

THE MIND TRANSFIGUR'D:
BRAIN, BODY, AND SELF IN THE DRAMA OF
SHAKESPEARE AND MARLOWE

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The Mind Transfigur'd argues that the early modern period's fascination with embodied experience primed authors to experiment with literature's effects on their audiences. The rise of permanent theaters in London coupled with a broader interest in the philosophy of mind encouraged playwrights to attend to the dynamics of audiences' experiences. Accordingly, early modern plays, particularly those of William Shakespeare and Christopher Marlowe, reveal a pronounced degree of self-aware "metatheatricality" that predicts how an audience will respond to a dramatic work. Beyond simply reminding playgoers of a play's fictional nature, this form of theatrical self-awareness folds an audience's experience into the dramatic work itself, incorporating it into the play's thematic concerns. This project suggests that we might understand Shakespeare and Marlowe as conducting experiments on their audiences, prodding and manipulating the minds of individuals in order to reveal hidden aspects of the audience's selves. Extending beyond their historical moment, these experiments continue to work upon our minds today and offer us new forms of self-experience.

To elucidate these experiments and explain their significance for audiences both modern and historical, this project analyzes early modern drama through the lens of three disparate archives: historical writing on the embodied mind, phenomenological philosophy, and findings from the cognitive sciences. This approach, known as neurophenomenology, aims to trace the

complexities of aesthetic experience and offer scientific explanations for it, while also remaining attentive to way historical individuals described their experiences. In drawing connections between the minds of early modern individuals and our own, this project argues that the embodied self is a product of evolutionary forces as well as social and cultural ones, and this allows us to appreciate what parts of our selves we share with historical individuals.

Each chapter focuses on one aspect of embodied selfhood and examines how Shakespeare and Marlowe's plays manipulate our self-experience. Analyzing famously self-aware plays such as *Edward II*, *Richard II*, *Doctor Faustus* and *Hamlet*, the chapters of *The Mind Transfigur'd* demonstrate how early modern drama reveals parts of our minds that might otherwise remain hidden, performing a kind of cognitive science before its time.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Matthew Kibbee received his undergraduate degree from Tufts University, where he graduated *summa cum laude* with a focus on English literature and creative writing. After living in Vietnam for a year where he taught English as a second language, he returned to the United States for graduate school. He received an M.A. from the University of Chicago, writing his thesis on Ben Jonson and cognitive linguistics. Matthew worked as a science writer at a non-profit research institute in Cambridge, Massachusetts before moving to Ithaca to complete his doctoral studies at Cornell. His research interests include early modern drama and poetry, the intersections of the sciences and the humanities, literary theory, and the philosophy of mind.

To my parents

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Introduction: Self-Figured Knots

This dissertation began with the question: Are the cognitive sciences relevant to literary studies?¹ I first asked myself this question, however, years before I started graduate school. In my first year at college, I was a neurobiology major, dreaming of a career of neurological research. As part of an advanced course in neurobiology, I participated in a research experiment studying how melatonin, a hormone involved in the regulation of circadian rhythms, impacted the regeneration of limbs in fiddler crabs. Our lab group was given over 100 of these animals, whose oversized claws we had to remove with a pair of thick steel scissors. I can remember grimly sitting over the plastic tank, plucking the outraged crustaceans from the water one by one, clipping their claws, and tossing them back into the plastic tub with their other maimed brethren. Fiddler crabs can naturally lose and regenerate their limbs—my snipping was merely meant to replicate the thousand natural shocks these animals might encounter were they still scuttling along the coast. Nevertheless, when I returned to the lab that evening to feed the crabs their nightly scoop of dry cat-food, I found nearly half the animals had died from the trauma, their brittle bodies floating in a fetid cocktail of soggy Meow Mix and bodily excretions. I had been told to expect this. Fiddler crabs *can* recover from such injuries, but survival is hardly a guarantee. Scooping up one mangled carcass after another, though, gave me pause. I knew that in the coming days, my lab group would repeat this process with a new batch of crabs. Whichever animals happened to survive would soon be dead all the same, for we had to remove the soft, translucent nubs miraculously sprouting from their wounds in order to study them under a microscope. My textbooks warned me that future experiments could involve more complex

¹ Portions of this chapter appear in my essay “*Hamlet* and Time-Consciousness: A Neurophenomenological Reading,” in *Shakespeare and Consciousness*, eds. Paul Budra and Clifford Werier (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 215-245.

organisms: mice, cats, even primates. I had no outright ethical objection to any of this. I believed, perhaps a touch naively, that this and other experiments I might perform would not only increase our knowledge of the human brain but also benefit people suffering from debilitating neurological disorders. That evening, however, I inhaled the briny stench of the crab and cat-food slurry and confronted the fact that I was perhaps not the sort of person to carry out this research. Our experiment finished a few months later. The results were inconclusive.

I had asked myself how the sciences of the mind might be relevant to literary studies both because I eagerly wished to make the switch to English and because I was loath to leave behind the topics and questions that had sparked my intellectual curiosity and drove me to study the brain in the first place. Eventually, I learned I could pursue these interests together, yet I am not entirely sure I can securely answer the question I asked myself so many years ago and which more recently motivated this dissertation. In the following chapters, I make an argument for the cognitive sciences' relevance to literary studies, but if, in the spirit of the empirical sciences, I had to affix an unambiguous label to my results, I fear the verdict would once again be "inconclusive." I firmly believe the cognitive sciences *could* be relevant to literary studies, yet there are numerous obstacles, particularly within the field of early modern literature, that prevent the sciences of the mind from making a worthwhile contribution to our discipline. Some of these are practical—questions of competence and methodology—and some are ideological. In this introduction, I attempt to confront both these impediments. First, I argue that the cognitive sciences can intervene in theoretical debates about *the self* by offering conceptual clarification and by pointing out avenues for further study. Second, I make the case that the standard cultural-historicist methodology is insufficient for studying the experience of embodied selfhood, and I

put forward a new methodology, drawn from the cognitive sciences, that attends to both the particularities of historical discourse and phenomenological character of embodied experience.

Whether these arguments are successful must, of course, be left to the judgment of the reader. As I argue below, a key challenge for any literary scholar attempting to use the cognitive sciences in his or her readings is to balance science's generalizations with the specific qualities of an individual literary work, to resist the impulse to categorize a play or poem as but one example of a universal type. This sort of systematic classification may make for good science but, I think, rather deflating readings. I have tried my best to avoid this tendency, but I take some solace in the thought that, this time, whatever the results of my research, the objects of study will survive my snipping and prodding.

Conceptual Matters: The Self

Determining the cognitive sciences' relevance to literary studies involves more than arguing how the sciences can help "explain" a literary text; it also involves convincing literary scholars that the findings of the cognitive sciences have some bearing on the questions that interest them.² It is for this reason that I have focused my project on the question of the self in early modern literature. It seems to me that both the cognitive sciences and literary studies have been pursuing questions about the nature of the self for some time, though each with minimal awareness of the progress and missteps of the other. True, interest in this topic has peaked at different times in these fields: the heyday of literary theory's debates about the self was in the

² Here and throughout I favor the term 'cognitive sciences' over the singular form in order to emphasize the diversity of methodologies and philosophical positions operating under this name. For a detailed summary of the so-called first cognitive revolution, which focused on computational processing, see Andy Clark, *Mindware: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Cognitive Science* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001). For a survey of the second revolution, including notions of embodied and extended cognition, see Mark Rowlands, *The New Science of the Mind: From Extended Mind to Embodied Cognition* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2010).

1980s and 90s while it remains a hot topic in the cognitive sciences today.³ On the other hand, the question of the self has never quite disappeared from early modern studies, even if the intensity of the arguments, and the number of the monographs, has decreased.⁴ If we put aside for the time being the question of what is currently fashionable in early modern studies, we can see that topic of selfhood has arisen as central point of debate in several critical movements of early modern scholarship, a fact that suggests the self may have some inherent importance in the literature of the time. To stake out exactly where the cognitive sciences might be the most relevant to scholars of early modern literature, I will briefly survey the debates about the self within the field. In doing so, I am not so much attempting to revive long-dead arguments but rather to establish a clear conceptual relationship between the aspects of selfhood that have occupied literary scholars and those aspects that can be elucidated by the cognitive sciences.

Stephen Greenblatt's *Renaissance Self-Fashioning* remains the model for contemporary scholarship on the Renaissance self, and his theoretical position vis-à-vis the self (derived largely from Foucault) holds that "the dream of autonomous agency, though intensely experienced and tenaciously embraced, is only a dream" and that "the innermost experiences of the individual" are constructed by social institutions.⁵ As many critics have noticed, Greenblatt's formulation is

³ The past ten years have seen the publication of numerous popular science books on the brain and self, including but not limited to Thomas Metzinger, *The Ego Tunnel: the Science of the Mind and the Myth of the Self* (Basic Books, 2009); Antonio R. Damasio, *Self Comes to Mind: Constructing the Conscious Brain* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2010); V. S. Ramachandran, *The Tell-Tale Brain: a Neuroscientist's Quest for What Makes Us Human* (W. W. Norton, 2011); Bruce M. Hood, *The Self Illusion: How the Social Brain Creates Identity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012); Anil Ananthaswamy, *The Man Who Wasn't There: Investigations into the Strange New Science of the Self* (New York: Dutton, 2015); and Evan Thompson, *Waking, Dreaming, Being: Self and Consciousness in Neuroscience, Meditation, and Philosophy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015).

⁴ Scholarship on the early modern self has hardly dried up. Relevant monographs from the last ten decades include (but are not limited to): Peter Holbrook, *Shakespeare's Individualism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010); Joel B. Altman, *The Improbability of Othello: Rhetorical Anthropology and Shakespearean Selfhood* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010); Peter Kishore Saval, *Shakespeare in Hate: Emotions, Passions, Selfhood* (New York: Routledge, 2016); and Kevin Curran, *Shakespeare's Legal Ecologies: Law and Distributed Selfhood* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2017).

⁵ Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), xi, xiv-xv.

a conscious rejection of an older critical tradition that celebrated the Renaissance for the dawn of autonomous individuality. In the previous century, Jacob Burckhardt attributed to the historical era a flourishing of human consciousness that was once covered by a “common veil” composed of “faith, illusion and childish prepossession.”⁶ Greenblatt undermined this narrative by emphasizing the domineering power of political forces, the constructedness of the self, and the illusion of autonomy. What both narratives have in common, however, is a focus on the sociocultural aspects of the self, how individuals defined themselves within cultural contexts and in relation to one another. Both critical approaches emphasized an individual’s roles within his or her community, religion, and political state, and while Burkhardt and Greenblatt attached different morals to their stories, the plot structures were largely identical. As John Jeffries Martin points out, both of these histories of the individual presuppose a self contingent solely upon social forces, a premise which makes plausible the authors’ belief that the political conditions of the Renaissance gave rise to modern subjectivity.⁷

Over the three decades since Greenblatt introduced this position to early modern scholarship, the notion of a socially constructed self has become something closer to “spontaneous philosophy,” or disciplinary common sense, than a fully theorized philosophical stance.⁸ As such, casual, unexamined statements about the self’s ultimate artificiality or non-existence are common in today’s early modern scholarship, especially cultural historical scholarship derived from New Historicism.⁹ Russell West, for example, assumes that a stable self was only beginning to take shape in the Jacobean era, and he remarks that individuality in the

⁶ Greenblatt, *Renaissance*, 98.

⁷ John Jeffries Martin, *Myths of Renaissance Individualism* (Hampshire, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 127.

⁸ John Guillory adapts Althusser’s term “spontaneous philosophy” for an academic context in “The Sokal Affair and the History of Criticism,” *Critical Inquiry* 28, no. 4 (Winter 2002): 475.

⁹ On the tendency of postmodern philosophers to favor a single dimension of the self, see Jerrold E. Seigel, *The Idea of the Self: Thought and Experience in Western Thought Since the Seventeenth Century* (New York: Cambridge UP, 2005), 605-650.

period was simply “an extraordinary [sic] flexible but artificial construction in the service of power, dictated by the necessities of political intervention and the pressures of the contingent historical moment.”¹⁰ Similarly, Catherine Belsey claims that before the bourgeoisie comes to power in the late seventeenth century, an individual was seen as “disunited or discontinuous” with “no single subjectivity,” and so we must reject the idea that Shakespeare’s plays promote a “the unified human subject or [affirm] a continuous or inviolable interiority.”¹¹ Francis Barker recites the same narrative: “Pre-Bourgeois subjection does not involve subjectivity at all” but a place or membership that has nothing to do with “an interiorized self-recognition.”¹² Jonathan Goldberg asserts, “The individual derived a sense of self largely from external matrices,” and in a later essay he warns readers against considering characters as autonomous or capable of change because these “conceptual categories” simply did not exist.¹³ Finally, Patricia Fumerton claims “the private self was a sugar-spun identity” and was essentially “void.”¹⁴

There are many grounds on which these accounts have been criticized, from their overgeneralizations of early modern thought to their anachronistic politics to their conceptual ambiguity that fudges distinctions between “self,” “subjectivity,” and “identity.”¹⁵ Although the

¹⁰ Russell West, *Spatial Representations on the Jacobean Stage: From Shakespeare to Webster* (Hampshire, NY: Palgrave, 2002), 228.

¹¹ Catherine Belsey, *The Subject of Tragedy: Identity and Difference in Renaissance Drama* (New York: Methuen, 1985), 18.

¹² Francis Barker, *The Tremulous Private Body: Essays on Subjection* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1995), 28, 58.

¹³ Jonathan Goldberg, *James I and the Politics of Literature: Jonson, Shakespeare, Donne, and Their Contemporaries* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1983), 86; Jonathan Goldberg, “Shakespearean Inscriptions: The Voicing of Power” in *Shakespeare and the Question of Theory*, eds. Patricia A Parker and Geoffrey H Hartman (New York: Methuen, 1985), 118.

¹⁴ Patricia Fumerton, *Cultural Aesthetics: Renaissance Literature and the Practice of Social Ornament* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 130. There are, of course, dissenting voices, but the disagreements take place on historical rather than philosophical grounds. In addition to Martin’s *Myths* (cited above), see Katherine Eisaman Maus, *Inwardness and Theater in the English Renaissance* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995).

¹⁵ Richard Levin accuses New Historicists of treating early modern culture as monolithic. See Richard Levin, “Unthinkable Thoughts in the New Historicizing of English Renaissance Drama,” *New Literary History*. 21, no. 3 (1990): 433-47. Brian Vickers finds a strong influence of anachronistic psychoanalytic theory in *Appropriating Shakespeare: Contemporary Critical Quarrels* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 225. And John Lee and Terry Sherwood criticize New Historicists for conceptual ambiguity. See John Lee, *Shakespeare’s Hamlet and the*

latter criticism has some relevance here, I am more concerned with specific dimensions of selfhood that New Historicism has sometimes acknowledged but often left unexamined. Certain critics, while not denying the social aspects of the self, have insisted that what we call the self also has a bodily dimension distinguishable, if not entirely separate from, the social dimension. That is, when we talk about the self, we sometimes seem to refer to the basic experience of possessing a physical body, of feeling a corporeal cohesiveness. Katherine Maus, for example, scolds critics for not even considering “the possibility of a subjectivity prior to or exempt from social determination.”¹⁶ And Martin voices a discomfort with the assumption that cultural forces work on a “blank slate,” insisting we should think of the social self as part of a “complex organism *already* capable of thought, feeling, emotion, and desire.”¹⁷ In an effort to bring this embodied aspect of the self to the fore, some critics have turned to Renaissance writing on the body, particularly on the Galenic humoral theory. This approach, which Richard Strier labels, “new humoralism,” attempts to treat the self as a “physiocultural” artifact and to investigate how people in the Renaissance both understood and experienced themselves as embodied individuals.¹⁸

I contend the work of the new humoralists and others reveals a degree of restlessness with New Historicism in regards to the experience of embodied selfhood. On the one hand, the critics’ methodology rarely deviates from typical New Historicism, and direct critiques of its

Controversies of Self (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000) and Terry G. Sherwood, *The Self in Early Modern Literature: for the Common Good* (Duquesne University Press, 2007).

¹⁶ Maus, *Inwardness*, 27-29.

¹⁷ Martin, *Myths*, 19.

¹⁸ Richard Strier, *Unrepentant Renaissance: From Petrarch to Shakespeare to Milton* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 17. Prominent examples of new humoralism include Michael C. Schoenfeldt, *Bodies and Selves in Early Modern England: Physiology and Inwardness in Spenser, Shakespeare, Herbert, and Milton* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999) and Gail Kern Paster, *Humoring the Body: Emotions and the Shakespearean Stage* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004).

philosophy are uncommon.¹⁹ On the other hand, it is significant that these scholars all venture outside the usual archives—if only momentarily—and cite well-known cognitive scientists. It’s not always easy to discern the motivation behind these gestures: is the goal to point out a merely coincidental similarity between conceptualizations in two different historical periods, or are they tacit recognitions that these historical discourses refer in some way to transhistorical cognitive processes? I would favor the latter and venture an argument that these inconsistencies speak to New Historicism’s inability to account for the embodied self in its phenomenological immediacy. One might even go so far as to claim that New Historicism was founded upon this very bracketing of the experience of selfhood from the study of culture. It is not often remarked upon that Greenblatt’s *Renaissance Self-Fashioning*, the text that championed the notion of the self as a socially constructed artifact, has on its first page this ahistorical pronouncement: “after all, there are always selves,” by which Greenblatt means (I think) the sensation or experience of selfhood.²⁰ In this swift, unexamined gesture, not only does Greenblatt place the experiential dimension of self outside of the range of his study but he also implies this aspect has no relevance to a *historical* study of the self.

Despite some of the more radical provocations, I would hazard that even the most ardent self-skeptics would acknowledge that, whatever concepts were available in early modern thought, an early modern individual experienced the *feeling* of a stable embodied self, even if just on a moment-to-moment basis. But, if this is true, how are we to account for this experience, and how does it relate to the sociocultural aspect of the self upon which New Historicism was founded? How can historicism discuss selves that have “always” been? It is here where I believe

¹⁹ Nancy Easterlin argues that these positions, though rarely endorsed explicitly anymore, continue to influence literary critical culture. See her *A Biocultural Approach to Literary Theory and Interpretation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2012), 39-40.

²⁰ Greenblatt, *Renaissance*, 1.

the cognitive sciences can usefully intervene. Cognitive scientists, particularly those attentive to the phenomenological tradition, reject the false choice between a “natural” and “socially constructed” self. Philosopher Dan Zahavi argues, “We shouldn’t accept being forced to choose between viewing selfhood as either a socially constructed achievement or an innate and culturally invariant given. Who we are is as much made as found.”²¹ This “innate” self to which Zahavi refers is not some “soul-pearl” or unchanging essence of individuality but rather a minimal, pre-reflective self-awareness that structures conscious experience. According to this theory, the experience of the embodied self evolved to help organisms navigate the natural world, and it is this aspect of the self that makes more complex dimensions, such the sociocultural one, possible.²² In the following sections, I will flesh out this concept of the embodied self as it has been theorized in the cognitive sciences, and I’ll argue for its significance in the study of early modern literature. For the moment, however, I only wish to position this concept of the innate, embodied self in relation to typical conceptions within the field of early modern studies.

Of course, there remains within New Historicism a suspicion of the universalizing claims of biology. In a field whose mantra is “Always historicize,” the idea of an ahistorical self is likely to be met with skepticism if not outright hostility. Yet what I am proposing is rather a multi-historical self. John Donne labels the intertwining of body and spirit as “That subtle knot that makes us man,” and I believe that as historically minded literary scholars, we ought to adopt a similar image of the self as a *knot of timelines*.²³ That is, we ought to see the self in its most

²¹ Dan Zahavi, *Self and Other: Exploring Subjectivity, Empathy, and Shame* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 90.

²² Damasio argues the embodied self makes possible the “autobiographical self,” which he defines as “the social me.” See his *Self Comes to Mind*, 23.

²³ “The Ecstasy,” ln. 64. All quotations from Donne are from *The Complete Poems of John Donne*, ed. Robin Hugh A. Robbins, Rev. ed., (New York: Longman, 2010).

general conception as the entanglement of histories laid out on drastically different timescales: personal, sociocultural, and evolutionary. In this “self-figur’d knot,” an individual’s personal history weaves itself into his or her historical era which loops in and around the forces of natural selection.²⁴ If the cognitive sciences posit the existence of a biologically instantiated self, this self, too, has its history, even if the forces that construct it work their influence over a much greater period of time. I suggest a knot as a guiding metaphor not only because it prevents any one timeline from dominating the others but also because it expresses the complexity and, indeed, the confusion of the relationships between these temporal strands.

Therefore, although my emphasis in this project will be on illuminating the oft-neglected biological timeline of the self, I seek not to study it in isolation; rather, I want to examine its place within the subtle knot of the self, to try to understand how it circles and interlaces with its co-histories. The cognitive sciences can be of use because its practitioners are accustomed to thinking on an evolutionary timescale; cognitive scientists ask not just how the brain functions but how, over time, those functions arose from the natural world’s cauldron of competition and cooperation. On the other hand, while the cognitive sciences can be said to “historicize” in their own way, we ought not to assume that we can analyze the evolved self’s role in early modern literature the same way we investigate the sociocultural self. In the following section, I argue that to understand the biological strand of the self, early modern scholars must make major adjustments to the standard cultural historical methodology, and here, too, the cognitive sciences can be relevant.

Methodological Questions: The Cognitive Sciences and the Problem of Experience

²⁴ The term “self-figur’d knot” appears in Shakespeare’s *Cymbeline* (2.3.119). Brief quotations from Shakespeare’s plays are taken from *The Riverside Shakespeare*, eds. G. Blakemore Evans and J. J. M. Tobin, 2nd Edition (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1997). For longer discussions of specific plays, I use separate Arden editions.

At the time of writing, it could be objected that the question “Are the cognitive sciences relevant to literary studies?” has already been answered in the affirmative. Conferences, articles, and books dedicated to the analysis of literature through the lens of the cognitive sciences are plentiful and varied. Even in the historically minded field of early modern studies, we find recent books that use cognitive science to study early modern rhetoric, dramatic practice, and the sonnet.²⁵ At the beginning of these and indeed nearly every book of cognitive literary studies, one will read a breathless promise to reveal exciting new scientific findings that will change the way we think about literature. Yet despite these passionate declarations, New Historicism has withstood the cognitive barrage, and the question of how the cognitive sciences are relevant to this field remains dangling in front of us. I believe this may be in part explained by cognitive literary scholars’ attitude to New Historicism, which usually falls on one of two extremes. Some subordinate the cognitive sciences to New Historicism, which results in either toothless close readings or simply the usual historicist analysis with updated jargon. Others use the cognitive sciences as a battering ram against what they see as New Historicism’s monolithic dominance. By bringing the cognitive sciences into a discussion of the embodied self, I do not wish merely to cart in the field’s mountains of data, argument, and conjecture on the nature of selfhood in order to transplant the theories of self that early modern scholars find relevant. Nor, however, do I think it worthwhile to defang cognitive science, as some have attempted to do, so that it sits comfortably “inside mainstream cultural theory.”²⁶ As one might expect, between the two disciplines there is common ground but also very deep points of contention, and I see no reason

²⁵ Respectively, Raphael Lyne, *Shakespeare, Rhetoric and Cognition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011); Michael Booth, *Shakespeare and Conceptual Blending: Cognition, Creativity, Criticism* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017); and Brian Boyd, *Why Lyrics Last: Evolution, Cognition, and Shakespeare's Sonnets* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012).

²⁶ Lisa Zunshine, “What is Cognitive Cultural Studies?” in *Introduction to Cognitive Cultural Studies*, ed. by Lisa Zunshine (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010), i.

to bring together the cognitive sciences and literary studies if one simply wants to conduct business as usual, only with a shiny veneer of scientific legitimacy. To elucidate this point, I will briefly survey two of the major types of cognitive literary analysis in early modern studies: cognitive linguistics and evocriticism.²⁷ These theoretical approaches, while among the most prominent, are not the only means by which literary scholars have used cognitive science to analyze literary texts, but they do exemplify some of the problems with the interdisciplinary endeavor.²⁸ Rather than subsume the cognitive sciences to historicist concerns or wield them as a weapon against the tyranny of theory, I argue that a particular practice within the cognitive sciences known as *neurophenomenology* can help correct certain blind spots within New Historicism when it comes to investigating the experience of embodied selfhood. I conclude by laying out certain principles of this methodology that will guide my analysis in the following chapters.

Early modern studies first took notice of the cognitive sciences in the guise of cognitive linguistics.²⁹ Indeed, cognitive linguistics has traditionally been one of the most important links

²⁷ For the sake of brevity, I am limiting my scope to the field of early modern literature. The two approaches discussed here appear in other fields, but research in intersubjectivity, or “mindreading,” is often cited in cognitive literary scholarship on the novel. See, for example, Lisa Zunshine, *Why We Read Fiction: Theory of Mind and the Novel* (Ohio State University Press, 2006) and Blakey Vermeule, *Why Do We Care about Literary Characters?* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010). For a recent study of “mindreading” in early modern drama, see Paul Cefalu, *Tragic Cognition in Shakespeare's Othello: Beyond the Neural Sublime* (London: Bloomsbury Arden Shakespeare, 2015). I discuss mindreading at length in Chapter 2 below.

²⁸ I have omitted from my discussion empirical studies of literature and figurative language. Scientists, sometimes with, sometimes without collaboration with literary scholars, have conducted rigorous empirical research on topics as varied as emotional responses to fiction, computational analysis of literary texts, and the effects of reading on social knowledge and selfhood. This work has yet to make many inroads in early modern studies, however. For a collection that surveys the different methods and research concerns of these empirical studies, see Willie van Peer and Sonia Zyngier, *Directions in Empirical Literary Studies: In Honor of Willie Van Peer* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Pub. Co., 2008). For a psychological approach to metaphor, see Gerard Steen, *Understanding Metaphor in Literature: An Empirical Approach* (New York: Longman Group Limited, 2009); for a survey of studies pertaining to the neural basis of metaphor, see Gwenda L. Schmidt et al., “Beyond Laterality: A Critical Assessment of Research on the Neural Basis of Metaphor,” *Journal of the International Neuropsychological Society* 16 (2010): 1 – 5.

²⁹ Here I should emphasize that the cognitive sciences make up a host of disciplines, including neurobiology, philosophy, computer science, linguistics, and experimental psychology, all which share a general interest in the process of thought. See note 2 above. Of course, literary scholars have often displayed an interest in psychology and

between literary studies and cognitive science, and it continues to exert a powerful influence on today's cognitive literary theorists. Formed in opposition to Chomskyan generative grammar, cognitive linguistics rejects the idea that grammar is an autonomous formal system, it calls for a renewed emphasis on meaning and semantics, and upholds the importance of figurative language not just in everyday discourse but in our cognition as well. The seminal text, *Metaphors We Live By*, drew a direct connection between bodily experience, language, and thought, which appealed to literary scholars, especially those of early modern literature. Mary Thomas Crane has frequently employed concepts from cognitive linguistics such as conceptual metaphor and prototype theory to analyze a wide range of texts, including Shakespeare's plays, Donne's lyric poetry, and Fredric Jameson's *The Political Unconscious*.³⁰ Douglas Freeman has investigated "cognitive metaphor" in *Macbeth*.³¹ Amy Cook makes use of conceptual blending, an offshoot of conceptual metaphor theory, to unpack the concept of the mirror in *Hamlet*.³² Evelyn Tribble also uses conceptual blending in her analysis of the Globe Theater.³³ And Mark Turner, the most vocal proponent of cognitive literary theory, has written extensively on the subject.³⁴ Turner and Lakoff even collaborated on a guidebook that seeks to introduce non-specialists to conceptual

the mind, from psychoanalytic theory to reader-response criticism. For an early attempt to incorporate findings from neurobiology with literary analysis, see I. A. Richards' 1924 work, *Principles of Literary Criticism* (London: Routledge, 2001), esp. 104-122.

³⁰ See, respectively, Mary Thomas Crane, *Shakespeare's Brain: Reading with Cognitive Theory* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001); "Analogy, Metaphor, and the New Science: Cognitive Science and Early Modern Epistemology," in *Introduction to Cognitive Cultural Studies*, ed. by Lisa Zunshine (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010), 103-113; and "Surface, Depth, and the Spatial Imaginary: A Cognitive Reading of *The Political Unconscious*," *Representations* 108, no. 1 (Fall 2009): 76-97.

³¹ Douglas Freeman, "'Catch[ing] the Nearest Way': *Macbeth* and Cognitive Metaphor," *Journal of Pragmatics* 24 (1995): 689-708.

³² Amy Cook, *Shakespearean Neuroplay: Reinvigorating the Study of Dramatic Texts and Performance Through Cognitive Science* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010). On conceptual blending, see Gilles Fauconnier, *Mental Spaces* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994). Gilles Fauconnier and Mark Turner, *The Way We Think: Conceptual Blending and the Mind's Hidden Complexities* (New York: Basic Books, 2002).

³³ Evelyn Tribble, *Cognition in the Globe: Attention and Memory in Shakespeare's Theatre* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).

³⁴ See, for example, Mark Turner, *Death is the Mother of Beauty: Mind, Metaphor, Criticism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987) and his *Reading Minds: The Study of English in the Age of Cognitive Science* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991).

metaphor theory as a tool for analyzing poetry. Offering readings of Shakespeare's sonnets as well as more modern poetry, Lakoff and Turner argue that because metaphor is more than a mere linguistic object, seemingly unrelated figurative expressions can relate back to the same metaphor, and so all poetic metaphors are in fact elaborations of everyday conceptual metaphors.³⁵

It is one thing, however, to note that literary scholars have cited cognitive linguistics; it is another thing altogether to argue cognitive linguistics has improved literary analysis. The problem with many of these readings, as several critics have noted, is that they rarely seem to tell us anything new about either the mind or the texts themselves.³⁶ The failing, I would argue, is not with the critics but with how conceptual metaphor theory is employed. Lakoff and Johnson originally sought to *conventionalize* metaphor, to bring it out of the realm of the fanciful imagination and position it within philosophical discourse. In this sense, they followed the path of I. A. Richards and Max Black, both of whom recognized the prevalence of metaphor outside of literary writing and, rather than trying to excise it from rational discourse, attempted to explain its relation to knowledge.³⁷ Although cognitive linguistics denies a strict division between the literary and the rational, its theories always flow away from the former and towards the latter. Indeed, in denying a distinction between the two, cognitive linguists tend to betray a lack of interest in the literary as either a category of discourse or as a cultural practice. Literature becomes merely a form of figurative language which is merely a form average, everyday thought. Accordingly, Lakoff and Turner can only offer up rather tame descriptions of a poet's

³⁵ George Lakoff and Mark Turner, *More Than Cool Reason: A Field Guide to Poetic Metaphor* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987).

³⁶ As Ray Jackendoff and David Aaron note in their review of *More Than Cool Reason*: "the book ultimately leaves something of an empty feeling." See Ray Jackendoff and David Aaron, "Review of *More Than Cool Reason: A Field Guide to Poetic Metaphor* by George Lakoff and Mark Turner," *Language* 67, no. 2 (June 1991): 338.

³⁷ See, I. A. Richards, *The Philosophy of Rhetoric* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1936); and Max Black, "Metaphor," *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, New Series 55 (1954-1955): 273-294.

use of metaphor: a poet's options with metaphors are to "simply versify" them, "deploy them masterfully," or defamiliarize/destabilize them.³⁸ As a field of study, cognitive linguistics is primarily interested in categorizing and linking, in bringing particular examples under the umbrella of the general. There is, overall, little concern with the sort of specificity involved in literary interpretation, and so declarations such as Freeman's are unfortunately common: "I believe that *Macbeth* is not a special case but a luminous instance of the prototypical case."³⁹ In cognitive linguistics, it seems, we are urged to look for the prototype and ignore the luminosity.

In this respect, evocriticism may have an advantage over cognitive linguistics due to its ostensible goal of investigating the powerful effects of literature and explaining why literary works matter to us. Why did we evolve to take pleasure from metrical speech? Why do we seem to prefer certain stories over others? Evocriticism addresses these questions in light of the evolutionary history of the brain, primarily supporting its arguments with findings from evolutionary psychology. This speculative subfield of psychology, which is somewhat controversial among cognitive scientists, attempts to provide evolutionary explanations for certain psychological phenomena. And while evolutionary psychologists themselves have been accused of manufacturing just-so stories to prove their theories, evocritics, too, have a tendency to point to Science to bolster their literary preferences and ideological disputes. Indeed, evocriticism is usually characterized by clumsy scientism and a blunt hostility to literary theory in almost any guise. Jonathan Gottschall, for example, sees his work as a "rebellion" against theory's oppressive regime, and Joseph Carroll dismisses most of last twenty years of critical theory as "essentially a wrong turn, a misconceived enterprise, a repository of delusions and

³⁸ Lakoff and Turner, *More Than Cool Reason*, 51.

³⁹ Freeman, "Catch[ing]," 691.

wasted efforts.”⁴⁰ In their (self)righteous crusade, evocritics claim that all major aspects of the human mind have evolved for one purpose or another, that art and literature are biological adaptations, and that we must therefore read (usually canonical) literature with an eye toward what they proclaim to be indisputable biological facts. By consequence, as Jonathan Kramnick notes, evocritics trample over not only historical but textual particularities and “retreat to the idea that literature provides enduring themes or values, now validated by the latest science.”⁴¹ Brian Boyd, for example, promises that his “bio-cultural” approach offers “a more comprehensive theory of literature *and* a closer investigation of literary texts,” yet in his reading of *Hamlet* in the same article, he quotes only five of Shakespeare’s words and concludes that the “universality of the play’s appeal” comes from its representation of competing desires for personal revenge and impersonal justice. That’s that, then. Unfortunately, Boyd’s clumsy reading, ignorance of historical particularities, and misrepresentation of evolutionary science are the hallmarks of evocriticism, which seems incapable of telling us anything interesting about literature or anything substantial about the human mind. As Laurent Dubreuil puts it, the entire enterprise of evocriticism “proves to be *inconsistent* theoretically, *incorrect* scientifically, *incompetent* historically, and *incoherent* methodologically.”⁴²

With the Scylla and Charybdis of cognitive linguistics and evocriticism in mind, I now turn to the particular methodological issues that arise when studying the experience of the embodied self. Above, I argued that the cognitive sciences can intervene in ongoing debates within early modern studies by clarifying conceptual matters related to the self, and that these conceptual ambiguities are in some ways central to the New Historicist project. In the remainder

⁴⁰ Jonathan Gottschall, *Literature, Science, and a New Humanities* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 12; Joseph Carroll, *Evolution and Literary Theory* (St. Louis: University of Missouri Press, 1995), 468.

⁴¹ Jonathan Kramnick, “Against Literary Darwinism,” *Critical Inquiry* 37, no. 2 (Winter 2011): 333.

⁴² Laurent Dubreuil, “On Experimental Criticism: Cognition, Evolution, and Literary Theory,” *Diacritics* 39, no. 1 (2009): 11.

of this section, I wish to push this argument further by demonstrating that the topic of historical experience remains an unmoving blind spot in New Historicism's methodology. That is, not only has early modern studies lacked some of the conceptual clarity necessary to discuss the self in its experiential dimension, but also its own methodology has rendered it functionally *incapable* of correcting this problem. The question of experience, as I shall argue, proves to be outside the reach of modern historicist approaches, and this methodological blind spot renders cultural historicism ill-equipped to deal with matters of the embodied self and, more broadly, the phenomenological effects of early modern literature. To bring these topics within the historically minded literary scholar's domain, I argue for the adoption of an approach called neurophenomenology, a methodology capable of attending to both the particularities of historical data and the unique character of phenomenological information. What is at stake here is both an understanding of the self's history and a means of discussing early modern literature's effects on its embodied audience—modern as well as historical.

The complaint that New Historicism fails to account for literature *qua* literature is, of course, an old one, but recently a variety of dissenting voices, organized under the label of “new formalists,” have called for a renewed attention to literary form if not an outright return to the aesthetic.⁴³ As the voices of new formalism are rather diverse, it is difficult to evaluate the merit of the movement, but a persuasive, if often inchoate, point is that New Historicism fails to do justice to the aesthetic experience, both as a contemporary and transtemporal phenomenon.⁴⁴ In

⁴³ Important examples include Isobel Armstrong, *The Radical Aesthetic* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers Ltd, 2000); Michael Clark, *Revenge of the Aesthetic: The Place of Literature in Theory Today* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000); Heather Dubrow, “Guess Who's Coming to Dinner? Reinterpreting Formalism and the Country House Poem,” *Modern Language Quarterly* 61, no. 1 (2000), 59-77; and Jonathan Loesberg, *A Return to Aesthetics: Autonomy, Indifference, and Postmodernism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005).

⁴⁴ In a survey of this work, Marjorie Levinson calls new formalism a ‘movement’ rather than a theory or method because, in her view, new formalist critics fail to critique the premises of New Historicism and instead seem mainly to target its dominant influence within the profession. See her “What Is New Formalism?” *PMLA* 122, no. 2 (March 2007): 558.

other words, new formalists perceive a failure to address how literature works upon us in the present day and to accommodate that obvious fact within a theory of historically contingent meaning. Thus, for example, Paul B. Armstrong calls for a serious investigation of the “lived experience of reading,” and Mark Womack argues that poetic patterns “are not conduits for messages but material properties of the work that engage the audience in a richly complex experience.”⁴⁵ Even Stephen Greenblatt admits (without specifically criticizing New Historicism) that the “profession has become so oddly diffident and even phobic about literary power.”⁴⁶

New Historicists might protest that they *have* addressed affect, sensations, and embodied experience.⁴⁷ In a sense, this is undeniably true. As I mention above, the past ten years have seen a heightened interest in the various dimensions of embodied experience and their relevance to Renaissance literature. Representative of this work is Gail Kern Paster and Michael Schoenfeldt’s study of embodied emotions, Katharine Craik’s study of sensations, and Garrett Sullivan Jr.’s investigation of memory.⁴⁸ The obvious rejoinder, however, is that these studies deal not with experience itself but with *representations, theories, conceptualizations, modes of expression, or descriptions* of experience. Usually, the distinction is duly noted by these scholars. Nevertheless, we invariably find telling slippages from the conceptual to the phenomenological so that, with hardly a whisper, what was once a study of writing about experience becomes a

⁴⁵ Paul B. Armstrong, “In Defense of Reading: Or, Why Reading Still Matters in a Contextualist Age,” *New Literary History* 42, no. 1 (Winter 2011): 87; Mark Womack, “Undelivered Meanings: The Aesthetics of Shakespearean Wordplay,” in *Renaissance Literature and Its Formal Engagements*, ed. Mark David Rasmussen (New York: Palgrave, 2002), 142.

⁴⁶ Stephen Greenblatt, *Hamlet in Purgatory* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 4.

⁴⁷ See, for example, Heather Hirschfeld, “Historicizing Satisfaction in Shakespeare’s *Othello*,” in *Rethinking Historicism from Shakespeare to Milton*, ed. by Ann B. Coiro and Thomas Fulton, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 113-115; and Levinson, “What is New Formalism?” 561-2.

⁴⁸ Paster, *Humoring*; Schoenfeldt, *Bodies*; Katharine A. Craik, *Reading Sensations in Early Modern England* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007); Garrett A. Sullivan, Jr., *Memory and Forgetting in English Renaissance Drama* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

study of experience itself. Paster is by far the most forthright in this move, labeling her approach “historical phenomenology” and claiming her interest ‘lies in trying to discover the phenomenological character of early modern experiences of emotion—what passions of many sorts *might have felt like* in a penetrable body containing wriggling animal spirits.’⁴⁹ This leap from concept to *quale* seems to pass over a host of serious objections: that humoral theory was but one discourse out of many for describing emotions, that it is frequently metaphorical, and that it is a *subpersonal* theory of emotions, which hardly makes it a reliable window into subjective experience.⁵⁰

This admittedly selective survey is meant to demonstrate two things: first, that within literary studies there is a conspicuous interest in the domain of embodied experience both generally and as it relates to aesthetic issues; second, that the problem of how to investigate these phenomena is complex and the obstacles run deep. To begin to address the situation, I suggest adopting the approach known as neurophenomenology.⁵¹ For literature scholars, this methodology would involve a relationship of reciprocal constraints between first-person phenomenological reports, third-person scientific data, and historical-cultural information. Neurophenomenology follows previous cognitive literary studies by bringing in research from the sciences of mind, but it also goes further by including first-person phenomenological reports and establishing a relationship of *mutual* constraints between the three types of information.

⁴⁹ Paster, *Humoring*, 20. My emphasis.

⁵⁰ These points are made by Richard Strier in his remarks with Carla Mazzio, “Two Responses to ‘Shakespeare and Embodiment: An E-Conversation,’” *Literature Compass* 3, no. 1 (2005): 16.

⁵¹ I favor this term over modified versions such as ‘cultural’ or (with a nod to Paster) ‘historical neurophenomenology.’ While these latter terms might, at first glance, make the approach more palatable to skeptical readers, they are, as I explain below, redundant. They also indirectly serve to reinforce the assumption that phenomenology is an ahistorical, culturally blind philosophy. For the use of cultural neurophenomenology in anthropology, see Charles D. Laughlin and C. Jason Throop, “Cultural Neurophenomenology: Integrating Experience, Culture and Reality Through Fisher Information,” *Culture & Psychology* 12, no. 3 (2006): 305-337.

Because these two elements are likely to be the least familiar and perhaps most controversial of the methodology, I shall discuss them in greater detail.

Before defining first-person reports within neurophenomenology, it is important to clarify what they are not. Phenomenological reports consist of neither simple introspection nor bland assertions about how literature moves us. Phenomenology, of the sort practiced by Edmund Husserl, Jean-Paul Sartre, and Maurice Merleau-Ponty, requires a rigorous exploration of lived experience in order to describe the structural invariants of consciousness.⁵² In this tradition, phenomenology involves first and foremost a suspension of habitual thought processes and commonplace attitudes, coupled with an increased attention to the immediacy of experience. This bracketing or suspension of commonsense beliefs is known as the *epoché*, in which the subject abandons a naïve realistic attitude that takes for granted the connection between objective reality and the world as it appears to us. As the neuroscientist Francisco Varela explains, the *epoché* involves adopting “a sudden, transient suspension of beliefs about what is being examined, a putting in abeyance our habitual discourse about something, a bracketing of the pre-set structuring that constitutes the ubiquitous background of everyday life.”⁵³ A scholar then ensures the validity of his or her first-person reports by describing the experience in precise language that may be affirmed or critiqued by others. Immediately, a crucial difference between neurophenomenology and historical phenomenology presents itself. Whereas our first-hand reports require a conscious bracketing of commonplace attitudes and beliefs, historical phenomenologists take as their object of study exactly those bracketed beliefs. In *Phenomenal*

⁵² The most extensive guide to the phenomenological method is Depraz, Varela, and Vermersch’s *On Becoming Aware*. Depraz et al. recommend working with another, more experienced person when producing phenomenological reports. See Natalie Depraz, Francisco J. Varela, and Pierre Vermersch, *On Becoming Aware: A Pragmatics of Experiencing* (Amsterdam: J. Benjamins, 2003).

⁵³ Francisco J. Varela, “Neurophenomenology: A Methodological Remedy for the Hard Problem,” *Journal of Consciousness Studies* 3, no. 4 (1996): 336-7.

Shakespeare, Bruce Smith states that the historical phenomenologist is particularly interested in “the stories that [the historical William Shakespeare] and his contemporaries told themselves about perception, about what was happening in their bodies and brains when they looked, listened, read, and loved.”⁵⁴ For the neurophenomenologist, however, these stories, beliefs, and theories may be of use to his or her analysis, but, strictly speaking, they are not phenomenological reports and must not be confused with experience itself.

Phenomenology as a practice is not without its critics, and I suspect that literary scholars trained to insist upon radical differences between historically distant cultures will be skeptical about the notion that an individual can shed the sediments of traditions and the pressures of his or her historical moment. They might further argue that phenomenology is in itself a culturally situated, theoretically driven distortion of experience, offering no more of a privileged access to consciousness than Galenic humoral theory or Faculty Psychology. Although it is beyond the scope of my project to offer a defense of the entire practice,⁵⁵ I can only stress that the phenomenological method is better understood as a kind of heightened attention to what is already there rather than a distorting reflection.⁵⁶ Modern phenomenologists believe that while it is true that phenomenology—like every other methodology—is subject to “cultural expectations and instrumental bias,” it does not follow that the resulting descriptions completely warp the original experience; rather, one can recognize effects of language on descriptions of experience *and* maintain that “the phenomenal data gathered are... constrained by the very reality of conscious contents.”⁵⁷

⁵⁴ Bruce R. Smith, *Phenomenal Shakespeare* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 34.

⁵⁵ For a response to concerns that phenomenology is ill-equipped to analyze culture, see Robert Desjarlais and C. Jason Throop, “Phenomenological Approaches in Anthropology,” *Annual Review of Anthropology* 40 (2011): 94-7.

⁵⁶ Dan Zahavi, *Subjectivity and Selfhood: Investigating the First-Person Perspective* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2005), 88-95.

⁵⁷ Depraz et al., *On Becoming Aware*, 9. For an extended response to the linguistic critique of phenomenology, see Dan Zahavi, *Husserl and Transcendental Intersubjectivity: A Response to the Linguistic-Pragmatic Critique*

Aside from the type of material under investigation, the novelty of neurophenomenology lies in the relationship it establishes between its three sets of data. These sets operate under mutual constraints, meaning not one source is given primacy over the others and each must answer to the findings of the rest. A relationship of mutual constraints is a *dynamic* conversation between three different types of data, a conversation that allows for contradiction as well as agreement. In order to demonstrate how this relationship of mutual constraints works, let us take each pair of constraints in turn.

Cognitive Science and Historical Information: A neurophenomenologist seeks to understand the balance between the influences of invariant, hard-wired aspects of our physiology and those that derive from social, historical, and cultural forces. He or she recognizes the plasticity of neural pathways as well as the neurobiological features that remain constant across time periods. Neurobiological information can tell us something useful about the brains of early modern people, but historical information alerts us to what early moderns were aware of in regards to their own thinking and can demonstrate the ways in which cultural factors adapted or shaped innate neurobiological processes. Anthropologists Charles D. Laughlin and C. Jason Throop have put forward five ‘basic existential structures’ that mediate between experience and reality regardless of cultural and historical difference; these include the ways we are ‘pre-wired’ to know ourselves and the world, the ways the physical world resists our intentions and desires, and an innate intersubjectivity we possess as a social species.⁵⁸ Thus, a historically sensitive

(Athens: Ohio University Press, 2001), 171-205. For a critique of phenomenology and an alternative methodology known as ‘heterophenomenology,’ see Daniel C. Dennett, *Consciousness Explained* (New York: Back Bay Books, 1991), 72-9. Dennett maintains that we should treat first-person reports as *beliefs* the subject has about her own experience but not as descriptions of stable structures of experience. For a neurophenomenological response to heterophenomenology, see Evan Thompson, *Mind in Life: Biology, Phenomenology, and the Sciences of Mind* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), 306-8.

⁵⁸ Charles D. Laughlin and C. Jason Throop, “Husserlian Meditations and Anthropological Reflections: Toward a Cultural Neurophenomenology of Experience and Reality,” *Anthropology of Consciousness* 20, no. 2 (2009): 130-170.

neurophenomenological study arrives at statements of historical difference only *through* a consideration of transhistorical attributes.

First-person Reports and Cognitive Science: The question of how to reconcile first-person reports of experience with scientific data has preoccupied cognitive scientists for decades, with some dismissing subjective reports entirely and others arguing that finding precise links between experience and its neural correlates should be the primary goal of the cognitive sciences. Even classical phenomenologists tend to question the usefulness of looking for neurobiological explanations of experience. (Husserl himself dismissed the question out of hand). Neurophenomenology, rather than reducing experience to the firing of neurons, places rigorous first-person reports alongside current scientific data, allowing for both connections and contradictions. Ideally, each set of data will enrich the other: suggesting new aspects of experience and future research possibilities. For the historically minded scholar, this relationship of mutual constraints can offer supporting evidence of a given subjective experience's transhistorical nature. In other words, if we find neural correlates for a given experiential structure, we can make the case that that structure was present in other time periods as well. In the other direction, first-hand reports can provide a richer, more relevant (to literary studies) description of the texture and character of experience than scientific studies alone offer. The key premise of this relationship is that the neurophenomenologist will be willing to return to first-person reports in response to new scientific studies, yet without pressure to conform such descriptions to third-person data.

First-person Reports and Historical Information: As I mention above, in examining a scholar's first-person reports alongside historical theories of experience, we are not comparing a single type of information from two different time periods but rather two distinct types of data.

This is a key difference between historical phenomenology and neurophenomenology: what historical phenomenology takes as direct evidence of actual conscious experience, neurophenomenology would treat as beliefs about causes of experience, theories about the mechanisms behind certain experiences, or explanations of specific phenomena. A neurophenomenologist studying early modern literature should be aware that the language of modern phenomenology is unlikely to align with that of early modern discourse. Instead of looking for direct reference to a given experience, the neurophenomenologist must often search in the gaps of historical texts, speculating about experiences that are frequently elusive and fleeting. At the same time, a neurophenomenologist should be ready to accept the possibility that a particular experience, no matter how vivid, is firmly rooted only in the current historical moment. Ultimately, it is far more likely that simpler, minute responses are shared across cultures than extended, complex experiences.

I have attempted to map out the principles of neurophenomenology in a systematic way. In practice, however, I treat these three sets of data much less programmatically. While I attempt for clarity's sake not to toss different types of data together willy-nilly, I also avoid proceeding in a robotic manner, first discussing one data set, then the next, and then comparing them, etc. The following chapters are each attempts at reading a specific literary work's dynamic effects on its audience, and so my analyses often require a more circuitous path to their end goal. The above discussion of neurophenomenology is meant to provide the reader with an explanation for the types of data under investigation as well as the guiding principles behind how I position each one in relation to the others. In the final section of this introduction, I will lay out the general argument of the dissertation, first by fleshing out the conception of the embodied self that I have

thus far only alluded to, after which I will put forward my argument of how this aspect of the self is relevant to the study of early modern literature.

The Argument: Self-Knowledge in Early Modern Literature

I have asserted that the cognitive sciences can furnish early modern studies with a theory of the experience of embodied selfhood. This experience is not a matter of understanding oneself in a psychological and autobiographical totality but rather the feeling of a minimal, pre-reflective self-awareness that structures conscious experience. It is not a matter of believing one is a stable, unchanging essence but of attending to the basic phenomenological character of perspectival awareness. This self-experience, I argue, is an innate feature of human consciousness, a function of the embodied brain that evolved over millions of years and that intertwines with a cultural and personal history to form the knot of the self. I now wish to flesh out, so to speak, this innate sense of embodied selfhood to which I have so far only gestured. It is not my wish to flood the reader with scientific jargon, yet the basic neurological workings of the embodied self are crucial to my overall argument. Therefore, before going into my thesis in detail, I wish to explain the specific theory of embodied selfhood that is operative in the following chapters. The evolved, biological dynamic I describe here not only offers some justification for attributing this phenomenological sense of self to early modern individuals, but it also recasts this experience of a stable self as the product of a complex process. In the theory I describe, evolution has not equipped us with a stable, unchanging self—it has, however, resulted in a biological process that creates the *sense* or *feeling* of one. This distinction is crucial, for while it extends the problem of the self beyond the realm of cultural or intellectual history, it also implies that the phenomenology of embodied selfhood, the very sensation of invariance, can, in theory, be

altered or interrupted. In other words, with a specific, powerful intervention, the unmovable self could be moved.

According to some cognitive scientists, the process by which the self comes into being involves an ongoing dynamic interplay between bottom-up and top-down components.⁵⁹ Bubbling up from below are the data of bodily sensations, pain, muscle movements, and internal feelings. As the brain receives data from the rest of the body, it generates hypotheses about the current state of the system. These two components, bodily data and mental hypotheses, exist in a constant feedback loop wherein hypotheses are either confirmed or denied by physical sensations and the hypotheses are adjusted according to the new data.⁶⁰ The looping process between self-presentation (bodily input) and self-simulation (system-state hypotheses) forms the special sort of mental representational content that is the human self.⁶¹ Acting as a model or simulation of the entire organism, the mental construct of the self brings together information from different corporeal sources within a coherent phenomenal space. In daily life, this translates to a sense of phenomenological ownership and perspectivalness, of experiencing, for example, a stubbed toe as *my* pain from *my* toe.

The embodied self, however, is more than a tacit recognition that a body part or sensation belongs to me: it is the constituting feature of the way I see the world. To understand why this is so, we must distinguish the self from other mental constructs such as a consciously held thought or belief. Although the self is a mental representation, what distinguishes it from other mental

⁵⁹ For my conception of the self, I am primarily indebted to Thomas Metzinger's theory of the self-model, but I have also drawn on the work of Antonio Damasio, Dan Zahavi, and Francisco J. Varela. See, Thomas Metzinger, *Being No One: The Self-Model Theory of Subjectivity* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2003); Antonio Damasio, *Self Comes to Mind*; Dan Zahavi, *Self and Subjectivity*; and Francisco J. Varela, "The Specious Present: A Neurophenomenology of Time Consciousness," in *Naturalizing Phenomenology: Issues in Contemporary Phenomenology and Cognitive Science*, ed. Jean Petitot (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), 266-314.

⁶⁰ On the role of feedback loops in complex systems, see Alicia Juarrero, *Dynamics in Action: Intentional Behavior as a Complex System* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1999), 139-140.

⁶¹ Metzinger, *Being*, 302-3.

constructs is that it is *phenomenologically transparent*, meaning we do not think it—we think *with* it and *through* it. More technically, transparency in this sense means that the processing stages that go into producing the self are unavailable for attentional awareness. No matter where we direct our focus, we cannot detect the neurobiological steps that go into creating the self. In contrast, a consciously formed idea or concept is phenomenally opaque—we can attend to its status as a representational construct; we are aware it has been constructed and can be either true or false. When, for example, I imagine a tree, I am aware that I have willfully conjured the mental image. Its status as a mental representation is clear and obvious, and there is no danger of me mistaking the imagined tree for one I am currently perceiving in the world. Because the self is transparent, however, we cannot phenomenally experience it as a construct, even if we possess conceptual knowledge of its constructedness: the earlier processing stages remain hidden from our awareness regardless of what we know about them. As Metzinger explains, “We do not experience the contents of our self-consciousness as the contents of a representational process, and we do not experience them as some sort of causally active internal placeholder of the system in the system’s all-inclusive model of reality, but simply as ourselves, living in the world right now.”⁶² It is as though we are standing in front of a perfectly clear pane of glass. Even if someone were to tell us there is an invisible pane of glass in front of us, we would not suddenly be able to see the glass. Explicit knowledge of its existence will not affect our ability to perceive it. Just so, our conceptual knowledge about the self has no bearing on its phenomenological transparency; it remains a constitutive yet undetectable feature of our phenomenal life.

Given the self’s transparency, if we grant that the self is, in part, an evolved biological construct, we arrive at the rather startling conclusion that evolution has equipped human beings with a built-in limit to direct self-knowledge. Our embodied selves are founded upon what

⁶² Metzinger, *Being*, 331.

Metzinger describes as a “structurally anchored deficit in the capacity to gain knowledge about oneself.”⁶³ It should be noted that this deficit in self-knowledge applies only to direct attentional awareness and not to conceptual knowledge. So while we are not burdened by inborn limits to our theoretical knowledge about ourselves, we do not experience our selves as the neurobiological representations they are. Crucially, however, because the self is a dynamic representation, the process of its formation can (in theory) be changed, interrupted, or manipulated.⁶⁴ Put simply, the self can be moved, and given that the self is a complex, non-linear process comprising many different components, it can be moved in a variety of ways.

If we accept this notion of the self as a kind of imperceptible window unto the world, I wish to argue that certain kinds of literary experience offer a way around this phenomenological obstacle by disrupting the process that continually generates the transparent self.⁶⁵ To return to our earlier metaphor, literature might be capable of smudging the glass, allowing the subject to become *aware* of the window’s existence. There are, of course, significant constraints to this experience. Since the generation of the self is an ongoing dynamic process, the “smudge” cannot remain for long, as the brain continuously attempts to stabilize its self-simulation. Further, the new phenomenological awareness literature could potentially generate does not dictate the sort of conceptual knowledge that a person might produce to explain the experience. A momentary awareness of the smudge could provoke any number of explanations, or it could be ignored entirely. The gulf between attentional awareness and cognition cannot be overlooked, yet it is

⁶³ Metzinger, *Being*, 57.

⁶⁴ See, for example, Bigna Lenggenhager, Tej Tadi, Thomas Metzinger, and Olaf Blanke, “Video Ergo Sum: Manipulating Bodily Self-Consciousness,” *Science* 317 (2007): 1096-1099.

⁶⁵ It must be stressed that this is pure speculation on my part, or, perhaps more generously, merely a hypothesis. Metzinger and Damasio offer significant scientific evidence to support the theory of the self as a transparent mental construct and concede that it is possible to interrupt the process of its construction and thus make the self temporarily available to our conscious awareness. They make no claims, however, about literature or art more generally, nor do they address aesthetic experience’s potential to provoke these interruptions. I offer this point up as an empirically testable claim with the acknowledgement that future research may squarely disprove it. Such is the risk of dallying in the sciences.

equally crucial to recognize the unique type of self-knowledge that the literary experience might make possible. By disrupting the self-constructing process, by creating new experiences of selfhood, literature could provide attentional access to a process that evolution has rendered largely invisible.

This formulation may seem well beyond the scope of early modern English thought, but writers in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries often speculated about what sort of self-knowledge could be gained from art and literature. Indeed, this era saw a newfound interest in the topic of self-knowledge more generally, and individuals brought together remarkably diverse philosophical traditions when writing about the self and theorizing how one could achieve self-knowledge.⁶⁶ John Davies, in his poetic ode to self-knowledge *Nosce Teipsum*, complains of this diversity of viewpoints about the soul, alluding to the theories of Platonism, Aristotelianism, Epicureanism, Atomism and everything between:

One thinks the *Soule* is *Aire*, another *Fire*,
Another, *blood* defus'd about the hart
Another saith, the *Elements* conspire,
And to her *Essence* each doth give a part.
...
Some thinke one generall *Soule* fils euery braine
As the bright *Sunne* sheds light in euery Starre
And others thinke the name of *Soule* is vaine,

⁶⁶ For an explanation of how early modern philosophy about the self fits into the broader philosophical history of the soul and self, see Raymond Martin and John Barresi, *The Rise and Fall of Soul and Self: an Intellectual History of Personal Identity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), esp. 116-122.

And that *we onely well mixt* bodies are.⁶⁷

Davies compares these competing perspectives to the cacophony of different languages after the Tower of Babel's fall, and insists only God can know the truth of the soul. Nevertheless, it is the poet that can offer a riposte to the "vain and fond" theories of philosophers, for in order for the soul to judge itself, "she must her selfe transcend, / As greater Circles comprehend the lesse."

And the poet, whose mind is illuminated by the "Lampe" of divine inspiration, can transcend his or her self in such a way:

This Lampe through all the Regions of my braine,
Where my *Soule* sits, doth spread such beames of grace
As now, methinks, I do distinguish plaine
Each subtill line of her immortall face.⁶⁸

The poet's purest topic, Davies suggests, is not the superficialities of the outside world, which draw the soul away from itself and preoccupy the mind with trivialities; instead the poet's self ought to be both source and intention of the poet's art. Davies promises his readers, "My selfe am *Center* on my circling thought, / Onely *my selfe* I studie, learne, and know."⁶⁹

Davies seeks to guide his readers' gaze towards their own souls and thus teach them the way to know themselves. In his mixture of poetry and philosophy and his attempt to bestow self-knowledge, Davies aligns himself with the early modern notion that poetry could grant privileged access to the self. Sidney's *Defence of Poesy* offers the most ardent support for this idea, finding that all types of technical knowledge, from astronomy to mathematics, are mere "serving sciences" to the "highest end" of a particular kind of knowledge: "the knowledge of

⁶⁷ John Davies, *Nosce Teipsum* (London: Printed by Richard Field, for Iohn Standish, 1599), C2r-v, Early English Books Online. Italics in the original. Here and throughout I have kept the original spelling whenever possible, but I have modernized the long S.

