

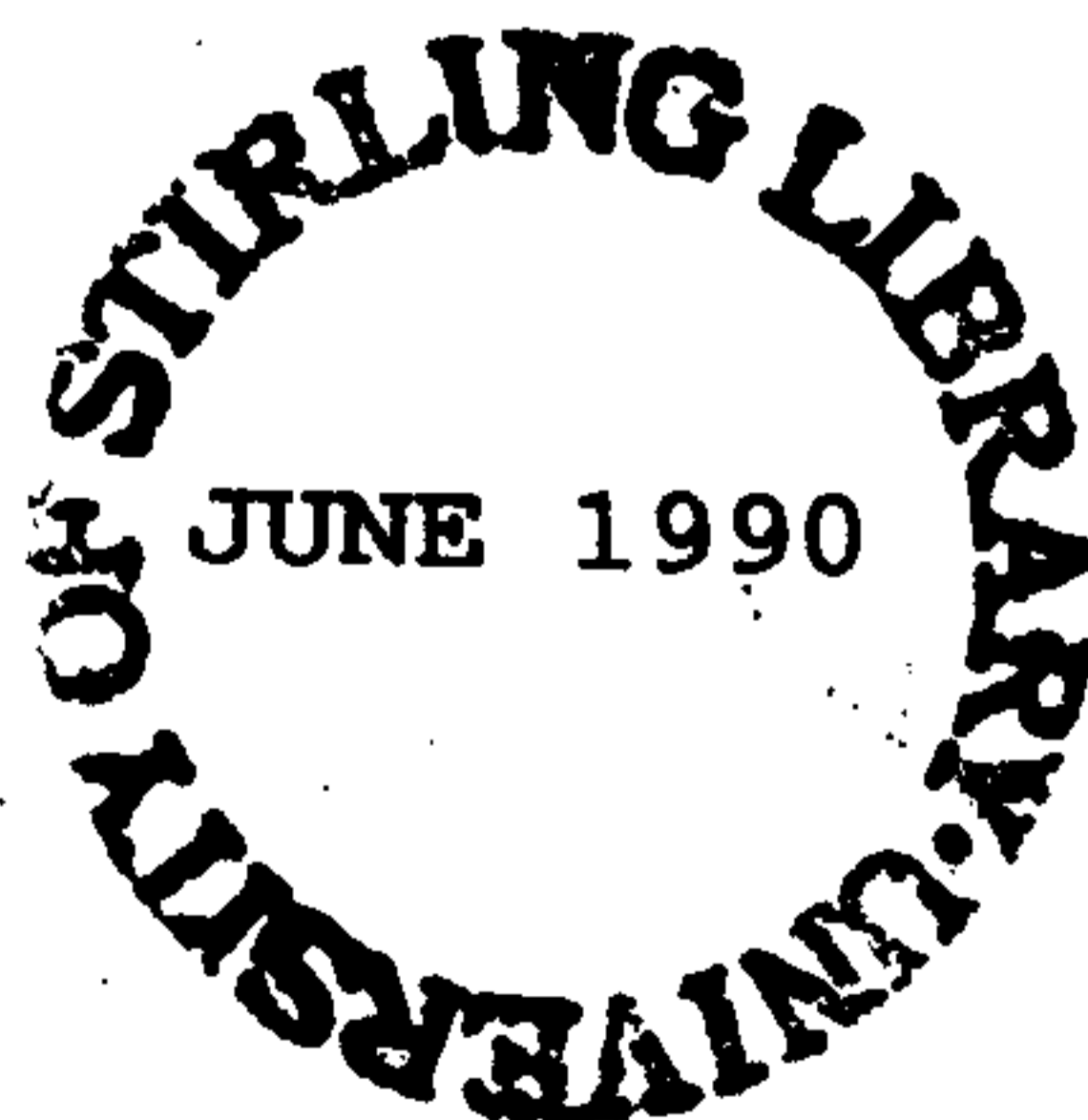
Thesis
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SUBJECTIVITY IN SHAKESPEARE'S SONNETS

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ABSTRACT

This thesis undertakes a study of Shakespeare's sonnets that seeks to locate them in the determinate historical circumstances of the moment of their production. Subjectivity in the sonnets is read as the location of a series of conflicts which are ultimately socio-historical in nature. Contemporaries identified the sonnet form as a discourse of the aristocracy, especially in its manifestation of courtly love. Shakespeare's sonnets attempt to manage the pressures that the history of the late sixteenth century impose upon this discursive formation from within the genre itself. The first and second chapters of the thesis set out the historical framework within which the generic requirements of the sonnet were played out, and discuss the tensions which result. Chapter three reads the first seventeen sonnets in the light of this work, arguing against a view of these particular poems as a homogeneous group of marriage sonnets. These sonnets set out the homosocial considerations that underpin the relationship between the addressor and the young nobleman in a way that foreshadows the conflicts that are played out in later poems. Chapter four traces these conflicts in terms of the subjectivity of the young man, noting that the historical crisis in the ideology of the aristocracy renders his subject-position unstable. Chapter five relates this result to the related subjectivity of the addressor, the poetic persona of the poems, and reads his position as noting the disjunctions in the dominant ideology, while nevertheless being unable to move away from its interpellation of his position. Chapter six notes the consequent disruption of gendered identity, both for the "dark lady" and the poetic persona himself. The conclusion argues for a materialist perspective on the sonnets' problematising of subjectivity in the Renaissance.

For Kay, Ann and the big square cat.

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It should be noted that all references to Shakespeare's sonnets are taken from Stephen Booth's 1977 edition. All other Shakespearean references are from the Alexander Text, published by Collins.

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Introduction

This thesis will be concerned with the construction of subjectivity in Shakespeare's sonnets. It is a commonplace of literary criticism that these poems represent a 'problem' similar to that of some of the plays. This assumption will be questioned in a reading of the sonnets which takes into account the historical context within which they were produced. The crucial question will be to determine whether a 'problem' actually exists, or whether the difficulties these texts pose are a consequence of certain untheorised assumptions inherent in critical practice itself.

The problem can be best characterised as arising from the elaboration of a critical reading of the sonnets as a biographical record. This reading assumes that the texts reproduce unproblematically an authentic poetic voice. The issue of 'presence' and the assumption of personal autonomy therefore act as the subtext of much critical work on the sonnets. The identification of the 'I' of the sonnets with the man William Shakespeare is only part of a wider critical

project, and is necessarily, therefore, imbricated in questions of representation and an assumed transparency of language itself. The result has been a mythologising and dehistoricising of 'Shakespeare' as the greatest dramatist of all time, a genius who transcends mere historical contingency.

By attending to subjectivity this thesis will approach the historical context which produced the sonnets in a way that pays more attention to their political discursivities than has hitherto generally been the case. In her essay 'Hegemony And New Political Subjects: Toward A New Concept Of Democracy' Chantal Mouffe offers a theoretical perspective on subjectivity which is of particular relevance to the present project. She observes that:

Within every society, each social agent is inscribed in a multiplicity of social relations - not only social relations of production but also the social relations, among others, of sex, race, nationality, and vicinity. All these social relations determine positionalities or subject positions, and every social agent is therefore the locus of many subject positions and cannot be reduced to only one. Thus, someone inscribed in the relations of production as a worker is also a man or a woman, white or black, Catholic or Protestant, French or German, and so on. A person's subjectivity is not constructed only on the basis of his or her position in the relations of production. Furthermore, each social position, each subject

position, is itself the locus of multiple possible constructions, according to the different discourses that can construct that position. Thus, the subjectivity of a given social agent is always precariously and provisionally fixed or, to use the Lacanian term, sutured at the intersection of various discourses.¹

The relationship proposed in this passage between individual social agents and the positioning of their subjectivity is a dialectical one, and this relationship will be of crucial importance for the reading of the sonnets that follows. Mouffe's theoretical position corroborates the development of my contention that the sonnets do not position subjects in a simple reflection of the relations of production. Rather, the subject positions that are possible at a particular historical juncture are inscribed in the literary form by means of a relationship between text and history which is itself dialectical. The socially produced subjectivities recorded in these poems are historically precise, and resist any retrospective attempt to conflate Renaissance subjectivity and the post-Cartesian subject. Consequently, subjectivity in the sonnets will be investigated in terms of ideological positionings, and in this

respect my analysis will draw upon the work of Louis Althusser's Essays On Ideology² among others.

The necessary corollary to a reading of the sonnets which takes into account their full historicity in the manner outlined above is that there can be no simplistic demarcation between a theoretical position and critical practice. Accordingly, the thesis will concentrate on the integral relationship between text and history at the level of literary production, and that between theory and practice at the level of critical reception. Each informs the other, with the result that it has been impossible to divide the text of the thesis into separate sections on theory and sections on the actual practice of the reading of the sonnets.

The purpose of the introduction will therefore be to commence a survey of some previous critical texts on Shakespeare in general and the sonnets in particular, reading them in terms of their engagement with the crucial relationship between history and the literary work itself. This will serve as a means of clearing the way for my own reading of the sonnets, with particular reference to the crucial question of the historical production of the subject positions inscribed

within them.

I

Some of the assumptions of Shakespearean criticism can be located as having their beginnings in the literary theory of the Restoration. Literature was assigned the dual function of entertainment and moral instruction, an attitude which was encouraged by the restored monarchy's political managing of the arts as a new enlightenment, in a reaction against the repressive legislation enacted during the interregnum. John Dryden provides a viewpoint which can be taken to epitomise this movement:

a play ought to be a just and lively image of human nature, representing its passions and humours, and the changes of fortune to which it is subject, for the delight and instructing of mankind.³

Here Dryden makes no distinction between poetry and drama, in a development of one of the two essential elements of 'poesy', as conceived by Sidney and Puttenham in the Renaissance. The emphasis on moral instruction and pleasure is predicated upon a

synthesis of humanist learning, which utilises 'delight' to expound a perception of harmony, and the Christian ethos of moral instruction. This Neo-Platonic position proposes that the function of the poet is to represent higher reality in a way which is edifying for the fallen creatures of this world. Thus, Dryden's reference to harmony positions the subject while, at the same time, effacing this operation through a utilisation of a theoretical perspective whereby the poet arrives at the Neo-Platonic understanding of higher reality through the techniques of poetic perception. However, as Samuel Johnson later observed, a strong tradition of carnivalesque humour ensured that that which was designated as immoral could also elicit pleasure, and if poetry were to represent reality, then it would have had to figure forth the bad as well as the good.⁴ But if poetry were to be morally instructive, then the enormous vitality of the immoral would have had to be managed, or even suppressed. Thus, a contradiction is embodied at the heart of representation, and for Dryden no easy resolution of the problem is possible. The practice of representation is required to efface the

operation of its own occlusion of what is considered immoral. Representation may therefore be seen as an ideological operation.

It is precisely at this point that the figure of Shakespeare as autonomous subject begins to be invoked as a means of resolving such contradictions. Dryden draws attention to Shakespeare the man as the origin of poetic wisdom, in a passage which prefigures much later Shakespearean criticism:

To begin then, with Shakespeare. He was the man of all modern, and perhaps of all ancient poets, who had the largest and most comprehensive soul. All the images of Nature were still present to him, and he drew them, not laboriously, but luckily; when he describes any thing, you more than see it, you feel it too.⁵

The tense of "describes" reveals a sense of an author who is registered both as present to his own poetic discourse, and whose 'presence' permits him access to the moral structure that is silently inscribed in 'nature'. The issue here is that poetic voice, the autonomous self, and 'nature' are all presented as particular facets of a fully integrated personality.

The Augustans take up and develop this figure

of the author as it is embodied in Dryden's discourse, as the following passage from Pope shows:

If ever any author deserved the name of an original, it was Shakespeare ... The poetry of Shakespeare was inspiration indeed: he is not so much, an imitator, as an instrument of, nature; and 'tis not so just to say that he speaks from her, as that she speaks through him.⁶

Already in this early critical text Shakespeare is characterised as being no mere imitator; his genius is already the transcendent authority later to be celebrated by the Romantics. Pope continues:

His characters are so much like nature herself, that 'tis a sort of injury to call them by so distant a name as copies of her ... every single character in Shakespeare is as much an individual, as those in life itself; it is impossible to find any two alike.⁷

The type of character criticism taken to its logical extreme later by Romanticism and its successors, especially Bradley, is already prefigured in Pope's work. Even the later concern with the disclosure of the author in his plays is also in evidence in Pope's writings:

How astonishing is it ... that he is not more a master of the great than of the ridiculous in human nature; of our noblest tendernesses, than of our vainest

foibles; of our strongest emotions, than of our idlest sensations!⁸

Already the writer, rather than the text, has become the object of the critic's attention. The plays are merely the transparent medium through which the 'great author' is approached.

The canonisation of Shakespeare as a cultural icon which is a consequence of such a view entails also the production of a genius who feels everything. As Pope puts it:

His sentiments are not only in general the most pertinent and judicious upon every subject; but by a talent very peculiar, something between penetration and felicity, he hits upon that particular point on which the bent of each argument turns, or the force of each moment depends.⁹

However, the Augustans do articulate a partial reaction against the importance given to the function of art as entertainment, recapitulating the ethics of poetry in a return to the moral values of Sidney and Puttenham. But this is accomplished in the context of a debate about literary power, epitomised in the struggle between the moderns and the ancients. The definitive

Augustan statement of the power of literary discourse is formulated by Samuel Johnson; for children, books

are the entertainment of minds unfurnished with ideas and therefore easily susceptible of impressions; not fixed by principles, and therefore following the current of fancy; not informed by experience, and consequently open to every false suggestion and partial account. The same kind, though not the same degree, of caution is required in every thing which is laid before them, to secure them from unjust prejudices, perverse opinions, and incongruous combinations of images.¹⁰

Thus, unless proper instruction is given, the child's mind may be influenced by partial accounts. The passage of course obfuscates its own partiality, utilising the classic strategy of demonising other versions - they are 'unjust prejudices, perverse opinions, and incongruous combinations of images'. Dr. Johnson is concerned with a particular constellation of civilised values, and the anxiety over the use of literary art as a force for moral education continues in his work:

It is justly considered as the greatest excellency of art, to imitate nature; but it is necessary to distinguish those parts of nature, which are most proper

for imitation: greater care still is required in presenting life, which is so often discoloured by passion, or deformed by wickedness. If the world be promiscuously described, I cannot see of what use it can be to read the account; or why it may not be as safe to turn the eye immediately upon mankind, as upon a mirror which shows all that presents itself without discrimination.¹¹

Exactly what it is that constitutes the grounds for this discrimination is not stated. Once again, as with Dryden, mimesis is to be curtailed in the interests of morality, representing only the good.

