between emotional and physiological phenomena is growing” (Lange 37).

For early Reformers, as we’ve seen, tears were a visible manifestation of a genuine imitatio Christi, but for later preachers and poets they were the outward expression of one’s inner unworthiness, of a recognition of one’s sinfulness in the face of God, and the necessary precursor to the invitation and acceptance of divine grace. Tears ceased to be the hallmark of God’s presence within every individual, and became evidence of his absence. The trajectory that we see here is a microcosmic representation of the larger movement of subjectivity we’ve been discussing: displays of ungovernable emotion, once seen as authentic expressions of an integral and integrated self, become potentially spurious hallmarks of a self conceived of as an individual.

Perhaps the best illustrative example comes from Paradise Lost. In Book 5, after the disturbing dream in which Eve is first tempted, Adam’s consolations are not enough to halt the tears from springing to Eve’s eyes:

So cheered he his fair spouse and she was cheered

But silently a gentle tear let fall

From either eye and wiped them with her hair.

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32 Verse like Donne’s Holy Sonnet 5, which pleads that God “Pour new seas in mine eyes, that so I might / Drown my world with my weeping earnestly, / Or wash it if it must be drown’d no more,” or Herbert’s “Grief,” wherein springs are invited to “Dwell in my head & eyes: come clouds, & rain: / My grief hath need of all the watry things, / That nature hath produc’d” are part of what Louis Martz has called the period’s “literature of tears” (The Poetry of Meditation 201).

33 In what follows I am indebted to Michael Schoenfeldt’s insightful “‘Commotion Strange’: Passion in Paradise Lost,” in Reading the Early Modern Passions: Essays in the Cultural History of Emotion, ed Paster, Rowe, and Floyd-Wilson.
Two other precious drops that ready stood
Each in their crystal sluice he ere they fell
Kissed as the gracious signs of sweet remorse
And pious awe that feared to have offended.

So all was cleared and to the field they haste. (5.130-137)

These tears, then, are “fully redemptive” (Schoenfeldt 60), in that no other sacrament is required. In the act of weeping is repentance and forgiveness. The tears themselves, materially, are “the gracious signs of sweet remorse,” and in them, “all is cleared” in a process that is as serene and peaceful as it is instant. This prelapsarian authenticity differs markedly from the parallels after the Fall.

After the eating of the apple, Adam and Eve first clothe themselves. Then:

Thus fenced, and, as they thought, their shame in part
Covered, but not at rest or ease of mind
They sat them down to weep. Nor only tears
Rained at their eyes but high winds worse within
Began to rise, high passions – anger, hate,
Mistrust, suspicion, discord – and shook sore
Their inward state of mind, calm region once
And full of peace, now tossed and turbulent. (9.1119-1126)

As we’ve seen, the abruption from the authority with which the two were bound throws them onto the same “troubled sea of passion tossed” (10.718) that Harington almost
verbatim imagined the pre-rebellion Essex\textsuperscript{34}, himself discorporate after being banished from Elizabeth’s presence. Now, though, tears are not the natural, harmonious, gracious sacrament that they were in book 5 (or that Huizinga associates with the medieval self); involuntarily individuated, without a superego to govern it, the self reacts with a violent surge of passions released from the abruption.

As the products of “fallen” individuals, the tears themselves have no sacramental value at all. Prelapsarian tears were an act of repentance that was in itself an act of forgiveness, but after the Fall, reconciliation takes on a markedly different aspect, one that bears the hallmarks of self-fashionsing. Adam despairs, and wonders:

\begin{quote}
What better can we do than to the place
Repairing where he judged us prostrate fall
Before Him reverent and there confess
Humbly our faults and pardon beg, with tears
Watering the ground and with our sighs the air
Frequenting, send from hearts contrite in sign
Of sorrow unfeigned and humiliation meek? (10.1086-1092)
\end{quote}

No longer is grace contained in tears; a sacrament is required, and it must be acted out, performed. Repentance must be fashioned. This is brought home even more forcefully by the repetition, only 5 lines later, of the performance that Adam had proposed:

\begin{quote}
So spake our father penitent; nor Eve
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{34} Paul Stevens has meaningfully associated this line with the “sea of troubles” against which Hamlet considers taking arms, arguing that Milton’s allusion to Hamlet “anticipates Taylor’s conviction that the unaided reason of the bounded self denies us faith” ("Hamlet, Henry VIII, and the Question of Religion" 6). Insofar as I believe the passage makes a clear distinction between an unbounded self and one “bounded” by the borders of individuation, I completely agree.
Felt less remorse: they forthwith to the place
Repairing where he judged them, prostrate fell
Before him reverent; and both confessed
Humbly their faults, and pardon begged; with tears
Watering the ground, and with their sighs the air
Frequenting, sent from hearts contrite, in sign
Of sorrow unfeigned, and humiliation meek. (10.1097-1104)

The repetition\textsuperscript{35} clearly establishes their newfound sense of radical reflexivity: Adam and Eve exist in time now, in a new way, where they first conceive of the scene they will enact, and then perform it. In short, as I’ve suggested, they fashion their repentance, and fashion themselves as repentant, and this stands in stark contrast to the immediacy of the prelapsarian sacrament. Grace now has to be earned; it is no longer immanent in tears. It’s worth noting, too, that there is nothing insincere about the whole process. Milton takes great pains to stress the “unfeigned” nature of their performance: in a word, it is sincere. But it is not authentic, and in this it differs fundamentally from what came before. Sincerity is necessarily born with the “sin” of self-fashioning.

In the context of this dichotomous presentation of paradigms, I’d like to discuss the last thing Essex ever wrote, the long poem “The Passions of a Discontented Minde.” Stephen May has persuasively narrowed down the date of the poem’s composition to the last few nights before his death, as he languished in the Tower (94ff). There is little

\textsuperscript{35} Gordon Teskey describes the repetition as Homeric, arguing that it emphasizes the ritual nature of prayer in the future, in contrast with the easy eloquence of the prayers that Adam and Eve sing before the fall (Norton \textit{PL} 259). I agree with the distinction he makes between the natural and the contrived prayers, but I ascribe it a different significance.
evidence to suggest that the poem was ever meant to be read; there is no mention at all of
the Queen, and no appeal for mercy. Wotton writes that it was Essex’s custom, when
feeling a particularly strong emotion, to “evaporate his thoughts in a sonnet” (4); the
private and confessional tone of the poem seems entirely in keeping with this practice.

The poem makes a particularly unique contribution to the literature of tears.
Herbert’s “Grief” opens with the question “O, who will give me tears?” The speaker’s
“wearie weeping eyes” are “too drie” to “with [his] state agree.” Thus, he invokes “all
the watry things, / That nature hath produc’d” to come to his aid, an appeal that ends
memorably with the anguished cry, “Alas, my God!” Like Herbert’s speaker, Essex
laments the lack of tears:

If any eye therefore can spare a teare
To fill the well-spring that must wet my cheekes,
O let that eye to this sad feast draw neere,
Refuse me not my humble soule beseekes :
For all the teares mine eyes haue euer wept
Were now too little had they all beene kept. (61-66)

However, where the anguish in Herbert’s poem comes from the inability to express an
interior emotion, in Essex it flows from the emotion itself:

Yet cannot straine one true repentant teare,
To gain the blisse from which my soule is banisht;
My flintie heart such sorrowing doth forbeare,
And from my sence all true remorse is vanisht. (91-94)
As with the prelapsarian Adam and Eve, a tear would be — not represent or invite — forgiveness. Like many poets and preachers, Essex cites Mary Magdalene, the paragon of weeping sinners. Mary, for Essex, is a model of integrity:

She, happy sinner, saw her life misse-led,

At sight whereof her inward hart did bleede,

To witness which her outward teares were shed,

O blessed saint, and O most blessed deede.

But wretched I, that see more sinnes than she,

Nor greeve within, nor yet weepe outwardly. (187-192)

It is more than poetical imposture, then, that he begs for tears. They are, for him, “the key that ope the way to blisse” (211), and “the attonement true twixt God and our amisse” (213). He does not pray for forgiveness, because he does not believe that he can have it unless he physically manifests his contrition. It may seem odd that after more than 200 lines of searing versified self-recrimination, he asks “to what end do I deferre repenting?” (232). But his understanding of himself is such that he recognizes neither his own repentance or any hope of God’s forgiveness without a physical expression, even if it is outside of his control.

For Essex, then, tearlessness is a problem not because it does not represent his inner nature (as was the case with Herbert’s speaker), but precisely because, perforce, it does. He wishes for tears because he knows that they would BE grace, not because they would represent it. He cites David, who has “by his teares found grace, and so repented” (214); it is in David’s tears themselves that are grace, and repentance follows. And Essex, “although I have more neede, / Do not, as he, so truly weepe indeede” (221-2).
The description of David’s weeping as “true” is a telling one: there is no distinction between the physical tears and the affect that gives them rise.

In this moment, he resembles nothing so much as Claudius in 3.3 of *Hamlet.*

Like Essex, Claudius’ sins are interfering with his attempts to pray:

> Pray can I not,
> Though inclination be as sharp as will;
> My stronger guilt defeats my strong intent,
> And, like a man to double business bound,
> I stand in pause where I shall first begin,
> And both neglect. (38-43)

Claudius is well aware, though, that even if “in the corrupted currents of this world,” penance may be affected, that “offence’s gilded hand may shove by justice” (58), that this is not the case in heaven: “There is no shuffling; there the action lies / In his true nature” (61-2). He knows that genuine repentance will bring him forgiveness, but like Essex, must admit that he is not truly sorry: “what can it when one cannot repent? / O wretched state! O bosom black as death! / O limed soul, that, struggling to be free, / Art more engaged” (66-69).

At the end of his soliloquy, though, Claudius makes a significant leap, one that Essex cannot. He decides to “make assay” anyway, to bend his “stubborn knees” and pray (69-70). Ramie Targoff has discussed this moment as indicative of a “commitment among early modern thinkers to the direct correspondence between outward behavior and inward thought” (50) arguing that for many in the period, in particular in the religious context, outward practice was thought to influence the inward self, and that the chasm
between them is not so wide as is widely believed. Claudius hopes to “fashion”
repentance by enacting it; Essex is incapable of making this imaginative leap. Rather, he
can only wonder “O wherefore is my steely heart so hard? / Why am I made of metal
unrelenting?”

If Donne might not have been able to answer Essex’s question, he at least would
have understood it. In the last chapter, we saw that John 11:35 (“Jesus wept”) was the
centre of a great deal of philosophical and homiletic exegesis and disputation. According
to Lange’s study, only one preacher ever dedicated an entire sermon to the verse, and that
was Donne, on February 28, 1622. ³⁶ For him, the tears Christ shed over Lazarus were
“humanitus,” shed “to show that he was a true Man” (Sermons 4.326): tears, like all
expressions of passion, were for Donne component of humanity. In Christ, to be a man
is not to abandon all restraint and to give in recklessly to one’s passions. Even though
“Christ might goe farther that way than any other man…because he had no Originall sin
within,” Donne is emphatic that “Christ wept not so” (328). Still, the expression of
passion through the physical manifestation of tears was for Donne a deliberate assertion
of humanity on Christ’s part. Like Luther and Calvin, he preferred overly passionate
natures to Stoics insofar as they approached more fully the passionate example set by
Christ: “inordinateness of affections may sometimes make some men like some beasts;
but indolencie, absence, emptinesse, privation of affections, makes any man, at all times,
like stones, like dirt” (330).

³⁶ For more on the homiletic tradition surrounding this verse, the role of tears in preaching, and for her
reading of Donne’s sermon, see Lange 108ff. See also Gary Kuchar, The Poetry of Religious Sorrow in
Early Modern England.
For Donne, in fact, the refusal – or the inability – to express one’s passions is “an intrusion, an usurpation upon God” (330). Christ had a relationship with Lazarus and with his sisters Martha and Mary, he “had contracted a friendship in that Family…and he would let the world see that he loved them” (330). The ultimate badge of Christ’s humanity, for Donne, was the act of weeping, for “without outward declarations, who can conclude an inward love? To assure that, Jesus wept” (331). In other words, the act of expressing an emotion is the proof of its existence, and humanity consists largely of the public sharing of inner feeling. Just as God, by nature completely self-sufficient, created creatures around himself solely “to shed forth lines of love upon them” (330), “Christ made it an argument of his being man to weepe” (331). There is something deeply incarnational, something profoundly mysterious, about authentic tears to Donne. They are God, present. This mystery, for Donne, becomes truly accessible only in affective experience; any remove from it, whether intellectual or ontological, serves only to insulate and isolate the individual — to turn him inwards — from the infinite fullness of the communion with the divine made possible by authentic passion.

Actions like those of Claudius (or of other dissemblers) are as baffling to Donne as they were to Essex. “I hope it is merely poetical…that some study to weep with a good grace, […]that they make use and advantage of their teares, and weep when they will” (340); for Donne this sort of performance is hubris in that its motivation is inevitably worldly, and rejects the communion with God that real passion represents. God “loves to work in Waxe, and not in Marble” (340), in the context of a self which interacts with God and allows him to impress upon it his will and his passions. Essex’s “steely heart,” the “metal unrelenting” which he finds within himself, are for him
Gary Kuchar has demonstrated the ways in which “poems which explore religious sorrow have a tendency to address the most pressing theological, metaphysical, and literary issues” (2) of the era, repeatedly emphasizing the ways in which they represent “the lived experience of early modern faith” (3). In this context, Essex’s poem, like Donne’s sermon and Milton’s Adam and Eve, invokes Kuchar’s reading of 2 Corinthians 7-9, in which Paul distinguishes between “godly sorrow” and “sorrow of the world.” While the latter leads only to death, the former “worketh repentance to salvation” because, among other things, it effects a “clearing of yourselves.” It dissolves the boundaries that separate the sinner from God, and allows the fullness of his presence, of which the tears are as much cause as they are effect. The distinction between the two sorrows, then, is “much more than a static opposition between emotions; it serves as a medium for addressing different existential comportments” (Kuchar 5).

3.5 Charisma

For many, however, Essex’s steely and unrelenting heart was the principal source of his appeal. It was precisely his inability to fashion himself that provided evidence of his grace, as an imitatio Christi; ironically, Essex’s failure to weep equates him with the weeping Jesus. That the reformers yearn for authentic self-definition may go some way to explaining Essex’s overwhelming popularity, and the evident charismatic authority he wielded. In his influential consideration of charisma, Max Weber reminds us that at its
root, it is a nearly religious quality; not only is the word “charisma” etymologically
denotative of “the gift of grace,” but at the conceptual level it is “taken from the language
of early Christianity” (328). There are other, structural parallels, as well:

The term ‘charisma’ will be applied to a certain quality of an individual
personality by virtue of which he is considered extraordinary and treated as
endowed with supernatural superhuman, or at least specifically exceptional
powers or qualities. These are not accessible to the ordinary person, but are
regarded as of divine origin or as exemplary, and on the basis of them the
individual concerned is treated as a leader.” (358-9)

For Weber, charismatic authority is set against the rational, based on legality and whose
force flows from adherence to a commonly accepted set of rules, and the traditional,
which draws its authority from belief in the sanctity of immemorial traditions and the
legitimacy of the status of those exercising authority under them. The charismatic
model, though, is based on “devotion to the specific and exceptional sanctity, heroism or
exemplary character of an individual person, and of the normative patterns or order
revealed or ordained by him” (328); as such, it is almost entirely dependent on the
personal qualities of the leader himself, and on the relationship between him and his
followers.

In this formulation, Weber’s work agrees with much modern-day sociological
inquiry into charisma: a significant corpus of research concludes that “exemplification,”
associated with integrity and moral worthiness, is “the strategy most closely linked to
charisma.” So-called “exemplifiers” typically “engage in self-sacrificing and personally
risky behaviours that dramatically illustrate their commitment to the cause” (Gardner and
Avolio 44), suggesting that charisma is rooted in something far deeper than mere rhetorical flourish. In fact, the instant that he casts doubt on the embodiment of his belief, the charismatic loses his authority completely. We might think here of the Early Modern trope of examining the scars of soldiers as proof of their commitment to battle, or to Sidney’s fatal refusal to wear his cuirasses at Zutphen, for instance. Essex himself, who single-handedly challenged both the Spanish and French armies to combat, was notorious for throwing himself into battle before anyone else, in his Queen’s remonstrative words, “trailing of a pike, to approach the place like a common soldier, a thing not indeed commendable in you, although it was reported by such as pretended to give you great glory by the same” (Bourchier, 1:245).

We need no theory or research beyond our own experience, though, to link charisma with authenticity. Those figures in whom we place our absolute trust, who move us outside ourselves and whom we allow to carry us away, are precisely—and only, I am arguing—those people who strike us as authentic, and such a bond requires of us the complete suspension of reason and, in may ways, of our own conception of ourselves. Consider, if you like, cultish organizations and the relationships between their leaders and members. Sincerity in this sort of interpersonal transaction is, essentially, worthless. We might well be persuaded on some issue to come over to the side of a spokesperson whose reasoning and whose belief in her cause strikes us as sincere, but this is precisely what I am arguing: the authentic requires no persuasion. It simply does not take place in this field. Genuine, authentic charisma is not a relationship of reason. For at least one sociologist, the relationship of charismatic to follower is a “transformational” one, in that followers submit to the leader, and “as they model his or
her behaviours, their identification with the leader grows until their identities become integrally intertwined with the leader’s and the collective he or she represents” (Shamir, qtd in Gardner and Avolio 48). In effect, this relationship is a re-enactment of the relationship between individual and authority, in that the former submits itself entirely to the latter and foregoes the sense of itself as separate, and considers the latter’s claim to this status is divinely ordained or inspired.

In considering this fact, Weber asserts that “charisma can only be ‘awakened’ and ‘tested’; it cannot be ‘learned’ or ‘taught’” (367). This language, too, is strikingly religious, and evokes Reformist doctrines of faith-based Christianity, while at the same time precluding the possibility of its being “fashioned”; in this, it is similar to the Early Modern English conception of grace. Grace, of course, was given externally by God, a distinction whose importance cannot be overestimated, but the similarity to which I’d like to call attention here is the immanence of both charisma and grace. Neither can be earned or striven towards or internalized; they can be recognized by external signs and actions, but no external signs or actions can create them. In all these ways, they are related to authenticity. The insistence of many early modern thinkers that the most genuine and meaningful existence, as well as the most divinely inspired one, is rooted in uninhibited passionate expression, is a line of thought that runs parallel to the emphasis on faith and grace over works; in this line of thought, authenticity as an ontology begets charismatic authority, particularly in an age when authenticity is being sicklied o’er by the pale cast of sincerity, and even more particularly in a society that emphasizes grace over works as the badge and embodiment of a divine spark. Essex’s rather theatrical public comportment, then — even in attempting to draw a weapon on his Queen — can
be read as the “exemplification” that we might expect of an authentic charismatic in the period.

In the words the Puritan minister George Gifford, the Earl’s battlefield exploits are proof of this sort of authenticity:

Doubtless if there were any man that doth stand indeed to be wholly directed by the counsel and aide of the Lord God in all his affaires, it is the noble warriour. And that for sundry causes: first, for that the true fortitude itselfe, wherewith he is to perfoerne his valiant and noble actes, is not a vertue (as I may say) humane, or which any man hath in his owne nature, or can attaine unto by the powers of his owne minde: but a divine gift, a worke of grace…Then further it is requisite of him that warreth, to see and to know assuredly, that the cause and quarrel in which he fighteth, is good, just, and warrantable by that written word of God.”

(Sermons Upon the Whole Booke of the Revelation A2r-A2v)

It is perhaps unsurprising that Gifford, a Puritan minister who accompanied Sidney and Essex on Leicester’s expedition to the Netherlands and who was summoned to Sidney’s deathbed as chaplain, and who was responsible for writing The Manner of Sir Philip Sidney’s Death, would frame the war against Spain in eschatological terms, and that he would find a link between warfare and grace. Still, for him as for many, Essex’s flamboyant performance on the battlefield was evidence that “God hath prepared your honour as a right worthy instrument, furnished with an heroicall spirite for the defence of our most noble Queene and kingdom” (A treatise of true fortitude [1594] A2V).

It was Essex’s authentic charisma – his innate qualities, to return to the language used by Naunton, Wotton, and Camden – that drew so many to him. His client Anthony
Sherley, who travelled to the Middle East and gathered information for Essex’s intelligence network, was so taken by him that he made Essex his role model: "as my reverence and regard to his rare qualities was exceeding so I desired (as much as my humility might answere, with such an eminency) to make him the patterne of my civill life, and from him to draw a worthy model of all my actions” (2). I argue that the responses of both Gifford and Sherley to Essex are a direct result of what they perceived to be his authenticity.

3.6 Coterie Writing, Fulke Greville and Edenic Authenticity

Arthur Marotti has compellingly argued that the poetry of John Donne can only fully be understood in the context of the coterie of readers to whom it was addressed. The poems – and, he hastens to add, many of those by Donne’s contemporaries written under similar conditions – are best understood as “social transactions” rather than as “literary icons” (13); drawing on Gregory Bateson’s ideation of “metacommunication,” in which “the subject of discourse is the relationship between the speakers” (178), Marotti offers a hermeneutic based on the fact that the poems “refer back to and further define the relationship of writer and reader in a particular social milieu” (21). David Aers and Gunther Kreuss suggest that coteries work as a sort of extension of a “transcendental” self-conception (109), claiming that “being is defined in terms of social membership of the group to which [Donne] aspires: creation is therefore a social act, the act of admitting, drawing in the individual to the group” (108). Given the argument of my project, and the extent to which I have associated Donne’s writing and thinking with
the worldview associated with Essex, it is unsurprising to find the earl at the centre of
Donne’s coterie. Ted-Larry Pebworth points out that “several members of this coterie,
no doubt recommended to the earl's attention by the writing of poetry, served with Essex
as secretaries or as participants in one or more of his military campaigns, or both” (62).
Little wonder, then, that the same oppositional stance that Essex adopted in his
Accession Day play, and the same authenticity that underpinned his charismatic
influence, circulated through the coterie of writers with which he was associated, and
then beyond.

This circulation is most apparent in the writings of Essex’s follower, Fulke
Greville. His “A Treatie of Humane Learning” [1633], often seen as a direct response to
The Advancement of Learning (Pearce 100), is on its surface a generic investigation of
the properties of knowledge. Where Bacon had argued that God could be found in second
causes in a rigorous study of nature which would over time disclose truth, Greville’s
approach is much more like that of Donne, another (if not quite as intimate) confederate
of Essex’s, in that it presumes as its start point that “we are born ruinous.” Jim Pearce
has highlighted the many connections between Greville’s thoughts and those of Calvin,
for both of whom (as for Donne) all knowledge begins with knowledge of God. Calvin
writes that “it is certain that no man ever achieves a clear knowledge of himself unless he
has first looked upon God’s face, and then descends from scrutinizing him to examining
himself” (qtd in Pearce 92); any knowledge, like Bacon’s, that begins with the individual
and seeks to ascend to God is as sinful to Calvin as it is to Greville and Donne, and every
bit as conscious of “the ruin of that second birth” (Rebholtz 23).
For Greville, knowledge is infinite, and is “the measure of the minde” (§1); as well as being prideful, “the same forbidden tree / Which man lusts after to be made his maker” (§3), it is doomed to failure: as our senses are made imperfect by our corruption, then so too are our imagination, memory, and understanding, which draw on sensory input. Arts and sciences pretend to be able to supply the bridges over these gaps, but in the end “nature we draw to art, which then forsakes / to be herselfe, when she with art combines” (§27), and these pursuits turn arts to craft, knowledge to sophistry, truth to rhetoric, and human attempts at knowledge are devilishly-inspired Babels. Greville is not dismissive of knowledge and learning, seeing them as means of spiritual advancement. He is quite specific, though, that they must flow from life itself, from the real, based on Faith and Grace. The sciences and the Arts “ought to be briefe in books, in practice long” (§68); physicians, for instance, should treat patients “rather by what they know, than what they read” (§97). Eloquence, in this view, “is not [the] craft of words, but formes of speech, / Such as from living wisdoms doe proceed” (§110). Poetry and music, approached in this way, will bear a certain authenticity about them, for “if the matter be in nature vile, / How can it be made precious by a stile?” (§112). Sincerity, in other words, is no substitute for authenticity.

In order to help us to tell the difference between proper modes of knowledge-gathering, and its salubrious uses, Greville points to the presence of cynosures, “pure, humble creatures” (§128) sent by God to show us the way, and through whose example “out of one root do proceed so many” (§128). These elect are pure mirrors by which we “see/ and reade the heavenly glory of the good” (§135), and it is in his description of them that the language of self-fashioning (or, rather, its lack) begins to emerge:
Their Arts, Laws, Wisedome, Acts, Ends, Honours being
All stamp’d and moulded in th’Eternall breast;
Beyond which truth, what can be worth their seeing
That as false wisoms all things else detest?
Whereby their works are rather great than many,
More than to know, and doe, they have not any. (§131)

The fact that these souls are “stamped and moulded in th’Eternall breast” is a crucial distinction for Greville. Schools, based as they are on corrupted models of knowledge, and established only to promote self-interested sophistry in imitation of the original sin, act as shaping forces on human souls, through which corrupt men fashion others after their own flawed image: “false moulds, that while they fashion, do infect,” serving as “craftie moulds of schisme” (§57). Greville sets his paragons against these “fashioned” versions, and in the juxtaposition argues for the difference between a self given by God and one created by man: “the World, and Man can never frame / These outward moulds, to cast God’s chosen in” (§88). They are born, not made, and certainly not self-made.

These exemplary guides then forge a new chain drawing mankind closer to heaven (rather than the reverse), a chain whose construction is characterized by a sense of integration: “but one forme, and metall it containes, / Reason and passion being there the same” (§130). Authenticity, then, wherein passion does not have to be controlled because it is divinely inspired and operates as a function of grace, is not only an Augustinian hallmark of the divine, but is linked inextricably to charisma and the God-given ability to lead and influence others. Self-fashioning, no matter how well intended it might be, is inevitably associated with lapsarian corruption, the Augustinian and
Lutheran curving inward, and re-enacts Adam’s bite of the apple in that it seeks to know not of God or through God, but as God.

It is worth noting that Adam’s first lapsarian knowledge was self-knowledge, and that his first response was self-consciousness and a sort of fashioning of his own image in the form of his leafy loin-cloth. Not only are Greville’s exemplars (whom, it should be noted, Greville most frequently identifies as Kings) not interested in self-fashioning, but they are incapable of it, submitting just as entirely to the authority of the divine as did Essex’s Erophilus to that of his Queen: “these pure soules (who only know his voice) / Have no art, but obedience for their test” (§64). Only souls such as these can resemble those of Adam and Eve, who bearing “That lively image of God’s truth and might…from their inward natures, gave the name / To every creature, and describ’d the same” (§50). Authenticity is as Edenic as it is Christ-like.

These same “pure soules” appear in Greville’s An Inquisition Upon Fame and Honour, as well. The poem’s approach to fame and honour begins with the hallmarks of the contemptus mundi, calling them “bayte” (§2) for sin and a “relicke of man’s discretion” (§5). Greville balances the potential pitfalls, though, against society’s need for role models. In wondering why, if glory-seekers like Heracles were deceived by illusory and ephemeral values, Aristotle had built them up so high, he proclaims that “The Answer’s plain, that never any state / Could rise, or stand, without this thirst of glory, / Of noble workes, as well the mould as story” (§6). The incidental riposte to Spenser, whose Faerie Queene was meant “to fashion a gentleman,” is a telling extension of his insistence in “A Treatie of Human Learning” that true knowledge can only come from real-world action, and not from books; here, gentlemen cannot be
fashioned by reading about noble deeds. Ideals must be put into practice and witnessed in order that they have any formative (or, better said, Reformative) effect. In equating “mould” and “story,” too, Greville identifies the private self of one of these individuals with his public one; the authenticity of the “pure souls whom the godhead means to crowne” (§77) is made very clear. In them, fame is an “outward mirror of the inward mind,” for whom every act is an unadulterated expression of their inner purity: “as Nature feeles not, Art hath not exprest: All what the world admires comes from within” (§84). Fame, then, comes naturally as a by-product of their virtue, and the result, as we’ve seen, is an Edenic renewal of humankind, and a return to a pre-lapsarian state of grace:

Abcees they are, which doe unteach againe
That knowledge which first taught us not to know,
The happy state, wherein we did remaine,
When we for lack of evill thought not so;
New making paradise where we began,
Not in a garden, but the heart of Man. (§80)

37 This renewal, which Greville likens to a serpent shedding his skin, is rooted not in the desire for fame, but in a sense of “love and wonder” (§79). While I’m not quite prepared to suggest a direct reference, I would be remiss if I failed to point out what is at least a thought-provoking connection with Donne here: where in “The Anagram” Donne writes that “All love is wonder,” in “A Valediction: of the Booke” he broadens his conception to assert that “all Divinity / Is love or wonder” (28-9); and in “A Funerall Elegie” he equates the missing spirit of the world, personified in the subsequent Anniversary poems, as “wonder and love,” described as “those fine spirits which do tune, and set / This Organ,” and without which “the world must needs decrepit bee.” I obviously cannot know the relationship between the two men, although it’s certainly reasonable to expect that Greville would have read Donne’s poems, but given that both men were at various times in Essex’s orbit, this ideological connection is precisely the sort of distribution of his social energy that I’d like to propose as existing throughout his coterie.
The idea of “unteaching,” of our being led back to an earlier stage of development, is a
fascinating one in the context of my argument, in that it very clearly and, I think, very
deliberately locates goodness and godliness in the un-self-awareness, in the un-self-
fashioning, of Eden, in the complete submission — not only of will but of self — to
divine authority. God is, the poem argues, in the authentic self, and not in the sincere
(or, obviously, the insincere) one. Sinful, post-lapsarian man boasts of “man’s power to
make himself good” (§23), to fashion himself. For Greville, this can be nothing but sin.