⁶⁸ Davies, *Nosce*, C3r.

⁶⁹ Davies, *Nosce*, Cr.

man's self."⁷⁰ Sidney's theory about how poetry can lead to self-knowledge differs somewhat from Davies', the latter using poetry as philosophical treatise to supply his readers with arguments for the soul's immortality. Sidney grants that poesy can transmit philosophical ideas in lively and memorable images, but he claims poesy goes beyond precept by also offering pleasing examples of virtues rewarded and vices punished, the representation of which can mold individuals into ethically responsible citizens. According to Sidney, poetry succeeds in instilling virtue primarily because it is attendant to the failings and weaknesses of the mortal mind; it communicates much the same knowledge as the philosopher and historian, but it does so with an understanding of the mind's need for pleasure, variety, and excitement. To compare the poet and philosopher's methods, Sidney imagines each profession as a kind of guide on the path to knowledge. If the philosopher "showeth you the way, he informeth you of the particularities, as well of the tediousness of the way, as of the pleasant lodging you shall have when the journey is ended," the poet, by contrast, "doth, as if your journey should lie through a fair vineyard, at the first give you a cluster of grapes, that full of that taste, you may long to pass further."⁷¹

The familiar idea that poetry provides a spoonful of sugar to help readers swallow their moral medicine is of course not original to Sidney; it was voiced by Classical authors and repeated in Renaissance Italian literary criticism.⁷² But this image of the poet offering grapes to entice the reader along has, in addition to the Bacchanalian connotations, a veiled suggestion of poet as tempter, especially appearing as it does in a treatise laden with references to Eden and humankind's fallen nature.⁷³ In fact, as R. W. Maslen notes, antitheatricalist Stephen Gosson

⁷⁰ Philip Sidney, *An Apology for Poetry, or, The Defence of Poesy*, eds. Geoffrey Shepherd and R. W. Maslen. 3rd ed (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 2002), 88.

⁷¹ Sidney, *Apology*, 94.

⁷² For a survey of this literature, see Bernard Weinberg, *A History of Literary Criticism in the Italian Renaissance* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961).

⁷³ For a discussion of Sidney's use of the Fall, see Frank B. Evans, "The Concept of the Fall in Sidney's *Apologie*," *Renaissance Papers* (1969): 9-14.

employs a similar conceit to illustrate how poets lead their readers astray: “The deceitfull Phisition giueth sweete Syrropes to make his poyson goe downe the smoother.”⁷⁴ The sinister shadow of Sidney’s image is, I think, neither oversight nor unconscious ambivalence on the poet’s part. *The Defence* has been labeled a hybrid treatise for the way it fuses theories from a variety of sources into a unique system.⁷⁵ But if Sidney’s poetic theory displays influences both ancient and contemporary, Christian and pagan, it also presupposes a hybrid reader who can only achieve a higher self-knowledge through the use of his or her fallible perception and corrupted mind. After all, poetry derives its power from appealing to a person’s fallen nature, thereby “draw[ing] the mind” to virtue, so to be effective, the poet must be well versed in error and illusion.⁷⁶ Even though Sidney, like Davies, stresses that poetry can push the reader’s mind “from the dungeon of the body to the enjoying his own divine essence,” he suggests the poet must have as great an understanding of the embodied instruments of our fallen perception as of the pure, immortal soul.⁷⁷

This, I believe, is the dark twin to poetry’s ideal of self-knowledge. The widespread recognition of mankind’s fallen, fallible perception fostered a pervasive (some would say perverse) interest in this other half of the self. Consequently, many early modern authors display a tacit understanding that there is as much to be learned about the self from one’s misapprehension of the world as from true understanding. In its reliance on the passions, deception, and illusion, literature might function like the oft-cited thought experiments in

⁷⁴ Qtd. in Sidney, *Apology*, 177, n.21-2.

⁷⁵ D.H. Craig, “A Hybrid Growth: Sidney’s Theory of Poetry in *An Apology for Poetry*,” *English Literary Renaissance* 10 (1980): 183-201.

⁷⁶ Sidney, *Apology*, 96.

⁷⁷ Sidney, *Apology*, 88.

Classical Skepticism, which confront us with our errors in order to show mind to itself.⁷⁸

Although early modern authors dutifully insisted literature's end was heavenly virtue, they understood the seeker of self-knowledge must first confront the strange and misleading nature of the embodied self. Davies describes the bizarre vision that the soul beholds upon seeing itself embodied: "...she espies, / Such strange *Chymeraes*, and such Monsters there, / Such Toyes, such *Antikes*, and such Vanities...."⁷⁹ Here Davies, like Sidney in his *Defence*, echoes the language of the antitheatricalists, not exactly to refute them but rather to suggest there is knowledge—particularly self-knowledge—to be gained from recognizing the ways in which our embodied mind can lead us astray. It is no coincidence that both Sidney and Davies at times lapse into medical language to diagnose the bodily senses, which Davies calls "the windowes" through which the soul views the world: "And yet whiles she these spectacles doth use, / Oft worldly things seeme greater than they are."⁸⁰ Indeed, here both poets betray an interest in physiology similar to the authors of medical and psychological treatises of the time. Thomas Wright, for example, claims, "our Soule dwelleth in the tabernacle of flesh & blood, it is drowned in humors and fatness, it is blinded with vapours & mists, it sees thorow carnall windowes, and cloudy spectacles."⁸¹

In the following chapters, I demonstrate that this understanding of literature manifests itself not merely in descriptions of literature or explicit theorizing but in *the aesthetic experience of the work itself*. Moreover, this experience is woven into the thematic texture of certain works, moving from aesthetic effect to conscious concept in order to guide the audience to a kind of

⁷⁸ On skepticism in Renaissance thought, see Charles Larmore, "Scepticism," in *Cambridge History of Seventeenth-Century Philosophy*, ed. Daniel Garber and Michael Ayers, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1998), 2:1145-92. I discuss these skeptical thought experiments at greater length in Chapter 2 below.

⁷⁹ Davies, *Nosce*, B4r.

⁸⁰ Davies, *Nosce*, Gv.

⁸¹ Thomas Wright, *The passions of the minde in generall. Corrected, enlarged, and with sundry new discourses augmented. By Thomas Wright. With a treatise thereto adioyng of the clymaticall yeare, occasioned by the death of Queene Elizabeth* (London, 1604), Proquest, EEBO Editions, 309.

self-knowledge. This line of inquiry thus elaborates on Sidney's theory of poesy by focusing on literature's sometimes disruptive, even violent, effects on the embodied self. Sidney repeatedly stresses the corporeal nature of poesy's powers, to the point where poetry seems to exert force directly on the bodily form: the poet can "strike, pierce, [and] posses" and can "move," "draw," and "inflameth" his or her audience.⁸² And while Sidney initially states that poetry works upon our "clayey lodgings" only to move us beyond them, he later posits a more complex dynamic in which poetic effects feed back into the very processes from which they arose: "And that moving is of a higher degree than teaching, it may by this appear, that it is well nigh both the cause and effect of teaching."⁸³ According to this new conception, the clayey lodgings are stirred, which lifts the soul, which again stirs the body. Mind, body, and soul interpenetrate one another, and poesy takes root at these points of contact. Self-knowledge is figured not as instantaneous apprehension of the truth but as a rising and falling, a dynamic process of transcending and returning to the embodied mind.

Key parts of this theory resonate with the idea that literature is capable of interrupting the brain's generation of the self. Although I don't mean to suggest the absurd idea that Sidney and modern cognitive scientists are describing exactly the same thing, I do think perhaps they turned their gaze in the same general direction and assayed their problems with similar perspectives. Neuroscientists, unable to directly tinker with a living human brain, have often derived their knowledge from disorders, deformities, and injuries that impair the brain's function, locating the part of the brain that has been physically damaged and matching that with the specific character of disordered behavior. Early modern authors, for their part, often approached self-knowledge in a similarly indirect manner, attempting "with windlasses and with assays of bias, / By

⁸² Sidney, *Apology*, 222, 226, 228, 23.

⁸³ Sidney, *Apology*, 226.

indirections find directions out” (*Hamlet*, 2.1.62-3).⁸⁴ Literature could show the self to itself, but this sometimes meant exposing the mind to its inveterate errors; it meant fogging the soul’s spectacles to remind the individual that he or she observes the world through the window of the embodied self. To bring the cognitive sciences to literary studies is not just an effort to recover phenomenological information long after the individual subjects have passed away; it is also a marrying of sympathetic perspectives, an alliance of penetrating explorations of the mortal mind.

I have taken the title for this dissertation, *The Mind Transfigur’d*, from Shakespeare’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*. The phrase appears at the end of the play, after the lovers have been magically altered by their experience in the forest, and as Theseus and Hippolyta discuss their fantastic tale, Theseus finds the whole story rather hard to believe. He dismisses their narrative as “More strange than true” and declares he will never trust the words of lovers, lunatics, or poets because they all “have such seething brains” that generate airy nothings (5.1.2-17). In reply, Hippolyta protests the lovers’ shared experiences suggest more than mere fantasy:

But all the story of the night told over,
And all their minds transfigur’d so together,
More witeseth than fancy’s images,
And grows to something of great constancy;
But howsoever, strange and admirable. (5.1.23-27)

As this passage exemplifies, early modern English playwrights were intensely conscious of both the antitheatrical attitude of the time and the strange, transformative effects that drama could have on a willing audience.⁸⁵ In the Duke, Shakespeare parrots the commonplace suspicion of

⁸⁴ All quotations from Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* are taken from *Hamlet*, eds. Ann Thompson and Neil Taylor (London: Arden Shakespeare, 2006).

⁸⁵ On this antitheatrical attitude, see Jonas A. Barish, *The Antitheatrical Prejudice* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1981).

dramatic illusion that could be found in the strident screeds of John Rainolds and William Prynne, who criticized playwrights and playgoers alike for indulging in insubstantial, if not deviant, fantasies. As Gurr has argued, however, antitheatrical writing was significantly more nuanced than we might expect. Not all antitheatricalists were puritans merely scolding the public for idle pleasure; some writers possessed a genuine “fear of illusion, a revulsion against the deliberate dishonesty and pretence that theater was based on.”⁸⁶ Indeed, like Sidney (who was in part responding to antitheatricalists in his *Defence*), antitheatrical writers were often perceptive analysts of the theatrical experience, and they paid close attention to ways in which dramatists manipulated the embodied minds of their audiences to conjure dramatic illusion. Yet Hippolyta’s reply demonstrates that even if playwrights were familiar with the antitheatrical theorizing, they found the dramatic experience capable of producing something more profound and lasting than mere fancy, potentially growing to something “of great constancy.”

It is because of this double-sided awareness that I have chosen to focus my analysis on early modern dramatic literature, specifically the works of William Shakespeare and Christopher Marlowe. Although literary scholars have often focused on these two playwrights for the way they conceptualize and dramatize early modern notions of selfhood, for my purposes I am less concerned with these dramatists’ theories of self than I am with the self-referentiality of their plays. If, as I have argued, early modern literature *anticipates* its effects on audiences and folds these aesthetic responses back into the content of the works themselves, then authors who consciously observed and contemplated their audience’s responses would be in the best position to practice this technique.⁸⁷ Marlowe and Shakespeare, I believe, were not only keen observers

⁸⁶ Andrew Gurr, *The Shakespearean Stage, 1574-1642* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 7.

⁸⁷ Wolfgang Iser voices a version of the idea that the text anticipates our responses, claiming “the text refers back directly to our own preconceptions—which are revealed by the act of interpretation that is a basic element of the reading process.” See his “The Reading Process: A Phenomenological Approach,” in *Reader-response Criticism:*

of aesthetic phenomenology but they also engaged with antitheatricalists and other contemporary writers in considering the philosophical implications of drama's powerful effects on the embodied self. We see evidence of this both in their allusions to antitheatrical theories and the many metatheatrical gestures that assume central roles in their plays.⁸⁸ As Michael Witmore has argued, for playwrights such as Marlowe and Shakespeare, the audience's embodied responses to the onstage spectacle were more than a natural consequence of the drama, they were also frequently its subject matter: "there is something fundamentally important about the ways in which [the theatre] mobilizes our senses and, more importantly, makes *sensation itself* something significant."⁸⁹ In their close attention to the particularities of the theatrical experience, Marlowe and Shakespeare prove to be something like neurophenomenologists *avant la lettre*, combining philosophical theories about the self and the theater with direct observation of an audience's phenomenology. Inside the laboratory of England's newly built permanent theaters, these playwrights experimented with how drama could unsettle, disrupt, and eventually transfigure the embodied self.⁹⁰

Each chapter of this dissertation focuses on a specific phenomenological dimension of the embodied self and examines how certain early modern plays disrupt that dimension, bringing that aspect of the self to the audience's attention, and then folding that awareness into the play's

From Formalism to Post-Structuralism, ed. Jane P. Tompkins (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981), 55.

⁸⁸ I do not wish to imply, however, that Shakespeare and Marlowe were the only playwrights of the time who toyed with metatheatrical dramatic effects. As Gurr has argued, metatheatricality was "the stage custom" for much of early modern drama. See his *Stage*, 9.

⁸⁹ Michael Witmore, "Eventuality" in *Early Modern Theatricality*, ed. Henry Turner (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 388, his emphasis.

⁹⁰ Although I will occasionally make reference to the social divisions within early modern audiences, I tend to agree with Jeremy Lopez, who argues that the modern tendency to argue audience responses were dictated by their individual social status is unnecessarily reifying and ultimately paralyzing. It is no doubt true that individuals' behavior in the theater varied according to their rank, as numerous reports of riotous behavior from the groundlings and boorish acts of the young nobility make clear. However, my project focuses on basic, elemental dramatic effects, in which case social status is likely to be irrelevant. See Jeremy Lopez, *Theatrical Convention and Audience Response In Early Modern Drama* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), esp. 6-10. For reports of audience behavior, see Gurr, *Stage*, 275-282.

thematic concerns. In one respect, the individual dimensions of embodied selfhood on which I base my analysis appear relatively straightforward: the feeling of corporeal space, the phenomenological distinction between self and other, and the sense of a stable self persisting over time. In daily life, these dimensions often form the basis of naïve or folk-psychological understandings of the self: the self is my body, the self is what differentiates me from others, the self is the part of me that is constant from one moment to the next. And while I argue these notions derive from the foundational experience of embodied selfhood, they have, in discourses both modern and early modern, accumulated meanings and associations that make them appear at once deceptively simple and rigidly constricting in a philosophical sense. Shakespeare and Marlowe, I argue, attack this issue at both branch and root. As I hope to show in the following chapters, these playwrights undermine conventionalized ideas of embodied selfhood even as their dramatic works directly manipulate the phenomenological components that make up their audience's sense of self. Staging their interventions on both the conceptual and phenomenological levels, Shakespeare and Marlowe are able to unsettle their audience's preconceptions while also clearing a path for new forms of self-awareness. Together, these actions make possible more radical forms of self-knowledge by not only generating new ideas about the self but by pulling back the evolutionary curtain to reveal the self's hidden role in conscious experience.

In the first chapter, I examine the spatial dimensions of the self, including the body's physical extension in space and the notion of the self as a private interior. Both ideas, I claim, are interrogated in different ways by Marlowe's *Edward II* and Shakespeare's *Richard II*, with the former showing how the self can extend far beyond the limits of the body and the latter pushing the spatial logic of interiority into a nightmarish infinite regress. Before discussing the specifics

of these interrogations, however, I show how both are made possible by the physical playhouse's amplification of spatialized language. I use the theory of mental spaces from the cognitive sciences to argue that early modern audiences "offloaded" onto the newly built permanent playhouses some of the mental labor required to follow dramatic performances. In effect, audiences were encouraged to loop the physical structure of the playhouse itself into their cognitive processes, creating a deep bond between their minds and the environment. By extending their minds in this way, audiences would have experienced intensified effects of spatialized language about the self, making possible more pronounced "interiority effects" that facilitated radical thinking about the self's spatial dimensions. While I address in this chapter the recurring critical controversy about the existence of an early modern interiority, I conclude that the physical theater did not impress upon early modern people a specific concept of the self; rather, it facilitated thinking about the self in spatial terms, the consequences of which are predictably varied and experimental. The cognitive sciences, I contend, can help us better understand these spatialized experiments, for cognitive scientists have shown how the self can be plastic and externalized without denying the phenomenological reality of interiorized experience.

In the second chapter, I focus on Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* and the division between self and other. Modern literary criticism, I contend, has been hampered by a rather crude understanding of intersubjectivity. Even those scholars who accuse Cartesian philosophy of deep-rooted solipsism wind up echoing its position that we can only know others by deciphering external clues, be they facial expressions, actions, or linguistic signs. I offer an alternative theory, drawn from the cognitive sciences and phenomenology, which explains how a powerful, automatic connection between self and other is underwritten by neurobiological mechanisms such as mirror neurons: cells that fire both when an action is carried out and when the same

action is perceived. According to this theory, we do not have to “read” or “interpret” other people but are born automatically attuned to the *perception* of other minds. The conflict between these two positions vis-à-vis the Other plays out on stage in *Doctor Faustus*. Marlowe’s play, I argue, pits extreme skepticism of the possibility of ever knowing another’s mind against the phenomenological experience of the other. Although Marlowe’s play appeared before Descartes’ skepticism carved out an unbridgeable intersubjective gap, Marlowe intuitively anticipates the rise of this radical solipsism in the popularity of Greek skeptics and the thought experiments of demonologists. In *Faustus*, the playwright populates the stage with spirits and demons whose thoughts are, according to occult philosophy, unfathomable, thus provoking extreme doubt about the possibility of understanding other minds. While this skepticism conjures up the radical doubt of Descartes, Marlowe counters it with the phenomenological experience of the theater, specifically the way an audience identifies with characters onstage. Marlowe, I argue, uses his actors’ physicality and themes of bodily dismemberment to forge powerful links between character and audience. In this way, Marlowe does not refute the problem of other minds so much as overcome it with the brute force of intersubjectivity.

Finally, I turn to *Hamlet*, memory, and the self’s persistence through time. In discourses both historical and modern, writers often cite memory as the bedrock of the self. Sometimes this belief posits memory as proof of the self’s constancy. Others maintain that the self is a mere recitation of autobiographical memories, constructed in response to sociocultural demands. *Hamlet*, however, displays a more complex understanding of the self’s relation to memory, one that draws upon a diverse group of philosophical traditions. To be sure, many scholars have already linked the play with historical discourses on memory, whether medical, technological, or part of the *ars memoriae*. But this sort of reification of memory often feels at odds with its

presence in the play, and I contend that Shakespeare employs notions of memory from Neo-Platonism to stage a wider examination of the subjective dimension of time. According to the Platonic tradition, memory is not merely a recollection of past information but the condition of existing in two temporalities at once: the mortal time of the body and the eternal time of the soul. I link this theory with Edmund Husserl's analysis of time-consciousness and neuroscientific studies of temporal experience to show how the famously self-aware *Hamlet* embeds dual temporalities—that of actor and character, stage and world, fiction and reality—into a single temporal horizon. Shakespeare's metatheatrical gestures, when considered alongside Platonic notions of memory, show how the self constructs our experience of time. Far from interrupting the theatrical experience, *Hamlet's* moments of metatheater equip the audience with a double-vision, one that mirrors the Danish prince's dawning awareness of his own dual status as actor and character, and one that ultimately (if temporarily) smudges the window of the playgoer's temporal experience, revealing the self to itself.

In these chapters, it is not my goal to hector the reader into admitting the cognitive sciences are relevant to early modern studies by pointing out our discipline's missteps and blind spots. Instead, I believe the cognitive sciences could be of interest, even *exciting*, for those studying early modern literature. As I hope to show, interdisciplinary studies of the mind have produced challenging and nuanced ideas about the brain, body, and self, which can steer us out of dead-end debates and offer fresh perspectives on topics that have been drained of life by rote dismissal or defense. "The self" is not only the quintessential example of such a topic; it is also inextricably bound up with questions of experience and embodiment, which have increasingly attracted the attention of modern scholars. If we wish to investigate how early modern drama works upon its audiences both past and present, how despite the gulf of history, we and early

moderns might leave the theater with our “minds transfigur’d so together,” we must confront the self, our window to the theater of the world. The cognitive sciences may offer us a conceptual toolkit for understanding the self’s properties and dimensions, but it is only literary experience, with its power to disrupt the habitual processes of our embodied minds, that can usher the self onto the stage.

Chapter 1: The Self Turned Inside Out

Historical neurophenomenology seeks to get inside the minds of subjects long dead. It is not merely concerned with the stories and descriptions historical individuals recited in moments of self-examination; rather, it attempts to uncover those fragments of a person's experience that were left unspoken. It is an archaeology of *inner* life. As part of the phenomenological tradition, this methodology acknowledges the vast complexity of consciousness, recognizing that even the briefest theatrical experience comprises not only an individual's private thoughts and emotions but also the words of the playwright and the gestures of the actors, the smell of bodies pressed close together, the muffled sounds of London creeping in from the open roof, and the groaning of the rafters as the well-to-do shift and shuffle in the galleries. It recognizes that an historical theatergoer's conscious experience encompasses inner sensations as well as the multisensory perception of the theater. Thus, by studying a subject's inner world, historical neurophenomenology can find itself (re)attending to the external world of the playhouse.

Today it is hardly revelatory to argue that the physical space of the theater played some role in the early modern theatrical experience. As many critics have pointed out, playwrights of the period display a heightened awareness of the playhouse's unique capabilities and limitations, frequently drawing on these features for dramatic effect. In *Julius Caesar*, for example, after the conspirators have swarmed Caesar and stabbed him to death, Cassius, the primary instigator of the plot, stands triumphantly over Caesar's bleeding corpse. He proclaims, "How many ages hence / Shall this our lofty scene be acted over / In states unborn and accents yet unknown?" (3.1.111-3).¹ Here Cassius envisions the assassination repeating endlessly throughout time. His

¹ All quotations from *Julius Caesar* are taken from the Arden edition, with act, scene, and line numbers given parenthetically in the text. William Shakespeare, *Julius Caesar*, ed. David Daniell (London: Arden Shakespeare, 2002)

words project from ancient history into the very moment of performance and rebound back to the event itself. For an audience member attending the original performance of *Julius Caesar*, this moment's rich metatheatricality would draw its strength from the very timber of the playhouse. It is highly likely that this play was the first ever performed in the newly built Globe Theater. To mark the occasion, Shakespeare stuffs his play with lines and actions that call attention to the theatrical space: the text prompts actors to make several dramatic ascents to the balcony above the main stage; during crowd scenes, the large new stage is flooded with over a dozen bodies; landmarks in Rome are subtly aligned with counterparts in London (the Tiber becomes the Thames, etc.); and the play's numerous references to time most likely comment on the calendar day when the Globe first opened and the play was first performed.²

Further, the theater's timber itself was charged with import. All of this material came from Shakespeare's company's previous playhouse, which the company nearly lost when their lease on the land expired. Unable to regain the land, the company snuck onto the property in the dead of night, tore down the large playhouse, and carried the lumber away. Giles Allen, owner of the land, describes the event in a characteristically bitter lawsuit:

...then and there armed themselves with divers and many unlawful and offensive weapons, as, namely, swords, daggers, bills, axes, and such like, and so armed did then repair unto the said Theatre. And then and there, armed as aforesaid, in very riotous, outrageous, and forcible manner, and contrary to the laws of your Highness' realm, attempted to pull down the said Theatre, whereupon divers of your subjects, servants, and farmers, then going about in peaceable manner to procure them to desist from their unlawful enterprise, they (the said riotous

² For a detailed explanation of these references, especially those related to time, see Steve Sohmer, *Shakespeare's Mystery Play: The Opening of the Globe Theatre in 1599* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999).

persons aforesaid) notwithstanding procured then therein with great violence, not only then and there forcibly and riotously resisting your subjects, servants, and farmers, but also then and there pulling, breaking, and throwing down the said Theatre in very outrageous, violent, and riotous sort, to the great disturbance and terrifying not only of your subjects, said servants, and farmers, but of divers other of your Majesty's loving subjects there near inhabiting.³

Quickly and efficiently, this gang of theatrical conspirators dismantled the boards of the stage, the planks of the seats, the massive beams that held up the 30-foot walls, and transported the timber to a new site by the Thames, where they used this material to construct a playhouse they called The Globe. For the early modern audience, *Julius Caesar* was a baptism for a deconstructed-reconstructed stage whose wooden O would eventually contain “the two mighty monarchies” of *Henry V*, the rotten state of Denmark, and Lear’s “pitiless storms.”

In reciting this familiar story, we have established what early modern audiences *knew* (or could be expected to know) and aligned those facts with features of the play’s text, but we have said little to nothing about the playgoing experience itself. We have taken information from one domain (historical record) and drawn connections to information from another (a literary text) without saying much of anything about how these two domains might have come together for a real person watching *Julius Caesar* in the Globe. One could venture a guess that such a person, upon hearing Cassius refer to future performances of Caesar’s assassination, might give an appreciative chuckle, or perhaps the metatheatrical echoes of this emotionally charged scene would self-amplify to produce in him or her a transcendent delight. Both these responses—and many, many others—seem possible and indeed, given the paucity of information available about individual theatergoers of the time, equally likely. So, if we are to push forward, it is precisely at

³ Qtd. in Sohmer, *Mystery*, 3.

this point where New Historicist criticism must abandon reasoned argument based in evidence and transition to speculation.

This is not to disparage speculation. Literary scholarship gives us license to bend our gaze beyond the often scanty historical record to the hazy, ephemeral matters of aesthetic experience. Historical neurophenomenology must also speculate, but it offers a seat somewhat nearer to the scene that we strain to discern. By considering the science of how our brains combine information from diverse domains, how information about a theater and the perception of a dramatic performance come together in our minds, historical neurophenomenology can progress towards speculation on much steadier ground. In what follows, I lay out the theory of cognitive blending, or how our cognitive processes work to combine information from different contexts to create entirely new mental domains. Certain cognitive scientists argue that contextual domains are best thought of as *mental spaces*, and that the brain is in a constant state of creating, combining, and elaborating these spaces as we navigate our waking lives. The theory of mental spaces, I contend, helps us understand the unique role the structure of the playhouse had in the development of early modern thought. In the following pages, I will show how theatrical performance involves the combination of many different contextual domains, and I argue the newly built physical playhouses helped shape and stabilize the blending of these mental spaces for early modern individuals. With the playhouse buttressing these complicated cognitive operations, the physical structure eased much of the mental “labor” involved in following a dramatic performance, and as a result, people were able to perform more complex and creative elaborations within the mental spaces of the theater. This afforded both more creative opportunities for the playwright as well as a deeper, more engaging experience for the audience.

In the second half of this chapter, I will explore the consequences this state of affairs had on theatrical explorations of the self, specifically ideas of interiority and the self's spatial characteristics. While these topics were hotly debated in literary scholarship several decades ago, many of these discussions were hindered by focusing on the language of interiority at the expense of theatrical experience. I believe a return to these debates, equipped with insights from cognitive science and with a renewed focus on theatrical phenomenology, can spark a more productive conversation. Rather than merely tallying descriptions of interiority and spatial metaphors for the self, I will argue that the physical structure of the playhouse significantly altered the *effects* of such language, enhancing its impact and shaping its interpretation. It may perhaps come as no surprise to learn that early modern individual's spatial and architectural surroundings influenced their thinking about interiority and the space of the self, but my argument differs from the usual cultural literary history by exploring how this influence happened in real time, how a physical structure could have altered the experience of a theatrical performance and shaped an individual's thinking about the self. Here we are not discussing broad, pervasive cultural trends, but the direct, immediate impact of a physical structure on aesthetic experience.

This chapter will therefore not conclude with a definitive statement about whether or not early moderns had the concept of a strictly private interiority or an inner self. It is clear that the metaphor of a "true self within" pre-dates early modern English drama, even if the significance of that figuration remains contested.⁴ Rather than trying to pin down concepts, however, I want to show how the material conditions of performance amplified and expanded the significance of

⁴ See, for example, Anne Ferry, *The "Inward" Language: Sonnets of Wyatt, Sidney, Shakespeare, and Donne* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983); Katherine Eisaman Maus, *Inwardness and Theater in the English Renaissance* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995); and John Jeffries Martin, *Myths of Renaissance Individualism* (Hampshire, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004).

such language, allowing playwrights to plumb the depths of the ideas themselves. The physical theater did not impress upon early modern people a specific concept of the self; rather, it facilitated thinking about the self in spatial terms, the consequences of which are predictably varied and experimental. For this reason, I will examine the effects of these conditions on plays by two different authors: William Shakespeare's *Richard II* and Christopher Marlowe's *Edward II*. These "weak king" plays, echoing each other in both theme and language while contrasting starkly in terms of tone, character, and political worldview, have been discussed together for decades. I have chosen these two works because, while they both use the story of deposed kings to delve into issues of identity and subjectivity (in all senses of that word), they nevertheless exhibit radically divergent approaches to ideas of interiority and the self. Thus, they offer fitting examples of the ways in which the playhouse helped unbind thinking about the self without dictating where such thinking might ultimately alight.

Mental Spaces Theory

Mental spaces theory uses spatial diagrams to model language, positing that we can better understand how our brains process speech and writing if we consider language not as an information-delivery system but rather as prompt for the creation of mental worlds. First presented by Gilles Fauconnier in his book *Mental Spaces*, mental spaces theory questions the traditional approach to meaning within linguistics and computer science, which treats a sentence as a basic unit that can be assigned truth values and studied with the tools of formal logic.⁵ Rather than assuming the mind processes language as a computer processes logical formulae, Fauconnier demonstrates that the complex and imaginative aspects of cognition can be best understood in terms of "mental spaces," which he and Mark Turner define as "small conceptual

⁵ Gilles Fauconnier, *Mental Spaces* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

packets constructed as we think and talk, for purposes of local understanding and action.”⁶ These spaces, stripped-down worlds containing minimal structure and very few elements, are created, linked, blended, shifted and discarded dynamically during the process of cognition, albeit behind the curtain of conscious thought. In extended discourse, such as a conversation with another or while reading a book, the brain links multiple mental spaces, creating a dense network of possible worlds.⁷ Sweetser and Fauconnier explain the basic concept in this way:

...as we think and talk, mental spaces are set up, structured, and linked under pressure from grammar, context, and culture. The effect is to create a network of spaces through which we move as discourse unfolds. Because each space stems from another space (its “parent”), and because a parent can have many offspring, the space network will be a two-dimensional lattice.⁸

Although Fauconnier admits that we are not conscious of mental space construction (he refers to it as “backstage cognition”), he insists we cannot adequately understand the connection between language and thought without reference to mental spaces. A key insight of the theory is that our brains are inherently primed for the creation of meaning via these mental spaces, and language does not impart meaning so much as it influences the shape these mental spaces might take. In Fauconnier’s words, “Language does not carry meaning, it guides it.”⁹

Let us look at a brief example of the basic workings of the theory. Returning to that first performance of *Julius Caesar*, we can imagine an audience member remarking on the beliefs of a

⁶ Giles Fauconnier and Mark Turner, *The Way We Think: Conceptual Blending and the Mind’s Hidden Complexities* (New York: Basic Books, 2002), 102.

⁷ This term could be misleading in certain contexts, for mental spaces are *not* equivalent to the possible worlds of formal linguistics. In contrast to those, mental spaces are extremely spare and fragmentary. I discuss this further below.

⁸ Eve Sweetser and Gilles Fauconnier, “Cognitive Links and Domains: Basic Aspects of Mental Space Theory,” in *Spaces, Worlds and Grammar*, eds. Eve Sweetser and Gilles Fauconnier (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 321.

⁹ Fauconnier, *Mental Spaces*, xxii.

certain character. Let's say, "Cassius believes Caesar is a tyrant." This seemingly simple sentence creates some problems for formal linguistics, and the problems quickly mount if we introduce relatively common linguistic attributes such as referential opacity, counterfactual conditionals, etc. According to mental spaces theory, however, the above sentence can be modeled quite simply (Figure 1).¹⁰

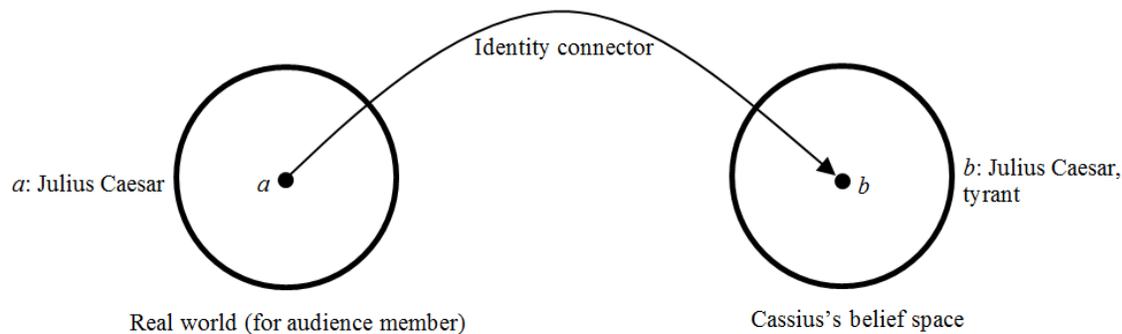


Figure 1: Mental Spaces of "Cassius believes Caesar is a tyrant."

In the sentence, the word "believes" prompts the creation of a new space ("belief space") that is linked to the parent space by the identity connector between *a* and *b*. The linking of counterparts between two spaces is the key to creating a complex network of spaces in discourse. Based on this simple arrangement, we can build from either space with sentences such as "Cassius imagines killing the tyrant" (which builds from Cassius's belief space) or "Julius Caesar was not in fact a tyrant" (which builds from the "real world" of the audience member). In real discourse, or over the course of a performance, these spaces would obviously not exist in isolation but would rather be part of a large network with multiple connections between various spaces.

Conceptual Blending

¹⁰ Figure adapted from Fauconnier, *Mental Spaces*, 14.

Separate mental spaces can also be combined in a process Fauconnier and Turner call *conceptual blending*. When the mind blends two spaces, it selectively combines certain elements from each space to develop a new space with its own emergent structure. Because only certain parts of the input spaces are selected for the blend, the blended space is not necessarily constrained by the same structural limitations as the inputs, which allows for the creation of novel scenarios and greater creative possibilities. In essence, when spaces are blended, two limited spaces combine to create a brand new world, one with its own emergent properties and possibilities. Indeed, cognitive scientists believe blending to be the foundation not only of particular linguistic constructions but also of human creativity itself.

A well-known example of blending is the “evolution of man” image, in which an ape-like creature seems to transform into *homo habilis*, which transforms into *homo erectus*, which transforms into a modern human being. In this blend, the two input spaces are from evolutionary science and the visual arts. The former recognizes the distances (both temporal and spatial) that separate these species. Between them lie thousands of miles, uncounted mutations, genetic dead-ends, and millions of years; for science, it is hardly a straight line from the apes to human beings. However, when blended with the common visual metaphor in which a series of points in a line represents a progression (as in a timeline, for example), the messy and chaotic genetic ancestry becomes compressed into a clear and straightforward image. As a cognitive process, the blending of mental spaces aids comprehension because it reduces complicated information to fit a human scale of understanding. In this case, the incomprehensible scale of time and number of genetic mutations compresses to an orderly line. According to Fauconnier and Turner, blending can create relatively straightforward, unremarkable blends as well as incredibly complicated, counterintuitive blends, such as complex numbers, a concept that blends the traditional concept

of numbers with two-dimensional geometry. Furthermore, once the blend is established, it can be “run,” or elaborated creatively. To return to the evolution example, we can imagine *homo erectus* stepping on the heels of *homo sapiens*, or the *homo sapiens* looking nervously over his shoulder at a hostile gang of unevolved creatures.

To illustrate how blending works in a literary context, let’s look at another example from *Julius Caesar*. Cassius’s metatheatrical line discussed above combines elements from two domains: history and theater. “How many ages hence / Shall this our lofty scene be acted over / In states unborn and accents yet unknown?” The general meaning of these lines is relatively clear, but conceptual blending helps us understand how two contextual domains come together to form an original and evocative mental space. The blend draws connections between the reproduction of an act in a historical context and the reproduction of an act in a theatrical context. In a historical context, a significant act is recorded and repeated by historians and others for many years; while in theater, an action that is part of a play is performed by actors repeatedly throughout the run of the production. Across the two spaces, connections are forged between common elements, as illustrated in Figure 2:

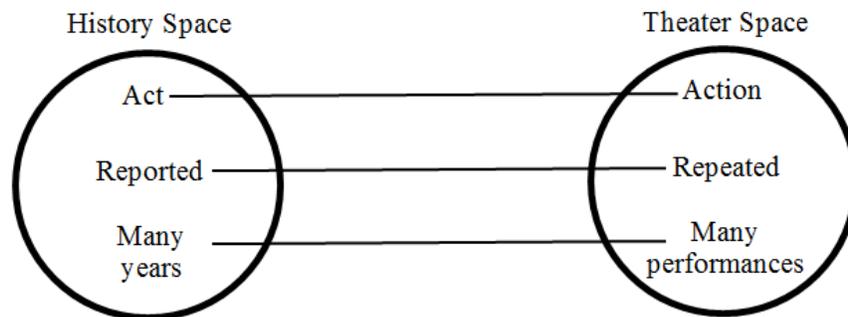


Figure 2: Linking Input Spaces

Notice that only the most basic elements are involved in the blend, conflicting or extraneous information is left out and only those parts of the spaces that can be linked with each other remain. In a theatrical context, for instance, an action is repeatedly performed in a theater, but in a historical context, a historically significant act is repeated in schools, published in books, recited in homes, and disseminated through many other means. These incompatible elements of the two spaces are therefore not part of the linking process that precipitates the blend. Once the elements are linked across the spaces, two spaces can be combined into a new, blended space (Figure 3)¹¹. In the blended space, the conspirators' assassination is not only reported for years after the fact, it is *physically acted out* for centuries upon centuries. Magnifying the horror and unnaturalness of the act, Cassius's blend warps both spaces, fleshing out the dry historical record so that the act of murder is actually repeated (not just reported) again and again, while also stretching the typical theatrical run to uncanny lengths, extending the action beyond the known world.

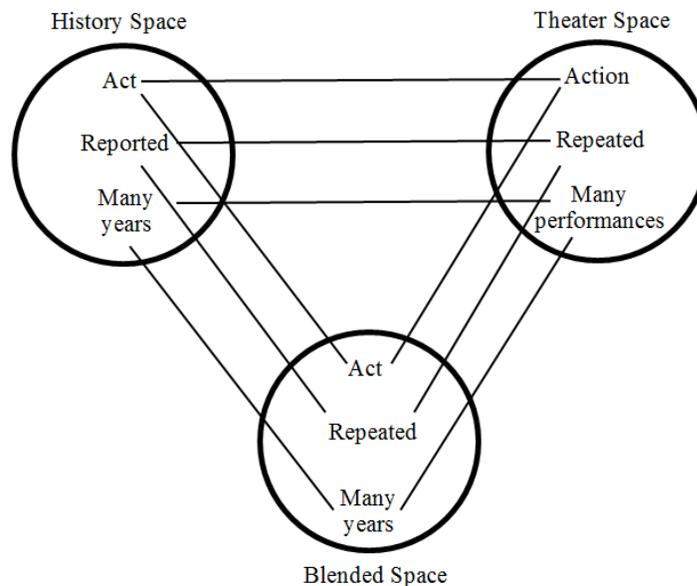


Figure 3: Blended Space

¹¹ For simplicity's sake, I am leaving off part of Fauconnier and Turner's outline for conceptual blending, which includes a "generic space" that serves as a bridge between the two linked mental spaces. This space is a stripped-down schematic that contains what both input spaces have in common.

Then, once the blended space is established, it can be elaborated upon or used as the foundation for further mental spaces, as Brutus does when he immediately responds to Cassius with his own question: “How many times shall Caesar bleed in sport...?” (3.1.114). Brutus, picking up on the theatrical element of the blend, consciously ignores the historical elements (and Cassius boast of the act’s historical import) and reduces the blended space to a mere sideshow, imagining the gawking masses watching Caesar’s murder for their mid-afternoon entertainment. Brutus’s twist on the blended space also brings us to an important caveat, which is that conceptual blending is not deterministic. In our example, I have argued Cassius’s figure of speech is the product of a conceptual blend, but this neither proves with certainty that Shakespeare executed the blend, nor does it require that his audience used conceptual blending to make sense of the lines. Conceptual blending theory is not a rigid interpretive practice that insists if the author says X, then the audience would automatically think Y. In the case of interpreting specific lines of a play, an individual’s personal history, viewpoints, preferences, and general demeanor all exert influence over his or her construction of meaning in the immediate theatrical experience. There are other blends, however, that are more fundamental, upheld by culture and tradition, and which we can say would be shared across a large portion of early modern English society. It is this sort of blend that will be our focus here.

Material Anchors for Conceptual Blends

Although conceptual blending is an unconscious cognitive process, it nevertheless can require a significant amount of cognitive “labor,” especially in cases where one wishes to think within the blended space, to elaborate upon it or build from it. Blended spaces, because they are newly born hybrid creations, are fragile and slippery. Without repetition over time or some sort

of external support, conceptual blends can easily sink into oblivion. If the evolution-of-man blend seems relatively straightforward, it is because the blend has been held up by both these supports: a clear visual representation that has been repeated in books and other media for many years. In the case of more complex blends, Fauconnier and Turner point out that material objects can act as anchors for conceptual blending, allowing an individual to “offload” cognitive labor onto the material world. Edward Hutchins, a cognitive anthropologist, shows that across diverse cultures certain objects—including watches, gauges, slide rules, and even the human hand—are used to stabilize conceptual representations.¹² He explains how this works in a simple navigational compass:

The complex set of spatial relations among the directions (however the frame is conceptualized, e.g., points of the compass, degrees, etc.) would require a huge investment of resources to maintain and operate upon as a purely mental image. In order to produce and manipulate a stable representation of the conceptual elements involved in reasoning about directions, the elements must be somehow held (or anchored) in place. This holding-in-place is accomplished by mapping the conceptual elements onto a relatively stable material structure, the compass rose.¹³

Of course, Hutchins does not contend that a compass is necessary to think about cardinal directions; rather, he argues that the complex and precise relations between the cardinal directions become much easier to use and understand when they are anchored by a stable material object. An operation that was once done purely in the mind can be accomplished with greater accuracy and speed when supported by an object in the external world. Thus, a material

¹² Edward Hutchins, “Material Anchors for Conceptual Blends,” *Journal of Pragmatics* 37 (2005): 1555-1577.

¹³ Hutchins, “Anchors,” 1573.

anchor “enable[s] more complex reasoning processes than would be possible otherwise,” and it is easy to see how, as with the compass rose, such an anchor can transform the way a culture thinks and acts within a certain realm.¹⁴

It is important to note, especially for literary scholars inclined to think in certain ways, that material anchors for conceptual blends are *not* in essence signs or representations. They may *also* be signs, but, as Hutchins explains, material anchors do not “stand in” for ideas so much as they add support to mental operations as a kind of cognitive scaffolding.¹⁵ If, for instance, we grant Saussure’s dictum that the signifier holds an arbitrary relation to the signified, the material anchor is precisely the reverse of that notion. Whatever object one uses for a material anchor, there is always something about the concrete physical form that relates directly to the cognitive process it is intended to support.¹⁶ Thus, although a compass can of course act as a symbol in various contexts, when a navigator uses the compass rose to head a few degrees off due east, the compass is not *representing* space in this instance; it is supporting a conceptual blend to facilitate a more complex and precise cognitive operation. This distinction will be crucial in the following section where I shall discuss the anchoring properties of an object that is already overladen with symbolic significance.

The Stage as a Material Anchor

Cognitive scientists believe material anchors for conceptual blends can also come in the form of buildings and constructed environments. Memory theaters and other methods of loci are perhaps the most well-known example of this latter type of material anchor, but Hutchins and

¹⁴ Hutchins, “Anchors,” 1562.

¹⁵ Hutchins, “Anchors,” 1556.

¹⁶ On the subject of language, Hutchins grants that while written words could be used as material anchors, it is unlikely they would play that role because their physical forms have completely arbitrary relationships to concepts. Hutchins, “Anchors,” 1572.

others have extended this analysis to Gothic cathedrals, airplane cockpits, and modern offices.¹⁷ In recent years, literary scholars have applied the theory of conceptual blending to early modern drama, and Evelyn Tribble has argued that we ought to see the Globe Theater as a kind of workplace in which cognition is distributed via various objects and features of the stage. She contends that the workings of the theater must be understood “across the entire system, which includes attention to neuro-biological systems, material artifacts, the social surround, and technologies such as sound and lighting among others.”¹⁸ Tribble primarily focuses on the cognition of the actors—the Globe is, after all, their “workplace”—and how the material features of the theater helped them recall their lines and engage their audiences in their performances. I believe analyzing the Globe as a workplace is a productive line of inquiry, but here I wish to argue that the relatively recent development of permanent theaters in England helped anchor the cognitive labor of creating and sustaining a fictional world and, like the compass for the navigator, utterly transformed the theatrical experience.

Although this may seem like a familiar refrain, and indeed many critics have already trumpeted the importance of permanent theaters and their effect on the development of English drama, mental spaces theory allows us to go beyond general panegyric, to isolate specific and concrete effects these new structures had, and to trace their consequences in specific dramatic works.¹⁹ As Fauconnier claims, if we wish to think about theater in terms of mental spaces, we must first discard the simplistic tendency of thinking about drama in terms of two realms: the

¹⁷ See Fauconnier and Turner, *The Way We Think*, 206-10, for a discussion of the Gothic cathedral as a material anchor for conceptual blends.

¹⁸ Evelyn Tribble, *Cognition in the Globe: Attention and Memory in Shakespeare's Theatre* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 22.

¹⁹ See, for example, Margreta de Grazia, “World Pictures, Modern Periods, and the Early Stage,” in *A New History of Early English Drama*, eds. John D. Cox and David Scott Kastan (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997); Kent T Van den Berg, *Playhouse and Cosmos: Shakespearean Theater as Metaphor* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1985); and William West, *Theatres and Encyclopedias in Early Modern Europe* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

“real” world and the play’s world. While Fauconnier is no literary scholar, he points out that in common theatrical discourse we see at minimum four distinct spaces.²⁰ These are: the real-world space, the play space (as written by the playwright), the performance space (in which the people on stage “are” the characters), and the “real” onstage situation (actors pretending). Let us examine how these spaces might work when discussing the setting during the original performance of *Julius Caesar* (Figure 4).²¹

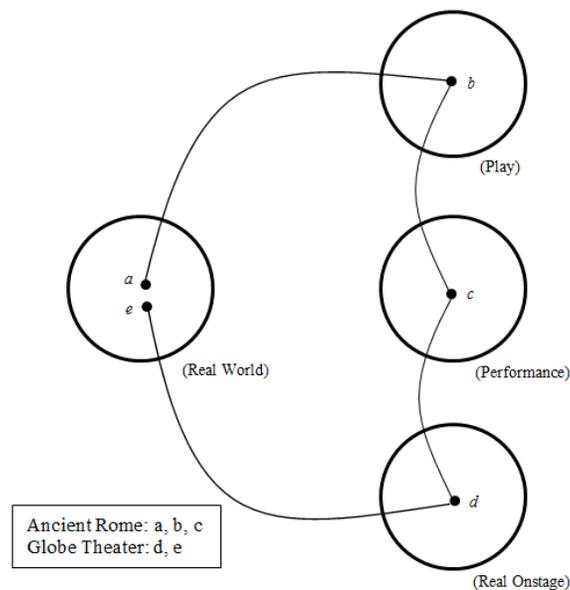


Figure 4: The Spaces of Theatrical Performance

This precise mapping and linking between the two settings elucidates the sort of ambiguous utterances that are common when we discuss drama. The utterance “In the play, the conspirators stab Caesar in Rome” is focused on the Play space, while “Tonight at the Globe, the actors performed the assassination of Caesar” is focused on the Real Onstage space. Due to the links between the counterparts, sentences can be interpreted across spaces. For example, we can also say that “In tonight’s performance, there was an assassination in Rome,” which could either

²⁰ Fauconnier, *Mental Spaces*, 73.

²¹ This figure is adapted from Fauconnier, *Mental Spaces*, 74.

be focused on the Performance space, or it could have its focus on the Real Onstage space due to the identifying link between *d* and *c*. This also allows for the kind of reflexivity that Shakespeare often uses for dramatic effect: “In the play, the Globe is Rome,” refers to *d* and *c* in the Real Onstage space and the Performance space respectively.

Fauconnier keeps these spaces separate in order to illustrate how mental spaces theory can clarify ambiguous utterances in way that formal linguistics cannot; however, I want to suggest that, at its peak, drama is capable of *blending* these various worlds to create something wholly new. In these moments, which could be sustained or fleeting, a dramatic occurrence would no longer be contained to its particular frame of reference but rather seem to transcend it. When the various mental spaces blend, the distinction between character and actor, setting and stage dissolve, and the elements that make up the distinct spaces combine and enter unique arrangements. This is not precisely “suspension of disbelief” or “dramatic illusion,” although there could be phenomenological similarities. While these common theatrical terms are based on the idea that the audience forgets the people on stage are actors or that they willfully repress knowledge of a play’s fiction, the blending of the various spaces that make up a dramatic performance involves the *incorporation* of such information into the dramatic experience. Nor are we discussing a Brechtian alienation effect in which the dramatic fiction is interrupted by the intrusion of the “outside world.” The coming together of these distinct spaces in a conceptual blend joins elements from the different realms in a hybridized yet stable arrangement, mutating the fictive realm rather than shattering it.

When Cassius, hands slick with blood, boldly asks how far into the future his “lofty scene” will be performed, Shakespeare is not merely offering a metatheatrical nod to the audience; he is baptizing the stage as the material support for a new theatrical realm. In this

moment, Shakespeare blends elements from the audience's world—the opening of a new theater, constructed by a group of conspirators from the carcass of an old one—with elements from his fictionalized Rome to create a space that is not wholly in one place nor in one time. Like the reverberating screech of a bat, Cassius' words echo across the centuries and continents that compose the scene, rolling over the vast expanse of this blended world.

For this complex blend to be achieved, the audience must have been primed to recall information about the physical theater in which they were sitting (or standing). What distinguishes a blend of real and fictive worlds such as this one from a tossed-off anachronistic joke or real-world reference is that it draws on a vast array of mental spaces that have already been active in the viewer's mind. As mentioned above, Shakespeare subtly yet persistently keeps the audience conscious of the Globe and London's physical presence throughout the play with performance tricks, gestures toward London landmarks, and allusions to real-world events.²² The cumulative effect of these moments is that, in the audience's mind, the real-world mental spaces are alive and active, primed and ready for the sort of complex blend that Cassius's words incite. It is for this reason that the audience is not "reminded" the play is a fiction, nor is the sense of illusion "shattered" by a reference to the outside world; the audience has, over the course of the performance, held the mental spaces of the real world alongside those of the fictive one, and Cassius's lofty scene prompts a collapse of two separate networks of spaces into each other. The early modern theater's resurrection as the Globe merges with the new Rome's bloody baptism, with both Cassius and the man playing Cassius peering into the future's dark abyss.

In response to the undergraduate's skeptical query, "Did some person in the audience *really* think about all that when watching the play?" we must concede that perhaps he or she did not. The effect we are discussing involves many variables, including knowledge of the theater

²² See note 2 above.

company's actions and an at least semi-conscious grasping of the play's real-world references; and even in such a case, there is no guarantee that Cassius's proclamation would spark a conceptual blend in an individual's mind. As we have seen, the theory of mental spaces holds that language does not create meaning—it guides it. Shakespeare's audience was not a field of *tabulae rasae*, nor was it a pack of Pavlovian animals producing the same reflex response to any given stimulus. According to Fauconnier, each individual mind is a meaning-producing machine, and so the best Shakespeare and his theater company could hope for is to shepherd that production in one direction or another. In any case, the point I wish to make hinges less on the effect of this individual moment from *Julius Caesar* and more on the general conditions that make such an effect possible. It is true we cannot be certain of how an individual theatergoer responded to a certain moment in a play; however, we can conclude that plays such as *Julius Caesar* encouraged and rewarded audience members who were willing to bear a heavier cognitive load by tracking developments in the various mental spaces that make up a theatrical performance. If an audience member could hold and cultivate a network of spaces stemming from the “real world” space while following the development of the play's fictive space, he or she could reap the rewards when the play blended these normally disparate spaces and ushered a theatergoer into entirely new dramatic realm.

These instances of complex cognitive blending would not have been possible without the advent of permanent theaters to support them. A solid, enclosed playhouse, with its hidden tiring house, clearly demarcated stage, and firm divisions between the private theater space and the public world, helped to stabilize the performance for the theatergoers.²³ The physical theater's

²³ This is not to suggest these barriers were impregnable. As theater historians have shown, it was easy for early modern actors to cross the various barriers of a theater to interact directly with the audience (and vice versa). As Gurr notes, it was common enough for young men to sit on the stage itself in certain playhouses and comment obtrusively on the action. See his *The Shakespearean Stage, 1574-1642*, 4th ed. (Cambridge University Press, 2009),

“sealing off” allowed the audience to conceptualize a new form of drama, one which blended mental realms that had previously been kept apart. With the material support of the theater, the audience members would have been able to participate with greater proficiency, and dramatists in turn could experiment with deeper and more complex elaborations of the performance blend. The Globe, encircling the theatergoers, who themselves encircled the stage, combined real and fictive realms while isolating this admixture from the outside world, demarcating a new and unique form of social imagination. Crucially, permanent theaters such as the Globe did not divorce reality from fiction but rather set the terms by which mental realms could be combined. It was, ultimately, by rounding off diverse spaces, by creating clear lines between interior and exterior, that English drama was able flourish.

The Self in Blended Space

The second half of this chapter examines how this particular kind of conceptual blending, supported by the material anchor of the stage, altered conceptions of the self within early modern English drama. Specifically, I argue that the interdependent development of permanent theaters and complex blending of mental spaces in dramatic works promoted radical thinking about the self in spatial terms. To understand why this is, let us return to the diagram of the mental spaces that make up a theatrical performance, only now we will focus on the question of character and actor (Figure 5).

278. And Weimann has suggested the Elizabethan playhouse retained the medieval custom of dividing the stage between the more private *locus* and, along the stage’s periphery, a more public, less-illusionistic *platea*. See Robert Weimann, *Shakespeare and the Popular Tradition in the Theater: Studies in the Social Dimension of Dramatic Form and Function*, ed. Robert Schwartz (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987), 210-220.

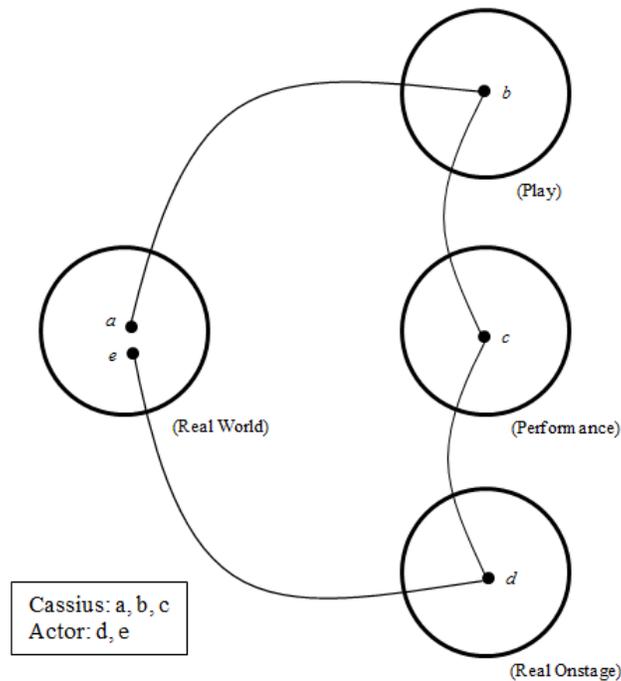


Figure 5: Actor and Character in Theatrical Spaces

We have already discussed how two or more of these spaces come together in a blend, but now I wish to examine the significant consequences this cognitive activity has when a human body becomes an element in conceptual blending. While an audience member might blend the empty stage of the Globe and an imagined ancient Rome with relative ease, blending a character with a human being (and anchoring the blend in a single living body) provokes intriguing incompatibilities. In each mental space above, the Cassius or Actor element is a conscious being (or a representation of one) and so is capable of prompting the creation of its own branch of mental spaces in the viewing audience. For example, a theatergoer could make the observation “In the play, Cassius believes Brutus is sympathetic to his cause,” which builds from Cassius in the Play Space; or she could say, “The actor playing Cassius cannot remember his lines,” which builds from the Actor in the Real Onstage Space; or she could say, “In this performance, Cassius

seems particularly suspicious of others,” which builds from the Cassius in the Performance Space and refers to the actor’s interpretive creation of the character in that day’s performance. The character/actor element in each space has its own thoughts and beliefs that an audience member can track to whatever extent the performance requires. One might assume the specific actor’s thoughts in the Real Onstage Space might be less important in a typical performance, but at least on certain occasions the performances encouraged audiences to do so, such as when Mary Frith popped onstage to “play” herself in Middleton and Dekker’s *The Roaring Girl*.²⁴

In addition to having their own network of mental spaces, the character/actor elements have distinct ways of presenting mental activity. While we usually consider the act of thinking to be private, in the early modern theater, thought was at least a semi-public performance. Sanctioning the use of asides, soliloquies, and gestures aimed solely at the audience, the generic conventions of Renaissance drama encouraged non-naturalistic representation of its characters’ consciousness. Crucially, this non-naturalistic representation of thought existed alongside (and was sometimes blended with) at least two other methods of displaying consciousness. The actor of the Real Onstage space, of course, did not use asides to express his own thoughts, and the character of the Play Space had no recourse to gestures or facial expressions except what was written in the text. In sum, within each space, an agent has a different sort of consciousness, each with its own type of display and private interiority (See Table 1). In some spaces, mental activity is more or less unseen; in others, it is partially public, presenting itself to some observers while

²⁴ *The Roaring Girl*’s epilogue promises “The Roaring Girl herself, some few days hence, / Shall on this stage give larger recompense” (34-35). All quotations from Middleton’s plays are from *Thomas Middleton: the Collected Works*, eds. Gary Taylor and John Lavagnino (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007). Michael Witmore argues that some of the pleasure of early modern theater was waiting to see something happen that was unplanned or a mistake (and watching how the actors responded). This would suggest an audience frequently attended to the mental spaces of the Real Onstage actors. See Michael Witmore, “Eventuality,” in *Early Modern Theatricality*, ed. Henry S. Turner (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 386-401.

being hidden from others. Importantly, all three of these types of thought are anchored to a single physical body during a performance, so that, from the audience’s perspective, an actor does not merely play different people but rather embodies three distinct *modes* of consciousness.

Mental Space	Play (Cassius)	Performance (Cassius)	Real Onstage (Actor)
Displayed Thought	Written asides and soliloquies	Asides, soliloquies, gestures and facial expressions	Mistakes, involuntary reactions, metatheatrical gestures to the audience
Hidden Thought	Anything unwritten	Anything unspoken and unexpressed through performance	Interior consciousness

Table 1: The Display of Thought in Theater’s Mental Spaces

It is not difficult to see how this state of affairs brought certain issues of selfhood to the fore. Moreover, these issues took on a distinct spatial characteristic because the conventions of early modern drama promoted the performance of mental activity *in space*. In the course of a performance, a character could step toward the audience and offer a glimpse into his or her thinking that, relative to the other characters, would be interiorized and private. Dramatic devices such as soliloquies and asides, however, did more than reveal thought; they transformed it into a spatial activity. The same gestures and actions a character would use in the external world now became the tools of the inner realm, projecting an individual’s private interior outwards onto a public, physical space. In short, the self was turned inside out. And while literary scholars have been quick to latch onto early modern drama’s tendency to display a character’s inner world as evidence that early moderns did not have the concept of a private, interiorized self, we must remember that this exteriorized self existed alongside (and was sometimes blended with) other modes of consciousness with their own less public forms of mental activity. Early modern drama did not deny the interiorized self; instead, it forced the inner and outer aspects of the self together, sometimes existing in parallel, sometimes blended into chimerical creations.