However, if representation can be utilised in such a way, then it may also, logically, be used in other ways. This implies that language does not simply and unproblematically represent reality. Dr. Johnson comes very close to realising this necessary limitation upon the power of representation in the following manner:

No word is necessarily or intrinsically meaner than another; our opinion therefore of words, as of other things arbitrarily and capriciously established, depends wholly upon accident and custom.¹²

The arbitrariness of language which Johnson here recognises reveals a fundamental contradiction in mimetic theory. It is this contradiction that the

Romantics attempted to resolve in their theory of the Imagination. The Augustans therefore prepare for the Romantics, drawing together poetic voice and the autonomous self. Specifically, in the instance of Shakespeare, he becomes associated with his writings, and his texts are seen as the utterance of the transcendent author.

For the Romantics, the philosophy of the Imagination becomes the referent of theory. For Shelley:

Metaphysics will thus possess this conspicuous advantage over every other science, that each student, by attentively referring to his own mind, may ascertain the authorities upon which any assertions regarding it are supported.¹³

Following Kant, the imaginative being who produces the work of art in the realm of aesthetics has now come to the fore. In these circumstances, to know the Ideal one reads to find the minds of the great poets who have located it. As Shelley describes it, the Imagination is what matters, and this primacy of mind renders language transparent:

Most of the errors of the philosophers have arisen from considering the human being in a point of view too detailed and circumscribed. He is not a moral, and an

intellectual, - but also, and pre-eminently, an imaginative being. His own mind is his law; his own mind is all things to him.¹⁴

The aestheticising strategy which takes place here acts as the foundation for a theory of the autonomous poetic self. The continuation of the demarcation between emotion and reason is evident here, in a typically Romantic reaction against the rationalism of the Enlightenment. It must be observed that the Kantian poetic produced by this theory exists independently of history:

A poet participates in the eternal, the infinite and the one; as far as relates to his conceptions, time and place and number are not.¹⁵

This transcendence of history is what lies behind Victor Hugo's definitive statement of the Imagination in his book William Shakespeare: "The human mind is the infinite possible."¹⁶ Thus, the Romantic sanctification of the poetic self turns from the religious language of place to a religion of the self. Hugo continues:

Men of genius are extravagant. This arises from the infinite element within them; they are, in fact, not circumscribed.¹⁷

The correspondence of this self of the Romantics with the Cartesian 'self' is made explicit in Coleridge's Biographia Literaria. Coleridge's text links the English literary movement with German continental philosophy, the direct heir of the Cartesians. Thus, for Coleridge, philosophy is:

the science of ultimate truths and
therefore *scientia scientorum*.¹⁸

These ultimate truths are connected with the Cartesian Subject, and as a result, Coleridge is able to define philosophy as 'the science of *Being*'.¹⁹ He goes on to establish a connection between this ultimately unitary self and a theory of Imagination, providing a framework for a relationship between the author and his text which consolidates the principle of authorial presence. For him, the act of imagination is an act of creation, and to write is, therefore, to inscribe oneself in language. Thus, the created human being recreates himself in textual form. In Coleridge's terms, the author partakes of the divine power of creation, making himself present in his text by means of a difference in the degree of his creative power from that of the Supreme Being. As a result,

The inevitable result of this position is that the literary work is the author:

The *Imagination* then, I consider as primary or secondary. The *Primary Imagination* I hold to be the living Power and prime Agent of all human perception, and as a repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation in the infinite *I Am*. The *Secondary Imagination* I consider as an echo of the former, co-existing with the conscious will, yet still as identical with the primary in the *kind* of its agency, and differing only in *degree* and in the *mode* of its operation. It dissolves, diffuses, dissipates, in order to recreate.²⁰

Thus, the secondary imagination is the textual replication of the subject originally created by the Supreme Being.

As a consequence of this theoretical position, the question asked of texts becomes, and has remained, the same as that asked by Coleridge:

What is poetry? is so nearly the same question with, what is a poet? that the answer to the one is involved in the solution of the other.²¹

This assumption of a unity between the author and the text has crucial implications for literary studies after Coleridge, especially with regard to the figure of Shakespeare.

It is only a short step from Coleridge's position

to a form of idealism, which is epitomised most obviously in the work of Matthew Arnold:

there is certainly a curiosity, a desire after the things of the mind simply for their own sakes and for the pleasure of seeing them as they are, - which is, in an intelligent being, natural and laudable.²²

Criticism in this context is explicitly divorced from any sort of political practice, becoming a de-historicised activity which seeks out the author as the transcendent consciousness of the text. The result is the production of Arnold's well-known denial that literature has any direct relationship whatsoever with political practice. For him, the world of literature is to be a seamless ideal, while the practical world of politics is allowed to be contradictory. A hierarchy of discourses is being set up here, and the consequence of Arnold's position is the effective removal of literature from the conflict of ideologies, and the task of the critic is to pursue the eternal verities presented by the author in his text for the benefit of mankind.

Nevertheless, the operation of this idealist critical practice in fact fails to resolve contradiction at a crucial point:

The moment this view of culture is seized, the moment it is regarded not solely as the endeavour to see things as they are, to draw towards a knowledge of the universal order which seems to be intended and aimed at in the world, and which it is a man's happiness to go along with, or his misery to go counter to, - to learn, in short, the will of God, - the moment, I say, culture is considered not merely as the endeavour to see and learn this, but as the endeavour, also, to make it prevail, the moral, social, and beneficial character of culture becomes manifest.²³

The theory of pleasure in relation to 'order' here directly informs the Kantian relationship between the Absolute and the present world. Thus, the Liberal ideology of culture becomes, in this passage, the reality 'which it is a man's happiness to go along with, or his misery to go counter to'. Here a repressive apparatus may be detected behind the educational apparatus. Only culture is good; it has a morally and socially beneficial character which one should endeavour to promote. The exclusion of women through the use of 'man' at a crucial point in the rhetoric, together with the veiled violence of an 'endeavour' to 'prevail', open up the contradictions which the ideology tries to efface. The invocation of the name of God

identifies the good moral purpose of criticism with the good news of Christianity. Arnold's universalising operation accordingly appeals to a hierarchy of moral values, and it is this religious good which will be the prime beneficiary of culture, despite the fact that he specifically excludes from its operations any action in the world. It is precisely this Arnoldian separation of culture from politics which informs the critical attitudes of much twentieth century criticism of Shakespeare, and it does so in terms of the assumption that the poetic persona is the textual representation of the authorial self.

II

Hence the production of the autonomous self naturally leads on to a criticism which reads Shakespeare's texts as the expression of a self. When, for example, Dr. Johnson finds the comedies more satisfying than the tragedies, he invokes the concept of Shakespeare's 'disposition' as the reason:

He therefore indulged his natural disposition, and his disposition, as Rhymer has remarked, led him to comedy.²⁴

Thus, Johnson makes a distinction between the tragedies and the comedies based upon the assumptions inherent in his own theory of literary authority:

His tragedy seems to be skill, his comedy to be instinct.²⁵

Following on from earlier comments upon the production of this self, a distinction now needs to be made between a critical 'reading' which is always ideologically motivated, and the historical moment of the texts' initial production, with their own social and cultural conditioning.

Johnson seems to recognise that there is a disjunction between texts and critical work:

He sacrifices virtue to convenience, and is so much more careful to please than to instruct, that he seems to write without any moral purpose.²⁸

The imposition of moral values from a later period upon Shakespeare's texts thus produces a disjunction between the assumptions of a critical practice and the readings that it sanctions. Johnson of course interprets this to mean that there is something wrong with the plays, as he is

unable to perceive the constructed nature of his own ideological assumptions. The passage is not an isolated case in Johnson's work, as the following quotation indicates:

The equality of words to things is very often neglected.²⁷

The "equality of words to things" was produced by the philosophical tradition of mimesis, and, as was seen earlier, Johnson is aware of the arbitrary nature of this correspondence. Nevertheless, despite this awareness, as a critic, the dislocations in signifying practice which he finds in Shakespeare's texts puzzle him, and he falls back upon familiar moral assumptions.

After Johnson, the Romantics glorify precisely the diversity which he questioned. Coleridge again provides the fullest expression of this tendency:

Shakespeare possessed the chief, if not all the requisites of a poet - namely, deep feeling and exquisite sense of beauty, both as exhibited to the eye in combinations of form, and to the ear in sweet and appropriate melody...; that these feelings were under the command of his own will; that in his very first productions he projected his mind out of his own particular being, and felt, and made others feel, on subjects no way connected with himself, except by force of contemplation and that sublime faculty

by which a great mind becomes that which it meditates on.²⁸

The production of this omniscient author allows Coleridge to construct a Shakespeare who incorporates nature into his being:

To this we add the affectionate love of nature and natural objects, without which no man could have observed so steadily, or painted so truly and passionately, the very minutest beauties of the external world.²⁹

The ideal and the poet are caught up in a direct and circular correspondence; only the truly great poet can represent the ideal, and the ideal can only be represented by the truly great poet. At first sight this appears to be a tautology, but in fact it has its roots in aesthetics, grounding Coleridge's criticism upon his theory of the creative Imagination. The act of perception of the poet as genius re-creates for others the reality of the ideal, just as the ideal creates the conditions for the genius through his perceptions.

Shakespeare is given pride of place in this body of ideas and assumptions by Coleridge:

We find undoubted proof in his mind of imagination, or the power by which one

image or feeling is made to modify many others, and by a sort of fusion to force many into one ... combining many circumstances into one moment of thought to produce that ultimate end of human thought and human feeling, unity, and, thereby the reduction of the spirit to its principle and fountain, who alone is truly one.³⁰

The production of Shakespeare the genius is thus explicitly united with a Christian deism which subsumes into itself all human thought and feeling, and it becomes the critic's task to uncover this great authorial being in his texts:

He was a child of nature, but it was of human nature and of the most important of human nature. In the meanest characters, it was still Shakespeare ... it was this great and mighty being changing himself into the nurse or the blundering constable, that gave delight.³¹

This mode of critical practice has led to a privileging of the humanist subject in a body of criticism which has been unwilling to recognise the constructed nature of its own assumptions.³² Coleridge renders explicit the ahistorical essentialism which is a corollary of these assumptions in the following manner:

Lear and The Merchant of Venice were popular tales, but so excellently managed

that both were the representation of men in all ages and at all times.³³

According to Coleridge, then, Shakespeare manages a representation of essential humanity in his texts, and this results in a relegation of history itself to the status of 'accidental circumstances':

The next ground of judging is how far a poet is influenced by *accidental circumstances*. He writes not for past ages but for that in which he lives and that which is to follow. It is natural that he should conform to the circumstances of his day, but a true genius will stand independent of these circumstances.³⁴

There is here no description of exactly what it is that constitutes the grounds for judging whether or not a poet passes this test, and the recuperation of Shakespeare for this ahistorical formula culminates in Coleridge's famous dictum: 'Shakespeare is of no age!'.³⁵ It is in these terms that a form of criticism develops which regards the characters of the plays as a transparent means of locating the autonomous subject 'Shakespeare'.³⁶

These assumptions formed the methodological framework within which literary criticism later entered the academy. The process which constituted

the study of English at university is therefore imbricated in the production of a transcendent Shakespeare. Continuing in this tradition, Walter Raleigh writes:

He has been separated from his fellows, and recognised for what he is: perhaps the greatest poet of all time; one who has said more about humanity than any other writer, and has said it better.³⁷

The use of the passive "has been separated" reveals the operation which has been performed upon the 'subject' Shakespeare. Raleigh's text goes on to relate the reading of this individual Shakespeare to the reality lived and experienced by a humanist subject:

The indispensable preliminary for judging and enjoying Shakespeare is not knowledge of his works, but knowledge of his theme, a wide acquaintance of human life and passion as they are reflected in a sensitive and independent mind.³⁸

The author, now accompanied by the critic, as transcendent subject is again privileged over the materiality of the text, and Raleigh uses the terminology of nineteenth-century psychology to interpret this authorial self, despite the fact that Shakespeare's works date from a time prior to

its development within the sphere of psychology:

The tragic conflicts which are the themes of his greatest plays were projected by him from the intestinal warfare and insurrections of the kingdom of his mind ... the central drama of his mind is the tragedy of the life of imagination.³⁹

Thus, the discourse of humanism shares certain psychological assumptions about the nature of the self. The objectivity which is claimed by the critic in the face of this transhistorical being is therefore in reality a mystification, a process that can be shown to operate in Raleigh's text:

Shakespeare was that rarest of all things, a whole man ... He is, in a word, a seer and a sceptic. There is no contradiction in all this. Large minds are open and wise, where small minds are close and cunning.⁴⁰

The acknowledgement of a possible objection to the construction of the Shakespearean subject is evaded by means of a mystificatory appeal to a humanist version of an autonomous subjectivity that first receives its philosophical elaboration during the Enlightenment.