The danger is made even more abundantly clear when we examine the language
in which Greville describes the dark, illusory side of fame and those who would seek it.
Creatures of a fallen world, they flit among corrupted institutions, inadvertently (or
advertently) spreading falsity wherever they go. Their existence is characterized by a
fragmentation every bit as personal as it is institutional: “Rebellion in the members to the
head, / Advantage to the head, to keepe them under, / The sweet consent of sympathie
quite dead, / Selfenesse even apt to teare it selfe asunder” (§14, emphasis added).

“Sympathie,” defined as “conformity of feelings, inclinations, or temperament, which
makes persons agreeable to each other; community of feeling; harmony of disposition”
(OED 3a), is Greville’s term for the forces that bind a community together, in the
“cognitive transformation” by which they see each other as interconnected. An
individual member’s act of self-interest does not only remove that individual from the
collective, but it in effect “kills” sympathy. This, too, has effects that far transcend the
individual member: selfness itself, here clearly linked with sympathy, is destroyed. The
sense of self, bound up with the sense of community, relies on all members. Selfness, on
a conceptual level, is transcendent to Greville, and one member’s attempt to define
himself shatters the bonds between them all, affecting every member’s sense of himself. The disintegration of this sense of “selfenesse,” I am arguing, is akin to a re-enactment of the Fall; this is the very “knowledge which first taught us not to know” God, which Greville associates with a protean sinfulness. Those who follow “the people’s lust, who like their cloths, / Still shift conceit of truth and goodnesse both” (§55) have “no true, and so no constant mould” (§68). In acquiring the ability to fashion themselves, they lose the ability to contain themselves, and fall prey to the ever-shifting demands of their public personae, of their relational selves.38 Authenticity is lost, and the best to which they can aspire is sincerity.39 They “Forme, but reforme not; meer hypocrisie, / By shadoes, onely shadoes bringing forth” (§86). Only the authentic, then, are truly godly; self-fashioners, no matter how well-intentioned, no matter how sincere, in the very act of sincerity re-enact their own corruption and damnation, re-staging the Fall despite their best intentions. In this context, to read Camden’s assessment of Essex that “to speake in a word, No man was more ambitious of glory by vertue, no man more carelesse of all things else” (§43) suggests a mindset very similar to that of Greville’s paragons.

The presence of “Essexian values” in the works of Greville is an example of their direct transmission through the shared mind of the coterie. A more diffuse and less direct, but wider-reaching and in many ways more telling, system of broadcast were the

38 The obvious perfection of this trend is Iago.

39 This same ideology is staged in Troilus and Cressida, as we’ll see below.

40 Etymologically, at least, it seems that Greville aligns himself here against the theatre, and it seems as though it would be difficult for a proponent of authenticity (rather than sincerity) to condone an activity that bases itself on fashioning if not one’s own self, then that of a fictional character. In the next chapter, I will show how the theatre might be experienced as authentic, and indeed how it was so, for men like Essex and Donne (as well as Greville).
period’s ballads and broadsides. Contemporaries, like John Selden, recognized in them a barometer of public opinion that was more accurate, if less weighty, than the sorts of versification that have been more traditionally used as touchstones: “Though some make light of [them], you may see by them how the wind sits. As take a straw, and throw it up into the air: you shall see by that which way the wind is, which you shall not do by casting up a stone. More solid things do not show the complexion of the times so well as ballads” (qtd in Fumerton 1). Bruce Smith finds in ballads a similar importance, arguing that they “let us know just what it was that versifiers, singers, and listeners found worth of keeping alive” (35), and given their ability to “move debates from a narrow circle of peers to a broad audience, transgressing boundaries of class, rank, and even education” (Nedeker 1), they track popular values to their widest printed pitch.

In the minds of the authors of the ballads about Essex archived in the English Broadside and Ballad Archive, what was “worth keeping alive” was less the rebellion and more the glory and virtue that preceded it. “A Lamentable new Ballad upon the Earle of Essex his death” argues that Essex not be grouped with Campion, Babington, or Westmoreland, “these traitorous men” (l.10), but insists that Essex’s “quarrel still maintained the right” (14), and steps back from assigning anyone blame for his actions or his execution by neutrally observing that “by our Lawes condemned was he” (7). The poem is quite clear that he was “of rich and poore beloved” (5) through it all. Calling upon the “Portingals” (17), the “Frenchmen” (25), and “stately Cales” (33) to witness the extent of Essex’s chivalry and nobility, the ballad refers to the Ash Wednesday of Essex’s execution as “that dismall day” (49) before recounting, over the course of 6 stanzas, his Christian deportment at the scaffold, including a stanza recounting Essex’s
utter repudiation of any charges of Papistry: “the workes of Papists I defie, / I nere worshipt Saint, nor Angel in heaven, / Nor to the Virgin Mary I, but to Christ” (90-3).

“A Lamentable Ditty made on the Death of Robert Devrux, Earl of Essex” has more in common with the “Lamentable new Ballad” than just its title. It, too, cites his martial exploits in Ireland, Spain, and France, and the national pride they brought, as well as the honour he won for himself and the queen in the tiltyard. It, too, recalls that “He always lovd the Poor, / Which makes them sigh full sore, / His Death they did deplore, / in every place” (13-6). It, too, mentions the rebellion only in passing and in the weakest terms, recalling that he “by a sad mischance / is from us tane” (7-8), and blaming “Envy that foul fiend, / Whose malice there doth end” for having “brought true vertues friend, / unto this thrall” (23-4). Before explicitly praising Elizabeth’s mercy in pardoning some of the other conspirators, the ballad does spend a stanza recounting, in the vaguest possible terms, the events of the rebellion:

That Sunday in the morn…

That he to the City came,

With all his Troops.

That first began the strife,

And caused him lose his life,

---

41 Both ballads cite the really quite incredible aftermath of his conquest of Cadiz in 1596, in which the sacking of the town was put off until women and children were permitted to leave the city with all that they could carry, and in which no churches were vandalized; the “Ballad” claims that “therefore [the citizens of Cadiz] pray’d for his long life.” There is, too, some evidence that this was the case; of Essex, even King Philip himself was reported to have said that “tan hidalgo no sia visto entre herejas” [such a gentleman has never been seen among heretics] (Bourchier 367-84), and Essex himself, the poorest Earl in England, took no treasure of his own from the conquest. He did, at a subsequent stop in Faro, claim the library of Bishop Osorius, which he promptly gave to Thomas Bodley to help in the early stages of the Bodleian Library. To any observer, these actions were evidence of Essex’s authenticity, but also of the divinity of his actions.
And others did the like,

As well as he. (49-56)

Then, like the “Lamentable new Ballad,” the “lamentable ditty” closes with a relatively lengthy description of the religious character of Essex’s final hours, from his request to the guards that they pray for him, to his serene acceptance of his fate, and including his assertion on the scaffold that “I ner loved Papistry / But still doth it defy” (109-110), then through his own prayers, his exchange of forgiveness with the hangman, and closing with the assurance that “His Soul is now at rest,” / In Heaven among the blest” (197-8).

If these ballads share a surprising unwillingness to impute to Essex a jot of blame for any of the events of the rebellion, they are in lockstep about what they do seek to memorialize about his life: his glorious military career, his kindness to the poor, and the devoutly Protestant character of his death. In short, it is precisely the behaviours associated by Greville with authentic, “sympathetic” selfness that seem to have characterized him to the wider community, as well, and all of them join in interpreting his fall as somehow beyond his control or agency, and as having deeply tragical dimensions.

3.7 Greville on Essex

Small wonder that Greville spent much of his courtly life in the last two decades of the 16th century attached first to Philip Sidney, and then to Essex. His hagiography of Sidney is designed to be the “story” of which the man himself was the “mould,” “to the
end that in the tribute I owe him, our nation may see a Sea-mark, rais’d upon their native coast, above the levell of any private Pharos abroad: and so by a right Meridian line of their own, learn to sayl through the straits of true vertue, into a calm, and spacious Ocean of humane honour” (The Life of the Renowned Sir Philip Sidney 4). Although Sidney’s literary work was certainly part of the means by which he led, in Greville’s estimation what made Sidney so exceptional was the force of his personal presence, of which his writings were a secondary reflection. Greville reports that Sidney’s charisma was irresistible, that wherever he went, he was beloved, and obeyed: “yea into what Action soever he came last at the first, he became first at the last: the whole managing of the business, not by usurpation, or violence, but (as it were) by right, and acknowledgment, falling into his hands, as into a naturall Center” (21). Both Sidney’s personal comportment and his writing, then, are “an outward passage of an inward greatness” (25), and Sidney is identified with the cynosures of Greville’s poetry as “a true model of worth.” Again, this role is identified with an air of authenticity, in that “his heart and tongue went both one way, and so with every one that went with the Truth; as knowing no other kindred, partie, or end” (41). At the risk of belabouring the point, I suggest that what is of particular importance here is Greville’s assertion that Sidney’s “knowing” no other way to be, as though he had no choice in the matter, just as so many of Essex’s contemporaries described his various characteristics as “innate.” The “constant tenor of truth” (81) that Greville sees around Sidney is a function of his authenticity, itself flowing from, and giving evidence of, grace.

Although he would obviously never have used the term, Greville saw Essex, even more than he did Sidney, as a “hysteretic” vestige of this model of selfhood, and the
inclusion of his apology for Essex in the middle of his ode to Sidney is ontologically associative. Writing with several decades’ worth of nostalgic hindsight, he opens his hagiography with a rumination on “the difference which I have found between times, and consequently the changes of life into which their naturall vicissitudes doe violently carry men” (1). In this light, Essex’s fall evokes classical tragedy, in that it represents as much as those works “images of the unequall ballance between humours, and times; nature, and place,” in other words, a self disjointed from its time, from the prevailing ontological model. Greville describes “seeing the like instance not poetically, but really fashioned in the Earle of Essex then falling” (178). As Donne describes the situation in a letter to Wotton, “that which was said of Cato that his age understood him not I feare may be averred of your lord: that he understood not his age” (Bald 108). Essex is a mould and story of an authentic self, but he points beyond himself. In his life, as well as in his writing, he gestures to the shifting paradigms around him, to the incomprehensibility and mistrust that their co-presence engendered, and to the anguish and the nostalgia that results.

It is in this context, I argue, that he appears not only explicitly in Greville’s biography, but implicitly in his poetry. Like Sidney before him, Essex charismatically drew to himself those who — however consciously — were alienated by the shifting habits of thought around them. If coterie verse “echoed back to the general readership the language they were already speaking” (13), then it should not be surprising that we find two of the most prominent writers in his circle — Donne and Greville — so vociferously and explicitly echoing his objections to the onrush of sincerity’s ethics of
difference, and advocating for a return to the “incarnational aesthetic” (Dawson 21) of the medieval period.

3.8 Essex, *Hamlet*, and the Divinity of Rashness

That the exploration of the confluence of the same ideas – unfettered passion, rashness, and the nature of the self – also forms the thematic core of the period’s most revered play is, I argue, no coincidence; neither is the fact that much of the play’s narrative seems designed to highlight the co-presence of the two principal paradigms that address them. There is a long tradition of scholarship linking Essex with *Hamlet* – Dover Wilson, for instance, in the introduction to his 1936 edition of the play, argues that inspiration for the character "came to Shakespeare from the career and personality of the most conspicuous figure in England during the last decade of the sixteenth century, namely the brilliant, the moody, the excitable, the unstable, the procrastinating, the ill-fated Earl of Essex” (lxvi). Others suggest that the “late innovation” that has forced the players to travel to Elsinore is a veiled analogy to Essex’s rebellion.42 I argue that the Essex that reverberates so tantalizingly (and unmistakably) throughout the play is an analogy more ontological than topical; like Karin Coddon, I suggest that “whether Shakespeare’s reflections were actually prompted by the ill-fated career of the Queen’s

42 For example, see Margreta De Grazia’s *Hamlet without Hamlet*, Montrose’s The Purpose of Playing (103), James Shapiro’s 1599 (271). The editors of the Arden Third Series offer it as a possibility in their notes. Bevington sees the connection as unlikely (*Murder Most Foul* 79).
last favourite is ultimately less important than the pervasive crisis of inwardness and authority, enacted in Hamlet, acted upon by the Earl of Essex” (51).

For of course, madness is central to Hamlet and to Hamlet. I do not mean to discuss Hamlet’s “antic disposition” here, but rather to focus on the play’s interrogation of madness and moments of passion, and of the actions that ensue from their throes. In many ways, Hamlet is set up to examine these very questions, in that it does often associate passionate emotion with madness. Polonius’ assessment of Hamlet’s madness, for example, centres on the assumption that he is “mad for [Ophelia’s] love,” that

This is the very ecstasy of love,
Whose violent property fordoes itself
And leads the will to desperate undertakings
As oft as any passions under heaven
That does afflict our natures. (2.1.98-102)

Claudius insists that it is “his father’s death, that thus hath put him / So much from th’understanding of himself” (2.2.8-9), to which Gertrude adds their “o’erhasty marriage” (2.2.57). And after Hamlet’s “towering passion” in disrupting Ophelia’s funeral, Gertrude excuses his behaviour by asserting that

This is mere madness;
And thus a while the fit will work on him.
Anon, as patient as the female dove
When that her golden couplets are disclos’d,
His silence will sit drooping. (5.1.273-77)
Likewise, Ophelia’s madness is described as “the poison of deep grief” that “springs / All from her father’s death” (4.5.75-6), and although it is never described as madness, we might read Laertes’ rebellious willingness to “dare damnation” in search of revenge for Polonius’ death in the same light.

And there is no doubt that such moments are often treated with suspicion. Hamlet’s unthinking murder of Polonius in 3.4, described by Gertrude as a “rash and bloody deed,” is the most obviously tragic case. Hamlet disavows his own rash actions in the moment of the killing when he declares to Laertes and the assembled court that he was not himself when acting rashly, suggesting in effect that to act without thinking is to separate oneself from oneself:

What I have done

That might your nature, honour, and exception

Roughly awake, I here proclaim was madness.

Was't Hamlet wrong'd Laertes? Never Hamlet.

If Hamlet from himself be taken away,

And when he's not himself does wrong Laertes,

Then Hamlet does it not, Hamlet denies it.

Who does it, then? His madness. If't be so,

Hamlet is of the faction that is wrong'd;

His madness is poor Hamlet's enemy. (5.2.211-217)

In acting rashly, then, Hamlet has certainly indulged his own violent passions at the expense of his relationship with his community. But as his speech here suggests, it is also at the expense of his relationship with himself; as much as his selfish indulgence in
passion is a turning away from the communal good, it is also a turning of his back on himself. Hamlet does not, in turning inwards, become more himself, but rather less: this implies a synecdochal self-conception based on the co-meddling of reason and passion. It is only when these two sides are in balance, both within and without, that Hamlet truly sees himself to be Hamlet.

He articulates his regret at grappling with Laertes in Ophelia’s grave in similar terms, confessing that “I regret that to Laertes I forgot myself” (5.2.76). When Hamlet disavows any man that is “passion’s slave” (3.2.77), then, he does so in the same way in which Burton observed that a man might be “a slave to fear” (408), or a “slave to his lust” (387): the implication is that rash, passionate action amounts to servitude, and is a form of self-alienation. His regret at his state explains his affection for the reasonable Horatio, “e’en as just a man / As e’er [his] conversation coped withal” (3.2.50-51). For Horatio is not moved by the winds of passion; he has been “As one in suffering all that suffers nothing” (3.2.62), and in his admiration for him Hamlet articulates his estimation of “those / Whose blood and judgment are so well co-meddled / That they are not a pipe for Fortune’s finger / To sound what stop she please” (64-66). On this model, then, one can only be said to experience oneself fully when “reason and passion being there the same” (Greville §130), when “excellent consent” (Burton 107) exists between blood and judgment. In short, from this perspective the play sets Horatio up as a kind of Edenic model.

Oddly enough, though, the text also defends and even advocates passion. Polonius orders Reynaldo to cast such light aspersions on Laertes as may seem “the taints of liberty, / The flash and outbreak of a fiery mind, / A savageness in unreclaimed
blood / Of general assault” (2.1.32-34); such things are for him associated with youth, and are not seen as in any way objectionable, perhaps flowing from the Galenic belief that youthful men’s bodies were hotter, and as such more susceptible to incontinent outbursts. In fact, certain types of madness are associated with rare insight in the play: Polonius, wondering at Hamlet’s sometimes-pregnant replies, remarks that this is “a happiness that often madness hits on, which reason and sanity could not so prosperously be delivered of” (2.2.206-208), and in a similar vein, Laertes describes Ophelia’s “nothing” as “more than matter” (4.5.168). The state of madness, defined in the play as an unreasoning and unreasoned indulgence in passion, is often depicted as bearing a truth beyond the scope of rational thought. There is a marked sense here that passion is, if not inevitable, at least not always objectionable, and that it might in some forms be more revealing of truth than is reason.

The centrepiece of the play, Hamlet’s “to be or not to be” soliloquy, goes even farther. Hamlet is, of course, wondering whether ‘tis nobler in the mind to suffer, rather stoically and dispassionately, the slings and arrows of life, or to act, courageously, confronting (with, apparently, little hope of conquest) an entire sea of troubles. He makes it quite clear, though, that the question holds ontological implications, for the question of whether or not to feel (and, in response, to act) are asked on parallel lines as whether “to be or not to be.” In this play, that is the question: not how to act, but how to be, through action. It is the authenticity of rash action that Hamlet finds especially appealing, the “native hue of resolution” (3.1.83), as it is the only way that “enterprises of great pitch and moment” (85) are achieved. Still, though, unable to escape the contemplation of “ills…that we know not of” (81), Hamlet separates himself from his
own “native” self (in a moment of nearly doctrinal Reformation Christianity) and pauses to think, to assess the implications of his response to passion. If abandoning himself to unthinking passion is a form of slavery, that moment of contemplation, that “radical reflexivity” upon which we have seen the model of the fashioned self to be constructed, is for Hamlet a sort of shrinking, a self-betrayal. Just as “the native hue of resolution / Is sicklied o’er with the pale cast of thought” (83-4), so, too, is Hamlet’s entire sense of self. In this reading, then, the self is created in the unthinking, reactive, passionate response to circumstance, and the reason that seeks to modulate these impulses “does make cowards of us all” (82-3).

This fact may go some way to explaining Hamlet’s fascination with the story of “the rugged Pyrrhus” in 2.2. Christopher Tilmouth suggests that Hamlet’s invocation of the revenger is a function of his “longing to be possessed not simply by a vigorous passion, but by a furious, uncontrolled rage” (80). Indeed, as Tilmouth suggests, the prospect of a man “total gules, horridly tricked / With blood of fathers, mothers, daughters, sons… / roasted in wrath and fire…o’ersized with coagulate gore” (395-400) probably ought to be revolting, rather than fascinating. And yet, in the same way that we find the Vice in any of his incarnations to be so appealing on the stage, Hamlet is transfixed. For Tilmouth, this is a Senecan moment, as revengers such as Atreus and Medea achieve a sort of freedom in the indulgence of their burning desire for vengeance, and it is with this that Hamlet identifies. I would argue that the impulse to revenge is not necessary to their epiphanic self-realization; rather, the self is created in the sort of immediate indulgence of passion (no matter how bloody), and it is with this self-creation that Hamlet feels fascination. It is not merely the bloody violence they wreak, but the
complete self-submersion into the moment and to their feelings. For this reason does he prod the Player to “come to Hecuba” (2.2.439); Hamlet is just as interested in her passionate grief as in Pyrrus’ bloodlust. Just as Seneca’s heroine is able to assert that in her decision to murder her children “Medea I am made,” so it is in Hamlet’s rash leap into Ophelia’s grave that he is finally able to claim that “this is I, Hamlet the Dane” (5.1.246-7); in the native hue of his resolution, Hamlet finds himself, and discovers what it is (and what it is not) “to be.”

I view Hamlet’s general fascination with acting in a similar light. Consider his response to the Player’s tears, shed in the telling of the tale of Hecuba. The player’s account of an event that “(Unless things mortal move them not at all) / Would have made milch the burning eyes of heaven / And passion in the gods” (2.2.454-6) is especially remarkable to Hamlet not as a virtuoso mimetic representation of the outward effects of emotion, but of authentic passion in response to “a fiction,” “a dream.” In other words, it is not the performance of the outward show of expression that fascinates Hamlet, but rather the scantness of the player’s motivation for the experience of such deep passion, and for the completeness of his immersion in it. It is both the ease with which he is moved, and the extreme to which he is carried. What fascinates him about Pyrrhus, Hecuba, and the player, then, is not the sincerity of the emotions, but precisely that they are neither sincere nor insincere. The player has “that within which passes show” (1.2.85) rather than merely “the trappings and the suits of woe” (1.2.86). Even the most ardent sincerity is still reducible to “trappings and suits.” In Hamlet’s terms, there is a profoundly authentic humanity about what he has witnessed, and when he berates himself afterwards as a “rogue and peasant slave” (2.2.485) he does so out of a sense of
the extent to which he has been “sicklied o’er with the pale cast of thought” (3.1.84), a fact made far more visible by the player’s “native hue.” Insofar as the central question of the play is “to be or not to be,” and more precisely, how to be, the player has provided Hamlet with an example: he has “force[d] his soul to his own conceit” (2.2.488), as well as making “his whole function [suit] / With forms to his conceit” (2.2.491-2). The conceit itself may be fictional, but it is the only thing about the player that is. In embodying his spurious passion so fully, the player has modelled authenticity.

What are we to make of this? How can passion and rashness be both self-denial and self-affirmation, both a fracturing and an integrating of the self? To begin to address this paradox, I call attention to the fact that the three characters whose actions the play describes as mad – Hamlet, Ophelia, and Laertes – have all undergone a radical restructuring in their relationship with authority. I do not mean the murder of the king; only Hamlet is aware of the death as foul play, and even he cannot be positive until the staging of “The Mousetrap” given the “questionable shape” (1.4.43) of his source. As far as the rest of the country is concerned, the succession has been orderly and seamless, and political authority has not been usurped or disrupted in the slightest. But the three do share a common well-spring of passion, in that all of them are the children of murdered fathers. Even for Hamlet, it is the loss of a father that seems more distressing than that of a king; in response to Horatio’s condolence that Hamlet Sr was “a goodly king,” Hamlet responds that “‘A was a man, take him for all in all, / I shall not look upon his like again” (1.2.186-7). Despite Claudius’s self-serving interest in assigning the death of a father a nearly quotidian character in 1.2, calling it “as common / As any the most vulgar thing to sense” (1.2.99), there is no doubt that the loss of paternal authority alters irrevocably the
self-conception of the three. Claudius sees grief as no more than “filial obligation,”
calling Hamlet’s melancholy “impious,” “unmanly,” and “most incorrect to heaven”
(1.1.90-5), yet unruly passion is precisely what characterizes the reactions of Hamlet,
Ophelia, and Laertes, even if it is directed in different ways. Madness, then, is the result
of a destabilizing restructuring of the relationship between a self and the authority that
defines it.

For Coddon, madness is a cause rather than a symptom. Essex “is as radically
self-divided a subject as Hamlet in that madness is the opposite of self-government, or
what Mervyn James calls ’internalization of obedience’” (52), so madness disintegrates
the identity that has been precariously fashioned by notions of inward control and self-
vigilance. Coddon’s use of James’ Freudian model is telling; as we’ve seen, Essex is a
far more reliable exemplar of a model of selfhood that pre-dates the super-ego in Freud’s
declension, and as such his madness is inexplicable by this framework. He lacks exactly
this internalized obedience, so bound up is his identity with its corporate controls,
whereas Coddon’s analysis of Hamlet (and of Essex) pre-supposes a self that reasoningly
understands itself as an individual entity. As such, madness is in her view inevitably
transgressive, as it represents the overcoming of the powers of reason by the unruly
aspects of human nature.

As I’ve been arguing, however, the madness of Hamlet and of Essex is not the
cause of their self-division, but rather the result of it. Both have been cut off from the
authority figure by whom they defined themselves as selves, and in accordance with
which their actions had meaning; where Essex has been imprisoned without trial for
almost a year and then banished from the Queen’s presence, Hamlet’s Hyperion has been
usurped by a satyr, and he has lost a father whom he worshipped with an unusual fervour. Both respond by giving in to “towering passions,” of the sort described by Harington, tossed to and fro on a sea of powerful emotions, without either an anchor or a rudder. In the absence of a super-ego, passion is not in any way transgressive; it is the authentic expression of a self possessed of no other modulator. And within the context of the author-agent relationship, it forms the cornerstone of a corporate self-conception. Coddon rightly cites Camden’s assessment that Essex’s behaviour towards Elizabeth “seemed rather to proceed from a mind that wanted ballast, than any real pride in him.” Needless to say, I find this observation immensely important: without the “internalized obedience,” without the ability to fashion himself, ballast was the one thing that Essex required externally, in the form of an authority into which he could submerge himself, and as a part of which he might conceive of himself as incorporate. Without that external ballast, and with no internal equivalent, Essex and Hamlet both are tossed to and fro like the waves of a troubled sea until returned to the fold.

I argue, though, that both Hamlet and Hamlet achieve some sort of resolution of this most fundamental debate, and that it occurs through faith. Hamlet’s contention that “There’s a divinity that shapes our ends, / Rough-hew them how we will” (5.2.10-11) is commonly read as an acceptance of his own fate, subject to a Calvinist ideation of providence as active in the world, even in “the fall of a sparrow” (5.2.198). Commonly ignored, however, are the lines preceding his epiphany, crucial in my reading of the play:

Sir, in my heart there was a kind of fighting,
That would not let me sleep: methought I lay
Worse than the mutines in the bilboes. Rashly,
And praised be rashness for it, let us know,

Our indiscretion sometimes serves us well,

When our deep plots do pall: and that should teach us

There's a divinity that shapes our ends,

Rough-hew them how we will. (5.2.4-11, emphasis added)

Here, rashness, action without thought and on the spur of the moment, is equated with the action of divine providence. Here, the native hue of resolution shines through, unsicklied by the pale cast of thought, and it reveals not only the presence of God, but of authenticity, as well. Hamlet is not passion’s slave: his passion serves a divine purpose, making him an instrument of redemption. It is worth noting here, with Coddon, that Hamlet’s rapid and uncontrollable shifts in emotion do not occur until after his encounter with the ghost in 1.5, after which they replace the melancholy that had governed his response to his father’s death, but that they have all but disappeared by the end of the play. What I am arguing, then, is that the text presents passion as a hallmark of authenticity insofar as it is exercised within the framework of a relationship between agent and authority like that described by Essex in his Ascension Day play, or like that described in Sidney’s *Arcadia*, or Donne’s verse, or Greville’s. It is also worthy of note that the text presents a translation in the nature of authority; as his ontological centre, Hamlet has suggestively replaced his father with divine providence. Deprived of that authority (paternal and political), Hamlet’s indulgence of his passions, though authentic, is indeed a form of slavery, but once circumscribed by a submission to a greater authority (such as the divine), rashness becomes the ultimate form of freedom. As such, Hamlet’s
actions in the final scene, which would do credit to any Senecan revenger, lack the mania that might characterize, say, Medea’s infanticide, and bear the stamp of the providential.

I do not mean to imply that the play condones any rash and thoughtless action: the rashness that Hamlet describes in 5.2 is of a special variety. It is not akin to the “rash and bloody deed” of Polonius’ murder (3.4.25), or to the “wretched, rash, intruding fool” (3.4.29) who was its victim. It is not the quality that Hamlet denies himself when he tells Laertes that he is not “splenative rash” (5.1.250) over Ophelia’s grave. Nor, for that matter, is it the “hideous rashness” of which Kent accuses Lear in the first scene of *King Lear*, or the “rash choler” in Cassius with which Brutus takes issue in *Julius Caesar*. To discern the difference, I turn to the fourth character in the play who has suffered the violent death of a father: Fortinbras. Hamlet names him successor to the Danish throne, despite (as far as we know) never having met the man. Based on the Captain’s account of the Norwegian expedition to Poland in 4.4, Hamlet describes Fortinbras as “a delicate and tender prince, / Whose spirit with divine ambition puffed / Makes mouths at the invisible event” (47-49). The “divinity” of Fortinbras’ actions is somewhat puzzling, but in the context of my argument, it becomes clearer. As dangerous as the passions can be, Wright believes that they can also be “a means to help us,” which is why “of Divines they are divinely handled” (2), and we have seen the ways in which Early Modern medicine theorized a return to a prelapsarian state through the perfect practice of submissive immersion into the divine. Fortinbras, at least in Hamlet’s estimation, is acting with an inspired “rashness,” and abandoning himself to the divinity that shapes his ends. He is “greatly [finding] quarrel in a straw / When honour’s at the stake” (4.4.54-55); as we saw with the Player, what fascinates Hamlet is the extreme action on such
slight grounds, but here Hamlet places Fortinbras in the context of providence. In this way, he serves as a role model for Hamlet of rash action as authentic rather than merely passionate, and in lobbying for his rule, *Hamlet* and Hamlet suggest the restoration of both political and divine authority to the throne, as well as offering a picture of the proper response to their loss that is painted in the native hue of resolution. Likewise, the text depicts authenticity as the by-product of a complete submission of self to authority, describing the way in which such a genuflection creates authentic agency.