The fact that different modes of consciousness became anchored to a single human body and that some (but not all) of these modes of consciousness were staged in physical space meant that issues of the self took on a charged spatial quality, and interiority itself was elevated to a more vivid imaginative register. The point here is not that the material conditions of early modern theater dictated a specific conception of selfhood but rather that they loosened the conceptual shackles of early modern thought and allowed audiences and playwrights alike to experiment with dynamic and hybridized conceptions of the self. In some ways, these conditions resonated with the syncretic impulse of early modern philosophy, yet what was happening on stage was not the display of rigorous philosophical theorizing. Instead, the charged environment of the playhouse added depth and breadth to spatially inflected figurations of the self, amplifying their effects on the audience's imagination so that even commonplace conceptions of the self could suddenly appear unfamiliar, fantastical, or grotesque. To illustrate this point, then, I wish to examine two plays with radically divergent depictions of selfhood, both of which explore the space of the self yet which stage their explorations on entirely different terrain. Marlowe's *Edward II*, I argue, puts pressure on the notion that the mind is confined to the physical body. Marlowe's characters frequently spread their selves into the external world to include objects, environments, and even other characters as part of their "extended selves." Shakespeare, on the other hand, isolates and problematizes the metaphorical structures of interiority, demonstrating how the common figuration of the body as a container for the self obscures rather than uncovers his characters' inner realms.²⁵ Both these playwrights use their "weak kings" to interrogate common conceptions of interiority, and although they do so from drastically different

²⁵ All quotations of *Richard II* are from *King Richard II*, ed. Charles Forker (London: Arden Shakespeare, 2001), with act, scene, and line numbers given parenthetically in the text. All quotations of *Edward II* are from *Edward II*, ed. Stephen Guy-Bray, 3rd ed. (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), with scene and line numbers given parenthetically in the text.

perspectives, both Marlowe and Shakespeare take advantage of the playhouse's charged environment to upend spatial conceptions the self.

Edward's Extended Self

A survey of the scholarship analyzing the self in *Edward II* reveals the usual debate between a somewhat older tradition finding artistic fault in Edward's lack of interiority and a somewhat less old tradition championing Edward's shallow interiority as evidence of Marlowe's radical re-conception of the self. David Thurn writes that in *Edward II*, "our powers of identification are under sharp strain,"²⁶ William Kelly advises readers not to think of Edward as an individual but as a "bundle of extrinsic qualities,"²⁷ and even Constance Kuriyama, who sees *Edward II* as Marlowe's "most ambitious attempt to create a credible human being," admits the rhetorical patterning "at times does violence to the credibility of characterization."²⁸ Critics frequently compare the interiority of Marlowe's king to that of Shakespeare's Richard II, with Edward usually coming up short.²⁹ George Geckle claims that Marlowe sacrifices a "sense of complexity" for a more streamlined narrative, and Robert Logan notes that Richard has "a more complex personality."³⁰ Many see Marlowe's play as dramatizing the division between an individual's will and external social and ideological pressures. Thurn uses both Lacan and Greenblatt to analyze the structures that create the dual fictions of self and state, and he argues Edward's subjectivity attempts to "fix itself by postulating objects of permanence and identity in

²⁶ David H. Thurn, "Sovereignty, Disorder and Fetishism in Marlowe's *Edward II*," *Renaissance Drama* 21 (1991): 115.

²⁷ William B. Kelly, "Mapping Subjects in Marlowe's *Edward II*," *Atlantic Review* 63, no. 1 (Winter 1998): 4.

²⁸ Constance Brown Kuriyama, *Hammer or Anvil: Psychological Patterns in Christopher Marlowe's Plays* (New Brunswick: Rutgers UP, 1980), 180-181.

²⁹ For the critical tradition of comparing characterization in the two plays, see Charles R. Forker, ed., *Shakespeare: The Critical Tradition: Richard II* (London: Athlone Press, 1998), esp. 324-7, 349-51, 423-5, and 458-61.

³⁰ George L. Geckle, "Narrativity: *Edward II* and *Richard II*," *Renaissance Papers* 24, no. 2 (2000): 99-118, 115. Robert Logan, *Shakespeare's Marlowe: The Influence of Christopher Marlowe on Shakespeare's Artistry*, (Burlington: Ashgate, 2007), 100.

the world.”³¹ Similarly, Kelly’s post-structuralist reading treats individual subjectivity as “a continual process of responses to ideological pressures.”³² And Claude Summers argues that despite characters’ attempts to embrace their fluid identities and chase their inner desires, in the end “reality prevails” and “[c]haracters remain entrapped in the prisons of their own circumstances and their own selves.”³³

Despite their divergent conclusions, these critics generally agree that Marlowe does not equip his king with a strong interiorized self, that with Edward things remain more or less on the surface. In many ways, Marlowe encourages such a reading by having his characters undergo sudden shifts in personality and by obscuring glimpses to his characters inner lives. Edward, despite his professed love and loyalty to Gaveston, quickly finds a replacement in Spencer after Gaveston’s death. Isabella begins the play as a loving yet put-upon wife and finishes it as a deceptive schemer who quickly assents to Edward’s murder. Similarly, Mortimer appears at first to be a well-meaning, yet justifiably aggrieved noble, but he finishes the play as a Machiavellian overreacher. This apparent division of the play into two parts has led some critics to argue that Marlowe structures his drama through multiple dualities; however, there are other less subtle and less structured ways he prevents the audience from pinning down a coherent interiority in any of his characters. As Logan notes, the characters refer to Edward’s age in an inconsistent manner: Mortimer Senior calls Edward a promising but inconstant “youth” in scene 4, then Kent promises to rescue “aged Edward” (21.119), and finally Edward, referring to himself in the third person, sighs, “Thus lives old Edward, not relieved by any, / And so must die, though pitied by many”

³¹ Thurn, “Sovereignty,” 132.

³² Kelly, “Mapping Subjects,” 1.

³³ Claude J. Summers, “Sex, Politics, and Self-Realization in *Edward II*,” in “*A Poet and a Filthy Play-Maker*”: *New Essays on Christopher Marlowe*, eds. Kenneth Friedenreich, Roma Gill, and Constance Brown Kuriyama (New York: AMS Press, 1988), 221-240.

(22.23-4).³⁴ Furthermore, Marlowe provides Edward with very few soliloquies, and the king's monologues are generally brief and unrevealing. Edward has his longest sustained speeches while in prison, and critics have often treated these lines, perhaps because of their similarities to Richard's famous Pomfret Castle soliloquy in Shakespeare's play, as expressions of Edward's true inner thoughts. John McElroy, for example, sees these lines as "enact[ing] Edward's psychomachia" and carrying the "force and authority of a true tragic recognition."³⁵ Thurn, too, argues Edward's speeches "exhibit the desperate plunges and violent turns and reversal of a mind in torment...."³⁶ Unlike those late scenes in *Richard II*, however, Edward's final speeches are not soliloquies at all. Leicester, Winchester, and Trussel are all present during his monologues, and although Edward rarely addresses them directly, we cannot ignore their presence. Considered alongside the general pattern of blocking glimpses into the characters' "inner" lives, the presence of these characters during Edward's most unguarded moments suggests a similar motivation on Marlowe's part.

To explain these features of *Edward II*, critics have adhered to the idea that a strong, complex self relies upon a profound interiority, with the corollary that the lack of an interiorized self means either an artistic failing or a conscious denial of the very concept of selfhood. Cognitive science, however, offers a path between these two extremes. If we recall the discussion above about material anchors for conceptual blends, we should recognize how common it is that we "offload" our thinking onto material objects and how much of our "inner" lives takes place in the external world. Indeed, some cognitive scientists believe we have drawn a false barrier between our minds and the world, that, when looked at in the proper light "there is

³⁴ Logan, *Shakespeare's Marlowe*, 94.

³⁵ John F. McElroy, "Repetition, Contrariety, and Individualization in *Edward II*," *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 24, no. 2 (Spring 1984): 223.

³⁶ Thurn, "Sovereignty," 135.

nothing sacred about skull and skin.”³⁷ The philosopher and cognitive scientist Andy Clark argues that our reliance on material anchors shows that these objects are not just tools or supports for thought but are *actually constitutive of the mind*.³⁸ To illustrate this point, Clark and David Chalmers put forward a provocative thought experiment. They ask us to imagine a person named Otto who is suffering from a neurological disorder similar to Alzheimer’s that has destroyed his memory. Because he can no longer rely on his biological memory, Otto keeps a notebook filled with important information. If, one day, he wants to go to the museum, he consults his notebook, sees that he has written down the museum’s address, and goes to that location. Clark and Chalmers insist that it’s not just information that is stored in the notebook but Otto’s *belief* that the museum is where it is. If we were to follow Otto around for a day, we would see him consulting his notebook just as a person with a fully functioning memory would consult his or her memorized facts. Thus, Otto behaves the same way a person with a functioning memory would: both believe the museum is, say, on Main Street but one holds the belief within and the other holds it in the external world. Importantly, Clark and Chalmers argue that Otto believes the museum is on Main Street even before consulting his notebook. Some of Otto’s memories and long-term beliefs—portions of Otto’s mind—reside outside his skull.³⁹

This way of thinking about the mind must necessarily alter our conception of a self predicated upon a deep interiority. Clark and Chalmers argue we should consider Otto as “an extended system, a coupling of biological organism and extended resources” and that we should see selves in general as “spread into the world.”⁴⁰ And while the theory of the extended mind

³⁷ Andy Clark and David Chalmers, “The Extended Mind,” *Analysis* 58, no. 1 (1998): 14.

³⁸ Clark and Chalmers, “Mind,” 7-19.

³⁹ This somewhat counterintuitive thesis has its critics. See, for example, Frederick Adams and Kenneth Aizawa, *The Bounds of Cognition* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2008). For Clark’s response, see his *Supersizing the Mind: Embodiment, Action, and Cognitive Extension* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 85-110.

⁴⁰ Clark and Chalmers, “Mind,” 18.

(based, in part, on information theory and the computer sciences) was not available to early moderns, literary scholars have found compelling evidence that notions of extended or distributed selfhood were available in other discourses. Research on humoral theory has demonstrated how early modern saw their internal states as tightly linked to their environments, so much so that certain climates or diet could have a permanent effect on an individual's psychology.⁴¹ More recently, Kevin Curran has argued that legal discourse offered early moderns an avenue for "describing selfhood in distributed terms, as a product of interpersonal exchange or as a gathering of various material forces."⁴² In some legal contexts, he claims, the self "is not a fixed and bounded entity, but instead something better characterized as a *dynamic process* involving an assortment of human and nonhuman agents in environments of exchange."⁴³ This conception bears a strong resemblance to the sort of self Clark and Chalmers describe, one that is not confined to skin and skull but rather unfurls itself into the world, draping itself on objects, structures and even other human beings.

For our purposes in examining *Edward II*, it is less important where the conceptual language for an extended self originated from. We have already seen how cognitive labor was offloaded within the theater and how the blending of mental spaces put pressure on spatially inflected thinking about the self. Curran is surely correct in stating "there was nothing about Shakespeare's world that would have hindered him from conceiving of the self in distributed terms. Quite the contrary: the intellectual and literary culture of his time provided multiple resources for questioning ideas of individuality and interiority."⁴⁴ Beyond intellectual and

⁴¹ Gail Kern Paster, for example, cites Clark and notes the similarities between the extended mind theory and early modern humoral psychology. See her *Humoring the Body: Emotions and the Shakespearean Stage* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), esp. 11.

⁴² Kevin Curran, *Shakespeare's Legal Ecologies: Law and Distributed Selfhood* (Northwestern University Press, 2017), 3.

⁴³ Curran, *Ecologies*, 11.

⁴⁴ Curran, *Ecologies*, 17.

literary culture, however, early modern drama offered a dramatic *enactment* of distributed selfhood. The extended self was more than an intellectual notion circulating in rarefied discourses; it was part of the phenomenological texture of early modern drama.

This texture ought to inform our reading of the various objects that populate *Edward II*, a play that begins with a physical object helping to smudge two characters' identities. Marlowe's play opens with an as-yet unidentified Gaveston alone on stage, speaking the words of King Edward: "My father is deceased; come, Gaveston / And share the kingdom with thy dearest friend" (1.1-2). Although a piece of paper in the actor's hand would signify to the audience that Gaveston is reading these words, Marlowe stokes ambiguity by allowing for the alternative interpretation that Gaveston is reading news that *his* father is dead. Even if we assume the audience at the time was familiar with Edward's history, the audience would still have to complete the process of matching the historical roles to the actors' bodies. So it is suggestive that, at the moment when these correspondences are the least defined, Marlowe chooses to extend the confusion just a bit longer by having one character speak through another. While it is a fairly common technique in early modern drama to open a scene with a character reading a letter, playwrights generally avoided opening a play in such a manner, mostly likely to avoid just this sort of confusion.⁴⁵ The wording of the letter further frustrates easy identification, leaning on possessive adjectives (*my* father, *thy* dearest friend) that define relationships between persons while leaving the persons themselves obscure. And the imperative with a proper name ("come, Gaveston") might easily be interpreted as the character referring to himself in the third person, a

⁴⁵Marlowe opens *Doctor Faustus* with Faustus reading his books, but Faustus announces that he is reading, and all of his quotations are in Latin, clearly demarcated from his normal speech. Shakespeare begins *Much Ado about Nothing* with the characters discussing a letter, but the characters do not read from it directly: "I learn from this letter that..." (1.1.1). Closer to Marlowe's technique in *Edward II* is the way Shakespeare introduces Lady Macbeth, who begins Act 1, Scene 5 alone onstage while reading directly from Macbeth's letter. In both *Edward II* and *Macbeth*, the conflation of identities between the letter writer and reader has obvious dramatic import. Unlike Marlowe, however, Shakespeare avoids serious confusion by first establishing other key characters and by having Lady Macbeth recount events that the audience has already witnessed happen to Macbeth.

rhetorical feature quite common amongst Marlowe's characters and one that appears just two lines later: "What greater bliss can hap to Gaveston / Than live and be the favourite of a king?" (1.4-5). This ambiguous presentation of a letter obviously looks forward to Mortimer's fatal "unpointed" letter that equivocally dooms the fallen king (23.13) while also priming our attention for the various objects that extend the characters' selves into the external world, including Edward and Gaveston's miniature portraits ("O might I keep thee here, as I do this") and jewels that communicate more than they adorn (4.128; 4.329 and 21.71).

The play's most prominent example of objects extending the minds of the characters occurs in the sixth scene, where the nobles' display heraldic shields for Gaveston's (second) return to England. As Edward anxiously waits for Gaveston, he asks the nobles to explain their decorated shields that they have prepared for the occasion. Mortimer describes his image:

A lofty cedar tree fair flourishing,
On whose top branches kingly eagles perch,
And by the bark a canker creeps me up
And gets unto the highest bough of all;
The motto: *Aequae tandem.* (6.16-20)

Lancaster then summarizes his shield, which features an emblem of a hunted flying fish and a similarly hostile Latin caption. Despite the aggressive imagery on display, the nobles strategically position themselves as purely passive figures in this scene. They do not mention or explicate the objects until prompted by the king, and even then, they require further encouragement:

EDWARD: ...But tell me, Mortimer, what's thy device
Against the stately triumph we decreed?

MORTIMER JUNIOR: A homely one, my lord, not worth the telling.

EDWARD: Prithee let me know it. (6.11-14)

Similarly, they frame their discussion of their shields as passive descriptions of real and true objects: “thus it is,” begins Mortimer (6.15). Clearly, subtlety is not the nobles’ objective, as Edward immediately interprets the shields as insults and threats directed at Gaveston, but the nobles “offload” their dissent unto external objects in such a way as to avoid direct confrontation and thus escape punishment. The nobles take no steps to correct Edward’s interpretation or protest their innocence, silently allowing Isabella to come to their defense. Indeed, it appears to be this presentation of passivity that clears the way for an outsider’s exculpation and prevents Edward from taking immediate action against them. The king may call Mortimer “proud” and Lancaster “ungentle,” but otherwise his response takes the form of a series of questions, which, while insinuating guilt, do not directly provoke punishment (6.29-35).

Of course, Lancaster and Mortimer’s shields differ from Clark’s thought experiment of the memory-impaired Otto and his notebook, for the nobles, as fictional characters, have no minds to extend. They do not, unlike Otto, rely on the shields to aid their cognition. Nevertheless, Marlowe is some sense training his audience to conceive of these characters as being, in Clark and Chalmers’ words, “spread into the world,” asking us to consider their minds not as hidden interiors but as extended outward into the public space. Edward’s furious interrogation underlines the extent to which we ought to consider the nobles’ shields are part and parcel of their minds: “Can you in words make show of amity / And in your shields display your rancorous minds? / What call you this but private libeling...?” (6.32-34). Although Edward claims the shields “display” the nobles’ minds, his oxymoronic “private libeling” undercuts any stable division between a interiorized mind and external behavior. The cut-and-dry legal

distinction between public and private cannot smoothly translate to the messy reality of extended selves, which reach beyond flesh and bone to loop the material world into a complex, self-supporting system.

If the play begins with the blurring of identities and if Marlowe suggests the self cannot be isolated within the confines of an individual body, then we must take seriously Edward's proclamation to Gaveston: "Knowest thou not who I am? / Thy friend, thy self, another Gaveston!" (1.141-142). Of course, the idea of a friend as a "second self" was commonplace at the time, a notion championed by poets, philosophers, and other early modern writers. More generally, these writers argued that male friendships were the purest form of social relation (with more than a dash of misogyny to support their arguments). Yet if we find Marlowe parroting this well-worn sentiment in his play, it is nevertheless clear that he had no intention of turning the story of Edward II into a paean to true friendship. That is not to say Marlowe is not interested in the concept. Constance Kuriyama argues it is an abiding concern in most of Marlowe's plays: "male friendship, in the more ordinary form of amicable association or companionship, figures prominently in [the plays], and his characters attach great importance to it."⁴⁶ And it is a particularly urgent concern in *Edward II* where, as Sean Lawrence notes, "friend," "friendship," and related words appear more than twice as often as they do in any of his other plays.⁴⁷ Critics such as Skura, however, who quickly cite Elyot, Bacon, and Montaigne as writers who approvingly write about friends as "second selves" seem to miss the degree to which the commonplace had already passed into cliché.⁴⁸ Montaigne was eager to flesh out the idea, to

⁴⁶ Constance B. Kuriyama, "Second selves: Marlowe's Cambridge and London friendships," *Medieval and Renaissance Drama in England* 14 (2001): 86-104.

⁴⁷ Sean Lawrence, *Forgiving the Gift: the Philosophy of Generosity in Shakespeare and Marlowe* (Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press, 2012), 126.

⁴⁸ Meredith Skura, "Marlowe's *Edward II*: Penetrating Language in Shakespeare's *Richard II*" *Shakespeare Survey* 50 (1997): 43.

make the metaphor into a dizzying reality: “In the friendship I speak of, our souls mingle and blend with each other so completely that they efface the seam that joined them, and cannot find it again. If you press me to tell why I loved him, I feel this cannot be expressed, except my answering: Because it was he, because it was I.”⁴⁹ And Francis Bacon reveals himself to be just as unsatisfied with the conceit, writing:

[I]t was a sparing speech of the ancients to say, that ‘a friend is another himself’; for that a friend is far more than himself. . . . So that a man hath, as it were, two lives in his desires. A man hath a body, and that body is confined to a place; but where friendship is, all offices of life are as it were granted to him and his deputy. For he may exercise them by his friend.⁵⁰

According to Bacon, a friend is not only another version of oneself but an almost supernatural extension of one’s will and desires, a means of spreading oneself beyond the limitations of the physical body. When Marlowe took up his pen to write the history of Edward II, it would seem the friend-as-second-self idea had grown stale, with writers already fussing and picking at the ancient idea to find what parts could still have meaning in their world. In Marlowe’s case, he both emphasized the sexuality in the sentiment (often present in past writings, though rarely made explicit) and also situated the conceit in a world where the self is no longer body-bound, pushing the commonplace to an extreme while also warping and complicating its dynamics.

In what sense, then, is Gaveston Edward’s “second self”? The king speaks only in the most passionate terms about Gaveston, and he continuously risks his throne for his minion’s sake, even offering to abdicate power to keep Gaveston by his side:

⁴⁹ Michel de Montaigne, “Of Friendship” in *The Complete Works: Essays, Travel Journal, Letters*, trans. Donald M. Frame (New York: A.A. Knopf, 2003), 169.

⁵⁰ Francis Bacon, “Of Friendship” in *Francis Bacon: The Major Works*, ed. Brian Vickers (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 395.

Make several kingdoms of this monarchy,
And share it equally amongst you all
So I may have some nook or corner left
To frolic with my dearest Gaveston. (4.70-73)

Lest we assume, however, that Edward's affections are merely the infatuation of a "light-brained king," Marlowe hints at a still deeper connection by having Edward unknowingly mirror some of Gaveston's final words:

GAVESTON: O, must this day be period of my life,
Centre of all my bliss? (10.4-5)

EDWARD: O day! The last of all my bliss on earth,
Centre of all misfortune. (19.61-2)

Edward is not present when Gaveston speaks his lines, nor does he have a report of them, so his echo has a ghostly quality, suggesting both parallel fates and two minds so in sync that they produce paired cries of anguish. Edward's lines, though, are more than an echo of Gaveston's; they are a mirror image of them. Sharing a center yet with asymmetrical sides of bliss and misfortune, these lines demonstrate the profound interdependence of the two figures. A number of critics have noted the mirroring of Edward and Gaveston. Thurn argues that Gaveston "assures Edward of his own identity by providing him with a mirror reflection: Edward is 'another Gaveston' whose narcissistic gaze protects him from self-banishment by fixing him in specular relation with an identical other."⁵¹ And Skura claims that with Gaveston as a twin figure, Marlowe multiplies and internalizes subjective division.⁵²

⁵¹ Thurn, "Sovereignty," 132.

⁵² Skura, "Penetrating Language," 45.

If we view Edward and Gaveston's relationship through the lens of the extend mind hypothesis, however, we need not offer diagnoses for disorders or chide Edward for his delayed maturation. Psychoanalytically inclined scholarship has attempted to locate psychological patterns that fit within traditional textual analysis and a work's historical context. According to that tradition, the two characters' interdependence and mirroring of each other speaks to a deep-seated psychological lack. But the extended mind theory allows us to understand Edward and Gaveston's dynamic in a way that fits with the historical conceit of a friend as a second self without resorting to clinical diagnosis. From this perspective, Gaveston and Edward forming part of a single self becomes one instance of a constant and omnipresent habit of the self to reach beyond the body and become intertwined with the external world. In Edward's attachment to Gaveston, he does not show himself to be incomplete or stuck in a phase of childhood development; his interdependence with another is, in one sense, *normal*, even if those around him insist upon its deviancy. If we take Edward at his word that his soul was "knit" to Gaveston's (13.7), then we ought to understand the moment when Edward unconsciously echoes the words of his dead friend and lover as evidence that the two were so tightly intertwined that one could produce the speech of the other—not that Gaveston is speaking through Edward but that this double self, severed by death, retains some trace of its other half.

We need to darken this scene. As I state above, *Edward II* is not Marlowe's portrait of true friendship, nor do I think the play is simply a rendering of two intertwined souls ripped apart, though it is also that. The cognitive sciences show us how individuals reach out and loop in objects and other people to form extended selves, and in *Edward II* there is a deep and abiding desire to join self and world. The play begins in this vein, with Gaveston planning a joyous union between the imagination and the environment, with the internal and external forming a feedback

loop to shape and amplify each other. He envisions Edward walking amidst an ecosystem of his desires and fantasies:

And in the day when he shall walk abroad,
Like sylvan nymphs my pages shall be clad.
My men like satyrs grazing on the lawns
Shall with their goat-feet dance an antic hay;
Sometime a lovely boy in Dian's shape,
With hair that gilds the water as it glides,
Crownets of pearl about his naked arms,
And in his sportful hands an olive tree
To hide those parts which men delight to see,
Shall bathe him in a spring.... (1.56-65)

Marlowe, through Gaveston, never allows us to lose sight of what we might call this scene's *artificiality*. The pages are clad "[l]ike" sylvan nymphs (57); his men "like" satyrs graze (58); a boy takes "Dian's shape" (60); and later in the passage "One like Actaeon" will be attacked and "seem to die" (65, 69). But this is artificial not in contrast to the natural; it is in conjunction with it. It is artificial in that it displays the exercise of craft and skill upon the environment—a reworking of the natural world to match the minds of those who walk within it.

The harmony of this vision, however, is marred by one off-key note. Before Gaveston describes his courtly masque, he wishes aloud for the presence of musicians and poets, who "with touching of a string / May draw the pliant King which way I please" (1.50-2). This is the only glimpse of a manipulative intent that we see from Gaveston, and his long description contains no suggestion of how or why he might try to influence the king. He concludes only by

noting how the entertainment shall delight him: “Such things as these best please his majesty” (1.70). Yet this momentary shadow of deception spreads over not only Gaveston’s monologue but his entire character, so that the nobles’ standard Elizabethan fretting about a monarch’s favorites and flatterers find some purchase with us, even if we see no further evidence of Gaveston’s manipulative intent. To be sure, Marlowe immediately burdens Gaveston with numerous character traits that would irritate the early modern English populace: his disdain for London (1.12), his taste for foreign things (1.54), his indifference to the poor (1.23), and his social climbing (1.18-19). On the other hand, Gaveston’s introduction only superficially resembles the Vice-like monologues that open, for example, Marlowe’s *Jew of Malta* or Shakespeare’s *Richard III*. Gaveston plots no crime, nor does he cast himself as a villain. Indeed, Marlowe seems to trade upon the structural resemblance to these other introductions in order to foster an attitude of dislike and distrust, without offering audiences a sure ground on which to accuse Gaveston of any crime. Gaveston’s fleeting admission that he plans to influence the “pliant King” does not expose his inner self, but it does pollute his imagined world.

This is a problem for the self that would spread into the environment. In fact, the very possibility of deception and illusion presents a problem for the extended mind theory. Philosopher Kim Sterelny has criticized Clark and Chalmers for failing to take into account the environment of violence and competition in which our biological capacities have evolved. Our perception, our means of grasping the world, have been battered and buffeted by the deception of both predators and prey. Sterelny explains that animals interacting with an inanimate environment can streamline their perception to pure efficiency. A bee uses the sun as a compass; when navigating, the bee need only perceive the sun’s position, and nothing else, for “[t]hat cue

is never misleading.”⁵³ Such simplicity, however, is no longer sufficient when dealing with other biological agents, which, either to catch food or to avoid being eaten, often have a vested interest in spreading false information into their environments. Under the evolutionary pressure of competition, animals must often pollute their epistemic environments. Sterelny explains:

[M]uch animal behavior takes place under the whip of predation and competition. Predation is not just a danger to life and limb. Predation results in epistemic pollution. Prey, too, pollute the epistemic environment of their predators. Hiding, camouflage, and mimicry all complicate an animal’s epistemic problems.⁵⁴

In the world in which our minds evolved, a leaf may not be a leaf; tall grass may contain a predator; and the costs of investigating these ambiguous perceptual signals can be great. Thus, we have evolved to treat the external world as *epistemically polluted*. Sterelny argues that this undercuts the extended mind theory which holds that the brain and external world can cohere into a single cognitive system. Internal information, he claims, does not have to be checked and re-checked in the same way as information from the external world. We do not have to worry about biological agents sabotaging our memories, but our notebooks and other material anchors exist in a public, contested space and so are at risk of epistemic pollution.⁵⁵

Sterelny’s concept of epistemic pollution is, I believe, useful for understanding the world Marlowe creates in *Edward II*, and helps explain why, despite externalization of characters’ selves, the play has a constant, almost frantic concern with the hidden, interior recesses of the mind. To create this effect, Marlowe places a heavy emphasis on the eyesight of the characters, particularly the king. Of course, Marlowe’s interest in the power of vision pops up

⁵³ Kim Sterelny, *Thought in a Hostile World: the Evolution of Human Cognition* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2003), 24.

⁵⁴ Sterelny, *Thought*, 25.

⁵⁵ For Clark’s response to this critique, see *Supersizing the Mind*, 102-105.

in many of his plays, from Tamburlaine's strategic display of gold in *Tamburlaine part 1* to Faustus' flying high above the earth to "prove cosmography" (*Doctor Faustus*, 3.Chorus.7). In *Edward II*, this concern with visual perception is specifically coded as a means of achieving surety about one's place in the social world. Often, this comes in the form of a gaze from the King, as the nobles and Isabella complain that Edward no longer looks at them, or, if he does, he matches his gaze to Gaveston's and looks down upon them. Isabella laments, "I look for love at Edward's hand, / Whose eyes are fixed on none but Gaveston" (8.62-3). When Gaveston is forced to flee, he describes himself as "divorcèd from King Edward's eyes" (9.3). And Mortimer Jr. complains that Edward and Gaveston literally and figuratively look down on others: "Whiles other walk below, the King and he / From out a window laugh at such as we, / And flout our train and jest at our attire" (4.417-19). There is clearly a great deal of political import in *what* the King sees and *how* he sees it, and Gaveston's commandeering of Edward's eyesight can (and has) been seen as an interruption in the perceptual scaffolds that maintain the crown and state.⁵⁶

At the same time, the epistemic stakes of the visual register in the play stretch beyond political surety to the very ties that link the self to the external world. If vision is the primary means of extending the self beyond the skull, then a corruption of the eyes—or the pollution of the information one attains—would have devastating effects on one's mind. In *The passions of the minde*, Thomas Wright forcefully emphasizes this point:

[O]f all our sences, sight was the surest and certainest of his object and sensation; no sence rangeth abroad and pierceth the skies like unto this; no sence hath such varietie of objects to feed and delight it, as this; no sence imprinteth so firmly his forms in the imagination, as this; no sence serveth the soule so much for knowledge, as this; no sence is put so oft in action, as this; no sence sooner

⁵⁶ See, for example, Thurn, "Sovereignty," esp. 117.

mooveth, than this; and consequently, non sence well guided, more profitable to the soule than this, nor no sence perverteth more perilous than this: for if the guide be corrupted, the followers will hardly escape uninfected.⁵⁷

It is true that Isabella and the nobles' accusations against Gaveston often suggest a kind of bodily corruption (2.270), with the King's sense organs being clogged or degraded by his minion: "my lord the King regards me not...He [Gaveston] claps his cheeks and hangs about his neck, / Smiles in his face and whispers in his ears" (2.49-52). Here Isabella almost figures Gaveston as a veil on Edward's perception, with Gaveston blocking his ears with whispers and eclipsing the King's vision with his face. Tellingly, however, it is only the nobles and Isabella who adopt the language of perceptual infection. For Edward, sight offers something closer to sustenance. In Wright's words, vision has a bountiful "varietie of objects to feed and delight it," and Edward dramatizes this notion by seeming to take his nourishment from what he sees. Each of Edward's separations from Gaveston is figured as depriving the King of a cherished sight: "The time is little that thou hast to stay, / And therefore give me leave to look my fill" (4.138-9). And before Gaveston is killed, there is a repeated emphasis on the King seeing Gaveston before the latter dies (9.37, 77-8, 93-4). Finally, when Edward is captured, Mortimer devises the twin tortures of starving the King and forbidding him from receiving any kind glances: "Seek all the means thou canst to make him droop, / And neither give him kind word nor good look" (21.53-4). In the political realm, the King's vision is currency, not only a mark of favor in that it signals a physical proximity to the seat of power but also a way of reading one's place in his esteem. But Marlowe is not solely interested in the specular instantiation of power, for he also demonstrates how the King's "second self" is bonded to him through the ties of eyesight. For Edward, a glance can be a

⁵⁷ Thomas Wright, *The passions of the minde in generall. Corrected, enlarged, and with sundry new discourses augmented. By Thomas Wright. With a treatise thereto adioyng of the clymatericall yeare, occasioned by the death of Queene Elizabeth* (London, 1604), Proquest, EEBO Editions, 172.

way of granting or withholding favor (4.164-9), yet more importantly it is also the primary means by which he constitutes his extended self. When he is deprived of these reciprocal looks, he is halved, hobbled, and starved.

As Marlowe establishes the way in which the self is extended and propped up by vision, he simultaneously allows a steady drip of epistemic pollution to sully the informational environment. We have already seen how characters have engineered the material world to manipulate Edward's sight and mind, such as Gaveston's imagined masque and the nobles' duplicitous shield display, but Marlowe in several metatheatrical moments extends this practice beyond the fictional world to prompt the audience to consider their own surroundings. In the play's fourth scene, Isabella, under pressure from the King, seeks to persuade the hostile nobles to allow Gaveston to return to England almost immediately after they had him banished. Her eventual success causes an overjoyed Edward to exclaim, "I'll hang a golden tongue about thy neck, / Seeing thou hast pleaded with so good success" (4.329-30). The irony is that we have not heard Isabella plead at all. In fact, her persuasion of the nobles proves to be a genius display of stage management. First she arranges herself to provide a striking image to halt the passing nobles:

LANCASTER: Look where the sister of the King of France

Sits wringing of her hands and beats her breast.

WARWICK: The King, I fear, hath ill entreated her.

PEMBROKE: Hard is the heart that injures such a saint. (4.187-190)

Then she singles out Mortimer and draws him aside: "Then thus—but none shall hear it but ourselves" (4.239). From there, her conversation with Mortimer proceeds as a kind of dumb show, being unheard by both the audience and the nobles, who offer up befuddled commentary:

“the Queen’s words cannot alter him”; “mark how earnestly she pleads”; “how coldly his looks make denial”; “She smiles! Now, for my life, his mind is changed” (4.233-6). Why does Marlowe choose to render this pivotal conversation as a silent moving picture? There is, granted, the question of theatrical economy; Mortimer, once convinced, will then have to persuade the nobles. There is no reason the audience need hear the argument twice. Yet Marlowe could have just as easily arranged the scene a different way, allowing the audience to hear Isabella’s conversation with Mortimer and having the latter’s relay to the nobles in silence or offstage. Given the seemingly sudden shift in character for both these figures in the second half of the play, this scene between them proves to be a pivot, the moment when they cease to be separately aggrieved and begin to plot together. It all happens in plain view (for the audience and the nobles), but Marlowe denies us the subtleties of language, the ways in which words can push and pull while also revealing something the speaker; he forces us, in other words, to rely solely on what we can see, and it proves to be starkly insufficient.

In this way, Marlowe brings to light the deficiencies of the visual register. Transforming the crucial conversation to a dumb show frustrates the audience and forces them to fill in the details. And by watching the nobles strain to interpret the same tableau, the audience becomes aware of how both the scene and the scene-within-the-scene have been engineered to prompt specific effects. In this moment, Isabella and Marlowe fall into sync, each crafting their scene in a way that hides nothing from view yet nevertheless shapes the informational landscape to draw their pliant audiences which way they please. The difference between the queen and the playwright, however, is that Marlowe reveals himself as the engineer—not in order to dilute his drama’s effects, for, like the nobles, we fix our eyes upon the scene and puzzle how Isabella could change Mortimer’s mind. Instead, because the audience is clued in to the fact that

something is being intentionally hidden from us, we search more determinedly for that concealed truth. As Sterelny points out, epistemic pollution does not only mar an agent's perception of its world, but it often provokes the agent to investigate further, to disambiguate information that has been deformed by hostile minds. Marlowe's metatheatrical move shows us the curtain to stoke our desire to peek behind it.

To further undermine our faith in the visual register, Marlowe takes a different tack and drives a wedge between our minds and our perception. Many critics have noted that *Edward II* takes place in ill-defined, "shapeless" settings, with few spatial descriptions or action that is in any way determined by the imagined space.⁵⁸ We know that the Earl of Pembroke's Men took the play on tour soon after it was written, so, as Atwood argues, it would be to the touring company's advantage to have a play that could adapt "daily to new performance spaces: inns, courtyards, taverns, or other impromptu multiuse venues."⁵⁹ On the other hand, it is unknown where the play was first performed, though it is likely to have been at a permanent playhouse, so there is no clear evidence that the play's ambiguous spaces are meant to satisfy the pragmatic needs of a playing company instead of being the dramatist's deliberate aesthetic decision. Indeed critics such as Leslie Thomson and Courtney Naum Scuro have argued Marlowe's construction of meaning often relies on such relatively undefined playing space.⁶⁰ In particular, Scuro insists that for Marlowe, "Spatial ambiguity becomes a vehicle for opening up values with which a

⁵⁸ Emily Bartels uses the term "shapeless" to describe Marlovian space in *Spectacles of Strangeness: Imperialism, Alienation, and Marlowe* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993).

⁵⁹ Emma Katherine Atwood, "'All Places Are Alike': Marlowe's *Edward II* and English Spatial Imagination," *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 43, no. 1 (Winter 2013): 55.

⁶⁰ Leslie Thomson, "Marlowe's Staging of Meaning," *Medieval & Renaissance Drama in England* 18 (2005): 19-36. Courtney Naum Scuro, "Placing and Playing the Past: History, Politics, and Spatial Ambiguity in Richard Mulcaster's "The Queen's Majesty's Passage" and Christopher Marlowe's "Edward II," *The Journal of the Midwest Modern Language Association* 48, no. 2 (Fall 2015): 71-94.

society defines its world, and therefore an individual's relative place within it, for reconsideration."⁶¹

In making this point, Scuro is focusing on instances such as when Kent, attempting to free Edward from confinement, is ordered back to court, which causes him to exclaim, "Where is the court but here? Here is the King..." (22.59).⁶² Although it is true that Marlowe toys with cultural signification of space, he cuts somewhat closer to the bone in *Edward II* where, as the play reaches its conclusion, the fictional space becomes more precisely defined and therefore more at odds with what we in the audience perceive. Space in *Edward II* does not become less clear but rather *less coherent*. As Edward's fortunes fall, his world starts to shrink, and as though he were standing in a narrowing spotlight, his immediate surroundings take on greater significance. It must be noted, however, that the "spotlight" is purely descriptive in nature. While the undefined playing space remains unchanged, the verbal descriptions of the space begin to pile up, creating a stronger and stronger contrast between the audience's perception and imagination. While standing on the playhouse's empty stage, Edward complains he is "pent and mewed...in a prison" (20.18). At Berkeley, the specifics of Edward's confinement—nearly impossible to represent physically in the theater—are repeated by multiple characters, a necessity if audiences are meant to keep track of a specific space with no structural or visual support. Maltravers tells us Edward is imprisoned "in a vault up to the knees in water, / To which the channels of the castle run, (24.2-3), and the jailers must continually situate the imagined space for the audience: "Here is the keys; this is the lake"; "Here's a light to go into the dungeon"; "Here's a place indeed with all my heart," (24.25, 37, and 40). Still Edward reiterates "This dungeon where they keep me is the sink / Wherein the filth of all the castle falls" (24.55-6).

⁶¹Scuro, "Placing," 90.

⁶² Scuro discusses these lines in "Placing," 88-9.

“And there in mire and puddle have I stood / This ten days’ space” (24.58-9). These repeated verbal descriptions all occur within a mere sixty lines of each other, which suggests that Marlowe has something in mind other than trying to keep the audience oriented in imagined space.

In essence, Marlowe confronts us with the reverse of the problem presented to Edward in scene 20, where Leicester urges the captured King:

Be patient, good my lord, cease your lament.
Imagine Kenilworth Castle were your court.
And that you lay for your pleasure here a space,
Not of compulsion or necessity. (20.1-4)

This mind-over-matter advice, which Shakespeare would adapt and expand in *Richard II* (see below), offers little comfort to a man who eventually finds himself knee-deep in sewage. Just as Edward cannot project an imagined reality on the obdurate physical world, so the audience is repeatedly confronted by a stubborn disjunction between the featureless stage and the sloshing volumes of putrid waste that are said to flood Edward’s prison cell. The castle’s bodily pollution becomes the audience’s epistemic pollution, as the flood of spatial descriptions confronts the audience with information that jarringly conflicts with what they see. In pushing the audience’s imaginations beyond the stage’s capabilities to support them, Marlowe calls attention to the gap between our internal and external worlds. Once again, Marlowe tantalizes the audience with the possibility that there is *more* than what falls within their view, that the true substance of the scene—the muck, the stench, the ragged prison walls—escapes their eyesight, residing in some private, unseen interior.

The cumulative effect of these metatheatrical techniques is to align the audience and characters in a shared desire to seek out a hidden interiority. Within the play's world, whose atmosphere is one of deception and mistrust, there is a compulsion among the characters to seek surety by discovering others' interiorized selves. As the play nears its conclusion, the atmosphere of paranoia intensifies. When the fleeing Edward takes refuge in a monastery, his party is dogged by fears and suspicions. Spencer Junior frets for their safety, imagining a countryside populated by spies both natural and supernatural, and when the monks assure him not a single person knows of their whereabouts, he replies:

Not one alive; but shrewdly I suspect

A gloomy fellow in a mead below;

A gave a long look after us, my lord,

And all the land, I know, is up in arms—

Arms that pursue our lives with deadly hate. (19.28-32)

Edward himself cannot even find solace in the kindly visage of the Abbot, who tries to calm the frazzled king to little effect: "Father, thy face should harbour no deceit" (19.8). Edward's words read as belonging to one who wishes to trust another yet cannot quite bring himself to let his guard down. The holy Abbot *should* harbour no deceit, but Edward has learned not to rely on external signs; he is, after all, attempting to hide by wearing a religious disguise himself, and so he must recognize the gulf between what the eye sees and what lies beneath: "Hence feignèd weeds, unfeignèd are my woes" (19.96). It is telling, therefore, that Edward uses similar language when he is at last confronted by his executioner: "These looks of thine can harbour nought but death. / I see my tragedy written in thy brows" and "O if thou harbour'st murder in thy heart..." (24.72-3, 86). The term "harbour," though used in nautical contexts at this time (see

6.166) had primarily a sense of lodging or offering shelter, and here the King employs it to refer to thoughts and intentions hidden within an individual. Despairing of finding truth in another's looks, Edward trains his thoughts on the true, interiorized selves of those around him.

Attendant upon the desire to see what is within an individual is the belief in an omniscient vision that can penetrate the play's gallery of false exteriors. For the characters in the play, this belief is usually figured in religious terms, as when Edward specifically calls on the eyes of the "[i]mmortal powers" to judge his torturers: "O level all your looks upon these daring men" (22.37-9). As Marlowe has carefully aligned the characters' suspicions with the audience's uncertainty about the characters' interior selves, however, the appeal to an omniscient witness becomes a sort of (meta)dramatic irony. The audience's perspective, while certainly more comprehensive than that of any individual character, has been shaped and blinkered by Marlowe so that the characters' interiority remains hidden, even as it is repeatedly gestured to. In one of the play's few soliloquies, Isabella cries to an absent Edward: "Heavens can witness, I love none but you" (8.15). At this point in the play, we have already heard several suggestions that Isabella has feelings for Mortimer (4.147-8, 154, 322; 6.223; 8.14), yet these accusations come only from Edward and Gaveston, and the audience is given no clear evidence of an affair. Nevertheless, Marlowe leaves room for doubt. Ultimately, Isabella proves a skilled dissembler (21.73), and her soliloquy, containing a subtle echo of Gaveston's plan to "draw the pliant king which way I please" (1.52), undermines her professed innocence: "O that mine arms could close this isle about, / That I might pull him to me where I would" (8.17-18). The point here is not that Isabella reveals herself to be unfaithful; rather, when she proclaims "Heaven can witness," we realize that if there are eyes that can view her interior self, we in the audience do not possess them. Isabella assures us the truth lies within, but Marlowe restricts our gaze to the surface.

Thus, the torture and execution of Edward signifies a desperate, crazed attempt to get at this sacred interiority, an attempt to pierce through the layers of epistemic pollution, pry open an individual, and glimpse the pure interiorized self. Edward's physical and mental anguish seem to carve out a complex interior zone within him. Early challenges awake Edward's inner gaze: "My heart is an anvil unto sorrow, / Which beats upon it like the Cyclops' hammers, / And with the noise turns up my giddy brain" (2.313-15). These words ominously prefigure Edward's dungeon at Berkeley castle, where "One plays continually upon a drum" to assail his mind and prevent him from sleeping (24.60). Within Berkeley, it is as though Edward has been crudely and painfully turned inside out so that his internal agony becomes interchangeable with external lashings. His keepers find it easy enough to transition from one to another: "He hath a body able to endure / More than we can inflict; and therefore now / Let us assail his mind another while" (24.9-11). Philosopher Gaston Bachelard has noted how pain and sickness are particularly effective at helping our minds survey the body's interiority: "By following the labyrinth of fever that runs through the body, by exploring the "seats of fever," or the pains that inhabit a hollow tooth, we should learn that the imagination localizes suffering and creates and recreates imaginary anatomies."⁶³ Just so, Lightborne's methods of execution all pierce the body's exterior and trace the corporal channels and corridors, exposing a hidden interior to the mind's eye:

I learned in Naples how to poison flowers,
 To strangle with a lawn thrust through the throat,
 To pierce the windpipe with a needle's point,
 Or, whilst one is asleep, to take a quill
 And blow a little powder in his ears,
 Or open his mouth and pour quicksilver down. (23.30-35)

⁶³ Gaston Bachelard, *Poetics of Space*, trans. Maria Jolas (Boston: Beacon Press, 1994), 225.

With these potential executions, Lightborne begins to create Edward's "imaginary anatomy," to peer into the hollow of his throat or the canals of his ears, laying open the King's body as if on an operating table. The assassin's casual tone suggests the ease with which the interior can be reached, and yet Lightborne ominously promises, "But yet I have a braver way than these" (23.36).

In dramatizing Edward's death, Marlowe follows Holinshed's history, yet he does so without description or explanation. Lightborne instructs Maltravers and Gourney to bring him "a spit, and let it be red hot" along with a "table and featherbed" (24.30, 33.). When the moment comes, he only orders them to "lay the table down and stamp on it; / But not too hard, lest that you bruise his body" (24.111-12). After that, the text offers nothing. There is no stage direction, no words from Edward or the others. The next spoken line is Maltravers' shaken reflection on what the text has passed over in silence: "I fear me that this cry will raise the town" (24.113). The line alludes to Holinshed's pitying description, which Marlowe mostly elides:

[Edward's] crie did mooue manie within the castell and towne of Berkley to compassion, plainelie hearing him vtter a wailefull noise, as the tormentors were about to murther him, so that diuerse being awakened therewith (as they themselues confessed) praied heartilie to God to receiue his soule, when they vnderstood by his crie what the matter ment.⁶⁴

The attempt to penetrate to Edward's interior yields no enlightenment or insight; it only releases an inhuman scream, formless and unintelligible. Over the course of the play, we have seen Edward stripped of every external trapping of his identity, from his second body to his "second self," and when the moment arrives to glimpse his true, interior self, we are met with a howl of

⁶⁴ Qtd. in Charles R. Forker, ed., "Appendix B: Longer Extracts from Marlowe's Sources," in *Edward the Second* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1994), 355.

anguish. Given Marlowe's frequent gesturing to this interior space (one that he suggests is always just beyond our gaze), it should perhaps be no surprise that our sole glimpse of an individual's interiority is invisible and illegible, taking shape only as a scream. What else, Marlowe seems to ask, could we possibly hope to find?

Edward II concludes with the young Edward III holding Mortimer's severed head. Emma Atwood argues that despite the penetrating focus on Edward's body in the final scenes, it is the mind, not the body, which holds the greatest significance in the play: "Edward's body is neither the central object of punishment nor the real locus of cultural concern in the play. The body is a red herring. Instead, his mind is the ultimate source of conflict and anguish."⁶⁵ I would agree that the body is not the play's central concern, but I would counter that it is the *head* and not the mind that, to echo Atwood's spatial metaphor, is the symbolic locus of *Edward II*. Indeed, I have argued that the play calls into question the mind's "real locus." As many critics have noticed, Edward III's closing speech to Mortimer's head is but the final instance in a long series of references to this particular body part.⁶⁶ Characters mention heads most often in reference to literal beheading, but they also use them metonymically to refer to soldiers (6.122), as the supposed locus of intention (18.23-4), or as source of physical sensation (20.82). In the final scene, Edward III promises Mortimer that his "hateful and accursèd head" shall sit atop Edward's coffin as "witness to the world" of his murder (25.29-32). Once Mortimer is beheaded, he addresses the lifeless head directly: "Accursèd head! / Could I have ruled thee then, as I do now, / Thou hadst not hatched this monstrous treachery" (25.95-7). And finally he presents the head to his deceased father:

⁶⁵ Atwood, "All Places," 50.

⁶⁶ The word "head" or "heads" appears 38 times, the most in any of Marlowe's plays, and more than any Shakespeare play save *Henry VI, pt. 2*. I am not including many relevant terms such as "behead" (2.43), "heading" (9.30), or "headless" (11.136).

Sweet father, here unto thy murdered ghost
I offer up this wicked traitor's head.
And let these tears, distilling from mine eyes,
Be witness of my grief and innocency. (25.99-102).

Here Edward brings together the various threads of meaning that have attached themselves to the head throughout the play. The head is witness as an inanimate object, a senseless part of the external world to which we attach significance and stabilize the slippery the process of our thought and reasoning.⁶⁷ In a grim satire of the nobles' shields, Edward III mounts the severed head on his father's coffin as an emblematic display of the restored power of the monarchy. Yet the head is witness, too, in that it reaches out from within itself to shape the world and grant it meaning. As the newly crowned king states, the severed head in his hands "hatched this monstrous treachery"; the play's entire plot issuing forth from deep within the recesses of a hidden and unknowable interiority. The head, then, is both the object of thought and its source, our self's path to the world and its prison, our means of witnessing creation and witness to our eternal isolation.

Containing Richard

Earlier in this chapter, I argued that the material conditions of the early modern playhouse facilitated thinking about the self in spatial terms. In writing *Edward II*, Marlowe took advantage of that charged environment to explore the ways in which the self can be extended into the material world, radically questioning the individualistic notion that the self must be confined by skin and skull. At the same time, Marlowe's iconoclastic impulses seem to have

⁶⁷ Thurn also argues that heads are a kind of witness in the play, but he focuses primarily on how they function to uphold political order: "The head becomes the 'witness' of power...it speaks or 'preaches upon poles'...the lessons of submission, obedience to the one who claims sovereignty." See his "Sovereignty," 125.

collided with a suspicious worldview in which the external supports for our extended selves are always under threat by malicious agents. This awareness of epistemic pollution spurred the drive inward, and although Marlowe seems to imply that this interiority is ultimately unknowable, his outwardly minded play has the paradoxical effect of privileging this internal zone. Edward's interiority cannot be apprehended without destroying him, and what is discovered there can only be figured as an unintelligible scream. Interiority thus becomes in *Edward II* something otherworldly, almost sacred. Shakespeare's *Richard II*, which was obviously influenced by Marlowe's play, also makes use of the playhouse's charged environment to examine the space of the self, but it does so in radically different ways.⁶⁸ Rather than having his eyes trained outward yet continuously pulled inward, Shakespeare fixes his gaze determinedly on his characters' interiority. Rather than suggesting the interiority is shapeless and incomprehensible, Shakespeare's characters treat it as easily, almost automatically legible. And rather than portray a King extending his self into the world, Shakespeare tells the story of one tumbling headlong into his own inner realms. The dramatic difference between Marlowe and Shakespeare's approaches should come as no surprise, given that the playhouse's material conditions offered only a resonant environment capable of amplifying spatialized thinking—yet one unlikely to direct the course of such thought. Indeed, the painful tragedy of *Richard II* is not just the political fall and murder of a weak king but the duplication or *reflection* of his worldly misfortune within Richard himself. Shakespeare, by reanimating the metaphor of the self as a kind of container, pushes the conceit of interiority to extreme lengths, thereby exposing the metaphor itself as a self-made prison for the mind.

To help reconstruct the effects the early modern playhouse might have had on Shakespeare's language, I want to briefly re-consider the metaphor at the heart of "interiority,"

⁶⁸ For a recent study on how Marlowe influenced *Richard II*, see Logan, *Shakespeare's Marlowe*, 83-116.

both within literary scholarship and during the early modern period. In the literary scholarship of the past few decades, the term “interiority” has become something of a weapon in politically charged debates about the history of the self. In fact, the concept has become so common in some debates that critics seem to forget or ignore its metaphorical origin entirely. Quite often we see “interiority” standing for privacy, secrecy, mental life, or still more abstruse notions such as identity or subjectivity.⁶⁹ For the moment, I wish to forestall any debates about what historical era saw the construction of an “inner self” or whether an interiorized subjectivity was unthinkable at this time, and focus on the metaphorical language of interiority.⁷⁰ As shorthand, I’ll refer to this language under the blanket term of *the container metaphor*, and after a brief comparison of its understanding in literary scholarship and cognitive linguistics, I will examine how Shakespeare brings to light the container metaphor’s various presuppositions and entailments in *Richard II*.

It is perhaps surprising, given the intense historicist skepticism of the concept of interiority, that critics mostly agree that the container metaphor’s “inward language” was extremely common in early modern literature. Scholars such as Anne Ferry, Katherine Maus, and John Martin, have convincingly demonstrated how pervasive the container metaphor was in early modern England, both in literature and other writings.⁷¹ Indeed, the philosophical, religious, and medical conception of the mind as a container of thoughts had already begun to ossify. This was happening concurrently in a number of different discourses, and Walter Ong points out that Ramist logic, which had an enormous influence on how students at the time were taught, increasingly spatialized the mind, referring to it as a vast container of thought-objects. The

⁶⁹ John Lee finds New Historicist critics in particular to play fast and loose with their terminology. See his *Shakespeare’s Hamlet and the Controversies of Self* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000), 52.

⁷⁰ Richard Levin, “Unthinkable Thoughts in the New Historicizing of English Renaissance Drama,” *New Literary History* 21, no. 3(1990): 433-447.

⁷¹ See note 4 above.

Ramist project was to organize and map these objects and array them in visual form. With this focus on the silent, unchanging contents of the mind, Ramist theories of rhetoric expressed new attitudes toward utterances. Ong argues that after Ramus' intervention, "Speech is no longer a medium in which the human mind and sensibility lives. It is represented, rather, as an accretion to thought, hereupon imagined as ranging noiseless concepts or "ideas" in a silent field of mental space....Thought becomes a private or even antisocial enterprise."⁷² Although the container metaphor may not have been as systematically applied to the mind in other discourses, it clearly had advanced to a point where the metaphor began to impose a certain relationship between thought and the self.⁷³ The fact that the container metaphor formed part of the bedrock of pedagogy at the time suggests that, regardless of what sort of discourses one participated in as an adult, an early modern individual was probably exposed to this "inward language" in some form or another.

In addition to drawing on written accounts of interiority, early moderns also could draw on the foundational bodily experience that shaped their conceptual thinking. Indeed, the cognitive sciences, particularly cognitive linguistics, suggest there is something specific about the container metaphor which provides its constraining power to the philosopher as well as its suppleness to the poet.⁷⁴ The immediacy of containment—a concept that appears to be available to infants before they can even speak—explains both its prevalence in conventional metaphors and its power as a poetic image.⁷⁵ Linguist George Lakoff and philosopher Mark Johnson have

⁷² Walter J. Ong, *Ramus, Method, and the Decay of Dialogue; From the Art of Discourse to the Art of Reason* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 291.

⁷³ Ferry argues, however, that "inward language" was prevalent in both physiological and theological texts. See her *Inward Language*, 60-66.

⁷⁴ For a discussion of cognitive linguistics in literary studies, see pages 12-15 above. For a discussion of the organizing schema of in-out, see Mark Johnson, *The Body in the Mind: The Bodily Basis of Meaning, Imagination, and Reason* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 30-37.

⁷⁵ On infants' understanding of containment, see Andrea Tyler and Vyvyan Evans, *The Semantics of English Prepositions: Spatial Scenes, Embodied Meaning, and Cognition* (New York: Cambridge UP, 2003), 25.

argued that human beings do not merely speak with metaphors to adorn our everyday speech; rather, our minds use metaphor to construct understandings of ourselves, our culture, and our environment.⁷⁶ Although they acknowledge that culture creates and shapes our conceptual metaphors, cognitive linguists differ from cultural theorists by insisting that these metaphors are in fact grounded in our bodily experience and shaped by our neural architecture. After numerous repetitions of certain experiences, our brains eventually organize them into image schema (simplified and structured patterns of neuronal firings), which in turn can be used to structure other perceptual experiences.⁷⁷ Directly experienced, sharply delineated phenomena, such as basic spatial sensations, construct primary metaphors, which are used to structure and thereby understand less concrete concepts, such as consciousness or interiority. As Lakoff and Johnson note, although abstract concepts are inspired and molded by cultural conditions, basic bodily experiences such as symmetrical division and orientation in relation to gravity extended beyond cultural lines: “In general the major orientations up-down, in-out, central-peripheral, active-passive, etc. seem to cut across all cultures, but which concepts are oriented which way and which orientations are most important vary from culture to culture.”⁷⁸ Furthermore, certain physical aspects of our brains appear to guide and restrict the means by which these concepts form, change, and combine.⁷⁹ The presence of these cognitive constants has the advantage of accounting not only for the complexity of human thought and immense variety we see across human cultures but also the equally undeniable similarities we find in societies that are separated both geographically, genealogically, and historically.⁸⁰

⁷⁶ George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press), 1980.

⁷⁷ On image schemas, see George Lakoff, *Women, Fire, and Dangerous Things* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987).

⁷⁸ Lakoff, *Dangerous*, 24.

⁷⁹ See, for example, Ronald Langacker, *Foundations of Cognitive Grammar* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1987).

⁸⁰ Modifying linguistics terminology slightly, I use the phrase “genealogically separate” to describe two or more societies with a distantly removed common ancestor and which have had limited cultural exchange with each other

It's safe to say, then, that early moderns were familiar with interiorized language about the self, deriving this conception not only from the plethora of writings imbued with inward-looking language, but also from the biological brain's ability to transform phenomenological experience into foundational concepts for cognition. With this established, we are now in a better position to understand the status of the container metaphor in *Richard II* and what Shakespeare could do with it. Whereas *Edward II* denies its audience access to characters' interiority only to later carve out these inner realms through language of pain and torture, *Richard II* begins with such visceral imagery. In the play's first scene, Bolingbroke and Mowbray's threats repeatedly stage themselves within the body's cavernous spaces. Bolingbroke declares to his adversary, "With foul traitor's name stuff I thy throat" (1.1.44), and Mowbray responds with the same image, promising the insult will be "doubled down [Bolingbroke's] throat" (1.1.57). As the scene progresses, this network of inner spaces grows more elaborate, connecting heart, throat and mouth: "Then, Bolingbroke, as low as to thy heart / Through the false passage of thy throat, thou liest" (1.1.124); "Pierced to the soul with Slander's venom'd spear / The which no balm can cure but his heart-blood / Which breathed this poison" (1.1.171-3). To amplify this effect, Shakespeare repeatedly draws connections between the body's inner space and subterranean regions: "blood, like sacrificing Abel's, cries / Even from the tongueless caverns of the earth" (1.1.104-5).

Richard is subject to the most vivid elaborations of the container metaphor, with Shakespeare arranging a pattern of imagery that connects the doomed King with various containers, caves, and architectural spaces. In one of Richard's famous laments, he imagines his skin as crust covering a pastry (3.2.153-4), ruefully realizing that although he used to consider

since this split. Linguists use the term "genetically distinct" for a similar purpose when describing languages. Since I am primarily concerned with cultures here, the reason I have changed the term will, I imagine, be obvious.

his flesh as “brass impregnable,” he now knows Death will eventually arrive with his “little pin” and bore through his “castle wall” (3.2.168-170).⁸¹ In a later scene, Bolingbroke, too, seems inadvertently to confuse Flint Castle with the King who inhabits it, as he orders Northumberland to “Go to the rude ribs of that ancient castle; / Through brazen trumpet send the breath of parley / Into his ruined ears” (3.3.32-4). And the Queen refers to the deposed Richard as “King Richard’s tomb” as well as a “most beauteous inn” whose only lodger is “Grief” (5.1.12-14).