III

Raleigh's humanist assumptions lead him to postulate the text as the communication of the great mind of the author with other, lesser minds:

But everywhere, even where we follow with uncertain steps, we feel the pressure of his hand, and are aware that all the knowledge that we gather by the way is knowledge of him, authorised and communicated by himself.⁴¹

Such a position is rendered problematical when one comes to the sonnets. If Shakespeare's texts are a personal communication, a direct representation of his experience in the world, then it would be logical to expect criticism to embody a perception of the omniscient author behind the texts of the poems. Accordingly, in Raleigh's text there occurs a sketching out of an omniscient position for 'Shakespeare' that lends authority to his utterance. The issue here is one of authority and wisdom, as for Raleigh Shakespeare's texts then become exemplary, and as a result are appropriated for educational purposes. Raleigh's almost psalmodic evocation of the authorised version of the wisdom of Shakespeare produced a reading of the texts which was easily

recuperated as a tool for a deliberate educational policy.⁴² As a cultural icon, Shakespeare was utilised in the early twentieth century in the context of an anxiety about control of the apparatus of education, as indicated in the Newbolt Report:

Literature, the form of art most readily available, must be handled from the first as the most direct and lasting communication of experience from man to man.⁴³

This essentialising of 'experience', articulated in literary form, aligns 'literature' and 'humanism' as a complex medium of political control. The report continues:

If we use English literature as a means of contact with great minds, a channel by which to draw upon their experience with profit and delight, and a bond of sympathy between the members of a human society, we shall succeed.⁴⁴

Here 'profit' comes before 'delight' in a context of utilitarian manipulation of literature as a means of promoting harmony within society. Until recently, the assumptions which lay behind the Newbolt Report have continued to determine the critical context within which literature in general

and the works of Shakespeare in particular have been discussed.⁴⁵

The kinds of critical attitudes characterised so far have produced a reaction in modern critical theory. The term 'theory' does not sufficiently convey the fact that there are many different and conflicting emphases, but it does serve as a reminder that there have been recent movements in cultural studies which are self-consciously aware of their status as theoretical constructs. This in itself has led to a demystifying of the type of criticism investigated in the previous sections of this introduction. A criticism which is hostile to theory can therefore be challenged on the grounds that it is itself produced by a set of assumptions which, while not theorised as such, can nevertheless be shown to inform critical practice. Critical readings are therefore always produced in conjunction with a set of interpretative strategies.

Modern critical theory reacts against the untheorised body of assumptions which underpin particular critical practices. It seeks to relocate text and theory in a relationship to each other

that includes an awareness of the fact that any reading emanates from a constructed position. Given that criticism has failed to address the problems of historical subjectivities in Shakespeare's sonnets, the investigation of representation by theorists provides a more consistent framework for such a project. There is not the space in this introduction to attempt a full investigation of the many diverse positions in critical theory. Nevertheless, a short survey of some of the work which is more relevant to the concerns of this thesis will serve to clear the ground for the reading of the sonnets which follows.

Continuing the interrogation of criticism's concern with the authentic poetic voice suggested earlier, the work of Roland Barthes on representation should now be addressed. His concern is with narratological semiotics, and he concentrates upon the construction of literary discourse. His methodology leads him, in S/Z, to posit that in his novella Balzac utilises five different types of delaying strategy alone. The multiplication of variations which inevitably accompanies the attempt to use a structure to

define all that is possible in a given text moves Barthes toward a break with structuralist methodology. Thus, the free-floating signifier characteristic of much later post-structuralist theory already haunts this text:

Connotation is the way into the polysemy of the classic text, to that limited plural on which the classic text is based.⁴⁶

He continues further:

what we call "real" (in the theory of the representative text) is never more than a code of representation (of signification): it is never a code of execution: *the novelistic real is not operable.*⁴⁷

Barthes' narratological theory here indicates that the classic realist text assumes an extra-textual 'reality' which is nevertheless inseparable from the text. However, he fails to produce a theoretical model of the relationship between history and text. Thus, despite excavating the classic text's own presupposition of a prior historical reality, he is unable to articulate that discovery in terms of the resultant determination of the interaction of meanings. Hence, the one type

of commentary conspicuous by its absence in Barthes' text, is a theorising of the relation between the bourgeois ideology prevalent at the time of the production of Balzac's story and the text itself.

The crucial relationship between text and history is therefore left unresolved in S/Z. This relationship has continued to be problematical for those critics associated with 'deconstruction', one of the main successors to structuralism. By rejecting the metaphysics of presence, deconstruction has much in common with the materialist emphasis on historical overdetermination. There is, however, a tendency among some of its practitioners to argue away all forms of social referentiality, thus forcing a recession into radical indeterminacy, precluding a genuinely historicised analysis. In the United States in particular, this has led to the recuperation of deconstruction for a criticism based on vague idealist categories. The problem is whether or not the play of the signifier has societal and historical limits.⁴⁸ Connected with this is the question of analytical coherence: if

all thinking and reading necessarily occurs within the limits sponsored within the metaphysical tradition, then is any theory which reacts against that tradition necessarily confined to the terms laid down by the tradition? The work of Jacques Derrida, who initiated the movement, is itself much more aware of these questions than that of some of his American disciples. Derrida is always careful to relate his work to historical considerations:

Arche-writing as spacing cannot occur as *such* within the phenomenological experience of a *presence*. It marks the *dead time* within the presence of one living present within the general form of all presence. The dead time is at work.⁴⁹

It is significant that Derrida invokes 'time', the history which tends to be effaced by some post-Derridean deconstructionists.⁵⁰ By contrast, free-form deconstruction has become recuperable for that Arnoldian separation of culture from politics.

One theorist whose work does address the relationship between text and history is Michel Foucault. His analysis of epistemological paradigms is accomplished in a manner that is directly relevant to the project envisaged in this thesis. Foucault argues that the sixteenth century was

predisposed to 'think' meaning through in terms of a totalising impetus by means of a theory of resemblance:

To search for a meaning is to bring to light a resemblance. To search for the law governing signs is to discover the things that are alike ... The nature of things, their coexistence, the way in which they are linked together and communicate is nothing other than their resemblance.⁵¹

The unfolding series of ideas that constitutes the practice of mimetic representation as Foucault defines it privileges symbolic, hierarchical order.

He continues:

At the Renaissance the organization [of the sign] is different, and much more complex: it is ternary, since it requires the formal domain of marks, the content indicated by them, and the similitudes that link the marks to the things designated by them; but since resemblance is the form of the signs as well as their content, the three distinct elements of this articulation are resolved into a single form.⁵²

Therefore, at the Renaissance, Foucault argues, the sign fulfils a completely different function from both the modern sign-system structured by difference, and the preceding system characterised by unitary Christian symbolism. He politicises his theory of signification as a necessary prelude to his

chronology of the movement from each period to its successor:

If a position, a sentence, a group of signs can be called a "statement", it is not therefore because, one day, someone happened to speak them or put them into some concrete form of writing; it is because the position of the subject can be assigned.⁵³

This implies that the assignation of a subject position delimits the communicative act, and Foucault's use of the passive here reveals the operation which is enacted upon the subject. The assignation of the subject to which Foucault here refers reveals an operation of power upon the individual, with an implication of covert control. The problem with this formulation is that it does not address directly the problem of discursive resistance. The reason for this is, however, that Foucault's field of investigation is not wide enough to encompass the historical subjectivities interpellated by particular ideologies. The sweep of his charting of the progression of epistemological movements necessarily prevents him from taking into account resistance to the procedures by which they succeed each other in

power, and from considering in detail the ways in which they attempt to establish and preserve their hegemony. His analysis is also to some extent too narrowly structuralist:

In any given culture at any given moment, there is always only one episteme that defines the conditions of possibility of all knowledge, whether expressed in a theory or silently invested in a practice.⁵⁴

In this passage Foucault is effectively stating that there can be no resistance to power; the reification of power is therefore a problem for his theory. This can be seen especially in relation to the methods of more recent historicists who follow Foucault's lead. An example is provided by Leonard Tennenhouse's Power On Display, in which he argues that the drama of the English Renaissance stages state power:

If indeed plays were understood to serve similar ends to those of entertainments on progress and the audience was always implicitly the queen, then we have to consider the drama as a forum for staging symbolic shows of state power and as a vehicle for disseminating court ideology.⁵⁵

Tennenhouse's assumption that the audience was a monologic, court clientele, whose symbolic focus was the figure of the queen, leads him to postulate a drama that merely reproduces state ideology. In fact, he homogenises dramatic comedy and the discourse of aristocratic courtly love in ways which will be rendered problematical in the second chapter of this thesis, particularly in relation to the link between the sonnet form and the discourse of courtly love. Theatre research has shown that the audience of the Elizabethan and Jacobean theatres was much more heterogeneous than Tennenhouse here allows,⁵⁶ thus laying open to question his argument that their primary function was the staging of power; after all, if the hegemony of the state was so simplistically reproduced in the theatre, why was such a need felt for the imposition of an apparatus of censorship?

In a manner similar to that of Stephen Greenblatt in Renaissance Self-Fashioning,⁵⁷ Tennenhouse attempts to unite the heterogeneity of the drama in the figure of the playwright. He therefore concludes that Shakespeare stands outside contingency, utilising his plays as a means of

fashioning his own identity:

Shakespeare obviously recognized he was forging a more inclusive form of nationalism, one that both employed the signs and symbols of the state and revitalized them in the service of the queen. Thus he regularly displayed his own importance as a playwright within his plays in authorizing her power as monarch.⁵⁸

This implies an inscription of the playwright's fully conscious self in his plays in a way that elides the difference between playwright and monarch; hence the tautology of the second sentence of the above quotation. Here the name of Shakespeare invests monarchy with power through the enactment of its power in the drama. In a comment on the role of Christopher Sly in the induction to The Taming Of The Shrew, Tennenhouse moves on to a positing of the difference between the aristocrat and the commoner which is undialectical in its treatment of power relations:

Shakespeare never allows us to believe that Sly could enter into the aristocratic body any more than he allows us to believe Bottom could be desired by the queen of the fairies.⁵⁹

His analysis of a monological display of state power thus precludes the postulation of the drama as a site of ideological conflict. Tennenhouse is incapable of theorising the Lord's own staging of the Christopher Sly framing play in The Taming of The Shrew; the fact that the Lord organises such a staging itself dramatises an aristocratic staging of subjection. The ideology of the aristocracy can therefore be seen itself to be a staging, a managing, of disruption that in the end effaces the dislocation revealed by the process itself. It should be noted in this connection that, as in Measure For Measure, the Lord himself arranges the dislocation, in order to display its full recuperative power. But again, the fact that this operation is laid bare on the stage permits an interrogation of its practices.

With regard to Shakespeare's sonnets, the comments from Foucault analysed earlier and the work of the New Historicists now need to be glossed in the light of Eve Sedgwick's recent work on the relations of power inhering in the institution of patriarchy in her book Between Men: English Literature And Male Homosocial Desire, in which she

writes:

An even more interesting line of discussion, however, and one that would help give the question of family some specificity and grounding, would require us to pluralize and specify the notion of power, which I have had to treat so far as reified and even quantitative.⁶⁰

Sedgwick is writing here in the context of the relationship between the young man and the poetic persona in Shakespeare's sonnets, but her comment has wider relevance. For the New Historicists, the dominant is all powerful, and this imposes a severe limitation on any analysis of the processes of textual resistance. It is therefore necessary to proceed to another form of criticism, one which serves to theorise the relationship between text and history in a more dialectical manner. The type of criticism which best fulfils this need is one which involves a materialist perspective.

Materialist theories provide a rich area in which to seek out the dialectical relation between text and history. The work of Mikhail Bakhtin in particular provides some especially valuable concepts in this respect, since his theorising of the 'carnavalesque' facilitates an approach to

those discourses which are repressed by the dominant ideology.⁶¹ The 'carnavalesque' is his term for the grotesque transgression of official rules in the popular traditions of Medieval and Renaissance holidays. It articulates an inversion of the standard world of daily existence which refuses to take that existence seriously. As such, it nevertheless accepts that the official world has pertinence in its own sphere. However, as Peter Stallybrass and Allon White have argued in their book The Politics and Poetics of Transgression, the hegemony of the official world can become threatened by a mobilisation of the energies of the carnivalesque in times of crisis in the field of political practice:

It actually makes little sense to fight out the issue of whether or not carnivals are *intrinsically radical or conservative*, for to do so automatically involves the false essentializing of carnivalesque transgression. The most that can be said in the abstract is that for long periods carnival may be a stable and cyclical ritual with no noticeable politically transformative effects but that, given the presence of sharpened political antagonism, it may often act as *catalyst and site of actual and symbolic struggle*.⁶²

Carnival is therefore a possible site of dialogism,

Bakhtin's term for the nature of the sign as a site of ideological struggle. This implies that there are always already struggles in progress, and that there are many ideologies in existence at any given moment within one social formation.⁶³ The dialogism of the sign refers to the consequent ability of one lexical item to mean different things to different people. The dominant ideology does not, therefore, mould other positions; rather, it negotiates its position of dominance by means of its relation with other discourses in the socio-historical circumstances which always overdetermine the play of meanings in a given text.

Bakhtin's formulation of the dialogical nature of the sign has been reinforced by the work of other theorists concerned with ideological repression which takes place in the process of the production of meaning. Louis Althusser has insisted on the historical specificity of the subjectivities associated with such a theory of signification:

From this series I shall immediately extract the decisive central term on which everything else depends: the notion of the SUBJECT.

And I shall immediately set down two conjoint theses:

1. there is no practice except by and in an ideology;

2. there is no ideology except by and for subjects.

I can now come to my central thesis:
IDEOLOGY INTERPELLATES INDIVIDUALS AS
SUBJECTS.⁶⁴

Althusser moves on from this formulation to analyse the ideological apparatuses of bourgeois capitalism, positioning the subject as the product of ideology. The relationship of the subject to the literary text is therefore one which is necessarily ideological. Following Althusser then, it is of crucial importance to read the inscription of history in the literary work. The multiplicity of meanings in the literary text is, therefore, historically precise, and the implication is that it is possible to locate and excavate a dialectical relationship between a text and the determinate history which produced it. To use the terminology of another materialist critic, Raymond Williams, the paradigm shift effected by the rise of emergent elements and their challenging of dominant elements can itself be detected in textual form as the play of ideological positions in the literary text.⁶⁵

The interplay which results from this history has been theorised by Pierre Macherey in his book A

Theory Of Literary Production, in which he writes:

Experimenting with ideology rather than inventing it, the literary work is both the analogy of a knowledge and a caricature of customary ideology.⁶⁶

Customary ideology can be recovered by a symptomatic reading of its caricature. Thus, to borrow the terms used by Stallybrass and White, marginalised discourses are necessarily centrally symbolic to the construction of the dominant discourse. This means that, for Macherey, the text has to be sited in relation to a determinate history:

Moreover, we shall be looking within the work itself for reasons for moving beyond it.⁶⁷

For him, the symbolic importance for the dominant ideology of the positioning of other discourses permits a radically historicised reading of a text. The ideologies specific to the moment of the production of the literary text are therefore crucial to the type of critical work which it is the concern of Macherey's theory to encourage:

The literary work must be studied in a double perspective: in relation to

history, and in relation to an ideological version of that history.⁶⁸

The interplay of history and ideologies here crisscrosses the text in such a way that each is as important as the other for a full reading. Macherey continues:

The ideological dream is infiltrated by the reality it seeks to repress.⁶⁹

Thus, a work can be read in terms of its own partiality to a particular version of history, but it can also be read in such a way that it discloses involuntarily 'other' histories that are repressed.