Essex achieved a similar effect on the scaffold. Having made a full account of his sins to his confessor Abdiyas Ashton (who promptly violated Essex’s confidence and revealed all), his death was as close to an “ideal” Christian execution as it could possibly have been. He walked to the scaffold in the company of three divines, praying aloud, confessed loudly and publicly that his sins “were more in number than the hairs on his head,” and begged Christ to intercede for him. Asking forgiveness from “all the world,” he freely forgave it, then prayed for “Her Majesty, the Council, and the state,” and insisted that he was “a true English Christian, brought up in the belief that justification came through God’s grace and not man’s merit, and said that in that belief he was now ready to die.” He exchanged pardons with the executioner, then prayed aloud so that “all present might join him in spirit.” After the Lord’s prayer, his creed, and 2 verses of Psalm 51, he urged the executioner to strike, saying “‘Come, Lord Jesus, come Lord Jesus, and receive my soul; O Lord, into thy hands I commend my spirit.’ In the midst of which sentence his head was severed by the axe from the corpse at three blows, but the first deadly, and depriving absolutely all sense and motion. (CSP, qtd in Langston, “Essex and the Art of Dying” 109-111)
Like Hamlet, and like Hoccleve and More before him, Essex seeks to restore the “ballast” that has been taken from him by an existential crisis following a shocking removal of incorporated authority, and does so by immersing himself completely in the divine, the only transcendent entity that remained to him. His one-time admirer Marshall Biron derided his piety as “more befitting a silly Minister than a stout Warrior” (Camden § 41), but in exchanging one authority for another, as did Hamlet, he perhaps found some measure of peace.

In many ways, my argument is consonant with Margreta de Grazia’s insistence that critics strip away the presentist emphasis on Hamlet’s “modern” consciousness and that we try to recover something of the play’s original meaning. She quite rightly observes (and in this I think that Aers would be glad) that Hamlet, as he is spoken of so frequently today, is “distinguished by an inner being so transcendent that it barely comes into contact with the play from which it emerges” (Hamlet Without Hamlet 106). Harold Bloom, for instance, in breathlessly calling him the “genius of western consciousness” (Hamlet: Poem Unlimited 144) claims that “we go back to Hamlet because we cannot achieve enough consciousness” (145), placing the character as a “third newness” after King David and Jesus Christ (145). Instead, de Grazia urges us to return to what she perceives as the fullness of the complexity invoked by the play’s true protagonist, “the action hero of a tale of dispossession and revenge” (Bevington, Murder Most Foul 176). That done, de Grazia discovers the centrality of land, and Hamlet’s dispossession of it, to the text, in its structure and in its language. While I find her reading immensely compelling, as I’ve argued I see in the play a comprehensive examination of the
consequences of the loss of fathers; pace Bloom, the fact that four characters lose their fathers to acts of violence and respond in very different ways, encompassing between them the widest possible range of responses, each characterized by passion and a form of “madness,” is at the very least highly suggestive.

Given that I began with de Grazia’s suggestion that we strip away the accreted scholarly fetishization of Hamlet’s subjectivity as a hermeneutic, and given that like her I perceive the death of Hamlet Sr as one of the central drives of the narrative that remains, it is perhaps odd that this done, I return to the discovery of subjectivity as an important concern of the play. Certainly it is not the post-Coleridge, post-Romantic, relentlessly “modern” subject that de Grazia explodes; rather, it is the subject as it appeared at the turn of the 17th century, torn between paradigms, struggling to deal with an individuation it never sought and for which it was often unprepared, confused by the sudden onrush of passions and unsure how to channel or contain them, and above all, trapped between the synecdoche of the authentic and the uncertainty of the fashioned self.

In an oft-discussed passage from 1.2, Hamlet has already discussed his own experience with the relationship between inner feeling and outer expression:

Seems, madam? Nay, it is. I know not seems.

’Tis not alone my inky cloak, good mother,

Nor customary suits of solemn black,

Nor windy suspiration of forced breath,
No, nor the fruitful river in the eye,
Nor the dejected 'havior of the visage,
Together with all forms, moods, shapes of grief,
That can denote me truly. These indeed seem,
For they are actions that a man might play.
But I have that within which passeth show,
These but the trappings and the suits of woe. (1.2.76-86)

Many critics would argue that any attempt to read this passage as evidence of Hamlet’s “interiority” is misguided: in various ways, Francis Barker, Catherine Belsey, and Jean Howard would describe inferences of the “interiority and self-presence of the individual” (15) as “anachronistic” (Barker 31). As I’ve argued above, I think Aers is absolutely correct to call these assertions into question; I’ve pointed out roots of individuated subjectivity far earlier than Hamlet. De Grazia argues that an Elizabethan argument would have understood “that within” as Hamlet’s sense of dispossession, and not as some inexpressibly complex interior. While plausible in the context of her larger argument, this reading cannot account for the passage’s emphasis on the unreliability of the histrionic presentation and representation of passion. Terry Eagleton asserts that the speech is suggestive of an irony central to the play, namely that Hamlet “has no essence of being whatsoever, no inner sanctum to be safeguarded: he is pure deferral and illusion, a hollow void which offers nothing determinate to be known” (William Shakespeare 72).

Nothing could be farther from the truth. It may be true that Hamlet has no individual essence, but this is not what Eagleton means. For in fact, what is within is what is without, and it is the synecdoche into which each binds the other. It is, in a word,
infinity. Hamlet’s trouble is that his authenticity is meaningless in a world of sincerity; his actions could at best be interpreted by those around him as sincere, making them indeed “actions that a man might play.”

Closest to my understanding of the play (and this passage) is Katherine Eisaman Maus, who opens her consideration of *Inwardness and Theater* with this reading:

In his reply to his mother, his first extended utterance in the play, Hamlet distinguishes between the elaborate external rituals of mourning and an inner, invisible anguish. His black attire, his sigh, his tear fail to denote him truly not because they are false – Hamlet’s sorrow for his father is sincere – but because they might be false, because some other person might conceivably employ them deceitfully. Even reliable indicators or symptoms of his distress become suspect, simply because they are defined as indicators and symptoms...The mere, inevitable existence of a hiatus between signs (“trappings and suits”) and what they signify (“that within”) seems to empty signs of their significance. (1)

I think this reading is insightful, but I’d like to offer two small modifications. First, I call attention to Maus’ use of the word “sincere” here, as well as to the dichotomy she highlights between the play’s “contrast between an authentic personal interior and derivative or secondary superficies” (2). I have made a significant distinction between these terms, and were we to exchange “sincere” in her description of Hamlet’s grief for

44 To “pass” can be read as “To be beyond the range or compass of (a faculty or expression); to be too great for, transcend” (OED 2). In other words, it is not his grief per se that is too great to be expressed, but rather that Hamlet’s authentic self is incapable of being rendered as such, when all expression is measured on a scale of sincerity.
“authentic,” I think that our readings would harmonize. I would suggest, too, that there was nothing “inevitable” about the hiatus to which she refers. In fact, as I’ve shown, it is the very newness of the hiatus that makes it so traumatic, in particular when it comes on suddenly in the form of an abruption from authority or infinity. While we in the 21st century well know, looking backwards in time, how inevitable it might have been, to assume that everyone – Hamlet, say, or Essex – in 1599 would have known this or seen it as a “mere” development, is to fall into precisely the sort of “post-festum” analysis with whose denunciation I opened this project, and to take the play out of its time, removing from it the angst (to use Freud’s term) and trauma, and replacing them with a faintly clinical detachment. To do so is, I argue, to miss part of the central concern of the play, and of its debt to Essex.45

3.9 Shakespeare’s *Troilus and Cressida* and Essex

If Hamlet manages to achieve a manner of reconstitution in his submission to the divinity that shapes his ends, we find almost the reverse enacted in another of Shakespeare’s “Essexian” plays, *Troilus and Cressida*, in which such peace is not to be found. I am far from the first to impute a relationship between the text and the events of

45 Indeed, although I certainly do not mean to suggest that it was on Shakespeare’s mind, the question of the misinterpretation of actions, no matter how well meaning, was one that plagued Essex. Henry Howard attempted to warn the earl that “all his vertues [would be] drawne into the nature of vices’ by his enemies, but also the queen” (qtd in Gajda 190), and in 1604 the soldier Robert Prickett produced a versified attempt to rehabilitate Essex’s reputation that bemoaned the fact that “the well meaning actions of mighty men cannot…stand cleared from the after-rays’d-vp misty Meteors which may encomber them” (1).
Essex’s life, and little wonder. Written in the months following Essex’s execution, the play was barely (if ever) performed, leading some scholars to suggest that its topicality was dangerous in the aftermath of the rebellion.46 The traditional chivalric values at once glorified and undermined in the play and the factionalism plaguing the Greek camp are, in this vein, lugubrious reflections on a post-Essexian political landscape in which, in the words of Elizabeth herself, “now the wit of the fox is everywhere on foot, so as hardly a faithful or virtuous man may be found” (Nicholls iii:552). Much of this thought flows from the identification in the period of Essex with Achilles; Hugh Plat referred to him as such in his 1594 work The Jewell House of Art and Nature, and Vincentio Saviolo named him the “English Achilles” in his Saviolo His Practise (1595). The most extravagant connection, though, was made by George Chapman, who dedicated his 1598 translation of seven books of the Iliad to Essex as “the most honoured now living instance of the Achilleian vertues eternised by divine Homere.” There are problems with this approach, of course: Shakespeare’s Achilles is certainly not Homer’s, and neither of them corresponds with any analogical snugness to Essex. As a result, James Savage argues that it is in fact the more chivalrous Hector who is Essex’s stand-in in the play. This makes Patroclus out to be Southampton, of course, and David Norbrook suggests that Nestor and Ulysses are thinly-veiled representations of Burleigh and his son, Robert Cecil. (Savage 43; Norbrook 150). Eric Mallin confusingly — if bemusedly — observes that “if Shakespeare replicates some parallels between English court affairs and the tale of Troy, he also skews others, setting the picture of contemporary politics curiously

46 For more on this, see Honigmann, E.A.J. Myriad-Minded Shakespeare. London: Macmillan, 1989, and also David Bevington’s introduction to the Third Arden edition of the play.
awry,” concluding that “history is not reproduced eccentrically in *Troilus and Cressida*; it is disposed bilaterally” (153-154). In his resulting reading, it is both Hector and Achilles who represent Essex: “the image of Robert Devereux, that is, bifurcates in the two central adversaries” of the play (168). I have no interest in dismissing entirely any of these readings, as they do provide interesting contexts in which we might understand certain elements of the play. And of course, I most certainly maintain that the decision to bear Essex in mind as we read this play is the right one. Unlike these scholars, though, I propose to move the discussion of the play outside the realm of politics, and to examine Essex’s presence in the play not as an ideological or political but as an ontological one.

Like so many, I begin with Chapman’s dedication to Essex, but rather than concentrating on Achilles himself, I’d like to examine the Achillean virtues, the values that Chapman might have associated with Homer’s hero and with Essex. Later in his Epistle Dedicatarie, Chapman describes Homeric verse as vessels wherein “the souls of all the recorded worthies that ever lived, become eternally embodied” (8), and the poems as “earthly Elysiums” (8) whose lines are “a most beautiful lineament of [the worthies’] souls’ infinite bodies” (8); Achillean virtues, then, have nothing to do with warcraft. They are, rather, embodiments of divinity and of the eternal, of grace. When Chapman calls Essex the “most abundant precedent of true nobleness in whose manifest actions all these sacred objects are divinely pursued”(8), then, or “most true Achilles…in whose unmatched virtues shine the dignities of the soul and the whole excellence of royal humanity” (8), the analogy invokes Homer’s ability to channel divinity in his verse, and the extent to which Achilles and Essex embody them. It is an endorsement of an ethic of integrity. We can trace to the same roots a connection with passionate living. Shortly
after publishing his partial translation, Chapman published a section translating a section from Book XVIII, describing Achilles’ shield. His dedication here, also to Essex, is an argument for the superiority of Homeric verse to the Vergilian, and some of his reasoning is telling: “Homer’s poems were writ from a free furie, an absolute and full soul: Virgil’s out of a courtly, laborious, and altogether imitative spirit” (1). As we’ll see, this distinction is crucial to my reading of Troilus and Cressida. In identifying Essex with Homer as much as with his greatest hero, Chapman again makes the connection we have seen over and over: his spontaneity is linked with an authenticity whose ultimate source is the divine.

   It is this aspect of Homeric virtue that I propose to examine in Troilus and Cressida, chiefly through a consideration of the titular characters. Indeed, it is worth mentioning that the play is named for the lovers, and not for the war and the political intrigues and machinations that surround them, for this relationship, and its ultimate decay, is absolutely central to the thematic structure of the play, and it is upon this belief that I base my claim that Essex’s fall is here echoed.

   From the outset, there is something different about Troilus. In a rare moment of uncynical admiration, Ulysses describes Troilus as follows:

   The youngest son of Priam, a true knight,
   Not yet mature, yet matchless firm of word,
   Speaking in deeds and deedless in his tongue;
   Not soon provoked, nor being provoked soon calmed;
   His heart and hand both open and both free.
   For what he has, he gives; what he thinks, he shows;
Yet gives he not till judgment guide his bounty,
Not dignifies an impair thought with breath;
Many as Hector, but more dangerous,
For Hector in his blaze of wrath subscribes
To tender objects, but he in heat of action
Is more vindicative than jealous love. (4.5.97-108)

In short, Troilus embodies what I have been describing as an authentic self: one whose actions are one with his mind without linguistic intercession, one incapable of concealment or dissimulation, one who gives himself fully over to the passions of the moment, and one unable (as Hector is able) to control them or to rein them in; that said, though, we are scrupulously reminded that in him, as Greville describes, “reason and passion are there the same.”

Ulysses’ description of Troilus is borne out throughout the play, and often through juxtaposition with those with whom he interacts. We first meet him in the throes of his unrequited love for Cressida. Afraid of being discovered, he has tried his best to bury “this sigh in wrinkle of a smile; / But sorrow that is couched in seeming gladness /
Is like that mirth fate turns to sudden sadness” (1.1.36-38); his attempts to hide his feelings are doomed to fail, and he is “mad in Cressid’s love” (1.1.48-9). Cressida, for her part, returns the sentiment, but in an effort to keep Troilus interested in the pursuit, discloses nothing, not even to Pandarus: “though my heart’s contents firm love doth bear, / Nothing of that shall from mine eyes appear” (1.2.285-6). This is not even to mention the contrast with the characters on the Greek side, where “pale and bloodless emulation” (1.3.134) seem to rule the day: Achilles, feigning illness in his tents, has Patroclus
“pageant” and “make paradoxes” (1.3.184) of the Greeks. In return, instigated by the wily Ulysses, they affect a nonchalant indifference to him and a mock-enthusiastic reverence for the dull-witted Ajax. Diomedes, for his part, is “a false-hearted rogue” who will “spend his mouth and promise…but when he performs, astronomers foretell it; it is prodigious. … The sun borrows of the moon when Diomed keeps his word” (5.1.86-91). We should not lump Cressida’s deception in with Diomed’s, at least not for the moment, insofar as her “deception” is in no way malicious. In a word, she is sincere and Diomedes insincere. The distinction to which I am calling attention, though, is not a moral one, not one between sinful and well-meaning self-fashioning, but between the ability and the inability to fashion a self for others.47

Troilus’ self-integration is apparent, too, in his complete self-subjugation to the infinity he perceives in various forms of authority. In 2.2, when Hector attempts to justify the return of Helen on the reasoned grounds of her worth next to that of the many souls who have died in her name, Troilus counters by making a claim for the infinity of majesty, and its concomitant superiority to this line of thought:

Fie, fie, my brother!

Weigh you the worth and honour of a king

So great as our dread father in a scale

47 Both Janet Adelman and Gayle Greene have gendered Cressida’s fragmentation; in Adelman’s view, she has no sense of her intrinsic worth because she has “internalized the principle of valuation that rules this society”, one based on market valuations (47). For Greene, Cressida’s disunity is a result of “the tendency of a woman to define herself in relational capacities, to derive self-esteem from the esteem of others, and to ‘objectify’ herself” (31). These are compelling and valuable readings of the play, and we agree at least on the dichotomy between unity and fragmentation offered by the lovers. I find, I think, more of a sense of agency in Cressida than do these critics. Like Douglas Bruster, I think that “Realizing that she is seen as a commodity, Cressida decides to take control of her commodity function” (98).
Of common ounces? Will you with counters sum
The past-proportion of his infinite
And buckle in a waist most fathomless
With spans and inches so diminutive
As fears and reasons? Fie, for godly shame! (2.2.25-33)

For Troilus, conscience does make cowards of us all: “reason and respect / Make livers pale and lustihood deject” (2.2.49-50). Hector’s view that the possibility of failure and loss must be weighed, and his equation of Troilus’ deliberately unreasoning (as opposed to unreasonable) attitude with a rashness born of “blood / So madly hot that no discourse of reason” (2.2.115-6) can qualify it, stand in opposition to Troilus’ insistence that “we may not think the justness of each act / Such and no other than th’event doth form it” (2.2.119-20). For Troilus, actions are correct simply by virtue of being undertaken, and undertaken in the name of the King’s honour; in this, he echoes Fortinbras, at least as Hamlet sees him. Spontaneity as opposed to deliberateness, and passion as opposed to reason, when motivating an action, are what “make it gracious”, rather than the “godly shame” associated with fears and reasons. Grace and shame are again linked to passionate engagement with the world, rather than with reasoning reflection upon it.

For Troilus, love is another authority to which he grants an infinite status.
Confronted for the first time with the opportunity to meet his beloved, Troilus is unable to conceive of “th’imaginary relish” (3.2.17) of the event, that he fears may represent “some joy too fine, / Too subtle-potent, tuned too sharp in sweetness, / For the capacity of my ruder powers” (3.2.21-3). Tellingly, he likens the experience and the concomitant sapping of his powers to “vassalage at unawares encount’ring / The eye of majesty”
(3.2.36-7): both infinitudes overwhelm his reason, and he submits entirely to both. For Troilus, the only finite quantity in the equation is himself: “this is the monstruosity in love, lady,” he tells Cressida, “that the will is infinite and the execution confined; that the desire is boundless and the act a slave to limit” (3.2.77-80). In other words, Troilus feels incapable of the completeness of the submission that infinite love deserves. Troilus’ fear in the face of infinity is that in giving himself over to it as completely as he does, he will “lose distinction in my joys” (3.2.25), that it will overwhelm him to the point of his own erasure, not as a reasoning self (for he has no desire to be one of these) but as, even at the most fundamental phenomenological level, an experiencer, a first-person perspective. Danger is, for Troilus, too much unity.

This stands in contrast to Cressida’s experience with love, which is one of fragmentation. For Troilus, the “cruel battle here within” (1.1.3) that threatens to “rive [his heart] in twain” (1.1.33) is ultimately resolved in his self-erasure, but Cressida’s experience is quite different. Told by an uncomprehending Troilus that “you cannot shun yourself,” she responds that “I have a kind of self resides with you, / But an unkind self that itself will leave / To be another’s fool” (3.2.141-5). Unable to abandon herself (her self?) to her feelings, she instead divides herself, and the “unkindness” that results evidences a self-alienation inherent in the process, one that is completely foreign to Troilus’ understanding. For he expresses his love in absolute terms of wholeness “integrity”, “truth,” and “winnowed purity,” “as true as truth’s simplicity, / And simpler than the infancy of truth” (3.2.160-5). The contrast with Cressida’s words when she fatefully accedes to Diomedes’ ministrations is wonderfully stark:

Troilus, farewell! One eye yet looks on thee,
But with my heart the other eye doth see.

Ah, poor our sex! This fault in us I find:

The error of our eye directs our mind.

What error leads must err. O, then conclude:

Minds swayed by eyes are full of turpitude. (5.2.113-8)

The wonderful puns on eye/I throughout the passage serve to make the point even more clear: one “I” yet looks on Troilus, but the other “I” looks elsewhere. Cressida is completely divided, and can find no way back. Her farewell to Troilus is as much an adieu to herself as to him. Her words also imply the problems of a “fallen” self: when the “error of the I” leads the mind, the inevitable result, the only result, is error, and worse, sin. We see the fall re-enacted not only in her “turpitude,” but in her self-division, in a mind swayed by an “I.”

The relationship between sight and subjectivity expressed in the homonymic “I”/”eye” in the play is intriguingly reminiscent of Joel Fineman’s exploration of its use in Sonnet 152, where the poet refers to his “perjur’d eye” (l. 13) in having “seen” his beloved as other than she is. As Fineman has demonstrated, the doubled meaning is indicative of a “new first-person posture” (2) articulated in the sonnets. The mimetic aspect of traditional epideictic poetry assumes the likeness of the poet and the object of his praise, then “joins these likenesses together in a peculiarly powerful and mutually corroboratory way, as though the likeness of the one were a confirmation of—in some respects, the likeness of— the likeness of the other” (3). In this relationship, the poet’s self-definition is related, even circumscribed, by the formal and rhetorical conceits of epideixis, creating a kind of grammar of poetic presence that controls the way a poet can
articulate himself” (7). So, for example, when Sidney’s Astrophil looks into his heart and writes, he can do so because he will find inside of him Stella, and thus his “introspection, guaranteed by extrospection, can show the poet what to write” (15); in other words, “poetic voice becomes thereby a visionary voice…because poetic “I” becomes a speaking eye” (15). Not only are the poet and his beloved intermingled in the rhetoricity of epideixis, then, but so are his subjectivity and his very faculties of perception.

Shakespeare, per Fineman, replaces this ideal of visionary language: it is a different account that characterizes communication as something corruptingly linguistic rather than something ideally specular, as something duplicitously verbal as opposed to something singly visual. The result is a poetics of a double tongue rather than a poetics of a unified and unifying eye, a language of suspicious word rather than a language of true vision.” (15)

Words are “fallen,” and have “lost their visionary truth” (15). Particularly in the dark lady sonnets, the speaker

“identifies himself now with that which is a unity, but with that which is duplicitous. Instead of identifying himself with what is like himself, the poet instead identifies himself, not only with what is unlike himself, but with what is unlike itself…As a result, but as a highly paradoxical result, no longer joined to a sameness which is the same as itself, the poet is joined instead to an irreducible difference, to an essential otherness.” (22)

Although Fineman’s focus is on the sonnets, he might make the same argument in the context of Troilus and Cressida. It is surely not a coincidence that both Troilus and
the speaker of the sonnets are involved with a woman who is herself involved with another man, nor is it by chance that the “I”/“eye” wordplay is invoked as the speaker loses his beloved. Fineman chronicles the dissolution of the synecdochal sense of epideictic sight and language – and of subjectivity – throughout the sonnets, but its apotheosis, the moment that names his investigation as it informs it, is the finality with which the speaker comes to see himself as separate from his beloved, but also from the language and the ontological structures he has used to construct her, and their relationship, to himself:

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. In profound contrast, Shakespeare’s sonnets instead record the difference between their vision and their speech…It is not too much to say, therefore, that the subject of Shakespeare’s sonnets experiences himself as his difference from himself. His identity is an identity of ruptured identification, a broken identity that carves out in the poet’s self a syncopated hollowness.” (25)

In Troilus’ horrible discovery, we watch the transition from one subjectivity to the other, and the intensity of its concomitant anguish is riveting:

O madness of discourse,

That cause sets up with and against itself!

Sonnet 152 is the last of the “dark lady” sonnets.
Bi-fold authority, where reason can revolt
Without perdition, and loss assume all reason
Without revolt! This is and is not Cressid.
Within my soul there doth conduce a fight
Of this strange nature that a thing inseparate
Divides more wider than the sky and earth…
Instance, O instance! strong as heaven itself;
The bonds of heaven are slipp'd, dissolved, and loosed. (5.2.149-164)
These are the same bonds whose loosening I have shown in so many cases, the sense of identification whose rupturing left Essex and Hamlet as self-divided as it does Troilus and the speaker of the sonnets.

For Troilus, as described by J. Hillis Miller, the bifurcation is born of the recognition of “the possibility of two simultaneous contradictory sign systems centred on Cressida but ultimately organizing everything in the cosmos around this Cressida or, alternatively, around that Cressida…they double [Troilus’] mind against itself” (47-8); now, there is no “rule in unity itself” (TC 5.2.148). The external division is directed inwards, too, in the production of a “bi-fold subjectivity” (Fineman 331n), and it results in behavior that (despite Troilus’ insistence in 5.2.133 that it “hath no taste of madness”) resembles what observers of both Hamlet and Essex interpreted as insanity. Ulysses’ admonition to Troilus that he “contain [himself]” (5.2.187) implies the porousness of Troilus’s sense of himself in his relationships, just as it identifies the one thing that his subjectivity prevents him from doing.
Although this episode is the play’s most poignant commentary on fragmentation, it is far from its only one, a fact that serves only to throw Troilus’ authenticity into a starker relief. In the Greek camp, the process we have observed in Cressida is more fully advanced, and selfhood is as much a question of public opinion as it is of self-knowledge. Ulysses begins his conversation with Achilles in 3.3 with the commonplace that a man “Cannot make boast to have that which he hath, / Nor feels not what he owes, but by reflection.” When Achilles agrees that “this is not strange,” Ulysses continues, arguing that

No man is the lord of anything,

Though in and of him there be much consisting,

Till he communicate his parts to others;

Nor doth he of himself know them for aught

Till he behold them form’d in the applause

Where they’re extended. (3.3.116-121)

If a man can only know his own parts by observing their reflection in others, then, the implication for self-hood is grim indeed, in that the self exists in tiny fragments, differing from relationship to relationship, entirely defined by its social aspect. This is not the same as Troilus’ (and Essex’s) integration, where one is an individual and a part of a whole simultaneously. The obvious endpoint of this precipitous descent into incoherence is Ajax. At the most basic genealogical level, he is half Greek and half Trojan, which Hector cites as reason enough for not pursuing their duel to a fatal conclusion in 4.5. More than this, though, he is described as some sort of monstrous chimera:
This man, lady, hath robbed many beasts of their particular additions; he is as valiant as the lion, churlish as the bear, slow as the elephant: a man into whom nature hath so crowded humours that his valour is crushed into folly, his folly sauced with discretion: there is no man hath a virtue that he hath not a glimpse of, nor any man an attaint but he carries some stain of it: he is melancholy without cause, and merry against the hair: he hath the joints of every thing, but everything so out of joint that he is a gouty Briareus, many hands and no use, or purblind Argus, all eyes and no sight. (1.2.19-30)

In short, Ajax is little more than a cobbling together of the qualities of others, an inevitability when the self has been fractured to the point of absurdity.

This notion goes some way toward an explanation of the emulous nature of so many of the interactions in the Greek camp. I would argue that the fact that this is the only one of Shakespeare’s plays to include that word, and that its noun form “emulation” is used more often here than in any other play, is revealing, and certainly not coincidental. The same might be said for the presence of the “hollow tents” and “hollow factions” that result. As we saw predicted in Greville’s work, when the self is fragmented, this is the outcome: there is form, but no possibility of reform, and all we see are emulous “shadoes, onely shadoes bringing forth.”

This is not the only result of individuation, of course, and not all is doom and gloom; consider Nestor’s words concerning the selection of a Greek champion to face Hector in the lists:

It is supposed

He that meets Hector issues from our choice;
And choice, being mutual act of all our souls,

Makes merit her election and doth boil.

As ‘twere from forth us all, a man distilled

Out of our virtues. (1.3.347-52)

In a moment that strikingly prefigures Hobbes’ delineation of the theatrical creation of an “Artificial Person” as a metaphorical representation of civic leadership, Nestor proposes here a nearly democratic ideal. Where for Troilus unity is achieved by a willing submission to, and submersion into, an infinite authority, for the Greeks it can be achieved through reason; the “authority” is not granted to a king by divine fiat, but to a man, and by universal consent. In the absence of authenticity, there is still sincerity: all is not lost. And yet, something indefinable, ineffable has gone, and it cannot be regained.

Many critics have called attention to the play’s frequent use of commercial language and imagery, through which characters are repeatedly reduced to vendible merchandise, whose price and worth are subject to negotiation and the vagaries of the markets. In cataloguing these references, and in observing how frequently in Shakespeare’s works the “tension between the heroic and the commercial appears” (107), Douglas Bruster suggests that the playwright’s “historical vision saw them as the antithetical entities of past and present (107). In dramatizing and re-dramatizing the “struggle between the martial and the mercenary” (107), Bruster argues, Shakespeare depicts the “heroic” gradually giving way to the “cynical,” and the world of Essex, Troilus, Achilles, and the rest “with Troilus and Cressida…falls before the citizenry and the City’s growing commercialism. Troilus and Cressida is about this fall” (107). There
can be no doubt about the mercantile undercurrents in the play, or about the shift in social and economic forces of which it is a reflection. I think, though, that commercialism is but one more avatar of the wider trend I have begun to chart, of the general movement from the perception of unity to an identification with individuation. In that context, just as in the one Bruster has described, it is no coincidence that a play so closely identified with Essex would be so bitterly pessimistic about the fate of the system with which he was associated.

We see this “nostalgia for spoiled unity” (Adelman 45) most clearly in Troilus’ reaction to Cressida’s infidelity. In recognizing that “this is Diomed’s Cressida” (5.2.144), Troilus is confronted with a relational self, a less-than-absolute, all the more distressing to him because, as we have seen, the absolute and the infinite are the foundations for his ontology. From this initial quake, the aftershocks are every bit as deadly:

If beauty have a soul, this is not she;
If souls guide vows, if vows be sanctimonious,
If sanctimony be the gods’ delight,
If there be rule in unity itself,
This is not she. (5.2.145-9)

It is not only the unities of beauty, religion, and the self that are shivered in this horrible epiphany, but Troilus’ understanding of unity itself. “This is and is not Cressid” (5.2.153) Troilus moans. And when he bitterly describes her as no more than the sum of “the fractions of her faith, orts of her love, / The fragments, scraps, the bits and greasy relics / Of her o’ereaten faith” (5.2.165-7), he might as well be damning human nature in
general, and perhaps foreseeing the future of his own heretofore “so eternal and so fixed a soul” (5.2.173). His connection to the infinite lost, it cannot be recaptured; in this, Janet Adelman has argued that “the betrayal enabled him to achieve a particularly brutal form of individuation” (*Suffocating Mothers* 62)\(^49\), and this is the moment of abruption to which I have called attention in various cases from Hoccleve and More to Hamlet and Essex, to the same effect. When Hector is killed in the bargain, Troilus, unmoored, falls slave to the passions that until now have been contained, and he runs offstage to pursue his revenge, if not his death. Without leaning too heavily on it, I point out that the last line of Troilus’ oration to the troops he incites to battle is that “hope of revenge shall hide our inward woe:” has Troilus learned to fashion himself at last?