In a gesture that aligns with the early modern conception of the body’s microcosm forming an analogical link with the macrocosm of the state, Shakespeare nests Richard’s architectural interiority within a similarly hermetic space of England, which is continuously figured as a protective container standing in opposition to a harsh external world. Nowhere is this more evident than in the dying Gaunt’s prophesy, in which he foresees the loss of his safely bounded country:

This royal throne of kings, this scepter’d isle,
This earth of majesty, this seat of Mars,
This other Eden, demi-paradise,
This fortress built by Nature for herself
Against infection and the hand of war,
This happy breed of men, this little world,
This precious stone set in the silver sea,
Which serves it in the office of a wall,
Or as a moat defensive to a house,
Against the envy of less happier lands

⁸¹ Skura argues the pin also refers to an ax or hefty carpenter’s tool, locating it in a “network of potentially erotic penetrations” in the play. See her “Penetrating Language,” 52.

...

Whose rocky shore beats back the envious siege

Of wat'ry Neptune, is now bound in with shame... (2.1.40-49)

The language of isolation and fortification is clear: England stands enclosed like the Garden of “Eden,” a “fortress” braced against “infection” and “war” by the double-walled barrier of the “rocky shore” and the ocean’s “moat defensive.” Gaunt’s hoard of images pile up to create an England that is almost hermetically sealed from the outside world, underscoring his gloomy concern that the country’s weak king will leave it open to corruption. The container metaphor sits behind much of this, serving as the structuring image that organizes Gaunt’s vision of England and Richard’s interiority. On one hand, this is no great surprise. The recurring metaphor of an enclosed nation under threat traded on anxieties both historical and contemporary for Shakespeare’s audience. For the characters, it looks forward to internal strife and national collapse during the War of the Roses, and for the audience it stokes the fear of foreign invaders, an omnipresent concern in an England still steeped in anti-Catholic paranoia. Shakespeare’s engagement with political theology and the problem of the “king’s two bodies” has been a recurring focal point in critical analyses of this play, Kantorowicz’s masterful study being the touchstone.⁸²

Yet these political readings tend to emphasize one of the king’s bodies at the expense of the other, thereby passing over the foundation for the play’s guiding metaphor. The play’s network of secure and nested spaces obviously speaks to the microcosm theory of monarchy, which saw a repeated structure of patriarchal control extending from God’s rule over the world

⁸² Ernst Hartwig Kantorowicz, *The King’s Two Bodies: A Study in Medieval Political Theology* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1957). For recent analyses along these lines, see also Richard Halpern, “The King’s Two Buckets: Kantorowicz, *Richard II*, and Fiscal *Trauerspiel*,” *Representations* 109 (2009): 67-76; and Philip Lorenz, “Christall Mirrors: Analogy and Onto-Theology in Shakespeare and Francisco Suárez,” *Religion and Literature* 38, no. 3 (Autumn 2006): 101-119.

to the king's government of the country to the management of a private household down to an individual's body;⁸³ however, I contend that as Shakespeare guides us deeper within these nested spaces, the container metaphor bursts apart once we hit the corporeal foundation of Richard's interiority. In placing my focus on the king's mortal body, I do not wish to deny the political stakes of the first play of the *Henriad*. I only wish to bring to light a less studied aspect of Shakespeare's "weak king." It is true that *Richard II* casts its gaze forward to Agincourt and Henry V, but by progressively stripping his royal protagonist down to something raw and uncertain, Shakespeare also looks ahead to the contemplations of Hamlet and the bare mortality of Lear.

In the play's early scenes, however, Richard's interiority is nearly non-existent. His pronouncements have the power that one would expect from any monarch, but his words appear without reference to his thoughts or inward states. He does not hesitate, ruminate, or debate—he simply speaks, and his words have an instantaneous effect whose power dazzles his listeners. After Richard repeals four years from Bolingbroke's banishment, the latter stands in awe of how the monarch's words seem to punctuate time: "How long a time lies in one little word! / Four lagging winters and four wanton springs / End in a word; such is a breath of kings" (1.3.212-3). In these early scenes, Shakespeare somewhat follows *Edward II* by representing sudden changes of heart without revealing to the audience the thought process behind the decision. The effect here is to give Richard the appearance of possessing a direct and unmediated flow from intention to speech to action, as though his very thought could mold the external world to match his desires. Richard's interiority is simply not an issue because there is no distinction between his internal states and *the* state. Far from us looking within him, he seems to pierce the interiority of

⁸³ For a discussion of how patriarchal absolutism extended from the public to the private spheres, see Lena Cowen Orlin, *Private Matters and Public Culture in Post-Reformation England* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994).

those around him, and when Richard has a change of heart, it is Gaunt's heart, not Richard's, which is on display: "Uncle, even the glasses of thine eyes / I see thy grieved heart." (1.3.208-9).

As his power wanes, however, Richard turns that penetrating gaze inward, shining a light on his inner world: "If I turn mine eyes upon myself..." (4.1.247). Yet his turn inward is not attempted in the spirit of Stoic resignation or contemplative curiosity; rather, he seems to believe he can stage his last stand in a kind hermetic interior space, as if his mortal body served his interiority "in the office of wall," and like England's rocky shore, his inner realm might shield him from Bolingbroke's "envious siege." Indeed, Richard's self-reflection is just that—a reflection of his self—so it is no surprise that he finds a "court" within his "hollow crown" (3.2.160-66). The Queen's indignant query to the fallen king also establishes an inner monarchy: "Hath Bolingbroke / Deposed thine Intellect?" (5.1.27-8). At Pomfret, the imprisoned Richard manufactures a new world of imagined people, mirroring the subjects he once ruled:

...I'll hammer't out.

My brain I'll prove the female to my soul,

My soul the father, and these two beget

A generation of still-breeding thoughts;

And these same thoughts people this little world,

In humors like the people of this world.... (5.5.5-10)

Richard offers no explanation for why he attempts to "compare" his prison "unto the world," but although he frames his sole soliloquy in scholastic terms ("I have been studying..." (5.1.1)), his earlier treatment of his thoughts and emotions make it clear his inward turn is a defensive move. He defiantly declares to Bolingbroke that the usurper may rob him of everything, but he himself remains sole possessor and sovereign of his inner state(s):

BOLINGBROKE: I thought you had been willing to resign.

RICHARD: My crown I am, but still my griefs are mine.

You may my glories and my state depose,

But not my griefs; still am I king of those. (4.1.190-193)

Richard repeatedly transforms his griefs and cares to material objects, which give him, as sole possessor of this inner matter, greater *substance* than his triumphant rival. In his famous two-buckets simile, he envisions himself as the heavier, fuller bucket which sinks down, sending Bolingbroke's lighter, empty bucket skywards (4.1.184-9). With this display of what Richard Halpern calls "rhetorical jujitsu,"⁸⁴ Richard not only casts himself as the more weighty and substantial of the two men, but he also implies that *he* is the cause of Bolingbroke's rise. The former king's weight lifts up the insubstantial Bolingbroke: "The emptier ever dancing in the air" (4.1.185).

What does it mean, however, to say that Richard's self-reflection is but a reflection of self? For literary scholars inclined to be skeptical about interiority, Richard's peopling of his inner world reveals interiority itself to be an illusion. The private, "monadic, hollowed-out subjectivity of the new selfhood" collapses, they argue, when we realize that interiority is just a reproduction of the outer world.⁸⁵ Critics gleefully point out, "the supposedly private sphere...can be imagined only through its similarities and dissimilarities to the public world."⁸⁶ Ferry goes so far as to claim that even in works where the inner world is distinguished from the outer one, early modern authors "blur the distinction between them by appropriating terms from

⁸⁴ Halpern, "Two Buckets," 69.

⁸⁵ Russell West, *Spatial Representations on the Jacobean Stage: From Shakespeare to Webster* (Hampshire, NY: Palgrave, 2002), 239.

⁸⁶ Ann R. Jones and Peter Stallybrass, "The Politics of *Astrophil and Stella*," *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 24, no. 1 (1984): 54.

the outward sphere to characterize what is inward.”⁸⁷ However, it’s not clear, *pace* Ferry, how one could conceivably appropriate terms from the inward sphere. Where besides the public, outer world could one find the means to conceptualize the inner one? I make this point not to be glib but rather because I believe this question, or something like it, preoccupies Shakespeare in *Richard II*. If the container metaphor proves inadequate, how might one begin to re-conceptualize interiority?

Thus, when I say that Richard’s self-reflection reflects the self, I do not mean that he cobbles together an illusory interiority from the detritus of the physical world, nor do I mean he merely reproduces his ego with his narcissistic inner gaze. Instead, Shakespeare, through Richard’s poetic figuration of his interiority, upends the container metaphor by extending the analogical schema to the point of dizzying absurdity, thereby interrogating not interiority itself but our way of *seeing* it. To do this, Shakespeare has Richard fall into a trap now well-known to phenomenologists: the infinite regress of introspection. By “introspection,” phenomenologists do not refer to a general attending to one’s inner states; rather, they mean a specific way of investigating one’s interiority, one which overindulges in the specular metaphor lodged within the word. Introspection of this type looks within and sees a pandemonium of internal agents, navigating, observing, and acting within one’s inner world. Thomas Metzinger warns, “[I]nternal attention must not be interpreted as the activity of a homunculus directing the beam of a flashlight consisting of his already existing consciousness toward different internal objects and thereby transforming them into phenomenal individuals.”⁸⁸ Once one has peopled one’s own little world, one immediately plunges into an infinitely recursive interiority, with each subject of the interior world possessing its own infinite inwardness.

⁸⁷ Ferry, *Language*, 45.

⁸⁸ Thomas Metzinger, *Being No One: The Self-Model Theory of Subjectivity* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2003), 32.

Thus Richard finds himself tumbling down the infinite regress at the moment he begins to hammer out his mind's microcosm. First he divides himself, "My brain I'll prove the female to my soul, / My soul the father" (5.1.6-7), which then creates further division and duplication: "and these two beget / A generation of still-breeding thoughts" (7-8). But then these, too, must have their inner realms; these thoughts possess "humours like the people of this world" (9). Now this teeming army of homunculi within Richard's hollow crown all boast their own anatomy, their own internal realms, and when Richard claims that "no thought is contented" he puns upon the term, derived from the Latin *contentum*, or that which is contained.⁸⁹ No thought is contained within him, and no thought can fully contain its own interior. As Richard progressively lists off his types of his personified thoughts, we find that each one has its own inner world: the divine thoughts hold Biblical passages within themselves that are "intermixed/ With scruples" (12-13); ambitious thoughts "plot" and are fatally suffused with "pride" (18, 22); and thoughts "tending to content" attempt to mitigate their "shame" by forming their own thoughts, "and *in* this thought they find a kind of ease" (23-28, my emphasis). Thoughts nested within thoughts drag Richard within himself. They are "still-breeding" because "none are contented," meaning each thought contains an interior void wherein more inner subjects, hiding their own interiors, only serve to expand the empty space within the anguished King. Richard is thus both overfull and vacuous—both buckets dangle within him. He turns to introspection to find the subjects he has lost, and instead he is swallowed by an infinite regress of subjectivity. It is for this reason he believes his ever-running, un-contented mind will only stop when it reaches the bedrock of non-being: "Nor

⁸⁹ The *OED* claims that the plural "contents," used to refer to the matter of what is contained (in a vessel or in writing), was often used interchangeably with the singular in the seventeenth century. See "content, n.1." *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, June 2018, www.oed.com/view/Entry/40144. Shakespeare usually employs the plural when referring to the substance of a written document, as in Edmund's comment about a letter: "It is his hand, my lord; but I hope his heart is not in the contents" (*King Lear*, 1.2.67-8).

I nor any man that but man is / With nothing shall be pleased till he be eased / With being nothing” (5.539-41).

Critics have been too quick, I believe, to take Richard’s narration of his internal, eternal division literally and proclaim we see in his fall the dissolution of the self, of the humanist subject’s “miserable spiral of mastery and failure, authoritarianism and panic.”⁹⁰ On the contrary, Shakespeare suggests that Richard’s self does not dissolve. In fact, Richard yearns for its dissolution—but despite his desires, the self persists: “O, that I were a mockery king of snow, / Standing before the sun of Bolingbroke, / To melt myself away in water-drops!” (4.1.260-262). Instead, Shakespeare suggests that it is Richard’s way of seeing, his introspective probing and objectifying of his conscious contents, that imprisons him within his own mind. This is the type of inward vision that Bushy describes, a parsing of the mind’s matter that splinters experience into a thousand pieces:

For Sorrow’s eyes, glazed with blinding tears,
Divides one thing entire to many objects,
Like perspectives, which, rightly gazed upon,
Show nothing but confusion... (2.2.16-19)

Bushy’s intensely specular rendering draws on various visual technologies to figure the act of introspection as merely another mode of visual perception, with the same potentials for distortion and enhancement.⁹¹ This is the sort of self-reflection that ensnares the deposed Richard, one that, as philosopher Donald Verene argues, limits its knowledge to the visual realm and improves itself only through visual technology: for the thinker committed to reflection, “[t]o produce mirrors, prisms, and lenses and, through them, to describe light and formulate its laws is to be at

⁹⁰ Catherine Belsey, “The Subject in Danger: A Reply to Richard Levin,” *Textual Practice* 3, no.1 (1989): 87.

⁹¹ For a reading of this scene in relation to the play’s larger themes of vision and identity, see Scott McMillin, “Shakespeare’s *Richard II*: Eyes of Sorrow, Eyes of Desire.” *Shakespeare Quarterly* 35, no. 1 (1984): 40-52.

the basis of knowledge and reality itself.”⁹² Following Verene, we can say that Richard’s reflecting introspection is in fact antithetical to self-knowledge because it ultimately takes as its object of study not the self but *reflection itself*: “Reflection reflects; it has no power to set its own starting points.... The dictum to think reflectively, which means to think critically, replaces the dictum to know thyself. It appears to make this ancient dictum unnecessary.”⁹³

For all his reflection, Richard cannot dissolve the self to find contentment, nor does he achieve enlightenment through self-knowledge. When Bolingbroke asks him “Are you contented to resign the crown?”, Richard replies, “Ay, no. No, ay; for I must nothing be” (4.1.200-201). And although this knotty line is at one level an attempt at self-dissolution before his more-powerful rival, Richard also recognizes that an “I” may not know an “I,” but there is still an “I” that knows. Without lands, without titles, without a name, Richard is confronted by the paradox of an abiding self that persists where none should; this is not a cycling from mastery to failure but the *reductio ad absurdum* of the belief that one can apperceive the self merely by casting one’s gaze within. Verene claims that, when one limits oneself to reflection, “All life becomes politics,” and in Richard’s case at least, this is certainly true. But his interiority resembles the political realm because his introspection is guided and magnified by the religiously tinted monarchical sightlines that originally granted him his power—that macrocosm-microcosm connection linking God to the king to the individual subject.⁹⁴ As S. K. Heninger explains, “To Shakespeare’s audience there was no poetic truth more cogent than the explicit analogy between the macrocosm of the world and the microcosm of man. His vital heat corresponded to

⁹² Donald P. Verene, *Philosophy and the Return to Self-Knowledge* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1997), 73.

⁹³ Verene, *Return*, 60.

⁹⁴ Verene, *Return*, 42.

subterranean fires, his veins to rivers, and his breath to the anima mundi.”⁹⁵ What connects these nested worlds is God’s all-seeing eye, one that views the objects of the outer world with the same ease as He views our worlds within. Maus argues that in the early modern era “the inwardness of persons is constituted by the disparity between what a limited, fallible human observer can see and what is available to the hypostasized divine observer.”⁹⁶ It’s true that the disparity of observation between God viewing an individual and one person seeing another helps define interiority, but the analogical link between human vision and a heavenly omniscient spectator also situates our inner world firmly on the visual plane. It is no surprise, then, that Richard regards his interiority in the same manner he regards his kingdom. The king’s two bodies prove to be arrayed along a single line of sight.⁹⁷

Thus far we find some sympathy between literary scholars and the neurophenomenologists, both of whom look with suspicion at Richard’s manner of introspection, a type of seeing that merely reproduces the external world within. Yet while this leads many literary scholars to dismiss interiority itself as an imaginary construction of the humanist subject, a neurophenomenological reading would suggest Richard’s flailing monologues should rather be taken as evidence of a flawed understanding of his own inwardness. Interiority is not constituted by the reflecting gaze of introspection; instead, like Bushy’s “false Sorrow’s eye” the introspective eye creates “things imaginary” (2.2.27). There are other ways to investigate our inner worlds. Cognitive scientists argue that organisms evolved an inner sense as a way of monitoring biological processes, and that these background sensations eventually formed the basis for a phenomenological sense of stability. These “primordial feelings” as Antonio Damasio

⁹⁵ S. K. Heninger, “The Heart’s Meteors, A Microcosm: Macrocosm Analogy,” *Shakespeare Quarterly* 7, no. 2 (1956): 273–275.

⁹⁶ Maus, *Inwardness*, 11.

⁹⁷ For a discussion of how theater’s sightlines upheld monarchical power in courtly masques, see Stephen Orgel, *The Illusion of Power: Political Theater in the English Renaissance* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975).

calls them, “generate an observant chorus that accompanies all other images going on in the mind.”⁹⁸ Take a moment, reader, and attend to these feelings in yourself, so that this idea becomes more than mere concept. Do you notice a gentle subcutaneous hum in your limbs? A soft pulse in your chest? An ache or a sense of warmth somewhere within? Before going to the next paragraph, take your eyes away from the page and train your attention on your own bodily experience.

To describe these feelings, Metzinger offers up the German term *präreflexive Selbstvertrautheit*, which he defines as “prereflexive self-intimacy” or the feeling of being “infinitely close with yourself.”⁹⁹ For cognitive scientists attentive of the phenomenological tradition, it is necessary to speak of interiority because of the phenomenological reality of our inner feelings. Metzinger explains the reality of interiority is:

[T]he consciously experienced quality of “inwardness” accompanying bodily sensations, like a pleasant feeling of warmth; emotional states, like pleasure of sympathy; and cognitive contents like a thought about Descartes’ philosophical argument for dualism. All these forms of mental content are subjectivity experienced as *inner* events and, in standard situations, as one’s *own* states.¹⁰⁰

It is important to clarify that for neurophenomenology there is no inherent *political* or even *philosophical* import in these observations. Our interiority is not the guarantor of a stable, autonomous subjectivity, nor is it shelter for a private coherent self.¹⁰¹ On the other hand, as Metzinger notes, this persistent experience of prereflexive self-intimacy derives from primordial

⁹⁸ Antonio R. Damasio, *Self Comes to Mind: Constructing the Conscious Brain* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2010), 203.

⁹⁹ Metzinger, *Being*, 158.

¹⁰⁰ Metzinger, *Being*, 267.

¹⁰¹ Metzinger, in fact, argues these feelings of inwardness are an *illusion*, a phenomenological character attached to stimuli *ex post facto*, and which can be mistakenly applied to external stimuli in certain situations.

feelings that give us a sense of self, and on a phenomenological level it “constitutes a consciously available self-world boundary, and...generates a genuinely *inner* world.”¹⁰² Naïve introspection or politically minded self-reflection can reify or deform this inner world, but if we expose these disfigurements, the inner world does not suddenly dissolve. According to neurophenomenology, our bodily experience is not fully contained by our conceptual thoughts.

Ultimately, in *Richard II*, Shakespeare does not offer a fully formed alternative to introspection’s self-reflecting gaze—the play is in some sense a tragedy spread across the king’s two bodies—but in nooks and corners of the play’s world we find hints of other ways of thinking about interiority. Chief among these is Isabel’s steadfast refusal to label or conceptualize her feelings beyond her immediate phenomenological experience. She rejects the demands of the men around her to shape or categorize her emotions in one way or another. When Bushy tells her she is “too much sad” and reminds her she had promised her husband to be happier, she replies, “To please the King I did; to please myself, / I cannot do it” (2.2.1-6). She openly accepts both that she lacks total control over her inward states and that she cannot pinpoint her grief’s cause: “Yet I know no cause / Why I should welcome such a guest as Grief” (5-6). This line (“I cannot do it. Yet I know no cause”) prefigures Richard’s soliloquy (“I cannot do it. Yet I’ll hammer’t out.” (5.5.5)) but it also signals the Queen’s radically different approach to her interiority. While the deposed King forges on in his attempt to manufacture his inward kingdom, the Queen accepts her inner states in their opaque immediacy. Bushy pushes her towards a visually based conception of her grief, insisting her grief is an exaggerated response to a single, simple cause: “More is not seen, / Or if it be, ‘tis with false Sorrow’s eye” (2.2.26-7), but she refuses to simplify her experience:

It may be so; but yet my inward soul

¹⁰² Metzinger, *Being*, 158.

Persuades me it is otherwise. Howe'er it be,
I cannot but be sad—so heavy sad
As thought, on thinking on no thought I think,
Makes me with heavy nothing faint and shrink. (2.2.28-32)

Each survey of her interiority yields the same result: nothing. “my inward soul / With nothing trembles” (2.2.11-12); “For nothing hath begot my something grief” (2.2.36-37). We are, perhaps, veering dangerously close to a Lacanian reading that would posit a subjectivity founded on an absence or lack, but such an interpretation is strangely literal-minded in taking Isabel’s “nothing” as a straightforward reference. Christopher Pye, for example, describes Isabel’s grief as “a signifier without a signified, divided and derivative in its essence, the queen's sorrow is the shadow not of anything that has gone before but solely of “what it is not.””¹⁰³ Pye, I think, has it backwards. The Queen has an overabundance of signifiers and conceits, “nothing” being the most common, but she finds them all insufficient. Not a single one seems to touch the ominous and opaque sensation that overwhelms her: “But what it is, that is not yet known what, / I cannot name. ‘Tis nameless woe, I wot” (2.2.39-40). Pye claims division is the “essence” of her grief, but he errs, as Bushy does, in trying to hypostasize her emotional state—an introspective approach that leads Bushy to a famously confused piece of psychology and which leads Pye to Lacan. Isabel resists both interpretations, refusing to turn grief into an object of introspection: “Conceit is still derived / From some forefather grief. Mine is not so...” (2.2.34-5).

Isabel’s description of her sudden and unexplained sadness displays Shakespeare’s keen observation of inner experience. Thus, Samuel Johnson praised this passage for rendering the

¹⁰³ Christopher Pye, “The Betrayal of the Gaze: Theatricality and Power in Shakespeare’s *Richard II*,” *ELH* 55, no. 3 (Autumn 1988): 583.

“involuntary and unaccountable depression of the mind, which everyone has sometime felt.”¹⁰⁴

And while it true that Isabel makes an important phenomenological distinction between what Metzinger calls “phenomenological *mineness*” (the experienced possession of one’s inner states) and phenomenological agency (Isabel recognizes she did not cause nor can she dissolve her grief), Shakespeare takes care to render her inner state as *temporally* significant.¹⁰⁵ That is, Isabel seems to recognize that her grief renders her interiority out of sync with the march of external time: “Yet again, methinks, / Some unborn sorrow, ripe in Fortune’s womb, / Is coming towards me...” (2.2.9-11). She possesses her grief, but only “in reversion,” as if the clock lags behind her internal time (2.2.38). It is at this moment that she syncs up with Richard, and it is at this moment when Shakespeare offers his strongest hint for how one might perceive interiority outside of the container metaphor. Once Richard has peered into the void of his recursive interiority, his runaway thinking is halted by strains of music: “Music do I hear? / Ha, ha, keep time! How sour sweet music is / When time is broke and no proportion kept!” (5.5.41-43). The disjointed playing then inspires Richard to imagine himself transformed into a mechanical clock:

For now hath Time made me his numb’ring clock.
My thoughts are minutes, and with sighs they jar
Their watches on unto mine eyes, the outward watch,
Whereto my finger, like a dial’s point,
Is pointing still, in cleansing them from tears. (5.5.50-4)

Richard’s thoughts, previously subjects with their own interiors, are now mere means to mark the passing of time, and Richard, once the sovereign of his inner state, now sees himself almost as an

¹⁰⁴ Qtd. in *Richard II*, ed. Forker, 277 n.30-2.

¹⁰⁵ Metzinger, *Being*, 267. This temporally disjointed depression that prefigures disaster also arises in Antonio at the beginning of *Merchant of Venice* (1.1.1-8).

automaton, ticking and whirring to a rhythm that he does not dictate but which distinguishes his interiority from the outside world: “But my time / Runs posting on...” (58-9).

Richard’s time ends before he can pursue this line of thought, but we shall see in the third chapter how in *Hamlet* Shakespeare develops this idea of the self instantiating an *internal* time, or a phenomenological *now*. For now, however, it is enough to note that the playwright, in pushing the container metaphor to its breaking point before hinting at alternative figurations, suggests that the body may be both lock and key to re-conceptualizing the structures of our inner and outer worlds. If, as the cognitive linguists suggest, we derive our conceptual metaphors from the body’s interaction with the world, we ourselves have therefore built the container metaphor around our minds, shackling our thinking about interiority, tempting us to put our trust in a reflecting introspection. However, both Marlowe and Shakespeare demonstrate that within the workplace of the theater, our embodied minds permit a near-infinite variety of creative conceits, and in their own ways these playwrights show that by extending our cognitive processes, we possess a plasticity that allows us to structure (and restructure) even the most inveterate concepts. Despite the restrictions the container metaphor places upon thought, be they veils that obscure our interiorities or buttresses for patriarchal authority, there is a promise that, within the theater, the same cognitive mechanisms that have structured the political hierarchy could be reconfigured to dismantle it. Alternative bodily experiences could form the foundation for new conceptions of inner worlds and outer ones. What neurophenomenology and these plays make clear is that the self is not the sovereign of an inner state; rather, our inner sensations exist in what Metzinger calls a “liquid hierarchy,” whereby the various inner sensations form an integrated whole. Our attention may range over this tableau, picking out forms and patterns, but it nevertheless retains its cohesiveness. “What continuously changes, however, is the way in

which bodily, emotional, and cognitive contents of experience are nested into each other.” As a whole, Metzinger points, our interiority “constitutes something like an internal scene, a stage, an exclusively *internal*... context.”¹⁰⁶ For Shakespeare and Marlowe, the nested structures of the “wooden O” within the circular early modern playhouse offered not only a way of projecting this internal scene out into the external world, but also of transfiguring those worlds within.

¹⁰⁶ Metzinger, *Being*, 322-3.

Chapter 2: Zombie Marlowe and the Problem of Other Minds

“Is this the face that launched a thousand ships, / And burned the topless towers of Illium?”¹ What is the spirit behind this oft-recited question? Late in *Doctor Faustus*, as Faustus faces a demon transformed to resemble the stunning Helen of Troy, why and to whom does he ask this question? Is it an example of what rhetoricians called *erotema*, or “the Questioner,” by which “we may ask many questions and look for none answer, speaking indeed by interrogation which we might as well say by affirmation”?² Is Faustus, as he takes in this vision, affirming by interrogation that he is gazing upon the most beautiful woman in the world? Or can he scarcely believe his eyes? Perhaps this final *mira* performed by his diabolical servant has so amazed the learned man that he in fact begins to doubt his own perception. Or might there be a shade of uncertainty in his question? One can hear in Faustus’ query a churning skepticism. After all, he himself has never seen Helen in the flesh; he has asked Mephistopheles to conjure her, and he knows the devil is unable to produce the “true substantial bodies” of historical figures whose remains “long since are consumed to dust” (4.1.47-9). In this moment, as he prepares to join this shade of history in “sweet embracings” (5.1.86), might not the man who has mastered and tossed aside philosophy, medicine, law, and theology experience a shadow of doubt? Whose face is this really?

This final question is one that history has directed at Faustus himself. Is he the face of the author? Does Faustus give form to Marlowe’s own fortunes: the tragic fall of a brilliant yet

¹ All quotations from *Doctor Faustus* are taken from the Revels edition with act, scene, and line numbers given parenthetically in the text. *Doctor Faustus A- and B- Texts (1604, 1616): Christopher Marlowe and His Collaborator and Revisers*, eds. David Bevington and Eric Rasmussen (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993). In general, I limit my analysis to the A-text, with some notes on suggestive differences between the two. I make no comment on the purity or quality of one text relative to the other; rather, I follow Bevington and Rasmussen in treating the B-text as its own work.

² George Puttenham, *The Art of English Poesy*, eds. Frank Whigham and Wayne A. Rebhorn (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007), 296.

overreaching mind?³ Other critics have claimed Faustus possesses the spirit of his age: a Renaissance man struggling to free himself from the strictures of religion. Still others see him as the dawning of a new type of stage figure, one that has shaken off the flat allegorical trappings of his medieval forbearers and evolved into a character that seems to possess something akin to human consciousness. Now, however, we are discouraged from speaking this way. As teachers, we warn students not to put human minds in textual constructs, and we speak about “anachronistic interiority” and sugar-spun selves.⁴ Whatever the pyrotechnics of Marlowe’s mighty line, we are told, we must not be bamboozled into attributing anything like a psychology to a theatrical character. No, the character must forever remain a zombie, stalking the stage without consciousness, without mind, without spirit.

Fortunately for us, zombies are in vogue, and not solely in literary criticism. The term “zombie” has also shuffled out of popular culture and into modern philosophy of mind. Within philosophy departments, the “zombie” lives as a controversial thought experiment. With this experiment, we are asked to imagine a creature that possesses all of the physical attributes of a human being: not only the same face, limbs, and torso but also a human digestive system, nervous system, and, crucially, a complete, unaltered brain. This creature behaves in the exact same manner as a human being, navigating the world, interacting with other human beings, participating in conversations and mixing with society. In every particular way, this creature is identical to a human being—except for one key difference: the zombie lacks consciousness. It has no self-awareness and its actions and perceptions have no subjective quality. From the outside, the zombie is indistinguishable from a real person, but there is no internal experience to

³ Harry Levin, *The Overreacher: a Study of Christopher Marlowe* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1952).

⁴ Francis Barker, *The Tremulous Private Body: Essays on Subjection* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1995), 28; Patricia Fumerton, *Cultural Aesthetics: Renaissance Literature and the Practice of Social Ornament* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 130.

go along with its seemingly normal behavior. The zombie is human in all respects except one, offering us only a seductive illusion of consciousness. Some philosophers have argued from this thought experiment that *if* we can conceive of such a being (without violating any laws of physics), then it follows that the subjective qualities of consciousness are distinct from the physical properties of the body. That is, if we can imagine a zombie, then a zombie is—in theory—possible. We *could* have a creature that is physiologically identical to us yet without any semblance of a mental life.⁵

It is not my intention here to weigh in on this philosophical debate. I am, however, interested in the force and guile of the thought experiment and how it relates to early modern philosophy of mind. Early moderns, of course, did not have the concept of a zombie. Although early modern people knew of automatons—beings animated either by machines or magic yet otherwise insentient—the automaton did not serve the same function as the zombie does in modern philosophical discourse.⁶ Indeed, in the early modern period, there seemed to be little need for the philosophical zombie, for Western philosophy had not yet formulated radically skeptical questions about the human mind. Philosophers at this time did not question the existence of other minds, nor did they see the privacy of inner experience as a pressing problem. What today is known as the “problem of other minds” did not take shape until, at the very earliest, the late eighteenth century with Thomas Reid’s *On the Intellectual Powers of Man*. In fact, the problem of other minds stands out in the history of philosophy because it appears to be a distinctly *modern* problem. If most deep, intractable philosophical issues have a clear lineage in

⁵ Within analytic philosophy, the thought experiment is highly controversial, with philosophers debating both whether such a creature is conceivable and, more generally, whether conceivability entails physical, logical, or metaphysical possibility. Daniel Dennett, for instance, dismisses the entire thought experiment as a mere “intuition pump” designed to make the preposterous seem plausible. See his Daniel C. Dennett, *Consciousness Explained* (New York: Back Bay Books, 1991), 405-6.

⁶ On this general topic, see the essays in Wendy Beth Hyman, ed., *The Automaton in English Renaissance Literature* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2011).

the history of Western philosophy, the problem of other minds seems to spring up out of nowhere, and well after the early modern period. For early moderns, it seems, other minds posed no serious philosophical problems. What relevance, then, could the zombie have for Marlowe and our understanding of *Doctor Faustus*?

In this chapter, I argue that, despite a lack of explicit philosophical discussion, the problem of other minds *was* important for early moderns and that Marlowe in *Doctor Faustus* wrestles with this problem before it appeared in philosophical literature. Anticipating Descartes' radical skepticism of other minds by several decades, Marlowe probes this philosophical problem by combining two contemporary discourses: the philosophical skepticism available to early moderns through the writings (and commentators) of Greek skeptics, and demonology. Early modern demonologists frequently expressed radical skepticism about human cognition and perception and, in discussing the possibility of diabolical beings, posited the existence of supernatural minds whose function and behavior might be incomprehensible to our own. The final ingredient for Marlowe's alchemy is the space of the stage. The theater, which readily allows the mixing of ontological realms, provided Marlowe with the workspace to create his own zombie-like thought experiment. As early-modern writers used demons and witchcraft to point out the limits of human understanding, so Marlowe created characters that possess minds that appear human but are revealed to be beyond even the most educated man's comprehension. By dramatizing the mis-reading of other minds, Marlowe conjures up the specter of doubt about the minds of others well before Descartes' *malin génie* appears on the scene.

In making this argument, I might appear to be following a well-trod path of making Marlowe a Vice figure on the philosophical stage who gleefully undercuts our most sacred certainties. And while I believe this playful querying appears in the play, I contend in the second

section of this chapter that Marlowe answers this skepticism with the *phenomenological reality of other minds*. That is, I argue that Marlowe draws on his experience as a playwright, one who has seen audiences invest themselves in fictional figures day after day, to undercut the play's own skepticism by insisting that subjectivity is, at base, *intersubjectivity* and that our perception of other minds is as powerful and automatic as our perception of light and shade. In making this point, I argue literary critics have in their own way fallen prey to a kind of Cartesian skepticism when it comes to thinking about fictional characters. The ongoing debate about a character's "interiority," discussed at length in the previous chapter, ultimately reveals a facile and rather blunt understanding of intersubjectivity, and I contend that we can dissolve many of these critical debates with a more complex understanding of the interaction between self and other. To provide this understanding, I draw on theories of the phenomenology of empathy and findings from the cognitive sciences to reveal the automatic force with which we come to "see" other minds.

"Was this the face that launched a thousand ships?" It is a question infused with both radical skepticism about what we can know of the other and a marveling at the force of intersubjective perception. At once, it de-personalizes Helen, metonymically reducing her to a disembodied visage, and invests her with otherworldly power by which she herself reduces scores of soldiers to mere vessels. Following this pattern over the course of the play, Marlowe uses the devils and angels of *Doctor Faustus* to conjure up the problem of other minds only to combat it with the phenomenological force of intersubjectivity. By the final act, the audience finds itself like Faustus, unsure of the spirit that stands before them, but ultimately, uncontrollably captivated by this strange other mind. With Faustus, we come to find our souls sucked out and intertwined with the Other. If, Marlowe seems to say, we ever experience some doubt about the spirit behind the flurry of faces we encounter in our daily lives, if we question

the presence of other minds, we need only look to our own sympathies with the tragic Faustus. When we watch with agony as the clock ticks away his final moments, we come to recognize that our empathy with this stage zombie might be imperfect—it could even be a grand illusion—but it is our only way of being in the world.

Skepticism in Early Modern Philosophy

I have suggested that the problem of other minds traces its lineage deeper into history than its explicit formation in philosophical discourse. In what follows, I wish to situate Marlowe's play within various skeptical discourses in the early modern period. The point here is to show not only how Marlowe drew upon contemporary thinking about other minds but also how he employed his dramatic work to blend and animate those theories into something that could be said to anticipate the development of modern skeptical thought. I do not wish, however, to put forward the dubious claim that Marlowe was a pre-Cartesian Descartes or even to suggest that Marlowe would have endorsed the French philosopher's radical division between mind and body. On the contrary, I believe Marlowe raised a specter of these ideas only to combat them with his own knowledge culled from his experience in the theater. Indeed, what plays out on stage is a battle between knowledge from the philosophical and phenomenological realms, and while the play seems to recognize the force of these pre-Cartesian doubts, it ultimately upholds the phenomenological intuition of the reality of other minds. To make these claims, I will briefly discuss the sources of skepticism from more traditional philosophical sources and argue that although some ancient and medieval thinkers flirted with radical skepticism about other minds, they were more interested in practical matters about how to live with a skeptical outlook. It is not until Descartes' separation between body and mind that the problem of other minds enters into

philosophical discourse. Marlowe, I suggest, tugged at certain strands in ancient skepticism and drew them together with the radical doubts raised by demonology and occult philosophy. These latter sources provided Marlowe with an imaginative leap that allowed him to call into question some of the commonsense beliefs about how we understand other minds. Key to the alchemical blending of skeptical thought, however, was Marlowe's medium of dramatic performance. Outside of the strict axioms of philosophy, the theater gave Marlowe space to stage a stark confrontation between different ontological realms, allowing the playwright to let his early modern thought experiment play out before a captive audience.

Skepticism took root in early modern England in 1562 with the publication of Henri Estienne's *Pyrrhonian Hypotyposes*, followed soon after by Latin editions of Sextus Empiricus' skeptical treatises.⁷ As Richard Popkin notes, skeptical ideas were available indirectly in the writings of Cicero, Lucian, Diogenes Laertius, and Galen, yet it was Estienne's translation that caused Sextus' *Outlines of Pyrrhonism* to become "the dominant philosophical text of the age."⁸ According to Sextus Empiricus, skeptics sought to suspend judgement on all matters of knowledge. This did not mean an outright denial of knowledge; rather, it meant an acceptance of things as they appear and a desire to live in this state of peaceful doubt. To foster doubt and undercut certainty, Sextus proposed ten "modes," or focused argumentative techniques, by which a skeptic could undermine any philosopher's dogma. These modes often involved pointing out faults of perception—such as when a half-submerged oar appears bent beneath the water—or the importance of context and situation when delivering a judgment. By finding arguments on both

⁷ See Richard H. Popkin, *The History of Scepticism from Erasmus to Spinoza* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979). Luciano Floridi, "The Diffusion of Sextus Empiricus's Works in the Renaissance," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 56, no. 1 (1995): 63-85; Lisa Jardine, "Lorenzo Valla: Academic Skepticism and the New Humanist Dialectic," in *Skeptical Tradition*, ed. Myles Burnyeat (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 253-86; and Charles Larmore, "Scepticism," in *Cambridge History of Seventeenth-Century Philosophy*, eds. Daniel Garber and Michael Ayers, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 2:1145-92.

⁸ Julia Annas and Jonathan Barnes, *The Modes of Skepticism: Ancient Texts and Modern Interpretations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 5.

sides of an issue, skeptical thinkers could learn to live with things solely based on appearances and so achieve a deep tranquility (*ataraxia*). As Sextus explains, “the Sceptic’s end, where matters of opinion are concerned, is mental tranquility; in the realm of things unavoidable, moderation of feeling is the end.”⁹

Many early modern authors were attracted to skepticism, not only because of its goal of mental tranquility but also, as William Hamlin points out, because of its “careful discrimination between various states of cognition.”¹⁰ Skeptics were keen psychologists, alive to the texture of subjective experience as well as the blind spots of human consciousness. Yet for all that ancient and early modern skeptics threw into doubt, they stopped short of outright solipsism or insisting upon the absolute incommensurability of other minds. From a modern perspective, it appears a simple leap from doubting our own senses to doubting our understanding of others. And, indeed, certain passages from Sextus might suggest such a leap. In *Against the Professors*, he writes:

So we are all unerring with regard to our own *pathê* [subjective experience], but we all make mistakes with regard to the external object. And those are apprehensible, but this is inapprehensible because the soul is too weak to distinguish it on account of the places, the distances, the motions the changes, and numerous other causes. Hence, they say that no criterion is common to mankind but that common names are assigned to the objects.¹¹

Citing everyday examples of people disagreeing over an object’s physical properties, he points out that people cannot often agree on an object’s color, even when they’re looking at the same thing. He concludes, “For each person is aware of his own private *pathos*, but whether this

⁹ Sextus Empiricus, *Selections from the Major Writings on Scepticism, Man, & God*, ed. Philip Paul Hallie (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1985), 41.

¹⁰ William M. Hamlin, “Casting Doubt in Marlowe’s *Doctor Faustus*,” *SEL: Studies in English Literature 1500-1900* 41, no. 2 (2001): 262.

¹¹ Sextus, *Selections*, 42.

pathos occurs in him and his neighbor from a white object neither can he himself tell.”¹² At first blush, it appears Sextus is raising the point that another person’s experience is in principle unknowable and so both a man and his neighbor will remain imprisoned in their own heads.

Later commentators would carry this skepticism even further. Augustine, in *De trinitate* (especially books eight through fifteen), takes up certain skeptical positions about the possibility of knowing other minds. In the eighth book, for example, Augustine emphasizes the separation between the self and the other:

For we also recognize, from a likeness to us, the movements of bodies by which we perceive that other others besides us live. Just as we move our body in living, so, we notice, those bodies are moved. For when a living body is moved, there is no way opened to our eyes to see the soul, a thing which we cannot be seen with the eyes. But we perceive something present in that bulk, such as is present in us to move our bulk in a similar way; it is life and the soul.... Therefore, we know the mind of anyone at all from our own, and from our own case we believe in that which we do not know. For not only do we perceive a mind, but we even know what one is, by considering our own; for we, too, have a mind.¹³

In later books, Augustine is even more forceful about this point. He insists that when we interact with another person, “It is utterly impossible for us either to perceive or to understand his will unless he makes it known by some corporeal signs, and even then we would believe rather than understand.”¹⁴ It may appear that Augustine conceives of a strict division between human minds so that, if we wish to know the other, we must access knowledge about ourselves and reason our

¹² Sextus, *Selections*, 45.

¹³ Augustine, *On the Trinity. Books 8-15*, ed. Gareth B. Matthews (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 14.

¹⁴ Augustine, *Trinity*, 52.

way to the other's mind by way of analogy. This would seem to prefigure the popular argument-from-analogy used by later philosophers such as John Locke and commit Augustine to a form of solipsism in which the other is in principle unknowable and one can only reason outward from a sure foundation of self-knowledge.

Yet we should not be too hasty to read such an extreme skepticism into these pre-Cartesian thinkers. Literary scholars such as William Hamlin have been rather too hasty in downplaying the significance of Descartes's skepticism in an effort to radicalize early modern thought. Hamlin, for example, writes, "it remains true that Descartes is ultimately less remarkable for his doubt than for the edifice of certainty his doubt enables him to build...Pyrrhonian skepticism has the potential to be as radical a form of doubt as that employed by Descartes."¹⁵ While it is true that Descartes's skepticism is in service of locating a bedrock of certainty on which to build his philosophical system, the scope of Descartes's doubt (as I shall explain below) goes well beyond any Pyrrhonian skeptic—especially regarding other minds. When Augustine insists that we must look within to achieve some knowledge about the other, he does not insist upon a radical break between two minds but rather on an indirect connection through God. Looking within provides more than logical certainty—it offers a direct line to the truth. He writes, for example, that we believe in the deeds and words of the Apostles "not because we hear it from some others, but because we see it within ourselves, or rather above ourselves in the truth itself."¹⁶ This final clause is key, as it emphasizes Augustine's belief that we all possess privileged access to a truth about others so that, by looking to God, we come to

¹⁵ William Hamlin, "Casting Doubt," 259. I am not entirely sure what Hamlin means by the "potential" of Pyrrhonian skepticism. If, as I suspect, he means that the skepticism of Sextus and his commentators call into doubt the very existence of other minds and, indeed, the entire world as Descartes does, then I would strongly disagree. Nevertheless, I think Hamlin would be right to suggest that there is adequate room for interpretation in these texts to allow for a greater skeptical leap.

¹⁶ Augustine, *Trinity*, 21.

know not just a reasonable theory about the existence of other minds but an absolute knowledge of their being. Indeed, the *existence* of other minds is never called into question in Augustine's works, and although he notes the limitations of our access to the minds of others, he stops short of suggesting that any individual mind is forever shut off from others.

Similarly, Pyrrhonian skeptics are happy to note the many ways in which individual minds may be confused, but they never go so far as to assert that other minds present a special kind of uncertainty or question whether other minds might exist at all. Indeed, as some philosophers have argued, this brand of skepticism in fact *requires* the existence of other minds in order to get off the ground. In the Sextus passage quoted above, for example, the philosopher states that "we are all unerring with regard to our own *pathê*, but we all make mistakes with regard to the external object," but it is an unstated assumption that each individual *has* a mind. These individual minds may operate slightly differently, yet the skeptics always presume that each mind exists and that the differences between them, while significant, are not so vast as to be incommensurable. As Anita Avramides notes, "not only does the sceptic preface his questions on an assumption that there is a world of which we have experience, he assumes as well that experience exists *across individuals*.... It seems that the very scepticism formulated by the Pyrrhonist *relies* on the existence of other minds."¹⁷ Furthermore, ancient skeptics were primarily concerned with the very practical issue of how to live in the world and get along with others. The end of skeptical philosophy is not to throw the very existence of the external world into doubt but to learn how to operate in the world *with* doubt.¹⁸ In the early modern period, one marked by religious and political instability, Pyrrhonian skepticism offered the possibility of achieving mental calm a world of vast uncertainty.

¹⁷ Anita Avramides, *Other Minds* (London: Routledge, 2001), 29, her emphasis.

¹⁸ Avramides makes this point in *Minds*, 37.

This form of skepticism, then, stands in stark contrast to Cartesian philosophy, which undercut Pyrrhonian assumptions and ignored its pragmatic goals. Descartes's division between mind and body is well known and often remarked upon in literary criticism, so I will not offer a broad overview here; rather, I wish to point out how this division permits the formulation of the problem of other minds in a way that was unavailable to earlier skeptics. There is nothing, for example, in Sextus, Augustine, Erasmus, or any commentator that approaches the extreme doubt expressed in this famous passage from the second *Meditation*:

But then if I look out of the window and see men crossing the square, as I just happen to have done, I normally say that I see men themselves.... Yet do I see any more than hats and coats which could conceal automatons? I *judge* that they are men. And so something which I thought I was seeing with my eyes is in fact grasped solely by the faculty of judgement which is in my mind.¹⁹

Contrary to Pyrrhonian skepticism, Descartes shows little interest in pragmatic matters such as how we should live in the world. Significantly, Descartes drops the first-person plural favored by Augustine and Sextus Empiricus; he shows the world from *his* window, from *his* eyes.

Avramides points out that “[Descartes] moves from a practical to a theoretical doubt. Consistent with this he abandons the collective practice in favour of a radically first-person stance.”²⁰ Here, with the *cogito*, Descartes finds his bedrock of certainty; however, by placing emphasis on his subjective experience as a—or rather *the*—self-guaranteeing truth, Descartes throws everything else into doubt. The Cartesian mind, as philosopher Voula Tsouna argues, is “an ontologically basic entity, whose existence does not depend in any way upon the existence of other entities

¹⁹ René Descartes, *Meditations on first philosophy: with selections from the Objections and replies*, eds. John Cottingham and Bernard Williams (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 21.

²⁰ Avramides, *Minds*, 37.

such as other minds or other bodies.”²¹ If, therefore, the mind is a self-contained entity, the sole means of certainty in the world, then everything else—the body, the physical world, and the existence of other minds—is called into question. And if my mind becomes an “autonomous realm,” what can I possibly know of other subjectivities?²² Thus, Descartes’s move of placing mind and body on two different ontological realms creates the problem of other minds. An individual mind, cloaked by skin and bone, has no direct access to another, and so there seems no way to be certain that other minds exist. For Descartes, every skull might harbor a machine, every face might mask a zombie.

Skepticism and Demonology

The problem of other minds, according to modern philosophers, could only arise in the wake of Descartes’ radical skepticism. Tsouna, for instance, maintains that “questions related to the problem of other minds are logically dependent on the mind-body distinction.”²³ The scholars who make these arguments, however, are concerned solely with philosophical discourse. Outside of traditional philosophy, early modern demonologists were conducting their own thought experiments about human cognition and the ways in which we might think about minds radically different from our own. Writers of this time, while sometimes alarmist and paranoid, struggled in earnest to comprehend the reports of demonic activity that poured in from every corner of Europe. At once disturbed and fascinated by supposedly factual reports of evil spirits, these writers attempted, with varying degrees of erudition and rigor, to frame such stories within a coherent system of thought. As Stuart Clark has exhaustively demonstrated, demonology was “as

²¹ Voula Tsouna, “Remarks About Other Minds in Greek Philosophy,” *Phronesis: a Journal of Ancient Philosophy* 43 (1998): 253.

²² John McDowell, “Singular Thought and the Extent of Inner Space,” in *Subject, Thought, and Context*, eds. Philip Pettit and John McDowell (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), 146.

²³ Tsouna, “Remarks,” 245.

much an exercise in epistemology and ontology as in theology and morality.”²⁴ With this in mind, I wish to follow Clark in considering demonology an “intellectual resource” for early moderns—particularly Marlowe—one that not only provided grotesqueries and intrigue but also uncovered more radically skeptical ideas than are found in Pyrrhonian philosophy.²⁵ Devils and spirits, I argue, offered a unique possibility for thought experiments due to the fact that these other-worldly beings were believed to possess drastically different mental powers from mortals. Supernatural agents were of course capable of amazing feats, bending the laws of the natural world almost to their breaking point, yet these devils and demons also differed from human beings in their knowledge, memory, perception, and cognition. In demonological treatises, writers could imagine the meeting of mortal and immortal minds, and this unique *mélange*, coupled with hints from skeptical philosophy, offered Marlowe the philosophical and intellectual resources he could use to stage the problem of other minds.

For early modern writers, supernatural beings prompted skeptical questions about other minds for two reasons: demons possessed minds radically unlike our own, and, through their power to deceive and meddle with human thoughts, they provoked disturbing questions about the fallibility and contingency of the mortal mind. Of course, the idea of the devil as a great deceiver was common currency. Yet demonology exploded this commonplace by pursuing the unsettling implications of the devil’s deceptive powers. Devils could alter perceptions, induce hallucinations, upset the body’s humors, and inject unclean thoughts into susceptible human brains. Demonologists repeatedly emphasized that the barrier protecting the human mind from demons was tenuous and permeable. Henry Holland’s dialogue *A treatise against witchcraft* (1590) expresses some of the shattering uncertainty provoked by demonic powers: “Satan is full

²⁴ Stuart Clark, *Thinking with Demons: The Idea of Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), 166.

²⁵ Clark, *Demons*, viii.

of delusions, and filleth the mindes, eies, and eares of such as the Lorde hath iustlie giuen ouer vnto his hands.”²⁶ Holland imagines satanic influence as a kind of bodily invasion that clouds our perception, a corruption that works outwards to block up our windows to the external world. The strength and completeness of these illusions are such that the deceived might never even recognize how their mental faculties have been hijacked: “My heart trembles and quakes... when I vnderstand by the holy Scripture, how all prophane and wicked men in the Church euen among us, are thus fast bound in Sathans snares and chaines, and what is more miserable, they are so blind, they know it not.”²⁷ Again, the notion that our senses and understanding are fallible was hardly novel to early moderns, but demonology extended the doubt to such an extent that one’s sense of reality could easily falter. As Clark argues, “[The devil] was given so much power to deceive, so much command over the human senses, imagination, and understanding, that it is occasionally difficult to see how any real distinction between reality and illusion could have been maintained.”²⁸ Given the scope of diabolic deception, it is no surprise that Descartes chose a demon (*le malin génie*) for his skeptical thought experiment: if a demon could constantly feed our mind with delusions, how can we be sure we are ever seeing the world as it truly is?²⁹ It took Descartes’ mind to articulate such extreme skepticism as a rigorous philosophy, but this radical doubt hung in the background of demonological tracts. For demonologists, the world was suffused with evil spirits that warped human perception with such guile a subtlety that their victims might never know they were infected.

In addition to their powers of deception, demons were also understood to have minds vastly different from our own. Demonologists claimed that demons possessed knowledge of all

²⁶ Henry Holland, *A Treatise against Vvitchcraft* (Cambridge: John Legatt, 1590), B3r, Early English Books Online.

²⁷ Holland, *Treatise*, H1v.

²⁸ Clark, *Demons*, 172.

²⁹ Clark also makes this point in *Demons*, 174.

human history, vast stores of memory, and even the power to predict the future. Most writers took pains to stress that Satan and his minions were not omniscient (only God is), yet demonologists admitted that the devil's knowledge put his mind well beyond human comprehension. Clark writes, "Longevity and memory of things since the beginning of the world provided opportunities for those comparisons, inductions, and conjectures that humans also made, but on a superhuman scale."³⁰ Moreover, early moderns believed that Satan was by far more intelligent and, crucially, more *educated* than any human could ever be. He held the entirety of the academic disciplines within his demonic mind, having mastered every art, science, and craft that humankind has discovered. In *The Institutes*, Calvin describes him in appropriately academic terms as "an enemy the most daring, the most powerful, the most crafty, the most indefatigable, the most completely equipped with all the engines, and the most expert in the science of war."³¹ And in *The anatomie of sorcerie* (1612), James Mason reasons that whatever gifts of learning God granted to man must also be available for the much greater mind of the devil:

Furthermore, seeing that God doth bestow all kinde of temporarie, and worldly blessings, whether they pertaine to the bodie, or to the minde: as are all artes, sciences, and worldly wisdome and learning, as well vpon the wicked, as vpon the godly; as we see by experience.... And if he deale thus bountifully with wicked men, whose end is destruction with the diuel and his angels: why may he not bestow such like giftes euen vpon the diuell? albeit he abuse the same.³²

³⁰ Clark, *Demons*, 189.

³¹ Jean Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2008), 151.

³² James Mason, *The Anatomie of Sorcerie* (London: Iohn Legatt, 1612), 56-7, Early English Books Online.

According to these writers, Satan had a mind that operated in similar ways to human beings, yet his pure processing power and immense cognitive abilities meant that his extreme intelligence and use of the arts and sciences put him beyond human understanding.

In addition to the brute force of demonic intellect, devils had the other advantage of witnessing the entire span of the world's history. If devils were around since the early days of creation, the reasoning went, they must be privy to many of nature's secrets, to the dimensions of the physical world, and answers to profound metaphysical questions. After all, devils could boast first-hand knowledge of both heaven and hell, creation and the fall. Holland ruminates on this point at length, painting a picture of a clever and patient deceiver who has spent the centuries learning and perfecting his skills:

[H]is knowledge is woonderfull, as the name Lucifer importeth unto us, for he hath now 5000 yeeres experience & more. Againe, he is seene into the causes of most naturall things, his ministers are most swift, & can in a moment descry things farre distant, & hee is placed in the ayer, whence hee hath a most free prospect, to viewe most things here vpon earth. Again, he is singulerly seen in the historie of the holy Scripture. Lastly hee is often called for the execution of Gods iustice; wherefore it is certen, that this old serpent is most strong also in respect of his knowledge as for his arts they are infinite in number, & haue varied in all ages of this worlde, as they might best serve his purpose.³³

Because of the devil's superhuman memory and perception, he knows the secrets of the natural world, for which reason Holland labels him "an Empiricke of many yeeres experience."³⁴

Typical for writers in this genre, Holland seems to vacillate between fear and admiration for

³³ Holland, *Treatise*, K3r.

³⁴ Holland, *Treatise*, H2r.

Satan's mind, which exponentially exceeds that of the most educated, sharp-witted Renaissance thinker. Every intellectual achievement in the human world was swiftly dwarfed by the supernatural mind, and demonologists often sought to dazzle the reader with the scope and depth of the devil's intellect. Their ostensible goal was to stoke the vigilance of their readers, yet in their imaginative zeal, demonologists posited a mind so drastically beyond human comprehension that it seemed folly even to attempt to grapple with it.

With this brief survey of demonology texts, I mean to point out the ways in which more fanciful and bolder thinking about the problem of other minds could be accomplished outside of traditional philosophical discourse. The strange and baffling reports collected by these writers encouraged them to imagine the minds of otherworldly beings, and, consequently, to consider the limits of human comprehension. Within this discourse, the range and manner of thought experiments was unique, as writers considered the mechanics and metaphysics behind the mixing of the mortal and the demonic. Indeed, it is within demonology that we see a faint image of the zombie-as-thought-experiment. Philip le Loyer writes in his *Discours des spectres* (translated into English in 1605) that devils "may enter into a dead body and move the same as if it has sense and feeling."³⁵ And this idea is echoed by Philipp Elich in his 1607 *Daemonomagia* and André Valladier in *Le Saincte Philosophie de l'ame*, the latter claiming that so convincing was the puppet-corpse's behavior that "one could in no way recognize any difference" between this proto-zombie and real, living people.³⁶ In all these texts, the problem of other minds emerges only momentarily; demonologists wished to guide their readers to salvation, not pursue the troubling philosophical implications of their theories. It would not be until Descartes's malicious

³⁵ Pierre le Loyer, *A Treatise of Specters or Straunge Sights, Visions and Apparitions Appearing Sensibly Vnto Men*, trans. Zachary Jones (London: Printed by Val. Simmes for Mathew Lownes, 1605), B4v, Early English Books Online.

³⁶ Qtd. in Clark, *Demons*, 172.

demon that the problem of other minds would take on both form and substance. Yet here and in skeptical philosophy, the ingredients were available for Marlowe's alchemical ambitions. In *Doctor Faustus*, the thought experiments from demonology would take on new life, yet, as we shall see, Marlowe proffers a powerful reply to the problem of other minds.

Skepticism and Supernatural Minds in Doctor Faustus

If the opening chorus of *Doctor Faustus* serves to situate the play within dramatic genres and to provide some necessary backstory for Faustus the man, it also sketches a rough model of the play's universe and hints at the nature of the relationships between its mortal and immortal denizens. Marlowe bookends his prologue with two descriptions of interactions between gods and men, first when he assures us we will not see any martial scenes as when "Mars did mate the Carthaginians" (2), and then later when he foretells the "melting heavens" will conspire in Faustus' downfall. In a broad sense, these twin images provide a telling contrast: the Chorus begins by describing the gods allying with man (and assuring us this is what we will *not* see) and then ends with gods who have "conspired" against him. The point is clear enough: this is not a story of supernatural beings helping mortals to achieve their desires; this is a story of mortal vs. immortal with an all-too-predictable end. The fact that Marlowe uses the impersonal "heavens" to signify the gods matters less than the verb "conspire," which creates the image of a chorus of supernatural beings breathing together their rarefied air and standing in stark opposition to lowly man. At the same time, however, Marlowe tilts the scales to emphasize the gods as powerful yet distant, unknowable yet vaguely threatening. He undercuts his own symbol of metaphysical collaboration—Mars aiding the Carthaginians—with the curious word "mate," which carries the

opposing meanings of “to ally with” and “to defeat or subdue.”³⁷ Tellingly, the Chorus does nothing to clarify which meaning is intended, demanding instead that the audience draw on its knowledge of Roman history to help sort out the image. Indeed, a touch of confusion on the audience’s part would be appropriate, given a third meaning of the word: to confound or stupefy. We see this meaning active in other dramatic writing, such as *Macbeth*’s, “My mind she has mated, and amazed my sight” (5.1.78) and *Henry VI, Part 2*: “Be it by gins, by snares, by subtlety, / Sleeping or waking, ’tis no matter how, / So he be dead; for that is good deceit / Which mates him first that first intends deceit” (3.1.262-5). In effect, the verb destabilizes the simple, commonplace image of a god picking a side in battle to help the soldiers to victory, and leaves behind the impression that the supernatural has imposed itself on natural affairs, but the intention and motivation behind this supernatural act remains very much in question. In the universe of *Doctor Faustus*, it seems, even the straightforward act of a god helping soldiers to victory becomes somewhat obscure. When the supernatural realm imposes itself upon the natural world—an occurrence the prologue portrays as common, even inevitable—the intention of the gods becomes difficult to grasp, for a helping hand becomes indistinguishable from an ireful brow, and perhaps the only certain consequence of this collaboration between god and human is that the human mind will end up in the dark.