Michel Pecheux provides a methodology for this strategy of reading in his book Language, Semantics and Ideology. For him, textual management of historical fact provides a means of recovering the repression of other discourses by the dominant ideology. It also provides a methodology for the excavation of the subject which is the result of ideological interpellation, in Althusser's sense:

one can begin to see how *unconscious repression* and *ideological subjection* are materially linked, without being confounded, inside what could be called the *process of the signifier in interpellation* and identification, a

process by which are realised what I have called the ideological conditions of the reproduction/transformation of the relations of production.⁷⁰

The material outcome of ideological subjection is therefore the repression into the unconscious of other possibilities in the relations of production. Pecheux then proceeds to theorise the concomitant necessity for the dominant ideology to conceal this operation:

it is proper to every discursive formation to conceal, in the transparency of the meaning formed in it, the contradictory material objectivity of interdiscourse.⁷¹

Thus, every discursive formation attempts to conceal the operation of its power in an attempt to efface the objectivity of interdiscourse, the historical heterogeneity of language as embodied in the existence of other ideologies, by proclaiming that meaning is transparent.

Recapitulating upon the concern with the relationship between text and history which was articulated at the outset of this introduction, it is proposed to utilise materialist theory in this thesis in order to excavate the historical

production of ideology and, hence, the construction of subject positions, in Shakespeare's sonnets. The mimetic theory of language which is the expression of the poetics associated with the dominant aristocratic conception of transparent linguistic referentiality in the Renaissance will be shown to be ideologically motivated. The close relationship between this theoretical position and the sonnet form as the expression of the courtly love discourse of the aristocracy renders the historical moment of the production of the sonnet intelligible through a symptomatic reading of the kind envisaged by Macherey and Pecheux.

However, Shakespeare's sonnets are much more problematical than this might suggest, since they do not simply reflect the dominant mode of literary production, but also articulate a response to a historical break in the power of the aristocracy. There is therefore an irreducible discontinuity between Shakespeare's sonnets and those of his predecessors. It is this difference which will provide the material for analysing, firstly, the history of the discourse of the sonnet genre prior to Shakespeare and, secondly, the changes which occur in the elements of this discourse in his sequence. Only a historicised reading can uncover the production of

the material form of a group of poems which traditional literary criticism has come to regard as problematical. This critical problem is the result of an unwillingness to place the sonnets at the moment of their historical production. In direct contrast, it will be argued in the chapters that follow that the 'characters' who have occupied so much critical time (the aristocratic young friend, the 'rival poet', and the 'dark lady') are the symptoms in literature of the crisis which was the condition of their production.

Moreover, Pecheux provides a theoretical framework for the following concerns with the discontinuity between previous sonnet sequences and subjectivity in Shakespeare's sonnets. His arguments allow the postulation of a theory of the subject in the Renaissance which takes historical change fully into account:

I can now specify that the interpellation of the individual as subject of his discourse is achieved by the identification (of the subject) with the discursive formation that dominates him (ie, in which he is constituted as subject): this identification, which founds the (imaginary) unity of the subject, depends on the fact that the elements of interdiscourse that constitute, in the subject's discourse, *the traces of what determines him*, are

re-inscribed in the discourse of the subject himself.⁷²

The interdiscourse is re-inscribed in the subject's discourse; the subject's discourse therefore inevitably records the operation of subjection. It is the task of ideology to efface the operation of subjection, and the crisis of the dominant ideology at the time of the production of Shakespeare's sonnets renders this process problematical. Moreover, such a reading necessarily precludes any attempt to locate authorial presence in the text, since the object of analysis is the political process of the interpellation of subject positions.

There is, however, a necessity here to develop further the position outlined by Pecheux, since he does not theorise the relationship between emergent and dominant ideologies sufficiently to account for the replacement of the dominant by the emergent. In addition, he does not theorise the specific position occupied by the literary work in the interplay of discursive formations, and as a result his argument needs to be supplemented with that elaborated by Fredric Jameson in his book The Political Unconscious:

Our presuppositions, in the analyses that follow, will be that only a genuine philosophy of history is capable of respecting the specificity and radical difference of the social and cultural past while disclosing the solidarity of its polemics and passions, its forms, structures, experiences, and struggles, with those of the present day.⁷³

This leads Jameson to a theorising of the relationship between history and text which has much relevance to the present project:

We would therefore propose the following revised formulation: that history is *not* a text, not a narrative, master or otherwise, but that, as an absent cause, it is inaccessible to us except in textual form, and that our approach to it and to the Real itself necessarily passes through its prior textualisation, its narrativisation in the political unconscious.⁷⁴

This allows Jameson to place the literary text in a precise relation to the determinate history which produced it:

The type of interpretation here proposed is more satisfactorily grasped as the rewriting of the literary text in such a way that the latter may itself be seen as the rewriting or restructuration of a prior historical or ideological *subtext*, it always being understood that "subtext" is not immediately present as such, not some common-sense external reality, nor even the conventional narratives of history manuals, but rather must itself

always be (re)constructed after the fact.⁷⁵

Thus, the literary text is steeped in a history that is always only available as a subtext, with the two necessarily engaged in a dialectical relationship with each other. The implication is that history is not outside the text, is not even or only a context; rather, the literary work itself is one of the modes of historical production. Hence, this thesis will read Shakespeare's sonnets as producing historically specific subjectivities in response to the breakdown in aristocratic interpellation which occurred at the end of the sixteenth century. This crisis in ideology precipitates the literary production of these poems in a determinate history. In Jameson's terms, the 'political unconscious' is more easily reached through the mediation of the sonnets because the operation of ideological repression is not as strong as it was in the sequences of Shakespeare's predecessors. To use Pecheux's terminology, the sonnets represent a means of interrogating the relationship of the dominant ideology with the materiality of all interdiscourse. The capacity of

discourse in these poems is therefore the result of this crisis in discursive practice. What traditional criticism has characterised as the richness of the word-play in these poems has always threatened to disturb humanist categories of thought, and so has been designated as a problem. It is suggested that the kind of criticism characterised at the beginning of this introduction, and the attitudes associated with it, lack the theoretical coherence to account for this tension in the sonnets. The material consequences for subjectivity of the dialectic between text and history will therefore constitute the main focus for the reading of the sonnets in this thesis.

Notes

- 1: Chantal Mouffe: 'Hegemony And New Political Subjects: Toward A New Concept Of Democracy' in Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg eds.: Marxism And The Interpretation Of Culture (London: MacMillan, 1988), pp.89-90.
- 2: See Louis Althusser: Essays On Ideology (London: Verso, 1984).
- 3: John Dryden: Literary Criticism of John Dryden ed. Arthur C.Kirsch (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1966) p.11.
- 4: See, for Aristotle's recommendations on the demarcation between high tragedy and comedy as the drama of the ordinary: Classical Literary Criticism ed. T.S.Dorsch (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1983) pp.37-38.
- 5: Dryden op.cit., p.47.
- 6: Alexander Pope: The Complete Works of Shakespeare (Glasgow: R. and A.Foulis, 1746) p.ii.
- 7: ibid.
- 8: ibid., p.iii.
- 9: ibid., p.iii.
- 10: Johnson As Critic ed. John Wain (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1973) p.68.
- 11: ibid., p.69.
- 12: ibid., p.123.
- 13: Percy Bysshe Shelley: Shelley's Literary and Philosophical Criticism ed. John Shawcross (London: Henry Frowde, 1909) p.68.
- 14: ibid., p.69.
- 15: ibid., p.124.

- 16: Victor Hugo: William Shakespeare trans. Melville B. Anderson (London: J.K. Lewis, 1892) p.102.
- 17: *ibid.*
- 18: Samuel Taylor Coleridge: Biographia Literaria ed. John Shawcross; 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1907) vol.1 p.163.
- 19: *ibid.*, vol.1 p.164.
- 20: *ibid.*, vol.1 p.202.
- 21: *ibid.*, Vol.2 p.12.
- 22: Matthew Arnold: The Complete Prose Works of Matthew Arnold ed. R.H. Super (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1960-1978) vol.5 p.91.
- 23: *ibid.*, p.93.
- 24: Samuel Johnson: Preface to Shakespeare, reprinted in The Dramatic Works of William Shakespeare (Edinburgh: Thomas Nelson, 1839) p.vi.
- 25: *ibid.*, p.vi.
- 26: *ibid.*, p.vii.
- 27: *ibid.*, p.vii.
- 28: Terence Hawkes ed.: Coleridge's Writings On Shakespeare (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1969) p.63.
- 29: *ibid.*
- 30: *ibid.*, p.65.
- 31: *ibid.*, p.78.
- 32: See Catherine Belsey: Critical Practice (London: Methuen, 1980), especially Chapter 1, for a much fuller account than can be delivered here.
- 33: Hawkes *op.cit.*, p.112.

- 34: *ibid.*, p.108.
- 35: *ibid.*, p.121.
- 36: See Hugo *op.cit.*, pp.80-81 for another statement along these lines.
- 37: Sir Walter Raleigh: William Shakespeare (London: MacMillan, 1928) p.2.
- 38: *ibid.*, p.3.
- 39: *ibid.*, p.15.
- 40: *ibid.*, pp.19-20.
- 41: *ibid.*, p.13.
- 42: See also Alan Sinfield: 'Shakespeare And Education', in Jonathan Dollimore and Alan Sinfield eds.: Political Shakespeare (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1989), and Derek Longhurst: "'Not for all time, but for an Age': an approach to Shakespeare Studies", in Peter Widdowson ed.: Re-Reading English (London and New York: Methuen, 1982).
- 43: Sir Henry Newbolt: The Newbolt Report (London: H.M.S.O., 1921) p.9.
- 44: *ibid.*, p.15.
- 45: See Catherine Belsey *op.cit.*, Chapter 2.
- 46: Roland Barthes: S/Z trans. Richard Miller (London: Jonathan Cape, 1975) p.8.
- 47: *ibid.*, p.80.
- 48: See for example the case of Jonathan Goldberg versus Robert Weimann in Shakespeare Reproduced, eds. Jean E.Howard and Marion F.O'Connor (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1987).
- 49: Jacques Derrida: Of Grammatology trans. Gayatri Spivak (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976) p.68.

- 50: See Christopher Norris: Deconstruction: Theory And Practice (London: Methuen, 1982) Chapter 6 for a full treatment of this.
- 51: Michel Foucault: The Order Of Things (London and New York: Tavistock/Routledge, 1989) p.29.
- 52: *ibid.*, p.42.
- 53: Michel Foucault: The Archaeology Of Knowledge trans. A.M.Sheridan-Smith (London: Tavistock, 1972) p.95.
- 54: Foucault *op.cit.* 1989, p.168.
- 55: Leonard Tennenhouse: Power On Display (London and New York: Methuen, 1986) p.39.
- 56: See Robert Weimann: Shakespeare And The Popular Tradition In The Theatre ed. R.Schwartz (Baltimore, Md, and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978) pp.169-177; and Margot Heinemann: Puritanism And Theatre: Thomas Middleton And Oppositional Drama Under The Early Stuarts (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982) pp.3-9.
- 57: Stephen J.Greenblatt: Renaissance Self-Fashioning From More To Shakespeare (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1980) p.228.
- 58: Tennenhouse *op.cit.*, p.44.
- 59: *ibid.*, p.46.
- 60: Eve Kosofsky Sedwick: Between Men: English Literature And Male Homosocial Desire (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985) p.46.
- 61: Mikhail Mikhailovitch Bakhtin: Rabelais And His World trans. Helene Iswolsky (Cambridge, Mass. and London: MIT Press, 1968) pp.437-474; and The Dialogic Imagination trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981) pp.259-442.
- 62: Peter Stallybrass and Allon White: The Politics And Poetics Of Transgression (London: Methuen, 1986) p.14.

- 63: See Michel Pecheux: Language, Semantics And Ideology trans. H. Nagpal (New York and London: MacMillan, 1982) for an extension and refinement of this position.
- 64: Althusser op.cit., p.44.
- 65: See Raymond Williams: Problems In Materialism And Culture (London: Verso, 1980) pp.31-49.
- 66: Pierre Macherey: A Theory Of Literary Production trans. Geoffrey Wall (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978) p.59.
- 67: ibid., p.94.
- 68: ibid., p.115.
- 69: ibid., p.118.
- 70: Pecheux op.cit., pp.92-93.
- 71: ibid., p.113.
- 72: ibid., p.114.
- 73: Fredric Jameson: The Political Unconscious: Narrative As A Socially Symbolic Act (London: Methuen, 1981) p.18.
- 74: ibid., p.35.
- 75: ibid., p.81.

Chapter 1

The Historical Context

The sonnet came over to England, crossing national boundaries, and inevitably undergoing change as a result. The introduction of the sonnet form to England was therefore predicated on an operation of difference, inscribed from the outset with a potential for change which made it particularly open to appropriation. At first it was identified with the aristocracy who had imported it, but in the atmosphere of social and political upheaval at the end of the sixteenth century, it very quickly traversed class boundaries. This raises fascinating problems concerning the relationship of the sonnet to the society in which it was imbricated, especially with regard to the operation of ideology. This chapter will seek to trace out and analyse these problems as a necessary and illuminating prelude to the reading of Shakespeare's sonnets themselves.