What I’m arguing, then, is that the play enacts the disintegration of an authentic self, and displays, as a consequence, a world governed by an irreparable fragmentation, and descending into “pale and bloodless emulation” of those lost models of authenticity: precisely the state of affairs depicted by Greville, and precisely the bases of much of the criticism levelled at the English court beginning in the latter years of Elizabeth’s reign. It is in this, I think, that the play dramatizes the fall of Essex: certainly, the chivalric values that he represented to many have disappeared by the end of this play, but I argue that they are only the visible representation of an authentic selfhood that, for many, disappeared with his rebellion.

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\(^49\) To be fair, although this wonderful turn of phrase fits my argument perfectly, and while I agree wholly with what it implies, I should point out that in Adelman’s Oedipal argument the individuation involves Troilus’ being forced to “leave the mother behind” (62). Still, although the object of his submission differs, we agree that it is his severance from it that forces on him an individuation that he does not want, and one for which he is entirely unprepared.
Bruster has suggested that the play “can be said to straddle the division between what are usually seen as distinct periods in the history of English Renaissance drama” (99). Like the many other literary works published between 1596 and 1602 that dealt with the events of the Trojan War, Shakespeare’s play “attempts to attribute blame for what appeared to be the imminent decline of London” (99). Not only does this analysis place the play neatly into the middle of the paradigm shift I am describing, but it also imputes to the text the same value judgment that we have seen in the writings of Essex and of his intimates. The world is changing, they all agree, and not for the better.

If Chapter 1 suggested the rough psychological outlines of both the transcendent, synecdochal subject and the individuated, self-fashioned one, and suggested the implications of their co-presence in and among Essex’s contemporaries, then, Chapter 2 has grounded the distinction in body hexis, in the lived experience of Essex and his contemporaries, and has given a sense of the ways in which the hysteresis effect might have found a literary voice in Essex’s work, and then, through the channels of both coterie and popular texts, outwards. In these ways, at times explicitly and at times implicitly, in works that he writes and in works that he inspires, Essex becomes the focal point of a sort of existential resistance, synonymous and metonymic with a model of subjectivity that is increasingly treated with a tincture of nostalgia. What remains is to consider these developments in the context of the theatre, setting the stage for an understanding of the performance of Richard 2 at the Globe on February 7, 1601.
4 Chapter 3: The Interesting Influence of Drama Upon Certain Minds

In the preceding chapters, I positioned Essex as a sort of ontological vestige. In invoking Bourdieu’s ideation of hysteresis to explain Essex’s inability to fashion himself as well as his failure to comprehend the self-fashioning of others, I suggested not only that the transformation of the “medieval” subject to the “early modern” one was a far more processual one than some analyses have implied, but also that the two models of subjectivity co-existed and overlapped, with the relationship between them being one of mutual tension and incomprehension. Furthermore, I argued that many in the late Elizabethan period were aware of the tension, and that as the most visible avatar of the waning modality, Essex became a rallying point for its last gasp. As such, his fall has ontological — and not simply political or cultural — implications, and this fact is visible in much of the literature he inspired, directly and indirectly. In making this argument, I have suggested that we might use Essex as a measuring stick by which to track the ebb — or in this case, the flow — of individuation as a paradigm of subjectivity: in attempting to account for Essex’s popularity and his ultimate fall as evidence of both Kuhn’s incommensurability and of Bourdieu’s hysteresis, I have argued that he is a highly illuminating individual case of movements and trends that we often talk about only in the broadest and most abstract terms.

In this chapter, I take this understanding of Essex and insert it as a backdrop behind the telling of the most famous tale in which he traditionally stars: the performance
of Richard 2 by the Lord Chamberlain’s Men on February 7, 1601, the eve of Essex’s so-called “rebellion.” The traditional narrative of the performance as mere propaganda holds tenaciously to its place in the hearts of early modernists. However – and this is true even in the case of those scholars who have attempted to bring fresh insight and discernment to the musty old saga – unless Essex is understood in terms of periodization and of hysteresis, the significance of the performance can only ever be understood in two dimensions. What I propose, then, is to undertake in this chapter an exploration of the implications of my broader argument to our positioning of the Lord Chamberlain’s Men’s most famous performance, and in so doing to offer some insights into the changing nature of the theatre at the waning of the Tudor line.

There is scarcely an edition of Shakespeare’s play that fails to mention the bespoke performance, and a nearly unanimous agreement that it was an attempt to drum up popular support for the rebellion which was to follow closely on its heels. A quick sampling of the editions available on the university library’s bookshelves is enough to establish the certainty of editors on this point: Nick de Somogyi suggests that “like many an attempted putsch since, Essex’s followers recognized the importance of the media, in their case, the Globe playhouse” (xxvii). For Matthew Black, the performance was an effort “to stir up popular feeling in favour of [Essex’s] ill-starred attempt to seize the throne” (21). Kenneth Muir believes that the conspirators were willing to subsidize the performance “because they thought that the deposition of Richard would be good

50 There is no evidence to suggest that the play performed was Shakespeare’s, although the preponderance of critical opinion seems satisfied to wield Ockham’s Razor and proceed as if it were. Although I will make some comments on the applicability of Shakespeare’s text to my understanding of the performance, I am on the whole far less interested in the text used for performance than I am in the fact that there was any performance at all.
propaganda” (xxiii). Charles Forker concludes that “the conspirators apparently believed that the drama would serve as effective propaganda for their treasonable enterprise” (10).

The fondness for the word “propaganda” on the part of these editors reveals two of the basic assumptions that govern our thinking about the performance. The first is that the conspirators intended the performance to sway the members of the audience into sympathizing with them the following morning in their attempt to storm the court. The second is the even more fundamental supposition that such persuasion was understood as possible at the time, that Elizabethans could be moved to think and to act (treasonously, in this case) in ways they might not have done otherwise, merely by exposure to a theatrical performance. Many commentators have used the show as the cornerstone of just this sort of argument: Greenblatt assumes that “some in the Essex faction saw in the theatre the power to subvert, or rather the power to wrest legitimation from the established ruler and confer it on another” (The Power of Forms 3), wondering whether tragedy can “be a strictly literary term when the Queen’s own life is endangered by the play” (4). Similarly, in making a case for “the utility of symbolic fictions – of pageantry and poetry in the largest sense – within a society” (42) Stephen Orgel describes the performance as “a piece of very dangerous civic pageantry” (45). And Jonathan Dollimore in Political Shakespeare calls the performance “a famous attempt to use the theatre to subvert authority” (8) attempting partially on that basis to “recover[] the political dimension of Renaissance drama” (7).

The appeal of these ideas is nearly irresistible. It does, after all, offer evidence to support the claims of new historicism that power and theatre are indistinguishable. And there seems to be no better explanation for the insistence of the conspirators that, despite
the complaints of the Lord Chamberlain’s Men that the play was too old to draw any sort of a crowd, it be this particular play on this particular occasion; little wonder that this particular chain of causality has become a critical commonplace.

The problem is that the theory has been shown to be deeply flawed. In what amounts to a fairly masterful act of mythbusting, Leeds Barroll has systematically undermined every pillar supporting this critical narrative in an effort to “break this traditional story of the Richard 2 performance out of its amber” (444), after which there can be no doubt that the play itself seemed not to bother authorities in the slightest.

Barroll’s analysis concords with Paul Yachnin’s description of the “powerless theatre,” wherein “commercial theatre plays…could not easily be enlisted as propaganda in actual political conflicts” (65). In a more pragmatic vein, Paul Hammer has convincingly argued that the fact of the performance a day before the rebellion was merely coincidence: as I’ll discuss later, in his exhaustive account, the march on Whitehall was not meant in any way to be subversive of Elizabeth’s reign, and in any event was not scheduled until the following week, being moved up unexpectedly in response to actions

51 Among Barroll’s more telling observations: the four conspirators executed after the rebellion had at best an “incidental” relationship to the performance; the most prestigious conspirators, including Essex himself and the earls of Southampton, Rutland, and Bedford, did not attend the production; the men who actually commissioned the play were minimally fined and were released from prison in 6 months; neither of the two conspirators summoned back to the Privy Council to give a second deposition about the events of the coup was asked anything about the play in his second round of questioning; the Lord Chamberlain’s Men were summoned to perform at court on Shrove Tuesday, February 24, the eve of Essex’s execution and only 2 weeks after the “seditious” performance; and the punishment meted out to John Hayward for his book-length Life of Henry IV was far more severe, amounting to a lengthy imprisonment and the examination of both his printer and the censor who had allowed it to be published, suggesting that authorities were far more concerned with this adaptation of history than with the staged version.

52 I’ll discuss both Barroll’s and Yachnin’s arguments in more detail below.
taken by the Privy Council. In other words, nobody who attended the performance did so in the knowledge that there even was to be an uprising on the following day.\(^{53}\)

If we abandon this traditional theory, though, what is left? No-one can deny that a group of men bound to Essex and soon to be part of his uprising, insisted that the Lord Chamberlain’s Men perform a play “of the deposying and kyllyng of Kyng Richard the Second,” countering the objection that the play was “old and out of use” by paying 40 shillings extra (qtd in Hammer 18). If the traditional new-historicist narrative cannot offer an explanation, where can we turn? Barroll’s theory is worth quoting at length:

We might set aside a theory that foregrounds drama’s power over the populace to focus instead on a theory that views the interesting influence of drama upon certain minds. Perhaps the “fact” that we should extract from the situation is the belief by some conspirators that the fictions they viewed onstage had the same power over others as such fictions had over themselves…One might wish to examine the power of drama as it was misconstrued by certain members of the Essex circle. Such a study would also take into account the Earl of Bedford’s and the Earl of Essex’s commitment to shows of chivalry embodied in the Accession Day tournaments, and it would consider the importance of mimetic and quasi-mimetic forms to an Essex group that included in its number so many patrons of the arts, a group led by an Earl who had married Sir Philip Sidney’s widow.

(454)

\(^{53}\) In “Shakespeare’s Richard II, the Play of 7 February 1601, and the Essex Rising.” Essex himself did not attend the performance; Hammer points out that he spent the afternoon playing tennis instead.
Such a theory is what I have elaborated over the preceding chapters, and it is to the application of that work to staged drama that I propose to turn here. What I will show is that the ontological differences between Essex (and his coterie) and their more individuated contemporaries account in many ways for the disparity with which they perceived the role of theatre in their lives. As in the first two chapters, my argument will be that two strikingly different models existed side by side, with one slowly and inexorably giving way to the other; by examining the performance from the perspective of each, then, can we hope to understand it fully. Paul Yachnin describes the performance as “desperately old-fashioned” (65); both adjective and adverb are entirely apt.

4.1 Theatre and the Turn to Religion

Before beginning to lay that groundwork, however, I return briefly to the various approaches to the period and its theatre that we might group under the umbrella of the “turn to religion.” I situated my thinking in terms of this movement in the introduction, and have implied an affinity with it through the first two chapters, but as the consideration of the theatre is a slightly more complicated exercise, I think it would be of benefit to pause for a moment and to be more explicit. The renewed attention to matters of religion in the period is in many ways a response to a presentism in much thought about the period, one (with apologies for belabouring the point) entirely predicted by both Bourdieu and Kuhn. Given the drastically different, and more peripheral, role assigned to matters of religion in most modern Western societies (and, I would venture to
suggest, especially in scholarly circles) than would have existed four centuries ago, it is nearly impossible for a modern mind to imagine, in a meaningful way, a phenomenology so different from our own, so steeped in belief and faith as to appear nearly alien. This manifestation of the hysteresis effect makes it nearly inevitable that a presentist element creeps into so much of our thought. I have made reference to this difficulty throughout this project, but it bears repeating, particularly as it a claim already voiced by scholars in increasing numbers. According to Ken Jackson and Arthur Marotti, “the otherness of early modern religious agents and culture(s) is translated into (for us) more acceptable modern forms conformable to our own cultural assumptions” (167) by scholars too concerned with political history, with the result that “religion and politics” are treated as “religion as politics” (167).

They credit Shuger with forcing scholars to take seriously the idea that “religion was not just about doctrine, liturgy or ecclesiastical government; it was a language, an aesthetic, a structuring of meaning, an identity, a politics” (Sharpe 16); it was, as I have said above, a “master code” (Jameson 35) by which we might well translate other fields of knowledge. One of the significant strands of thought to emerge has been the application of the “secularization thesis,” which purports to track a sharp movement in the period (and, in particular, in the theatre and in theatregoing in the period) from religious to secular, leading to spirited and informative debate about whether, for instance, as prominent New Historicists like Greenblatt and Montrose have argued, the theatre appropriated the mechanics and apparatus of religion for its own ends, or whether or not Shakespeare was as explicitly religious in his intentions as Jeffrey Knapp has claimed, or whether, as Huston Diehl has insisted, the drama of the period approaches
religion with hardline Protestant iconoclasm, setting out to dismantle what were seen as Catholic superstitions.

While I admire this approach to criticism, and although I find it to be rich and rewarding in the insights that it brings to our understanding of the theatre and of the plays, I do want to distinguish my own thinking from it in an important way, one that I think has been both implicit and explicit up to this point, but which is worth clarifying as it relates to the theatre.

Rather than with particular disciplines or dogmas, it is with what Shuger has called the “habits of thought” of the period, visible in religion, yes, but also — as I have described — in science, in medicine, in literature and, as I will show in this chapter, in drama. These disciplines are all examples of the declining “local presence of transcendent principles, from whence flows into the world all that opposes factionalism, self-interest, politics as usual, and the will to power” (Shuger, *Political Theologies in Shakespeare’s England* 46). Just as a transcendent, synecdochal phenomenology was in the process of being hemmed in by the individuating forces of progress, so, too, was the theatre as a social institution losing some of its primordial energy – and resultant power – as the individual experience with it gained prominence. And just as I have placed Essex and his coterie against a backdrop of change and used them to measure it, so will I establish the performance of February 7, 1601 (and, ultimately, its failure) as a benchmark by which we might draw conclusions about the rate and extent of the change in the context of the theatre.
4.2 Turner, the Liminal, and the Liminoid

Most students of the theatre would be familiar with the sociologist and ethnographer Victor Turner. Dissatisfied – for very much the same reasons as was Bourdieu – with the synchronic accounts of ethnography offered by the structuralist discourse, Turner sought to study change, and the mechanisms by which it took place, in social contexts. What he discovered was the “theatrical potential of social life” (9); “Social life,” he argued, “even in its quietest moments, is characteristically ‘pregnant’ with social dramas” (10). If it cannot be said that life imitates art in Turner’s formulation, we can certainly conclude that life and art are altered in concerted ways; the theatre is as much a “structuring structure” as the habitus, and gives evidence of the same hysteresis effect.

Following the work of van Gennep, who had divided rites of passage into the phases of separation, transition, and incorporation, Turner interpreted “performances of ritual as distinct phases in social processes whereby groups became adjusted to internal changes…and adapted to their external environment” (21-2). What for van Gennep had been transition became for Turner the “liminal” phase, where initiands were “betwixt and between” states, having been separated from the group, but not having yet been re-admitted bearing their new social identity. The same phases that govern the performance of ritual, he argues, circumscribe social dramas played out at the local level, and even up to national revolutions (10). Much of his subsequent work went on to trace the compelling interrelationships between these ritual practices (which he studied primarily
in African villages) and the modern Western theatre, for which the state of liminality took on a primary role.

Liminality exists only in “coherent communities” (9) like, for instance, the African villages where Turner’s research was carried out, wherein all members know each other and where all work is carried out towards a common end. Turner’s description of the conditions under which this coherence may flourish leans heavily on Durkheim’s “mechanical solidarity,” in which small, preliterate societies develop powerful bonds of cohesion among members who engage in co-operative, collective action, aimed at the achievement of group goals, and where individuality is seen as unimportant, or worse yet, anti-social (42). Under such conditions, the entire life of the community is dedicated to the divine, such that “the work of men is the work of the gods” (31). What we would now consider to be “leisure time” does not exist; rather, the only meaningful division is between sacred and profane work. And it is work, says Turner, “in which whole communities participate, as of obligation, not optation” (31); the entire community participates in ritual work as much as it does in other forms of labour, even if in ritual it might be either total or representative participation.

In some of its ritual form, however, this communal work takes on what might appear to us to be a ludic dimension, to the point that “in the liminal phases and states of tribal and agrarian cultures…work and play are hardly distinguishable in many cases” (34). Festivals and rituals, as much responsible for the achievement of the community’s goals as tilling and harvesting, were every bit as serious of purpose as their ergic counterparts, and were not carried out merely as leisure or recreational activities. As such, the two realms are so closely related as to be inextricable, each a reflection of and
co-efficient with the other. Both offer means of communion with the divine. As part of
the liminal phase of every ritual in this sort of culture, there must be “an interval,
however brief, of margin or limen, when the past is momentarily negated and suspended,
or abrogated, and the future has not yet begun, and instant of pure potentiality when
everything, as it were, trembles in the balance” (44). If, then, we accept the premise that
even in representative form the entire community participates in ritual activities in these
pre-industrial societies, then in a very real way (and in a way that we can never fully
appreciate or understand, as Bourdieu has warned us) the very fate of the entire
community hangs in the balance of every ritual. The liminal phase of communal ritual is
a communal liminality; no-one’s fate is secure until the conclusion of the rite.

What, then, was an audience member’s experience like in the midst of a liminal
ritual? If Turner is to be believed, the first and most important experience would have
been that of communitas, “an unmediated relationship between historical, idiosyncratic,
concrete individuals” (45). Turner’s work reveals that liminal experiences offer unique
circumstances for the “direct, immediate, and total confrontations of human identities”
(46). The feeling is often fleeting, as much so as is the moment of limen itself and the
subjunctivity it invokes, and it develops as spontaneously. The paradox, for Turner, is
that the intersubjectivity of the liminal offers a more profound subjectivity. “The more
spontaneously ‘equal’ people become,” he writes, “the more distinctively ‘themselves’
they become; the more the same they become socially, the less they find themselves to be
individually” (47). The result is that the liminal is both born of and constitutive of a
sense of loyalty to the highly corporate group to which the community – participants in
the ritual and its audience alike – all belong. The liminal makes no distinction between audience and performers. All are subsumed in *communitas*.

Although he would feel no need to use such explicitly literary terminology, we can see imbricated in Turner’s ideation of “coherent communities” the sort of phenomenology of synecdoche I have described. Without it, that coherence – as well as the liminality and the *communitas* it engenders – would be impossible. So, too, would be the theatrical practice with which we associate these communities, which I argue was the prevalent mode of medieval England.

### 4.3 The Medieval “Theatre”

The claim that the medieval theatre can be understood to embody Turner’s principles is far from new. Nearly every scholar who describes them does so either implicitly or explicitly in these terms. Consider, for example, Lawrence Clopper’s description, typical of the conclusions drawn by most: “All of these activities…bring together groups of people in an untypical relationship that fits, in general, Turner’s sense of *communitas*, that is, one of those anti-structural situations in which there is a greater degree of equality than usual and that has the effect of renewing the society that it temporarily abandons” (125).\(^54\) The case most often talked about, and the one on which I’ll focus in the following paragraphs, is the celebration of Corpus Christi, particularly in York. The connections between this festival and Turner’s work, now nearly a

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\(^54\) For more on this, see Beckwith, Phythian-Adams, James, or Beadle.
commonplace, have been so often made and pored over that we need nothing here but a
brief overview of their mechanics, saving a discussion of content for a moment: first, the
event was communal in the trust sense of the word. The idea of Christ’s body as a
synecdochal model of ontological hermeneutic is understood; in this festival, it was made
manifest. In general, such festivals were “visible means of relating individuals to the
social structure” (Phythian-Adams 59), but through the very mounting of the
performance of the cycle as much as through its text, “natural body and social body
indeed reacted on each other with a closeness which approaches identity” (James 21).

Based on the sheer size of the spectacle, the involvement of guilds either as performers or
as patrons of a particular performance, and of the audience involvement implied by the
route and its stations, it is difficult to imagine many people not participating in the
performance, either as performers or as spectators. Far from attending an event in a
purpose-built theatre, the citizens of York took up places in the very streets and
thoroughfares through which they lived their life, in such a way as to palimpsestically
overlay (or, perhaps, to reveal as foundational substrate) the story of Biblical history –
physically, tangibly – to the very streets of the city, “underlin[ing] further the physical
inescapability of communal involvement” (Phythian-Adams 77). As Mervyn James has
theorized, and as Sarah Beckwith has so fascinatingly demonstrated in practical terms,
the argument and debate over the seeming banalities of the procession route and the
location were among the means by which the festival served as a vehicle for social
definition: the wrangling over these things served to highlight divisions and demarcations
in York as much as their resolution in the day’s “sacramental theatre” served to caulk
them over in the name of communality and group identity: “a sense of wholeness and
participation [was] both represented but more crucially generated by the composite, sacral, and unified body of Christ” (Beckwith 26).

For us to attempt to understand these facts as liminal is – predictably – to fall into the trap set for us by the hysteresis effect, in that it is next to impossible for us to imagine not merely an experience that we have never had, but a very mode of experience itself, and entirely different phenomenology of theatre. The experiences are, to use Kuhn’s terminology, incommensurable. To a modern thinker, the experience of the York cycle might be somewhere between watching a parade and seeing a play in a park rather than in a theatre: the experience is still characterized by the separability of audience from performance, far from the enactment of a synecdochal world.

To attempt to understand the phenomenology of a liminal theatre experience is to call attention to a significant difficulty that plagues any modern discussion of medieval “drama,” that of lexis. Clopper’s important analysis of “drama, play, and game” in the medieval period has excavated many of these problems: the application of modern theatrical terms to medieval texts and documents has the effect of “theatricalising” activities that do not properly belong in that category as we understand it. The words “drama” and “dramatic” do not exist in Middle English. “Theatrum” was used either as a reference to classical practices and conditions, or as a pejorative metonym for debauched and pagan activity associated with them. What we think of as “theatre” was encompassed in the much broader term “ludi,” which – significantly, in terms of my analysis – included a far broader range of activities, such as church ales, wrestling and other sports, various games, singing and music, juggling and acrobatic displays, and the various seasonal festivals that governed the medieval calendar. Where we might “see a
play about Corpus Christi,” a medieval citizen of York might “play Corpus Christi”: the “playing” involves the audience as much as it does the performer, and no distinction is made in the terminology. As “players” begin to take prominence, and further, as they become “actors,” the distinction becomes clearer, and the synecdoche breaks down.

As true as this is for our understanding of the conditions of performance, I suggest that we must read the texts themselves in this light. We are used to thinking of medievals as lovers of analogy, as finding in one thing a representation of another; I have already argued that it is more correct to think of them as reproducing an experience with the world that sees in all things synecdoches of a united whole. In other words, in considering the York cycle (and its ilk), I am suggesting that we examine not a semiotics of theatre but a phenomenology of it. It is more true to life than we might think; as one critic has argued, “while the object of the plays is didactic, their effect is mimetic; more literally than the analyses have allowed, the plays provide a phenomenological account of existence, and…the concepts ‘allegory,’ ‘personified abstraction,’ and ‘universalized type’ do not account for the whole of the medieval experience of the plays” (Schmitt 23).

Any citizen of York, for example, who sat through the entire cycle of the Mystery plays, would see enacted the entire history of Christianity, beginning with the barkers’ enactment of the fall of the angels, through the principal incidents of both the Old Testament and the New. Were the purpose of the drama merely to present a teleology of human history, or to dramatize the biblical past, the day would have ended with the carpenters’ play of the resurrection, but of course it was not, and it did not. Rather, the final scene of the drama is the mercers’ presentation of the last judgment, an event that by definition takes place in the future. As a result, even on the most basic narrative level,
the audience’s present is placed between the chronicled past and the ineluctable future.

This fact is ensured not only by the overall structure of the cycle itself but by the opening of The Last Judgment itself: it opens with no less a figure than God himself taking the stage, reminding the audience of his benevolence in having created the world, of man’s ingratitude reflected in original sin, and of the infinity of his mercy as evidenced by Christ’s sacrifice; still, exhausted by man’s sinfulness, “The time is come [he] will make end” (l. 64).

The play goes further, however, in its interpella

tion of its audience. God instructs his angels to blow their trumpets, calling each creature to gaze upon Christ’s five wounds and to face judgment. The angels are instructed as follows:

Sunder them before my sight,
All sam in bliss shall they not be.
My blessed children, as I have hight,
On my right hand I shall them see;
Sithen shall ilka waried wight
On my left side for fearedness flee.
This day these dooms thus have I dight
To ilka man as he hath served me. (l. 73-80)

This is played out on stage, as the characters of 1 and 2 Good Soul and 1 and 2 Bad Soul would likely speak from these positions. The likelihood that they would take up positions at ground level, however, among the audience, offers an embodiment of the traditional iconography of the scene, with God and his angels (and, by scene’s end, Christ) above, and humankind below; audience members are physically placed in the
scene, and are forced to consider their placement physically and morally as well as temporally: “this will happen,” the play insists. “Where will you be when it does?”

Likewise, when Christ takes the stage with his apostles at line 177, and addresses himself to them and to the Good and Bad souls, he is addressing the audience, as well. His suggestions that “here may ye see my wounds wide” (245), or “all this I suffered for thy sake” (275), are aimed squarely at the off-stage audience, as is his closing “now is fulfilled all my forethought” (374). While the cycle presents the redemptive history of the world as past, then, it squarely places every member of its audience in the moving flow of eschatological time. It resists any effort to distinguish between calendrical time and the divine clock; they are, the play insists, one and the same. If a year has passed since the last performance, then each member of the audience is a year closer to judgment, and to his or her being called to account.

As V.A. Kolve has exhaustively and compellingly argued, it is not enough to say that medieval dramatists took advantage of certain techniques available to them in order to achieve these effects; rather, these were “mimetic modes invented in response to the Christian story that called formal drama into being” (8). In other words, drama did not evolve from preceding forms in England, but rather was invented in precisely the form that it was, so as to dramatize in precisely the way that it does, precisely the story that it does. In such a conception, no element of the drama can be dismissed as coincidental: scenes showing Christ’s earthly parents judged in an English court, depicting Christ himself adored by English shepherds and killed by English louts, his tomb guarded by Cornish soldiers are all part of the plays’ “mimetic” representation of the state of
Christianity (113-4): the plays, and the eschatological time in which they placed their audiences, took place there, in England.

As I’ve suggested, then, the medieval love of figuration must be seen as more mimetic than literary. The cycle plays present figures like Abraham and Noah as types of Christ, suggesting the repetition of his story over and over in history as prelude to the crucifixion; this emphasis on “figures and their fulfillment” is for Kolve evidence of a medieval “mimesis of total human time” (99). “Though the figures recede,” he argues, “they are never wholly lost from sight. Every moment is charged with memories of the past and expectations of the future; thereby we discover order and unity in a drama that tells several stories, each separate and apparently discontinuous, which span all human time…Form and meaning become one” (84). In this view, the drama has not merely the effect, but the intention, of placing its audiences squarely in the midst of the unfolding of biblical events, there and then, of shocking them from their quotidian complacency and into awareness of themselves as embedded in time, as involved in events that will conclude with them on God’s left hand or on his right, surely and inescapably. These events are types of their lives, as well.

Kolve’s work is suggestive of a larger reality about the medieval experience with drama, incommensurably one that is nearly impossible – thanks to hysteresis – for us to imagine, but one that I suggest is absolutely fundamental to any attempt to understand it, or to evaluate it from the perspective of periodization. English drama evolved from its roots in communal ritual as a mean of interpellating its audience into the Christian mysteries that were in the process of unfolding around them. There were no second causes; there was immanence. Eschatological time was not understood to be different
from calendrical time, and the Bible narrative, figured by types past and future, was not merely analogical: Englishmen and Englishwomen were, in ways real and tangible to them, actors in it. In this way, the medieval propensity to infinitize is also more than merely analogical: it is mimetic. As we’ve seen, medieval authors used the first-person to describe experiences that were not strictly speaking their own; Kolve observes that in *Everyman*, the titular character is referred to in both the singular and the plural, interchangeably (“Everyman and the Parable of the Talents” 328). The distinction between “man” and “a man” that we would make today was not a concern in an age when everything was immanent in everything else, and when experience was – in a real way – common to all. As Carolly Erickson suggests, and as I’ve had frequent occasion to demonstrate, “it was a cultural habit to endow individual things with multiple identities” (qtd in Schmitt 31); this applied to the experience of drama, as well.

In short, the governing mode of medieval thought – and drama – was that of synecdoche, a condition necessary to liminal theatre. As we’ve seen, individuation at the level of ego was a post-Reformation development, but I argue that it was concomitant with a theatrical counterpart. And if to be medieval is to be synecdochally, then to be early modern is to be metaphorically: in the former case, one thing IS all things, and all things ARE one thing, inseparably, while in the latter, one thing points to one thing, or represents one thing, or is symbolized by another thing, however faithfully or accurately. But it is not that thing. To hearken back to language I have used earlier, if the former is an “ethic of integrity” and the latter an “ethic of difference,” then it would be valuable, I am arguing, to conceive of the medieval theatre as authentic and its successor as sincere, and to attempt to position it, just as we have done with human ontology, in the midst of a
process of periodization. And if the liminal theatre represents the transcendent, there must be a model to accompany individuation, one characterized by the presence of boundaries and separation. Turner calls this form of experience the “liminoid.”

4.4 The Liminoid Theatre

In the operations of the liminality of ritual, Turner discovered significant differences between those cultures which developed before the Industrial Revolution and those which developed afterwards, differences so significant that the term “liminal” could not be applied to both. In this light, what was so called in pre-industrial societies he named “liminoid” in their more modernized counterparts. I will spend some time and effort to outline the distinctions between the two, because it is against the backdrop of the movement from the former to the latter that I place the professionalization of the English theatre in the 16th century.