So what is the nature of the supernatural beings in *Doctor Faustus*? To answer this question, we must first reject the common (modern) interpretive move of relegating the status of the play’s angels and demons to mere projections of Faustus’ conflicted mind.³⁸ Marlowe’s play

³⁷ Bevington and Rasmussen note that the OED seems to have been taken in by this confusion, for the dictionary cites this passage as an example of the meaning “to defeat,” yet Livy writes that Hannibal and his army were aided by the god’s terrifying portents. *Doctor Faustus*, p.106, n.2.

³⁸ Jonathan Dollimore promotes this reading of an “almost schizoid” Faustus in his *Radical Tragedy: Religion, Ideology, and Power In the Drama of Shakespeare and His Contemporaries*, 3rd ed. (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), 113. More recently, Andrew Duxfield has added some historical justification to this reading by arguing Renaissance hermeticism offered a model by which the play’s supernatural beings could be seen as manifestations

is no *psychomachia*. As Cleanth Brooks writes, there are good reasons—both dramatic and historical—to believe that Marlowe expected his audience to regard the play’s supernatural beings as “actual beings with an objective reality of their own and not merely as projections of Faustus’ state of mind.”³⁹ Even if Protestant theologians tended to downplay the possibility of supernatural beings meddling in humdrum human affairs, few if any writers were prepared to downgrade angels and demons to simple metaphors. Calvin himself warned against this way of thinking, claiming that angels are “real beings possessed of spiritual essence,” and that they are not mere metaphors for the workings of God “but true spirits.”⁴⁰ English writers, too, upheld the objective reality of angels and demons. In tracts such as *An homily...of good and bad angels* (1582), authors maintained that both good and bad angels have their duties to “perform a divinely appointed ministry.”⁴¹ Marlowe’s audience, then, would have readily accepted the play’s supernatural beings as autonomous agents with their own motivations, thoughts, and intentions.

By emphasizing the objective reality of the play’s angels and demons, I am not attempting to sort out a specific religious system informing Marlowe’s work; rather, I believe Marlowe’s lens is focused on the mortal, human mind, and his supernatural creatures serve to illuminate his observations. In other words, the precise status of the play’s supernatural beings is less important than their relationship with mortal minds.⁴² Indeed, this relationship was a charged

of Faustus’ “fissured identity.” See his *Christopher Marlowe and the Failure to Unify* (Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2015), 106.

³⁹ Cleanth Brooks, “The Unity of Marlowe’s *Doctor Faustus*,” in *To Neville Coghill from Friends*, eds. J. Lawlor and W. H. Auden (London: Faber and Faber, 1966), 120.

⁴⁰ Calvin, *Institutes*, 148.

⁴¹ Qtd. by Vivien Thomas and William Tydeman in *Christopher Marlowe: the Plays and Their Sources* (London: Routledge, 1994), 177. The authors suggest that these works provide evidence against seeing the angels as externalizations of Faustus’ conscience.

⁴² I am sidestepping the perennial issue of the status of Faustus’ soul over the course of the play, namely whether he literally transforms into a “spirit in form and substance” upon signing the diabolic contract (2.1.97). For my purposes, it is important only that Faustus’ perceptive, cognitive, and other mental abilities remain human, and the

issue in early modern England. Historians and literary scholars have demonstrated how Reformation theologians reconfigured the relationship between human beings and supernatural (particularly satanic) agents. Whereas before the Reformation, stories of devils and other supernatural creatures meddling in human affairs were common, Protestant writers downplayed this type of face-to-face interaction and instead described the ways in which the Devil and other supernatural beings directly influenced human thought, inserting foreign ideas and directly nudging human consciousness to salvation or damnation.⁴³ In these writings, demons and angels possess little to no physical presence, operating invisibly on the mind. No amount of physical preparedness could inure one from this type of influence; the only option for the devout Christian was to assiduously monitor one's own thoughts. Still, the older tradition that described supernatural creatures as physical beings alive and operating in the natural world continued to have influence in folk religion, ballads, and popular texts. At the turn of the seventeenth century, these conflicting notions both had influence over English religious thought, and Marlowe, scholar and popular writer, would have been keenly aware of them both.⁴⁴

The play's angels provide an intriguing demonstration of these two ideas about the relationship between the natural and supernatural realms. As Ruth Lunney has pointed out, the presence of the angels in the play is not unusual, but Faustus' response to them is. She explains, "The audience hears what the Angels say, but it seems that Faustus neither hears nor understands

play provides no evidence to doubt this. Whatever the status of Faustus' soul, it's clear that his *mind* remains human and deeply fallible. For the debate over Faustus' status, see W. W. Greg, "The Damnation of Faustus," *The Modern Language Review* 41, no. 2 (April 1946): 97-107; Frank Manley, "The Nature of Faustus" *Modern Philology* 66, no. 3 (February 1969):218-231; and T. W. Craik, "Faustus' Damnation Reconsidered" *Renaissance Drama*, New Series 2 (1969):189-196.

⁴³ See Nathan Johnstone, *The Devil and Demonism In Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 61.

⁴⁴ J. R. Macdonald has recently argued that Marlowe employs both systems of religious thought in order to disorient the audience and heighten the threat posed by the play's devils. See his "Calvinist Theology and 'Country Divinity' in Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*," *Studies in Philology* 111, no. 4 (2014): 821-844.

them adequately.”⁴⁵ I would add to this by noting that Marlowe forestalls any simplistic reading of the angels as either projections of his conscience or detached commentators by continually setting up and then undermining the patterns of their appearances. Initially, the angels visit Faustus within the first 100 lines of each act (1.1.72-79; 2.1.15-22); both times Faustus is alone and engaged in self-reflection. From these instances, the audience can foresee a pattern in which the angels appear at regular intervals to caution Faustus, with a final appearance at the play’s conclusion to pronounce his damnation. Marlowe, however, quickly disappoints this prediction by reintroducing the angels twice in the third scene of the second act—once with Mephistopheles still on stage—and then removing them from the play altogether (2.3.12-17, 78-81).⁴⁶ Nor does Marlowe offer a consistent pattern of interaction between Faustus and the angels: after their first appearance, it is unclear whether Faustus hears them at all, as he continues with his fantasies without explicit reference to the angels’ dialogue. In the second act, however, he repeats as a question the final word of their conversation:

EVIL ANGEL: No, Faustus, think of honour and wealth.

FAUSTUS: Of wealth?

Why, the seigniorie of Emden shall be mine.

When Mephistopheles shall stand by me,

What god can hurt thee, Faustus? (2.1.21-25)

Faustus’ repetition creates an incomplete line, and while Faustus elaborates briefly on the notion of material riches, the broken line suggests a fleeting, fragmentary apprehension of the angels’

⁴⁵ Ruth Lunney, *Marlowe and the Popular Tradition: Innovation in the English Drama Before 1595* (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 2002), 139.

⁴⁶ The B-text somewhat “corrects” this broken pattern by bringing the angels back to the stage in the waning moments of the final act. This sequence is one of many of the B-texts’ bombastically theatrical additions, as the angels introduce visual depictions of heaven and hell, and the Evil Angel intones a grotesque yet conventional description of hell, complete with boiling lead, pitchforks, and “[t]en thousand tortures” (*B-Text*, 5.2.104-37).

words. Yet he does not investigate the origin of these words, a fact which could indicate Faustus mistakes them as self-generated thoughts. If this sequence recalls the Protestant notion of supernatural thought-insertion, the angels' third appearance frustrates this interpretation by further externalizing the angels so that Faustus is nearly engaging in direct conversation:

EVIL ANGEL: Thou art a spirit. God cannot pity thee.

FAUSTUS: Who buzzeth in mine ears that I am a spirit?

Be I a devil, yet God may pity me;

Ay, God will pity me if I repent.

EVIL ANGEL: Ay, but Faustus never shall repent. (2.3.13-17)

While it is clear Faustus does not see the angels, he addresses them as external, physical agents. Their words no longer manifest mysteriously from a liminal space of consciousness but they are buzzed directly into his ear—specific, complete, and unwelcome comments from an outside source. And if the audience comes to suspect that Faustus is developing a stronger awareness of the angels, Marlowe pivots again, and the angels, in their final appearance, seem to have no influence whatsoever on Faustus' thoughts or actions. As the angels debate whether the devils will tear Faustus' body to shreds, Faustus ignores the possibility of a physical threat and pleads with God to “save distressed Faustus soul!” (2.3.72-83). With this pattern of inconsistency, Marlowe discourages any orthodox interpretation that would root in the play in the soil of either Protestant theology or popular tales of angels and demons. In doing so, he holds open the possibility for a complex and ambiguous relationship between mortal and immortal minds. Faustus' consciousness appears partially permeable—as his mind can absorb the angels' words without being fully aware of their origin—yet it also, crucially, stands apart from the angels' will. He is capable, at least on occasion, of disentangling himself from the metaphysical mind-

game, of interrogating the beliefs and motivations of the supernatural agents that buzz around him.

While Marlowe teases and confounds audience expectations with the angels, he appears to present a more straightforward dynamic between Faustus and the play's demons. The devils, including Lucifer, Beelzebub, and Mephistopheles, hold clear, focused conversations with Faustus, who sees and hears the devils without obstruction. Nevertheless, Marlowe offers numerous warnings that we ought not to think about these interactions as we would a normal human-to-human conversation. Nor is simple skepticism sufficient. It is not enough to recognize the devils are trying to trick Faustus, as audiences were well-trained to do through the tradition of the Vice figure.⁴⁷ Indeed, I believe Mephistopheles would have presented a beguiling figure for early modern audiences used to the impish antics of the morality play's Vice or the duplicitous human villains of, for example, *The Spanish Tragedy* or *Richard III*. By turns honest and evasive, unguarded and manipulative, Mephistopheles skillfully dodges facile categorization and refuses any simple lineage. At the very moment we think we've seen the real Mephistopheles, he presents another face to Faustus and the audience. Indeed, it is crucial to remember that Mephistopheles' visage is one of Faustus' own design. In Act One, Faustus, staring at a horrific sneer of a demon, orders Mephistopheles to depart and return once he has altered his appearance to resemble that of "an old Franciscan friar; / That holy shape becomes a devil best" (1.3.26-7). In sixteenth-century England, the devil appearing in a monk's habit was a common joke. Darren Oldridge notes that by the time Marlowe was writing, having the devil appear as a friar or priest was well-worn trope, one that was repeated even in tracts with little to no anti-Catholic intent: "...the satanic nature of Catholicism was sufficiently well known to be

⁴⁷ On the origin of the Vice figure, see L. W. Cushman, *The Devil and the Vice in the English Dramatic Literature Before Shakespeare* (Halle a.S: M. Niemeyer, 1900). For a comparison between Vice and Marlowe's characters, see Lunney, *Popular Tradition*, 140-156.

taken for granted: the theme could be dropped into popular texts of all kinds without any need for explanation.”⁴⁸ But within the context of Marlowe’s play, the specific shape Mephistopheles takes is less important than Faustus’ act of shaping him. It is in this moment when Faustus begins to remake the devil in his image, or, rather, to re-form Mephistopheles into something comprehensible, something resembling—but only resembling—human. In complying with Faustus’ “heavenly words” (1.3.28), Mephistopheles is doing more than facilitating the doctor’s self-deception; he is folding the audience into the demonic delusion by meeting their expectations and encouraging them to attribute to Mephistopheles a human-like mind. As audience members, we are allowed the dramatic irony of knowing the devil’s ill intentions when Faustus does not. Our security in this position is part of the seduction. Our mistake, which we share with Faustus, is in the very act of applying human mental categories to this supernatural figure.

In the following two acts, we watch as Mephistopheles responds to Faustus’ cues, sometimes refusing but more often relenting as he becomes exactly what Faustus requires him to be. Amidst this, Marlowe allows Mephistopheles to reveal something about the game he is playing. We are not, it must be emphasized, shown the “real” Mephistopheles; rather, it is only in the demon’s contradictions and inconsistencies—and the way in which these contradictions align with Faustus’ desires—that we can understand the scope and depth of Faustus’ error. After Faustus takes his first step in shaping the devil in his own image, he interrogates Mephistopheles to measure the extent of his power. Mephistopheles insists that he may not “follow” Faustus without his Lucifer’s permission (1.3.41-3). Puzzled and irritated by finding himself lower in the hierarchy, Faustus pecks at the demon with a series of short, demanding questions: “Did not he charge thee to appear to me...Did not my conjuring speeches raise thee? Speak” (1.3.44, 46).

⁴⁸ Darren Oldridge, *The Devil in Early Modern England* (Stroud: Sutton, 2000), 86.

Mephistopheles replies with a complicated set of motivations and obligations: Lucifer is his master, so he cannot serve two, but he came to Faustus of his own accord. Faustus desired his presence, but neither his desire nor his words compelled Mephistopheles to appear. Devils, according to Mephistopheles, come when they hear a person blaspheme “in hope to get his glorious soul,” and he dismisses Faustus’ elaborate conjuring as the cause “*per accidens*” for his arrival (1.3.47). His use of the scholastic term no doubt rubs salt in Faustus’ wounded pride, as the learned doctor discovers his intricate forbidden knowledge served as nothing more than a garnish for his corrupted soul—the true lure for the devil. “The shortest cut for conjuring,” Mephistopheles condescendingly informs him, “is stoutly to abjure the Trinity” (1.3.53-4). In these lines, Faustus is swiftly put in his place. It is Lucifer, not Faustus, who controls Mephistopheles’ movements, and his incantations amount to little more than superstitious ramblings.

However satisfying this deflation may be for the audience, we ought not to give too much credence to the devil’s words. Later in play, while Mephistopheles and Faustus are away from Germany, the comic character Robin steals one of Faustus’ conjuring books and appears to summon the demon back to Wittenberg against his will. When Mephistopheles realizes where he is, he flies into a rage. “How am I vexèd with these villains” charms! / From Constantinople am I hither come / Only for pleasure of these damnèd slaves” (3.2.32-34). Critics are quick to claim the “rules” of the dramatic plot need not apply to the comic sections, and this explanation is all the more tempting when we consider these sections are probably not written by Marlowe.⁴⁹ On the other hand, we must consider that “the rules” issue from the mouth of Mephistopheles and

⁴⁹ The editors David Bevington and Eric Rasmussen argue that Mephistopheles is drawn by the comic characters’ blasphemy and so “the inconsistency is less great than it might seem.” Yet Mephistopheles specifically laments the “charms” that drew him to Germany, and his tone is in marked contrast to his cool, intellectual remove during his conversation with Faustus. See *Doctor Faustus*, 170 n.32-4.

that they may serve a darker function. While it is true that Faustus states his wish for total control over Mephistopheles, demanding the demon to “always be obedient to my will” (1.3.99), he elsewhere reveals his desires to be more complex than he is willing to admit. Upon effecting Mephistopheles’ transformation into a friar, the doctor remarks, “How pliant is this Mephistopheles, / Full of obedience and humility! / Such is the force of magic and my spells.” (1.3.29-30). Here we see the sparks from the subtle friction in Faustus’ desires. There is a side of Faustus that fantasizes about his words having a direct, unmediated effect on both heaven and earth (“Such is the force of...my spells.”). Yet there is also a part of him that seeks something closer to companionship, which requires not only autonomous agency in the Other but also the *gift* of acquiescence, the voluntary act by the Other which grants something that could just as easily be withheld. This side of Faustus causes him to marvel at the demon’s “obedience and humility,” and his competing desires allow him to fantasize that he is both forcing the devil to kneel and that Mephistopheles is genuflecting with the utmost sincerity. The full significance of this internal contradiction is discussed below, but for the moment we need only note how Mephistopheles’ account of his and Faustus’ roles feed both sides of Faustus’ desire. Faustus is both granted and denied total control over his servant; he has summoned the devil, but it is the devil who has decided to answer his call.

A similar pattern plays out as Faustus quizzes his new servant on the mysteries of the universe. And “quiz” is the appropriate verb to describe these exchanges, for Faustus’ stance here is not, as one might expect, that of a scholar-philosopher granted a glimpse behind the curtain of the physical universe; instead, Faustus questions his interlocutor as he would an undergraduate, and—tellingly—Mephistopheles responds in kind. Faustus begins his interrogation with the formality of a scholar:

FAUSTUS: First will I question with thee about hell.

Tell me, where is the place that men call hell?

MEPHISTOPHELES: Under the heavens.

FAUSTUS: Ay, but whereabout?

MEPHISTOPHELES: Within the bowels of these elements,

Where we are tortured and remain for ever.

Hell hath no limits, nor is circumscribed

In one self place, for where we are is hell,

And where hell is must we ever be. (2.1.119-26)

As many commentators have noted, this exchange rehearses a popular academic disputation about the physical existence of hell. Marlowe, if he had not directly participated in such an academic exercise, is likely to have heard one just like it.⁵⁰ Playing the part of a dutiful student, Mephistopheles provides Faustus with both sides of the familiar argument, describing hell as a cavernous torture chamber and an intangible state of mind. The first part of his answer is given substance with spatial prepositions (under, within) and earthy nouns (bowels, elements) while the second part spins out into Zen-like paradox.⁵¹ Again, the point is not that Mephistopheles contradicts himself but, rather, it is through his obliging contradiction that we perceive he is giving Faustus exactly what Faustus needs. Similarly, in the following scene where Faustus questions Mephistopheles on technical matters of astronomy, he chides the devil for his

⁵⁰ David Riggs, *The World of Christopher Marlowe* (London: Faber, 2004), esp. 90-97.

⁵¹ Dollimore also notes Mephistopheles' predilection for having his cake and eating it too, though he claims, without argument, that Mephistopheles tells Faustus the truth: "Mephostophilis well understands transgressive desire; it is why he does not deceive Faustus about the reality of hell. It suggests too why he conceives of hell in the way he does; although his sense of it as a state of being and consciousness can be seen as a powerful recuperation of hell...it is also an arrogant appropriation of hell, an incorporating of it into the consciousness of the subject." See *Radical Tragedy*, 115.

unsophisticated replies: “Tush, these are freshman’s suppositions” (2.3.55-6).⁵² Mephistopheles recognizes, however, that Faustus is seeking freshman suppositions. Faustus frames his discussion in scholastic terms, breaking off his soul-searching to return to a familiar mode of conversation: “Come, Mephistopheles, let us dispute again / And argue of divine astrology” (2.3.33-4). From the formal nature of his questioning to the content of the questions themselves, Faustus reveals the insular, solipsistic attitude informing the examination. He has no desire to expand his understanding of the world; he wishes only to evaluate the devil’s intellect by measuring it against his own. At the close of Faustus’ astronomy quiz, the scholar declares with a shrug, “Well, I am answered” (2.3.66), which is precisely the case. Throughout the length of Faustus’ questioning, Mephistopheles has not provided any real answers; he has simply satisfied, appeased, and answered Faustus himself.

Of course, the bare fact that Mephistopheles deceives Faustus is clear enough. Few would expect any less from an emissary of hell. Thus far, I have attempted to elucidate the specific shape and depth of Mephistopheles’ deception, with the larger goal of arguing that Marlowe denies his audience even the briefest glimpse of the demon’s true nature. At all times, we see in Mephistopheles only a living lure, precisely shaped to Faustus’ desires. Against this interpretation, however, there would seem to be some compelling evidence, not the least of which that so many commentators over the years have labeled Mephistopheles sympathetic, tragic, and even humanistic. More to the point, while Faustus’ lines contain the bulk of the play’s horror and anguish, Mephistopheles’ speeches communicate true existential despair in their grim matter-of-factness:

⁵² On Marlowe’s knowledge of astronomy in general, see Francis R. Johnson, “Marlowe’s Astronomy and Renaissance Skepticism” *ELH* 13, no. 4 (December 1946): 241-254. On the astronomy in this specific scene, see Gabrielle Sugar, “‘Falling to a diuelish exercise’: The Copernican Universe in Christopher Marlowe’s *Doctor Faustus*,” *Early Theatre* 12, no. 1 (2009): 141-149.

Why, this is hell, nor am I out of it.
Think'st thou that I, who saw the face of God
And tasted the eternal joys of heaven,
Am not tormented with ten thousand hells
In being deprived of everlasting bliss? (1.3.78-82)

It will be worthwhile, however, to examine this stirring passage in context. Here, Mephistopheles replies to Faustus' question about how he has managed to leave hell. He begins with a simple assertion, a relatively orthodox view that devils are not physically confined in a specific location but rather carry their damnation with them. Yet the truly pitiable part, that which is most likely to play on human sympathies, is framed not as an assertion but as a question as to what Faustus believes ("Think'st thou....?"). Using the rhetorical device of *erotema*, Mephistopheles exploits his position as the authority on damnation to press Faustus into assent. And Mephistopheles uses this rhetorical strategy to obscure what is ultimately a preposterous demand for sympathy. For Faustus to feel genuine compassion for Mephistopheles, he would have to have himself "tasted the eternal joys of heaven," been "deprived" of them, and, most importantly, possess a mind or intellect comparable to a supernatural being. Otherwise, one might as well ask a dog how it would feel if it were fired from its job. Mephistopheles' seemingly sincere plea for pity is in fact an incredulous demand, one that provokes agreement by the brute force of his psychological manipulation.

Mephistopheles' speech, however, is more than a play for Faustus' sympathy; it is aimed at the audience, as well. Indeed, if, by the end of this speech the audience has not yet conjured some sympathy for the devil, Mephistopheles ends his sermon with the pitiable cry "O Faustus, leave these frivolous demands, / Which strike terror to my fainting soul!" (83-4). Leaving aside

the finer theological points of whether or not supernatural beings possess souls,⁵³ Mephistopheles' act of seeking sympathy by bringing up his own soul ought to give us pause. In fact, Mephistopheles proves to be quite eager to draw a straightforward comparison between human souls and demonic ones. Before Faustus signs his blood oath, he appears to seek out some ground for sympathy with Mephistopheles by asking "Have you any pain, that tortures others?" Mephistopheles' reply is both evasive and telling: "As great as have the souls of men" (2.2.43-44). While not asserting outright that he has a soul, Mephistopheles still draws a cunning comparison between human souls and supernatural minds, suggesting that he and the other devils not only experience the same pain as human beings but that their pain is somehow even greater. Again, the demon takes advantage of his own authority to bully Faustus into sympathy: Mephistopheles shares Faustus' pain but the devil's version of pain is also so great as to be beyond Faustus' limited understanding. Those in the audience inclined to feel some compassion for Mephistopheles will be further taken in by the devil's manipulative analogy.

If we grant that Mephistopheles plays upon the audience's sympathies as he does Faustus', it is telling that Marlowe gives Mephistopheles no soliloquies or lengthy asides. In fact, the two asides Mephistopheles does have serve the same function as his other pleas for sympathy. As Faustus fills out his deadly contract, Mephistopheles cries out, "O, what will not I do to obtain his soul?" (2.1.73). Because asides such as this one normally function to as a window into the characters' thoughts, the audience might assume they have seen a crack in the devil's artful façade, one which exposes his desperate thirst for human damnation coupled with his utter self-loathing. Then again, Mephistopheles' words themselves tell us precisely nothing other than what we already know. Further, he tells *us* no more than what he has already told

⁵³ Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, 1.75.7 gives some idea of the aridness of this debate. See his *Summa Theologiae: Questions on God*, eds. Brian Leftow and Brian Davies (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

Faustus, in similarly hyperbolic terms: “But tell me, Faustus, shall I have thy soul? / And I will be thy slave, and wait on thee, / And give thee more than thou hast wit to ask” (2.1.45-7). This same mirrored relationship between Faustus and the audience plays out later in the scene, when Faustus wavers in his commitment, and Mephistopheles leans to the audience as he would an accomplice, “I’ll fetch him somewhat to delight his mind” (82). Here Mephistopheles appears to inhabit the familiar role of Vice, playing tricks on the play’s other characters while winking at the audience and including them as passive participants in his schemes. After Mephistopheles’ dumbshow, however, Faustus inquires, “What means this show?” to which the devil replies, “Nothing, Faustus, but to delight thy mind...” (2.1.84). We are apt to read this moment as Mephistopheles’ deceiving the scholar by distracting him from his doubts, and of course it is that; however, by using the exact words to explain his actions to the audience as he does to Faustus himself, Mephistopheles undermines the assumed sincerity of his aside and reveals he is playing the same game with his onlookers as he is with Faustus. What appeared to be a moment of transparency becomes just another angle on the same darkened glass.

J. R. Macdonald claims, “The devils’ permanent opacity seems to be at the heart of Faustus’ tragedy,” but the tragedy is not Faustus’ alone.⁵⁴ The additional layer of obscurity between the audience and the character distinguishes Marlowe’s Mephistopheles from other early modern dramatic figures in the Vice tradition, and it is primarily through Mephistopheles that Marlowe is able to stoke an extreme skepticism of other minds. No matter how carefully we watch Mephistopheles, we see only inconsistencies in this persona—inconsistencies that align perfectly with Faustus. Therefore, they are not, *pace* Dollimore, marks of a flawed or fractured character; rather, they hint at something beyond character, something protean, dynamic, and solidifying momentarily only in response to one of Faustus’ overtures. What we know of

⁵⁴ Macdonald, “Country Divinity,” 826.

Mephistopheles' "mind" or "interior" remains nil; we only conceive that this figure expands and contracts to fit the mold of Faustus' desires.

Instances when the audience is encouraged to feel sympathy for Mephistopheles reveal themselves under scrutiny to be the same dance with a different partner. With carefully balanced stagecraft, Marlowe uses Mephistopheles to show how the illusion of a mind can be created and how our sympathies can be manipulated to see human consciousness where there is none. In practice, whether Mephistopheles is a mindless zombie or in possession of a supernatural mind beyond all human comprehension works out to more or less the same thing. Our sympathy and understanding will always be misplaced, for we are interacting with a figure whose subjectivity (if it exists at all) is completely alien to our own. To feel a sympathetic connection to another mind only to realize we have fallen victim to a seductive illusion means we come to experience in a direct, dramatic manner, the sort of radical skepticism about other minds that had been fostered in demonology and that, in a few decades, would be formalized in Cartesian philosophy. Deceived into sympathizing with Mephistopheles, a theatergoer could not be blamed if, anticipating Descartes, he or she looked around at the other audience members and wondered if they, too, might be mere illusions of consciousness: "[D]o I see any more than hats and coats which could conceal automatons?" Marlowe stokes this skepticism for dramatic effect, but he is not content to rest in radical uncertainty. Indeed, for a keen observer of the theatrical experience, to settle on this skepticism is not only dramatically unsatisfying but phenomenologically impossible.

The Phenomenology of Other Minds

Before examining how Marlowe goes about addressing this skeptical attitude in *Doctor Faustus*, it will be helpful to draw a distinction between our discussion and the typical critical conversations about intersubjectivity and the theater. These latter conversations stretch back decades and have been frequently rehashed, so I will not offer an exhaustive summary here. In broad strokes, however, the critical debate concerns the historical advent of so-called modern or complex psychological traits in fictional characters. A slightly older critical tradition upholds a narrative of the gradual demise of fictional characters with simple, transparent psychologies defined by one or two traits, followed by the rise of new dramatic figures that display a greater degree of psychological realism. Ruth Lunny puts it succinctly: “The new character is defined in terms of its essential nature, as being ‘individual’ and ‘complex’; as having become more like a ‘real’ person (like ‘us’, that is); as having achieved ‘self-expressiveness’ and ‘interiority’ and ‘subjectivity.’”⁵⁵ The following generation of critics derided this narrative as a humanist fable and insisted upon the historically conditioned difference between modern and early modern psychologies, fictional or otherwise. Thus Francis Barker writes of Hamlet’s “anachronistic inwardness” and claims, “At the centre of Hamlet, in the interior of his mystery, there is, in short, nothing. The promised essence remains beyond the scope of the text’s signification.”⁵⁶

My goal in rehearsing this debate is not to side with one tradition or the other but rather to emphasize that, even as scholars move beyond these competing narratives, critical conversation remains hobbled by an insufficient understanding of the theatrical experience, particularly as it relates to intersubjectivity. It should come as no surprise that, prior to the rise of performance studies and the emphasis on the historical conditions of the early modern theater, critics drew evidence for their arguments from the play’s written text. A character’s

⁵⁵ Lunny, *Popular*, 125.

⁵⁶ Barker, *Tremulous*, 33.

“subjectivity” or “interiority” was an *effect* of the play, a combined product of a character’s words and actions as set down in the written text. Whether one detected the rise of modern subjectivity or not was a matter of textual interpretation. Yet even now as critics turn their attention to the lived experience of the theater, emphasizing the role of costumes, stage directions and actors’ bodies, we nevertheless see a similarly interpretative approach. Modern scholars recognize the various elements—both textual and physical—that go into creating subjectivity “effects,” yet the minds of fictional characters remain texts to be read and interpreted as though they are still confined to the page.⁵⁷ To take a recent example, Richard Preiss writes in a 2013 collection of essays on early modern theatricality that creating interiority would have posed a significant challenge to early modern authors:

How to introduce ‘interiority’ to audiences unfamiliar with it and into creatures alien to it? Psychological interiority is by definition unrepresentable as such, and every attempt to represent it both misses and destroys it. And theatre is an embodied medium, limited at the level of character to externalized words and actions. Whenever a character does a thing—speak, think, move, exist—he or she must do so with the body in order for us to know about it; from the moment a character enters until the moment he or she exits, the character is always communicating, always revealing, always converting a state of being into empirical signs.⁵⁸

Preiss’ understanding of interiority is explicitly textual: he is focused on whether or not it is “representable” with “externalized” words and actions, and he insists a character is constantly

⁵⁷ On subjectivity effects, see Joel Fineman, *The Subjectivity Effect In Western Literary Tradition: Essays Toward the Release of Shakespeare’s Will* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1991).

⁵⁸ Richard Preiss, “Interiority” in *Early Modern Theatricality*, ed. Henry S. Turner (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 61.

“converting” an interior state into “empirical signs.”⁵⁹ One sees this same approach in modern Marlowe criticism, even when the author announces that he or she is factoring the theatrical experience into his or her analysis. Genevieve Guenther, for example, claims a spectator will feel pity for Marlowe’s characters “when he apprehends or *infers* that the character suffers inwardly in an extraordinary way.”⁶⁰ And Ruth Lunney argues that Marlowe’s audiences would be forced to draw on “their own experience with others” as well as “their own notions of psychology” in order to understand the characters in *Doctor Faustus*.⁶¹ Although these and other modern commentators purport to draw upon the material conditions of performance in order move beyond the text-based subjectivity debates of the late twentieth century, they remain wedded to a particularly Cartesian understanding of intersubjectivity, one that reifies the boundary between self and other. According to this view, minds remain imprisoned in individual skulls, and so a person must *interpret* a set of vague external behaviors (such as words and actions) in order to understand the mind of the other. While this interpretive stance made sense for critics who limited their focus to the written word, those who wish to account for lived theatrical experience can no longer ignore the intricacies of intersubjective phenomenology.

Cognitive scientists and philosophers studying phenomenology have come to reject the notion that minds are texts to be read or that mental activity exists in a lockbox that will forever remain isolated from the social world. This notion, they claim, is the legacy of a Cartesian privileging of the isolated mind.⁶² As discussed above, Descartes insists that we have no direct access to the minds of others, that we must employ our reasoning faculties to interpret a person’s

⁵⁹ In addition to a textual understanding of interiority, Preiss also seems confused by the differences between author, actor, and character. Does a *character* convert its state of being into empirical signs? What is a character’s state of being that exists apart from empirical signs?

⁶⁰ Genevieve Guenther, “Why Devils Came When Faustus Called Them,” *Modern Philology* 109, no. 1 (August 2011): 65, my emphasis.

⁶¹ Lunney, *Popular*, 61.

⁶² See Antonio R. Damasio, *Descartes’ Error: Emotion, Reason, and the Human Brain* (New York: Putnam, 1994).

external behavior and only thus do we come to have any understanding of other minds. Literary critics, of course, are not alone in accepting this Cartesian perspective, for the idea has proved just as seductive to scientists accustomed to thinking about brains as self-contained computers. As psychologist Colwyn Trevarthen explains, “[M]ind science and its ambitious extension in brain science have, and still mainly do, regard us as single heads processing information, storing it up in memory for reprocessing, and transferring it symbolically.”⁶³ Anchored to this theory of mind, these scientists maintain that all intersubjectivity is a process of bridging of the vast gulf between individual brains, and our understanding of others is limited by our powers of psychological interpretation or, at best, our ability to “simulate” other people within the theaters of our skulls.⁶⁴ As one might expect, such thinking, with its innovate-sounding jargon such as “mindreading” and “mental simulation,” has proved attractive to literary scholars already primed to view the mind as a text or symbolic representation just waiting to be interpreted.⁶⁵ Thus even interdisciplinary literary scholarship that draws on cognitive science has tended to further entrench the Cartesian notion of marooned brains tossing out symbolic signs like messages in bottles.⁶⁶

Phenomenologists, however, insist that minds are not primarily read or interpreted or guessed at; rather, minds are perceived, experienced directly and without mediation. Admittedly,

⁶³ Colwyn Trevarthen, “Forward: Shared Minds and the Science of Fiction: Why Theories Will Differ,” in *The Shared Mind: Perspectives on Intersubjectivity*, ed. Jordan Zlatev (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Pub. Co, 2008), vii.

⁶⁴ Within cognitive science, the two major theories about how we understand other minds are known as “theory theory” and “simulation theory.” The former emphasizes the role of rule-based interpretation while the latter focuses on how an individual mind simulates others and “runs” those simulations in order to predict and understand behavior. In practice, most cognitive scientists admit that the mind performs both these operations, yet they disagree as to which is more important. For an explanation of both theories see Alvin Goldman, *Joint Ventures: Mindreading, Mirroring, and Embodied Cognition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), esp. 19-44. Goldman insists that we come to understand other minds in various ways, but he is chiefly a proponent of simulation theory.

⁶⁵ These approaches are particularly attractive to literary scholarship of the novel. See, for example, Lisa Zunshine, *Why We Read Fiction: Theory of Mind and the Novel* (Ohio State University Press, 2006); and Blakey Vermeule, *Why Do We Care about Literary Characters?* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010).

⁶⁶ For an approach to intersubjectivity that is attentive to the cognitive sciences and the humanities and that avoids these Cartesian temptations, see Laurent Dubreuil, *The Intellectual Space: Thinking Beyond Cognition* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015).

there is something about this idea that is difficult to accept. After all, we all have had situations in which we struggle to make our thoughts known to others, or we have guessed what another is thinking only to be utterly, embarrassingly wrong. Phenomenologists do not deny the seductiveness of Cartesian skepticism. Philosopher Dan Zahavi acknowledges the intuitive draw:

One reason why the problem of other minds seems so persistent is that we have conflicting intuitions about the accessibility of the mental life of others....[There] seems to be something right in the Cartesian idea that the mental life of another is, in some respect, inaccessible. There are situations in which we have no reason to doubt that the other is distracted, upset, or just plain bored. There are other situations in which we have no clue to their precise state of mind.⁶⁷

And Merleau-Ponty admits that there may be no way to avoid a truly radical skepticism, if we *choose* to commit ourselves to such an enterprise. We can always plug our ears to the cries of other people and throw into doubt every perception; this is “the truth of solipsism.”⁶⁸

Nevertheless, Merleau-Ponty and other phenomenologists believe this type of skepticism stems from a fundamental misunderstanding about the nature of perception and a denial of the phenomenological reality of living with others. Merleau-Ponty seeks to redress these errors by complicating and subverting our common categories and understandings of perception. In doing so, he suggests that we have in some way created the problem of other minds by abstracting and isolating things in a manner that warps their true character. Of perception, he writes, “We must conceive of perspectives and the point of view as our insertion in the world-as-an-individual, and we must no longer conceive of perception as a constitution of the real object, but rather as our

⁶⁷ Dan Zahavi, *Self and Other: Exploring Subjectivity, Empathy, and Shame* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 165.

⁶⁸ Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. Donald A. Landes (New York: Routledge, 2012), 377.

inherence in things.”⁶⁹ In other words, it is not only that our perceptive faculties give us information about the world, but also that the very existence of those faculties tells us something about our relation to the world and indeed about the world itself. And so it is not only that we see other people but we instantly and automatically see them *as* people, their subjectivities being as built into our perception as are light, sound, and the pull of gravity. Language and culture will unavoidably shape how we think about and act towards others, but phenomenologists insist that our primordial openness to others is what makes such developments possible. Zahavi argues that “the subject has an *a priori* reference to intersubjectivity—a relation that is there whether or not the subject has ever learned a language, and whether or not the subject has a concrete experience of others.”⁷⁰ While Descartes found refuge from doubt within the isolated and immaterial *cogito*, phenomenologists point out that this move is in fact a retreat from our lived experience of being always automatically entwined in a shared perceptual world.⁷¹ If we must use the metaphor of mind-as-text, then we should acknowledge that we enter into life fluent in the language of other minds.

For all its insightfulness, however, phenomenology ultimately relies on the force of intuition. Merleau-Ponty and others seek, through both rigorous argumentation and evocative language, to reveal the invisible structures of perception that undergird our understanding of other minds, but their theories remain vulnerable to skepticism in large part because they rely on the reader’s own intuitive powers. Yet in last two decades, research in the cognitive science has thrown light upon some of the biological mechanisms involved in intersubjectivity, and while the

⁶⁹ Merleau-Ponty, *Perception*, 366.

⁷⁰ Dan Zahavi, *Husserl and Transcendental Intersubjectivity: A Response to the Linguistic-Pragmatic Critique* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2001), 205.

⁷¹ Phenomenologists do not all agree on this point. In making his argument, Merleau-Ponty broke from Husserl, who tends to emphasize the primacy of the constituting ego; however, Merleau-Ponty himself saw his theorizing as more or less in line with Husserl’s. For a brief summary of their opposing views, see Dermot Moran, *Introduction to Phenomenology* (London: Routledge, 2000), 408-9.

conclusions remain controversial, early findings offer compelling support for phenomenological theories about how we come to know other minds. In particular, the discovery of “mirror neurons” has sparked a great deal of research and debate.⁷² First noticed in primate species, these brain cells, located in the premotor cortex, fire both when an action is performed (when, for example, Monkey A grabs a piece of fruit) and when that same action is merely observed (when Monkey A watches Monkey B grab a piece of fruit).⁷³ Such findings suggest that these primates share a kind of motor-activity vocabulary that allows them to understand actions beyond mere visual recognition. These primates display a sort of neurological resonance when observing certain behaviors, which researchers argue would allow them to understand goal-directed actions implicitly and immediately.⁷⁴ Within a specific set of behavior, the primates were not analyzing and interpreting others’ actions to understand what they were doing but rather, at a neurobiological level, performing that same action themselves.

Although researchers cannot isolate human mirror neurons in the same way they have done with primates, less-invasive studies have found substantial evidence that the mirror neuron system exists in human beings as well.⁷⁵ For some scientists, this suggests that we come to understand action not just by seeing and interpreting it but also (and perhaps primarily) by

⁷²Unsurprisingly, both reporters and researchers are sometimes guilty of overstating the significance of mirror neurons, which have associated with everything from schizophrenia to love to managerial success. For a skeptical criticism of these speculations, see Gregory Hickock, *Myth of Mirror Neurons: The Real Neuroscience of Communication and Cognition* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co.), 2014.

⁷³G. di Pellegrino et al., “Understanding Motor Events: a Neurophysiological Study,” *Experimental Brain Research* 91, no.1 (October 1992): 176-80.

⁷⁴The term “neural resonance” comes from Jamil Zaki and Kevin Ochsner, “The Neuroscience of Empathy: Progress, Pitfalls and Promise,” *Nature Neuroscience* 15, no. 5 (2012): 675. Scientists disagree about the precise role of the mirror neuron system in motor-action understanding, with some arguing it forms a foundational basis and others claiming it merely contributes to a more complex neurological system.

⁷⁵For an explanation of what non-invasive tests can tell us about the human mirror-neuron system, see Giacomo Rizzolatti and Corrado Sinigaglia, *Mirrors In the Brain : How Our Minds Share Actions, Emotions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 118-19. Hickock, a mirror neuron skeptic, argues that the direct evidence for mirror neurons in human brains is “thin,” but even he admits it is highly likely that the cells exist in humans. See his *The Myth of Mirror Neurons*, esp. 27-40.

mirroring it “as if we were executing that very same action that we are observing.”⁷⁶ Crucially, this mirroring happens without thought or intention; it is a rapid, reflex-like behavior that immediately synchronizes the brain activity of actor and observer. Mirror-neuron researchers believe this neurological system forms the basis for understanding action in others, and that therefore our understanding of others’ behavior does not rely on conscious inference or learned information: “This understanding is completely devoid of any reflexive, conceptual, and/or linguistic mediation as it is based exclusively on the *vocabulary of acts* and the *motor knowledge* of which our capacity to act depends.”⁷⁷ To be clear, we are speaking here of a specific type of intersubjective understanding, a kind of sub-personal connection between minds, and at this point scientists cannot be sure how precisely this level of understanding relates to more complex social interaction. For example, if we were to see another person pick up an apple, our mirror neuron system could, based on the person’s movements and posture, provide us with information about whether the person is picking it up to eat it, or to hurl it away, or to drop it in the trash. It could not, however, tell us if the person is eating it because he wants to be healthy or is throwing it away because green apples are associated with an unhappy memory, or any deeper psychological information.⁷⁸ It would perhaps be best to follow philosophers Shaun Gallagher and Daniel Hutto in considering the mirror-neuron system as part of a “primary intersubjectivity” that precedes conscious thinking about other minds. As they explain, “Before we are in a position to wonder what the other person believes or desires, we already have specific perceptual

⁷⁶ Vittorio Gallese, “The ‘Shared Manifold’ Hypothesis: From Mirror Neurons to Empathy,” *Journal of Consciousness Studies* 8 (2001): 37.

⁷⁷ Rizzolatti and Sinigaglia, *Mirrors*, 125, their emphasis.

⁷⁸ For a review of the role of mirror neurons in social cognition, see Giacomo Rizzolatti and Corrado Sinigaglia, “The Functional Role of the Parieto-frontal Mirror Circuit: Interpretations and Misinterpretations,” *Nature Reviews Neuroscience* 11, no. 4 (2010): 264-74.

understanding about what they feel, whether they are attending to us or not, whether their intentions are friendly or not, and so forth.”⁷⁹

So far, research into mirror neurons has provided some highly suggestive scientific support for phenomenological theories of intersubjectivity, and it is not surprising that some cognitive scientists echo phenomenological theories when discussing the wide-ranging significance of these findings: “Thus mirror neurons embody both the interdependence of self and other...and the independence we simultaneously feel and require.”⁸⁰ Still, it is easy to get carried away when it comes to mirror neurons and to thereby flatten the complexity of phenomenological thought. Scientific researchers can be impatient to bridge the gap between measurable sub-personal cellular activity and lived experience, and much work remains to be done before we can recognize the full significance of the mirror neuron system. Our emphasis here is on the phenomenology of intersubjectivity, but this neuroscientific research further undercuts the Cartesian perspective that would see each mind sealed off from all others, relying solely on inference and interpretation to “read” other minds. Indeed, if phenomenologists take issue with the mirror neuron research (beyond its sometimes overreaching conclusions), it is because they find the mirroring metaphor too passive and isolating to do justice to the animated experience of intersubjectivity. Zahavi, for example, argues that the metaphor of dancing, rather than mirroring, captures the “dynamic and dialectical intertwinement between self and other.”⁸¹ Further extending the metaphor into theatrical territory, Rizzolatti and Sinigaglia claim the mirror neuron system “produce[s] a shared space of action, within which each act and chain of acts, whether ours or ‘theirs,’ are immediately registered and understood.” It is with this “shared

⁷⁹ Daniel Hutto and Shaun Gallagher, “Understanding Others through Primary Interaction and Narrative Practice,” in *The Shared Mind*, 25.

⁸⁰ Marco Iacoboni, *Mirroring People: The New Science of How We Connect with Others* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2008), 133.

⁸¹ Zahavi, *Self and Other*, 161.

space of action” in mind(s) that I wish to return to the theater and *Doctor Faustus*. Once we have unsettled some of our Cartesian suppositions, we will find ourselves more in sync with play’s approach. With Mephistopheles and the other supernatural characters, Marlowe has conjured up the specter of radical doubt and dramatized the distance between self and other, but to hear the play’s response, we must accept the phenomenological power of other minds.

A Zombie’s Reply

Modern readers will have no trouble accepting the claim that *Doctor Faustus* is a metatheatrical play. In 1985, Jan Kott called it Marlowe’s great “polytheatrical” drama, and in the intervening decades critics have repeatedly pointed out the ways in which Marlowe’s play comments upon its own theatricality.⁸² In the first half of the play, before Faustus gains his powers, Mephistopheles acts as author and stage director, putting on dumbshows (2.1.82-85), comic interludes (2.1.150-155), and elaborate pageants (2.3.105-177) to delight and distract Faustus. In the second half, Faustus produces his own entertainment, engineering comic situations and conjuring historical figures for the amusement of himself and others.⁸³ My aim in this concluding section is not to rehash the many ways in which *Faustus* calls attention to its own status as work of dramatic fiction; rather, I want to elucidate how the play uses metatheatrical

⁸² Jan Kott, “The Two Hells of *Doctor Faustus*: A Theatrical Polyphony” in *The Bottom Translation: Marlowe and Shakespeare and the Carnival Tradition* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1987), 1-27. For examples of critical writing on *Faustus* and metatheatricality, see Joel B. Altman, *The Tudor Play of Mind: Rhetorical Inquiry and the Development of Elizabethan Drama* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), 321-88; Patrick Cheney, *Marlowe’s Counterfeit Profession: Ovid Spenser, Counter-Nationhood* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), 190-220; Sara M. Deats, ““Mark this show’: Magic and the Theater in Marlowe’s *Doctor Faustus*,” in *Placing the Plays of Christopher Marlowe: Cultural Contexts of His Plays*, eds. Sara M. Deats and Robert A. Logan (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), 13-24; Darryll Grantley, ““What means this shew?’: Theatricalism, Camp, and Subversion in *Doctor Faustus* and *The Jew of Malta*,” in *Christopher Marlowe and English Renaissance Culture*, eds. Peter Roberts and Darryll Grantley (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1996), 224-38; Guenther, “Devils”; Sofer, “How to do things with demons: conjuring performatives in *Doctor Faustus*,” *Theatre Journal* 61 (2009): 1-21; and Barbara H. Traister, *Heavenly Necromancers: The Magician in English Renaissance Drama* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1984), 89-107.

⁸³ Deats, however, sees Faustus’ power as strictly limited in the play’s second half, with Faustus acting more as the author who is forced “always to perform his magic through the agency of Mephistopheles.” See her “Magic,” 20.

gestures to define a specific relationship between the play-world and the audience's reality. With this relationship foregrounded, Marlowe crafts a powerful answer to the problem of other minds by demonstrating how our minds become inextricably tangled with the minds of others—even when we know those minds to be illusory. While modern commentators have recognized the play's metatheatrical moments, they have tended to assume that the form and, consequently, the function of metatheatricality remains constant throughout the play. Yet Marlowe structures the play around a stark division between his two "internal" playwrights: Mephistopheles and Faustus. And although each is responsible for creating clearly demarcated theatrical set-pieces, the sum of which give the play its sense of self-awareness, the dramas themselves reflect their respective creators and, consequently, put forward different metatheatrical perspectives that entail conflicting ideas about the nature of theater and its relation to the audience.

We have seen how Mephistopheles' unnatural mind remains obscure beyond the essential fact that it desires Faustus' soul, and so it should come as no surprise that the motivating force behind his manufactured dramas is just as straightforward. The goal is simply to "delight" Faustus' mind, to distract him from heavenly thoughts, and to lead him astray with pleasure. Furthermore, as I have argued, Mephistopheles denies the audience a privileged position in his hunt for Faustus' soul, refusing to fold them into his deception or give them a peak behind the curtain. Predictably, then, Mephistopheles' dramatic set-pieces tend to situate Faustus and the audience on level ground, addressing the fictional Faustus and the real-world audience as one in the same. In the pageant of the seven sins, for example, the demons offer Faustus "some pastime" as a way of diverting his thoughts from God: "Talk not of paradise nor creation, but mark this show" (2.3.100, 105). During the pageant, each sin in turn responds to Faustus' question "What art thou?", yet while the sins' speeches are direct replies to him, most of the

monologues contain references—if not explicit addresses—to the real-world audience. Pride, for instance, interrupts his own monologue to turn his nose up at the unwashed groundlings standing beside the stage, “But fie, what a scent is here! I’ll not speak another word, except the ground were perfumed and covered with cloth of arras” (2.3.115-17). Next, Covetousness claims, “I would desire that this house and all the people in it were turned to gold” (120-22). Given that just Faustus, Mephistopheles, and two other devils are on stage at this moment, it would only fit Covetousness rapacious greed if he were gesturing toward the mass of bodies surrounding him in the audience. Similarly, Wrath says, “I was born in hell, and look to it, for some of you shall be my father.” Wrath’s “hell” refers at once to the literal hell and area under the stage nicknamed “hell,” and once again, the sin uses the plural “you” to broaden his frame of reference to the audience. In fact, it would make little sense to warn the devils on stage that they could be his father, whereas the warning would be more suited to the unruly audience members. Finally, Envy laments “But must thou sit and I stand?” and although Faustus is likely sitting while he watches the pageant, Envy’s accusation casts beyond him to the unequal seating of the theater in which the poorest stood around the stage and the well-to-do sat comfortably in the galleries.⁸⁴ Indeed, it is not difficult to imagine Envy throwing his gesture upstage past the seated Faustus and towards the most expensive “lord’s rooms” above the stage.

The key point here is not merely that Marlowe is calling attention to *Faustus* as a dramatic work but rather that this particular metatheatrical gesture aligns the audience and Faustus in nearly the exact same position vis-à-vis the onstage spectacle. For Faustus and flesh-and-blood theatergoers, this drama serves merely to distract and delight. To use the language of the play, this is art as *ravishment*, as mesmerizing force that lulls the audience into dull acquiescence. It is the “sweet pleasure” that urges Faustus forward:

⁸⁴ On the prices of different sections in the theater, see Gurr, *Stage*, 150.

Have not I made blind Homer sing to me
Of Alexander's love and Oenone's death?
And hath not he that built the walls of Thebes
With ravishing sound of his melodious harp
Made music with my Mephistopheles?
Why should I die, then, or basely despair?
I am resolved Faustus shall ne'er repent. (2.3.25-32)

Of course, as Faustus later admits, the shows put on for him by Mephistopheles feature mere simulacrum that "lively resemble" the people they are meant to be. And despite the elevated nature of these performances, the ghostly Homer and Amphion (like the more mundane seven sins) function solely to ravish Faustus with hedonistic pleasure. Whether delivered in mighty lines or street-ready prose, theatrical performance, it seems, is the devil's province, and neither Mephistopheles nor Marlowe himself have any compunction about using it for their own gain. It is no wonder, then, that some critics have found the play to be oddly sympathetic with the antitheatricalists who denounced popular drama as both stultifying distraction and immoral temptation.⁸⁵

Once Faustus gains his powers and takes on the role of playwright, however, the play's metatheatrical elements reflect a radically different attitude towards drama. This shift in metatheatrical perspective is a key feature of the play in that it suggests a new relationship between the audience and the dramatic work, one which makes possible Marlowe's reply to radical skepticism about other minds. Some of Faustus' more memorable set-pieces are discussed below, but to illustrate this shift in perspective, let us consider the brief comic

⁸⁵ Deats, for example, sees a "notorious contrariety" in the play and believes it signifies Marlowe's "ambivalence" towards his own dramatic medium. See her, "Magic," 13.

interlude of Faustus' prank on the Horse-courser. Here, Faustus stages his own dilemma in miniature. He sells his horse to the Horse-courser yet cryptically warns him not to ride the horse into water, which of course tempts the man to do just that. After the horse disintegrates into a bundle of hay, the Horse-courser explains that he disobeyed Faustus' orders because he believed "my horse had had some rare quality that [Faustus] would not have had me known of" (4.1.150-1). And when Faustus terrifies the man by allowing him to pull Faustus' leg from his body, the Horse-courser frantically agrees to pay an additional forty dollars on top of what he paid for his now non-existent horse. The promise of forbidden knowledge and Faustus' obscure, seemingly arbitrary restrictions lead the cozened man to utter Faustus' own lament: "I would not be ruled by him" (4.1.148-9). Of course, comic plots mirroring the main action is a standard device in early modern drama, but the important difference here is that it is the tragic hero himself who is directing the comic mirror. Moreover, Faustus frames the seemingly pointless prank with grim speeches acknowledging the swift approach of his damnation. Before he meets the Horse-courser, he bewails "the restless course / That time doth run with calm and silent foot" (4.1.100-1), and after he sells the charmed horse, he settles down to sleep in order to quiet his gloomy thoughts:

What art thou, Faustus, but a man condemned to die?

Thy fatal time doth draw to final end.

Despair doth drive distrust unto my thoughts.

Confound these passions with a quiet sleep.

Tush! Christ did call the thief upon the cross;

Then rest thee, Faustus, quiet in conceit. (139-44)

All of this prevents the Horse-courser's blunders from offering the audience true "comic relief," and keeps the comedy tethered to the tragic plot. More importantly, it transforms the episode from comic subplot to metatheater by having Faustus engineer a dramatic adaptation of his own story.

What we see, however, is not Faustus' *Mousetrap*, for the play-within-the-play serves no obvious dramatic function, nor does it seem designed to provoke any particular reaction from the other characters. (Aside from Mephistopheles, who remains mostly passive in this scene, no other characters witness Faustus' prank.) Indeed, Faustus' metadrama is nothing other than *self-serving*, in several senses of the word. In its figuring of Faustus as a man who has been misled and cheated by a cruel and enigmatic authority figure, the play affirms Faustus' feelings of victimhood: he has fallen into God's trap, having lost everything because his innate curiosity has lead him to overstep a set of arbitrary yet iron-clad restrictions. Faustus, in this dramatic analogy, is the victim of a cheap trick, and he has lost more than he could have ever predicted. As a faithful representation of Faustus' situation, "The Tragedy of the Horse-courser" leaves much to be desired, yet for our purposes the accuracy of Faustus' metatheatrical production is beside the point. Instead, we must recognize that Faustus' "show" signals a shift in metatheatrical self-reference, emphasizing a more intimate enmeshment between creator and character. For Faustus' drama is also self-serving in the sense that it serves as an extension of Faustus' self, and thus presents a deeper connection between the drama and its author. Even though Faustus subjects the Horse-courser to his cruel comic mischief, there remains within the metadrama a current of sympathy for the protagonist, for the Horse-courser is in a very real way Faustus himself. His story fits the "form of Faustus' fortunes," and Faustus, knowing the man will succumb as he has, intuitively connects with the rustic, despite their wildly different statures. By dissolving the

barrier between the self and the characters within a drama, this metatheatrical sequence foregrounds for the real-world theatergoers a radically different relationship between audience and character. Faustus does not stand apart from his dramatic creation in the way Mephistopheles does; rather, he remains intimately entangled with his pseudo-protagonist even though he remains in all significant ways a stranger to him. The rustic Horse-courser, present for a mere 69 lines, shares no obvious qualities with the cultured, ambitious doctor, yet it is no coincidence that when the comic figure leaves the stage, he is carrying a piece of Doctor Faustus with him.

It might be objected that Faustus' sympathy for the Horse-courser derives solely from the fact that the Horse-Courser's fate superficially resembles Faustus' own, and so Faustus' connection to the character is only a manifestation of the doctor's narcissism. As a character detail, this point makes sense, but in terms of the episode's larger metatheatrical significance, it is incomplete. In these sequences, Marlowe works to expand the potential dynamics between audience and drama, so the point is less why Faustus forges a sympathetic relationship with his own dramatic set-piece and more that such a sympathetic relationship is *possible*. Here and elsewhere, Marlowe is broadening the space of possibilities beyond the seductive but ultimately alienating devil-directed dramas in order to provoke his audience into considering their own connection with the figures on stage.

Of course, as Marlowe is staging this sort of sympathetic relationship, he is also creating it. The diverse techniques by which a dramatist creates sympathy for his or her characters is a topic too broad even to be summarized here, but it is worth noting that in this play Marlowe places a particular emphasis on the visual perception of his actors' living bodies. Outside of any specific modes of characterization or explicit psychologizing, *Doctor Faustus* manages to stoke a powerful sympathetic response in the audience simply by directing our eyes to the living actors

on stage. This is accomplished both through dramatic action and poetic emphasis on the visual register. Marlowe marks this shift at the start of Act Four, with the Chorus promising, “What there he did in trial of his art / I leave untold, your eyes shall see performed” (16-17), which is then immediately mirrored by the Emperor’s opening address to Faustus: “This, therefore, is my request: that thou let me see some proof of thy skill, that mine eyes may be witness to confirm what mine ears have heard reported” (4.1.5-8). In these lines, not only is there a repeated claim that we are shifting from verbally reported information to visually performed “proof,” but there are also direct references to body parts, which underlines the embodied nature of perception. With the poetry drifting into the visual register, the play also directs the audience’s attention to the actors’ bodies by dramatizing bodily mutilation and dismemberment. Even before the comic acts of pulling off Faustus’ leg or the rustics having their heads transformed into those of animals, Faustus can be seen to seal his sympathetic contract with the audience at the moment he cuts his arm.⁸⁶ Gripping his hand in a tight fist as he pierces the skin of his arm to draw blood for his hellish contract, Faustus (or, more accurately, the actor playing Faustus) can create a spontaneous identification with the audience. As the research into mirror neurons suggests, this kind of motion is likely to cause a mirroring effect within the brains of an audience, as if they, too, were gripping their fists in anticipation of pain.⁸⁷ Of course, *all* early modern plays featured living actors, and, if mirror neuron research is correct, many of the actors’ actions—from picking up a sword to gripping a quill—would trigger this sort of instantaneous sympathetic response. In that regard, *Doctor Faustus* is hardly unique in stimulating the mirror-neuron network. I would

⁸⁶ The B-text contains additional acts of dramatized bodily mutilation, including Faustus being magically decapitated (4.2.44) and his “mangled limbs” remaining onstage in the play’s conclusion (5.3.17).

⁸⁷ Obviously, Marlowe knew nothing about mirror neurons, so this latter aspect is an example of a dramatist’s intuition or just a felicitous coincidence. The former is perhaps not so far-fetched once one spends some time watching an audience during a theatrical performance. One can often observe audience members mirroring the facial expressions of the actors onstage—regardless of whether that actor is playing a “sympathetic” character or not.

argue, however, it is significant that Marlowe pairs his protagonist's fatal decision with an emphatically physical act, one that fixes the audience's attention on the tightened fist of the actor playing Faustus. It points us to a crucial parallel between the play's real-world effects and its fictional content, for the very moment Faustus signs away his soul is the one in which we as an audience become most in-tune with him.⁸⁸

This parallel extends through Faustus' entire dramatic arc, and it proves to be the key for understanding how Marlowe unravels the problem of other minds. The answer to this problem relies upon the (meta)dramatic irony of Faustus' onstage social isolation paired with his acceptance into the audience's collective sympathies: as Faustus removes himself from humanity, the audience draws him closer. Many commentators have noticed that Marlowe uses Faustus' social isolation to complement and dramatize his religious despair, a process that culminates in the play's final scene with Faustus alone onstage.⁸⁹ But this is more than means of theatrically representing an internal struggle for one's soul, for the play urges us to recognize that Faustus retreats from God at least in part *because* he has first abjured humanity. Marlowe invites this reading by emphasizing the social dimension of Faustus' world in the early acts, only to whittle it away as the play goes on. In Faustus' early speeches, as he debates various career paths, he draws a pronounced distinction between the social and solitary aspects of the academic profession. Indeed, Faustus' decision has a more distinctly public character than we would necessarily recognize today. As Ineke Murakami notes, Faustus uses the word "profess" (1.1.2), which derives from the medieval term for a public declaration of one's faith. Even in the Renaissance, Murakami argues, the term "retained the sense of public declaration (a claim that

⁸⁸ Guenther also argues the audience is in some ways manipulated into feeling sympathy for a damned figure, yet she claims that the play then shames the audience by causing them to think of God's disapproval for their pity. As I discuss below, I believe Marlowe stokes audience sympathy for different ends. See Guenther, "Devils," esp. 69.