I

The history of the Renaissance sonnet in England is marked from the very beginning by its relationship with the aristocracy. The sonnets of the courtly poets Surrey and Wyatt establish, in English, the form's close affinity with the European tradition of courtly love which was such an important aspect of Petrarch's own poems. The continuation of this relationship in the English Renaissance has been noted by E. M. W. Tillyard in a passage which links Wyatt and Surrey with the later figure of Sir Philip Sidney:

Of the poets of the English Renaissance, Wyatt, Surrey and Sidney, by their lives and character, seem to approach nearest the contemporary ideal of the scholar-courtier.¹

Here the architect of the 'Elizabethan World Picture' recognises the historical linkage provided by the aristocratic character of these poets. Tillyard goes on to analyse this ideal of the scholar-courtier by describing Wyatt's personality:

In Wyatt's character there was that balance of antithetical qualities that seemed to mark the type: genius for action and refined scholarship; impetuosity and the restraint (sometimes)

of gentle manners; versatility and fidelity
- and above all high ambitions and
modesty.²

The character of Wyatt serves as a particular example of the type, aligning the poet of the early English Renaissance with his successors by means of his social class. His character is that of the ideal Renaissance courtier: he is capable of action, in the tradition of the warrior nobility, but he is also educated; he has the warrior's impetuosity, but this is combined with the restraint of a gentleman; and he unites ambition with becoming modesty. The warrior knight is conflated with the courtier to produce this characterisation, revealing a two-sided subjectivity. This retrospective combination of the characteristics of action and urbane sophistication in the poet's personality ought to accord in historical terms with the figure of the ideal courtier set out in the many conduct books written in the period, but in fact it does not. For these books are at pains to describe only the courtly accomplishments of the gentleman; the warlike attributes are not mentioned because they are taken for granted because of his aristocratic position. This is an interesting contradiction, because such an assumption was no longer adequate

in the face of the many changes in warfare at the time. The knightly warrior was now obsolete on the battlefield, as the advent of reliable firearms made his heavy armour inadequate. In these circumstances the infantry predominated, and tactics were evolved specifically to protect the slow-firing musketeers. The period is often characterised as that of 'musket and pike' as a result, and in fact there was little need for the elite shock cavalry of earlier times.³ This contradicts any simplistic assumptions about the derivation of the traditional prestige of the nobility from military action. The result is that the courtly conduct books deal with this historical military background through a displacement of prowess onto courtly discourse by concentrating wholly on the requirements of the court, but, in accordance with their relationship with residual ideological elements, they still assume the traditional military prestige of the aristocracy.

Castiglione's Book Of The Courtier revealingly displaces this operation onto the figure of the Duchess of Urbino:

though such was the respect we had for the wishes of the Duchess that the liberty we enjoyed was accompanied by the

most careful restraint. And without exception everyone considered that the most pleasurable thing possible was to please her, and the most displeasing thing in the world was to earn her displeasure. So for these reasons in her company the most decorous behaviour proved compatible with the greatest freedom, and in her presence our games and laughter were seasoned both with the sharpest witticisms and with a gracious and sober dignity. For the modesty and nobility which informed every act, word and gesture of the Duchess, caused even those seeing her for the first time to recognize that she was a very great lady.⁴

The use of the masculine third person singular pronoun in the second sentence makes this duchess the sanction of the standards of behaviour of the male courtiers in Castiglione's book. In fact, Castiglione goes even further than this, and makes the duchess' own behaviour the archetype of that of his ideal courtier:

so that everyone endeavoured to imitate her personal way of behaviour, deriving as it were a model of fine manners from the presence of so great and talented a woman.⁵

The operation of the sublimation of violence in the behaviour of the courtier takes place by the ascription of the courtly code to the woman, masking the historical conditions which

necessitated the code's emergence in the first place. The aristocrat is henceforth to be a politician - a master of polite society - rather than a warrior. Castiglione is not alone in recording this shift, since, for example, in his The Complete Gentleman (published in 1622) Henry Peacham also describes the learned achievements of the ideal gentleman. He devotes chapters to poetry, music, antiquities, art, and heraldry, but not to the art of war.⁶ The closest he comes to war is in his chapter on exercise.

The conduct books therefore consider learning the chief virtue of the complete courtier. One of the prime elements of this learning is 'writing', which has important consequences for the social construction of subjectivity in the sonnet once it reaches England. A case in point is the part writing plays with regard to the initiators of the sonnet tradition in England, the noblemen Surrey and Wyatt, both of whom freely translated Petrarch's sonnets in addition to producing their own. Although they hold this interest in common, criticism has recognised that there are nevertheless differences between these poets. Therefore, they also necessarily differ from

Sidney, despite Tillyard's conglomerate characterisation of the aristocrat. However, this recognition of differences is based on assumptions about the style of an individual poet and the use he makes of the sonnet genre. These assumptions stem from the kind of characterological criticism exemplified in the stance of critics such as Tillyard. The preoccupation with the contents of personality obscures possible historical and generic variations within the style associated with the sonnet. Even so, the boundaries of social class are not the problem for Wyatt and Surrey which they become for later poets, with the result that there is no transgression of them at this early historical conjuncture. For Tillyard Wyatt's sonnets are experimental, and his creative 'personality' is inscribed in them. Personality produces innovations insofar as it plays with the conventions and figurative language of the form, a type of criticism which has its roots in the Romantics' concern with expressive realism and authorial intention. The concomitant privileging of the imagination of the poet with genius elevates him, allowing him to transcend contingency. Such a movement has been questioned by Foucault in his

essay What Is An Author?⁷ and by Barthes in The Death Of The Author⁸. Both theorists problematise the author - and, therefore, the concept of the work - in order to investigate more closely the terrain of 'authority'. Foucault, however, limits the historical scope of his essay by considering the disappearance of the author to be a relatively recent phenomenon, while Barthes writes:

Writing is that neutral, composite, oblique space where our subject slips away, the negative where all identity is lost, starting with the very identity of the body writing. No doubt it has always been that way. As soon as a fact is narrated no longer with a view to acting directly on reality but intransitively, that is to say, finally outside of any function other than that of the very practice of the symbol itself, this disconnection occurs, the author enters into his own death, writing begins.⁹

However useful this may be as a starting point for an analysis of traditional criticism, it seems to leave out history and the ideological interpellation of subjects. By inserting this history into Barthes' formulation, it is possible to state that traditional criticism of the sort practised by Tillyard does not adequately address the relationship of the nexus which is a work of

literature to the determinate circumstances in which it is produced. The basic assumption that, secreted in every individual there is an unchanging essence, produces a criticism that reads all style as the product of personality. This critical attitude produces analyses of Wyatt which are to be distinguished from the treatment of Surrey's sonnets, as can be seen in this passage from Dennis Keene's recent edition of a selection of the latter's poetry:

Surrey's interest in Petrarch now looks much like his interest in Virgil, as a poet who possessed the classical virtues of balance, symmetry, chaste diction and elegance; stylistic aspects in which English poetry and the English language itself were felt to be lacking. These translations, therefore, are more like adaptations than actual translations, as Surrey's aim was to fit Petrarchan style onto an English reality, which can be seen in sonnets which are not translations but are still dominated by Petrarchan, neo-classical ideas of style.¹⁰

This reading is primarily concerned with authorial intention, which can be used as a basis for the assertion that Surrey's sonnets are less 'individualistic' than Wyatt's, and moreover, Keene's use of the word 'style' effectively elides literary competence with the psychological notion

of 'personality' evoked in Tillyard's criticism. The assumption is that 'personality' is the source of literary individuality, allowing the passage to conflate the individual with objective historical considerations which effectively curtail the appeal to individualism. In this way criticism pays lip-service to contingency while refusing to engage with the extra considerations it involves. Thus, according to Keene, the Petrarchan style dominates Surrey's poems to such an extent that his own personality and individuality are stifled. There is no recognition of the difficulties raised for this critical position by the problem of intertextuality, even in relation to those sonnets which are not translations but which are too 'Petrarchan' to be genuinely original.

This produces a problem for the critic. Since the sonneteer is supposed to play with the conventions, what are the criteria for judging whether or not a particular poet has been successful in doing so? How does the critic decide what is original and what is not? What is the difference between the merely traditional sonnet and that which pushes against and extends the boundaries of the form? The sonnet is a form that

is imported into England, and therefore it is subjected to a new set of ideological imperatives. It is a discourse which can be inhabited in certain ways, which historically become more and more problematic for the ideology into which it is transplanted. The idiolect of the sonneteer is overdetermined, and it is therefore more accurate to write about different beginnings rather than authorial origin.

An easy solution to the questions I have just raised would be that traditional criticism has produced a reading of Wyatt as the more 'original' of the two poets, and that this reading could be challenged on the grounds of its own assumptions, that is, 'deconstructed' through a rigorous reading of its own contradictions. An example of these assumptions is provided by the use Dennis Keene makes of style, as he collapses history into categories of literary authority which depend upon an ahistorical psychology of the individual. However, this would fail to recognise that traditional criticism has uncovered a problem regarding the relationship of the sonnet to the social class of the poet, although it has been unable to pose the problem accurately, simply because the sonnet can be shown to have its beginnings in a form of subjectivity other than that

of the transcendent individual.

This problem of social class is produced by the historical attempt to link the sonnet form to one discourse, that of courtly love. The reduction of all of the subjects that it is possible to address in the sonnet to one type only is an attempt to limit a form which is supposed to play with such limitations. The registering of a single discourse within a specific set of linguistic protocols tries to unite the two contiguous discourses of the sonnet form and aristocratic courtly love. This idealising project tries to produce a continuous narrative which is ultimately aristocratic. The attempt to reduce an essentially 'mixed' form to one single discourse creates the conditions for the construction of a genre which occludes its determinate history and which encapsulates the aristocracy's idealised vision of itself. But the sonnet was subjected to historical and ideological pressures which ensured that it could not attain either the purity of form which its practitioners sought to attain in ideological terms, or that homogeneity of concerns that traditional criticism demands if the conditions of a 'genre' are to be met. The perception of a sonnet 'genre' by sixteenth and seventeenth century poets is thus to be distinguished historically from the retrospective

construction of a genre by modern critical practice, since the two are not always or necessarily coterminous.

II

The discourse of courtly love which informs the sonnet genre is itself familiar enough. It developed from the Arabic influence in Spain through the agency of the Provencal troubadours into what became a shared structure of aristocratic feeling. This process developed over several centuries and was not as smooth as it might first appear. A long period was required for the full condensation and displacement of the interests of the warrior aristocracy to take place. What had to be achieved first was a sublimation of violence by means of a process of displacement as it passed into the discursive formation of courtly love. In his book State Formation And Civilization, Norbert Elias describes this process, starting from the first differentiation imposed on the knights by their transformation from warriors to courtiers:

The country road is full of sought and unsought encounters which require no very great control of impulses. At court, towards the mistress, he may deny himself violent acts and affective outbursts, but

even the *courtois* knight is first and foremost still a warrior, and his life an almost uninterrupted chain of wars, feuds and violence. The more peaceful constraints of social intertwining which tend to impose a profound transformation of drives, do not yet bear constantly and evenly on his life; they intrude only intermittently, are constantly breached by belligerence which neither tolerates nor requires any restraint of the affects. So the self-restraint which the *courtois* knights observe at court is only slightly consolidated into half-unconscious habits, into the almost automatic pattern characteristic of a later age.¹¹

The piecemeal progress of this change can be seen in the examples Elias gives of typical 'medieval' behaviour in the lives of provincial gentry as late as the French Revolution, and he goes on to investigate the idealising function of the discourse of courtly love in this situation:

Retrospectively, *minnesang* can easily appear as an expression of knightly society in general. This interpretation has been reinforced by the fact that, with the decline of knightly functions and the growing subservience of the noble upper class with the rise of absolutism, the image of free, unfettered knightly society took on a nostalgic aura. But it is difficult to conceive that *minnesang*, especially in its more delicate tones - and it is not always delicate - springs from the same life as the coarse and unbridled behaviour that was proper to the bulk of knights. It has already been stressed that *minnesang* was actually "very contradictory to the knightly mentality" The whole landscape,

with its incipient differentiation, must be kept in view if this contradiction is to be resolved and the human attitude expressed in troubadour poetry understood.¹²

Elias traces the development of courtly poetry with the rise of the more powerful territorial courts such as Burgundy, where knights of lesser standing had to learn to curb their behaviour in the households of lords greater than themselves. The role of the lady of the household was particularly important in fostering such a relatively restrained attitude, as she had access to the learning of religious houses and the time to become educated. The 'courtly' lifestyle produced in this way then slowly spread to the rest of the upper classes with the unification of larger and larger territorial holdings. Thus, the structure of feeling shared by the aristocracy and known by the epithet 'courtly' took a considerable time to develop into a pattern of normative aristocratic behaviour. It also underpins the comments I made earlier on the silence of the courtly handbooks on the subject of war, a direct consequence of their emergence near the end of this process.

The representation of chivalry in literature at

this time accordingly idealises the brutal realities of the feudal system in response to the centralising impetus of late feudalism in exactly the manner outlined by Elias. The first major literary successes of this discourse in England came at the time of Chaucer. But this raises the same problems as the poetry of the troubadours on the continent, since the literature of Chaucer's period was full of nostalgia for a romanticised version of the chivalric code. Chaucer and his contemporaries hark back to an ideal chivalry at the precise historical moment of the transformation of the feudal system by the centralizing impulse of regal authority. Chivalric discourse is therefore ideologically residual, coming to the fore at the moment of its displacement by a post-feudal impulse to monarchic centralisation and the emergence of a mercantilist ethos which does not tie wealth to land, although property is still regarded as a mark of status. This kind of discontinuity between the ideal and the historical was to be repeated in the case of the Renaissance sonnet. It is no mere accident that the moment of the sonnet's greatest success came at a time of crisis for the aristocracy and was immediately followed by the

disintegration of the courtly love discourse to which it was nominally committed.

A parallel example of the sublimation of social energies is provided by Louis Montrose in his article 'Eliza, Queene of Shepheardes, and the Pastoral of Power', in which he demonstrates that the discourse of pastoral becomes a means of negotiating the necessities of courtly life:

The otiose love-talk of the shepherd masks the busy negotiation of the courtier; the shepherd is a courtly poet prosecuting his courtship in pastoral forms.¹³

The Elizabethan courtly rituals of pastoral represent the desire of the courtier in a wholly sublimated form, a direct outcome of the long process of the curbing of the affects of the warrior knights. What Montrose does here is to show the shift that takes place - a political shift - from medieval demotic Christian conceptions of pastoral to aristocratic appropriations of it which mediate power. Thus the energies which produced the impetus to war among the aristocracy are sublimated into a literary discourse which draws upon and effaces the process of the exploitation of the labour of a depressed peasantry.