I have described the “coherent communities” that I associate with medieval England and elsewhere. In industrialized cultures, however, conditions are strikingly different. With a person’s “work” now set apart from other activities, ludic pursuits now take place in free time “arbitrarily separated by managerial fiat from the time of ‘labour’” (Turner 33); society has ceased to govern its activities by means of common ritual obligations, with some activities becoming a matter of individual choice. Optation replaces obligation. The performance of ritual – which in this case leads to the professionalization of theatre, as we’ll see – takes on an ergic dimension: there is an “entertainment industry” (39). Without the sense of shared purpose, without the
perception of urgency and necessity about ritual, the liminality is converted into a state far more anodyne; if it is less atavistic, it is also less potent.

Rather than liminal, such experiences are “liminoid.” Turner is quite specific about the many differences between the two. Where liminal experiences are shared by tribal, agrarian societies which operate in “mechanical solidarity,” liminoid societies are post-industrial, where work has become a commodity and individuals are bonded by contractual relations. The liminal experience is collective, and concerned with calendrical and biological rhythms; the liminoid is more often individually produced, and is continuously generated rather than following a cyclical pattern. The liminal is central to all aspects of community life, representing a necessary subjunctivity, whereas its liminoid descendant stands apart from central economic and political processes (at least explicitly) and exists interstitially between institutions. Liminal experiences provide a common meaning for all members of the group, whereas the liminoid are more idiosyncratic, coming from individuals or groups and offered for sale as ludic commodities on the free market (53-4). Liminal activities usually invert, but seldom subvert, the status quo; “reversal underlines to a community that chaos is the alternative to cosmos, so they’d better stick to cosmos…but supposedly ‘entertainment’ genres of industrialized society are often subversive, satirizing, lampooning, burlesquing, or subtly putting down the central values of the basic, work-sphere society” (41).

Although he is insistent that the Industrial Revolution provides the impetus for the social changes necessary to transmute the liminal to the liminoid, Turner – like Weber before him in The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism – finds their roots in Calvinist Reformation theology. With the Calvinist dedication to vocation, service to
God was a matter of dedication to one’s work; “‘work’ became sacred, de facto, as the arena in which one’s salvation might be objectively demonstrated…the Calvinists wanted ‘no more cakes and ale’ – or other festival foods that belonged to the work and play of the gods. What they wanted was ascetic dedication to the mainline economic enterprise” (39). Of all places on earth, surely the creation of a professional theatre by social forces stemming from the Calvinist Reformation must apply to England, and of all time periods, surely it must apply to the 1590s.

What I am suggesting is that the medieval theatre, in all its forms, was fairly close to what Turner describes as liminal, while the Globe took on all the characteristics of the liminoid. And in the liminoid mode, removed from the context of the ritual, theatrical experience is individualized, both in the sense that the author who “creates” it is known and exalted, and in the sense that the optative audience participates as a group of individuals. It is as individuals that members of an audience assign meaning to a play, an operation of semiotics and not of synecdoche.

4.5 Transubstantiation

In one mode, which I associate with the liminal experience of theatre, the “play” is seen as synecdoche of life as a whole; in its counterpart, it stands as a symbol or a metaphor. The distinction, I argue, is far more than semantic. The adjustment in theatre from the phenomenological experience of synecdoche to that of analogy is a movement that had deep and profound implications. To attempt to understand the distinction between the two, I’d like to approach it from a couple of perspectives.
First, consider the post-Reformation question of transubstantiation. To reformers, the Catholic mass was nothing but theatre, and the priests glorified actors. The transubstantiation – the doctrine that the consecrated host embodies “Christ whole and entire…present in the sacrament with His Flesh and Blood, Body and Soul, Humanity and Divinity” (Catholic Encyclopedia “Real Presence”), all the while maintaining the physical accidents of bread and wine – was, for them, the pinnacle of popish stagecraft. So dismissive of the doctrine were they that the English reformers wrote their disdain for it into the 39 Articles of the Church of England in 1563, insisting that it “cannot be proved by Holy Writ, but it is repugnant to the plain words of Scripture, overthroweth the nature of a sacrament, and hath given occasion to many superstitions.” The eucharist was, they maintained, a metaphor, wherein the bread and wine were metaphorical representations of Christ’s sacrifice, and (as Zwingli argued in the early 16th century) their consumption was to be nothing more than a memorial of the Last Supper; the furthest thing from the Catholic “totality of presence.”

The debate over the nature of the eucharist stretches back into the medieval period. In 1059 century, Berengar of Tours denied any material change in the elements of the bread and wine, and was forced to recant by the Vatican, and to mouth the belief that “the bread and wine which are laid on the altar are after consecration not only a sacrament but also the true body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, and they are physically taken up and broken in the hands of the priests, and crushed by the teeth of the faithful, not only sacramentally but in truth” (qtd in Beckwith 60). This did not settle the matter, of course, as Berengar’s position was restated as the 4th Conclusion of the Lollards in 1395:
The Sacrament of bread induces all men but a few to idolatry, for they ween that Christ’s body, that never shall out of heaven, by virtue of the priest’s word should be essentially closed in a little bread, that they show to the people. But would God that they would believe that the doctor Evangelicus\textsuperscript{55} says in his Trialogue, 

\textit{quod panis materialis est habitudinaliter Corpus Christi.}\textsuperscript{56} For we suppose that on this wise may every true woman and man in God’s law make the sacrament of the bread without any such miracle.

There is much at stake in the Lollard and Reformer objection to the transubstantiation: the doctrine of \textit{multilocatio}, that Christ can be fully present in many places at once, is clearly disputed, and the imbuing of the word of a priest with the sort of power that might be necessary to enact such a transformation is treated with an abiding suspicion. But perhaps what is most notable about the Lollard objection to the Catholic belief is the evident scorn at the idea that a “little bread” could be anything more than what it appears to be. Instead, they insist on a representative relationship: the host is what it is, and it is a metaphor for something else, with the acts of representation and of interpretation taking place in the mind of the individual. The notion that it could be both itself and something else at the same time is, to them, risible. And yet this is precisely what the Catholic doctrine insisted was the case, “not only sacramentally but in truth.”

That the objections of Berengar and the Lollards, so long suppressed, could finally be enshrined in law, then, is not merely representative of a shift in theological tradition, but of something far more profound. In the words of Beckwith, “the idea that a

\textsuperscript{55} Wycliffe

\textsuperscript{56} “The material bread is the body of Christ by a convention of speech.”
sign could be a mere sign could arise only in a radically changed intellectual climate, a climate stressing causality rather than participation” (60). And if I quibble with Beckwith’s characterization of the change as existing solely in the intellectual plane, I concur wholeheartedly with her assessment of the change as “radical,” for it is the same radicality as we saw in the “radical reflexivity” suggested by Charles Taylor as fundamental to the development of the individuated sense of self. And it is, I argue, the same radicality we see in the transformation of the liminal theatre.

Little wonder, then, that when Donne speaks of “theatre” he does so not in terms of plays on stages, but in the context of a strikingly synecdochal phenomenology. For Donne, “our Theatre” here on earth, “the place where we sit and see [God], is the whole world, the whole house and frame of nature” (Sermons VII 220). To live on earth is, after a fashion, to live life from a theatre seat: “the world is the Theatre that represents God, and ever where every man may, nay must see him” (224). To live as a spectator in God’s Theatre, though, is not a passive experience. Every spectator plays a part in the performance:

Hath god made this world his theatre, \textit{ut exibeatur ludus deborum}, that man may represent God in his conversation; and wilt thou play no part but think that thou only wast made to pass thy time merrily and to be the only spectator upon this Theatre? Is the world a great and harmonious Organ where all parts are playd and all play parts; and must thou only sit idle and hear it? Is everybody else made to be a Member, and to do some real office for the sustentation of this great Body, this World, and wilt thou only be no member of this body? (Sermons 1.25)
To be a part of God’s theatre of synecdoche, for Donne, is to act and to be acted upon, all as part of a community in the all-encompassing divine. God’s volitional materialism is the agent by which a sense of unity is achieved, and by which all the faithful are compelled through action to revitalize it. To sunder oneself from the great communal drama is to render oneself powerless in the face of one’s own ruination. Donne’s sermons, as well as his art, are deeply immersed in this sort of sight, and invest themselves in inviting his audience to partake in it.

Just as unsurprising is the diametrical opposition of Francis Bacon to this position. When describing “idola theatri” as one of the four principal kinds of error plaguing the scientific investigation of the day, it is because he sees philosophical dogma and faulty demonstration as “so many stage plays creating fictitious and imaginary worlds” (Novum Organum 56); in short, as signifiers without signifieds. Masques and triumphs are, for him, “but toys” (Essays 175), and as for jousts and tournaments “the glories of them are chiefly in the chariots wherein the challengers make their entry, especially as they be drawn by strange beasts, as lions, bears, camels, and the like” (176). Suffice it to say that Bacon remained staunchly unmoved by the ludic as a general category.

Anthony Dawson has attempted to place theatrical experience in the context of this debate. For him, the central theological analogs to the theatre revolve around the question of the extent to which participants in the Eucharist are “participants” in the real presence of Christ. Citing Richard Hooker’s contention that the Eucharist is “instrumentally a cause of that mystical participation” between Christ and his people
(25), he argues that the Protestant belief that Christ is present both literally and figuratively in the Eucharist in the person of the believer provides a ready-made system of thought by which the theatre could function as a ritual “both secular and communal” (26).

Paul Yachnin’s response to Dawson’s argument, one that fascinatingly uses Donne as its test case, rejects wholesale the idea that religious or dogmatic dispute could in any way inform theatre-going. He maintains that the theatre is “a sphere apart from the religious ‘habits of thought’ of the period” (*The Culture of Playgoing* 38), and that Donne likely attended plays “to escape theological controversies and religious habits of thought altogether,” (39). Donne, he says, was unlikely to have “found at the playhouse anything more than the religious ‘habits of thought’ that he already possessed to great excess” (39). 57

This debate is of primary interest to me not because I have chosen sides, but because the two positions represent the poles of the movement I have been describing. Dawson’s playgoer experiences the world (and the theatre) somewhat porously, in the sense that the “habits of thought” that govern his spectatorship are rooted largely in a phenomenology of transcendence: he is open to the infinite, and it takes up residence in him, as it does in others, and through this shared experience they create a sense of community, even if it is only for the two hours’ traffic of a stage. 58 For Yachnin’s

57 Yachnin invokes Donne because his friend Richard Baker referred to the young poet as “a great visitor of ladies, [and] a great frequenter of Playes” (qtd 38), and because he argues that Donne likely pursued the two activities to the same end: pleasure. Perhaps, though, Bacon would have been a better exemplar of the kind of argument that he seeks to make.

58 I’ll discuss Dawson’s ideation of the communality of theatrical experience in more detail below.
playgoer, a spectacle is a commodity to be consumed, and nothing more, carried out for the frisson of “recreational pleasure” (38), an experience that begins and ends with the individual. It is the pastime of a self interested in itself, in pursuing its own needs and wants.

The trouble, however, is that while neither position is entirely incorrect, neither on its own captures what must have been an incredibly diverse range of approaches to theatre in the period. If the kind of co-presence that I am describing did exist, and if different people had different senses of the boundaries that might (or might not) have existed between each other and the world around them, and if the period is, as Shuger has suggested, primarily characterized by the thickening of these boundaries, then we cannot assume that either end of the spectrum was “typical” of a theatregoer at the time. Essex and Bacon inevitably sat in the same audience at a play. It is not inconceivable that Donne and Bacon might have shared a performance. These men, I am arguing, would have seen the same thing and responded to it in completely different ways, just as Kuhn has shown to be the case among scientists at various points in history; that such a thing is possible is certainly attributable on a small scale to aesthetics and to taste, but I position the disparities in the larger context of the movement I’ve been examining, and to suggest that we ascribe them a deeper significance.

4.6 The Tudor Play of Mind: Theatrical Analogy and the End of Power
It is not hard to find evidence of the process of transition from one mode to the other in the 16th century. To open his influential work on *The Tudor Play of Mind*, Joel Altman juxtaposes two works by Henry Medwall: *Nature* and *Fulgens and Lucre*. The former is a typical morality play, where the hero Man is tempted by the Vices led by Worldly Affections, and protected by Innocence. The latter is a rhetorical inquiry into the true nature of nobility, in which the Roman lady Lucre is wooed by Cornelius, a wealthy nobleman of distinguished ancestry, and by Gaius, a commoner who has earned praise for his goodness and public service. The plot of the play, including Lucre’s choice, is revealed by the prologue, with the result that “it is apparent that the central interest for the audience will be the manner in which the conclusion is reached” (Altman 19). For Altman, the two plays are evidence of two theatrical paradigms, the “demonstrative” and the “explorative.” Where the energies of the former are devoted to explanation, the latter’s aim at discovery. In the former, the aim is to “represent…the prevailing realities of the outside world,” while the latter remains “ethically neutral” (19). The difference, according to Altman, is that Medwall is “exercising a different intellectual muscle” (20), beginning with “observable data” rather than in “generalization” (20). Altman goes on to divide the drama of the first third of the 16th century along these lines, with such works as *Everyman* and *Magnyfycence* joining Nature under the banner of “demonstrative” theatre as plays which “primarily show,” while the tendency of the “explorative” paradigm to “primarily ask” is represented by such works as *The Four PP*.

Altman explains the transition as stemming from the humanist rhetorical practice of *controversia*, an academic exercise designed to prepare an orator to argue a legal
matter, later to become an entertainment in the early Roman Empire (28). He goes on to posit this as microcosmic of a larger relationship between rhetorical training and Tudor drama. This Aristotelian form of rhetorical inquiry, he argues at great length, “inspired and gave shape to a large body of Elizabethan drama” (2). I do not wish to engage with this thesis or its argument, although I find it compelling. What I would like to do, however, is to thicken a little our understanding of Medwall’s exercise of a “different intellectual muscle.” There is no doubt, I think, that the plays differ in their intent as much as in their dramaturgy. But it is not simply that an intellectual ability, heretofore lying dormant in the human mind, was of a sudden flexed and brought to life. Something more fundamental is taking place, a transition to which Altman’s work stands witness.

In Chapter 1, I cited M.E. Chenu’s investigation of the 12th-century Renaissance, in which dramatically changing social and economic conditions led to a shift in social consciousness: the natural world was, for a time, secularized. As Chenu suggests, man “rid himself of the childish fancies of animism and of the habit of seeing divinity in the marvels of nature. The sacred realm which he secularized by this process no longer possessed any properly religious value for him” (39). As a result, the works of human hands began to be seen as separate and distinct not only from the natural world from which they were sourced, but also from the divinity that imbued every particle of it. Although Chenu does not use the term, what he describes is a movement away from synecdoche as a controlling figure for phenomenological experience. Once this change is effected, no longer would, say, a rood and a tree and a cross and an ark be substantively the same thing — and the same thing as their observer, in some ways — but one might represent another; in short, synecdoche gives way to metaphor. This is the
same process by which the host moved from “divine presence” to “piece of bread,” and by which nature moved from Donne’s “divine immanence” to Bacon’s “superstition.”

By way of Turner, this is precisely what we see evidence of in the theatrical movement described by Altman; *Fulgens and Lucres*, as the first purely secular English drama, is best seen in the same light as the “works” of 12th-century artisans and as the Catholic host, as post-dating synecdochal phenomenology and representing something separate from its creator and consumer. In *Nature*, as I suggested in discussing the liminal theatre of the medieval period, the character Man is, in a mimetic and phenomenological way, man.\(^{59}\) In *Fulgens and Lucres*, the characters are different qualities possessed and cultivated by men and women, and they debate ideas and positions arrived at by men and women: in effect, they are self-fashioning. If Medwall can be described here as “exercising a different intellectual muscle,” then the presence of the muscle is new, and it is a product of the beginnings of the movement away from the liminal theatre. I am not, I hasten to point out, suggesting that *Fulgens and Lucres* is an example of liminoid drama. Far from it: the play was written for a particular audience (the household and guests of Lambeth Palace, possibly), and acted by some of its members (the prospect of Thomas More being one of the cast is delicious). It would have taken place in the great hall of the house, where entrances and exits would have been made through the same doorways as had been used by the guests; nor was there any attempt to imaginatively transport the audience. The play opens with the recognition of its setting:

\(^{59}\) Really, “humankind,” of course.
For Goddis will,
What meane ye, syrs, to stond so still?
Have not ye etyn and your fill
And payd no thinge therfore?
Iwys, syrs, thus dare I say,
He that shall for the shott pay
Vouch saveth that ye largely assay
Suche mete as he hath in store.
I trowe your disshes be not bare,
Nor yet ye do the wyne spare,
Therfore be mery as ye fare.
Ye ar welcome echeoon
Unto this house withoute faynynge.(1.1-13)

And, famously, the prologue’s speakers identified only as “A” and “B” are believed to have come from among the dinner guests; in short, while it is certainly not of the same ilk as was Nature, there is still a sense of communitas evoked by the performance, and it still bears many of the hallmarks of the liminal. That Medwall wrote both plays makes it strikingly clear that the liminal did not give way to the liminoid overnight; rather, there is a long period of co-presence and of hysteresis, in which both models of theatre exist side by side (although without, perhaps, the incommensurability that has plagued some of our other paradigm shifts) for quite some time. As Clopper notes, “a history of the drama that ignores the persistence of medieval drama in the 16th century is an intellectual scam to maintain a distinction between us, we moderns, and them, those medieval people”
(269). I have no interest in being party to such a scam. But, as I have suggested a similar doubling of the 16th-century understanding of human subjectivity, I am very interested in exploring the co-existence of these two models of theatre, and ultimately, towards understanding Essex in light of the dichotomy.

4.7 The Power of the Theatre

For Altman, the transition to the explorative mode of drama made possible what he calls the “moral cultivation of ambivalence,” whereby Tudor moralists were trained to examine argue issues in utramque partem, from both sides, as a means of weighing and balancing the moral implications on all side of potentially thorny ethical dilemmae. As much as it appears as “a mode of theological speculation and even of scientific investigation,” Altman argues that arguing both sides of the question was also used as a means of political inquiry and, often, of “political hedging” (32). In dramatic terms, this bears a striking resemblance to what Paul Yachnin (citing Annabel Patterson) has called “functional ambiguity” (“The Powerless Theatre” 50). In Yachnin’s analysis, the idea of theatre as having power, current during the early and middle Tudor period, “diminished considerably during the late Elizabethan and entire Jacobean period,” tending to be replaced with the idea that “the theatre was powerless” (50). They keystone of this transition was the understanding – cultivated by playwrights – that “drama was perceived to be separate from real life, []because play was perceived to be separate from power”
The movement away from the phenomenology of synecdoche, then, from the liminal theatre, is concomitant with the movement of theatre away from the potency of theatre.

That the liminal theatre possessed a power to shape and channel social forces is undeniable. Implied by Turner’s very definitions is the sense that this power is part of what makes the liminal liminal: while there is no doubt that *communitas* born of theatrical ritual flows from the solidarity of the community, it also builds it, with the result that the two form a sort of closed loop, each creating and created by the other, with theatre acting as a conduit giving each a form and a direction. James has described the ways in which “the opposites of social wholeness and social differentiation could be both affirmed and also brought into a creative tension, the one with the other” (17). This conflict, he argues, “strengthened the need for participation and support,” meaning that “the process of incorporation into the social body needed to be continually reaffirmed, and the body itself continually recreated” (23). Phythian-Adams argues that “ceremony obviously helped to transform the formal constitution of the city into some sort of social reality” (63), suggesting that “the significance of all these practices lay not in the ways in which social tensions were haphazardly released, but in the methods by which they were controlled” (68).

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60 This notion, of course, runs counter to many new historicist equations of theatre and power. The performance of February 7, 1601 – in particular, the indifference it seems to have evoked in audience members and authorities alike – has been used by both Barroll and Yachnin to demonstrate with force that such traditionally accepted narratives of the theatre as possessed of political potency are, while romantically appealing, deeply troubled. As Yachnin observes, not a single prominent poet or playwright during the reigns of Elizabeth or James was prosecuted for libel, while non-literary writers often faced harsh restraint and punishment. The conspirators, it seems, are not the only ones guilty of misconstruing the power of the theatre, at least in 1601.
As Turner has shown, what lends an immediacy to these events, what makes them liminal, is the investment of the participants (and in this I include both audience and performers, a distinction not made in truly liminal events) in the outcome of the ritual: nothing is certain until and unless the ritual is completed.\(^{61}\) I suggest that this is only possible in the case of the phenomenology of synecdoche I have been describing. Once that begins to shift, in concert with the various other manifestations of habitus that we have seen, the liminal begins to transform to the liminoid, and the power invested in ritual begins to wane. In sum, the forces that beget individuation and self-fashioning also begin to press the theatre to the liminoid realm, and a hysteretic vestige of one process will be left behind in the other.

It makes sense, then, that the early moments of the transition saw not only a belief in the power of theatre, but an attempt to take advantage of it. Martin Bucer, for example, writes in 1551 that theatre, so long as it is composed by “men schooled in the knowledge of Christ’s Kingdom,” is “not without value in increasing piety” (De Honestis Ludis 329). And as John Foxe wrote in 1562, “Players, Printers, and Preachers be set up of God as a triple Bulwark against the triple crown of the Pope, to bring him down” (Acts and Monuments IV 57). It also makes sense that, as Clopper observes, there was an “almost total absence of an anti-theatrical polemic in the late Middle Ages” (1); if the words “drama” and “dramatic” did not exist in Middle English, and if the concept to which they now refer was not even an inkling, little wonder that there was no opposition to the “theatre.” It is only when the theatre begins to exist as separate from the rest of

\(^{61}\) Should this not be the case, and should the outcome be a certainty, and should the steps be followed out of mere formality, then Turner identifies this as ceremony rather than ritual, and accords it no liminality.
“living” – when, to belabour the rather obvious point – it becomes liminoid – that anyone could be opposed to it (or, for that matter, could support it).

Little wonder that as Yachnin points out, the language of both pro- and anti-theatricalists in the latter 16th century focuses on the same thing, namely the effects of plays on audiences. A typical, if bombastic, example are the famous admonitions of John Northbrooke:

In their playes you shall learne all things that appertayne to craft, mischiefe, deceytes and filthinesse, etc. If you will learne how to bee false and deceyue your husbandes, or husbandes their wyves, howe to playe the harlottes, to obtayne one's loue, howe to ravise, howe to beguyle, howe to betraye, to flatter, lye, sweare, forswere, howe to allure to whoredome, howe to murther, howe to poyson, howe to disobey and rebell against princes, to consume treasures prodigally, to moove to lustes, to ransacke and spoyle cities and townes, to bee idle, to blaspheme, to sing filthie songs of love, to speak filthily, to be prowde, howe to mock, scoff and deryde any nation …shall you not learne, then, at such enterludes howe to practise them? (Chambers 198-9)

Likewise, Gosson insists that plays “stirre up affections, and affections are naturally planted in that part of the minde that is common to us with brute beasts” (Chambers 217). Thomas Elyot smartly observes that “if the vices in [comedies] expressed shulde be the cause that myndes of the reders shulde be corrupted: than by the same argumente not only entreludes in englisshe, but also sermons, wherein some vice is declared, shulde be to the beholders and herers like occasion to encrease sinners” (The Governour, qtd in Chambers 187). In the same way, Udall insists in his Prologue to Ralph Roister Doister
that there is “nothing more commendable for a man’s recreation / Than Mirth which is
used in an honest fashion” (188), and Heywood argues that the theatre “hath power to
new-mold the harts of the spectators, and fashion them to the shape of any noble and
notable” example” (251).

The authorities, for their part, seem monumentally unmoved by this rhetoric on
either side. As long as a play did not “declare or speak anything in the derogation,
depraving, or despising of the [Book of Common Prayer], or of anything therein
contained,” and as long as it was not a performance in which “either matters of religion
or of the governaunce of the estate of the common weale shall be handled or treated”
(Chambers 263), members of Elizabeth’s administration seemed singularly unimpressed.
Instead, they framed their acquiescence to the theatre as a sort of job-creation program
(the Privy Council agreed in 1581 that players had “noe other meanes to sustayne them,
their wyves, and children but their exercise of playing, and were only brought up from
their youthe in the practice and profession of musicke and playing” (284)) and their
discomfiture as concern with the unregulated gathering of large and combustible masses
of malcontents (as the Lord Mayor complained to Walsingham in 1583, plays drew
“greate multitudes of the basest sort of people; and many enfected with sores running on
them” (294)).

62

62 With the stunning indifference of local and national authorities to the pro- and anti-theatrical rhetoric in
mind, I find it hard to credit either side with any real influence. Future historians, for instance, might look
back on our time period and find the remarks of Kurt Anderson that Sesame Street’s puppets “Bert and
Ernie conduct themselves in the same loving, discreet way that millions of gay men, women and hand
puppets do. They do their jobs well and live a splendidly settled life together in an impeccably decorated
cabinet” (The Real Thing 88); at least, says Andersen, “they don’t flaunt their gayness.” They might find,
among the musings of American journalist Buck Wolf, a chapter luridly entitled “Ernie and Bert’s
Forbidden Love: Muppet Pals Deny Sex Rumours” (The Wolf Files 42). They might find fundamentalist
Christian preacher Joseph Chambers’ radio rant that “Bert and Ernie are two grown men sharing a house
The rhetoric, at any rate, suggests the problem of interpretation. When a work is performed as a ritual, as a synecdochic element in a liminal experience, it needs no interpretation: its meaning is in its performance, generated as much by the act and conditions of its mounting as by any content within it. Removed from this frame of reference, however, and existing on its own, it becomes subject to rhetorical interpretation and inquiry, just as did nature in Baconian investigation. The movement to semiotics is a fragmentation of signification that runs parallel to the ontological pulverization that we have seen over the first two chapters.

This is the transition to which I believe Altman refers (although implicitly and never explicitly) in *The Tudor Play of Mind*, and is one of the pitfalls of the cultivation of “functional ambiguity” to which Yachnin refers. Jonson, for example, decries the “invading interpreters…[who] utter their own virulent malice under other men’s simplest

and a bedroom. They share clothes, eat and cook together and have blatantly effeminate characteristics. In one show Bert teaches Ernie how to sew. In another they tend plants together. If this isn't meant to represent a homosexual union, I can't imagine what it's supposed to represent.” They might find the cover of the *New Yorker* magazine from July 8, 2013 celebrating the decision of the Supreme Court of the United States to overturn the Defence of Marriage Act, which depicts Ernie and Bert snuggling, looking at an image of the members of the court on television. They might find the Sesame Workshop’s statement that “Bert and Ernie, who've been on Sesame Street for 25 years, do not portray a gay couple, and there are no plans for them to do so in the future. They are puppets, not humans. Like all the Muppets created for Sesame Street, they were designed to help educate preschoolers. Bert and Ernie are characters who help demonstrate to children that despite their differences, they can be good friends.” They might find a petition on the website <change.org>, signed by nearly 11,000 people, that urged the show’s creators to “Let Bert and Ernie Get Married on Sesame Street.” They might find the weary response from the show’s creators that “Bert and Ernie are best friends. They were created to teach preschoolers that people can be good friends with those who are very different from themselves. Even though they are identified as male characters and possess many human traits and characteristics… they remain puppets, and do not have a sexual orientation,” and the exasperated remarks of Sesame Workshop President Gary Knell that “They are not gay, they are not straight. They are puppets. They don't exist below the waist.” We could forgive these future scholars – even as we might commend their archival research – for imagining that anyone cared about any of this. But we know that scarcely anyone does, and that those that do, exist far out on the fringes.
meanings” (qtd in Yachnin 57). Greville destroyed all traces of his dramatization of Antony and Cleopatra, or fear that it might have been misconstrued as “personating…vices in the present Governors and government” (Life of Sidney 156). In an earlier chapter I described the medieval tendency to “infinitize”, to read everything as though it extended on to the limitless size that can only be understood through synecdoche. Removed from this phenomenology, the analogical cognate is topical allegorization, where a fictional character might stand in for a real person, but the experiences are entirely different.

For Yachnin, the most “brilliant critique of the idea of the powerful theatre” takes place in Hamlet, centring around the performance of The Murder of Gonzago. Hamlet believed, says Yachnin, that “the passionate univocality of the theatre has the capacity to galvanize a diverse audience” (57) into unity. But this univocality soon fractures into cacophony when Hamlet and Horatio’s interpretation of the play is shown to differ (or, perhaps not) from that of Claudius, and again from that of Gertrude, Rosencrantz, and Guildenstern. In presenting the inability of the theatre conclusively to mean any one thing, the play within a play “suggests that a theatre which has no control over what it means is in no position to be able to influence its audience toward any particular political viewpoint” (58).

I suggest a complement to Yachnin’s argument, one that places it more in the context of mine. I’d like to consider Twelfth Night in its religious context, and to argue that the play uses its engagement with Pauline eschatology to attempt to create an

63 This is particularly useful in the context of my argument because Greville’s fear was that the play would be deemed pro-Essex.
experience that we might identify as liminal, and that it does so by attempting to emphasize the phenomenological at the expense of the semiotic. Several critics have noted the peculiar religious undertones to the play (see Knapp, Hamilton, and Lewalski, for example). Although, as Hamilton notes, the play does display “its connection to the issues of religious controversy with a disarming playfulness” (86), there is little doubt that the connection exists. I call attention, though, to a very specific intertextual engagement: I suggest that Feste bears a striking resemblance to the “fool” that is described St Paul in 1 Corinthians.