⁸⁹ Frank Manley, for example, argues that Faustus' story is one of leaving society and entering a "world of spiritual isolation created in the mind alone." See his "Nature," 220.

one has mastered a particular body of knowledge) and the gravity of a vow.”⁹⁰ Furthermore, we are told by that Chorus that Faustus has “Excel[ed] all whose sweet delight disputes / In heavenly matters of theology,” lines that place him within a community of scholars while at the same time insisting that he has moved beyond them. Here, Marlowe metonymically represents scholarship with the pleasurable social activity of debate in order to distance Faustus from the community, suggesting that he has alienated himself from this simple yet vital source of pleasure. In Faustus’ opening monologue, Faustus himself dismisses the field of philosophy because it offers nothing more than just this sort of social activity: “Is to dispute well logic’s chiefest end? / Affords this art no greater miracle? (1.1.8-9). Similarly, he shrugs off the legal profession that “aims at nothing but external trash” (1.1.35). As Faustus cycles through the academic fields, he establishes a firm distinction between the internal “life of the mind” and all other “external trash,” for while Faustus’ monologue is ostensibly about selecting a public position, the doctor frames his own speech as a way to “sound the depth of that thou wilt profess” (1.1.2). That is, he is concerned not with outward, communal aspects of a profession but their private, hidden value. Of course, this translates to Faustus determining each field’s value *for him*. As he sorts through the various professions open to him, he continually separates the social dimension of his work from his private experience of it. He discards the social debate of philosophy for something that better “fitteth Faustus’ wit”; he claims medicine would be better “esteemed” (by him) if it could raise the dead; and he scorns law as “[t]oo servile and illiberal *for me*” (1.1.11, 26, and 36, my emphasis). Here, we witness a cleaving of isolated thought from social engagement, with the former portrayed as the more important and “truer” end of these pursuits.

⁹⁰ See Ineke Murakami, *Moral Play and Counterpublic : Transformations In Moral Drama, 1465-1599* (New York: Routledge, 2011), 108.

Marlowe further plays up this contrast by altering his source, the *English Faust Book*, to add greater weight to Faustus' social interaction in the play's early going. This includes inventing two scholars that are not present in the original source and giving them key roles in Faustus' descent into damnation. In the *Faust Book*, Faustus goes to a solitary grove to conjure by himself, seemingly without any encouragement or prompting from others,⁹¹ yet Marlowe alters the source to establish that Faustus' initial forays into the world of magic are undertaken with companions. This change creates a somewhat jarring effect, immediately contrasting a long speech from an individualistic, arrogant academic with the same man relying (graciously so) on the wisdom of others: "[Valdes and Cornelius'] conference will be a greater help to me / Than all my labours, plod I ne'er so fast" (1.1.70-1). Further, Faustus admits that he has turned to necromancy at least in part because of Valdes and Cornelius' urging: "Know that your words have won me at the last / To practice magic and concealed arts" (1.1.103-4). Despite their importance in the play's first act, Valdes and Cornelius possess a rather asymmetrical presence in the play, disappearing entirely and not warranting a mention from Faustus even after he returns to Wittenberg. In these later Wittenberg scenes, the academic community is represented by nameless scholars, and here, too, Marlowe adapts his source to play up the contrast between the socially embedded scholar and the doomed, isolated necromancer who returns to Germany. The author of the *Faust Book* lingers on Faustus' final days as he carouses with fellow academics, including "seven students and masters that studied divinity, *juris prudential*, and *medicina*," whom the book describes as "his dear friends."⁹² These events have a brief parallel in the play, but they are passed over in summary (5.1.4-8) whereas the *Faust Book* devotes several chapters to narrating Faustus' extensive banquets and various parlor tricks.

⁹¹ John Henry Jones, ed., *The English Faust Book: A Critical Edition, Based on the Text of 1592* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 93.

⁹² *Faust Book*, 159.

The character of the early academic scenes also forms a stark contrast to Faustus' final exchanges with his fellow academics. It is immediately clear that Faustus is using Valdes and Cornelius as a means to an end, and vice versa. Tellingly, he boasts to them that once he possesses the ability to conjure, he alone will "be as cunning as Agrippa was" (1.1.111), while Valdes, recognizing that he and Cornelius require Faustus' "wit" to supplement their "experience" (113) wedges himself and Cornelius back into the equation: "As Indian Moors obey their Spanish lords, / So shall the spirits of every element / Be always serviceable to *us three*" (115-7, my emphasis). Frank Manley is certainly correct when he writes, "[t]here is no true social bond and no true friendship in magic. Faustus intends to use Valdes and Cornelius and move on through increasing isolation to the unknown boundaries of our world."⁹³ Yet it is important to recognize that this arrangement is mutually exploitative, for it is in this furnace of suspicion and opportunism that Faustus' mind has been forged. Repeatedly, the two scholars test Faustus' resolve, both to strengthen his will and to satisfy their own skepticism. Valdes promises him the world "If learned Faustus will be resolute." And even after Faustus swears, "Valdes, as resolute am I in this / As thou art to live," Cornelius urges, "Then doubt not, Faustus, but to be renowned" (136-7, 143). Faustus' "increasing isolation," to use Manley's words, is in fact the logical extension of this mindset of doubt, suspicion, and self-interest. Conference with Valdes and Cornelius (and others of their ilk) has guided Faustus even beyond introducing him to the dark arts—it has dragged his mind into self-serving isolation.

At the play's conclusion, Marlowe again adjusts his source to accentuate Faustus' loneliness. In the *Faust Book*, Faustus' desperate monologue comes before his conference with the concerned scholars; Marlowe reverses the order, concluding the play with Faustus alone on

⁹³ Manley, "The Nature of Faustus," 220.

stage.⁹⁴ Critics have written extensively about this closing monologue as an expression of religious despair, as the doomed plea of Calvin's reprobate, or as humbled cry of the Renaissance individualist. Without contradicting any of these readings, I wish to highlight an aspect of this soliloquy that is frequently assumed yet rarely commented upon: Faustus' profound, and profoundly human, loneliness. Behind the speech's theological implications, questions of free will, and literary allusions, there is a core of isolation, a solipsistic despair that fuels and complements the religious one. It's clear enough that Faustus is isolated by the end of the play, but recognizing the scope and character of his loneliness is crucial for understanding our response to Faustus as a character and, therefore, how the play addresses the problem of other minds. While Faustus makes no mention of other people in his final soliloquy, Marlowe communicates his character's loneliness by having the doomed man call upon the physical elements for which he has sacrificed his mortal soul, only for those elements to answer with a stony silence. Faustus spends the first half of his monologue (before the watch strikes), crying out to the physical world for help. "Stand still," he calls into the darkness, "you ever-moving spheres of heaven, / That time may cease and midnight never come!" (5.2.69). He follows this with an imperative, "Fair nature's eye, rise, rise again..." and quotes Ovid for another, "*O lente, lente currite noctis equi!*" (5.2.70, 74). Failing to slow time, he shifts his focus downwards: "Mountains and hills, come, come and fall on me /... / Earth, gape!" (5.2.84, 88). Finally, he calls upon the stars, "Now draw up Faustus like a foggy mist" (5.2.89). Each of these pleas contains an explicit echo of earlier passages in which Faustus envisions what will be possible with necromancy. His "ever-moving spheres" recall his discussion of astronomy and his promise to make the "moon drop from her sphere" (1.3.39); his address to "mountains and hills" resembles his boast, "I'll join the hills that bind the Afric shore"; and we see Cornelius'

⁹⁴ Thomas and Tydeman make this observation in *Sources*, 184.

description of spirits who “fetch the treasure of all foreign wrecks— / Ay, all the wealth that our forefathers hid / Within the massy entrails of the earth” (1.1.149) mirrored in Faustus’ desire to have the mountains “hide [him] from the heavy wrath of God!” and to have the stars draw him “[i]nto the entrails of yon labouring cloud” (5.2.85.92). Of course, as midnight approaches, the physical universe ignores Faustus, and in a rhythmic series of brief phrases, he bitterly admits he is unable to influence the external world: “The stars move still; time runs; the clock will strike; / The devil will come, and Faustus must be damned” (5.2.75-6). It is vital that we see him directly calling to the elements as he would call to an animate being, the attendant silence emphasizing his complete and total isolation.

That Faustus’ despair derives from a profound loneliness instead of a mere loss of power may not be immediately clear until we consider his performance of these lines within the context of Renaissance theories of magic. Behind these unanswered pleas for help is the Neoplatonic understanding of magic as the physical world’s sympathetic response to human action. Patrick Cheney has pointed out that “[i]n the philosophical tradition leading into the Elizabethan age, which included Neoplatonism, magic tended to be ‘sympathetic magic.’”⁹⁵ Powerful magicians, according to this tradition, played upon the harmony that unites the physical universe, coaxing its elements to sympathize with human desires. There are traces of this philosophy in Valdes’ promise that “the subjects of every element” will be “serviceable” to the properly trained magician (1.1.124-5). Bevington and Rasmussen note that the B-text has “spirits” instead of “subjects,” which more clearly presents the image of sentient, personified creatures acting in sympathy with human beings. From this perspective, Faustus’ loss of power takes on more personal stakes, for these very elements which responded to him with a degree of kinship now refuse even to signal they have heard him. While motivated by selfish ends, Faustus had

⁹⁵ Cheney, “Love,” 95.

previously tapped into the sympathetic harmony that unites the universe; now, he stands outside it, utterly alone.

Even without this conceptual framework, however, the audience can intuit Faustus' extreme loneliness because Marlowe creates a metatheatrical overlap between the unresponsive physical elements and the audience watching Faustus on stage. As Faustus calls out, "Mountains and hills, come, come and fall on me," the actor playing him would almost inevitably gesture to the seated crowd above him; as he pleads with the earth to swallow him, those audience members standing level with the floorboards of the stage would watch silently. His call to the elements is not just a desperate attempt to forestall damnation but also a call to humanity. The fact that we, standing in for the spirits of "every element," do not answer him prompts us to feel Faustus' isolation in the most immediate sense. He prays for the sort of help that we, bound by theater's rules, cannot give him. Therefore, as he fantasizes about total physical dissolution, he does so not just to escape eternal torment but also to join the collective that will not admit him. He calls for the stars to draw him up "like a foggy mist" (5.2.91); he wishes he could be re-born an animal because "All beasts are happy, for, when they die, / Their souls are soon dissolved in elements" (5.2.110-11); and he prays, "O soul, be changed into little waterdrops, / And fall into the ocean, ne'er be found!" (5.2.118-20). Murakami writes that this imagery of dissolution speaks to Faustus' desire for the "cessation of coherent identity," but this is only half the story.⁹⁶ Faustus expresses a desire not just to disintegrate but, crucially, to *rejoin* a collective, to be absorbed by the ocean or dissolved *in* the elements.

Thus, with Marlowe's metatheatrical maneuvering, Faustus' monologue can also be experienced as the self-ostracized solipsist begging to be readmitted to the community of other minds. Those minds he has previously denigrated as common and servile now surround him and

⁹⁶ Murakami, *Moral Play*, 114

wall him up in total isolation. And at this carefully engineered moment, we see Faustus at his most human, his most *sympathetic* calling directly to us and pleading for sympathetic action on his behalf—action we are bound not to give. In this manner, Marlowe intuits what phenomenologists would later make explicit about the collective experience of theater-going. Sartre writes that it is in the instant when we recognize that we, with others, are absorbed in the theatrical experience that we feel most intensely what it is to be part of a collective:

The best example of the ‘we’ can be furnished us by the spectator at a theatrical performance whose consciousness is exhausted in apprehending the imaginary spectacle, in foreseeing the events through anticipatory schemes, in positing imaginary beings as the hero, the traitor, the captive, *etc.*, a spectator, who, however, in the very upsurge which makes him a consciousness *of* the spectacle is constituted non-thetically as consciousness (of) being a *co-spectator* of the spectacle.⁹⁷

A metatheatrical gesture, such as Faustus calling to the audience, provokes just such a recognition amongst the audience members, yet Marlowe goes further by using this effect to amplify Faustus’ isolation. At the moment we become conscious of ourselves as a community of “co-spectators,” we also come to understand Faustus as existing definitively outside the “we.” In other words, we grasp his estrangement most tangibly at the very instant he begs to belong. And because it is *our* community with which he pleads, we as co-spectators can experience on a personal level the extent of Faustus’ loss and the depth of his loneliness. For even though Faustus the fictional character is of a different order than the flesh-and-blood creatures that populate the theater, when he reaches out to us, our minds stir in sympathetic reply.

⁹⁷ Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness: A Phenomenological Essay on Ontology*, trans. Hazel E. Barnes (New York: Washington Square Press, 1992), 535.

Yet our sympathy runs up against our skepticism. What, exactly, are we sympathizing *with*? What pain does this stage-bound creature feel that we should pity him? Have we not, the play urges us to ask, fallen victim to the same illusion that Faustus has by assuming we have encountered a human mind like our own? Faustus, who believes he can comprehend the diabolic mind, has succumbed to Mephistopheles' manipulation, coming to see the devil as his friend and savior (his final words are "Ah, Mephistopheles!"). If we sigh in sympathy, "Ah, Faustus!", are we also victims of a sinister illusion? Over the course of the play, our mirror neurons have linked us with the actor on stage, creating an inevitable empathy, which Marlowe draws out with his words and the actor stokes with his craft, so by the play's conclusion we end up feeling pity for something that has never suffered and in fact does not even exist. That fact in itself is hardly revelatory, but in *Doctor Faustus* Marlowe has simultaneously fueled our skepticism and sympathy to engineer this crescendo of double-consciousness.

Thus, in the final act, we find ourselves like Faustus faced with his zombie Helen: intensely aware of the illusion yet utterly possessed by it. But it is also in this encounter that Marlowe draws out the radically different implications of Faustus' deception and that of the audience. When Faustus peers at Helen, he knows very well that she is not the real Helen but rather a spirit that can "lively resemble" the legendary beauty. He also knows he must rely on Mephistopheles to bring forth this spirit, and he can only trust that the devil is offering a faithful reproduction of Helen. Therefore, his question "Was this the face that launched a thousand ships / And burnt the topless towers of Ilium?" must express, at least in part, the scholar's extreme uncertainty, even as he uses the question more to assert his wonder than to interrogate Mephistopheles. Tellingly, Marlowe draws his inspiration for this passage from Lucian's

Dialogues of the Dead, where the question of Helen's identity is even less certain.⁹⁸ In the relevant passage in Lucian, while Hermes is giving the cynic Menippus a tour of the underworld, the latter asks his guide to point out the famous beauties of history. Hermes gestures to a pile of bones, and Menippus asks the god to point out Helen's remains, claiming "I can't pick her out myself." When Hermes shows Menippus her skull, the cynic snorts, "Was it then for this that the thousand ships were manned from all Greece, for this that so many Greeks and barbarians fell, and so many cities were devastated?"⁹⁹ As W. S. Heckscher argues, the point of this dialogue is to have the cynic scoff at beauty, sensuality, and all other transient things that Epicureans worship. And while Heckscher claims Marlowe "has entirely stripped the scene of its satirical elements," I believe Marlowe has preserved, even heightened, the skepticism of the original passage.¹⁰⁰ Not only does Marlowe's version mirror the speaker's inability to identify Helen, it also transforms Menippus' scoffing statement into a question, excising the cynic's arrogant certainty in favor of something much more tentative. Marlowe's famous paean to beauty, then, begins on an extremely uncertain note, with Faustus expressing not only doubt but perhaps a hopelessness in ever knowing the answer to his question.

A starker difference between Lucian's original and Marlowe's adaptation is also what marks Faustus' fatal mistake in succumbing to the illusion of another mind. In the Greek dialogue, Hermes is allowed to respond with care and feeling to his interlocutor's cynicism:

Ah, but you never saw the woman alive, Menippus, or you would have said yourself that it was forgivable that they, "for such a lady long should suffer woe."

⁹⁸ Neil Rhodes argues Marlowe probably read Lucian in Erasmus' Latin translation. See his "Marlowe and the Greeks," *Renaissance Studies* 27, no. 2 (2011): 199-218.

⁹⁹ All quotations from *Dialogues of the Dead* are from the Loeb edition of Lucian. "Dialogues of the Dead," in *Lucian in Eight Volumes*, trans. M. D. Macleod (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1969), 23.

¹⁰⁰ W. S. Heckscher, "'Was this the Face...?'" *Journal of the Warburg Institute* 1, no. 4 (1938): 296.

For if one sees flowers that are dried up and faded, they will, of course, appear ugly; but when they are in bloom and have their colour, they are very beautiful.¹⁰¹

Faustus, by contrast, waits for no reply. In truth, he does not expect to receive an answer. His figuration vacates this phantom Helen of whatever consciousness she may have, reducing her to mere visage, and he knows by now not to bother with Mephistopheles' assurance. It matters very little if this face in front of Faustus is *the* face, for Faustus' desire for Helen is merely instrumental. He asks Mephistopheles to conjure her "to glut the longing of [his] heart's desire" and to "extinguish clean" his fearful thoughts (5.1.83-88). Pre-figuring his desperate final soliloquy, he fantasizes that she will save him either by forestalling death ("make me immortal with a kiss") or harboring his hell-bound soul: "Her lips suck forth my soul. See where it flies!" (5.1.93-94).¹⁰² In Lucian, although Menippus is given the last word, there is room in the dialogue for both the Cynic and the Epicurean perspectives, but here there is only Faustus. Inserting himself into myth, he retells Helen's story but emphasizes his own agency, peppering the tale with the first-person pronoun and his "will":

Here will I dwell, for heaven be in these lips,
And all is dross that is not Helena.
I will be Paris, and for love of thee
Instead of Troy shall Wittenberg be sacked.
And I will combat with weak Menelaus,
And wear thy colours on my plumèd crest.
Yea, I will wound Achilles in the heel
And then return to Helen for a kiss. (5.1.96-103)

¹⁰¹ Lucian, "Dialogues," 23.

¹⁰² On the poetic image of exchanging souls with a kiss, see Bruce E. Brandt, "Marlowe's Helen and the Soul-in-the-Kiss Conceit," *Philological Quarterly* 64, no. 1 (Winter 1985): 118-120.

Ironically, while Menippus rolls his eyes at the wanton destruction inspired by a bit of flesh, Faustus not only tacitly approves of it but imagines repeating the death and chaos, all for his zombie Helena. In spite of his initial skepticism, the scholar abandons his doubt for self-serving fantasy, and, indeed, what else could he do at this point? He has tossed aside his fellow humans and effectively isolated himself from other minds. Facing him is a soulless empty vessel, conjured to fill with his desires, while looming behind him is a diabolic mind of incomprehensible hostility.

Therefore, when we say that Faustus has succumbed to the illusion of a zombie mind, we must go further and acknowledge that he has not confronted his skepticism about this other mind so much as shut his eyes to it. In accepting this zombie Helen as *the* Helen, he has not achieved anything close to sympathy; rather, his indifference merely props up his own solipsistic perspective. Phenomenologists have described this stance as a “relative solipsism,” one that accepts the possibility of other minds yet only within the scope of one’s own subjective reality.¹⁰³ In a relevant passage from *Being and Nothingness*, Sartre describes the mindset of the relative solipsist in regard to other minds:

[O]thers are those forms which pass by in the street, those magic objects which are capable of acting at a distance and upon which I can act by means of determined conduct. I scarcely notice them; I act as if I were alone in the world. I brush against ‘people’ as I brush against a wall; I avoid them as I avoid obstacles... Those ‘people’ are functions.¹⁰⁴

True sympathy, much less love, is impossible for the solipsist. Of course, no one would claim Faustus experiences true love for this ghostly reproduction of mythological beauty, but we have

¹⁰³ The term comes from Max Scheler, *The Nature of Sympathy*, trans. Peter Heath (Hamden CT: The Shoe String Press Inc. 1973), 59.

¹⁰⁴ Sartre, *Being*, 495.

seen the depth of his loneliness, and so we can better appreciate how Faustus, in his misguided attempt at love, drags himself only deeper into isolation. As Sartre notes, the person who seeks true love “is not bent on becoming the object of passion which flows forth mechanically. He does not want to possess an automaton...if the beloved is transformed into an automaton, the lover finds himself alone.”¹⁰⁵ Thus, Faustus answers the problem of other minds with a shrug, yet in doing so he banishes himself to a state of solipsistic despair.

There are suggestions in Faustus’ monologue that he recognizes at some level that he himself is his only obstacle to true sympathy and fellow feeling. As with his final soliloquy, he envisions not just his own death but total dissolution of self, his body and soul exploding into their foundational elements to re-join the multifarious world. He concludes his address to Helen with two Ovidian allusions (5.1.106-9), the first comparing himself to Semele who burst into flames in the presence of an undisguised Jupiter, and the second figuring himself as the river nymph Arethusa whose dissolution is dramatically described by Ovid in the first person: “In thin thick-falling drops my strength decreast. / Where-ere I step, streames run; my haire now fell / In trickling deaw; and sooner than I tell / My destinie, into a Flood I grew.”¹⁰⁶ Again, these allusions speak to a loneliness that can only be cured by dissolution, for Faustus can envision no other way to rejoin the community he has shunned except by disintegrating his self, which has become both his prison and his only window to the world.

But once again we may have found ourselves pitying the poor doctor. In doing so, have we made a mistake? Genevieve Guenther believes so. Or, rather, she claims that pity for Faustus is a mere aesthetic illusion that Marlowe has conjured for a greater moral purpose: “[I]n *Doctor Faustus*, pity has no salutary ethical or moral value; on the contrary, the play explicitly contrasts

¹⁰⁵ Sartre, *Being*, 478.

¹⁰⁶ *Ovid's Metamorphosis Englished by G.S.*, trans. George Sandys (London: Printed by Robert Young, 1628), 142, Early English Books Online.

the quality of human pity to that of divine mercy, thereby fashioning pity for Faustus as an aesthetic response that undermines the spectator's faith in God."¹⁰⁷ Pity for this fictional character, a shadowy figure without mind or consciousness, is certainly an illusion. Marlowe has drawn upon the thought experiments of philosophy and the wild imaginings of demonology to warn his audience that the minds of others might be solely in our heads. What seems human may be a mere automaton or in possession of an intelligence beyond comprehension. Therefore, when we regard Faustus, it is in the forefront of our minds that this figure onstage is not entirely what it claims to be. Yet we, like Faustus, accept the deception. Then, like Faustus, do we doom ourselves? Do we succumb to our fallible human pity and plunge ourselves into solipsism, isolation, and damnation?

Guenther is right to point out that *Doctor Faustus* draws some of its unease from the ways in which human sympathy leaves us vulnerable to deception and, therefore, damnation. Yet she is too quick, I think, in her handling of sympathy, and she fails to consider the complex, multi-faceted set of processes that fall under this broad concept. As we have seen, phenomenologists and certain cognitive scientists have only just begun to theorize what Marlowe, the experienced manipulator of human sympathies, had intuited in the practice of his dramatic art. As someone who had repeatedly conjured illusory minds, Marlowe could not deny that in the theater, we all fall victim to deception, that we attribute consciousness to mere shadows and give minds to zombies. *Doctor Faustus* demonstrates, however, that this illusion draws us to a greater truth. Phenomenologist Max Scheler explains that sympathy in fact "*frees us...from an illusion*; an illusion which is always to be found embodied in the naïve view of the world and manner of ordering it." This illusion is solipsism: "the illusion of taking one's own environment to be the world itself, i.e. the seeming givenness of this environment as 'the'

¹⁰⁷ Guenther, "Devils," 66.

world.”¹⁰⁸ And it is only overcome by a true sympathetic response to another mind, a pang of empathy that reveals the outlines of a world outside our individual subjectivity. Our solipsism, Scheler claims, is only “overcome in the *change of heart* displayed in a thorough-going sympathetic insight—a *change in the innermost nature of physical reality itself*; it is by no means a mere change in the contents of consciousness, for these simply reflect and exhibit it.”¹⁰⁹ It is not enough, in other words, to reason our way past the problem of other minds, nor is it sufficient to follow Faustus and forge ahead, leaving the question (“Was this the face...?”) unanswered. The “sympathetic insight” Scheler describes re-frames the world, giving us a glimpse of reality beyond the window of the self. Faustus, “the man that in his study sits,” craves a glimpse of this ultimate reality, but the doomed scholar can only seek it in and through his own perspective. For Faustus, reality can only go as far “as doth the mind of man.” In his quest for the universe, Faustus decides to expand this dominion instead of seeking a path beyond.

Whether Faustus is a hopeless reprobate, a victim of a tragic flaw, or damned by his own decisions is a question that Marlowe lets drift in the play’s interpretive space. It is worth considering, however, the phenomenologists’ view that we are born attuned to find consciousness everywhere, that we see anything and everything as expressive, and only through a process of enculturation—of education—do we tame and dampen this way of seeing. Scheler, for one, believes our skepticism regarding other minds is the sort of curse that can only be learned. For this reason, he considers learning a question of ‘de-souling’ (*Entseelung*) rather than of ‘ensouling’ (*Beseelung*).¹¹⁰ In the excessively erudite Faustus, perhaps Marlowe saw the

¹⁰⁸ Scheler, *Sympathy*, 58, my emphasis.

¹⁰⁹ Scheler, *Sympathy*, 59, emphasis in the original.

¹¹⁰ Zahavi, *Self and Other*, 122.

harbinger of an intellect that could think itself into a vat of solipsistic damnation.¹¹¹ If Marlowe had neither the precise philosophical formulation nor the logical refutation for the imminent problem of other minds, he seems to have sensed from the era's skeptical discourses its alarming implications. Fortunately, the form of Faustus' fortunes offered him a vehicle by which to confront this problem. In the tragedy of *Doctor Faustus*, Marlowe exploits skepticism's unsettling allure while answering it with the automatic and powerful performance of human sympathy. If, in the theater, we come to sympathize with mindless zombies, then we simply succumb to an illusion that can free us from *the* illusion. Solipsism, the learned curse that blinds us to others, causes Faustus to forget the simple truth that the phenomenology of sympathy reveals: that "the *essential* character of human consciousness is such that the community is in some sense implicit in every individual, and that man is not only part of society, but that society and the social bond are an essential part of himself."¹¹² When we regard Faustus' "hellish fall," Marlowe offers us a chance for just this sympathetic insight, for when Faustus' final moments tick away and the desperate scholar chokes on his final, anguished cry, we in the audience shudder in sympathy—and the problem of other minds, in an instant, dissolves.

¹¹¹ The famous brain-in-a-vat scenario is, like the philosophical zombie, one of the vivid thought experiments inspired by Cartesian skepticism. For an extensive refutation of the brain-in-the-vat hypothesis, see Hilary Putnam, *Reason, Truth, and History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), esp. 1–21.

¹¹² Scheler, *Sympathy*, 229–30.

Chapter 3: Looking Before and After: *Hamlet* and the Consciousness of Time

Hamlet's ghost has been spotted again.¹ It is important that we say "again" not only because the spirit of the slain king has been "twice seen" before he first appears, and so he appears always to be in the process of re-appearing (1.1.24), but we also say "again" to acknowledge, almost ritualistically, that with *Hamlet* we must always return to a familiar problem.² But if the sight is recognizable, the seeing might signal something peculiar. Horatio, the scholar, recognizes the ghost but theorizes its appearance has less to do with the personal history of the man it resembles than with an imminent "eruption" in Denmark. The apparition prompts a diagnosis of the state, an attempt to understand what the sight might say about the times: Why now? So, too, we might ask why the specter of Old Hamlet—though never exactly absent from critical attention—has returned to trouble the eyes of scholars in the present. Stephen Greenblatt, in his *Hamlet in Purgatory*, gives voice to the problem without exactly articulating it. He testifies to the *power* of the ghost, calling it "amazingly disturbing and vivid," and he claims that he will devote a heightened attention to this power, allowing "the feeling of this vividness to wash over [him]."³ It becomes clear, however, that this shift in focus speaks to a broader concern about the critic's relation to the text itself. He writes, "It seems a bit absurd to bear witness to the intensity of *Hamlet*; but my profession has become so oddly diffident and even phobic about literary power, so suspicious and tense...."⁴ While Greenblatt has rarely ignored literary power, he nevertheless must (without naming names) acknowledge that New Historicism, his own progeny, has neglected it. He thus joins a chorus of critics who have leveled

¹ Portions of this chapter appear in my essay "Hamlet and Time-Consciousness: A Neurophenomenological Reading," in *Shakespeare and Consciousness*, eds. Paul Budra and Clifford Werier (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 215-245.

² All quotations from the play are taken from *Hamlet*, eds. Ann Thompson and Neil Taylor (London: Arden Shakespeare, 2006), with act, scene, and line numbers given parenthetically in the text. This edition is based on the 1604-5 Second Quarto. I will mention any significant textual variations in the footnotes.

³ Stephen Greenblatt, *Hamlet in Purgatory* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 4.

⁴ Greenblatt, *Hamlet*, 4.

this same charge against New Historicism.⁵ Unlike these critics, however, Greenblatt sees no necessary reason why the “intensity” of literature should be tabled from critical discussions. After all, he has long maintained a desire to “speak with the dead,”⁶ so this new avowal of the ghost’s power would seem to have been a part of the New Historicist project from the very beginning. The ghost returns to remind us.

Nevertheless, there are distinct differences between this more recent testament to the ghost’s “vividness” and Greenblatt’s now-institutionalized goal to “speak with the dead.” In *Hamlet*, too, we see distinct modes of encountering the ghost. On the one hand, we have Horatio, the scholar, interrogating the specter with standard demands: “If thou art privy to thy country’s fate / Which happily foreknowing may avoid, / O, speak.” (1.1.132-4). On the other, there is the hypothetical auditor of the ghost’s “eternal blazon,” the lightest word of which harrows up the soul, freezes the blood, and causes the eyes to start from their sockets (1.5.13-20). Predictably, Greenblatt follows Horatio, delving into the historically mediated procedures for speaking *with* the dead. But what would it mean to turn an ear to the ghost and allow it to “unfold” its tale? The division between these modes is not simply a matter of passivity; rather, it suggests radically different temporal relations. Speaking with the dead, as Horatio attempts to do, acknowledges the temporal divide between self and other, yet it also situates and instrumentalizes the encounter in respect to the present moment. To hear the eternal blazon, however, is to *interrupt* the temporality of the self. It is to experience an impossible simultaneity, an eruption of eternity into the present. The ghost’s description, alternating between verbs of movement and stasis (“harrow...freeze...start...stand”), emphasizes the paradoxical temporality of this encounter.

⁵ See, for example, Paul B. Armstrong, “In Defense of Reading: Or, Why Reading Still Matters in a Contextualist Age,” *New Literary History* 42, no. 1 (Winter 2011): 87; and Mark Womack, “Undelivered Meanings: The Aesthetics of Shakespearean Wordplay,” in *Renaissance Literature and Its Formal Engagements*, ed. Mark David Rasmussen (New York: Palgrave, 2002), 142.

⁶ Stephen Greenblatt, *Shakespearean Negotiations* (Berkeley: University of California Press 1988), 1.

The spirit's reappearance on the critical landscape therefore suggests something rather more disturbing than a gentle professional reminder of the literariness of literature—an implication Greenblatt intuitively yet leaves unexamined.

If, like Horatio, we were to cast around in the current state of affairs for events that might explain this spectral disturbance, we might light upon the rise of historicism's most vocal adversary: presentism.⁷ The champions of presentism, Terence Hawkes and Hugh Grady, would encourage this diagnosis. In *Presentist Shakespeares*, they link their approach to the ghost by referring to presentism as a "specter," and claim half-jokingly that the very name of presentism "harrow[s] us with fear and wonder."⁸ Without a doubt, presentism confronts us with a rebellious spirit. Reversing the dominant trend of reading early modern texts historically, presentists demand these texts be considered primarily in the context of our current socio-cultural moment.⁹ What this means in practice differs from critic to critic: some employ Shakespearean texts for modern political critique while others read the texts against the background of twentieth and twenty-first century affairs, including modern productions, popular culture, and terrorism.¹⁰ Yet these scholars are united in their opposition to any approach that would seek to recover a historical moment by bracketing the beliefs, modes of thought, and prejudices of the present. The present, they argue, inevitably and irredeemably colors one's approach to the past, so a methodology that denies or ignores this fact cannot even get off the ground. Historicism, therefore, ends up blind to its own biases and ill-equipped to discuss literary meaning, historical or otherwise. Grady and Hawkes claim that by "reading resolutely backwards," new historicists

⁷ I will use the term "historicism" as a general term for various approaches that take the literary work's historical origin as a focal point for analysis. In doing so, I do not intend to deny the differences between new historicism, cultural materialism, new new historicism, new materialism, etc. Clearly, however, a good umbrella term is needed to keep things tidy.

⁸ Hugh Grady and Terence Hawkes, eds., *Presentist Shakespeares* (London: Routledge, 2007), 2.

⁹ See Hugh Grady, *Shakespeare's Universal Wolf: Studies in Early Modern Reification* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996); Terence Hawkes, *Shakespeare in the Present* (London: Routledge, 2002).

¹⁰ For a sample of this range, see the essays in Grady and Hawkes, eds., *Presentist Shakespeares*.

“can’t afford to examine the position in the present from which that manoeuvre is taken. As a result, they discount the nature of the choosing and the omission, the selections and suppressions which determine it.”¹¹ The only option, according to presentists, is to dwell in the present.

Presentists want to shock us with their iconoclastic spirit, but it is difficult to escape the feeling that one has heard these arguments before—even from historicists themselves.¹² Indeed, historicists have hardly been blind to the issue of how present concerns shape the questions we ask of the past. One might go so far as to say the “new” of “New Historicism” signaled a more explicitly dialogic relationship between historical discourses and modern ones. Claiming, as the presentists do, that historicist criticism “ignores” or even “represses” modern concerns simply misdiagnoses the scholarship.¹³ Aside from these rather stale arguments, then, presentism appears less a harrowing disturbance to historicism than its mirror image, for in stressing the inescapability of the present’s concerns and the need to consider literature in modern contexts, presentism betrays the same radically contextualist, culturally relativist underpinnings that drive the more extreme versions of historicist criticism. Both camps share the notion that discourses are historically determined, and presentism merely shifts the weight of this idea from early modern texts to critical ones. In this sense, as Ewan Fernie notes, “historicism and presentism are oddly at one.”¹⁴ Presentism undoubtedly expresses a desire to interrupt the current state of affairs,¹⁵ but in its insistence on the unassailable distance between the present and past and in its

¹¹ Grady and Hawkes, eds., *Presentist Shakespeares*, 2.

¹² Robin Headlam Wells makes this point in “Historicism and ‘presentism’ in Early Modern Studies,” *The Cambridge Quarterly* 29, no. 1 (2000): 46.

¹³ Ewan Fernie presses this psychoanalytic reading of historicism, claiming, “As what must be excluded from critical awareness in order to sustain historical contact, the present may be considered the unconscious which new historicism occasionally appeases and betrays.” See his “Shakespeare and the Prospect of Presentism,” *Shakespeare Survey* (2005): 174

¹⁴ Fernie, “Prospect,” 173.

¹⁵ Professional, rather than philosophical, concerns weigh more heavily in presentist tracts than their writers seem willing to admit. These concerns involve not only what sort of work is expected to be done in “serious” literary

instrumentalizing mode of putting literature to work for present concerns, presentism can but offer a few new topics for a conversation with the dead.

If, to borrow the presentists' rhetoric, historicism ignores or represses the present, presentism adopts a similar attitude toward the past. But the ghost's strange temporality anticipates and unsettles both positions by bringing the past and present together in an impossible simultaneity. At best, we might say that presentism signals a growing awareness of historicism's inability to account for this deviant temporality, even if it ultimately fails to offer a true alternative. Yet in the wake of presentism we see a few tentative steps in a new direction. Hugh Grady argues for a privileged status of the "aesthetic now," insisting that aesthetic objects surpass "linear, cognitive rationality."¹⁶ And Ewan Fernie believes scholars must consider a "more complex relation between time and text" than is offered by either historicism or presentism. Outside of these presentist debates, Jonathan Gil Harris has adapted the concepts of "polytemporality" and "multitemporality" from Bruno Latour and Michel Serres (respectively) to argue that objects "exhibit a temporality that is not one" (24). What unites these scholars is a refusal to anchor literature to a set time period—either the moment of its origin or the moment of its reception—and instead to try to account for what Laurent Dubreuil calls "the violent distortion that literature imposes on time."¹⁷ Such an approach would inevitably fail to find sure footing in either the past or the present, yet it is only from this unsettled position that we can encounter literature's unruly temporality.

Therefore, with the ghost stalking the critical landscape, the time invites a new approach to the literary object. At the same time, to recognize the ghost's reappearance *as* a reappearance

scholarship but also the fear that literary studies could historicize itself into irrelevance. This latter concern is voiced by Stanley Fish in his article "Why Milton Matters; or, Against Historicism," *Milton Studies* 44 (2005): 1-12.

¹⁶ Hugh Grady, "Hamlet and the Present: Notes of the Moving Aesthetic 'Now,'" in *Presentist Shakespeares*, 142.

¹⁷ Laurent Dubreuil, "What is Literature Now?" *New Literary History* 38, no. 1 (Winter 2007): 55.

is to recognize the issues that confront us now emanate from a time that is not our own. It is, in other words, to acknowledge that these problems are provoked and therefore in some way *anticipated* by *Hamlet* itself. Indeed, these questions about time have gravitated toward the play not only because of the ghost's untimeliness but also because the play has continually flaunted its unsettled (and unsettling) relationship to time. And I use both "unsettled" and "unsettling" with some care here, for I wish to argue that the two customary ways of understanding *Hamlet*'s temporality—its thematic engagement with time and its disruptive effect on the audience's experience of time—work together in such a way that each one necessarily functions in reference to the other, or, to put it in temporal terms, each one is anticipated by the other. What follows from this is that although these two ways of thinking about *Hamlet*'s temporality are indeed distinct, neither can be fully understood in isolation. As we have seen, the interweaving of content and effect is not unique to Shakespeare's play, but I hope to show that this entanglement takes on a unique quality in *Hamlet* for two reasons. First, the play not only offers an example of this entanglement but is organized around the temporal paradox inherent in that very condition. Thus, my reading follows the tradition of characterizing the play as exceptionally "self-aware," but I also contend that the play achieves this quality due to a heightened awareness of the self. By focusing on the phenomenological character of time as opposed to, for example, time as a physical law or time as history, the play reveals the self to be the very condition for temporal experience. *Hamlet*, therefore, unsettles by targeting its audience's experience of time, and the play is unsettled in its anticipation and exploitation of the very effect it provokes.

This understanding of time requires the scholar to speak with the ghost but also to listen and to allow the spectral interlocutor to unsettle comfortable distinctions between now and then, past and present, the quick and the dead. In practical terms, our approach requires both an

attention to the play's engagement with historical discourse and an attention to its present-day effects. In what follows, I will investigate the historicist notion that the play is primarily concerned with the past as evidenced by the thematic emphasis on memory. In particular, historical phenomenology has insisted upon the *embodied* nature of memory, which, I suggest has caused scholars to overemphasize a materialist, Aristotelian theory of memory at the expense of the Platonic tradition which presents a more complex relationship between memory, the body, the self, and the larger world. I then turn to the present by reviewing the neurophenomenological studies of time and showing how *Hamlet* exploits the strange qualities of the phenomenological "now." Drawing from Edmund Husserl's lectures on time-consciousness as well as recent cognitive science theories, I argue that the play exploits the phenomenological structure of the present moment to instill in its audience a kind of double-vision. Finally, I contend these two engagements with time present a conception of the self that is markedly different from that championed by historical phenomenologists and historicists more generally. *Hamlet's* double-vision, I argue, reveals the self as an on-going yet illusory phenomenological consistency for which personal memory is only ornament. The self is always a product of the present while the past is enlisted in strengthening the illusion of self. While this presentist self is in some ways predetermined and inescapable, *Hamlet* enacts a pulling apart of this self-constituting present moment both in its characters and for the audience via its flickering metatheatrical shifts in perspective.

By committing to this deviant temporality, we necessarily run the risk of losing our way. But although the move may provoke discomfort, it is a move the play asks us to make. If we are tempted toward the flood or the dreadful summit which threatens the sovereignty of reason, the time invites us to take this risk. The ghost's reappearance on the critical landscape demands a re-

thinking of our thinking about literature's time. If the previous decades have seen scholars speak to the ghost, it is now time, like Hamlet, to follow it.

Theories of Memory in Early Modern Thought

Although historicism in one form or another has reigned in early modern studies for decades, it has been curiously reticent about *Hamlet*, to the point where Margreta de Grazia can, in 2001, bemoan the dominance of “presentist approaches” to the play.¹⁸ Even more recently, de Grazia has offered a thorough historicist reading, *Hamlet without Hamlet*, intended to counter the long tradition of attributing to Hamlet something akin to “modern” consciousness. In a striking, if rather blunt, move, de Grazia and others who wish to push back against the tendency to praise *Hamlet* for being ahead of its time insist that it is a play concerned primarily with the past, not the present. Far from being modern, Shakespeare's work, writes de Grazia, is “behind the times” and “old on arrival.”¹⁹ It is not surprising, therefore, that when de Grazia urges us to abandon presentist readings and scour the play for “givens of the past,” she includes in her examples of these givens “embodied memory.”²⁰

If, the argument seems to go, the play engages with the past, and particularly the cultural history of the early modern period, we would expect to find an emphasis on early modern notions about how individuals engage with the past via memory. This argument finds plenty of support in *Hamlet*, which contains more instances of the word “memory” and its related words (“remember,” “remembrance,” etc.) than any of Shakespeare's other works, including the

¹⁸ Margreta de Grazia, “*Hamlet Before Its Time*,” *Modern Language Quarterly* 62, no. 4 (2001): 375.

¹⁹ Margreta de Grazia, *Hamlet Without Hamlet* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 7, 8.

²⁰ de Grazia, “Time,” 375.

sonnets.²¹ Hamlet himself has a complicated relationship with memory, beginning the play by cursing its dogged persistence: “Must I remember?” (1.2.143), yet he also laments the weakness of his memory in his failure to seek revenge on his father’s behalf. Perhaps the most succinct example of the play’s complex relationship between memory, history, and culture is the ghost’s famous command “remember me” (1.5.91), which, as it speaks to Hamlet’s personal memory, would also have recalled, in the collective memory of the early modern audience, the earlier *Ur-Hamlet*. Thomas Lodge’s off-hand reference to the prior version, presumably not authored by Shakespeare, suggests the command “Hamlet, revenge” was the one commonly associated with the story of the Danish prince—a line never uttered in Shakespeare’s play.²² By dramatically altering what seems to have amounted to the ghost’s catchphrase, Shakespeare would have sparked the memories of his audience who might, like Hamlet, have thought “Nay, that follows not” (2.2.349), and so, in a single utterance, the ghost conjures the audience’s memory of the earlier play while signaling the new play’s shift in emphasis from revenge to remembrance.

Shakespeare, with his typically expansive scope, not only uses and re-uses terms for memory, but he also gathers in the terms’ metaphoric branches and so explores their shifts in meaning in various contexts. Unsurprisingly, critical attention to memory in the play has been persistent and extensive in tracing this metaphorical range.²³ Here, without denying the concept’s

²¹ John Lee makes this point in *Shakespeare’s Hamlet and the Controversies of Self* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000), 200.

²² “...he walks for the most part in black under colour of gravity, & looks as pale as the Visard of y ghost which cried so miserally at y Theator, like another wife, Hamlet, revenge...” Thomas Lodge, *Vvits Miserie, and the Vvorlds Madnesse: Discovering the Devils Incarnat of This Age* (London: Printed by Adam Islip, 1596), 56, Early English Books Online.

²³ One must be selective to prevent the footnotes from devouring the page, but in addition to the aforementioned *Hamlet in Purgatory* by Greenblatt, see Anthony Low, “Hamlet and the Ghost of Purgatory,” *English Literary Renaissance* 29 (1999): 443-467; Gail Kern Paster, *Humoring the Body: Emotions and the Shakespearean Stage* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 25-76; and Garrett A. Sullivan, Jr., *Memory and Forgetting in English Renaissance Drama* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 25-43; Rhodri Lewis, “Hamlet, Metaphor, and Memory,” *Studies in Philology* 109, no. 5 (2012): 609-641; Peter Stallybrass et al., “Hamlet’s Tables and the Technologies of Writing in Renaissance England,” *Shakespeare Quarterly* 55, no. 4 (Winter 2004): 379-419; and Andrew Wallace, “‘What’s Hecuba to Him?’: Pain, Privacy, and the Ancient Text,” in *Ars Reminiscendi*:

expansiveness, I must be more restrictive in my analysis and limit the investigation of memory to the historically situated notion of memory as an individual psychological phenomenon. I do so not only for the sake of expediency but also to situate my analysis alongside the recent historicist focus on “embodied memory.” Yet even with this focus we must be cautious, for memory has proven to be a deceptive idea. On the one hand, as Kurt Danziger notes, unlike most modern psychological terms, memory has a “truly ancient lineage.”²⁴ Despite the shifting theories over the centuries, it seems that if ever there were a candidate for a biologically determined psychological constant, memory would be it. After all, we all possess a strong, albeit intuitive, sense of what memory is. Yet, as I hope to demonstrate, this sense quickly dissipates upon investigation, so that, even with relatively strict conceptual and historical constraints, we find that for thinkers both ancient and modern, memory is at once a source of stability and perplexity. This is particularly true for early modern theorists of memory who, taken with the spirit of intellectual syncretism, blended concepts, frameworks, and beliefs from diverse and often contradictory philosophies. Recent critical approaches, however, have often failed to display either the necessary precision when delineating the concept of memory or the appropriate flexibility in characterizing the period’s thought. This is not to say that such work has painted a false picture of memory, only an incomplete one. A brief survey of this work will reveal the particular aspects of memorial discourse that are being favored by critics at the moment, and it will offer a useful springboard to a discussion of how *Hamlet* draws on the period’s conflicting, messy, and frequently thrilling ideas about memory.

Before that, however, I wish to offer a textual touchstone from *Hamlet* by which various approaches to memory may be tested. In the opening of Act Two, Polonius, indulging in a bit of

Mind and Memory in Renaissance Culture, eds. Donald Beecher and Grant Williams (Toronto: Center for Reformation and Renaissance Studies, 2009): 231-243.

²⁴ Kurt Danziger, *Marking the Mind: A History of Memory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 14.

paternal meddling, conveys instructions to his servant Reynaldo about how to sound Laertes' reputation abroad. Then, for no apparent reason, he forgets what he was going to say:

POLONIUS: And then, sir, does 'a this, 'a does—

What was I about to say? By the mass, I was about to say something!

Where did I leave?

REYNALDO: At 'closes in the consequence'.

POLONIUS: At 'closes in the consequence', ay, marry.

He closes thus....

(2.1.48-54)

The moment, which appears in Q1, Q2, and the Folio, seems at once to demand analysis and deny it.²⁵ Occurring immediately after Hamlet's confrontation with the Ghost, trailing in the wake of the dead King's command "remember me" (1.5.91) and Hamlet's frantic promise that he will retain his father's words "whiles memory holds a seat / In this distracted globe" (1.5.96-7), Polonius' lapse must appear charged with significance. And yet when we look at the passage itself, we find very little of import: a momentary disruption of the meter, a jangling repetition, and a quick return to business as usual. It all passes too quickly for a sustained analysis, but still it provokes us with its implausible insignificance. Despite appearing in a play championed for "inventing the human" through its hero's complex interiority, Polonius' intensely human moment of inconsequential fallibility seems to endow him with a sort of hyperrealism, albeit one that disappears as quickly as it arose.²⁶ I ask the reader to hold this scene in his or her memory as we survey the scholarly discourse. We will return to Polonius later in the chapter in order to evaluate how well various theories of memory can account for such a curious moment.

²⁵ Q1 has "What was I about to say?" instead of "Where did I leave?"

²⁶ Harold Bloom, *Shakespeare: The Invention of the Human* (New York: Riverhead Books, 1998). Bloom's bombastic title makes it an easy target, but of course his work follows in a long tradition of trumpeting Hamlet's modern consciousness. For a brief survey of this type of criticism, see de Grazia, *Hamlet without Hamlet*, 7-22.

Modern scholars have tended to emphasize two aspects of memory: its physicality and its status as a conscious, willed activity. Whether focusing on *ars memoriae* treatises, medical tracts, or philosophical works, scholars argue for a notion of memory as a physical process that takes place entirely in the body, with its own anatomical location and mechanisms of cause and effect. Garret Sullivan, for example, writes, “[M]emory should be thought of as a fully embodied process that presupposes involvement with the environment.”²⁷ Rhodri Lewis argues memory was to be considered a “bodily organ.”²⁸ And Lina Perkins Wilder, while arguing that the *ars memoriae* sought to impose an un-bodily discipline on memory, contends that “natural memory” derived its unruly character from the body’s materiality. Wilder’s thesis reveals the other focal point of these approaches, which is memory as a willed activity. In these formulations, subjects engage with their memory by actively searching for something; remembering is an intentional and willful behavior whose success depends on the physical characteristics of the remembering subject.²⁹ As a working definition of memory that can be shared across these critical approaches, we could say that it is a physical process of willfully and consciously retrieving information about past experiences that have been stored in the physical medium of the body.³⁰

What this amounts to is a broadly Aristotelian theory of memory, one that leans on the philosopher’s notion of “recollection.” Although Aristotle is largely silent on the specific physiology of memory in his *De memoria et reminiscencia*, he is unequivocal in his argument that memory is a physical process. When a living thing perceives something, it undergoes a

²⁷ Sullivan, *Memory*, 7.

²⁸ Lewis, “Hamlet, Memory, Metaphor,” 617.

²⁹ In practice, critics do not eschew instances of *unwilled* memory in literary texts, but these are usually framed as malfunctions of the physical process. See, for example, Lina P. Wilder, *Shakespeare's Memory Theatre: Recollection, Properties, and Character* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 46-7.

³⁰ Mary Carruthers criticizes modern scholars for only thinking about memory in its “reiterative, reduplicative role.” See her *The Book of Memory: A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 68.

physical change, traces of which remain after the object is no longer perceived, and which can be called up again by the memory. Aristotle further stresses the materialism of this theory through his use of vivid physical metaphors: “For the change that occurs marks in a sort of imprint, as it were, of the sense-image, as people who seal things with signet rings.”³¹ This explains, he argues, why the very young and the very old have poor memories, because both are “subject to a lot of movement” (450a32), so that in the case of children, who are subject to too much change, it is as though “the seal were falling on running water” (450a32). Yet the Stagirite is much more detailed in his physiology when the conversation turns to recollection: “recollection is a search in something bodily.” Here, Aristotle occasionally delves into biology, explaining:

It upsets some people when they are unable to recollect in spite of applying their thought hard....The people who get upset most are those who happen to have fluid around the perceptive region. For once moved, the fluid is not easily stopped until what is sought returns and the movement takes a straight course. (453a14)

Recollection, he explains, differs from remembering in that recollection is an active, deliberate search of one’s memory for something that is not currently available. For example, if I see someone on the street and immediately remember him from high school, then I am remembering. If, however, I am trying to think of the name of the person who sat next to me in Biology class, and I decide to call up an image of the classroom, then an image of the person sitting next to me, then I recall the teacher calling on that person to answer a question, and so I hit upon the person’s name: this is recollection. It involves tracing associated images in pursuit of a required end. Because recollection requires an active search and so judgment (I must first decide on the best “starting place” for my search), only humans are capable of recollection, while both animals

³¹*de Memoria et Reminiscentia*, 450a25. All quotes from Aristotle’s *de Memoria* are from Richard Sorabji’s translation in his, *Aristotle on Memory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006). Future quotes will be cited with in-text parentheticals.

and humans have memory (453a4). Recollection thus requires the capacity for memory, but it should be thought of as a particular form of embodied cognition.

On one hand, critics' reliance on a broadly Aristotelian notion of memory fits the tenor of early modern English writing on psychology and physiology, which derives in large part from the works Aristotle, particularly *De anima* and *Parva naturalia*, and their commentators.³² Early modern memory discourse often reveals a similar debt. For example, Guglielmo Gratarolo's *The Castel of Memorie* (translated into English by William Fulwod in 1562) includes Aristotle's definition of memory as "an imagination, that remaineth of such thinges as the sense had conceyued" and approvingly cites the philosopher's notion that the physical make-up of the subject affects his or her ability to retain impressions for memory:

They that haue greate Moystenenes of the brayne, are verye desyrus of muche sleepe, whose mouthes are full of spittle, and their Nostrells and eyes frequented with fleame: all their Motions are dulle. Suche kynde of people doe remember thinges present and lately done: but being done long agone, they doe either neuer, or with great paine remember them. For suche is the nature of moystenenes of the brayne that it easelye receyuethe what imprintings or infixions it listeth and with like easenes loseth them againe.³³

And the *ars memoriae* tradition, while primarily drawing on the Latin rhetorical treatises Cicero's *De oratore*, Quintilian's *Institutio oratoria*, and the anonymous *Ad C. Herennium libri IV*, found support in Aristotle's notion of recollection as a kind of deliberative searching of

³² Katharine Park and Eckhard Kessler, "The Concept of Psychology," in *The Cambridge History of Renaissance Philosophy*, eds. Charles B. Schmitt, Quentin Skinner, and Eckhard Kessler (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988: 455.

³³ Guglielmo Gratarolo and William Fulwood, *The Castel of Memorie* (London: Rouland Hall dwellynge in Gutter lane, at the signe of the half Egle & the Keye, 1562), Bvii.r, Early English Books Online.

associated images in one's memory.³⁴ As Frances Yates notes, the scholastics, perceiving Aristotle's familiarity with mnemonic systems, used *De memoria* as "philosophical and psychological justifications" for the rules of artificial memory.³⁵ The weight given to a broadly Aristotelian theory of memory in modern scholarship therefore finds plenty of support in early modern treatises emphasizing memory's bodily and deliberative characteristics.

On the other hand, this emphasis leads critics to a particular model of subjectivity that, while familiar to modern scholars, finds less support in the specific theories of memory under discussion and tends to eschew alternative yet highly influential theories that deal more directly with subjectivity and selfhood. By insisting upon the twin aspects of recollection—the unruly body and intentional performance of memory—critics set up a contentious dynamic between prescriptive socio-cultural influences on behavior and the chaotic biological flux. According to this way of thinking, the sloppy, frothy, flowing body threatens social order, which constantly attempts to limit and control this unpredictable object with strict directives for memory and memorial practices. The unchecked body therefore becomes associated with political subversion and memorial practices with oppressive, normative social discipline.³⁶ This broadly Foucauldian way of looking at things has of course a long history in Renaissance criticism, but this particular model has wriggled its way into Renaissance memory scholarship via the work of John Sutton, whose sweeping history of memory traces begins by opposing unruly animal spirits to early

³⁴ There is some question as to what extent Aristotle is interested in mnemonic systems in his *De memoria*. He mentions a place-system memory technique at 452a12-13 but does not discuss it at length. Sorabji, for one, believes place systems hold greater significance for Aristotle than is usually recognized. See his *Aristotle on Memory*, 22-34.

³⁵ Frances A. Yates, *The Art of Memory* (London: Ark Paperbacks, 1984), 32.

³⁶ Sullivan, for example, argues, "'Forgetting' is the sign under which are collected models of subjectivity and of embodiment unsanctioned by secular and ecclesiastical authorities." *Memory and Forgetting*, 43. And Wilder sets off "male bodily discipline" that has been trained in the *ars memoriae* with female "dilation." See Wilder, *Memory Theatre*, 8.

modern theories of memory.³⁷ Sutton's notion of "moral physiology," which he defines as "the disciplined mastery of the self and of the body by the self," not only provides a vivid and politically charged framework in which "Memory, like the body, had to be *forced* to submit to conscious control,"³⁸ but it also valorizes the historical phenomenological project by insisting that this bodily control was directly experienced by early modern subjects. Sutton proclaims, "Rhetoric about order and chaos in connection with the animal spirits is unlikely to be merely philosophical: it touched deeply the way body processes were experienced in banal or extreme conditions."³⁹ Therefore, in addition to reducing theories of memory to a dynamic of bodily subversion and social containment, these scholars contend that early modern individuals subjectively experienced this political tug-of-war in the act of remembering.

Although, as I explain above, I am skeptical about this smooth transition from concept to *quale*, I do not wish to deny the profound influence of a broadly Aristotelian notion of recollection on early modern theories of memory, nor am I attempting to refute the political implications of treatises that seek to regulate memorial performance. I contend, rather, that both these arguments tend to neglect important Platonic theories of memory, which held very different attitudes toward memory's relation to the body and the self. Indeed, the topic of memory can be seen as the fault line for early modern psychology, which found it difficult to study the mind without reference to the body *and* the soul. Psychology, as Katherine Park and Eckhard Kessler note, had to ascend to metaphysics or divine philosophy just as often as it dug into the flesh and fluids of biology.⁴⁰ Of all the faculties, memory stood out for its obvious physicality (preserving

³⁷ John Sutton, *Philosophy and Memory Traces: Descartes to Connectionism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 1998), 25-49.

³⁸ Sutton, *Traces*, 47, 43.

³⁹ Sutton, *Traces*, 43. Needless to say, Sutton is heavily cited by historical phenomenologists.

⁴⁰ Park and Kessler, "Psychology," 456.

the information of the sense organs) and for its seeming estrangement from the body (our eyes never see universals or abstractions, so how do we remember them?).

If the Aristotelian tradition concerned itself mainly with the physiological aspects of memory, Plato offered a provocative, if less systematic, understanding of the faculty and its relation to the soul. The most extensive and well-known demonstration of Platonic recollection (*anamnesis*) occurs in the dialogue *Meno*, where Socrates asks Meno's uneducated attendant a series of questions that lead the young boy to the solution of a fairly difficult geometrical problem. Socrates insists he has not provided the boy with the answer to the problem; rather, the philosopher has guided him to the recovery of what he has always possessed. Because the boy's soul is immortal and "has beheld all things both in this world and in the nether realms," the boy holds such knowledge within himself. Without teaching, the truth of geometrical principles has "been stirred up in him, like a dream."⁴¹ In later dialogues, Socrates further develops this notion of recollection to describe a process by which the soul comes to forget pre-natal knowledge yet re-acquires it, as it were, through the body's sense-perception:

But, I suppose, if we acquired knowledge before we were born and lost it at birth, but afterwards by the use of our senses regained the knowledge which we had previously possessed, would not the process which we call learning really be recovering knowledge which is our own? And should we be right in calling this recollection?⁴²

Here, recollection is not merely the process of retrieving an old sight or smell but a kind of ascent over and above the mass of sense impressions to something perfect and eternal. Memory

⁴¹ *Meno*, 85d. All citations of Plato are from the Loeb editions unless otherwise noted. *Laches, Protagoras, Meno, Euthydemus*, trans. Walter R. M. Lamb (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard Univ. Press, 2006).

⁴² *Phaedo*, 75e. *Euthyphro, Apology, Crito, Phaedo, Phaedrus*, trans. Harold North Fowler (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1914).

includes the autobiographical details of an individual's life, but it also presents a path beyond such limited terrain. In *Phaedrus*, this mystical potential of memory comes to the fore. The philosopher who communes with memory "separates himself from human interests and turns his attention towards the divine." Memory is both an appraisal of what one already possesses and a catalyst for transformation: "Now a man who employs such memories rightly is always being initiated into perfect mysteries and he alone becomes truly perfect."⁴³ An unexpected consequence of this theory is that memory is not solely directed towards the past. The recollecting subject can use memory to access knowledge that has no originary moment or duration; such objects of memory are not tied to an individual's lifetime yet they are in a sense more intimately bound up with the self than any autobiographical detail.