One of the assumptions of the courtly discourse was that sonnets were read by the nobility, and that only they could recognise the constant allusions to classical myth because of their education. However, social changes were outstripping these assumptions; the nobility was no longer the only well-educated section of society by the time the sonnet was at the height of its popularity. In his book Middle-Class Culture In Elizabethan England, Louis B. Wright suggests that:

No phase of the middle-class background has greater cultural significance than the interest displayed by plain citizens in school learning from the mid-sixteenth to the mid-seventeenth century.¹⁴

Many schools were endowed by middle-class patrons in this period, mostly from the merchant class, and Shakespeare himself studied at one such school. After the founding of Gresham College the middle classes had what was virtually a university which taught the kind of utilitarian knowledge they required, particularly the natural sciences, needed by their ship captains, and business skills such as accounting and finance. It was generally felt that such a college was necessary because the universities were really seminaries for Anglican

divines.

As Clarke, Hall and Jefferson have argued in another context, there are particularly strong theoretical objections to a rendering of the circumstances of any particular period which does not take into account historical changes of the sort that have so far been described:

The dominant culture of a complex society is never a homogeneous structure. It is layered, reflecting different interests within the dominant class (e.g. an aristocratic versus a bourgeois outlook), containing different traces from the past (e.g. religious ideas within a largely secular culture), as well as emergent elements in the present. Subordinate cultures may not always be in conflict with it. They may, for long periods, coexist with it, negotiate the spaces and gaps in it, make inroads into it, "warrening it from within".¹⁵

The way sonnet sequences such as Samuel Daniel's Delia cling to assumptions which were becoming outmoded show that they remained in sympathy with the values of an aristocratic class whose ideas occupied a residual position in the sphere of Renaissance ideology. The continuing identification of the sonnet with the nobility in these circumstances was to have important consequences for the history of the form itself.

This is apparent in the mimetic convention that language is transparent. For example, given that the intended rhetorical effect of the sonnet is to move the woman to pity, or to reciprocate the poet's affection, the fact that it is, in reality, a literary fiction raises fundamental questions concerning the speaker's sincerity. As the idealising functions of the sonnet answer an emotional need, the aristocratic desire for power and domination, the sonnet represents the working out of this need in a literary form. The displacement of economic concerns and the idealising of the subjectivity of the woman serve as means of constructing a myth for the aristocracy. However, this becomes an empty convention because changes in the historical situation produce new needs, thus emptying these conventional discourses of their customary significance, and transforming them in the service of emergent social groups seeking status. Not the least of these needs is the continuing repression of women, which produces a contradiction in the discourse through which woman is idealised. The sonnet attempts to resolve this contradiction by denigrating the passions the woman arouses, at the

same time as it spiritualises the woman, a strategy which is rooted in historical necessity, as Norbert Elias points out in a crucially important passage:

Later, as the conveyor belts running through his existence grow longer and more complex, the individual learns to control himself more steadily; he is now less a prisoner of his passions than before. But as he is now more tightly bound by his functional dependence on the activities of an ever-larger number of people, he is much more restricted in his conduct, in his chances of directly satisfying his drives and passions. Life becomes in a sense less dangerous, but also less emotional or pleasurable, at least as far as the direct release of pleasure is concerned. And for what is lacking in everyday life a substitute is created in dreams, in books and pictures. So, on their way to becoming courtiers, the nobility read novels of chivalry... But at the same time the battlefield is, in a sense, moved within. Part of the tensions and passions that were earlier directly released in the struggle of man and man, must now be worked out in the human being. The more peaceful constraints exerted on him by his relations to others are mirrored within him; an individualized pattern of near-automatic habits is established and consolidated within him, a specific "super-ego", which endeavours to control, transform or suppress his affects in keeping with the social structure.¹⁶

What Elias draws attention to here is the means by which the violent realities of feudalism are internalised, and become sublimated through a displacement of their energies into literature, a

necessary outlet for the individual who must now curb his behaviour in keeping with society's new requirements. The use of the masculine pronoun is deliberate here, the point being that the hierarchically arranged discourses of feudalism, particularly the discourse of patriarchy, can no longer be articulated in terms of obligation, pointing to a self which is divided. This produces a situation in which patriarchy has to develop a much more subtle form for its subjection of women, in accordance with the general move towards the sublimation of political violence in society. The concomitant displacement of violence onto a literary discourse which has as its object the figure of the woman in sonnet sequences is the means by which the subjection of women is articulated as a female power that freely relinquishes itself. Berowne's long speech in Act 4 Scene 3 of Love's Labour's Lost is emblematic of this operation. He characterises female subjectivity in these words:

Learning is but an adjunct to ourself,
 And where we are our learning likewise is;
 Then when ourselves we see in ladies' eyes,
 With ourselves,
 Do we not likewise see our learning there?
 (IV.iii.310-313)

The learning Berowne prefers to that of the dry world of bookish wisdom is encapsulated in women's eyes, a revealing use of the Petrarchan motif normally encountered in sonnets. But, crucially, Berowne says that this learning 'is but an adjunct to ourself', allowing the courtiers to see themselves reflected in women's eyes. Thus the learning which is in women's eyes is the figures of the men. As Berowne goes on to say:

For wisdom's sake, a word that all men love;
 Or for love's sake, a word that loves all men;
 Or for men's sake, *the authors of these women;*
 Or women's sake, by whom we men are men -
 Let us once lose our oaths to find ourselves,
 Or else we lose ourselves to keep our oaths.

(IV.iii. 353-358) (My italics)

The oath taken to study must therefore be broken so that the men may find themselves in women. The men are 'the authors' of women, they realise themselves as men through the agency of women whose subject positions are authorised by the men precisely in order to confirm masculine subjectivity, a classic instance of the dominant discourse setting up its 'others'. The women who seem to be the active principle of life and speech are in fact already subjects of patriarchy, since their position is authorised by men. The naked violence and physical

power relations of feudalism are here replaced by a textual managing of female subjectivity, whereby woman is offered a subject position which she comes to recognise as her own.

III

Nonetheless, even this powerful sonnet discourse can be shown to be beginning to break down towards the end of the sixteenth century, at the time when the sonnets of Shakespeare were being written. This disintegration and the resultant difficulty that it produces are the effects of wider historical pressures being exerted upon the sonnet form. These pressures are themselves rooted in the historically transitional nature of the period caught between feudalism on the one hand and capitalism on the other. As Eric Hobsbawm points out in his introduction to Marx's essays on Pre-Capitalist Economic Formations:

For Marx the conjunction of three phenomena is necessary to account for the development of capitalism out of feudalism: first, as we have seen, a rural social structure which allows the peasantry to be "set free" at a certain point; second, the urban craft development which produces specialised, non-agricultural commodity production in

the form of the crafts; and third, accumulations of monetary wealth derived from trade and usury.¹⁷

It is the third of Marx's criteria, the accumulation of capital, which may be detected in its early stages during the late sixteenth century in England, that produces tensions in a society which continued to consider land ownership as opposed to the accumulation of monetary wealth to be the primary mark of social status.

The figure of the woman as represented in the sonnet is particularly important in such a period, especially since the aristocratic heiress becomes, through the institution of marriage and the attendant practice of courtship, the means through which the wealth and status of the nobility is sustained. The financial difficulties of the English aristocracy at the end of the sixteenth century arose because of the discrepancy between the practice of conspicuous consumption in the Elizabethan court and the inadequacy of the traditional mechanisms for producing wealth. The result was that many members of the English nobility incurred debts to usurers who had, since the fourteenth century, underwritten feudal economic practice, so that in the decades

immediately preceding the production of Shakespeare's sonnets the contemporary debate about usurious practice was engaged with renewed vigour. R.H. Tawney describes the issues of this debate in the following passage:

The issue on which the struggle between the new economic movements of the age and the scheme of economic ethics expounded by churchmen was most definitely joined, and continued longest, was not, as the modern reader might be disposed to expect, that of wages, but that of credit, money-lending and prices. The centre of this controversy - the mystery of iniquity in which a whole host of minor scandals were conveniently, if inaccurately, epitomized - was the problem which contemporaries described by the word usury.¹⁸

Social ideas were lagging behind a series of social changes of such bewildering complexity and which took place at such a rate, that contemporary thought was confused on this issue. The exploitative nature of feudal land tenure is made clear by R.H. Tawney:

The very essence of feudal property was exploitation in its most naked and shameless form, compulsory labour, additional corvees at the very moments when the peasant's labour was most urgently needed on his own holding, innumerable dues and payments, the obligation to grind at the lord's mill and bake at the lord's oven, the private justice of the lord's court.¹⁹

Moreover, a hierarchically re-constituted system was in the process of replacing the figure of an aristocratic feudal superior with a landlord who engaged in commercial practice, deriving wealth from trade. This landlord could be either the merchant who bought land in order to acquire its concomitant prestige value along with the social status denied him, or the aristocrat who tried to get more money out of his land, who also could be actively involved in trading ventures. These problems were augmented by extreme mobility at the upper end of English society, as Lawrence Stone notes:

Exceptionally large numbers of new families were forcing their way to the top, exceptionally large numbers of old families were falling into evil days and sinking into obscurity. There were 641 gentry families in Yorkshire in 1603; by 1642, 180 of these had died out in the male line or left the county, while 218 had first become armigerous, had come into the county, or had set themselves up as cadet branches. This represents a disappearance and replacement of more than one family in four.²⁰

This pattern of mobility in Yorkshire was repeated throughout the country, with regional variations. According to Lawrence Stone the busiest period was the twenty years after 1585:

There was a very high rate of turnover of property throughout these eighty years, the losses almost amounting to the total holdings of 1558. There is reason to believe, however, that these losses were not spread uniformly over the whole period... The figures strongly suggest that after the first decade of the seventeenth century there was a very sharp fall in sales, as families at last managed to balance their budgets. By far the worst period of sales was from about 1585 to 1606, during which time the net losses were so alarming that one may reasonably talk about a financial crisis of the aristocracy, which was arrested soon after the death of Queen Elizabeth.²¹

Therefore at the time of the production of discourses which have come to be regarded as literary the dominant social classes were in a state of extreme financial disarray, which led to intense pressure for the acquisition of land from below. As Stone argues:

Landed families which stuck to the old ways, left rents as they were, and continued to grant long leases soon found themselves trapped between lagging incomes and rising prices. The significance of this lag should not be exaggerated. There is no evidence that the gap was ever very wide, and it did not last for more than forty years or so. The Elizabethan nobility ran into difficulties more because of mounting expenditure than because of declining incomes in terms of purchasing power. On the other hand the rapid rise in incomes after 1590 was of major consequence in enabling them to recover their prosperity.²²

Stone estimates that the end result was the fragmentation of estates and a consequent division of landownership between a greater number of people:

In terms of landownership, though not of course gross landed income, much less income from all sources, the top level of the English social pyramid had been substantially reduced between the accession of Elizabeth and the outbreak of the Civil War.²³

A new spirit, the first manifestation of capitalist enterprise, began to exert an influence in these changed circumstances. However, this capitalist spirit was not exclusively middle class; just as there was no clear class distinction between Anglican and Puritan, neither was there between economic conservative and capitalist. Stone analyses the dichotomy of the capitalist puritan merchant and the anglican conservative noble and finds it misleading. Initially he draws the following distinctions:

The Capitalist/Protestant ethic is one of self-improvement, thrift, hard work, chastity and sobriety, competition, equality of opportunity, and the association of poverty with moral weakness; the aristocratic ethic is one of voluntary service to the State, generous hospitality, clear class distinctions, social stability,

tolerant indifference to the sins of the flesh, inequality of opportunity based on the accident of inheritance, arrogant self-confidence, a paternalist and patronising attitude towards economic inferiors, and an acceptance of the grinding poverty of the lower classes as part of the natural order of things.²⁴

However, he goes on to argue that these distinctions were fast becoming obsolete. The aristocracy had members in both camps by the end of the sixteenth century, as did the middle classes. In fact, the aristocracy showed more enterprise than did the merchants, in which case (as Tawney notes) the desire for wealth produced an economic adventurousness among the nobility, for example in business ventures which the City merchants considered too risky for investment, but which the aristocracy found an irresistible gamble:

It was they [the nobility], rather than the merchants, who were the risk takers, the frontiersmen, the pioneers in technological and geographical advance, the reason being that their motives were not exclusively financial.²⁵

One only needs to think of the career of Sir Walter Raleigh as an example.

IV

In such historical circumstances, it was almost inevitable that the familial ideology of the aristocracy would come under pressure. The traditional aristocratic vision of the family was set out by Jean Bodin:

A family may be defined as the right ordering of a group of persons owing obedience to a head of a household, and of those interests which are his proper concern.²⁶

Bodin follows this with a statement of the patriarchal nature of the aristocratic household:

From the moment a marriage is consummated the woman is subject to her husband, unless he is still living as a dependant in his father's house.²⁷

In the latter case both husband and wife are subject to the husband's father, as head of the household. Typically, the justification of the differentiation between men and women is referred to 'nature' and religion:

I have said that the crown ought to descend in the male line, seeing that gynecocracy is directly contrary to the laws of nature. Nature has endowed men with strength, foresight, pugnacity, authority, but has deprived women of

these qualities. Moreover the law of God explicitly enjoins that the woman should be subject, not only in matters concerning law and government, but within each particular family.²⁸

Thomas Smith explicitly associates this family structure with the aristocracy in his De Republica Anglorum:

So in the house and familie is the first and most naturall (but priuate) apparance of one of the best kindes of a common wealth, that is called Aristocratia where a few and the best doe gouerne, and where not one alwaies: but sometime and in some thing one, and sometime and in some thing another doth beare the rule.²⁹

Thus, both of these writers proceed upon the basis of patriarchal aristocratic assumptions. They are not alone in doing so; indeed, their views were anticipated by Sir Thomas Elyot, who had argued in his Book Of The Governour that:

A man in his natural perfection is fierce, hardy, strong in opinion, covetous of glory, and desirous of knowledge.