For Paul, the fundamental mystery of the Christian faith is a foolish one. It is not hard to see why: an all-powerful god allowing himself to be tried, convicted, tortured, and executed in the most painful and publicly humiliating way possible is, at best, puzzling. Paul suggests some of the difficulties in preaching this gospel to other communities: “the Iewes require a signe, and the Grecians seeke after wisdom. But we preach Christ crucified; unto the Iewes euen a stumbling blocke, and unto the Grecians, foolishnesse” (1:22-23). Of course, this inversion is the key to Paul’s transition from “carnall” to “spiritual” knowledge, because it represents a divine wisdom that flies in the face of earthly logic. The fact that God demonstrates his strength through the “weakness” of his son becomes word in the preaching of this “foolish” doctrine, re-enacted each time it is preached. Inversion becomes more than merely a cyclical indulgence; it is rather the linchpin of God’s earthly kingdom, wherein “God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, and God hath chosen the weak things of the world, to confound the mighty things, And vile things of the world and things which are despised, hath God chosen, and things which are not, to bring to nought
things that are” (1:27-28). Far from merely preaching a “foolish” doctrine, however, Paul and the other apostles become fools themselves:

For I think that God hath set forth us the last Apostles, as men appointed to death; for we are made a gazingstock unto the world, and to the Angels, and to men. We are fools for Christ’s sake, and ye are wise in Christ; we are weak, and ye are strong; ye are honorable, and we are despised. Unto this hour we both hunger, and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwelling place; And labor, working with our own hands; we are reviled, and yet we bless; we are persecuted, and suffer it. We are evil spoken of, and we pray; we are made as the filth of the world, the offscouring of all things, unto this time. (4:9-13)

For Paul, it is the apostolic willingness not merely to speak foolishly, but to become a “fool for Christ’s sake” that lies at the heart of his apostolic potential.

Paul is careful not to equate foolishness with a lack of knowledge — “I would not haue you ignorant,” he says in12:1 — but rather with a conscious choice. Feste is quite open about having made such a choice, warning Olivia that “cucullus non facit monachum — that’s as much as to say that I wear not motley in my brain” (1.5.51-53), a fact astutely observed by Viola in strikingly Pauline terms:

This fellow is wise enough to play the fool,
And to do that well craves a kind of wit.
He must observe their mood upon whom he jests,
The quality of persons, and the time,
And like the haggard, check at every feather
That comes before his eye. This is a practice
As full of labour as a wise man’s art,
For folly that he wisely shows is fit,
But wise men, folly fall’n, quite taint their wit. (3.1.59-67)

For the theologian Victor Furnish, the central feature of 1 Corinthians is “the eschatological character of life in Christ” (34), in response to a community wherein the hope of eternal life “had been or was in danger of being given up by a fair number of people” (34). He describes a world wherein the salvation of humanity has already begun thanks to the crucifixion, but that “the kingdom of God” (1 Cor 4:20) has not yet arrived; this reflects a dual life in Christ, characterized by an “already but not yet” mentality (49), plagued by “the responsibilities of being an end-time community with present-time involvements” (76). This dual, paradoxical existence is certainly not foreign to a play in which “I am not what I am” (3.1.139), and in which the conflicting statements “nothing that is so, is so” (4.1.9) and “that that is, is” (4.2.15) are resolved into “a natural perspective, that both is and is not” (5.1.210); still, both Paul and Feste would have their audiences eschew “present mirth” for what’s “hereafter.”

Indeed, the play’s concern with time — and with different ways of tracking it — is evident throughout: in 2.3. Malvolio’s concern over the “time of night” as measured by the clock clashes with the time kept by the revelers “in our catches” (85-90), and in 3.1 Olivia’s flirtatious conversation with “Cesario” is brought to an end by the striking clock, which she punctuates by predicting that “when wit and youth is come to harvest / Your wife is like to reap a proper man” (128-9). Ultimately, though, the play seems to settle on the apocalyptic time proffered by Feste and Paul, as various characters look to the future for answers. Viola yields to time in the resolution of her troubles, claiming that
“What else may hap to time I will commit” (1.2.57) and that “O time, thou must untangle this, not I” (2.2.40), just as Feste famously declares that “Thus the whirligig of time brings in his revenges” (5.1.370). This is particularly true when we consider Feste’s songs, one of the more unique features of his dramatic presence. Over and again, where we might expect music to be part of the festive atmosphere, Feste instead dampens the mood, insisting on the transitoriness of the carnival, reminding his audience of its impending conclusion, melodizing Paul’s chilling admonition to the Corinthians that “the time is short…for the fashion of this world goeth away” (7:29-31). In 2.3, when Toby and Andrew request a “love-song,” Feste reminds them that love is “not hereafter,” that “what’s to come is still unsure,” and that “youth’s a stuff will not endure.” Orsino requests a song that is “silly sooth / And dallies with the innocence of love,” and Feste responds with the funereal “Come Away Death” (2.4.50). Likewise, his final song complicates Orsino’s closing look forward to a “golden time” with its mournful insistence on the ephemerality of youthful pleasures and its dogged emphasis on endings.

For Paul, this maturation amounts to nothing less than the essential task of all Christians: the preparation for the looming apocalypse. When he first came to the Corinthians, he says, “I could not speak unto you, brethren, as unto spiritual men, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. I gave you milk to drink, and not meat; for ye were not yet able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able” (3:1-2). He urges them to grow up, spiritually, in Christ, in one of the letter’s most memorable passages, the one to which Donne was so irresistibly drawn in the sermon quoted above: “When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things. For now we see through a glass darkly; but then shall we see
face to face. Now I know in part; but then shall I know even as I am known” (13:11-12).

Feste’s project, I argue, runs along parallel lines.

But to what end? Knapp’s argument, that “English theology and ecclesiology shaped the drama at a fundamental level” (9) alights on Twelfth Night as “the play of [Shakespeare’s] that most directly addresses the problem of divisiveness among English Protestants” (174); he claims that the fact that “foolery is inherently social and adaptive becomes a fundamental doctrine in the play” (175). This is an important claim, and one with which I entirely agree, particularly after having pushed the argument beyond Knapp’s broadly inclusive context and into a Pauline one. I have already cited Paul’s indictments of idolaters as “people [who] sate downe to eate and drinke, and rose up to play” (10:7). However, as I have done throughout this project, I move past considerations of religion per se, and to consider the questions of transcendence and boundaries to which they point.

With that in mind, I call attention to the play’s penultimate line, from Feste’s final song: “That’s all one, our play is done” (5.1.397). The marvelous punning here kaleidoscopically refracts meaning, offering up a number of interpretations. “Our play” obviously refers most immediately to the actors whose presentation has come to a close, and for which Robert Armin seeks applause. Consider, though, the role of the fool. Robert Weinmann observes that the fool traditionally occupied the downstage position, and as such frequently acted as the audience’s stand-in in the dramatic action, or as an intermediary. 64 Karin Coddon goes so far as to suggest that Feste’s refusal to account for

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64 He and Douglas Bruster have also considered the Prologue figures in similar light: more on that below.
his whereabouts prior to his entrance in 1.5 plants the suggestion that he is a member of the audience who has wandered onto the stage. While I’m not completely convinced by this argument, I am very sympathetic to the idea at its root, that Feste is connected to the audience like no other character in the play; as such, and given that he takes the stage alone and addresses the audience directly with this song, the “we” in “our play” serves just as well as a gesture of inclusion, encompassing the entire theatrical community, audience as well as actors, Christendom as surely as the hundreds in the Globe. “Play,” too, offers broad semantic possibilities. Besides the performance just concluded, “play” might invoke Paul’s condemnation of idolatrous carnivalesque living, of the sort exalted during Twelfth Night festivities. It might just as readily identify any emphasis on the transitory, ephemeral life that all Christians are on the verge of losing.

In this way, the audience and the performers are united in the experience of “play,” here strikingly refigured in its medieval sense as “ludus.” There is no meaningful separation between audience and actor in the context of the play’s apocalyptic time, anymore than there might have been between Everyman and the crowds who watched his salvation, or between York as a market town and York as the site of the physical manifestation of the body of Christ. But of course, this ends as soon as the actors bow, and the audience disperses again to the non-theatrical streets of Southwark, the transition marked by the physical passing of the boundary of the wooden O. Feste’s Pauline foolishness is as close to liminality as was possible on the liminoid stages of London.

And if for Yachnin, the subjection of drama to the vagaries of individual interpretation

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65 In more strictly denominational terms, as Knapp would have it, it might refer to the sort of senseless internecine squabbling playing havoc with the nascent English identity.
renders it powerless, then we might read *Twelfth Night* as both a recognition of the process and as an attempt to reverse it, or at least to capitalize on a rather more atavistic (liminal) power.

### 4.8 Liminal Theatre and Power

In 1975, the performance artist Marina Abramovic walked naked onto the stage at an art gallery in Austria. In front of the spectators, she ate a kilogram of honey, then downed a litre of red wine. She broke the wine glass with her hand. She then produced a razor blade and carved, into the flesh of her abdomen, a 5-pointed star, flagellated herself until she bled, and spread herself out on a cross made of ice. A heater was aimed at her abdomen to keep the blood flowing from the star, but the flesh against the ice soon started to freeze. After 30 minutes, audience members interceded, unable to simply sit by and watch her risk grave harm, and carried her away. According to a Dutch curator, “Abramovic is not only threatening the integrity of her body and, thus, destabilizing the binary opposition between inside and outside, but is also questioning the distinction between public and performer. In the end, the members of the audience can no longer hide behind their passive status as observers, but are forced to take the decision to perform an action by their own” ([www.li-ma.nl](http://www.li-ma.nl)). Erika Fischer-Lichte describes the audience response in explicitly Turnerian terminology:

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66 She repeated the show at the Guggenheim in New York in 1993 and 2005, where it lasted 7 hours.
[Audience members] suddenly found themselves in a situation that invalidated prevalent norms and certainties. This crisis transferred the spectators into a state of radical betwixt and between. Evidently, the spectators could not overcome the crisis through reflection…Instead, they had to respond emotionally, bypassing all reflection…[They] continued to exist on the threshold. (158)

In other words, the performance was conceived and executed along nearly Turnerian lines. It sought more than just to involve the audience: it made them part of the experience, dismantling boundaries between them and the artist, and created a moment of true uncertainty, of “pure potentiality.” It created, in a word, transcendence. For Fischer-Lichte, it is only this sort of performance that allows the theatre to access its transformative power, and “by transforming its participants, performance achieves the re-enchantment of the world” (181), in effect restoring, for a few minutes at least, something of the phenomenology of synecdoche.

I recount this story here because it is an example of the ways in which modern theatre practitioners seek to harness the power of theatre by re-creating the liminal state. In their works, we find – couched in radical and radically different terms – the call to return the theatre to its liminal role as fundamentally necessary to its power. I want to talk about one such practitioner, and about some of the ways in which his techniques have been applied with – and without – success, because it will help me to establish the presence of a theatrical hysteresis effect in 1601, which is the ultimate aim of this chapter.

The Brazilian critic and activist Augusto Boal, in a sort of Nietzschean moment, advocates the return of the theatre – and the society around it – to the frenzy and the
freedom of the dithyramb, when “theatre was the people singing in the open air; the theatrical performance was created by and for the people…it was a celebration in which all could participate fully” (ix). Lurking behind his vision of the political power of the theatre is the same *communitas* we find in liminal ritual. To engender it, Boal proposes a number of techniques, all designed to make theatre “a language that is living and present, not…a finished product displaying images from the past” (126). In general, his version of theatre insists that spectators intervene in scenes without presenting themselves on stage. In what Boal calls “simultaneous dramaturgy,” audience members propose a theme, and actors either improvise or pre-script a brief scene around that theme, stopping when the action reaches a climax or crisis, at which point they break off and ask the audience for suggestions. All suggestions are immediately improvised, with the result that the audience “writes” the action, and the play becomes a “theatrical discussion” (132). In “image theatre,” an audience member physically arranges the bodies of the actors on stage so as to represent her perspective on a certain topic, after which other audience members are invited to “agree” or “disagree” by changing or altering the actors’ positions. In “forum theatre,” actors present a brief scene, then begin to run through it a second time. At any point, audience members are permitted – encouraged – to come on stage and replace an actor for as long as they deem it necessary and to alter or “correct” his spoken role, in response to which the other actors on stage must alter or “correct” their parts, all the while maintaining the action as it unfolds on stage.

In these ways, “the action ceases to be presented in a deterministic manner, as something inevitable, as Fate. Man is Man’s fate” (134). While the actor is still an
interpreter, “what changes is the object of his interpretation. If formerly he interpreted
the solitary writer locked in his study…here on the contrary he must interpret the mass
audience, assembled in their local committees, societies, of “friends of the barrio,”
groups of neighbours, schools, unions, peasant leagues, or whatever; he must give
expression to the collective thought of men and women. The actor ceases to interpret the
individual and starts to interpret the group” (134). It is impossible to overstate the
importance of the small groups in which Boal imagines his theatre to be effective. As
we’ve seen, liminal (and medieval) theatres are characterized by the communality of the
experience: audience members and participants identify each other and identify with each
other. Turner would be entirely supportive of this move: for him, in the modern context
true liminal experiences exist in such communities as churches, sects, and movements, in
the initiation rites of clubs, fraternities, or Masonic orders, and the like, and then only
when there is some doubt about the outcome. This uncertainty is what accounts for the
instant of pure potentiality, the “interval of margin or limen” that signifies the liminal
experience; without it, “ritual becomes indistinguishable from ‘ceremony’ or ‘formality’”
(Turner 80). In an identical vein, Boal emphasizes the distinction between a bourgeois
“spectacle-theatre” and a popular “rehearsal-theatre.” In the latter, “one knows how these
experiments will begin but not how they will end, because the spectator is free from his
chains” (Boal 142); as a result, they are “practiced with…joy.” In attempting to create
this sort of ludic communal identification, and in attempting to fabricate a theatrical
experience that is rooted in the real, present, moment-to-moment experience shared by
the community from which it springs, Boal is creating (unwittingly, I think) some of the
conditions of the liminal theatre; the main distinction is that Boal seeks to use this experience as “rehearsal for the revolution.”

What I suggest here is that Boal, although he doesn’t use the terminology, is advocating a return from a liminoid model of theatre to a liminal one. Transformative theatre, theatre that has the power to effect change, does not take place under a proscenium, or indeed on a stage. It does not separate performers from spectators, or its form from its content. “Revolutionary” theatre comes only from small communities, and represents and/or interprets those communities back to themselves, a mimetic condition with which I think Turner’s work is in concert. Before attempting to connect these ideas to Essex, though, I’d like to take a quick look at these ideas in practice.

4.9 Theatre for Development: The Power of the Liminal

It is unsurprising that Boal’s fiercely politicized vision of grassroots theatre took root in Africa in the latter decades of the 20th century. In the midst of a series of revolutions, and as post-colonialism became a governing mode in spheres social and cultural as much as economic, it is entirely logical that a bottom-up structure would evolve as a way to return agency to people (and peoples) held in check for generations. And for a culture like the one that existed in so many agrarian, isolated African communities, with low literacy rates and little access to any media, but inheritor of a profoundly theatrical ritual tradition, the “theatre of the oppressed” seems tailor-made.
For social power in many African cultures, in the truest liminal traditions, has often been adjudicated through the theatrical.67

This is true at the most practical level: of the Egungun, Nigerian rituals of ancestor-worship, David Kerr observes that they were “meant to cleanse the Yoruba communities from physical and psychological disorders,” to which end they often depicted “such physical, psychic, or social aberrations as leprosy, goitre, club-foot, small-pox, drunkenness, insanity, and prostitution” (12).

Liminal theatre has a broader power, too, as described in the work of Simon Ottenberg among the Afikpo Igbo, also of Nigeria. In this society, the 4-day week is punctuated by market-days attended by the entire village, on which feasts, ceremonies, and masked rites all centring on the life of the village take place. The participants in the rites are members of the village’s secret society (each village has its own, possessed of its own unique customs and masks), membership in which is granted only after a rite of initiation. The most feverish cycle of drama begins with the New Yam festival, celebrating the harvest of that crop in late August, and lasts through to March; but this is also, recounts Ottenberg, “the season when major readjustments in relationships occur” (12): initiations and status changes, the settling of disputes such as marriages and divorces or ownership of farmlands, and any other disagreements that arise. This is not merely a coincidence of the calendar: the performances are implicitly and explicitly steeped in communitas.

67 It was, of course, in response to his fieldwork in Africa that Turner elaborated and articulated the concept.
As Martin Banham has observed, “African theatre is ‘functional’ in the sense that it serves a purpose within communities and cultures that is much greater than simply that of entertainment” (qtd in Tanyi-Tang 30). Richard Schechner has referred to this as theatrical “efficacy” as opposed merely to “entertainment,” but in the context of this argument, I call attention to the operation of Turner’s principles here. There is no moment when these communities “go to the theatre” to experience a dramatic presentation, nor is there a moment when they “leave the stage.” Likewise, theatre flows from the wholeness of the community, and just as surely flows back into it. Every member of the community is, if not directly involved with the plays as an actor, directly involved in them as an audience member, a role which does not indicate any less involvement in the proceedings. There is no gap. One could no sooner separate audience from performer than one could *communitas* from theatre, or the stage from the village streets. Lastly, there is a definable sense of the liminal about these events. Whether socially, culturally, or politically, there is something definite at stake in the performance, and a very palpable sense that the outcome of the play will bear on the future of the village: performance is integral, instrumental, irreplaceable to the course of community life.

It is understandable, then, that the theatre has seemed an ideal way to effect social change in many of these isolated and impoverished communities. The first attempts to harness its traditions in an organized way was the *Laedza Batanani* project in Botswana in 1976, but the practice quickly spread throughout Africa over the subsequent decade, becoming known principally by the term “Theatre for Development.” Among other countries, Theatre for Development projects have been undertaken in Nigeria, Malawi,
Kenya, Botswana, Lesotho, Zimbabwe, Zambia, Tanzania, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, and Guinea Bissau, as well as in Argentina, Peru, Brazil, India, the Philippines, Indonesia, and Java (Okagbue 85). Laedza Batanani represented an attempt to address local issues of national importance. Government workers would spread out to rural communities and engage them theatrically, using Boal’s techniques, to attempt to address topics such as stray cattle, youth unemployment, the spread of tuberculosis or venereal diseases, land reform proposals, nutrition, sanitation, etc. More often than not, group leaders had specific policy-driven solutions in mind, and the theatre events were deemed the most effective way of delivering them to often isolated communities. Organizers attempted to stage their events in local languages, to adopt indigenous theatrical traditions, and to stage their events in kgotla, the village meeting places where other such events would take place.

While such approaches seem to have met with some limited success, what is of particular interest in the context of my argument is those ways in which Theatre for Development has either faced difficulties, or outright failed, and the ways in which it has been adjusted in response. Consider, for instance, Osita Okagbue’s account of his involvement with a program in Ghana in 1992, set up as part of that country’s government’s national functional literacy program. Okagbue was invited to help to set up a theatre for development program, and opportunity to which he responded with an excitement both implicitly and explicitly indebted to Boal:

This was an opportunity to put to use some of the new ideas and ideals of utilising theatre as a weapon for developing mass awareness and as a tool for the masses to use to explore and extress social issues that affect them as individuals
and as members of their communities – to explore as it were, Boal’s very attractive notion of “theatre as a language” capable of containing and expressing the experiences of individuals and their communities. (79-80).

In the end, though, although he still holds out hope for Theatre for Development and its “possibilities for the future,” the project failed to live up to his hopes, resulting in an experience he describes as “somewhat disappointing” (80).

Although he and his attendees were “pleasantly amazed and gratified by the reception, the rapt attention and the willingness of the spectators to join when called upon to do so” (84) by the plays they presented, Okagbue is forced to conclude that the project was ultimately unable to effect any meaningful change, that he and his group had “left the people of Medina very much as [they] found them” (85). The reasons for this failure, according to Okagbue, are not inherent in Boal’s model, but rather in the ways in which the project deviated from them. “For all our idealism and good intentions,” he writes, “the main ideal of the ‘theatre of the oppressed’…was never realized by the Medina workshop or the performance that came out of it” (85) for the same reason that he judges so many other similar projects (including Laedza Batanani) to have been failures: “it fell right into the ‘us’ and ‘them’ trap.” His group was made up of outsiders, who came into Madina to bring knowledge to the community. They did not involve the community in the performance, “giving them a new weapon for engaging with and speaking their condition” (86), but rather “preached to them by showing them our own diagnostic interpretation of what was wrong with their community” (86). Okagbue cites some of the conditions of Medina as less than perfectly fertile for the project, as well: as a suburb of Accra, it was “not such a homogenous community,” and was also subject to
ethnic rivalries from within” with the result that “there was a lack of communal feeling” (87). The audience “simply consumed the fare, with obvious pleasure it must be said, but little else” (87). In short, then, the project failed because it was not “theatre of the oppressed.” But it also failed because it was a liminoid project and its desired effects were liminal, because – for reasons both circumstantial and inherent – it utterly failed to engender communitas. It failed, in terms more familiar to this study, because it was not “liminal” enough. 68

4.10 Africa and 16th-century London: A Connection?

There is, I would argue, ample reason to see in 20th-century Africa a ready analog for 16th-century England when we consider the state of the stage. Richard Helgerson, whose first teaching experience was in West Africa, was struck by the similarities: “in constructing nations of their own,” he observes, “the Africans have written themselves from within a discursive field that first took shape in England, France, Spain, Portugal, and Holland some four hundred years ago” (17). In Helgerson’s view, which given his work is a political one, the most significant shared experience between the two cultures is “self-alienation,” an experience that would give rise to precisely the sort of abruption from synecdochal experience that I have been describing, and one that leads to

68 This tends to be typical of the results of Theatre For Development projects, many of whose practitioners reach the same conclusions as did Okagbue. See, for instance, Ross Kidd’s “Theatre for Development”: Diary of a Zimbabwe Workshop,” in which it was only “by breaking down the separation between theatre for development and village traditional performance, making them one activity,” that organizers were able to achieve any success.
significantly similar self-conceptions and self-presentations: “they don’t have to read Spenser to echo him” (17). Patrick Collinson seemingly saw no problem in presenting the material that would go on to become the first chapter of The Birthpangs of Protestant England in the context of the University of Kent’s Anstey Lectures, typically aimed at furthering the interests of their namesake in emerging African capitalism. Still, whether we accept or reject a hypothesis linking the situations of the two milieus, there can be no doubt that both cultures, in terms of theatre, are in the midst of the transition from liminal to liminoid. About this fact Turner is unequivocal. Associating the latter with nascent capitalism and “the appearance of real social classes” (84), he singles out 15th- and 16th-century England as particularly clear examples of the movement. He points to Bacon’s work – the Novum Organum in particular – as advancing the scientific and technical know-how necessary to commodify labour, effecting the separation of work and play and relegating the drama to the two-hours traffic of a stage.

4.11 The Early Modern Example

With all that in mind, let me turn to a consideration of the theatre of 1601. There are many critics who have discussed the late-Elizabethan theatre in terms of liminality. Michael Bristol, for instance, has described the “intensification of collective life

69 In fairness, I must report that Collinson does point out that the lectures were designed to reflect Anstey’s “wide interests as a historian,” in particular his “more general concern…with that is generally called the religious factor” (xi).
represented and experienced in the theatre” (3). Louis Montrose, too, uses Turner’s conceptual vocabulary in his assessment of the experience:

The actual process of theatrical performance, marked off in both time and space from the normal flow and loci of social activity, offered to its audience – and, of course, to its performers – an imaginative experience that partially and temporarily removed them from their normal places, their ascribed subject positions. In this sense, for the Queen’s common subjects, to go to the public playhouse to see a play was to undergo a marginal experience; it was to visit the interstices of the Elizabethan social and cognitive order. (33)

Douglas Bruster and Robert Weimann have pointed out that most scholars (among them Marjorie Garber, Edward Berry, and Brian Vickers) who base their understandings of theatre on the work of Turner and van Gennep do so in order to elucidate and articulate the experience of individuals as characters and as spectators. They cite Greenblatt’s Turnerian opinion, though, that although “a rite of passage is something that happens to an individual,” that “it is at the same time social and in most cases institutional. A private rite of passage is like an unattended wedding: it can mime the form of the ritual, but it misses the mark. The significance of the transition derives from collective understandings that accumulate around the performed acts” (Rites of Passage 28, qtd in Prologues to Shakespeare’s Theater 35). Bruster and Weimann argue that actors “speak, on behalf of a community of actors, to a community of imaginers on equal footing with one another” (35). The audience, they conclude, is “thus conjoined in a larger community with the players” (35). They insist that this feeling of community, though, remains circumscribed by the theatre’s position in the marketplace, and that audiences
would have encompassed a wide range of theatrical experiences and playgoers. The trouble, however, is that the theatre – the Globe, anyway – was not a liminal space, at least not as Turner described it. Not only was the physical space clearly set off, but “the payment of a penny was a mode of demarcation as well as a sign of commercialization” (Dawson, *Shakespeare and Secular Performance* 87). In February of 1601, the Globe was a nearly perfect model of the liminoid theatre, though, with all its relative limitations.

The distinction is absolutely critical. Not only, as I’ll go on to show, does it admit and account for the possibility of a hysteresis effect in the context of the theatre, but the failure to distinguish between the two modes often leads to some errant analysis. I’ll cite one example. In *The Subject of Tragedy*, Catherine Belsey argues that “fiction…has a certain specificity in that its topic is above all subjectivity itself – the intimate personal and interpersonal relations which define what it is to be a man or a woman” (9). I concur. Likewise, her attempt to place Renaissance tragedy along a line of developing subjectivity from medieval through to “the unified subject of liberal humanism” (33) as exalted in the Enlightenment and beyond is mostly successful, as is her insistence that in the plays of the Renaissance we can see both the vestiges of the medieval subject and the seeds of its successor. There is, then, much to like about Belsey’s analysis. But based on what I’ve just observed, there is one small but fundamental correction that must be made. Belsey refers to the medieval theatre and its successor as “emblematic” and “illusionist,” respectively. In large part, this terminology flows from her perceptive contention that the change in staging from the former to the latter, in her view from 1576 to 1642, has implications in our thinking about subjectivity.
The problem with Belsey’s analysis is that, as we have seen, the audience’s relationship to the drama is far from “emblematic.” To be so would be to preserve the same “ethic of difference” that gave rise to sincerity in human subjectivity, to assume a difference between the world of the play and the world of the audience that (in this case quite literally) inhabits it. As I’ve been arguing, however, this is inaccurate. Belsey suggests a movement from one ethic of difference to another, and eliminates entirely the integrity on whose basis my analysis of medieval liminal drama – and its audience – is elaborated. She concludes that “the prologue which so often recounts the story in advance, the homiletic mode of address, and the allegorical names of the characters act as markers of the meaning of the play. If the audience learns from the moralities, it does so in terms of the detailed analysis they offer of a familiar moral framework” (88). This conclusion is problematic for several reasons. As Kolve has shown, the plays were not written to teach. Form does not generate meaning. In fact, it is precisely the opposite: form is a function of meaning. The idea that an audience member would attend such a play “to learn” is wrong, just as it would be to assume that they would attend a Midsummer festival “to learn,” or a wedding “to learn,” or any other festive event or liminal ritual. Following Turner, I observe that this is “ludus” like any other: it may be profane rather than sacred, but participating in this drama is still “God’s work.” In my view, then, while there is much to admire in Belsey’s analysis, it suffers because it does not accurately measure the distance between the two points it seeks to assess: in short, it suffers from the hysteresis effect.

I’ll provide just one more example of an argument that would benefit were it to be placed in the context of a movement from liminal to liminoid theatre. Dawson,
building upon Sommerville’s secularization thesis, contends that “the theatre appropriates and redeployes the language of religion” (“Shakespeare and Secular Performance” 87). “The value and meaning that religious discourse has in the world do not lose their cultural weight,” he argues, “but that weight is shifted and transformed” (87). Shakespeare himself, Dawson concludes, is “neither Catholic nor Protestant because his fidelity is to the sweaty transcendence offered by the theatre” (88). In considering the “communal pull of theatrical experience” and its way of “temporarily transforming them” (87), Dawson observes that “any such uplift was temporary and provisional,” that the theatrical experience “allowed a brief breaking away from the everyday towards something that felt bigger or more important, thought that larger sense was grounded in, and inseparable from, the profane everyday” (88). The experience that Dawson is describing — temporarily transcendent, binding participants into a community, but inescapably profane and circumscribed by a physical space of performance — is, in a word, liminoid, although he never names it as such. This is a shame, for if he did, he would inevitably summon the spectre of the liminal, and in its shadow, his analysis would take on a more diachronic aspect.

It is certainly true that in making connections between religious discourse and the theatre, and in invoking the process of secularization, Dawson suggests that there is change in the air. But rather than proposing a theatre borne along by the same currents as was religious practice, he posits a theatre dedicated to “cannibalizing and carnivalizing religious discourse, and the authority that goes with it” (90). There is no cannibalism, because just as the culture around it is in the midst of a sea change from synecdoche to analogy, so, too, inevitably, is the theatre, albeit in the form of movement from liminal to
liminoid. And the carnivalizing energy is doubtless present, residual from the ludic roots of the theatre.\(^{70}\) The liminoid is certainly implicitly present in Dawson’s perceptive juxtaposition of religion and theatre. Were the distinction with the liminal made, however, and were the theatre seen in the same flux as the religion whose tenets gave it its basic phenomenological language, not only would its transcendence be thrown into a brighter light, but so, too, would the limitations of that power.\(^{71}\)

4.12 Liminality and the Last Honour Rebellion

With all that said, I’d like now to begin to turn our attention to the performance of February 7, 1601. The argument that I have been making is that the “central

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\(^{70}\) Dawson articulates his understanding of these concepts through a reading of the “orchestration” (ie the entrance of religious content onto the stage) in the “Bottom’s Dream” passage of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*. The text, wherein Bottom insists that “The eye of man hath not heard, the ear of man hath not seen, man’s hand is not able to taste, his tongue to conceive, nor his heart to report what my dream was” (4.1.211), is an oft-observed allusion to 1 Corinthians. For an account of how I believe Shakespeare uses the same letter, see my reading of *Twelfth Night*, above.