To modern ears, at least, this conception of memory sounds rather strange—certainly less familiar than Aristotle's unambiguously physiological theory and its attendant seal-in-wax metaphors. And so literary scholars have tended to give the notion short shrift, merely citing it as a philosophical oddity out of joint with early modern (and modern) predilection for embodied memory. This bias is not without some merit. Platonic memory *was* out of sync with much of the theorizing about memory at the time, yet this fact did not lead to its exclusion from early modern thought. Instead, writers tended to favor syncretic inclusiveness over systematic rigor, an attitude which facilitated creative combinations of philosophical systems even as it risked discordance if not total incoherence. The risks and rewards of this approach are perhaps nowhere more apparent than writing on memory, which had to balance the philosophical and the practical, the material and the spiritual, the body and the soul. Gregor Reisch's enormously popular work of natural philosophy the *Philosophical Pearl*, for example, attributes memory both to the sensitive soul and the intellectual soul, essentially positing two different kinds of memories:

⁴³ *Phaedrus*, 249d.

“[T]he intellectual memory is one thing, and the sensitive [memory] is another.” The latter retains sense impressions while the former holds universals that are not tied to any particular physical organ.⁴⁴ Similarly, Gratarolo’s *Castel of Memorie* (cited above) immediately follows Aristotle’s definition of memory with that of Plato: “Also by yt sentence of Plato, Memorie is a sense & a safetie (or safe reteining of things): for yt soule obtaineth by the office of the senses whatsoever things chaunce vnder the sense, and therefore it is the beginninge of an opinion. But by the mynde it selfe it considereth intellectuall thynges, & so is it become intelligence.”⁴⁵ Gratarolo thus follows Plato in distinguishing opinion from knowledge yet asserts that memory is involved in both. On the one hand, memory is a “safe reteining” of images of external objects brought in by the senses, which provides the particulars to form an opinion. On the other hand, memory has another operation, one that operates internally by “the mynde itself,” and which seems to have a transformative function, indicated by Gratarolo’s cryptic closer: “& so it is become intelligence.” Unfortunately, Gratarolo does not pursue this aspect of memory, nor does he attempt to reconcile it with the Aristotelian definition that precedes it, but its rather awkward inclusion speaks to the perceived importance of Plato’s theory and, perhaps, its controversial status in early modern thought.

Indeed, the Platonic concept of memory attracted fascination and derision in equal measure. Although it was often brought in as support in debates concerning personal immortality (one of the most pressing philosophical and theological issues of the time), it also entailed the pre-existence of the soul prior to its coupling with a body, an idea that was rejected

⁴⁴ Gregor Reisch, Andrew Cunningham, and Sachiko Kusukawa, *Natural Philosophy Epitomised: A Translation of Books 8-11 of Gregor Reisch's Philosophical Pearl (1503)* (Farnham, Surrey, England: Ashgate, 2010), 225.

⁴⁵ Gratarolo, *Castel*, Bi v.

by Christian orthodoxy.⁴⁶ Calvin, who often cites Plato with approval, laments that the philosopher felt compelled “erroniouslye to teache” that learning was “nothyng ells, but a calling to remembraunce.”⁴⁷ Calvin’s objection here seems to stem equally from pedagogical as theological concerns. Indeed, if Platonic recollection is taken in this bluntly literal fashion, it would seem to obviate not only formal education but also empirical observation. Francis Bacon detected this implication, and in his *Temporis partus masculus* he confronts Plato directly:

But you committed an unforgivable crime against Mankind when you falsely claimed that knowledge is innate in the human mind and does not enter from outside. By this theory you diverted Mankind from the habit of observation, from paying attention to external nature, which we can never sufficiently study and respect. Instead, you taught us to look inward and worship our own vague and invisible ideas, in the name of ‘contemplation.’⁴⁸

Bacon’s outburst suggests Platonic recollection was more than a philosophical oddity that the period’s writers could easily brush aside; rather, this philosophical tradition infused memory with vivid psychological and spiritual connotations, greatly expanding memory’s imaginative scope even as it carried it into controversy. Unlike Aristotle’s straightforward physiological theory, the Platonic tradition enlarged the boundaries of memory beyond the span of bodily life, connecting the subject with a realm of knowledge outside the successive march of mortal time. If this theory offered support to those who believed in the persistence of personality after death, it

⁴⁶ On the evolution of Aristotelianism as a response to these questions, see Emily Michael, “Renaissance Theories of Body, Soul, and Mind,” in *Psyche and Soma: Physicians and Metaphysicians on the Mind-Body Problem from Antiquity to Enlightenment*, eds. John P. Wright and Paul Potter (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000), 147-172.

⁴⁷ Jean Calvin, *The institution of Christian religion, vvyritten in Latine by maister Ihon Caluin, and translated into Englysh according to the authors last edition*, trans. Thomas Norton (London: Reinolde VVolfe & Richarde Harison, 1561), folio 4v, Early English Books Online.

⁴⁸ Quoted in Jayne Sears, *Plato in Renaissance England* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1995), 129.

also brought with it the implication of the soul's *pre*-existence and troublesome notions of metempsychosis and innate knowledge.⁴⁹

These matters were not helped by the fact that recollection is only discussed briefly in a few of Plato's dialogues, taking on a distinctly different character in each one. For those hostile to the idea, this allowed for simplistic interpretations and brusque dismissals. For the curious, it provoked a desire for further explanation, which they found in Plotinus' *Enneads*. Born more than five hundred years after Plato's death, Plotinus is today considered the founder of Neo-Platonism, but this characterization would have been unfamiliar to early moderns, who saw Plotinus as fitting snugly within the Platonic tradition.⁵⁰ Roger Baynes, for instance, calls him "a second prince of Philosophers unto Plato," which speaks both to Plotinus' close association with Platonic philosophy and his status in early modern thought.⁵¹ The theologian Thomas Jackson marvels at how well Plotinus' thought harmonizes with Christianity, so much so that Jackson wonders if Plotinus somehow had "acquaintance with Christian mysteries; howsoever he sought to forme them in Philosophicall mouldes, and set forth stollen fragments of the food of life with Platonicall sawce."⁵² Most importantly for our purposes, Plotinus offered a thorough discussion of memory, one which expanded upon the brief, suggestive comments in Plato's dialogues to knit the theory into a comprehensive philosophical tapestry. It was the *Enneads* where early moderns could find an elaborate and dynamic alternative to the largely physical and empirical

⁴⁹ Later English philosophers, the so-called "Cambridge Platonists," such as Henry More, Benjamin Whichcote and Ralph Cudworth, managed to tame Platonic recollection by using it as a metaphor for innate wisdom derived from the divine presence. See Dominic Scott, "Platonic Recollection and Cambridge Platonism," *Hermathena* 149 (Winter 1990): 73-97.

⁵⁰ The term "Neo-Platonism" is an invention of nineteenth century, and many scholars question the usefulness of the term as applied to Plotinus, who saw himself as an interpreter of Plato. Here, I will follow the early modern convention of referring to Plotinus as a Platonic philosopher.

⁵¹ Roger Baynes, *The praise of solitarinesse* (London: Francis Coldocke and Henry Bynneman, 1577), 78, Early English Books Online.

⁵² Thomas Jackson, *A treatise containing the originall of vnbeliefe, misbeliefe, or misperswasions concerning the veritie, vnitie, and attributes of the Deitie with directions for rectifying our beliefe or knowledge in the fore-mentioned points*, (London: Printed by John Dawson for John Clarke, 1625), 439, Early English Books Online.

Aristotelian models of memory. Such is the advice of Lodowick Bryskett, a companion of Spenser and Sydney, who wrote in his translation of Giambattista Giralaldi's philosophical compendium that anyone who was interested in Plato's theory would do well to turn to Plotinus, who "though he be somewhat obscure, deserueth the chiefe place, as best expressing *Plato* his sence and meaning."⁵³

Bryskett is astute in his assessment, for while Plotinus expounds and interprets Plato's thought with great nuance and care, the later philosopher built his treatment of memory on a complex metaphysical system, the details of which are beyond our scope here but which requires at least a cursory explanation in order for us to appreciate Plotinus' theory of memory. According to this system, there are three levels of being: the One, the Intellect, and the Soul. The One, being simple, perfect, and absolute, emanates the Intellect which itself emanates the Soul. The Soul is itself indivisible and unchanging, but because of its unique position it can have two concerns which are sometimes at odds. The Soul can either turn toward the Intellect, which is the realm of pure thought, or it can turn away and engage in the process of creating the world. It is this latter concern that results in individual souls acting upon the sensible world. How can there be individual souls inhabiting bodies yet still be part of a single soul that is indivisible and unchanging? Plotinus answers this question with one of his favorite images. The individual soul, he explains, does not step out of the Intellect and into the sensible world as one exits a room to enter another; rather, part of the soul remains above at all times: "[the] soul is composed of the part which is above and that which is attached to that higher world but has flowed out as far as these parts, like a line from a centre."⁵⁴ Each individual soul, then, can turn towards this centre

⁵³ Lodowick Bryskett, *A discourse of ciuill life containing the ethike part of morall philosophie*, (London: Printed by R. Field for Edvvard Blount, 1606), R3r, Early English Books Online.

⁵⁴ Plotinus, "The Enneads" in *Plotinus*, vol. 4, trans. A. H. Armstrong (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1966), 21. In general, I quote McKenna's slightly more poetic translation, but for clarity's sake I will make

(the Intellect) and concern itself with pure thought, or it can occupy itself with the bodies, objects, and affairs of the sensible world.

Plotinus therefore presents a much more ambivalent view of embodiment than we have seen from Aristotle and others. For Plotinus, the vital point about embodiment is that it involves the intertwining of two different temporal orders: that of the body and that of the soul. This state of being, which Plotinus calls the “Couplement” (*synamphoteron*) brings together the body, bound by time and slave to sequence, and the soul, perfect, unchanging, eternal.⁵⁵ Embodied existence, by definition, must be thought of as imperfect and incomplete, for the perfect and eternal soul becomes joined with something beholden to the march of time. Plotinus writes, “Things and being in the Time order—even when to all appearance complete, as a body is when fit to harbor a soul—are still bound to sequence; have it, present to them and running side by side with them, and are by that very fact incomplete.” Eternity, however, “demands something which is in its nature complete without sequence” (III.7.6).⁵⁶ Every act of the embodied individual, as long as it is sequential and thus dependent on time, remains forever incomplete. Plotinus follows convention by arguing that passions and emotions are functions of the body which distract the soul, but, rather less traditionally, he extends this argument to the mental act of reasoning. Even the movement from premises to conclusion, he contends, requires time and so must be considered a bodily act. By contrast, the soul knows all at once and without sequence: “Reasoning is for this sphere; it is the act of the Soul fallen into perplexity, distracted with cares, diminished in strength: the need of deliberation goes with the less self-sufficing intelligence;

reference to the Loeb translation as well. Plotinus, *The Enneads*, trans. Stephen McKenna (New York: Penguin, 1991). All following quotations will be cited parenthetically by Ennead and tractate.

⁵⁵ Armstrong translates it as the “gathering.”

⁵⁶ Plotinus is quick to point out that the soul is not stained or made less perfect in any other way by its embodiment—that would be impossible. It is the Couplement itself, the admixture of temporal and eternal, that is imperfect.

craftsmen faced by a difficulty stop to consider; where there is no problem, their art works on by its own forthright power” (IV.3.18). Plotinus is often scornful of the body, but even when he uses the language of descent or falling, he refuses to paint embodied existence as tragic. The body, he argues, is not “alien but attached to our nature,” and so our duty is to understand how best to navigate this conjoined realm (IV.4.18). Reason might lead us to what the soul knows, but Plotinus implies there is a smoother, more felicitous path to knowledge, one which begins from embodiment but which gives itself to the soul’s way of knowing.

This path is memory. As Henry Blumenthal writes, memory exists for Plotinus “on the frontiers of two realms of experience.”⁵⁷ Memory has one foot in the temporal world, retaining glimpses of creation, conversations with others, and thoughts from one’s mental life; yet memory also holds a place in the Intellectual realm, providing a kind of correspondence between the two levels of embodiment. As such, memory for Plotinus cannot be solely or even primarily a function of the body, and Plotinus spends much of his discussion of memory attacking the simplistic notion of memory as the mere retaining of sense impressions. The popular seal-in-wax metaphor comes under heavy fire here, as Plotinus dismantles the physiological theories of Aristotle and the Stoics.⁵⁸ Plotinus urges us not to think about memory as a passive acceptance and retaining of impressions upon the body but as a power of the soul. If memory is like a seal in wax, why does practice make our memory stronger? Wax cannot practice, nor can it become stronger at taking on impressions.⁵⁹ Once we understand memory as a non-corporeal ability, we can recognize the metaphor as wholly inadequate: “[T]here is no resemblance to seal

⁵⁷ H. J. Blumenthal, *Plotinus’ Psychology: His Doctrines of the Embodied Soul* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1971), 80.

⁵⁸ For a comprehensive and systematic comparison between Aristotle and Plotinus’ theories of memory, see R. A. H. King, *Aristotle and Plotinus on Memory* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2009).

⁵⁹ As King notes, Plotinus could be accused of using the seal-in-wax metaphor as a bit of a straw man. Aristotle makes use of the metaphor, but he does not base his entire treatment of memory upon it. Nevertheless, Plotinus points out the danger of putting too much emphasis on this arresting image. See King, *Aristotle and Plotinus*, 150-151.

impressions, not stamping of resistant matter, for there is neither the down-thrust (as of the seal) nor (the acceptance) as in the wax: the process is entirely of the intellect, though exercised upon things of sense” (IV. 3.26). If it appears to us that bodily constitutions have some effect on our ability to remember, it is only because the body hinders memory in different degrees. He explains, “Memory, in point of fact, is impeded by the body....The Soul is stability; the shifting and fleeting things which body is can be a cause only of its forgetting, not of its remembering” (IV.3.26).

If by refuting the materiality of memory Plotinus breaks from the Aristotelian tradition, he also modifies Plato’s theory by insisting that not all of memory’s objects are in the past. Recall that Socrates suggests to Meno we are able to recollect ideas that the soul has acquired from previous lives. Platonic recollection therefore still involves past impressions; it simply directs itself to impressions acquired before one’s current life. Plotinus does not dispute the theory of reincarnation, but he contends the ideas recovered by recollection are those that exist eternally for the soul and so are *not* acquired at any time in the past. Memory is a kind of limited access to the Intellectual realm where these ideas are held eternally and without sequence; it is thus a “memory outside of time” (IV.3.25). Alternatively, we might follow Renaissance commentator Philippe de Mornay (from a work that was partially translated by Sidney) in saying, “[Plotinus] affirmeth it to be the more excellent kynd of memorie; not that which calleth things agayne to mynd as alreadie past, but that which holdeth and beholdeth them still as alwaies present.”⁶⁰ Plotinus, it would seem, offered the early modern age a model of memory almost diametrically opposed to the broadly Aristotelian one that modern scholars have favored. Here, we have a

⁶⁰ Phillippe de Mornay, *A vvoorke concerning the trewnesse of the Christian religion...translated into English by Sir Philip Sidney Knight, and at his request finished by Arthur Golding* (London: John Charlewood and George Robinson for Thomas Cadman, 1587), S[1] r, Early English Books Online.

theory of memory that is active, not passive; immaterial, not embodied; and of the present, not the past.

Even so, some critics might respond that Plotinus' theory fits the general pattern of moral physiology by denigrating the material body as chaotic and unstable and championing memory as a psychological bulwark. Such a reading would, however, misconstrue Plotinus' aim, for while the philosopher often speaks of embodiment in negative terms (describing it as the soul's "burial" or "encavernment"), he is less interested in lamenting the soul's fall than in exploring the state of embodiment and the complex relationship between memory and materiality (IV.8.4). As memory no longer relies on the body, its operation during the period of embodiment becomes a special condition during which time it casts its view simultaneously in two directions. This means that memory can have as its objects items both internal and external. Even during embodiment, however, the *subject* of memory is always the immaterial soul. For Plotinus, the soul is a precondition for consciousness and indeed all cognitive functions because it is the only means of preserving the subject across the changes of time. As King explains, "The idea is that only impassibility can preserve identity, and identity is necessary for various forms of awareness, and so too for memory."⁶¹ Because Plotinus defines memory (as explained above) as the strengthening of the soul towards an object, he structures the relationship between self and memory in ways unfamiliar to most modern thinking. Since at least Locke, we are accustomed to thinking of memory as constitutive of the self, and this idea, now considered common sense, continues to inform historicist discussions of memory in the early modern period.⁶² Plotinus, however, urges us to think about the connection between memory and the self as more subtle and tenuous. The soul is the subject of memory, but because the soul is complete and self-contained,

⁶¹ King, *Aristotle and Plotinus*, 152.

⁶² See, for example, Lewis' assertion that "memories, for better or worse, define the core of one's character—who and what a person is." Lewis, "Memory and Metaphor," 629.

it is not in any way composed or defined by memory. Instead, memory offers up the soul potential paths before, during, and after embodied existence. In life, the soul retains memories of the Intellectual realm, which can incline it towards contemplation and, after death, direct it back to the Intellect. Alternatively, if the soul is pleased by memories of earthly existence, it can direct itself toward the sensible realm, becoming more concerned with worldly affairs and thus more likely to return to a body after death. As King explains, memory does not make up the self so much as it guides the self's movement: "The point is that memory is not just something the soul has, rather it determines the fate of the soul. Determining what the soul is does not mean determining the identity of the individual soul, not what the soul is in general; rather memory determines what the individual soul is at each stage (intellectual, heavenly, or earthly), or what it will become."⁶³

Perhaps at this point we might be tempted to echo Lodowick Bryskett by declaring this whole metaphysical arrangement "somewhat obscure," so Plotinus provides a striking literary example to illustrate his point. Citing Book 11 of the *Odyssey* in which Odysseus descends into Hades, Plotinus notes that Odysseus encounters the "shade" of Hercules in the underworld even though Hercules himself is with the gods.⁶⁴ This can be explained, says Plotinus, by the dual aspect of memory, for while the shade retains memories of the affairs and concerns of Hercules' practical life, the higher aspect of the soul, that which is in the Intellectual Realm, retains purified, abstract versions of these memories. In other words, the shade of Hercules represents the autobiographical memory of embodied existence, yet the higher soul of Hercules, while keeping in some sense the memory of friends, family, and country, retains them in a different way: "passively" and in the abstract. If we were to speak to the shade of Hercules, writes

⁶³ King, *Aristotle and Plotinus*, 208.

⁶⁴ Blumenthal points out that this passage is a later addition to *The Odyssey*, but he is unsure if Plotinus would have known this. See Blumenthal, *Psychology*, 86 n.8.

Plotinus, he would tell us of his earthly adventures, “but there is the other man to whom all of that is trivial; he has been translated to a holier place; he has won his way to the Intellectual Realm; he is more than Hercules...”(IV.3.32).⁶⁵ Although Plotinus says Hercules’ soul has a “happy forgetfulness,” he does not mean that the soul sheds all memories from embodied existence; rather, the soul contemplates them out of sequence and in perfect unity.

We can, then, imagine both these aspects of memory coming together in embodied existence, which leaves us with a very different picture of memory than the broadly Aristotelian notion championed by the historical phenomenologists. While this latter notion confines memory to the material realm, the Platonic theory essentially defines memory as a bridge between two levels of being, which correspond to two aspects of the embodied self. On the one hand, memory preserves autobiographical details such as traces of our childhood, our experiences, our perceptions, and in this sense it offers us a link with the material world. Viewed from another perspective, however, these memories can lead us to a more fundamental part of ourselves and the very bedrock of personal identity. In this latter use of memory, we approach most closely the activity of the soul in the Intellectual Realm, a kind of transcendent contemplation, and, as Plotinus explains, this has the seemingly paradoxical effect of the thinker shedding his personality even as he gets closer to his own self: “if he is himself (pure and simple), he is empty of all” (IV.4.2). Even though Plotinus advocates for this latter approach, he admits that embodied existence is best thought of as an oscillation between these two perspectives on memory.

Embodied souls, he writes, “have place in both spheres, living of necessity the life there and the

⁶⁵ I am somewhat simplifying matters here, as a full discussion of Plotinus’ metaphysics would take us too far afield. Plotinus seems to argue that the shade in the underworld is the vegetative soul and that the soul in the Intellectual Realm is the rational soul, both of which join in embodied existence and part at death. Some commentators argue these are in fact two independent entities, and indeed Plotinus often writes as if this were the case, but I tend to agree with King that the distinction between the two souls is ethical and not metaphysical. That is, the division is between practical and theoretical inclinations of our selves. See King, *Aristotle and Plotinus*, 157-164.

life here by turns, the upper life reigning in those able to consort more continuously with the divine Intellect, the lower dominant where character or circumstances are less favorable” (IV.8.4). Memory, according to this view, does not constitute the self but provides a path between the various divisions that make up embodied existence, including body and soul, character and self, and time and eternity.

What sort of influence did these ideas have in early modern England? Plotinus maintained a strong reputation as a Platonic philosopher despite the fact that his *Enneads* were not available in English.⁶⁶ (Plotinus’ works were, however, widely available in Ficino’s Latin translation, which went through four editions in England.) Nevertheless, references to him in English-language philosophy compendia tend to focus on his moral philosophy rather than his writing on memory, with the aforementioned work of Phillippe de Mornay being a notable exception.⁶⁷ Rather than exercising a direct influence on early modern thought, Plotinus’ version of Platonic recollection made its strongest inroads via later writers, who, while rarely remaining faithful to the finer points of Plotinus’ philosophy, illuminated the metaphorical and imaginative potential of his theories for early modern writers. In the *ars memoriae* tradition, for example, Giordano Bruno’s influential work *De umbris idearum* combined practical techniques for aiding recollection with a characteristically Plotinian schema whereby memory facilitates the ascent to a

⁶⁶ For a brief summary of Plotinus’ influence on early modern English writers, see Kurt Spellmeyer, “Plotinus and Seventeenth-Century Literature: A Prolegomenon to Further Study,” *Pacific Coast Philology* 17, no. 2 (November 1982): 50-58.

⁶⁷ Many authors approvingly cite Plotinus’ thoughts on temperance and his apparent scorn for worldly affairs. See, for example, Thomas Rogers, *A philosophical discourse entitled an anatomie of the minde* (London: John Charlewood for Andrew Maunsell, 1576), 100v, Early English Books Online. Robert Mason, although he does not mention memory directly, quotes Plotinus on the relationship between time and eternity and discusses the ways in which a temporally bound thought can approach eternity. See his *Reason’s Academie* (London: Imprinted by Th. Creede, for Iohn Browne, 1605), 23-24, Early English Books Online.

higher state of knowledge.⁶⁸ In this work, which Hilary Gatti points out “stimulated a lively discussion in England,” Bruno explains his two-sided approach to memory.⁶⁹

We deal with this art in a twofold form and method, of which one is higher and general, both for ordering the operations of the soul and indeed is the origin of many methods by which as with various organs one can explore (or discover) artificial memory....The other method which follows is more restricted in scope and involves a reliable kind of memory by means of the art of combination.⁷⁰

Plotinus, whom Bruno refers to as *Platonicorum princeps*, exerts a strong influence over this work, yet the extent of Bruno’s debt to the philosopher has only recently been adequately recognized.⁷¹

Yet perhaps the most important examination of Plotinus’ work on memory, from both a theological and psychological perspective, is Augustine’s *Confessions*, which powerfully evokes the imaginative possibilities and the *phenomenological implications* of the Platonic recollection. Augustine’s stirring discussion of memory and time in Books Ten and Eleven follow Plotinus in placing memory between two levels of embodied existence, yet Augustine, more so than the earlier philosopher, concerns himself with weighing the dynamic of temporally bound consciousness against Platonic conceptions of memory. For Augustine, Platonic memory precisely captures the sensation of possessing important truths that seem to have no moment of

⁶⁸ On the concept of noetic ascent through memory in the philosophy of Bruno, see Leo Catana, *The Concept of Contraction in Giordano Bruno's Philosophy* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2005), 69-87.

⁶⁹ Hilary Gatti, *Essays on Giordano Bruno* (Princeton University Press, 2011), 151.

⁷⁰ Bruno quoted in Stephen Clucas, “Simulacra et Signacula: Memory, Magic and Metaphysics in Brunian Mnemonics,” in *Giordano Bruno: Philosopher of the Renaissance*, ed. Hilary Gatti (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002), 261.

⁷¹ Clucas maintains that Bruno’s *De umbris* has long been misinterpreted as a work of Hermetic magic due to scholars overreliance on Yates’ *The Art of Memory*, in which Yates more or less dismisses Bruno’s Platonic influences. Against this, Clucas maintains we should think of *De umbris* less as an attempt at Egyptian magic and more as a work of “Platonic science.” See Clucas, “*Simulacra et Signacula*,” 265. For Yates on Bruno’s *De umbris*, see *The Art of Memory*, 199-230. On the Platonic sources of *De umbris*, see also, Alessandro G. Farinella and Carole Preston, “Giordano Bruno: Neoplatonism and the Wheel of Memory in the ‘De Umbris Idearum’,” *Renaissance Quarterly* 55, no. 2 (Summer 2002): 596-624.

acquisition: “These objects have no entry to the memory: only their images are grasped with astonishing rapidity, and then replaced as if in wonderful storerooms, so that in an amazing way the memory produces them.”⁷² And, like Plotinus before him and Bruno after, Augustine conceives of memory as a path that can lead from a muddle of sense perceptions to a greater form of knowledge, and his trajectory in the *Confessions* follows this precise path from the specifics of his autobiography in the early chapters to a broader, universal treatment of memory and time: “I will therefore rise above that natural capacity in a step by step ascent to him who made me.” Most crucial for Augustine, as Paige E Hochschild notes, is the question: “how can a man, who is discursive in his way of knowing, experience the simplicity and unity of the divine perspective in and through an embodied mode of existence?”⁷³ Of course, this issue occupied Plotinus, as well, but Augustine goes further in sounding the emotional resonances of both sides of the question, that is, both the hope and elation in striving for a near-divine perspective and the frustration and disappointment of recognizing the fallen nature of consciousness itself. Memory for Augustine is simultaneously a sign of the divine presence and a deeply felt distance from God, a distance that reveals itself in the very nature of sequential, time-bound thought.⁷⁴ Every act of thought, even listening to a beloved song one knows by heart, reminds the subject of his or her condition; this person “suffers a distention or stretching in feeling and in sense-perception from the expectation of future sounds and the memory of past sound”⁷⁵ We can, with memory, achieve some degree of stability against the stream of consciousness, reaching an “artificial permanence of the present perspective” and catching a glimpse of knowledge outside of time-

⁷² Augustine, Book 10, chapter 16. All quotations from the *Confessions* are from Henry Chadwick’s translation. Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. Henry Chadwick (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991).

⁷³ Paige E. Hochschild, *Memory in Augustine’s Theological Anthropology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 169.

⁷⁴ Phillip Cary, who suggestively argues that Platonic recollection marks the beginning of the Western concept of the inner self, believes Augustine uses Platonic memory as a metaphor for seeking God. See his *Augustine’s Invention of the Inner Self: The Legacy of a Christian Platonist*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

⁷⁵ Augustine, *Confessions*, 11.41.

bound cognition,⁷⁶ yet Augustine sees no true escape. He laments to God, “You are my eternal Father, but I am scattered in times whose order I do not understand. The storms of incoherent events tear to pieces my thoughts, the inmost entrails of my soul....”⁷⁷ Memory is thus our best path for approaching the divine, atemporal perspective yet with every step we take in this direction, we are reminded of our bondage to time and sequence.

It should be clear, then, that the early modern conception of memory was neither simple nor monolithic. In practice, early moderns drew on a wide range of theories, weaving together strands from divergent philosophical schools in a spirit that favored syncretic synthesis over systematic coherence. As such, we must be cautious when attributing to Shakespeare or any other early modern author a certain theory of memory, for the expansive range of ideas and combinatorial permutations of those ideas provided authors with a considerable palette with which they could compose. Let us, by way of example, return to our earlier touchstone in *Hamlet*. Polonius’ brief, seemingly unremarkable failure of memory, “What was I about to say? By the mass, I was about to say something!” (2.1.49), could potentially find a place in either an Aristotelian or Platonic interpretive framework, taking on a slightly different character in each. Both schools of thought recognize the all-too-obvious fact that memory degrades as one gets older, and therefore both would explain Polonius’ “senior moment” with reference to time and its effect the body. Aristotle, extending the seal-in-wax metaphor, argues the elderly have in some way become hardened over time and so have trouble taking on new impressions.⁷⁸ According to this interpretation, Polonius fails to remember because he has not properly committed to memory his own machinations. That is, his plan is a newly formulated one, perhaps drawn up during Laertes’ first spell abroad, and Polonius’ aged embodied memory sputters and slips as it tries to

⁷⁶ Hochschild, *Memory in Augustine*, 169.

⁷⁷ Augustine, *Confessions*, 11.41.

⁷⁸ Aristotle, *De memoria*, 450a32.

dredge up a recent acquisition. By contrast, a Platonic reading might follow Plotinus in claiming that the body can only be a hindrance to memory and that the sheer accumulation of memories acts as clutter to the soul and impedes true recollection. Here is Plotinus on the matter: “addition often brings forgetfulness; with thinning and clearing away, memory will often revive.”⁷⁹ Polonius, according to the Platonic school, has distracted himself with a mass of earthly memories, and quite literally loses himself amidst the swarm.⁸⁰ This inconsequential moment thus becomes loaded with import, pointing both to Polonius’ over-involvement with political scheming and the corrosive antagonism between his body and soul, which might even signal his imminent demise. Different readers will be inclined in different ways, for each admittedly cursory interpretation has its own merits. And while both offer something of an explanation of the content of this incident, neither contributes much to an interpretation of its form. Why is the incident so brief? Why is there no elaboration or meditation on forgetting as we see elsewhere in the play? Both frameworks give us a means of infusing the moment with significance, but why is it engineered to seem so *insignificant*? These are questions that will be addressed below; for the moment, it is enough to say that both Aristotelian and Platonic theories of memory have passed our touchstone test, and if we wish to characterize the significance of memory in *Hamlet*, we must widen our search. Two strong points of contention between the theories have also attracted a fair amount of recent critical attention—the question of memory’s materialism and its relation to the self—and these can serve as our focal points as we weigh the relative significance of these different notions of memory.

⁷⁹ Plotinus, *The Enneads*, IV.3.26.

⁸⁰ Few critics subject this moment to extended analysis, but Wylie Sypher comes closest to this first interpretation when he argues Polonius’ forgetting is a product of the old man “losing his way amid his intricate assays of bias.” Sypher, however, attributes this to the perversely intricate nature of Polonius’ plotting and his attempt to master time, not his memory specifically. See his *The Ethic of Time: Structures of Experience in Shakespeare* (New York: Seabury Press, 1976), 84.

Material Memory and the Embodied Self in Hamlet

Recent scholarship has overwhelmingly argued for the materialism of memory in *Hamlet*, a view which has been advanced on two fronts: by stressing that memory is physically constituted in the human body, and by collapsing the difference between material objects and individual memory.⁸¹ These arguments have been advanced separately, but they often occur together by first emphasizing the physicality of embodied memory and then arguing the same forces and contingencies that apply to material objects apply to individual memories.⁸² Certainly there is ample evidence to support this view. The word “matter” appears more times in *Hamlet* than in any other Shakespeare play, and there are multiple references to material objects used to support memory, including tables or notebooks (1.5.107), mementos (3.1.92), monuments to preserve memory of the dead (3.2.124-126), as well as a host of material metaphors for memory (1.3.57, 1.3.84-5, 1.5.98-104, 3.4.33-36, 5.2.98-100). The passage that has perhaps attracted the most critical attention as evidence for materialist memory is Hamlet’s second soliloquy. In this speech, Hamlet, still reeling from his encounter with the Ghost, responds to his father’s parting words “Adieu, adieu, adieu, remember me” (1.5.91)

O all you host of heaven, O earth—what else?—

And shall I couple hell? O fie! Hold, hold, my heart,

And you, my sinews, grow not instant old

⁸¹ Recently, there have been some dissenting voices to this trend. Scott Trudell, for example, has objected that materiality is a concept that is overstressed and under-analyzed in literary scholarship of *Hamlet*. Scott Trudell makes this point in reference to *Hamlet*. See his “The Mediation of Poesie: Ophelia’s Orphic Song,” *Shakespeare Quarterly* 63, no. 1 (Spring 2012): 46-76.

⁸² As Kerwin Lee Klein notes, this move has been employed most often by historicist scholars in order to transform memory into “a Foucauldian field of discourse,” allowing them to employ a one-size-fits-all methodology to analyze starkly different objects: “an author can move freely from memories as individual psychic events to memories as a shared group consciousness to memories as a collection of material artifacts and employ the same psychoanalytic vocabularies throughout.” Kerwin Lee Klein, “On the Emergence of Memory in Historical Discourse,” *Representations* 69 (Winter 2000): 135.

But bear me swiftly up. Remember thee?
 Ay, thou poor ghost, whiles memory holds a seat
 In this distracted globe. Remember thee?
 Yea, from the table of my memory
 I'll wipe away all trivial fond records,
 All saws of books, all forms, all pressures past
 That youth and observation copied there
 And thy commandment all alone shall live
 Within the book and volume of my brain
 Unmixed with baser matter. Yes, by heaven,
 O most pernicious woman,
 O villain, villain, smiling damned villain.
 My tables! Meet it is I set it down
 That one may smile and smile and be a villain—
 At least I am sure it may be so in Denmark.
 So, uncle, there you are. Now to my word.
 It is 'Adieu, adieu, remember me.'
 I have sworn't. (1.5.92-112)

Although there is no stage direction here in the Folio or any of the quartos, it is generally accepted that at line 107 Hamlet produces a physical notebook and jots down the commonplace.⁸³ It is not difficult to see why critics inclined towards the materialist view would devote their energies to this speech, which not only gives memory a place (“a seat / In this distracted globe”) and a bodily organ (“brain”), but it also seems to go beyond mere metaphor to

⁸³ As many have noted, Shakespeare also adapts the saying in *Henry VI, Part 3* (3.2.182).

equate individual memory with material object, Hamlet's "table of my memory" quickly giving way to literal tables. In this way, the speech echoes Sonnet 122, in which the speaker, who has lost the tables of a friend, excuses his act by claiming his memory will serve as a notebook that is both more receptive and longer lasting. The sonnet's speaker boasts his memory shall remain "[b]eyond all date, even to eternity," before backtracking a bit: "Or, at the least, so long as brain and heart / Have faculty by nature to subsist" (4-5).⁸⁴ Between the sonnet and Hamlet's soliloquy there is a significant overlap in vocabulary and in the apparent conflation between scriptive and biological matter. This is the point made by Peter Stallybrass, Roger Chartier, J. Franklin Mowery, and Heather Wolfe, who have uncovered the fascinating technology and cultural history behind erasable tables: portable, convenient notebooks on which writers could record and erase notes with ease.⁸⁵ Based on this research, Stallybrass et al. argue both the speaker and Hamlet confront, clearly in different emotional registers, the "erasability" of embodied memory. By equating human memory with erasable tables, by "collapsing the antithetical technologies of writing tables and bodily inscription into each other," Shakespeare insists "erasability is endemic to the human body," and at the moment Hamlet yokes his memory to his tables, he unwittingly condemns his father to oblivion.⁸⁶

Stallybrass et al. are undoubtedly correct to press the connection between these two works, and yet I believe they miss the aim of the sonnet and subsequently mischaracterize the relationship between matter and memory in their drive to have the former say something meaningful about the latter. They make no comment, for example, about the speaker's initial promise that his memory shall "above that idle rank remain / Beyond all date even to eternity"

⁸⁴ All quotes from Shakespeare's sonnets are taken from *Shakespeare's Sonnets*, ed. Katherine Duncan-Jones (London: Arden Shakespeare), 2010.

⁸⁵ Stallybrass et al., "Tables," 379-419.

⁸⁶ Stallybrass et al., "Tables," 417.

(3-4), except to say the second quatrain undoes the “grand claims” of the first. Yet in turning to a more materialist conception of memory, the speaker does not refute or otherwise contradict his assertions in the first; he merely hedges his bets, wittily and with a self-deprecating air. The speaker’s aim, after all, is to excuse the failure of his memory (misplacing his friend’s tables) by championing the superior power of his memory, and it is this self-mocking contradiction that animates the sonnet’s couplet (to which Stallybrass et al. attribute an “odd flatness”): “To keep an adjunct to remember thee / Were to import forgetfulness in me” (13-14).⁸⁷ More to the point, however, materialist critics ignore the first quatrain’s vivid opposition between a timeless memory and the body’s physicality, an opposition that looms over the rest of the poem. Here, the speaker elevates “lasting memory” with spiritual, heavenly associations, setting it apart from mortal time (“beyond all date”) and in the airy regions “above.” Memory persists in a powerful contrast to “that idle rank,” a perplexing phrase that has prompted various interpretations from editors who usually assume it refers either to lifeless lines of text or those people who rely on the printed word instead of natural memory. If, however, we recognize the manner in which the speaker draws upon the aforementioned theological and metaphysical qualities of Platonic memory, we notice how he puns to make “idle rank” into “idol rank,” transforming noun to adjective and adjective to noun, and pitting “lasting” memory against an overgrown, noxious, and falsely regarded mass of flesh. “Idol” could mean both a worldly distraction from God and, in a broader sense, a counterfeit or false image of an original, and so with this secondary meaning, the speaker establishes an even starker contrast between the soul’s memory and bodily matter.⁸⁸ Furthermore, Shakespeare generally uses “rank” as a noun in the abstract linear,

⁸⁷ Stallybrass et al., “Tables, 417.

⁸⁸ “idol, n.” OED Online. June 2013. Oxford University Press. www.oed.com/view/Entry/91087. (accessed September 02, 2013). Shakespeare also puns on idle/idol in sonnet 105: “Let not my love be called idolatry, / Nor my beloved as an idol show” (12). Interestingly, Helena uses a similar cluster of words and ideas (memory, line,

hierarchical sense as often as he employs it as a bodily, material adjective signifying overgrown, thickly profuse, grossly material, diseased, and ill-smelling. In *Hamlet*, for example, Shakespeare employs “rank” in this latter sense six times, using it to disparage the world (“’tis an unweeded garden / That grows to seed, things rank and gross in nature / Possess it merely” (1.2.135-7)) and Gertrude’s lust (“to live / In the rank sweat of an enseamed bed...” (3.2.89-90)). This is not to say that sonnet 122 is a conclusive repudiation of material forms of memory, either bodily or otherwise. The poem itself is too airy, the speaker too cheekily aware of his own bodily imperfections, to serve such a purpose. My point, rather, is that both material and immaterial conceptions of memory are at play, and it is the friction between them, the sloppy imperfection of the former and the distant idealism of the latter, that gives the sonnet its edge.

Keeping this dynamic in mind, we can see something similar happening in Hamlet’s soliloquy. Indeed, the same relationship is immediately foregrounded, as the realms of the body and spirit become coupled in the very first line: “O all you host of heaven, O earth.” And, as with the sonnet, the soliloquy functions neither to champion embodied memory nor to refute it; instead, Hamlet displays a marked *ambivalence* as to the grounds and guarantors of memory. This cycling back and forth between bodily substance and the insubstantial activities of the soul continues as Hamlet cries, “Hold, hold my heart” and begs his “sinews” to bear him up. At first glance, Hamlet seems frightened that his *body* might shut down, that the shock of his father’s revelation might shatter his physical frame. While the heart’s function as a blood pump had obviously not yet been discovered, the heart was nevertheless considered the principal organ for bodily existence. Burton describes it as “the seat and fountain of life, of heat, of spirits, of pulse

“heart” “table” “idolatry”) in *All’s Well That Ends Well*: “to sit and draw / His arched brows, his hawking eye, his curls, / In our heart’s table; heart to capable / Of every line and trick of his sweet favour: / But now he’s gone, and my idolatrous fancy / Must sanctify his reliques” (1.1.80).

and respiration, the sun of our body....”⁸⁹ Sinews, too, were understood to connect muscle to muscle and muscle to bone, physically holding the body together and thus allowing Hamlet to remain upright. Yet these bodily structures are doing double duty in this passage, for while they provide Hamlet with physical security, they also carry with them alternative, decidedly less material connotations which perhaps would have been more obvious to an early modern audience than they are to us today. As Marry Carruthers notes, there is a long literary and philosophical tradition that links memory with the heart, with varying degrees of literalness.⁹⁰ She argues the connection was in currency at least until Chaucer’s time, but it is clear Shakespeare was aware of it as well. He draws upon it, for example, in sonnet 122 when the speaker promises his memory will continue “so long as brain and heart / Have faculty by nature to subsist” (5-6). In Hamlet’s speech, the heart’s connection to memory—while subtle—is brought to the surface by its position, occurring two lines after the Ghost’s “remember me” and two lines before Hamlet’s “Remember thee?” and by Shakespeare’s sly evocation of “records” etymological root, which he achieves by having the stress fall upon the heart of the word: *cor*.⁹¹ Similarly, “sinews” could refer to both connective muscle tissue and to nerves that spread from the brain to the rest of the body, effectively communicating the activity of the soul. William Bullein in his *The government of health* (1595) explains, “And like as euerie tree and hearbe, haue the beginning in the braine, and the sinew and branches groweth downward: in the which braine, dwelleth the vertues of imagination, fantasie, memorie, &c.”⁹² In this sense, sinews had a

⁸⁹ Robert Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, ed. Holbrook Jackson (New York: New York Review of Books, 2001), 152-3.

⁹⁰ Carruthers, *Book of Memory*, 59-60.

⁹¹ On the echoes of the heart’s connection to memory in language, see Carruthers, *The Book of Memory*, 59-60.

⁹² William Bullein, *A Newe Booke of Phisicke Called Ye Government of Health* (London: Valentine Sims, 1595), 15, Early English Books Online.

part to play in memorial activity, for they helped communicate sense impressions to the soul and radiated the products of recollection out into the body.

Based this oscillation between body and soul, one might be tempted to agree with materialist readings that posit a conflation between memory and matter, but in deploying the concepts in this way Shakespeare methodically develops two *distinct* understandings of a single passage. It is not that the heart and sinews both support the physical body and carry out cognitive functions in service of the soul; it is that from one perspective, Hamlet asks for one thing and from another perspective, he asks for something else entirely. The passage's verbs maintain this double sense, with "hold" meaning both to endure or support in the physical sense and retain or keep in the memorial sense, and Hamlet's call for his sinews to bear him "swiftly up" reflects a physical uprightness and recalls the Platonic conception of memory as a kind of noetic ascent.⁹³ When Hamlet promises that his father's commandment will live within him "[u]mixed with baser matter," he speaks at once of his father's words remaining undiluted with other, trivial *content* and of the commandment being shorn of its material trappings and existing, beyond all date, within his soul.⁹⁴

It is with this double perspective on memory that we must regard Hamlet's decision to write in his tables. Critics are overeager, I believe, to see some sort of deep contradiction or

⁹³ Curiously enough, this im/material dynamic has been played out in editorial debates over whether to print Q2's "swiftly" or F's "stiffly." Thompson and Taylor prefer the former but admit most editors follow F (see 219 n.95). Shakespeare often associates "swift" with flight and thought, and given both memory's associations with ascent and the sinews' function of communicating cognitive information to the body, "swift" seems to be the better choice. Beyond this interpretation, however, "swiftly" has to recommend it an echo of Hamlet's promise from earlier in the scene, "I, with wings as swift / As meditation or the thoughts of love, / May sweep to my revenge" (29-31).

⁹⁴ On the process by which sense impressions are made incorporeal (as theorized in early modern psychological writings), see Grant Williams, "The Transmateriality of Memory in Early Modern Discourse," in *Ars Reminiscendi: Mind and Memory in Renaissance Culture*, eds. Donald Beecher and Grant Williams (Toronto: Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies, 2009), 313-338. Williams focuses on Aristotelian theories and insists these writings betray a kind of phobic reaction to the materiality of memory. While I agree with Williams that some critics too hastily equate memory with material artifacts and practices, I find Platonic conceptions of memory to have more complex attitudes towards materiality than one of phobia. I think *Hamlet*, too, adopts a more ambivalent perspective on the matter.

serious error in this act. Both materially inclined scholars and their critics tend to regard it as the first in what Trudell calls a “cascading series of failures,” either because Hamlet puts too much faith in his erasable notebook or too little faith in his own corporeal memory—or some combination of the two.⁹⁵ Yet we ought to interpret this moment less as failure by Hamlet to understand the nature of memory (notwithstanding his obviously hyperbolic claims of clearing his memory banks) than as a vivid demonstration of memory’s divided status, as a faculty that straddles the fault line between worldly particulars and ideal abstractions. Hamlet, like Plotinus’ Hercules, possesses the memory of the Ghost’s commandment, but he possesses it different ways. Readings that have Hamlet offloading his memory unto his tables or even using his tables as a crutch for his memory simply ignore the profound contrast established by this passage between what Hamlet presumably writes down “one may smile and smile and be a villain” and what he recollects aloud, his “word”: “Adieu, adieu, remember me.” The latter is a particular selection from the Ghost’s actual words, captured by the senses and held within Hamlet’s memory; the former is a general truth abstracted from the Ghost’s narrative, recorded on a material medium. It is possible to see his act as a representation of Platonic memory, which separates general abstract versions of memories from the particulars of the actual sense perception. Yet the closing lines suggest that although Hamlet is not wrong to distinguish between different aspects of his memory, the manner in which he does so prevents him from grasping the faculty’s potential. If higher forms of memory are reached by meditation and judgment, it seems as though Hamlet’s *sententia* is achieved less from thoughtful judgment than by involuntary recollection spurred by the sonic similarities between his outburst, “O villain, villain, smiling damned villain!” and a precept acquired as a student “one may smile and smile,

⁹⁵ Trudell, “Mediation,” 72. See also Lewis, “Metaphor,” 615-626; Wilder, *Memory Theatre*, 110-113; Stallybrass et al., “Tables,” esp. 414-419.

and be a villain.” In other words, the rhythm of his own involuntary outburst seems to call to mind his precept rather than a careful communing with his memory, and so the value of the precept—not the act of recording it nor the extraction of a general truth—should be regarded with suspicion. Lest we be tempted to favor a more worldly memory over this slippery process of Platonic recollection, Shakespeare concludes the soliloquy with an equally imperfect display of the former as Hamlet fails to recall the whole of his father’s parting line, repeating only two of the Ghost’s three adieus. Hamlet’s memory, mortal and body-bound, is no doubt imperfect, but it is Hamlet’s hasty response to this state of being that will have much deeper consequences.

This prompts us to consider the second point of contention between Aristotelian and Platonic conceptions of memory: the relation of memory to the self. As discussed above, the narrower, Aristotelian version favored by critics tends to stress the association between the self and memory, even suggesting the self is *constituted* by memory.⁹⁶ This manner of thinking is relatively commonplace in the modern era, but to what sort of foothold does it have in the play? Although there is a long critical debate about whether Hamlet suffers from a sluggish or overactive memory, there is a general agreement among critics that Hamlet’s relationship with his own memory is fraught with tension and uncertainty.⁹⁷ At various points in the play he appears to suffer from compulsive memory (“Must I remember?”), a difficulty recognizing old friends (1.2.160), and a fear that he has succumbed to “bestial oblivion” in failing to revenge his father (4.4.39). Even successful performances of Hamlet’s memory carry a degree of alienation,

⁹⁶ Shankar Raman, reading *The Comedy of Errors* through the lens of Aristotle’s *De memoria*, claims there is an “Aristotelian configuration linking selfhood to knowledge and memory” and that “identity, personhood, [and] life itself” depend on memory. See his “Marking Time: Memory and Market in *The Comedy of Errors*,” *Shakespeare Quarterly* 56, no. 2, (Summer 2005): 190-191.

⁹⁷ Those who insist Hamlet remembers too much or too frequently include Greenblatt, *Purgatory*, 214-218; and John Kerrigan, “Hieronimo, Hamlet, and Remembrance,” *Essays in Criticism* (1981): 116. On the other side, Richard Helgerson, “What Hamlet Remembers,” *Shakespeare Studies* 10 (1977): 92-3; Lewis, “Metaphor,” 631; Low, “Ghost,” 463; and Stallybrass et al. “Tables,” 61, all insist Hamlet has done something to prevent a full and proper recollection of his father’s command.

as when he recounts his escape from execution, which includes an instance of forgetting (“I...laboured much / How to forget that learning”) and which he describes as an almost out-of-body experience: “Or I could make a prologue to my brains / They had begun the play” (5.2.30-1). Aristotle was, of course, aware of the ways in which memory could fail or feed into madness, and those early moderns writing in the Galenic psychophysiological tradition were all too aware of the various maladies that could impact the memory.⁹⁸ Yet Platonic theories located within the exercise of memory itself a profound confusion that afflicts human cognition, a kind of side effect of memory’s capacity to shuttle back and forth between to levels of being. In *Phaedrus*, Socrates explains that for most people, the holy sights dredged up by recollection can often lead to confusion. He admits, “Few then are left which retain an adequate recollection of [the holy sights]; but these when they see here any likeness of the things of that other world, are stricken with amazement and can no longer control themselves; but they do not understand their condition, because they do not clearly perceive” (250a). Hamlet’s meeting with the Ghost is a visitation not simply from his own past, but an encounter with something outside of the subjective time scheme of past-present-future. Frederick Turner writes, “The Ghost is both outside time and also the disrupter of it,” and from this violent disruption of his subjectivity Hamlet emerges with a double perspective.⁹⁹ For the remainder of the play, he must negotiate the play’s world with this double vision, with one eye peering beyond the reaches of his soul. This, more than any humor or material cause, accounts for Hamlet’s unsettled memory, for he has been “jangled out of time” (3.1.157) and must reorient himself in temporal existence.

⁹⁸ Aristotle discusses, among possible memory disorders, a melancholic’s lack of control over recollection (453a14) and certain types of insanity that cause people to mistake their delusions for memories (451a8).

⁹⁹ Frederick Turner, *Shakespeare and the Nature of Time: Moral and Philosophical Themes in Some Plays and Poems of William Shakespeare* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), 80.

This temporal disorientation is further emphasized by the repeated action of characters recalling snatches of verse and song, all of which appear to be thickly woven in the fabric of their selves, but which nonetheless remain external and foreign to them. Memories thus become at once intimate and self-alienating. Hamlet never sounds more content than when he recounts the time he heard a player recite Aeneas' narration of the fall of Troy. Hamlet's sight of the first Player calls to his mind this event, and he recollects details of the "excellent play": that it was "as wholesome as sweet, and by the very much more handsome than fine," that it "pleased not the million" but was praised by the judicious, and that contained a speech that he "chiefly loved." He asks the Player if he recalls it, but before the player can answer, Hamlet launches into the speech and recites some twelve lines as if drawn by the strings of his memory (2.2.359-403). It is a rare moment of happiness and ease for the Danish prince and, until the graveyard scene, perhaps our most intimate glimpse at his past. At such moments, these memorized fragments appear to come very close to a character's selfhood, and some critics have argued that for these characters "the memorized text or image...has become part of the fabric of the knowing self."¹⁰⁰ And while these recitations offer a kind of window into these characters' memories, more often than not they only serve to obscure and alienate them from others. Ophelia's "snatches of old lauds" are described as "nothing," as utterances of "half sense," which provoke confusion or, for the self-interested, an opportunity to mold her songs to "fit their own thoughts" (4.5.7-10). Similarly, Hamlet's quotation of an unnamed ballad about the biblical Jephthah is met by Polonius with utter confusion, the old man failing either to recognize the ballad or significance of the words. Hamlet, it seems, would have been satisfied had Polonius either understood his meaning or simply completed the verse. As Polonius does neither, Hamlet can only grumble, "Nay, that follows not" (2.2.349).

¹⁰⁰ Scott Huelin, "Reading, Writing, and Memory in *Hamlet*," *Religion and Literature* 37, no.1 (Spring 2005): 27.

For Augustine, memorized words provoke this contradictory combination of intimacy and alienation because our memories, in retaining the text in its totality, come closest to mirroring the way the soul possesses knowledge. A memorized psalm, he explains, resides in one's mind in perfect unity and without sequence; the beginning, middle, and end of the psalm exist together outside of time. Indeed, Augustine speculates that this mode of knowing through memory has some resemblance to the mind of God: "Certainly if there were a mind endowed with such great knowledge and prescience that all things past and future could be known in the way I know a very familiar psalm, this mind would be utterly miraculous and amazing."¹⁰¹ Yet in exercising our memory, in actually reciting the memorized words, we must submit to sequence, recalling the parts of the psalm we have recited and looking forward to the parts we have yet to say, and we therefore must confront our subjection to earthly time: "A person singing or listening to a song he knows well suffers a distension or stretching in feeling and in sense-perception from the expectation of future sounds and the memory of past sound."¹⁰² Similarly, in *Hamlet*, memorized songs and verses appear to hew so closely to the characters' selves because they provide a means of holding the mind steady amidst the flow of worldly time and suggest a stability of identity against the flux of the body. Still, in their performance, these memories reveal themselves as temporary external supports and serve less as constituent parts of the self and more as subtle reminders of the gulf between the body and soul's modes of being.

Memory, at least of the autobiographical variety examined thus far, cannot be said to define the self. Yet if the play ultimately pulls apart the idea that the self is constituted by this limited version of memory, it nevertheless is suffused with a concern about what, if anything, could be said to guarantee a persistence of self across time. This concern is marked by a heavy

¹⁰¹ Augustine, *Confessions*, 11.41.

¹⁰² Augustine, *Confessions*, 11.21.

use of reflexive pronouns and a recurring figuration of the self as divided, both in offhand, quotidian phrases and extended examinations on the fabric of human identity. From the play's second line, "Stand and unfold yourself" (1.1.2), to Hamlet's figuration of his soul as separate from himself, "Since my dear soul was mistress of her choice" (3.2.59), the tendency of characters to speak of themselves and others as divided continues at a higher register as characters describe madness in a similar way: Ophelia is "divided from herself" (4.5.81) and Hamlet is "so much from th'understanding of himself" (2.2.9). Behind this persistent pattern lies a festering concern about what unites these fragments of selves, what could be said to persist amidst the flux of worldly time and numerous psychic upheavals.

For the historical phenomenologists, the answer is nothing. Paster dismisses the very notion, insisting a persistence of self and embodied consciousness are mutually exclusive: "Psychological self-sameness presupposes disembodied consciousness, not the humoral subject's full immersion in and continuous interaction with a constantly changing natural and cultural environment."¹⁰³ Alternatively, some adhere to the psychoanalytic model, insisting as Sullivan does that "the subject is by definition split, internally divided."¹⁰⁴ As confident as we might be making such pronouncements today, *Hamlet* is decidedly less so. Instead, the play treats the self's persistence across time as a central problem, a kind of stone in the drama's shoe that, despite some vigorous shaking, refuses to dislodge. This is nowhere more evident than the Player King's long speech in *The Murder of Gonzago*, or *The Mousetrap*, which has the appearance of a somewhat mournful yet mostly unsentimental meditation on human mutability. In this sense, it must be viewed as a companion to two speeches delivered on either side of it, one by Laertes (1.3.20-43) and the other by Claudius (4.7.108-24). Together, these three speeches insist that

¹⁰³ Paster, *Humoring*, 60.

¹⁰⁴ Sullivan, *Forgetting*, 21.

dramatic changes in our mental states over time render even our most deeply held beliefs fickle and untrustworthy. Of course, Laertes and Claudius' speeches are less sincere meditations on human psychology than they are rhetorical ploys to manipulate their listeners: Laertes' to convince his sister to shun Hamlet's love, Claudius' to harness Laertes' rage and direct it at Hamlet. The Player King's speech, then, functions as a sort of mirror to these ploys, stripping them of their rhetorical motivation and re-presenting their ideas in the abstract.¹⁰⁵ It begins as a response to the Player Queen's avowal that she would sooner die than remarry after her husband's death. The Player King replies,

I do believe you think what now you speak.

But what we do determine oft we break.

Purpose is but the slave to memory,

Of violent birth but poor validity (3.2.180-183)

Memory, of course, is being used in a special way, for the Player King is not exactly suggesting his wife will forget her vow in the way one forgets a person's name or the words to a song. He would not be contradicted if, long after his death, his remarried wife were to recall (perhaps with some shame) the passionate promise she made to her first husband. Rather, the Player King

¹⁰⁵ The Player King's speech is the most frequently nominated candidate for the lines that Hamlet has inserted into the play. Commentators who defend this theory argue the speech is the only one long enough to match the "dozen lines, or sixteen lines" Hamlet promises to add (2.2.476-7), and that the speech echoes a number of Hamlet's preoccupations. Skeptics point out this speech hardly comes "near the circumstance" of Hamlet's father's death (3.2.73). While my interest in the speech does not depend on this issue, I think there are good reasons for attributing these lines to Hamlet, who never claims his insertion relates to his father's death, only that there is a scene that does. As Hamlet asks the players to memorize a dozen lines, not an entire scene, it seems reasonable to assume this key scene already appears in *The Murder of Gonzago*. Indeed, Hamlet remains silent about the function of his inserted lines, and it's quite possible the addition is meant for Gertrude rather than Claudius. Hamlet's concern with his mother's behavior is, after all, a constant supplement to his ostensible objective. His outbursts during the play are all in response to the Player Queen and are meant as reflections on Gertrude's constancy ("If she should break it now!" (3.2.218)). This interpretation has the curious consequence of nudging the Player King's speech even closer to those of Laertes and Claudius in that it suggests the speech might have persuasive ends intended for a single listener. Even so, the speech is too abstract and too divided within itself to function in the same exact way as the others.

refers to the persistence of the particular mental state during which one makes a resolution. This becomes clear later in the passage when he declares,

*Most necessary 'tis that we forget
To pay ourselves what to ourselves is debt.
What to ourselves in passion we propose,
The passion ending doth the purpose lose. (186-189)*

Put precisely, the claim is that a psychological quality (being “in passion”) co-occurring with one’s resolution yet which is nevertheless extraneous to its content determines the fulfillment of the resolution. Or, to follow the Player King’s metaphor, we do not fail to re-pay ourselves because we forget there *is* a debt but because something external to the arrangement prevents us. The word “necessary,” although it carries with it a rather jarring moralistic force, is meant primarily to refer to the characteristics of nature, *i.e.*, “given the way things are in the world, such and such must be the case.” Memory, then, refers to the persistence of these natural characteristics, which at first are the passions—mental states the Player King insists will fade or, more forcefully, undo themselves: “*their own enactures with themselves destroy*” (192).

Later in the speech, however, the Player King expands his scope to include not only internal states, but external ones, implying an intimate relationship between the two:

*Where joy most revels, grief doth most lament
Grief joys, joy grieves on slender accident.
This world is not for aye, nor 'tis not strange
That even our loves should with our fortunes change (191-5)*

This leads the Player King to the question of whether love in particular can withstand the accidents of fate. For the first fourteen lines, the Player King has limited his discussion to the

human subject: his interest is in *memory, passion, grief, and joy*. Now, however, he calls in the impermanence of the world as another force that works against our wills. Rather than establishing the external world as an additional and separate item, this quatrain links the internal and external realms, suggesting a tight interdependence between memory and the world that is “not for aye.” Here, he is not externalizing memory so much as he is suggesting that 1) human will is subservient to both memory and the pressures of external affairs, and 2) memory (understood in this special sense as the persistence of mental states) is as transitory and unstable as the tempest of worldly events. By consequence, the will, resting one foot upon memory and the other upon worldly fortune, finds no stability either within or without, and so neither will, nor memory, nor the external world could be said to guarantee an enduring self.