The good nature of a woman is to be mild, timorous, tractable, benign, of sure remembrance, and shame-faced.³⁰

Lawrence Stone sums up the aristocratic attitude to marriage which accords with such assumptions:

Essentially, marriage was not thought of as a personal union for the satisfaction of psychological and physiological needs so much as an institutional device for the perpetuation of the family and its property.³¹

However, what is missing from Stone's account here is the process of the internalising of structures of feeling; it was on this ground that the aristocratic ideal of marriage was to be challenged by the new, although still patriarchal, family associated with the rise of the bourgeoisie. Here a relatively new family structure can be seen to embody certain functions hitherto arrogated to the repressive feudal state, while at the same time sustaining an aristocratic practice of positioning women in relation to the acquisition and transference of wealth.

In his book Penshurst: The Semiotics Of Place And The Poetics Of History, Don E. Wayne traces the development of this new familial ideology in the architectural scheme of the family home of the Sidneys and Ben Jonson's poem 'On Penshurst'. By locating a structural analogy between the assumption of a title by the historically recently ennobled Sidney family and the social position of the narrative persona in Jonson's poem, and the

idealising functions proper to each, Wayne detects a consequent disjunction in aristocratic ideology:

The Sidney house at Penshurst and the poem which Ben Jonson addressed to it provide exemplary manifestations of such esthetic and psychological tension grounded in ideological conflict. There is, for example, a general contradiction in the Sidneys' architectural scheme between a mythic and a historical representation of continuity and the need to rationalize discontinuity. There is the conflict in the poem between the traditional, hierarchical conception of social order based on hereditary rank, and a new doctrine, still hierarchical but founded on a conception of natural order epitomized in the patriarchal family and the home.³²

The operation of this disruption is piecemeal. The aristocratic conception of the family is not replaced by a completely new bourgeois family, rather the patriarchal nature of both types of family provides a necessary discursive link between them. It is this similarity which accounts for the relative smoothness of the transition. But there are also differences:

We can trace back to antiquity a semantic differentiation comparable to that conveyed by the pair of terms "house" and "home" in English. But in the seventeenth century Ben Jonson employs a variant of this distinction that bears a certain historical specificity. It marks an early stage in the formation of an ideology in which the nuclear, conjugal family is represented as the institutional foundation of morality

and social order. An important facet of this emergent ideology is the central role of property in concepts of self and society. There is some linguistic evidence that in the sixteenth century, if not earlier, the self began to be thought of in territorial and possessive terms. A shift can be detected away from the idea of subjectivity as a quality shared by members of a community to a notion that located the subject in the individual.³³

This relocation of subjectivity, usually associated with the new protestant emphasis on the individual, has important political consequences, which Wayne glosses in the following manner:

As we have seen, the garden at Penshurst functioned as the sign of the "nature" of the Sidney family - a family whose innate virtue gave to the Great Hall the power of transforming untamed nature into paradise. The garden was primarily the operator of a transformation, and of a transvaluation of the notion of nobility from a concept based on hereditary descent and wealth, to one based on natural virtue.³⁴

The fact that Wayne is able to trace the development of this concept in the history of an aristocratic family, one of whose members was the Elizabethan courtier *par excellence*, shows how powerful the process was.

v

Familial discourse and other elements of aristocratic ideology were linked with courtly poetic discourse through works such as Sir Philip Sidney's own Defence Of Poetry, and as the ideology of the nobility felt the tensions, so inevitably did the poetic forms and discourses through which they articulated that ideology. R.H. Tawney describes the idealising function of aristocratic literature which Norbert Elias showed to be an inevitable consequence of the 'civilising process':

There is a magic mirror in which each order and organ of society, as the consciousness of its character and destiny dawns upon it, looks for a moment, before the dust of conflict or the glamour of success obscures its vision. In that enchanted glass it sees its own lineaments reflected with ravishing allurements; for what it sees is not what it is, but what in the eyes of mankind and of its own heart it would be. The feudal noblesse had looked, and had caught a glimpse of a world of fealty and chivalry and honour.³⁵

One of the most important of the 'ravishing allurements' for the aristocracy was the vision of a hierarchy, an order of being, in which they occupied the topmost position beneath the monarch.

This was a direct result of their concern with social rank, exacerbated by a new nervousness in response to social mobility. Their literary theory draws on Platonic ideas in order to produce a general theoretical model which accords with this discourse of 'ordering'. Thus, Sir Philip Sidney unites Christian morality with the Ideal of the Platonists in a move which recalls the rediscovery of the classics in Christian Renaissance Europe. For Sidney, the poet

yieldeth to the powers of the mind an image of that whereof the philosopher best oweth but a wordish description, which doth neither strike, pierce, nor possess the sight of the soul, so much as that other doth.³⁶

The mimetic representation of the Ideal is the justification for a Christian moral position based on hierarchical order, thus bringing the theory into harmony with the interests of the aristocracy. Here the most influential court poet of the Elizabethan period produces a theoretical model in which poetry becomes a vehicle for moral instruction. The poet has this duty because he alone can fully communicate this higher reality to his fellow men. This quasi-religious position

informs the contiguity of the operation of morality and imagination in the person of the poet. The theory takes the Ideal as a 'given' reality which the poet reproduces in his works; order is revealed rather than socially constructed.

According to Sidney's theory there is a moral order inscribed in the universe itself, a version of the 'argument from design'. This produces a hierarchy of discourses and a corresponding hierarchy of values. In this vertical arrangement the earthly world is necessarily inferior:

Nature never set forth the earth in so rich tapestry as diverse poets have done; neither with so pleasant rivers, fruitful trees, sweet-smelling flowers, nor whatsoever else may make the too-much-loved earth more lovely; her world is brazen, the poets only deliver a golden.³⁷

The imagery here unites the Garden of Eden with the classical myths of the Golden Age of Saturnalian Italy, the Garden of the Hesperides and the Elysian Fields. The moral illnesses endemic to this fallen world should be corrected through the poetic imagery of the pre-lapsarian world, the Golden Age without sin.

This theory is not limited to Sidney. The other major literary theorist of the English Renaissance,

George Puttenham, also assumes that poetry has a moral purpose:

Poesie ought not to be abased and imployed upon any unworthy matter and subject.³⁸

There is no definition of exactly what constitutes unworthy subject matter, except that poetry exists for 'the praise of virtue and the reproof of vice'³⁹ and 'the instruction of moral doctrines'.⁴⁰

These texts do not define the moral order to which they refer, as it is assumed that the reader is in agreement with them, that is, has already internalised these moral values. But already the influence of the self whose development Don E. Wayne traces can be discerned in this assumption. It determines the position accorded the poet in relation to his work:

Because this continual course and manner of writing or speech showeth the matter and disposition of the writer's mind, more than one or few words or sentences can show, therefore there be that have called style, the image of man, for man is but his mind, and as his mind is tempered and qualified, so are his speeches and language at large.⁴¹

Language here is the instrument of a pre-conceived, transcendent subject who is the predecessor of the

completely autonomous Cartesian ego and who therefore occupies a position outside discourse. For Sidney the poet precedes history, and the raw being of his autonomy can be recovered through reading his language. This gives the poet the opportunity to imitate the Creator, the ultimate Christian project. Thus, Sidney constructs a hierarchy of discourses which places poetry above history, and he asserts that the Ideal can only be shown by the poet who frees himself from historical contingency; 'Only the poet disdaining subjection...' Here the morality which the poet teaches is therefore revealed, rather than constructed; indeed, it attempts to efface its own historicity by placing the person of the poet beyond history, so to speak, an operation which implicitly denies materiality. Moreover, it is possible to note the specificity of this position. Platonism in the Renaissance is to be differentiated from the grounding of the ideal in the autonomous subjectivity of the Romantics, introducing historical difference as a means of ensuring that the discontinuity between the Renaissance and later periods is not elided.

Renaissance poetic theory sought to establish a connection between the sonnet form itself and the essentially aristocratic discourse of 'ordering', with its submerged political ramifications. In the words of Samuel Daniel:

Nor is this certaine limit obserued in Sonnets any tyrannical bounding of the conceit, but rather a reducing it in qirum, and a iust forme, neither too long for the shortest proiect, nor too short for the longest, being but onely imployed for a present passion. For the body of our imagination, being as an unformed Chaos without fashion, without day, if by the diuine power of the spirit it be wrought into an Orbe of order and forme, is it not more pleasing to Nature, that desires a certaintie, and comports not with that which is infinite, to haue these clozes, rather than not to know where to end, or how farre to goe, especially seeing our passions are often without measure.⁴²

The passage uses a religious metaphor to enclose the sonnet wholly within the official discourse of the nobility, while appearing to restrict it 'naturally' to a 'present passion': love. The formal characteristics of the sonnet are invoked by Daniel in the kind of movement which Antony Easthope has analysed as ideological in his book Poetry As Discourse. He argues, following Foucault, that the Renaissance inaugurates an attempt to reduce language to a transparent medium; form is

superseded by content:

To facilitate a separation between words and the reality they might refer to, discourse generally began to aim for transparency - 'form' (signifier and means of representation) came to be radically distinguished from 'content' (the signified and the represented).⁴³

The problem with this, of course, is that Foucault bases his history of discourse, the move from symbol to sign, upon a vision of history that can be shown to be too simplistic a progression:

In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the peculiar existence and ancient solidity of language as a thing inscribed in the fabric of the world were dissolved in the functioning of representation; all language had value only as discourse. The art of language was a way of 'making a sign' - of simultaneously signifying something and arranging signs around that thing; an art of naming, therefore, and then, by means of a reduplication both demonstrative and decorative, of capturing that name, of enclosing and concealing it, of designating it in turn by other names that were the deferred presence of the first name, its secondary sign, its figuration, its rhetorical panoply.⁴⁴

However, it has been shown earlier in this chapter that the aristocratic poetic discourses of the Renaissance already depended upon the assumptions about representation and naming that Foucault

characterises as 'Classical'. His theory needs to be revised in the light of Raymond Williams' formulation of the piecemeal operation of ideology as containing emergent, dominant and residual elements.⁴⁵

The sonnet becomes one of the ways in which the discourse of the aristocracy is reproduced in these circumstances. Don E. Wayne places particular emphasis on this function of literature:

The very necessity of accommodating an increasing tempo of social and technological change has given to art another function, that of marking actual or potential disjunctions and discontinuities in the order of things as represented by a dominant ideology. The latter function can be understood as a critical activity within the esthetic realm, so long as we recognise that the criticism involved here is often implied rather than stated and is not necessarily attributable to a conscious intention on the part of the artist.⁴⁶

This means that one can read 'against the grain' in order to discover 'other' histories repressed by a dominant ideology, precisely at the points at which repression is attempted. In fact, as Stephen Greenblatt argues for atheism in this period,⁴⁷ the dominant ideology needs its 'others' precisely because it can define itself only in differential terms.

The conclusion is now inescapable that historical change is necessarily inscribed in the sonnet, not in spite of the idealising project resulting from its overdetermination by the dominant ideology of the aristocracy, but because of it. The attempt to reduce the sonnet form to a poetic vehicle for a single discourse is itself rooted in historical necessity, as a reaction by aristocratic ideology to historical movements wholly outside its control. The sonnet form is the literary counterpart of the literary theory of Sidney and Puttenham. The development of the sonnet is therefore a negotiation which is usually associated with hegemony. However, the history of the later Renaissance pressurises the form to such an extent that this hegemony is rendered fragile, and therefore open to disruption.

One element of the discourse which is affected by this disruption is the persona of the author, to which Puttenham refers. A later chapter will deal specifically with the problems this poses for the subjectivity of the addressor in Shakespeare's sonnets, but for the moment it is enough to note that the definition of style as an expression of the personality of the author which Puttenham

offers becomes historically more problematic as the sixteenth century draws to a close. The inscription of emotions in a pre-existent essence becomes so difficult that in Shakespeare's sonnets there is a manifest split in the subject of representation, not least in the representation of material sexual passion.

VI

The earlier sonnets of Wyatt and Surrey, while marked with a potential for disruption, were nevertheless able to contain it because the resultant tensions were not yet so highly developed. In particular the problem of the 'aspiring poet' who imitates aristocratic models had not yet emerged. Nevertheless, the ideological movement to reduce the sonnet to a discursive formation appertaining to the aristocracy was bound to fail. Pierre Macherey explains, at the theoretical level, why this should be so. For him, the operation of the dominant ideology can be recovered by a symptomatic reading of the literary work.⁴⁸ Literary language necessarily refers not only to one type of knowledge but also to caricatures of the ideology which inform that

knowledge. Part of the problem this poses for the dominant ideology is caused by the fact that it needs either to invoke other possibilities in order to justify its own pre-eminence, or to refer to an outside force from which its authority is derived. The latter course has already been seen to operate in the theoretical positions of Puttenham and Sidney.