\(^{71}\) Paul Stevens has challenged Dawson’s account, on the grounds that “because of its preoccupation with individualism, Sommerville’s thesis does real violence to the reformers’ profoundly other-worldly emphasis on the freedom of God and to so many ordinary people’s renewed sense of his immediate presence in the world” (“Hamlet, Henry VIII, and the Question of Religion: A Post-Secular Perspective” 6-7). Insofar as it implies a monolithic march to secularization, Stevens’ criticism is well founded. But the writings of Bacon, for example, are evidence that, to some at least, God’s presence was indeed becoming as removed as the secularization thesis would imply. Co-presence is a watchword here, as well. In addition, to borrow language that I used in chapter 1, if there was not a diminution of religious sentiment – and Stevens is certainly right to point out that there was not – there was a change in its bases (Reicher 77). To me at least, the changes in religion itself are of far smaller significance than the ways in which changes in these structures of belief were experienced, in lived experience generally, and in the theatre in particular.
problematic” of the period was the existence and the thickness of various boundaries, and that the late 16th century saw a shoring up of what had formerly been porous dividers between people and between epistemological categories; in the context of the theatre, this movement took the form of the gradual replacement of the liminal theatre with its liminoid descendant. And just as I have suggested that Essex and his coterie might be seen as hysteresial vestiges of the former phenomenology, I argue that the bespoke presentation of Richard 2 might be fruitfully positioned in the same way, as an example of the incommensurability of the two worldviews. If, as Turner and others have suggested, the theatre is a mimetic representation of reality in both form and content, and if there are co-present and in a state of incomprehension two different realities, it stands to reason that the two groups would understand the theatre in strikingly different ways. I argue that were we seated (or standing, for that matter) in the Globe for this singular performance, we would have been witness to hysteresis itself.

There is no way, of course, to essentialize a single motive behind the rebellion. In the case of Essex himself, as I’ve argued above, we can perhaps make some headway, but we cannot say that all the conspirators shared precisely Essex’s vision of the day’s events. Still, we can perhaps attempt to draw some conclusions about the ties that bound the group together. As Mervyn James has argued, much of the cohesion in the group can be ascribed to a shared sense of honour, much of it rooted in shared military backgrounds and experience. A full third of the rebels had served under Essex at one time or another, and a significant number of them had been knighted by him. Thus, “the military relationship had been given a special aura, of a traditionalist and chivalric kind” (428).
The group typically placed a great deal of importance on the lineage of its members.\footnote{Hammer, Op. Cit. See below.}

This emphasis on the past even extended to their housing; they “often inhabited 15th-century styles of housing, inherited from their ancestors, whose typical features were impressive fortified gatehouses and quadrangular form, furnished with large medieval-style halls, providing many lodgings for servants and visitors” (434). The lack of a clear religious commitment, too – the group included Anglicans, Catholics, and Puritans – “did tend to strengthen the centrality of primal honour” (437). If we are to understand, then, the nature of the rebellion and — finally — the nature of the performance of Richard II, then we need to understand something of the honour in which these men held themselves and each other.

In medieval Wells, the self was nothing less than the product of honour; as Shaw puts it, “where there is honour there is the self” (33). Honour was acted out – created – publicly through displays of what Shaw calls “worshipfulness,” and the words and gestures that constitute it. A suitor is a worshipper, after a fashion, and confers honour in the suit. Bowing, the deferential doffing of a hat, the dear ladys and good sirs – these were more than the measures of social power afterwards perceived by Hobbes, but rather were the very interactions by which the self, as socially inscribed, was constituted. For Bourdieu, honour as so practiced is far from simply a set of rules derived from some abstract principle; it is “a disposition inculcated in the earliest years of life and constantly reinforced by calls to order from the group, that is to say, the aggregate of the individuals
endowed with the same dispositions...Honour is a permanent disposition, embedded in
the agents’ very bodies in the form of mental dispositions” (15).

In a group setting, then, honour is nothing less than “the glue of the social
contract” (Oprisko 14). As articulated by Hans Speier, honour is the means by which
solidarity (and, although he does not use the term, *communitas*) is achieved in the context
of a group, insofar as honour is “the process by which a group confers value upon the
individual” (4). As Bourdieu describes the process, honour is “inculcated in the earliest
years of life and constantly reinforced by calls to order from the group, that is to say,
from the aggregate of individuals endowed with the same dispositions, to whom each is
linked by his dispositions and interests” (15). In this way, in the constant and
neverending process of earning, assigning, and being assigned more or less honour, the
hierarchy of a group is constantly articulated and re-articulated, even as the identity of
the group is defined in relation to other groups that exist around or alongside it. We
cannot overemphasize the value of Oprisko’s observation that honour must be bestowed
ceremonially: members of the group are witnesses to each other’s actions, and recognize
each other’s acts as “having value that reaches a threshold of exceptionality” (4). In
recognizing, and in being recognized, in this way, groups define themselves and their
values through ritual.

That they do so, as Bourdieu reminds us, is easy to forget when we look back
upon event removed by centuries; it might seem simple to imagine that “men of honour”
lived by a simple set of rules which we could easily extrapolate from the choices they
made. To imagine this, though, is entirely to negate the temporality of their actions, and
of the constant state of flux and renegotiation in which their honour was endlessly
rearticulated. Rather than “rules,” Bourdieu suggests that we attempt to understand their actions by means of strategies, a semantic shift that refuses to permit us to extract the living of honour from the practical timeframe in which it was embedded. In so doing, we arrive at the conclusion that the liminality that governs ritual is operant in the articulation and re-articulation of honour: individual identity is mediated by and in relation to group identity, as defined by a neverending series of rituals of uncertain outcome.

And just as I’ve suggested that a liminal theatre can only exist alongside a phenomenology of synecdoche, so, too, can this sort of honour-based community, as suggested by the title of Oprisko’s book. For Bourdieu, like the rest of the habitus, honour is inculcated by the observation and enactment of these very rituals, so much so that it becomes in many ways part of our mode of perception:

Honour is a permanent disposition, embedded in the agents' very bodies in the form of mental dispositions, schemes of perception and thought, extremely general in their application, such as those which divide up the world in accordance with the oppositions between the male and the female, east and west, future and past, top and bottom, right and left, etc. and also, at a deeper level, in the form of bodily postures and stances, ways of standing, sitting, looking, speaking, or walking. *(Outline of a Theory of Practice 15)*

At its heart, then, honour is a means of perception as much as of assignation of value. And if part of the movement from medieval to early modern involved a shift in the way the people perceived their relationships with each other and with the world around them, then it follows, too, that honour is subject to the same hysteresis effect as is ontology.
With this in mind, it is not surprising in the least that contemporary treatises on honour tie it inextricably to the sort of synecdoche I’ve been discussing. As we saw in Chapter 2, for example, Fulke Greville distinguishes in his “Inquisition Upon Fame and Honour” between honour grounded in humility and the thirst for individual recognition. Of the latter, he argues, Virgil’s depiction of Fama as a monster is correct, “For what indeed more monstrous, or more base, / Than these Chimeras of distempered mindes, | Born of opinion, not of vertues race… As Polypus with stones, so they with praise, / Change colours, and like Proteus their forme, / Followinge the peoples lust, who, like their cloths, / Still shifte conceit of truth and goodnesse both” (§55-6). These individuals “Forme, but reforme not; meer hypocrisie, / By shadoes, onely shadoes bringing forth” (§86). On the other hand, the “pure souls whom the godhead means to crowne” (§77), to whom honour is the natural consequence of their virtuous embodiment of the will of an omnipresent God, are “abcees” who unteach individualism, and lead us back to an Edenic way of knowing, whereby we know ourselves no longer as individuals, but as components of a creation made one in God.

We find similar ideas expressed in Robert Ashley’s Of Honour (c1596), the first work by an English author dedicated exclusively to a systematic investigation of the subject (Heltzel 1). There is no source of true honour, claims Ashley, but “the Godhead ytselve which ys the wellspringe and fountayne of all honor” (sic) (27). When God bestows honour upon men, “they are “partakers both of his divinitie and his honour” (28). In addition to joining men to each other through their union in God, true honour for Ashley bears as its hallmark the sort of outward-facing communal attitude that I’ve described in so many other contexts. Honour is “conversant for the most part in a
certeyne externall and open kind of accion which hath respect unto many, and not in dissimulacion nor in any secrete agitacion of the minde, which ys profitable to none but to himself” (35). Once attained, too, honour is formative of *communitas*, for “calmed and quieted by honour are Citties kept, families preserved, the society of men quietly and peaceably continued” (30), and it is through and for honour that men give aid to “friends, kinsfolkes, and Countreymen” rather than “profit[ing] them with some praise unto [themselves]” (35).

In *1 Henry 4*, Hotspur is “the child of honour and renown” (3.2.139), and wants nothing more than “To pluck bright honour from the pale-faced moon, / Or dive into the bottom of the deep, / Where fathom-line could never touch the ground, /And pluck up drowned honour by the locks” (1.3.200-203). Falstaff’s counterpoint is, of course, well known:

Well, 'tis no matter; honour pricks me on. Yea, but how if honour prick me off when I come on? how then? Can honour set to a leg? no: or an arm? no: or take away the grief of a wound? no. Honour hath no skill in surgery, then? no. What is honour? a word. What is in that word honour? what is that honour? air. A trim reckoning! Who hath it? he that died o' Wednesday. Doth he feel it? no. Doth he hear it? no. 'Tis insensible, then.Yea, to the dead. But will it not live with the living? no. Why? detraction will not suffer it. Therefore I'll none of it. Honour is a mere scutcheon: and so ends my catechism. (5.1.129-139)

In the same vein, in *Henry 8* – interestingly, the Shakespearean play in which the word “honour” is used most often – Buckingham describes “the cunning cardinal” as a man who “does buy and sell his honour as he pleases, / And for his own advantage” (1.1.191-
192). What is represented here is the alteration in the perception of honour as it moves from a communal value to an individual one, and, once in the latter realm, to a commodity. In short, not to belabour the poor point, precisely the same movement governs the experience of the theatre in the period, and I am suggesting that the parallels are important.

James suggests that “perhaps the most interesting feature of the Essex revolt is that it was the last of its kind…it was the last honour revolt: as such, the conclusion of a series and a tradition which recedes far back into the medieval period” (416). I have already suggested that we might say the same about the model of authentic self-hood that Essex represented, and in this chapter, that the liminal experience of theatre was subjected to the same forces. Their shared experience with honour is the result of the same phenomenology of synecdoche that governs these other interactions with the world and with each other, and all are imbricated in the liminal experience of theatre.

4.13 February 7, 1601

Where, then, does all this leave us relative to where and when we began, at the Globe Theatre on the afternoon of February 7, 1601? There is no doubt that the performance is every bit deserving of the importance that critics are nearly unanimous in ascribing it, and that we can learn something about the relationship of drama and politics

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73 Consider, in this light, Hamlet’s insistence that “to be great” is “greatly to find quarrel in a straw when honour’s at the stake” (4.4.9.45-46); further to my discussion of this soliloquy in Chapter 2, this ideology of honour positions Hamlet amid the transition from medieval to early modern.
in the period through its contemplation. However, as must be clear by the broad context into which I have placed it, I argue that to insist that the importance of the performance is entirely circumscribed by political considerations, and to find in it evidence only of the relationship of drama to political power, is a reading altogether too superficial to capture its relevance. There are reasons why Essex’s coterie would have hit upon a play as in some way a revolutionary activity, just as there are reasons why they were wrong. And just as synchrony is the enemy of a true understanding of the state of subjectivity at the time, so too is it inimical to an understanding of the proper place of the performance in the development of the theatre: as Essex himself is a hysteretical vestige of the processual shifting of the habitus defining the human subject, so the performance is the remainder of the concomitant shifting of the phenomenological experience of theatre.

If such a contextual broadening does not leave us in a place much different than that appointed us by Barroll, Yachnin, and Hammer, at the least we are left with a clearer sense of how and why we have arrived there. I have attempted to make sense of the peculiarities of Essex’s character that make him so resistant to the superimposition of the doctrine of self-fashioning by positioning him explicitly in time, as a by-product of periodizing movement, and of the hysteretic “remainder” predicted by Bourdieu’s model of ontological change. In this chapter, I have laid the groundwork for the performance of much the same positioning of the event with which Essex is most often associated, the performance of *Richard II*. Just as differing rates of change in ontological conditions — and conditioning — left Essex and his coterie behind, resulting in a drastically different model of self-conception than the dominant one and an eventual abruption between them, so, too, did differing rates of phenomenological change. And just as Essex himself was
the hysteretic by-product of that abruption, a “medieval man in a Renaissance world,” so
the performance of February 7, 1601 arises from a phenomenological hysteresis, left
behind as the liminal theatre of the medieval period gave rise to the liminoidity of the
Renaissance.

As we have seen, both Barroll and Yachnin have significantly undermined the
traditional (new historicist) reading of the performance. In observing the overwhelming
lack of interest on the part of the authorities in pursuing or punishing anyone for its
staging, both have called attention to the vigour dedicated to the castigation of non-
fiction writers — in particular, John Heywood, who spent nearly a year in the Tower —
who dared to make even oblique comparison between the deposition of Richard and
Elizabeth, or to make anything resembling analogical political commentary in their work.
In search of another motivation for the sponsorship of the performance, you will recall,
rather than offering a comprehensive explanation himself, Barroll suggested a number of
criteria by which a suitable example might be judged:

We might set aside a theory that foregrounds drama’s power over the populace to
focus instead on a theory that views the interesting influence of drama upon
certain minds. Perhaps the “fact” that we should extract from the situation is the
belief by some conspirators that the fictions they viewed onstage had the same
power over others as such fictions had over themselves…One might wish to
examine the power of drama as it was misconstrued by certain members of the
Essex circle. Such a study would also take into account the…Earl of Essex’s
commitment to shows of chivalry embodied in the Accession Day tournaments,
and it would consider the importance of mimetic and quasi-mimetic forms to an Essex group that included in its number so many patrons of the arts, a group led by an Earl who had married Sir Philip Sidney’s widow. (454)

In short, Barroll suggests that the performance offers proof of nothing other than that of “a group of nobles and gentlemen whose own inclinations towards drama predisposed them to exaggerate what plays could do” (463).

What plays could do, according to Yachnin, was not much at all: “during the late Elizabethan and entire Jacobean period,” he asserts, the idea of a theatre with a power to influence minds “tended to be replaced by the idea that the theatre was powerless,...unable to influence its audience in any purposeful or determinate way” (50). Starting in approximately 1590, he argues, “drama was perceived to be separate from real life” (51). In large part, Yachnin attributes the change to the deliberate efforts of mercenary playwrights, who in an effort to “commodify[] their talent in the scramble for advancement” (55), navigated between the paying audience’s demand for topical content and the censor’s unease with it by cultivating drama with a multiplicity of interpretation that rendered it toothless. The theatre, “polemical” as it had been earlier in the century, became “recreational” during Elizabeth’s reign.

Underlying both arguments is the movement from liminal to liminoid theatre. I have argued that the liminal theatre is associated with a phenomenology of synecdoche, one that governed not only Essex’s sense of himself, but also bound his coterie together tightly. To such a mind, public performance of all sorts, including drama, was more than a commodity to be consumed for pay inside a wooden O: it was the common recitation and the common constitution of an identity. In this context, to stage a play would be – as
Bucer and Foxe believed, as Boal theorized, and as Okagbue once thought – an ideal way to incorporate an audience into the community whose identity it both represents and constructs, and to inject the dramatized values in a nearly organic way into the body politic. Such a group would fall into precisely the patterns of behaviour flagged by Barroll: in addition to the exaggeration of the power of drama, it would also overemphasize public displays of those values constitutive of the identities of its members – chivalry, for instance, or the conspicuous patronage of the arts.

As they knew by February 8, however, their experience with these things was not that of their London contemporaries. Although artists like Donne and Shakespeare attempted to various ends to instill a sense of synecdochal unity in their audiences, the Baconian fragmentation was well underway, and the theatre was governed by principles tending to the liminoid: synecdoche was, at best, analogy, subject to the panoply of individual interpretation, and those forces that in the liminal theatre constituted individual and community identity were, from the liminoid stage, perhaps thought-provoking ideas, but little more. It is for this reason, pace Yachnin, that the theatre lost the power it had once had: a “recreational” theatre, separate from “real life,” is nearly a perfect fit for Turner’s liminoid, the development of which he associates with Bacon and the same time period. “Functional ambiguity” may well have been cultivated by playwrights for the reasons described by Yachnin, but it was only made possible by the fragmentation of the synecdochal worldview, after which (and only after which) a work of drama was perceivable as separate and separable from the “social drama” in which every member of liminal society participated. To such a liminoid audience, where the experience of a play was as easily ligated as the ideas it raised, the downloading of a
single idea – never mind the incitement to a single, unified course of action – was utterly inconceivable.

This analysis, of course, is based upon the assumption that there was a connection in the minds of the conspirators between the performance and the rebellion. Given the temporal logic of the two events, this seems a likely connection to make. However, Paul Hammer’s recent re-evaluation of the timeline of the events bears a mention. Hammer theorizes that the uprising, which was to be a storming of the court to ensure James’ succession and to arrest Essex’s courtly rivals for misleading the Queen to the detriment of the nation, was in fact scheduled to take place the following week, and that it was moved forward at the last minute in response to the discovery against Essex by, among others, Ralegh. If nothing else, this theory helps to understand why Essex spent the afternoon before his uprising playing tennis, then lying in bed recuperating from the exertion. In Hammer’s view, the performance’s role in the uprising was to be a more tangential one. Hammer notes that many of those involved in commissioning and watching the play were descended from the agitants depicted on stage, and suggests that many of machinations of courtly faction towards the end of 1597 “gave the play a dramatic new topicality” (28).

As the conspirators “expected to make history themselves, very soon,” argues Hammer, the “ancestral examples – and the prospect of being seen by a large public

74 Hammer bases his argument on the assumption that the play in question was Shakespeare’s.

75 Here are a few of the connections: Charles and Josceline Percy, were younger brothers of the Earl of Northumberland, whose ancestor the first Earl takes the stage in the play. Lord Monteagle was of the line of Mowbray. Essex’s friend Rutland was descended from the Duke and Duchess of York and their son Aumerle. Bolingbroke was the ancestor of Essex himself.
audience while they observed those examples – perhaps assumed an even greater importance” (30). The purpose of the performance, in Hammer’s estimation, was to offer the group the chance to “watch a play that featured their own ancestors,” as well as offering “striking parallels with the fortunes of their leader, the Earl of Essex” (34). It also afforded them the opportunity to “watch an enactment of a historical parallel for the aristocratic intervention with the queen which Essex would launch the following week and in which they would participate” (34).

It is at this point that Hammer’s tight narrative begins to unwind. For as with all those who would make the argument from the text that the play was to be used as propaganda, his analysis breaks down at the fourth act, when our sympathies begin to move to Richard, and when Bolingbroke’s more Machiavellian tendencies begin to emerge. Hammer is forced to suggest (although he himself expresses doubt at his own suggestion) that “the Essex playgoers simply left the play after the end of the text’s Act 3, discarding the last two acts as irrelevant to their partisan interests and purposes” (33). Assuming that this is spurious, he then suggests that they viewed the play’s first three acts as offering “important models of behaviour worthy of emulation by Essex and his supporters,” while to them the latter part was a “negative example,” a failure which they intended to correct in the coming days.

This is all certainly possible, I suppose, although it would require a fairly breathtaking act of hermeneutical unison on behalf of the audience if the performance were to achieve anything resembling this outcome; and if the performance were for the group itself and not for the Globe’s larger audience, one wonders why it would be staged at the Globe at all, and not, say, in Essex House, where plays were performed with
regularity. This sort of tangle, I suggest as gently as possible, is precisely the sort of fragmented understanding of a play brought on by the liminoid stage. This is the multiplicity of interpretation, bemoaned by Jonson and described by Yachnin, that renders the liminoid theatre so ineffective as an instrument of propaganda, a fact to which Boal so forcefully calls attention. And when Yachnin calls the attempt by Essex’s men here “hopelessly old-fashioned,” although he does so only implicitly, he suggests the bygone power of the liminal theatre in contrast with the intellectual commodity offered by its liminoid descendant.

How ought we understand the performance, then? I think that Barroll comes close when he suggests that it must be understood as part of a phenomenological aesthetic, one that includes pageantry and chivalry as surely as it incorporates the public promulgation of a collective identity through the support of the arts, and one that would value above all the sort of iconography inherent in, say, an Earl’s inheritance of Sidney’s sword and his marriage to Sidney’s widow. In this context, what is of most import is not which author’s play was performed, or even which characters are treated with the most sympathy by the play. What is most important is that it was a play. As we have seen, to most of those in positions of power at the time, the true threat to political stability was deemed to come from printed histories, and not the theatre. The Essex circle thought differently. Strategically, a march of Essex’s followers en masse to Whitehall would in all likelihood have achieved its goals and — from a purely strategic standpoint, at least — Essex’s insistence on turning instead into the city to rally the citizenry of London to

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76 This is not to say, of course, that there is nothing to be gained by determining these things.
his cause is absolutely baffling. These actions are, however, entirely consistent with a mindset in which “mechanical solidarity,” achieved by *communitas* through ludic ritual, holds sway.

The fact that Yachnin and James, among others, insist on associating the performance of February 7, and the uprising with which it is associated, with a kind of atavism is unsurprising. It speaks to the general sense that Essex and his circle had been passed by: that they are, to use a word that has reverberated throughout this document, defined by hysteresis. I have argued at some length that subjectivity in the period can fruitfully be subjected to the same hysteretic lens, after which Essex takes on a vestigial aspect; in this chapter, I argue that the pre-rebellion performance can be understood in much the same way. Using the framework established by Turner, already firmly planted in the late 16th and early 17th centuries, we can understand the hysteresis to be a result of the movement from liminal to liminoid modes of theatre, the latter supplanting the former and rendering it, to use Yachnin’s word, “powerless.”
5 Epilogue: Afterlives

Among the spurious volumes of his *Courtier’s Library* [1609], John Donne included two works entitled “The Brazen Head of Francis Bacon: concerning Robert the First, King of England,” and “An Encomion on Doctor Shaw, Chaplain to Richard III, by Doctor Barlow.” The former is a shot across the surging bow of Francis Bacon, who infamously turned on Essex, his vociferously ardent supporter and longtime friend, to side with Robert Cecil and the prosecution against Essex in the aftermath of the uprising. (By so doing, he was able to attain the Solicitorship General, a post to which Essex, despite his most vehement efforts, had been unable to propel him.) The latter equates Barlow, the writer of the officially-sanctioned sermon condemning Essex, with Shaw, who wrote for Richard in defence of the murder of the Princes in the Tower. It is not surprising, given the fundamental philosophical sympathies that I have articulated between the two men, and given the fact that Donne had volunteered to serve under Essex on the Cadiz expedition of 1596, and given Donne’s friendship with Essex’s secretary Henry Wotton, to find the poet sympathetic to the Earl. The expression of a nearly overt political sympathy with Essex, though, is a bit of a shock.

It suggests that in the years following Essex’s execution, the sort of cynicism Donne expresses in some of his Satires about James’ court found a retroactively idealized counterpoint in a nostalgia for Essex and for what he came to represent in the common memory. In the same vein, consider Elegie XIV, “A Tale of a Citizen and his Wife” [1610]. The poem opens with a cheek typical of Donne, wherein the poem’s narrator
comes across a citizen and his wife, “both riding upon one horse” (12). The woman was “a pretty peate, / And (by her eye) well fitting for the feate” (13-14), so the narrator decides to try his luck by befriending her husband with idle chatter. He attempts to “sort discourse for so fine a man” (20), asking about various legislations, local events, business dealings, infrastructure projects, and the like, but “he / As mute / As an old Courtier worn to his last suite) / Replies only with ayes and nayes” (29-31). At last, he asks about “Tradesmens gaines” (33), and unlocks the tongue of the suddenly garrulous husband:

“Alas! good sir,” quoth he, “there is no doing
In court or city now”; she smil’d, and I,
And, in my conscience, both gave him the lie
In one met thought; but he went on apace,
And at the present time with such a face
He rail’d, as fray’d me; for he gave no praise
To any but my Lord of Essex’ days;
Call’d that the age of action —“True!” quoth Hee —
“There’s now as great an itch of bravery,
And heat of taking up, but cold lay downe,
For, put to push of pay, away they runne;
Our onely City trades of hope now are
Bawd, Tavern-keeper, Whores, and Scrivener;
The much of privileg’d kingsmen, and the store
Of fresh protections make the rest all poore;
In the first state of their Creation
Though many stoutly stand, yet proves not one
A righteous pay-master.” Thus ran he on
In a continued rage; so void of reason
Seem’d his harsh talke, I sweat for feare of treason. (34-53)

It is, of course, far from certain that we are meant to identify this thinking with Donne’s in any way at all, even if the contents of the Courtier’s Library establish something of a precedent for doing so. What does seem certain, however, is that soon after his fall, Essex was associated with a set of noble, heroic values that were deemed to belong to the idealized past. In considering the “enthusiastic retro-Elizabethanism” (Knowles) that sprung up under the Stuarts, then, in which “values of opposition to Spain and Catholicism, anti-popery, foreign intervention in support of beleaguered Protestant allies, and a unified Church governed by a godly prince were fuelled by the myriad images of Elizabeth’ reign” (Knowles), we cannot simply reduce this nostalgia to a “quite extraordinary cult of the memory of Elizabeth” (Butler 198). As Donne’s poem suggests, to many the nostalgia for the late 16th century was for the values represented in the public memory by Essex, and not those of his Queen. Essex’s role as rebel, as we saw in the ballads sung posthumously about him, is pushed into the background, and he is remembered not as a political figure, or even primarily as a military one, but as the embodiment of a faded paradigm and as a measure of the cost of hysteresis.

Robert Prickett’s “Honor’s Fame in Triumph Riding” [1604], expressly written to counteract the official narrative of the rebellion (and dedicated to, among others, the Earl
of Southampton, Essex’s friend and co-conspirator), like the ballads I discussed in chapter 2, puts into verse the enduring popular impression made by the earl. Like them, the poem includes a catalogue of Essex’s military triumphs and of those chivalric virtues — his mercy, his justice, his faithfulness — that set him apart from the “corrupt deceit” of the court (100). And like them, it shrinks from any imputation of seditious intent to the “rebellion”: although Prickett seems content to concede that Essex was guilty of “inconsiderate thoughts” (1), and he suggests that they led him to a “dangerous accident” (1), he is quite adamant that “he never did intend / His force against his countries good to bend: / But seeming ill was ill approv’d / By them who not his honour lov’d” (101-4).

For Prickett, the causes of Essex’s “accident” were rooted in the personal and not the political: when “from the mistris of his life and death” (146) Essex was banished, “in passion then he sighed forth sorrowes breath: / The presence of his Queene whose sight most joyd him, / Had given him life, the want thereof destroyed him” (148-50). Like Harington, Prickett uses the metaphor of the turbulent sea to describe the mental state that resulted from Essex’s banishment from Elizabeth’s presence, and that led to his insurrection: after “monthes and yeares in restles harbour tost, / A patient hope indures a raging storme: / Bright honors ship did find itself neare lost” (169-71), and it was “thence did proceed he rigor of that day” (177). Any treason that resulted from the “confusion” Essex felt at his banishment from Elizabeth’s presence (166), Prickett insists, was done “ignorantly”: “Intent and purpose in the act, / Is that which makes a Traytors fact” (206-8). The rebellion, then, flows from the severing of Essex’s deeply personal connection with “the mistris of his life and death,” and with the overflow of uncontrollable passion that was the inevitable (and, for Prickett, the entirely logical) result.
Indeed, as I’ve shown, this causal connection seems to have been accepted nearly wholesale by Essex’s contemporaries as a matter of fact that required no justification or explanation. To Prickett, it is self-evident:

Let but the man of honour and renowne,
That is adourned with his Sovereignes love:
Whose heart is sound unto the State and crowne,
Whose thoughts do always faithfull motions move:
If exiled from his King he should remaine,
And as a traitor bere dishonour’s staine:
What would he thinke? Or what course take?
Let noble minds the answere make. (153-60)

Insisting that all accusations of treason were “after-raised-up misty Metors” (1) retroactively imputed to the uprising by “three times thrise double minded men” (2), Prickett exalts Essex’s “souldier’s passion” with the “bloud-thirsty crueltie” of his courtly enemies, who he says “were no men, / They walkt about like shaddowes then” (226-32).

The language is evocative of the “shadoes only shadoes bringing forth” described by Greville in contrast to the authentic cynosures among whom he names Essex; it recalls, too, the distinction between the native hue of resolution and the pale cast of thought. Prickett, like Greville and Hamlet, finds the paragon of authenticity in Essex’s “souldier’s passion.” And like them, and Donne, Prickett is explicit about the connection between Essex’s passion, his authenticity, and his inability to “seem”:

He was not hollow, like the Vaults of hell,
His soundnesse fled from base hypocrisy,
He fetcht no rules from hel-borne Machiauel, 

His learning was diuine Philosophy, 

His word and deed without a false intending, 

In Honors Lyst went on, the Truth commending; 

His vertues steps to Truth enclinde, 

Close subtile falshood undermined. (343-50) 

Essex’s “soundness” is rooted in the kind of “divine Philosophy” of which Donne would have approved, and his virtue is so linked with the authentic connection to the infinite it implies.

Prickett, like so many of the authors whose work draws on Essex as an inspiration, asserts that with the passing of the earl\textsuperscript{77} the values with which he is metonymic have gone out of the world. The “worlds worldlings” have driven virtue from “this Yron world” (457-8), and now “this rotten age is of that grace bereft” (459). For Prickett, then, as for Donne and his citizen, Essex in death retains his force as a shorthand for an existential paradigm with which the only relation left is nostalgia. 