As the Player King progresses, he holds up to examine and ultimately discards the typical buttresses for identity: memory, will, judgment, even love. These supposedly foundational elements become mere accoutrements to the self, trappings that we see shift and decay with dismaying regularity. Throwing off this perishable garb, the Player King asks us what is left. The blunt answer: not much. In the final lines, the subject is all but vanished, as the personal pronouns that marked the first four lines (I, you, you, we, we) give way to a swarm of possessive adjectives:

Our wills and fates do so contrary run

That our devices still are overthrown.

Our thoughts are ours, their ends none of our own:

So think thou wilt no second husband wed

But die thy thoughts when thy first lord is dead. (205-209)

The self seemingly decomposed into a series of parts, the Player King eschews personal pronouns and determines we can only with confidence speak of our constituent parts, of what belongs to us. Even these elements, however, are impersonal and in some measure beyond our control, for we may claim our thoughts, intimate and private, as our own, but *their* ends escape us.

One would be forgiven for interpreting this passage as doing full demolition work on the self and revealing its supposed unified and enduring presence to be an illusion. Although the speech comes close to doing so, it relies upon the self's persistence in opposition to the flux both within and without. For however we read the Player King's speech, as a lament for human frailty, as cynical rebuke, as a fatalist rumination, the force and heft of the passage derives from the self's stubborn perseverance. Those commentators who conclude from this speech that the self is fragmentary or non-existent have solved the logical problem but ignored the phenomenological one. Given the all-too-obvious disjointed world, the Player King would find some degree of contentment if he could, as Hamlet yearns, resolve himself into dew and find harmony with discord. But here the self is both the source and auditor of these miseries. To mourn the failure of memory *as* a failure, there must be something that precedes it and exists beyond it. To observe the will stumble and fall, there must be something that stands apart. What this self could be, stripped as it is by the end of the speech, remains unknown, but its haunting presence—*nunc et denique*—drives the passage and extends beyond it to trouble the play and its observers.

Hamlet and the Phenomenological Now

In the preceding section, I have sought to establish a certain affinity between memory as it is explored in *Hamlet* and Platonic theories of recollection, broadly conceived. This is not to suggest Shakespeare was a Platonist or that the play upholds a strict Platonic metaphysics, nor do I wish to imply theories of memory that derive from Galenic and Aristotelian traditions have no purchase in the play. To do either would place severe restrictions on a notoriously nebulous play and subsequently render it something of a historical oddity for shunning the age's preference for synthesis and combination over strict delineation. In emphasizing as I have the play's debt to Platonic theories of memory, I have sought to demonstrate how this tradition provided for Shakespeare a path towards a broader exploration of temporal existence, particularly the condition of being in two times at once. In addition the broader scope of *anamnesis*, the aspect of Platonic theories that undoubtedly attracted Shakespeare was the attention to the phenomenological dimensions of subjective experience. It is the Platonists, rather than the Aristotelians, who appear to struggle most deeply with temporal phenomenology, and Shakespeare could have been drawn to these philosophies not just as a thinker but as playwright who, as the prologue of *Henry V* states, manipulates the temporal experience of an audience, transforming years "[i]nto an hourglass."

It is important, then, that we consider the experience of time in *Hamlet* and look for any particular resonances between the phenomenological dimensions of the play and its thematic interests in memory, time, and the self. For this, too, we can turn to the touchstone of Polonius' forgetting his lines and note that what initially attracted us to this moment was its *momentariness*, its unsettling abruptness that jars us only for an instant before sinking beneath our consciousness. For a mere beat of the heart, we see Polonius as something else: perhaps as a player who has forgotten his lines, or as a hyper-realistic figure endowed with the most mundane

of humankind's failings. Then, before we can follow one interpretive course or another, Polonius collects himself, the meter resumes, and we are back on the familiar path. To get at the significance of this moment, it would seem we are better off abandoning thematic or conceptual concerns and instead examining it *as* a temporal experience. To do so, I will now turn to the most comprehensive account of these matters: Edmund Husserl's lectures *On the Phenomenology of Consciousness of Internal Time*.

We are not, however, entirely leaving the Platonists behind. Indeed, Husserl begins his 1905 lectures on the consciousness of internal time by sympathetically citing Augustine as “[t]he first person who sensed profoundly the enormous difficulties inherent in this analysis [of time-consciousness], and who struggled with them almost to despair.”¹⁰⁶ In Husserl's own work, there is evidence of a struggle, and his thinking on this matter evolved considerably in the decades following these lectures.¹⁰⁷ Nevertheless, we find in these talks a clear articulation of the problem that Husserl deems “the most difficult of all phenomenological problems.”¹⁰⁸ He argues that immediate experience of an object cannot only be a pure “now” of that object; otherwise, the perception of succession and change would be impossible. We do not, he claims, experience an object as a series of still photographs. By way of example, he describes listening to the individual tones of a melody:

When a melody sounds, for example, the individual tone does not utterly disappear with the cessation of the stimulus or of the neural movement it excites. When the new tone is sounding, the preceding tone has not disappeared without leaving a trace. If it had, we would be quite incapable of noticing the relations

¹⁰⁶ Edmund Husserl, *On the Phenomenology of the Consciousness of Internal Time (1893-1917)*, trans. John Barnett Brough (Boston: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1991), 3.

¹⁰⁷ For an extensive account of these changes, see Tonie Kortooms, *Phenomenology of Time: Edmund Husserl's Analysis of Time Consciousness* (Boston: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2002).

¹⁰⁸ Husserl, *Internal Time*, 286.

among the successive tones; in each moment we would have a tone, or perhaps an empty pause in the interval between the sounding of two tones, but never the representation of a melody.¹⁰⁹

But the lingering of a trace of a tone that has just sounded is not enough, for it must be in some way differentiated from the tone that immediately follows it. Without this distinction, a melody would be a cacophony of all of its tones sounding at once. Consciousness, therefore, must include more than what is given now, and it must somehow involve past things in a modified form. So when we are conscious of an object, our consciousness always includes a *primal impression* of the now-phase of the object, a *retention* of the just-past phase, and an unreflective anticipation or *protention* of the phase yet to occur.¹¹⁰ From this description, it becomes clear that our experience of the present moment is not a knife-edge but something with a “temporal width.”¹¹¹ The past, then, forms a structural part of the present moment. It is important recognize the precise nature of this relationship, for the just-past is not just an echo or an afterglow of the initial primal impression, nor does it blend together with the proceeding primal impression. We do not re-hear the just-past tone of the melody, nor do the tones overlap each other. Instead, as Shaun Gallagher and Dan Zahavi explain, the “meaning or significance” of the just-past tone is retained as just-past, embedding the primal impression in a temporal horizon.¹¹²

Husserl’s favorite example of listening to a melody works well as an illustration of unity in duration, but one should recognize that the problem of time-consciousness also involves seemingly stable objects. To demonstrate this point—and to allow the reader to fold into this

¹⁰⁹ Husserl, *Internal Time*, 11.

¹¹⁰ It must be stressed that all three components occur at once as a unity of consciousness and, despite their superficial resemblance, retention and protention are distinct from recollection and expectation in their everyday meanings. For example, the experience of a just-past tone of a melody is clearly different from a recollection of that melody a few days later.

¹¹¹ Evan Thompson, *Mind in Life: Biology, Phenomenology, and the Sciences of Mind* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), 319.

¹¹² Shaun Gallagher and Dan Zahavi, *The Phenomenological Mind*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2012), 86.

discussion some first-person data of his or her own—let us consider a different sort of temporal experience. I direct the reader’s attention to Figure 6 below.¹¹³ Even if you are familiar with this image (known as a Necker cube), please take a moment to examine it, noting your temporal experience as you do so. Attend to how the image appears to you at first, noting the side of the cube that appears to be closest to you. Now, consciously attempt to alter the image so that the sides of the cube become rearranged and the side that was closest to you recedes to the back. Try reversing the image a few times until you are able to switch back and forth with relative ease.

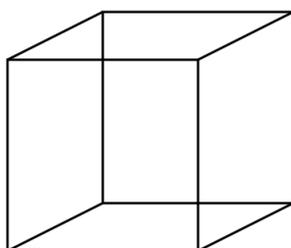


Figure 6: The Necker Cube

You will notice that the reversal of the figure arrives slightly after the directed effort to reverse it, but the reversal itself happens all at once. We do not see the far side of the cube progressively emerge into the foreground—the change is accompanied by an “*incompressible* duration that makes the transition perceptible as a sudden shift from one aspect to the other.”¹¹⁴ We are aware the change has occurred, but only because the previous configuration is present in our awareness in some way, not because we see a progressive alteration in the cube. Notice, too, that it is impossible to see both configurations at once, but with some effort we can continuously cycle

¹¹³ The use of multistable perception as an illustration and the following discussion are greatly indebted to Francisco Varela’s essay “The Specious Present: A Neurophenomenology of Time Consciousness” in *Naturalizing Phenomenology: Issues in Contemporary Phenomenology and Cognitive Science*, eds. Jean Petitot, Francisco J. Varela, Bernard Pachoud, and Jean-Michel Roy (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), 266-306. Varela himself is adapting the work of Ernst Pöppel. See Ernst Pöppel, *Mindworks: Time and Conscious Experience* (Boston: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1988), esp. 55-63.

¹¹⁴ Varela, “Specious,” 270.

back and forth between the two aspects. (As an additional challenge, see if you can stare at the Necker cube *without* it switching.)¹¹⁵ Of course, nothing about the image actually changes; the light reflected from the page hits your eye in same way no matter how the cube appears to your consciousness. The *experienced* reversal thus serves to highlight the temporal width of conscious experience.

We have isolated a certain temporal experience, one which seems relatively basic, but is this experience historically and culturally conditioned? Are we justified in reading this experience back into early modern phenomenology? Certainly the image, first published in the nineteenth century, was not available to the early moderns. We can note, also, that it is possible to get better at flip-flopping the cube, so the experience is in some way conditioned. It is also true, however, that there is a limit to how fast the cube can change (try as we might, we can never get it to flicker) and, more importantly, the structure of the temporal moment never changes. While some literary scholars are all too willing to pronounce that different cultures “literally *look at or see* time differently than we do,” in their rush to assert cultural difference they often overlook certain foundational aspects of temporal phenomenology.¹¹⁶ First, numerous psychological experiments with multistable phenomena similar to Figure 6 show that different individuals report the same temporal mode of appearance, requiring the same amount of time to shift between perceptual configurations.¹¹⁷ Second, there are brute material facts about our bodies that impose boundaries on our temporal experience. Neurobiologists have shown that cognitive events are constrained by at least three levels of embodiment: the time required for

¹¹⁵ Pöppel writes that the Necker cube shows that perception is not entirely passive and that our will has some power over how we see the world; however, the fact that we cannot prevent the cube from flip-flopping shows there is a limit to the power of our wills.

¹¹⁶ Linda Charnes, “Anticipating Nostalgia: Finding Temporal Logic in a Textual Anomaly,” *Textual Cultures: Texts, Contexts, Interpretation* 4, no. 1 (Spring 2009): 74.

¹¹⁷ Varela, “Specious,” 273-7. Further empirical research can be found in Pöppel, *Mindworks*.

neurons to fire and reset (between 10 and 100 milliseconds depending on the type of neuron); the relaxation time for the integration of distinct assemblies of neurons that form the basis of cognitive acts, in other words, “a time of emergence within which an experience arises, flourishes, and subsides only to begin another cycle”,¹¹⁸ and the span of working memory, which has a culturally invariant “width” of two to three seconds.¹¹⁹ Of course, such biological constraints leave a great deal of room for a diversity of conceptual and metaphorical articulations of time, but it is clear that the immediate temporal experience is not dictated by linguistic or cultural influences.

It may feel now that we have wandered rather far from Denmark. If, however, we retain some of Husserl’s insights as well as our own experience of the shifting Necker cube, we will perhaps recognize (or re-configure) certain episodes of the play, including our touchstone. Before returning to Polonius, let us consider an exchange in the third act, where we find a sort of Necker cube before its time. Hamlet, pointing out a cloud to Polonius offers a series of interpretations:

HAMLET: Do you see yonder cloud that’s almost in shape of a camel?

POLONIUS: By th’ mass and ‘tis like a camel indeed.

HAMLET: Methinks it is like a weasel.

POLONIUS: It is backed like a weasel.

HAMLET: Or like a whale?

POLONIUS: Very like a whale. (3.2.366-73)

¹¹⁸ Gallagher and Zahavi, *The Phenomenological Mind*, 89.

¹¹⁹ This theory, based on a dynamic systems model, is explained in the most detail by Varela in “Specious.” For a brief but detailed summation of this theory, see Gallagher and Zahavi’s discussion in *The Phenomenological Mind*, 89-92.

As one might expect, the conversation itself has inspired a number of interpretations, with older criticism investigating the symbolic significance of the animals and newer scholarship focusing on the epistemological stakes of the exchange.¹²⁰ Despite their different points of emphasis, critics generally take the passage to be a demonstration of Polonius' obsequiousness and match it with Hamlet's later exchange with Osric in which the Prince manipulates the servile courtier into repeatedly contradicting himself (5.2.67-162). But this reading flattens the passage's particularities and overlooks its connection to the play's overriding concern with the experiential dimension of time. Strictly speaking, Polonius does *not* contradict himself as it certainly possible for an ambiguous figure to resemble two or more things that bear no clear similarities to each other, as the famous rabbit-duck optical illusion illustrates.¹²¹ Polonius' obvious sycophancy does not negate the possibility that he genuinely sees the figures Hamlet describes, and his elaboration of Hamlet's prompts ("It is backed like a weasel") supports this reading. If we shift our focus slightly, we can see that in addition to the power dynamics between the two characters, this passage represents the phenomenological experience of multistable perception in which the external world seems to shift without moving. A cloud may be a camel, then a weasel, then a whale. Thinking makes it so.

There are two key points to be extracted from this demonstration. The first pertains to the audience and their relation to the play, the second pertains to the audience and their relation to themselves. If we apply this same consideration of multistable phenomena to Polonius'

¹²⁰ On the former, see Roger J. Trienens, "The Symbolic Cloud in *Hamlet*," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 5, no.2 (Spring 1954): 211-213. On the latter, see Rhodri Lewis, "Shakespeare's Clouds and the Image Made by Chance," *Essays in Criticism* 62, no. 1 (January 2012): 1-24.

¹²¹ Several critics have made reference to this illusion in their analyses of Shakespeare's works, most notably Norman Rabkin, who labels *Henry V* a "rabbit-duck play" in *Shakespeare and the Problem of Meaning* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 34. See also James L. Calderwood *To Be and Not to Be: Negation and Metadrama in Hamlet* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), 31. Both critics employ the illusion as a metaphor for the possibility of multiple interpretations of Shakespeare's work. As I hope is clear, my use of a multistable figure is different in that it serves as an isolated phenomenological experience that re-occurs in various guises throughout the play.

momentary memory loss, we can address these two points in turn. Polonius' stammering repetition, his sudden shift into prose, and his apparent lapse in memory prompt his swift and sweeping reconfiguration. Into what? A clown? An imperfect actor? A living, aging man? Before we have a chance to thematize this moment, however, Polonius resumes, the meter returns, and the event itself is forgotten. Silently, the playwright thus takes up Hamlet's position and prompts a series of rapid reinterpretations: "He is an old courtier." "He is an actor on stage." "He is Polonius." Of course, the metatheatrical nature of this moment has been noted by many commentators, but in ignoring the phenomenological dimensions of the act *in time*, they mischaracterize the experience and instead fall back on commonplace (and rather anachronistic) notions of metatheater as "shattering" dramatic illusion or "breaking the fourth wall."¹²² This, however, does not do justice to the phenomenological texture of viewing multistable perception. Although this experience involves a radical and abrupt alteration of our view of the world, it also highlights the way this change is embedded in a temporal horizon so that the just-past view is in some way retained as part of the present view. Again, what appears to us in the moments Polonius forgets and then remembers his lines is not a blended object but a series of configurations of the same object, each of whose meaning is retained to structure the successive reconfiguration.

In place of the language of destruction and alienation, which both misrepresent the phenomenology of the performance and the relationship of the audience to the play, we might adopt Ernst Pöppel's metaphor for the experience of the Necker cube: "We never see both perspectives of the cube simultaneously.... This indicates that there is only *one* object of consciousness. When this one thing occupies the center of attention, everything else, including

¹²² See, for example, Calderwood, who writes, "In large and small ways these instances of theatricalization in Denmark serve as Brechtian alienation devices to shatter our illusion of Danish reality and cut the cord of our imaginative life there." Calderwood, *To Be*, 167.

the other perspectives, withdraws into the background—becomes the background.”¹²³ The foreground/background schema preserves the reciprocal relationship between the various perspectives of multistable phenomena, embedding both parts in a kind of temporal tableau. Furthermore, the frequency with which *Hamlet* calls attention to itself as a dramatic artifact and prompts us to re-see what is before us suggests that, rather than alienating the audience from the dramatic world, the play is in a sense *training* its audience’s double-vision.¹²⁴ Just as our practice with the Necker cube improved our ability to transition between perspectives, so the play’s recurring metatheatrical moments increase the fluency of our double vision.

Admittedly, the point is hardly new. Even if the relationship between the play and the audience has been revised slightly, the notion that the play instills or at least encourages a kind of double-vision is rather commonplace. Less familiar is the claim that these particular effects facilitate, perhaps urge, a reconsideration of the self for the audience—a process that is repeatedly mirrored on stage. Indeed, Hamlet’s faith in his own play is built around the notion that the player’s spectacle will prompt an instantaneous, automatic reaction in Claudius which will ultimately reveal a hidden aspect of his soul: “For murder, though it have no tongue, will speak / With most miraculous organ” (2.2.528-9). And the instant bodily reactions to spectacles in the play are often paired with reflections upon the nature of the reacting subject. Characters reacting to Ophelia’s madness, for example, purport to draw significance from her ravings, but they rather reveal hidden qualities about themselves as they “botch the words up fit to their own thoughts” (4.5.10). Even the Queen acknowledges that her responses to external events are

¹²³ Pöppel, *Mindworks*, 60.

¹²⁴ The metatheatrical moments of the play are well-known and oft-discussed, so I will not attempt a comprehensive exposition of them here. Richard Hornby’s *Drama, Metadrama, and Perception* is one of the few books I know of that attempts a systematic mapping of metadramatic techniques. Although Hornby discusses Shakespeare, he attempts a much broader survey of drama, and he remains committed to a view of metadrama as a sensation of “unease, a dislocation of perception.” *Drama, Metadrama and Perception* (Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 1986), 32.

colored by the lens of her “sick soul” (4.5.16). Similar patterns of reacting-reflection occur in encounters with the Ghost. Hamlet marvels at the way the Ghost’s presence reveals the limitations of human thought by demanding “thoughts beyond the reaches of our souls” and exposing the spectators as mere “fools of nature” (1.4.54-6).

The in-play responses to these spectacles are framed in such a way so as to emphasize the nature of the spectator’s reaction and consequently to reveal something about *how* the subject sees. Hamlet’s game with the cloud is an explicit comment on that constancy, but we may understand this idea in two respects. First, most obviously, the Prince plays upon Polonius’ patronizing attitude and manipulates the old man into a laughable performance of inconsistency. More subtly, however, the moment raises the question about subjective consistency in light of our shifting perceptions. While the mutability of the natural world was a commonplace assumption in the early modern period, multistable phenomena, objects which shift in appearance without moving, expose the unsteadiness of our window onto the world and seem to invite the chaos within. Polonius’s real failure, then, is not his inconstant vision but rather that he fails to grasp the moment of self-awareness that presents itself in the uncommon, radical, and sudden shifts in his perception.

If Polonius characteristically passes up the opportunity to reflect on his own constancy, it is nevertheless a problem that occupies Hamlet and the play more generally. Lest we, too, let this moment slip by, let us take one final look at Figure 6 (please actually do this). In seeing one configuration of the Necker cube and then another, we can distinguish two distinct experiences with similar content, yet these experiences are linked by what Varela describes as “an underlying temporalization that is relatively independent of the particular content of the views.”¹²⁵ That is to say, it is not only the temporal object (the actual image) that has a duration, but we are also

¹²⁵ Varela, “Specious,” 289.

aware that the *experiences themselves* are somehow linked. Husserl realized that this possibility created the threat of an infinite regress, for if experience of temporal objects has a threefold structure of retention-impression-protection, and we can also experience this experience (that is, phenomenally recognize the three-part temporal structure of our perception), then it seems we would have to posit another threefold structure for the experience of the experience, and so on and so on.¹²⁶ Husserl wrestled with this problem throughout his career, and his theory—the presence of a self-constituting, foundational “absolute flow” which is itself timeless and for which “we have no names”—has done little to alleviate dispute.¹²⁷ Dan Zahavi, however, has recently formulated an elegant solution: what unifies these diverse experiences, what underlies our analysis of experience is, simply, the flow of the self.¹²⁸ That is, objectified awareness of experiences happens only through reflection or memory, and the “subjectivity of experience consists essentially in its being intransitively and nonreflectively self-aware.”¹²⁹ In the drift of our normal, everyday affairs, explains Zahavi, we are continually self-aware, and our acts and experiences do not stand apart from us as objects. It is only when we reflect on them or consciously recollect them that they are thrown into contrast with the continual flow of self-awareness.

There are several important conclusions to be drawn from this formulation. First, we see that certain kinds of memory and multistable phenomena offer a particularly heightened form of self-awareness by nullifying different aspects of experience so that the self presents itself as a minimal necessity. (Varela calls memory a “royal avenue of access to the flow.”)¹³⁰ In our

¹²⁶ Thompson, *Mind*, 323.

¹²⁷ Husserl, *Internal Time*, 382.

¹²⁸ Dan Zahavi, “Inner Time-Consciousness and Pre-Reflective Self-Awareness,” in *The New Husserl: A Critical Reader* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003): 157-180.

¹²⁹ Thompson, *Mind*, 327.

¹³⁰ Varela, “Specious,” 290.

encounter with the shifting cube, our sudden reflection on the temporality of these diverse experiences simultaneously insists upon a unifying dimension that holds them together. From here, we have an opportunity to appreciate the unwavering perspectivalness of experience, which leads us back to an awareness of the self. Second, this underlying self-awareness persists through time and serves to unify the welter of temporal experiences in our lives, but the particular *character* of this form of self-awareness is oddly impersonal. Although it makes memory possible, it has no memory. Although it gives us our sense of connectedness across time, it is oddly detached from our autobiographical narrative. For Husserl and those commentators and cognitive scientists who have taken up his line of inquiry, subjectivity first and foremost lives in *anonymity*. We exist, according to these thinkers, in a state of self-oblivion whereby our sense of selves and our knowledge about ourselves must be distinguished.¹³¹ This should not be interpreted as saying we are alienated or otherwise cut off from ourselves; rather, this flow of self-awareness can only provide us with *awareness*, not knowledge, of the self. For the latter, we must have recourse to reflection and objectification, which, if it does not radically distort the self, it at the very least changes its mode of givenness.

This distinction between self-as-experienced and self-as-remembered has only been strengthened by cognitive science research. On the one hand, this has resulted from a realization that beneath the folk-psychological concept of memory lie many distinct mechanisms and processes by which an organism retains some trace of a previous experience. While the popularized model from psychoanalysis distinguishes between conscious and unconscious memory, modern cognitive science has exploded the varieties of memory, which differ not only in their accessibility to consciousness but also in the type of information retained, the manner in

¹³¹ On this point, see Dan Zahavi, *Subjectivity and Selfhood: Investigating the First-Person Perspective* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2005), 52.

which it is stored, and how it is retrieved. A recent collection of memory concepts lists no fewer than eight different types of memory, including episodic, working, declarative, and flashbulb—and the cognitive sciences have posited many more in addition.¹³² As Gerald Edelman has noted, memory is no doubt crucial to consciousness experience, but only in its expansive sense including “molecular events, learning events, modality-specific phenomena, and linguistically based abilities.”¹³³ From this perspective, those intimate memories from our personal biography, even the traumas of childhood, contribute only a small part to the overall constitution of our selves. On the other hand, cognitive scientists have stressed the division between self and autobiographical memory as a way of understanding the self on an evolutionary timescale, insisting that the most familiar version of the self—one which is complex, narrative, and socially embedded—emerges from and relies upon evolutionary precedents. These precursors, which I have discussed in earlier chapters, generate the phenomenal presence that persists across our conscious existence and which anchors autobiographical memory in the subject. As Antonio Damasio explains, “While the core self pulses away relentlessly, always ‘online,’ from hint half-hinted to blatant presence, the autobiographical self leads a double life.”¹³⁴ Damasio’s point is not limited to the obvious fact that our personal memories often lie dormant; rather, he also wants to show that although memory depends upon the pulses of the core self, it offers a version of the self that is significantly different both in its mode of appearance (occasional, objectified) and content. In other words, our evolutionary history weighs upon our self-experience, driving a wedge between our self-awareness and our self-understanding.

¹³² Yadin Dudai, *Memory from A to Z: Keywords, Concepts, and Beyond* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

¹³³ Gerald Edelman, *The Remembered Present: A Biological Theory of Consciousness* (New York: Basic Books, 1989).

¹³⁴ Antonio R. Damasio, *Self Comes to Mind: Constructing the Conscious Brain* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2010), 210.

Of course, Shakespeare neither understood nor was aware of biological underpinnings of subjectivity. I bring up this research only to demonstrate how evolved brain structures prompt certain phenomenological invariants that we can reasonably assume an early modern subject to share with twenty-first century individuals. What an individual *does* with these experiences, however, depends on a host of external factors, so even if these experiences are made available to our awareness, one could just as easily ignore them as reflect upon them. *Hamlet*, I contend, considers curiously the phenomenological experience of time and the distinction between an enduring sense of self and the constructed cohesiveness of autobiographical memory. This curiosity extends not only to the way drama produces certain temporal experiences but also what the experiences themselves suggest about human subjectivity.

As the structure of time-consciousness led Husserl to posit an underlying flow, so Shakespeare's tacit awareness of the double-vision effect of metatheatricality seems to have led to a similarly dualistic conception of the self. Developing this framework allows Shakespeare to account for the discrepancy between an enduring sense of self and the lack of any clear source for this endurance. The problem of Hamlet's constancy has occupied critics for centuries, albeit variously framed as questions of neo-classical rules of character, faithfulness to a particular genre, or psychological verisimilitude. Aaron Hill, writing in 1735, laments the fact that there will never be an actor capable of matching himself to the spectrum of Hamlet's moods:

To what *Excess* then wou'd it not move were *Hamlet's Character* as strongly *represented as written!* The Poet has adorn'd him with a succession of the most *opposite Beauties*, which are *varied*, like *Colours* on the *Chameleon*, according to

the *different Lights* in which we behold him. But the PLAYER, unequal to his *Precedent*, is for-ever *His unvaried SELF*.¹³⁵

Hill sees deeply into the issue, but he also misses something vital. Shakespeare urges us to contemplate the coming together of this nebulous character and whatsoever inflexible actor attempts to keep time with Hamlet. Holding a mirror up to nature, *Hamlet's* characters are not attempts to reflect a multifaceted individuality that conforms to modern or early modern theories of personality, despite some ingenious attempts by scholars to build such a case.¹³⁶ Rather, the dynamic between actor and character, presupposed but not entirely prescribed by the written text, is meant to reflect a particular condition of existence.

Before elaborating on this condition, it is important to say what it is not. We are not talking about the much more common comparison between the world and the play that we find throughout early modern drama, or even in certain places in *Hamlet*. Such comparisons are made possible by the difference between the two realms. When *As You Like It's* Jacques proclaims, "All the world's a stage," he is comparing the stage as a distinct sphere to the world as another. If the resulting figuration blends the two, it is nevertheless a blend of two elements. To present, however, the conjoined player-character itself as a representation of earthly existence offers an entirely different vision. Once again, we can turn to Plotinus for a model. In explaining the relationship between body and soul, Plotinus follows the Stoics by comparing life to a play and then chiding us for treating the trivial matters of earthly existence with undue gravity: "For on earth, in all the succession of life, it is not the Soul within but the Shadow outside of the authentic man, that grieves and complains and acts out the plot on this world stage which men

¹³⁵ Aaron Hill, "On Hamlet" in *Shakespeare: The Critical Heritage*, ed. Brian Vickers (London: Routledge, 1974), 35.

¹³⁶ For a recent attempt to explain Hamlet's character via (relatively) modern theories of personality, see Lee, *Controversies*, 149-239. The most extensive reading of Hamlet's character in light of the theory of the humors is Bert O. States, *Hamlet and the Concept of Character* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992).

have dotted with stages of their own constructing” (II.2. 15). Plotinus, however, extends this common theatrical metaphor by complicating the hierarchy of its elements. Rather than building a distinction between appearance and essence or truth and reality, he places his emphasis on the reciprocal *dynamic* between actor and part: “In the dramas of human art, the poet provides the words but the actors add their own quality, good or bad—for they have more to do than merely repeat the author’s words: in the truer drama which dramatic genius imitates in its degree, the Soul displays itself in a part assigned by the creator of the piece” (III.2.17). Plotinus introduces this new element in order to illustrate man’s status as a “gathering” of two different temporalities. Actors, he insists, are not merely vessels for the playwright’s words because they “bring to this play what they were *before* it was ever staged” (III.2.17, my emphasis). The character and actor, therefore, possess two different histories, two different relationships to time. Memory, as I discuss above, is not only a means of recollecting one of these histories, but a way of moving between these two layers of the self.

If, as I have argued, *Hamlet* in some sense builds a parallel between Hamlet’s growing awareness of his conjoined nature and the change undergone by the audience whose double-vision progressively improves throughout the play, then we should expect both these elements to be in their infancy at the play’s beginning. Indeed, our first encounter with Hamlet offers only muted signs of what is to come. Hamlet’s “I know not ‘seems’” speech suggests he is forgetful in more ways than one. In recent decades, this speech has become the focal point for questions of Hamlet’s interiority, whether he possesses an “anachronistic” (to use Francis Barker’s term) sense of an inviolable inner self.¹³⁷ Yet in focusing on Hamlet’s claims, these critics unwittingly mirror Hamlet in that they seem to forget the question that prompts the speech in the first

¹³⁷ For a brief survey of this type of criticism, see de Grazia, *Hamlet without Hamlet*, 7-22.

place.¹³⁸ The Queen's question, when addressed at all, is usually taken to be no more than a soothing commonplace followed by a half plea for Hamlet to conform to normal mourning practices. A closer look is warranted. After urging him to cast off his "nighted colour," Gertrude says to her son, "Thou know'st 'tis common all that lives must die, / Passing through nature to eternity." Hamlet grants her claim: "Ay, madam, it is common." Which Gertrude follows with, "If it be / Why seems it so particular with thee?" Hamlet then fastens on her verb choice and launches into his speech: "'Seems', madam—nay it is, I know not 'seems'" (1.2.68-76). It must be noted that the Queen's query, far from an expression of threadbare sentiment, is framed as a logical argument. She does not merely wish to sound Hamlet's emotional state, she wishes to show the Prince himself that he is in a state of contradiction. First, she offers a claim about the world ("all that lives must die") and prompts Hamlet to assent to it. Once Hamlet does, she will imply that Hamlet's appearance and behavior stand in contradiction to the fact she has just forced him to concede. In a way, it is the guile and sharpness of the Queen's approach—contrasting with Claudius' ceremonial bombast—that causes Hamlet to wriggle away from her concealed argument. He does this first by creating some space between the content of the claim the queen has asked him to concede and the value or quality of the claim. While Hamlet grants her an "Ay," his sneering "it is common" weakens his affirmation by commenting upon the sentiment's time-worn quality. Yet the queen deftly adjusts to Hamlet's equivocation, matching his "common" with her "particular" and taking advantage of the ambiguity of Hamlet's pronoun "it" to return to her original point. Her reply should therefore be paraphrased as: "Given that you acknowledge death to be a fact of life common to all people, you contradict yourself with this un-common, idiosyncratic behavior. How can you therefore justify your appearance?" In other

¹³⁸ For a reading of Hamlet's speech that takes into account this prior exchange, see Paul Cefalu, "'Damnèd Custom ... Habits Devil': Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, Anti-Dualism, and the Early Modern Philosophy of Mind," *ELH* 67, no. 2 (2000): 399-431.

words, Gertrude believes she has found a discrepancy between Hamlet's inner and outer state, and she attempts to force her son to acknowledge it.

I have picked through this interaction in order to show that in Hamlet's "seems" speech, he himself seems to avoid—or perhaps forget—the Queen's question. Though he denounces "customary suits of solemn black," "windy suspirations," and "the dejected haviour of the visage" as mere "forms, moods, shapes of grief," Hamlet never addresses the Queen's true point: Why does he appear the way he does? In fact, Hamlet's repeated distinction between the "trappings" of grief and grief as an internal state only exacerbates the issue, for if we allow Hamlet something "within which passes show," we remain, like the Queen, unsure why the Prince puts on the show at all. I agree, to an extent, with Paul Cefalu, who argues that even though Hamlet insists upon a distinction between "a propositional attitude and an existential mode of being—'I act' and 'I am'," the Prince does not claim these two things must necessarily be at odds.¹³⁹ The line "'Tis not *alone* my inky cloak" (1.2.77, my emphasis) suggests the two could conceivably work in concert (and perhaps they are in this case). Cefalu thus explains Hamlet's appearance by advocating for a radical behaviorism: Hamlet's behavior is not at odds with his mental state; it *just is* his mental state. Yet one feels this reading pushes too strongly against the thrust of Hamlet's speech, which is to deepen the distinction between "something within" and his "suits of woe," even if his speech does not sever them entirely. Further, Cefalu's interpretation is at odds with Hamlet's discomfort with his mother's argument, which hinges precisely on the assertion that Hamlet's internal state and external state should agree. Although Cefalu is right to point out this discrepancy is not strictly defined, he attempts to explain away the friction rather than consider its purpose.

¹³⁹ Cefalu, "Custom," 405.

To be fair, its purpose, at least in the immediate context, is far from clear. Hamlet's argument is largely negative, built upon the staccato rhythm of "Nay," "not," "Nor," and "No." There are suggestions, however, that his costume is merely customary, his habit merely habit. Later, the Prince will rail against the Danish habit of drinking, "a custom / More honour'd in the breach than the observance" (1.4.15-16),¹⁴⁰ and wonder whether Gertrude's heart has been hardened by "damned custom" (3.4.35). Here, however, Hamlet seems to be following suit. He seems to follow tradition of expressing grief through customary displays (dark dress, exaggerated sighs), even as he insists it is his *private* grief that matters. Considered within the world of the play, this could be interpreted as a form of cultural memory pressing itself upon the Prince. Privileging the private memory of his father, Hamlet unwittingly allows cultural memory to dictate his appearance. Such an interpretation places Hamlet in two timescales: one which is private and autobiographical, the other which is historical. On this latter timescale, the causes predate the lives of the characters and the effects can act upon them without their knowledge or consent. This seems right, but it is also incomplete, for the particular custom Hamlet draws our attention to is that of characters on the stage: "they are actions that a man might play" (1.2.84). Indeed, his words here prefigure the terms he will later use to describe the Player: "all the *visage* wanned / —Tears in his *eyes*... / ...and his whole function *suiting* / With *forms* to his conceit" (2.2.489-492, my emphasis). Hamlet's language suggests that, over and above ordinary custom, his appearance and behavior are in some way scripted, that he is directed by past pressures beyond his memory. If the moment is too subtle to force a reconfiguration of the audience's vision, it nevertheless presents a character dressed in the colors of mourning denouncing his costume and insisting there is more to him than what is visible. In other words, the passage can be seen as establishing a tentative parallel between Hamlet's apparent awareness of a

¹⁴⁰ This speech appears only in Q2.

discrepancy between two aspects of himself and the audience's ability to discern two aspects of the drama.

It should be noted that the audience's ability does not *depend* on Hamlet, as evidenced by our touchstone with Polonius. The play itself is engineered around this particular aesthetic effect, but the phenomenology and philosophical implications of the effect are most prominently foregrounded as Hamlet wrestles with two sides of himself jangling out of time. A particularly forceful example is his "All occasions" speech, which although it does not appear in Q1 or the Folio, serves as a turning point in the play, albeit a highly problematic one. This monologue, given as Hamlet stares out over Fortinbras' amassed army, resembles Hamlet's soliloquy after listening to the Player (2.2.484-540). As many commentators have noted, both speeches show Hamlet marveling at something he sees and progressing from that response to strident self-criticism. Less remarked is the resemblance between this speech and the exchange over the shifting cloud, for here, too, Hamlet ponders a shapeless mass, seeing it one way and then another. Indeed the temporal significance of the cloud episode appears again in this speech albeit in a distended and heightened mode. More strongly, the speech dramatizes a version of the question that, as we have seen, preoccupied the Platonic memory theorists: "how can a man, who is discursive in his way of knowing, experience the simplicity and unity of the divine perspective in and through an embodied mode of existence?"¹⁴¹ The speech can be divided into two parts: the first defending the use of discursive reason on principle, the second observing the mass of troops and deriving morals from it. In both parts, the concept of discourse as *embodied thinking in time* proves crucial.

What is a man

If the chief good and market of his time

¹⁴¹ Hochschild, *Memory in Augustine*, 169.

Be but to sleep and feed? A beast—no more.
Sure he that made us with such large discourse,
Looking before and after, gave us not
That capability and godlike reason
To fust in us unused. (4.4.32-8)

In Shakespeare's other works, he uses the word "discourse" almost exclusively to denote speech or the ability to speak.¹⁴² Here, however, Hamlet clearly refers to the process of reasoning or the "discourse of reason," a phrase he uses earlier in the play (1.2.150).¹⁴³ At the same time, it would be too hasty to assume Hamlet is discussing the sort of mono-directional process of moving from premises to conclusion, for he explicitly desires from reason a "godlike" perspective, a kind of timeless way of knowing that allows him to look "before and after." It is reason's potential (in theory, at least) to provide mortal minds with a version of the divine, a-temporal way of knowing that Hamlet alludes to in his defense of his own, drawn-out thinking. Despite his protests, Hamlet comes to recognize that reason, too, must submit to time. Just as Plotinus affirms that reasoning is "for this sphere," a sign of the soul fallen into perplexity, and compares the reasoning thinker to a craftsman who, faced with an obstacles, "must stop to consider," so Hamlet in defending reason sinks into logical thought:

Now whether it be
Bestial oblivion or some craven scruple
Of thinking to precisely on th'event
(A thought which quartered hath but one part wisdom

¹⁴² As, for example, when Othello says of Desdemona: "She'd come again, and with a greedy ear / Devour up my discourse" (1.3.150-151). Later, however, Desdemona speaks of the "discourse of thought" (4.2.155). This is one of the few examples where Shakespeare uses term for mental activity.

¹⁴³ To my knowledge, Shakespeare only uses the phrase "discourse of reason" in one other play: *Troilus and Cressida* (2.2.117).

And ever three parts coward)... (38-42)

His attempt to reason out why he has not yet acted only causes further division in his thoughts, consigning him to eternal motion without progress. Each of reason's premises only leads to further division, and each step towards a conclusion only underscores discursive reason's subservience to time.

Hamlet's subsequent outburst of twenty-six successive monosyllables ("I do not know / why yet I live to say this thing's to do... (42-45), hammers home his frustration with this way of thinking. As an alternative, he turns toward the thousands of soldiers amassed before him: "Witness this army of such mass and charge" (46). Hamlet describes Fortinbras' gathering of troops as an event that "informs against" him and an "example" that exhorts him, but when he actually turns to consider the army, he experiences the nebulous mass of troops arrange and rearrange itself into multiple, non-complementary meanings. First, he sees the army as an emblem of its leader's great courage and "divine ambition" (48), as an example of unfaltering boldness that takes no concern with the unforeseeable, and, contrary to reason that seeks to look before and after, this rash bravery scorns "the invisible event" of the future (49). This prompts him to formulate a moral ("Rightly to be great...") and castigate himself for failing to follow this model ("How stand I then...?"). Yet after this seven-line aside in which he turns away from the scene before him and looks within, Hamlet goes back to the scene, only now the shape has shifted: "I see / The imminent death of twenty thousand men..." (58-9). Now "divine ambition" becomes a "trick of fame" and the boldness of Fortinbras' action in the face of the unknown becomes the grim march of thousands of soldiers to inevitable death.

Both Hamlet's interrogation of discursive reason in the first part of this soliloquy and his consideration of Fortinbras' troops in the second, therefore, address the temporality of embodied

thought. But whereas Hamlet initially considers the possibility of achieving a stable, “godlike” perspective via the path of reason, he ultimately discards that approach and instead uses the temporal quality of consciousness itself as the basis for reflection. Observing the swarming army arrange and re-arrange itself before him, Hamlet does not settle on one interpretation as the “truer” one or even seek to combine the two into an overarching moral. Instead, he seems to allow the two visions to stand on their own, permitting a thoroughly *unreasonable* incongruity to persist.

We might go further and interpret the moment as Hamlet acquiescing to a certain kind of inconstancy and self-oblivion. Similar to the Player King’s speech which at first highlights inconstancy only to whittle down subjectivity to something anonymous and perhaps unknowable, Hamlet’s soliloquy initially engages with a discursive mode of reasoning whereby thought is objectified, frozen in time in a step-by-step process that is supposed to lead to a timeless self-knowledge. In the second half, however, Hamlet appears to accept, if not embrace, his thought’s erratic oscillation *itself* as a window to the soul. His concluding lines (“O from this time forth / My thoughts be bloody or be nothing worth”) has puzzled commentators who see Hamlet’s apparent resolve as ill-timed, for there remains plenty of delay still to come. But we should locate Hamlet’s resolve less in his commitment to action than in his commitment to a certain way of thinking. Hamlet’s “or” is not exclusive—an interpretation that results in the summary: “if my thoughts aren’t bloody, then they’re worthless.” Rather, the conjunction yokes two disparate interpretations of his thoughts, giving us: “From now on, I can regard my thoughts as suffused with bodily passion and invested in the world, or I can regard them as mere toys and trifles.” Of course, Richard Burbage playing Hamlet at The Globe would mostly likely be looking out at the

audience as he speaks these lines. With audience doubling as Fortinbras' army, Hamlet learns how to see himself by watching the audience, which learns how to see itself by watching him.

At last, in the play's final scene, Hamlet follows this way of seeing to its inevitable conclusion. It is here where memory, understood as the correspondence between two levels of being, allows Hamlet to stand back from the flow of the plot and allow one aspect of himself to reach its end. Commentators have been puzzled by Hamlet's incongruous mix of attitudes in this scene: from the jumble of Calvinist and Stoic mindsets in the "We defy augury" speech to the gallingly insincere apology to Laertes. Yet we can explain these turns of mood—without denying their inconstancy—by recognizing Hamlet's newfound perspective. Before the fatal contest with Laertes, Hamlet rejects Horatio's urging to avoid the bout if the Prince suspects foul play.

Horatio offers an excuse, "say you are not fit" (5.2.196). Hamlet replies:

Not a whit. We defy augury. There is special providence in the fall of a sparrow.

If it be, 'tis not to come. If it be not to come, it will be now. If it be not now, yet it will come. The readiness is all, since no man of aught he leaves knows what is't to leave betimes. Let be. (5.2.197-202)

On the one hand, Hamlet submits himself to a divine order, upholding his earlier assertion that "a divinity that shapes our ends" (5.2.10), and refusing to second-guess God by trying to forestall his own death. As many have noted, the biblical allusion of the sparrow was favored by Calvin, who concludes, "Surely if the flyeng of birdes be ruled by the purpose of God, then must we nedes confesse with the Prophet, yet he so dwelleth on hye, that yet he humbleth himself to loke vpon at thinges that chaunce in heauen and earth."¹⁴⁴ At the same time, predestination does not preclude concern for one's soul, yet Hamlet assumes an attitude of detachment and indifference somewhat at odds with his Calvinist assertions. This is not an example of Hamlet contradicting

¹⁴⁴ Calvin, *Institution*, folio 59r.

himself; it is, rather, as Hilary Gatti asserts, “a complex scheme of juxtapositions which allow the possibility of Christian interpretations of the play while leaving the way open for alternative philosophical visions of the divinity, time, and death.”¹⁴⁵ It would therefore be a mistake to get carried away by this resigned attitude and conclude Hamlet has abandoned the search for self-knowledge or the divine perspective via the path of memory. Instead, we should see his apparent indifference as a direct result of memory’s double perspective, for, similar to Augustine’s memorization of the psalm, he views the plot of his own tragedy as a cohesive whole. And from this perspective the end of his life is a structural feature that bespeaks a larger order. The exact timing of his death is as irrelevant as the end of a psalm when one holds the entire passage in one’s head. There is, then, no answer to Hamlet’s question, “What is’t to leave betimes?” for from this higher perspective, there is no early or late.

Having grasped the duality of his self, Hamlet achieves a form of self-knowledge that is also a form of self-oblivion. It is for this reason that we should not view his apology to Laertes as a mere cynical excuse or self-serving false confession. As Plotinus states, a self-knower is a “double person.” Hamlet’s odd division of himself, “Was’t Hamlet wrong Laertes? Never Hamlet” (5.2.211), is not merely a convenient plea of not guilty by reason of insanity; more profoundly, it is a moment of recognition of his dualistic status, and his renunciation of his past actions can from this perspective be considered genuine. Furthermore, Hamlet’s references to his onlookers (“This presence knows” and the Folio’s “Sir, in this audience”) suggest his newfound ability to observe himself. Hamlet has, in part, become aware of his status as one of the audience, or as belonging to that other order. We can therefore align his Stoic attitude in the previous

¹⁴⁵ Hilary Gatti, *The Renaissance Drama of Knowledge: Giordano Bruno in England* (London: Routledge, 1989), 161. Gatti believes Hamlet echoes Bruno in this speech, but while Bruno insists upon the cyclical nature of time, Hamlet is focused on the endpoint of his life as it exists against the background of a divine order. Both Bruno and Hamlet’s thought, however, owe something to Platonic philosophy.

speech, his assertion of a divine order, and his partial denial of his own actions. Hamlet has essentially thrown himself into another order, an act that would in the Platonic tradition be called ascension through memory, and has resigned to watch this one aspect of himself play out its fate on stage.

Conclusion: Self-Made Fictions

When reading about the phenomenology of self-reflection, one often comes upon a scene of reading. Phenomenologists, even those not primarily concerned with aesthetic experience, will, in order to demonstrate the existence of a persistent sense of self, conjure a scene of a hypothetical individual engaged in a literary work. Dan Zahavi, for example, demonstrates the existence of a pre-reflective self with the following narrative:

If I am engaged in some conscious activity, such as the reading of a story, my attention is neither on myself nor on my activity of reading, but on the story. If my reading is interrupted by someone asking me what I'm doing, I immediately reply that I am (and have for some time been) reading; the self-consciousness on the basis of which I answer the question is not something acquired at just that moment, but a consciousness of myself that has been present to me all along.¹

Literary scholars attentive to the phenomenological tradition have also emphasized the dynamic of losing and recollecting oneself in a literary work. Wolfgang Iser argues that the reader's active role in constructing a fictional world ultimately creates a more vivid experience of the self, for the reader will continually "oscillat[e] between involvement in and observation of those illusions."² What draws phenomenologists to the scene of engagement in literary fiction is less the particularities of the experience than the intuition that there is something about being absorbed in a fiction that seems to both dampen self-awareness and affirm its ever-present nature. Zahavi maintains that even if while we read a story, the self seems to fade into the background of our consciousness, we must not discount the ease with which we recall our selves

¹ Dan Zahavi, *Subjectivity and Selfhood: Investigating the First-Person Perspective* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2005), 21.

² "The Reading Process: A Phenomenological Approach," in *Reader-response Criticism: From Formalism to Post-Structuralism*, ed. Jane P. Tompkins (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981), 61.

to ourselves. For philosophers and cognitive scientists who uphold the existence of an evolved, embodied self, then, our engagement with fiction offers both the most obvious threat to the theory and its steadiest support. It appears so simple to shed the self by losing ourselves in a good book, yet we awake from the dream without pause or confusion. With a tap on the shoulder, I can affirm that I am—and always have been—myself engaged in a work of fiction.

In the previous chapters, I hope to have shown that early modern dramatists, too, took a particular interest in a sense of self that seems both transparent and persistent. Although I believe that historicist-minded scholars frequently overstate their conclusions about the self as a mere cultural or linguistic construct, it is nevertheless clear that this skeptical, reductionist attitude toward the self can be found in abundance in early modern drama. Indeed, it is the drama itself that seems to have fueled this attitude. Ben Jonson, for instance, echoes a common sentiment when he insists that the theater not only reflects human activity but illustrates the danger of losing oneself to illusion. In his *Discoveries* (next to the marginal note *De vita humana*) Jonson writes, “I have considered, our whole life is like a play: wherein every man, forgetful of himself, is in travail with expression of another. Nay, we so insist in imitating others, as we cannot (when it is necessary) return to ourselves.”³ Here Jonson parrots the concerns of antitheatricalists who saw in the protean shape-shifting of the theater a genuine danger to individual identity and a perverse indulgence in deception and dishonesty. Antitheatricalist William Prynne argues that God “requires that the actions of every creature should be honest and sincere, devoyde of all hyocrisie, as all his actions, and their natures are. Hence he enjoyes all men at all times, to be such in shew, as they are in truth: to seeme that outwardly which they are inwardly; to act

³ Ben Jonson, *The Complete Poems*, ed. George Parfitt (New York: Penguin Books, 1996), 407.

themselves, not others.”⁴ It would seem, then, that Jonson, Prynne, and other early modern writers did not share Zahavi’s calm assurance that dallying with fictional identities posed little threat to our innate sense of self. I believe it is this fear, sparked by theater and stoked by antitheatricalists, that the self is fragile, contingent, and easily altered that modern historicist scholars have fastened upon in arguing for the early modern self as a mere product of cultural fashioning. True, some early modern authors saw in the constructed self a potential for liberation; others saw the opportunity for political critique; still others saw the idea as creatively productive for their art. The attitudes may have varied considerably, but the theater with its seemingly endless repository of changeable selves, demanded some form of response from its audience.

My project is therefore not at odds with the scholarship that treats the early modern self as a product of sociocultural pressures. It has not been my aim to replace this image of the era but rather to add a degree of depth and shade. As we have seen, while playwrights recognized all too well the illusory nature of the social and linguistic supports that hold up the self, they also, as they chipped away at it, found something that refused to crumble. Indeed, in nearly all of the works I have discussed, we find characters not just seeking but actively, desperately *yearning* for a complete and total dissolution of self. From Richard II’s self-pitying lament, “O that I were a mockery king of snow, / Standing before the sun of Bolingbroke, / To melt myself away in water-drops!” (*Richard II*, 4.1.260-62), to Faustus’ plea, “O soul, be changed into little waterdrops, / And fall into the ocean, ne’er be found!” (*Faustus*, 5.2.118-20), to Hamlet’s melancholic desire, “O that this too too solid flesh would melt, / Thaw, and resolve itself into a dew!” (*Hamlet*, 1.2.129-30), we find characters that, despite their aptitude for self-fashioning or

⁴ Qtd. in Jonas A. Barish, *The Antitheatrical Prejudice* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1981), 92. For a discussion of Jonson’s complicated relationship with the antitheatrical impulse, see Thomas M. Greene, “Ben Jonson and the Centered Self,” *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 10, no. 2 (Spring 1970): 325-348.

for skeptically undermining the buttresses of a stable identity, run up against the limits of their agency when they wish to dissolve the self entirely.⁵ Like *Hamlet*'s Player King, Shakespeare and Marlowe could with ease peel away the self's accoutrements, noting that, in a mutable world, how "necessary 'tis that we forget" our beliefs, desires, resolutions and intentions—all those things that would seem to define the self (*Hamlet*, 3.2.186). With this demolition work done, however, these playwrights recognized that something stubborn remained, some minimal presence that, regardless of our will, imposed a sense of corporeal coherence, a distinction between self and other, and a feeling of temporal order. This strand of the self may not have had a clear conceptual distinction at the time, but its presence, as a flickering shade, stalked these playwrights throughout their work.

New Historicism was founded upon the bracketing of this strand of the self, limiting its purview to the social and personal strands of the self's knotted timelines. As a consequence, however, scholars not only hampered their ability to account for embodied experience in all its immediacy, they also passed over an enduring, urgent concern of early modern authors. The persistence of a sense of self in contrast with the world's mutability perhaps found its clearest expression in the despair of tragic figures, but its importance can be detected everywhere in those self-aware texts that performed proto-neurophenomenological experiments within the laboratory of the playhouse. There, playwrights could poke and prod their captive audiences, interrupting their stable sense of self and then remarking upon its regeneration. As careful observers of the theatrical experience, Shakespeare and Marlowe leveled their sights at this subtle yet seemingly unmovable sense of self, not merely with the goal to understand it but to *move* it. And it was only by playing upon embodied phenomenology, by drawing their audiences into new forms of self-

⁵ Q1 and Q2 of *Hamlet* have "sallied" instead of "solid," which is in F. Solid makes better sense in the passage, which has an echo in *Henry IV*, pt.2: "the continent, / Weary of solid firmness, melt itself /Into the sea" (3.1.47-49).

experience, that these playwrights could give attentive individuals a fleeting glimpse of the part of their selves that never dissipated yet seemed to remain always in the backstage of the mind.

As Sidney and other early modern authors intuited, this unique form of self-knowledge could best be obtained through the dynamic of the literary, a type of experience that pierces and strikes the “clayey lodgings” of our embodied mind and then loops the resulting experience into its thematic and conceptual matter.⁶ In this sense, Sidney is certainly correct when he suggests that “poesy” offers a privileged means of responding to the Delphic dictum *nosce teipsum*. But what exactly is this self-knowledge that literature imparts? Hamlet declares “the purpose of playing... was and is, to hold, as ‘twere, a mirror up to Nature” (*Hamlet*, 3.2.20-22), suggesting we might come to know our own natures in fiction’s mirror. Moreover, many commentators have noted how literature builds upon the primordial fiction: the moment one first sees one’s own reflection. Literature, as a mirror of nature, might thus mimic the specular creation of the self. Even beyond Lacanian or psychoanalytic accounts, the cognitive sciences have recognized how the literary might be said to reflect the original reflection, how fiction derives from our founding fiction. Laurent Dubreuil explains:

The status of the mirrored *me* is far from simple. What I see is me, and it is not. The image of myself appears through this contradiction. This allows a regime of minimal fiction that is often perceptible in playful reactions in front of the mirror: the real has been displaced. The structural possibility for real fiction is also inscribed in this moment, and it is certainly no coincidence that mirrors are ubiquitous in the fantastic or that reflexivity is a noted trait of the literary.⁷

⁶ Philip Sidney, *An Apology for Poetry, or, The Defence of Poesy*, eds. Geoffrey Shepherd and R. W. Maslen. 3rd ed (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 2002), 226.

⁷ Laurent Dubreuil, *The Intellectual Space: Thinking Beyond Cognition* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015), 103.

Sidney, too, notes that the literary not only offers reflections of virtuous human action but also prompts pleasure as the imagination playfully exercises itself in the “golden world” of the poet.⁸ Fiction’s reflective capabilities thus not only show us to ourselves, they also, in the very act of reflection, remind us of the specular illusion upon which we first come to see *our selves*.

At the same time, I hope to have shown that early modern drama also stirs a kind of self-knowledge that at least originates outside of reflection (even if it ultimately becomes swept up in a dramatic work’s thematic and conceptual content). This sort of self-knowledge does not so much mirror the primordial experience of seeing the body reflected in a physical surface as it makes visible the transparent surface through which we perceive the world. The cognitive sciences have put forward the theory that our embodied sense of self is itself a mental representation, a neurobiological simulation that brings together disparate bodily sensations into a single phenomenological space. The welter of corporeal information is met by the ad-hoc interpretations of the brain, which constantly simulates our entire biological system as a cohesive whole. This ongoing loop between mental simulations and bodily information makes up the sense of our embodied self. The literary, as I’ve argued, can disrupt this loop, if only temporarily, by working upon both bodily sensations and our brain’s simulations. Whether laying bare the phenomenological structure of the present moment or tickling our mirror neurons, literature can alter the components of our embodied self, bringing that which is phenomenologically hidden to our awareness. Although our brain quickly course-corrects in response to these unsettling literary effects, the experiences themselves can be caught up in the content of certain “self-aware” literary works, ultimately forming part of their meaning and making the subtle self-knowledge available to us beyond the brief moment of its creation.

⁸ Sidney, *Apology*, 85.

What this form of self-knowledge directs us to, then, is less a personal uniqueness than a deeper understanding of how, through the self, we come to be embedded in the world. If, however, literature is tied to that “minimal fiction” of first seeing our reflection in a mirror, the type of self-knowledge I am describing here might also alert us to an elemental illusion. There are those in the cognitive sciences who insist that even our embodied experience is a fiction, indeed *the* fiction upon which our consciousness is founded.⁹ According to this way of thinking, the self only appears to be a stable feeling, a result of biological processes that (phenomenologically) cover their tracks, erasing the steps that lead to the self’s construction. As Metzinger explains, the brain is “a system which, even in ordinary waking states, constantly hallucinates at the world.”¹⁰ At each moment, each phenomenological “now,” the brain transforms our bodily sensations and perceptual information into a coherent self-world relationship, making the self not just an illusion, but an ongoing, dynamic fiction that opens us to reality. If we are always “vigorously dreaming at the world,” the literary, as I’ve argued here, is not our means for waking up, but perhaps it shows us the way to dream lucidly.¹¹ By disrupting the ongoing construction of embodied selfhood, literature might, for a fleeting instant, make darkness visible and show us what evolution has for eons kept in the shadows of consciousness.

As this project began with mangled fiddler crabs and the question “Are the cognitive sciences relevant to literary studies?” it would be rather too glib to conclude that the cognitive

⁹ Of the cognitive scientists I have referenced in this project, Metzinger is the most unequivocal in calling the embodied self an illusion. He states in the first page of his *Being No One* that the self does not exist: “The phenomenal self is not a thing, but a process.” Damasio, although he largely agrees with the specifics of Metzinger’s theory, is less willing to declare the self doesn’t exist. Zahavi, on the other hand, believes Metzinger makes a mistake by assuming that the self “must be an unchanging and ontologically independent entity” in order to have any meaningful existence. The fact that the self is “merely” a mental model, he argues, does not make it any less real. See Thomas Metzinger, *Being No One: The Self-Model Theory of Subjectivity* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2003), 1; Antonio R. Damasio, *Self Comes to Mind: Constructing the Conscious Brain* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2010), 24; and Dan Zahavi, *Self and Other: Exploring Subjectivity, Empathy, and Shame* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 3.

¹⁰ Metzinger, *Being*, 52

¹¹ Metzinger, *Being*, 52.

sciences show us how *we* are the true fiddler crabs—mere test subjects of early modern drama’s experiments upon us. We are, after all, willing participants, even collaborators, in these experiments. And whatever trauma literature might be capable of inflicting upon our embodied selves, their regenerative capabilities insure the damage will be short-lived. At the same time, I hope to have shown that it is not so far-fetched to think of the early modern theater as an experimental space where playwrights could generate not just radical new ideas but also new *experiences*. These theatrical experiments, while by no means scientific in the modern sense of the term, reveal a subtleness of thought, a syncretic philosophical approach, and a willingness to examine the mind in its multifaceted complexity, all of which make these works deserving forebearers to the cognitive sciences. If literature is in a sense always performing its cognitive experiments, the brief flourishing of English drama before the closing of the theaters in 1642 marked an unprecedented era when playwrights could run their tests and watch the results amid a storm of conceptual and theoretical musing from those writers who scrutinized the theater’s effects on its audience. To examine the plays of this period through the lens of the cognitive sciences is therefore a gesture both anachronistic and, at the same time, sympathetically attuned to the historical moment. Therefore, we ought to reconfigure the question of how the cognitive sciences are relevant to literary studies, and conceive of the relationship less as the bridging of two distinct disciplines and more the re-joining of various strands of inquiry, strands that one time formed a subtle knot.

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