There are a number of conclusions to draw from Prickett’s account (and, indeed, from that of Donne’s merchant). The first is that it was those qualities in Essex that I have associated with his authenticity that seem to have made the deepest and most lasting impression on his contemporaries. Second, and it is to this aspect of his legacy that I wish to turn, it is that he is metonymically associated with a particular style of politics, one that under the Stuarts seems to have passed: by insisting that the motivations for

\textsuperscript{77} Prickett is quite insistent that Essex is in heaven, “in endlesse joy upheld by Angels hands” (470).
Essex’s political uprising were personal, commenters imply a polity in which the two were inextricable. And by invoking this aspect of Essex’s relationship with his queen and the authority she represents, these writers argue that his subjection to it is very much a feature of his sense of subjectivity, and that the link between the two is inextricable, and far more than mere etymology. By cultivating a sense of nostalgia for this cognateness, authors mounted criticism of a new politics they often found to be detrimentally disinterested and self-serving, with Essex as the shorthand for the *communitas* so often associated with Elizabethan England.

5.1 The Second and Third Earls

By the time of the Civil War, the stakes of making such a connection were inestimably higher, made all the more immediate by the prominence of Robert Devereux, the third Earl of Essex, son of the subject of this thesis. As suggested by many scholars, the third earl (along with the Earl of Southampton) was seen as his father’s political and military heir. This association, already natural because of his lineage, name, and title, was enhanced by the fact that the second earl was one of a number of people Annabel Patterson describes as “symbolic persons, historical, literary, or in the in-between territory of legend” (213) that were claimed as avatars of republican values. Patterson points out that Milton saw in Essex the portraiture of his own cause: in his commonplace

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book, noting the conflict between Leicester and Essex’s father Walter (it had been bruited that Leicester had poisoned the first Earl of Essex in order to clear the way for marriage to his Lady), wrote that “just so another Essex was destroyed by the same deceits” (1:464; qtd in Patterson 229), and under the heading “Property and Taxes” Milton refers himself to those passages of Camden’s account of Essex’s rebellion wherein the historian attributes the widespread support of Essex to the poverty of the common people (1:484; Patterson 229). Where Prickett and so many others remember Essex’s rebellion as the natural consequence of an abrupted personal relation with an authority figure, Milton’s reading of Essex is circumscribed entirely by the political, and Essex’s fall indicative of a bankrupted authority whose actions have bankrupted an entire system of power. The comparison was only a private one, however; Milton never took advantage of the culturally constructed second earl in print, perhaps because of the contradictory place Essex still occupied in the public imagination as representative of a deeply personal mode of subjection and of subjectivity.

If Milton found little use of Essex as a rhetorical shorthand, though, there were others who did. To moderate royalists, Essex (perhaps more than Elizabeth) offered a perfect historical example of the kind of idealized polity that, in their view, had once flourished in England, and he served as the model for a set of values on which to construct a new polity moving forwards. This thinking was most clearly worked out in the literary context of the romance. The genre, according to Nigel Smith, was “habitually derided as a form that induced vainglory and illusion in the reader through an over-indulgence in the imaginary and the fantastic” (235); however, he argues, the “lived romance” of court politics in the 1620s and 1630s, such as Prince Charles and
Buckingham’s attempt to woo the Spanish Infanta, led to a revivification of the form. “The fictive forms provided by romance,” he argues, “enabled many political imaginations to comprehend, analyze, and think their way out of the dilemmas of the 1640s and 1650s” (235).

Like Smith, Victoria Kahn positions romance in the period as a response to Hobbesian vainglory. She argues that “English prose romance of the 1650s should be read as a contribution to seventeenth-century debates about the role of the passions in forging political obligation…[They] chart a trajectory from a politics of narrow self-interest — which contemporaries identified with Hobbes — to a politics of aesthetic interest” (625). Kahn cites three prose romances from the period: Percy Herbert’s *Princess Cloria*, Richard Brathwaite’s *Panthalia*, and William Sales’ *Theophania*. What she barely even mentions in passing, but what is of particular interest to me, is that the latter two contain thinly disguised accounts of Essex’s relationship with Elizabeth. If romance can be said to be a response to Hobbesian political thought and its involvement in the civil war (and both Kahn and Smith are persuasive on the point), then it seems that Essex is a central part of the rhetoric of that response. Hobbes’ description of human beings as irredeemably self-interested suggests that the only forces that bond individuals together are fear of violence and the instinct to self-preservation. Needless to say, this conception represents the apotheosis of the existential paradigm in opposition to which I have situated Essex, and insofar as Essex represented to the 17th century the most recent and foremost avatar of that paradigm, it is unsurprising that it is he who stands in as the shorthand symbol for national unity achieved through passionately transcendent relationships.
5.2 Theophania

Published in 1655, and likely written about a decade earlier, William Sales’ unfinished *Theophania* provides a romance framework on which to hang a discussion of a civil conflict whose climax was still unimaginable to the author and to its participants. Amid the chivalric adventures of analogical stand-ins for such personages as the princes Rupert of the Rhine and William of Orange and Charles II, the “underrated and understudied” (Smith 236) text offers a (very) loosely historical version of the relationship of Heraclius (the second Earl of Essex) and Theodora (Elizabeth), as told by Cenodoxius (the third earl), Heraclius’ son. The main thrust of Cenodoxius’ tale is that he was driven to rebellion by persistent disrespect from his kings, an act that he implies is a continuation of the injustice done to his father. The text is royalist in its sympathies, evidenced by its comically overwrought descriptions of Alexandro/Charles as possessing “such a majestic beauty that they all thought they never had beheld any equal to it,” “the perfection of all the sex,” from whose “face — which was full and round — came such resplendent rays through that cloud that it even dazzled the eyes of the beholders, and altogether framed such a royal mien that both knees and hearts were ready to bow at his devotion” (115-7).

Still, though, it is far from blindly supportive of the monarchy. Patterson argues that the text “seems to be directed to Charles II, and to argue for a restoration of a reformed monarchy” (264); the implication is that Charles II is shown in a much more favourable light than his father (who was at the time of the writing of the work still
living), and than his grandfather James I, and even, as I will describe shortly, than
Elizabeth. All of these monarchs are accused of abuses of one sort of authority or other,
and although Charles is depicted in battle as “showing such an invincible strength in his
arm that the brandishment of his sword was no less terrible than if Jove himself, to
support the glory of a triple royalty, had armed him with his threefold dart” (269), he is
also accused of being “so unskilled in the art of governing that whosoever have opposed
[his] proceedings or by any means sought to embroil [him] in troubles, instead of
punishment have been rewarded with offices of the greatest trust” (261).

For all that, what interests me the most in the context of this thesis is the
treatment of the second Earl of Essex, and it is to his story (in the guise of “Heraclius”) that I
turn. Before Heraclius is introduced, we are presented with a description of his
Queen, Theodora, who has come to the throne “by a doubtful claim,” but who quickly
“through a seeming popularity brought the people into a slavish obedience” (193).
Having done so, she quickly sets about consolidating her tyrannical power in a way that
would make Machiavelli himself beam with pride, feigning her way into the hearts of her
people.

Of all her subjects, “none had so sad an experience of her pride and inconstancy”
(196) as Heraclius. Having earned renown for his noble birth, glorious achievements,
beauty, mien, and deportment, he drew her attention. “At first, by eminent employments
she drew him to a nearness about her person,” at all of which he was successful. Then,
“letting fall ambiguous speeches, she emboldened him to pretensions of a higher nature,
which through either modesty or prudence – knowing the fickleness of women’s passions –
he seemed not to understand” (196). The two develop a romantic love, brought to the
surface after Heraclius saves her life by taking a dagger thrust meant for her, nearly
dying in the process; when the assassin is found to be in league with Valentius, the
emperor of Rome, and Aurelia, Queen of Cyprus (not very subtle doubles for the Pope
and Mary, Queen of Scots), Theodora declares eternal enmity against Rome, its princes,
and its priests. She vows to “throw down their temples” and “in contempt of his power
[to] set up onions, or cats, or what my fancy shall best like, to be adored in his chiepest
temples” (199-200).

What ensues, curiously, is a campaign by Elizabeth’s fictional doppelganger to
root out the “Roman” religion, persecuting and burning its adherents and destroying their
temples, at first undertaken in the name of vengeance for the attempt on her life. Soon,
though, she admits Heraclius into her fullest confidence, promising no longer to “conceal
from [him] those secret counsels which have so long laboured in [her] bosom for a
delivery” (203). Knowing that “the chief tie between the people of this country and the
Romans is the unanimous consent of both nations in matters of religion,” and wanting to
sever all ties with Rome, Theodora plans to show her people that their adoration of
Roman gods amounts to “either the vain chimeras of superstitious brains or else the
subtle inventions of wicked politicians, introduced only by a specious show of devotion
to tyrannize over men’s consciences” (203). She claims these actions would be taken in
defence of the realm, since “we cannot by any other means procure our safety”; if it is to
be successful, citizens must be “induced to like the change” by being enriched with the
spoils of the priests and their temples (204).

Heraclius is more than a little stunned at the revelation of this plan, and knows
that “not to comply was instead of advancement to procure his own ruin” (205), but he
does caution Theodora to consider “the dangerous consequence of such violent alterations” (206): the fear of gods and the fear of princes, he suggests, spring from the same root, and “in abolishing them you may perhaps destroy the tenure of your own power,” and in emboldening “the vulgar with profane hands to violate those things which in all ages have been reputed sacred, at the same time you instruct them to vilify and despise the authority of kings,” after which “the multitude contemning all human dictates, the regal ornaments will become the derision, and the flowers of the crown the trophies, of their fury” (206). Theodora is adamant, however, that given Valentinianus’ continued support for her rival claimant Aurelia, there is no other way to counteract his influence. She orders the extirpation of the Roman rites, insisting on a religion that worships Jupiter alone, of which she makes herself High Priestess. The people enthusiastically join in the demolition of the ancient relics and altars, and the nation gives way to “massacre or rapine” (211). Still, “to carry all with a show of sanctity” (211), she has workmen devise a new iconography, attires herself in sacred vestments, carries out public sacrifice with great pomp, and returns to her palace. Valentinianus, who had gathered a fleet to invade the country, was forced by the resulting show of national unity to return to Rome without making an attempt.

The Queen then inexplicably turns on Heraclius, although he “being of a frank, generous nature perceived it not” (212). Sending him to campaign against the Sardinians, she begins to entertain new favourites, and his counsellors urge him to ally

79 This is a suggestive echo of Camden’s commentary on Essex’s obliviousness to the Machiavellian machinations of his courtly rivals: “What need many words? Hee, though hee were of a lively and quicke understanding, either perceived not, or would not perceive these practices” (§ 3).
himself with the conquered foe and return to defeat Theodora. After some generic absurdities, including a love story with the daughter of his Sardinian foe, Heraclius is captured, and held in prison only so that the Queen can “insult over his misfortunes” (236); he “with a cheerful alacrity” (238) goes to the executioner, and the Queen passes her days in guilt and remorse. Years later, “the effects of her cruelty were wholly imputed to her ministers, and to herself the glorious and still lasting titles of the most pious, just, and merciful of princes” (238).

5.3 Theophania’s Essex

This version of the Essex story is compelling for a number of reasons. Firstly, the rebellion is almost entirely omitted. This is perhaps not surprising, given the moderate royalism of the text and its author; if one is to reclaim a historical figure for use in restoring a responsible monarchy, one cannot really trumpet his purported coup. As I’ve shown, though, this is entirely in keeping with a tradition of thought and memory that

80 Like Panthalia, Theophania includes a reference to an oft-recounted (and apocryphal) story about a ring: supposedly, in the height of their friendship, Elizabeth gave Essex a ring, and told him that should he ever require her forgiveness, he need only send it to her as a reminder of their mutual admiration and all would be made right. On the eve of his execution, he sends the ring through an intermediary (often the Countess of Nottingham), who for varying reasons fails to deliver it, and Essex is executed. Years later, the countess falls ill, and on her deathbed reveals to the Queen what happened. The Queen curses her, and never forgives herself, her own thoughts dwelling on Essex until her death. Pigeon suggests that the tale was well enough known to occasion a reference in Webster’s The Devil’s Law Case [1623], in which Leonora asks to die “In the distraction of that worthy princess / Who loathed food, and sleep, and ceremony. / For thought of that brave gentleman / She fain would have saved, had not a false conveyance / Express’d him stubborn-hearted” (3.3.277-281). Whether or not this is true, there is no doubt that the story has a remarkable tenacity: in addition to its appearance in several 17th-century accounts of Essex’s life, the story was central in Lytton Strachey’s breathless biography of Essex, where it was presented as fact, and appeared prominently in the 1939 Hollywood film “The Private Lives of Elizabeth and Essex” – itself based on the Broadway play “Elizabeth the Queen” – starring, unbelievably, Bette Davis and Errol Flynn in the title roles.
represented the events as personal, and far from political. In fact, Essex is figured in the story as a faithful and humble servant, one who only wavered in his dedication to his queen when she turned on him, and even then only for the love of “Agnesia, the Sardinian princess,” which although an entirely spurious device, serves only to deepen the implication that the entire affair was as personal as it was political. He is, instead, cast as a noble and honourable servant of the realm and of his prince, whose naivete allows him to be manipulated by a Machiavellian ruler. This is of course in keeping with the larger project of the narrative: to depict the civil war as arising not from a flawed political system, but from its abuse by incompetent or self-serving monarchs dedicated to their own ends and not to the greater good. If this case is to be made, the rebellion of the nobility (the third earl, who in Theophania attempts to connect his father’s suffering at the hands of poor monarchs through to his own, thus making his rebellion, too, a personal rather than a systemic disruption) can only be seen to be against an individual monarch, and not against monarchy itself.

In idealizing Essex, the story idealizes “the transcendent humanity of Heraclius” (229) as much as it does “the passions of his mind” (227) and his willingness to sacrifice his life for his Queen. As much as it lambastes Theodora/Elizabeth for the Machiavellian quality of her personal rule, and for her mistreatment of a loyal and faithful subject, it holds up as a paragon the authentic subjectivity of Heraclius/Essex, and the authentic subjection with which it is concomitant. The true fault of Theodora/Elizabeth, Sales implies, was that she proved unworthy of this level and kind of devotion.

This imputation is consistent with the text’s curious depiction of Essex as a defender of religion. Let us set aside for the moment the historical liberties that allow
Elizabeth to be the sole reformer of the church; that decision is made, I would argue, in the name of depicting monarchical rule as personal rather than responsible, well in keeping with what we have seen elsewhere. It is certainly true that Essex did not place too high a premium on the sect of Christianity practiced by Englishmen and Englishwomen\(^{81}\), but this is not the tenor of his objection in *Theophania*. It is not the elimination of Roman deities in the country that bothers him, per se, but rather the attack on the transcendent. Danger lies in allowing the people to see that “the holy mysteries of the gods have not been exempt from error” (206): that religion is, in effect, subject to fashioning by human hands, that it is made, not given. In short, this is an offshoot of the argument that I have been making throughout this thesis: Essex is associated with infinity, with a direct sense of communion with the divine and with an interconnectedness through it to all people, while those around him espouse what amounts here to a “religious self-fashioning.” For Heraclius, religion is “the chief obligation which preserves the concord of particular people amongst themselves” (206); in other words, he associates religion with a sense of *communitas*, and a sense of communal identity. The narrator takes pains to assert the correctness of Heraclius/Essex’s position: Theodora imagines that in assuming for herself the position of High Priestess, she will then be able to impose any laws “as should most conduce to the supporting of an unlimited prerogative,” but she is proven wrong. Rather, “the right of divine authority being denied them, [monarchs’] ordinances have ever been contemned,” which has “crushed and dashed in pieces the whole frame of the civil

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\(^{81}\) Christopher Blunt, in his interrogation after the rebellion, reported that “in his private talk, [Essex] was wont to say that he liked not that any man should be troubled for his religion” (Spedding 304).
government” (210). Monarchy fails, the text argues, when it bases itself on the principles of second causes. As a system bounded by immanence and *communitas* — represented by Essex — it is still an ideal worth striving for.

If we make allowances for the rhetorical purposes to which he has been put, the text suggests an Essex associated with the same “oceanic” feeling of synecdochal infinity that I have demonstrated throughout this work. The hysteresis effect seems here to govern his legacy as much as it did his ascent and fall, and the same sort of post-lapsarianism with which I have associated him in ontological, literary, and theatrical terms here governs his historical affiliation, as well. He remains in the civil war period the avatar for the “old ways,” and his fall retains its metonymical link with their passing.

### 5.4 Panthalia

Richard Brathwaite’s *Panthalia* [1659], too, suggests Essex as a block upon which to construct an ideal monarchy, but to him, what qualifies Essex for such a status is the authenticity of his passion. The story is primarily an allegorized representation of Stuart rule, tracing the worsening “corruption of political passions” that culminated in the “debauchery and uxoriousness of the courts of James and Charles” (Kahn). Under the reign of James (herein represented, with a nod to Sidney’s negligent pastoral ruler, as Basileus), “Tilts and Turnaments with other Martiall Exercises, wherein the Peerage were formerly imployed; became Addresses of too virile a quality. Carpet-Knights were not for Campe-Service: nor Court-Couches convertible to Field-Bedds” (46). The effeminacy of the court is paralleled by the decidedly un-liminal insularity of its
entertainments: “Masters of Revells [were] appointed and amply endowed; and these were employed in contriving and inventing variety of Comick and Pastorall delights: which were usually presented in their private Court Theaters, purposely erected for such Enterludes and Comicall Inventions” (47). Charles/Rosicles, in his wooing of Henrietta Maria, is accused of being nothing more than “one, as can suit his Fancy to all Objects: and pretend Faith, when he intends to colour it with the cunning artifice of Fraud” (93); in this, he is typical of his time, wherein the world “presents but in a Land-skip, a continued counterfet Love-mask; wherein appears variety of Faces, but they are not native nor genuine; but borrowed vizards” (93).

In spending as much time as it does dissecting and describing the marriages and courtships of the Stuart rulers, Panthalia insists that passion — and authentic passion, at that — is the cornerstone of effective monarchy. When properly deployed, authentic passion ensures “the harmonius union of a well-temper’d Monarchy” (271). When it is absent, or when it is merely contrived, as it always seems to be in the fictionalized courts of the Stuarts, the result is mere “state-theatre” (271), run by “sprouts of adventitious Honour” (281).

All this is described in contrast to Elizabethan values, whose articulation through the story of Essex and Elizabeth open the work. Figured as Clarentio and Bellingeria, respectively, the earl and his queen are presented as the ideal whose end marks the

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82 At the story’s end, Charles II/Charicles is characterized by “rare temperance and moderation” (304), “princely compassion” (305), mingling reason and passion in his treatment of his people after the Restoration; balance has been restored. Patterson notes that the work was being edited almost right up to the moment of its publication in August of 1659, just after Richard Cromwell’s abdication, and possibly even while it was in press. This implies that the final few pages of the work, those that deal with the Restoration, may not have been part of the original plan, and that the redemptive tone struck by its inclusion is an afterthought originating in the country’s change of political course.
decline into effeminacy. Essex/Clarentio’s “actions were amiable: and his disposition so sweetly tempered; as he became popular without seeking it: and generally belov'd without any obsequious officiating of it” (9). When Bellingeria worries that the closeness of their relationship might lead to an “occasion of aspersion” (9), she orders him to “henceforth discontinue [his] visits” (10). Clarentio, “one highly transported with passion” (11), gives in to his “distempered thoughts” (11) and begins to plan his revenge on the rivals whom he believed to have engineered the breach in his relationship with his queen. His actions, which throughout are depicted in the most chivalrous and honourable fashion, and which he defends eloquently — if ineffectively — against his courtly accusers at trial, are only afterwards “by some censorious spirits misstyled an Insurrection” (13).

Elizabeth/Bellingeria, it is important to note, is never explicitly blamed for the execution of Essex/Clarentio, which is styled as flowing from “his Enemies malignant humour: whose sole bent it was, as they conceiv'd, to improve their future advancement by his Dishonour” (24). She is remembered for “the nobleness and puritie of her disposition” (29), and for her learning, her justice, and her martial valour. Brathwaite describes her as a perfect ruler in all things save her treatment of Essex/Clarentio:

A precedent to present times: and memorall to future Ages. Yet the purest Cloath may admit it's staine: and the integriousest person incurr a blemish. This I might instance in this unparallel'd Princesse; a Lady memorable for her virile and masculine valour; and no less generally fam'd for her virgin honour. Whose royall repute receiv'd a deep taint or tincture in one action. (30-1)
It is only after her death (which, it is hinted, was caused by her passionate grief at the death of her favourite), with the accession of a race of “People naturally servile, uncivile and pusillanimous” (39) that the country falls into its decline to effeminacy, and contrast between “the admirable chivalric honor of an Essex and the romance debauchery and delusions of the Stuart court” becomes clear, along with Brathwaite’s “recommendation of a politic appeal to the affections” (Kahn).

Brathwaite’s argument for the centrality of the passions in a monarchical polity centres on the largely chivalric social memory of Essex, and his passionate relationship with Elizabeth is based on the historical continuity of the model I have sketched out. Both Elizabeth and Essex are praised for their passionate involvement in their respective roles, and the contrast with the imitative, theatricalized presentation of those passions in the self-interested courts of the Stuart monarchs serves to stress the foundational importance of those passions to an effective and just monarchy, just as it posits their lack (here equated with the fall of Essex and the death of Elizabeth) as the true cause of the Civil War and of the hollowness of monarchy as an institution.

Before re-reading Kahn’s argument from a rather more Essexian perspective, I’d like to return briefly to two suggestions I made in the second chapter. The first, considering *Hamlet*, was that we ought to read Hamlet as a man caught between authenticity and sincerity, wherein any authentic act was, to those around him, indistinguishable from a sincere one, inasmuch as the rest of the court interacted with the world through this latter phenomenology. There was for the prince no way to express
himself that could avoid this trap. Based in an ethic of difference, sincerity can easily be performed, or “played.” Hamlet’s authenticity cannot. He has, in short, “that within which passeth show.” The second moment to which I want briefly to return comes from my reading of *Troilus and Cressida*. In it, I argued that that play, too, juxtaposes and ethic of integrity with an ethic of difference, primarily in the differing approaches of its titular characters to their love, but also picked up in the “emulousness” of the Greek camp. Recall Nestor’s commentary on the Greek process of choosing a champion to face Hector:

> It is supposed
> He that meets Hector issues from our choice;
> And choice, being mutual act of all our souls,
> Makes merit her election and doth boil.
> As ‘twere from forth us all, a man distilled
> Out of our virtues. (1.3.347-52)

I suggested that this moment prefigures Hobbes’ delineation of the theatrical creation of an “Artificial Person” as a metaphorical representation of civic leadership; for Troilus unity is achieved only by a willing submission to, and submersion into, an infinite authority, whereas for the Greeks it can be achieved through a collaborative exercise in reason. Where for Troilus authority is justified because of its connection with the infinite, for the Greeks it is so because it is created “by us all.” I argued that these texts, in their associations with Essex, drew attention to the fragmentation that had come to govern self-conception, and that was beginning to dominate political discourse in the period, as well. I draw attention to this argument now because I suggest that, half a
century removed, the romances of the Civil War are using Essex in essentially the same way.

That vainglory is for Hobbes a fundamental weakness in human nature is a commonplace; after all, as he reminds us, in its Biblical etymology “leviathan” refers to “the King of the Proud.” It is, in fact, the reason human beings need rulers and laws at all; were simple self-preservation the driving instinct, we would, like animals do, simply band together, work as individuals for the benefit of the collective, and avoid internecine conflict of any kind. This being far from the case, a ruler is given power enough not to regulate the internal passions of any one citizen, but to exert control — physically, if necessary — over the extent to which those passions are given reign by any one citizen. With this in mind, if a society is to survive, the ruler must be strong enough, aware enough, and impartial enough that these curbs are put in place equally and effectively. It was precisely these conditions that the Stuarts failed to meet. In such a world, where there is no bridle either internal or external for the self-interest of vainglory, love and honour become dangerous, re-inscribed “in terms of politic self-interest” (Kahn 638). Politics becomes rooted increasingly in faction and interest, and “increasingly in this climate, all professions of love begin to look like hypocrisy” (640); this is a quandary that Hamlet and Troilus would understand.

To royalists of a more modern persuasion, there did exist a model of a society wherein the bonds of community exceeded self-interest, where monarchs ruled loving

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83 It is worth pointing out the contrast here with the writing of, say, Thomas A Kempis, or Donne, or Essex himself, or even of Freud, wherein the immersion of an individual into a community to which he or she quite literally belonged is the force that keeps the raging passions in cheek. External force only becomes necessary when self-definition (or, said another way, “self-fashioning”) is the dominant mode.
subjects by guiding them towards the common good, not by forcibly crushing their naturally violent, brutish urges, and where a social contract was made unnecessary by the nearly mechanical solidarity of the members of the collective. And if such a model did not exist anywhere in 17th-century Europe, what of it? It had existed in England in the past, or so they believed, paradigmatically represented by Essex, and could do so again, in the genre of romance. In co-opting the genre, Sales and Brathwaite attempt to sketch a path from Hobbesian self-interest to what Kahn describes as an “aesthetic interest” (628), from vainglory to “imaginative identification” (628) between courtiers. That they do so through the genre of romance leads us to Hirst’s suggestion that we read “the proliferation of romances in the 1650s…as political prescription, when in the minds of many, force rather than nobility and virtue appeared to dominate the body politic” (148).

Part of the prescription, it is important to point out, is that open rebellion is unacceptable: the name given to the doppelganger of the third earl, Cenodoxus, derives from the Greek word “kenodoxos,” which means “vainglorious” (Pigeon 61). In this decision, and in the decision to elide the second earl’s rebellion, Sales and Brathwaite make it quite clear that identification with romance chivalry and with Essex can only take place within the limits of a reformed monarchy.

That this path from “interest” to “imaginative identification” seems to have clung closely to the place occupied by Essex in the national consciousness is predictable. For in romance, the distinction is natural between “the admirable chivalric honour of an Essex and the romance debauchery and delusions of the Stuart court” (Kahn 641). Kahn reads *Theophania* as Sales’ attempt, typical of the ambitions of royalist romance, to “find a way to accommodate the old world of chivalric virtue to the new world of ‘politick
maxims” by depicting the soldier as “above all...a man of feeling” (646), and few men could have been remembered more “feelingly” than Essex, even fifty years on. And as such, Essex’s investiture as the paragon of the “imaginative identification” that was to form the building block of a new polity in England is suggestive. Would it be too much to suggest that the “imaginative identification” for which these thinkers strove was something akin to the synecdochal worldview I have described, and whose metonym in the later Elizabethan era and beyond was Essex himself?

5.5 Future(’)s Past

In identifying as “the political task of our generation” the achievement of a “new planetary humanity” Giorgio Agamben in *The Coming Community* bemoans the “senseless form of individuality” that dominates contemporary subjectivity. In its place, he aspires to construct a “community... without subjects.” Standing in its way, and typifying the “absurdity of individual existence,” is a problem of perception. Our current mode, he suggests, is flawed because we can only see in categories: “such and such being” has “this or that property, which identifies it as belonging to this or that set, to this or that class (the reds, the French, the Muslims).” What must be uncovered (or, as I argue, recovered) is the ability to find in each being the singularity of its existence, what Agamben refers to as its “whatever being.” Far from an expression of indifference of the sort used hourly by my high school students, “whatever being” is not “being, it does not matter which,” but rather “being such that it always matters.” The goal of this mode of
perception is to recover existence from classification and reveal its true nature, to remove the conditions of belonging ("there is an x such that it belongs to y") so that everything is valued "for its being-such, for belonging itself."

In such a community, the bonds between members would be, simply, love: love, as Agamben sees it, is not predicated on a particular property or condition of its object, but neither is it based on some indiscriminately applied "insipid generality (universal love)"; in his words, "the lover wants the loved one with all of its predicates, its being such as it is" (emphasis Agamben’s). Such a community would inevitably take on a transcendence analogous to a communion with divinity:

God or the good or the place does not take place, but is the taking place of the entities, their innermost exteriority. The being-worm of the worm, the being-stone of the stone, is divine. That the world is, that something can appear and have a face, that there is exteriority and non-latency as the determination and the limit of every thing: this is the good.

Likewise, the most serious transgression, the very definition of evil, is the insistence on existence as predicated on particulars: "evil, on the other hand, is the reduction of the taking-place to a fact like others, the forgetting of the transcendence inherent in the very taking-place of things."

Although there are centuries between them, and although Agamben’s ideas are very much born of late-20th century post-capitalist and post-industrialist notions of the individual, I cannot help but notice a striking parallel between the tensions he attempts to resolve and those I have described in this thesis. As we’ve seen, in The Advancement of Learning, Bacon claims that “certain it is that God worketh nothing in nature but by
second causes: and if [anyone] would have it otherwise believed, it is mere imposture” (1:6). This is precisely the evil of which Agamben speaks: it amounts to the reduction of existence to categorization and ramification. Donne, on the other hand, urges his parishioners to “Goe out, Goe forth, abroad, to consider God in his works; Goe as farre as you can, stop not in yourselves, nor stop not in any other, till you come to God himself” (Sermons VIII 122), and once they do, they will come “to know / His face in any naturall Stone, or Tree” (“First Anniversary” 453-4). It is the movement — better said, the movement back — from Bacon’s predicative eyes to Donne’s synecdochal ones that Agamben describes. It is the movement from Nestor’s piecemeal construction of reality to Troilus’ immersion and submersion into its transcendence, from Greville’s “shadoes” back to his Edenic “abcees.” It is, in short, the movement back to Essex’s world, as understood by his contemporaries, and as represented by him, by them, and by their nearest descendants, and as much as it exists in the remotest and at times most unimaginable past, thinkers like Agamben imply that perhaps, too, it is yet to come.
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