The relationship of the dominant ideology to others in existence is a historically precise one. It is therefore possible to move beyond the text to a reading of the historical relations which existed at the time of its production because these ideological relations are produced aesthetically, textualised in the literary work. Those discourses out of which the text is constituted produce an opportunity for excavating the interplay of history and ideologies. The relationship between the two structures the text in such a way that each is as important for a full reading as the other. Macherey summarises this relation as follows:

The work is perhaps a mirror precisely because it registers the partiality of its own reflections, the incomplete reality of simple elements. It is privileged because it does not have to elaborate the totality in order to

display it; it can reveal just the necessity of that totality - a necessity which can be deciphered from the work. It is the task of scientific criticism to achieve such a reading.⁴⁹

But there is a further problem: the assumptions held by critics sometimes accord with the assumptions of the text about its ideal reality. Criticism can therefore often be blind to the fact that the text contains other possibilities. In accordance with this fact, it has been easy for criticism to read Surrey's sonnets in terms of inventiveness, as I argued earlier. An example might be Surrey's sonnet 'The soote season, that bud and blome furth bringes'. Its composition is very simple, the first twelve lines consisting of twelve observations on nature. Only in the final couplet does the grammatical arrangement extend across two lines. In addition, the Spring - Winter dichotomy which structures the poem is a commonplace in the sonnet tradition. These two factors combine to produce a poem which would be an unexceptional, conventional sonnet, according to traditional criticism, with its commitment to the universal validity of poetry based on categories of

authorship. Such values have produced a certain kind of history, as Catherine Belsey makes clear:

To read the past, to read a text from the past, is thus always to make an interpretation which is in a sense an anachronism. Time travel is a fantasy. We cannot reproduce the conditions - the economy, the diseases, the manners, the language and the corresponding subjectivity - of another century. To do so would be, in any case, to eliminate the difference which makes the fantasy pleasurable: it would be to erase the recollection of the present, to cease to be, precisely, a traveller. Reading the past depends on this difference. The real anachronism, then, is of another kind. Here history as time travel gives way to history as costume drama, the reconstruction of the past as the present in fancy dress. The project is to explain away the surface strangeness of another century in order to release its profound continuity with the present. The past is read as - and for - evidence that change is always only superficial, that human nature, what it is to be a person, a man or a woman, a wife or a husband, is palpably unchanging. This history militates against radical commitment by denying the possibility of change.⁵⁰

Traditional literary historiography of the kind Belsey outlines here therefore reads the past in terms of its own preoccupations with an unchanging human subject, with the result that any sense of real historical discontinuity is lost. Her comments need to be glossed with Hayden White's theoretical

criticism of conventional historiography. In his book Tropics Of Discourse⁵¹ he argues that historiographical material is organised according to the cultural contexts which inform the writer. The historical narrative is then produced in one of four governing tropological modes: metaphoric, metonymic, synecdochic, or ironic. The mode used is chosen in accordance with the political and ideological leanings of the historian, with conservatives tending to write in the metonymic mode and radicals in the ironic mode. However, 'classic' works of history attain their status because they play off the mode of their 'emplotment' against their own political commitments, moving beyond an attempt to make their writing seem as transparent as possible. Indeed, White argues that the greatest historical works are those which are also the most 'literary' in this sense. This allows a reading of history which takes into account the literary and, conversely, a reading of literature which takes into account the historical. This work has already been initiated in Lauro Martines' book Society And History In English Renaissance Verse.⁵²

With regard to Surrey's sonnets, however, the

critical assumptions do seem to be validated, insofar as these poems, by and large, conform to the familiar protocols of aristocratic poetic discourse. The sonnet 'I never saw you, madam, lay apart' is an example of this.⁵³ In Dennis Keene's collection of Surrey's poems, this sonnet appears in the section entitled 'From the Italian'. It is almost a translation from Petrarch and follows closely the construction of a conventional subjectivity for the woman. The first mention of the 'cornet', the veil in Petrarch's poem, immediately invests it with all of the connotations of the colour black. The funereal aspect of the colour is especially predominant and is linked with the hiding away of the woman's golden hair:

But since ye knew I did love you and serve,
Your golden tresses was clad alway in black.
(lines 8-9)

These lines faithfully reproduce the conventional unapproachability of the woman, which is reinforced by the virtual eclipse of the light of her eyes in the final line:

So doth this cornet govern me alack,
In summer sun, in winter breath of frost;
Of your fair eyes whereby the light is lost.
(lines 12-14)

This dynamic opposition of light and darkness structures the movement of the poem's metaphors in a context which from the very outset foregrounds the sense of sight with the words 'I never saw you, madam'.

However, there is more to the poem than this. The capacity of the cornet to 'govern' the poet's sight and the loss of the light of the woman's eyes emphasise materiality, especially the golden tresses and smiling looks that the poet 'did crave so sore'. This minor disturbance of the specular economy of the sonnet by the material world, especially in relation to desire, does not accord with a possible view of the conventionality of the poem which privileges unity. There is a discontinuity between the material and the spiritual elements of the sonnet discourse, since desire is materialised in this poem in the body of the woman; the narrative persona attacks the veil which hides the sight of her body from him. Already in this early sonnet the Platonic element of ideal love is opened to deconstruction from the material force of sexuality, allowing the poem to be read from a standpoint which is informed by the problematical status of the physical versus the spiritual. Here we also observe the contemporary Renaissance recuperation of physical love for a hierarchical

discourse.

There are other sonnets by Surrey which represent more striking departures from the constraints of the tradition. While the sonnet just quoted figures forth a predictable reaction from the woman, and thus generally remains within the tradition despite the disruption caused by the recognition of the woman's sexuality, the poem "Love that doth reign and live within my thought" problematises poetic voice:

Love that doth reign and live within my thought,
 And built his seat within my captive breast,
 Clad in the arms wherein he with me fought,
 Oft in my face he doth his banner rest.
 But she that taught me love and suffer pain,
 My doubtful hope and eke my hot desire
 With shamefast look to shadow and refrain,
 Her smiling grace converteth straight to ire,
 And coward love then to the heart apace
 Taketh his flight, where he doth lurk and plain
 His purpose lost, and dare not show his face.
 For my lord's guilt thus faultless bide I pain;
 Yet from my lord shall not my foot remove.
 Sweet is the death that taketh end by love.

The final three lines introduce a disruptive element, in that the appearance of the 'lord' is not prepared for, or explained when it occurs. There is no link between this 'lord' and the 'death' mentioned in the final line. The result is to split the sonnet into two voices, one of which

is the lover of the major part of the poem, the other being the feudal servant of the last three lines. However, the 'lord' can be read as 'Love' expressed in straightforward feudal terms, bringing together two contiguous elements of the poem's aristocratic discourse. The similarity between the 'lord' of the poem and courtly love, which is founded upon their mutual overdetermination by the aristocratic discourse, is what allows them to be combined in this way. This draws attention to a three-way conflict between the poet, his lady, and his lord, which is worked out in metaphors of political subjection. By assimilating the love of the lady to the way feudal obligation expresses itself, the poem sidesteps the issue of its positioning of the woman's subjectivity; rather than ascribe feudal power to the woman, it makes Love itself a feudal superior. This shows subjection at work in the relationship between the poet and his lady, as can be seen in the final three lines:

For my lord's guilt thus faultless bide I pain;
 Yet from my lord shall not my foot remove.
 Sweet is the death that taketh end by love.
 (lines 12-14)

Thus, in the reference to the violent hierarchy of

feudalism, there is, because of these disruptions, a suggestion of a violent hierarchy which predicates the subjectivity of the woman. The problem created by this poem is, precisely, 'Who is speaking?'

In addition to these problems posed by Surrey's sonnets, there is no overall unity between the form and the discourse of love, a fact which represents a departure from the established tradition. He wrote a sonnet on death, as well as a 'history' sonnet on the Persian king Sardanapalus. It can therefore be argued that right at the beginning of the sonnet's history in England it is possible to employ this poetic form to address issues other than that of aristocratic love.

VII

In Wyatt's poetry the construction of female subjectivity is just as traditional as it is in Surrey's. This is exemplified in the couplet of the sonnet 'Diverse doth use, as I have heard and know':

But let it pass and think it is of kind
That often change doth please a woman's mind.⁵⁴

The stereotype of changeable femininity produces a contradiction in the discourse by introducing the woman's changeable mind into an aristocratic ideology which requires her absolute unattainability. The narrative persona hopes, against the constraints of the tradition, that the woman will change her mind, and he consoles himself with the stereotype of feminine changeability. The poem constructs this changing feminine mind as a means of salving a bruised masculine ego which is unable to attain its desire.

This contradiction is a source of potential disruption in many of Wyatt's sonnets. The poem 'My love took scorn my service to retain' uses the convention of the lover being in service to his lady according to the terminology of feudal loyalty. It explores the obligations of a feudal relation in which the inferior owes allegiance to a woman. Unlike the Surrey sonnet, Wyatt's poem refers explicitly to the fact that the narrator's superior is a woman, and does so almost immediately:

My love took scorn my service to retain
Wherein me thought she used cruelty (lines 1-2)

Nevertheless, in line 3 there is a recognition of the woman's position as dependent upon that of the narrator, with the statement that 'with good will I lost my liberty'. This implies that the narrator willingly chose to serve the woman, an idealisation of the historical facts of feudal service. Thus, the woman is given the status of a feudal superior while at the same time this status is already predicated upon the choice of the narrator. This gives the woman the power of a feudal lord, but without referring to the fact that, historically, any woman who had power in feudal times was particularly open to rebellion; Queen Maud of England is an example, and even Queen Elizabeth was careful to remain within the parameters of the courtly convention. Patriarchal discourse gave men political power, and gave women power in love. Thomas Smith, for example, put it in the following manner:

Which to maintaine for his part God hath
giuen to the man great wit, bigger
strength, and more courage to compell
the woman to obey by reason of force, and
to the woman bewtie, faire countenance,
and sweete wordes to make the man obey
her againe for loue.⁵⁵

The woman's position in this passage is already

given to her by patriarchy. But the distinction it draws is threatened by women rulers. Catherine Belsey identifies the problem as follows:

As woman writers acknowledged in their practice in the seventeenth century as well as in the nineteenth, to speak may be to adopt the voice of a man. Elizabeth I, who spoke powerfully, did so most famously to deny her femininity: 'I know I have the body of a weak and feeble woman, but I have the heart and stomach of a king'. (The woman rulers of Europe presented a problem for sixteenth-century patriarchy, but one which could be resolved by perceiving them as holders of a male office, 'princes', and thus only secondarily women in the eyes of the state).⁵⁶

Queen Elizabeth's statement puts the theory of patriarchy into practice. The poem by Wyatt can accordingly be read as idealising service of the lady while playing down specific historical tensions. Similarly, the poem 'I abide and abide and better abide' acknowledges the lady's command to wait while musing on the problems this creates for the aristocratic lover.

Thus, Wyatt's poems can be read in a manner that is alive to the historical tensions they contain, and yet which also acknowledges that the tensions do not become actual disjunctions. For such a reading, two issues regarding discursive change are now emerging

clearly: a formal change within the genre, and a historical change impinging upon the genre. In line 2 of 'My heart I gave thee' there is an example of the kind of grammatical 'flow' which is usually associated with later sonnets, particularly those of Shakespeare and Donne: 'But to preserve, it was to thee taken'. Here 'it' serves as the object of both 'preserve' and 'taken'. This is an example of a grammatical change, employed to introduce a greater degree of flexibility without extending what it is possible to write about in the sonnet form. But historical pressures are already producing perturbations at the level of the discourse itself. The poem 'Was I never yet of your love grieved' sets up an opposition between the traditional consequences of unrequited love and the poet's refusal to accept them. Thus, another disruption of the tradition is produced, as courtly life, represented metonymically by the standard responses of the lover, is displaced onto the woman, who is a model of capricious power.

This disturbance in the conventional rhetoric produces the antitheses and oxymorons of 'I find no peace', which inevitably puts in question the position of the woman, the 'causer of this strife'.

The ambiguity of the woman's position also informs 'My galley charg'd with forgetfulness', revealing the tension between the idealised lady and the material sexual desires of the aristocratic lover. Similarly, the dream of unrequited love in "Unstable dream" also denies the fulfilment of this sexual desire. The woman is represented as culpable for the desire she provokes, and, in accordance with the passage earlier quoted from Norbert Elias, the response of the aristocratic lover is displaced into a literature which deals with dreams. This is done in the context of the falseness of the woman as the dreamer perceives her:

Unstable dream, according to the place,
 Be steadfast once or else at least be true.
 By tasted sweetness make me not to rue
 The sudden loss of thy false feigned grace.(1-4)

The displacement of blame onto the woman functions in such a way as to make its own operation visible, coming close to a disclosure of the ideology's interests. The nature of such tensions, their disturbance of the discourse in the key areas of sexuality, social position, and the subjectivity of the woman, textualises the ideological conflicts of the times.

This produces a nervousness about representation in the literary work, which in Wyatt's sonnets becomes the fruitful source of a play upon truth in writing. The poem 'To rail or jest ye know I use it not' toys with the convention of the sonnet as a private address or letter to the lady. This links with the difference between outward show and inner feelings in 'Caesar when that the traitor of Egypt'. But this play on truth value does not yet disrupt the discourse; it is only with the increasing ideological pressures of the later part of the sixteenth century that this latent tension becomes a disruptive element.

Given that the sonnets of both Surrey and Wyatt register the presence of potentially subversive elements, it makes little sense to read Wyatt's as being more 'inventive' than Surrey's. It also permits a more historically aware reading of the tradition to place the disintegration of the discourse in the 1590s in context. This disintegration was an inevitable result of historical pressures on a form which was necessarily composed of disparate elements. The attempt to match the sonnet wholly to one discourse was therefore destined to fail from the outset. The

Notes

- 1: Wyatt: The Critical Heritage ed. Patricia Thompson (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1974) p.143.
- 2: ibid.
- 3: Note that noble cavalrymen still did have an important part to play on the Renaissance battlefield, because they could afford the high costs associated with keeping horses. However, the advance of technology had made the knight's traditional place as the primary arm of the army impossible, although cavalry were still invaluable as scouts and mobile firearms units, with the invention of the dragoon, a new type of troop. In addition, they continued to be a useful mobile reserve, especially for taking quick advantage of disorder among enemy infantry. However, these multiple functions required much more precision than the straightforward lance charge of an earlier period, and so cavalry units became more and more composed of professional soldiers, who might once have been gentlemen. Thus, Prince Rupert's cavalry in the Civil War consisted mainly of veterans who were gentlemen in little more than name.
- 4: Baldassare Castiglione: The Book Of The Courtier trans. George Bull (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1976) p.43.
- 5: ibid.
- 6: Henry Peacham: The Complete Gentleman And Other Works ed. Virgil B. Heltzel (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1962).
- 7: Michel Foucault: The Foucault Reader ed. Paul Rabinow (London: Penguin, 1987) pp.101-120.
- 8: Roland Barthes: Image. Music, Text ed. Stephen Heath (London: Fontana, 1984) pp.142-148.
- 9: ibid., p.142.

- 10: Henry Howard, Earl Of Surrey: Selected Poems ed. Dennis Keene (Manchester: Carcanet Press, 1985) p.86.
- 11: Norbert Elias: State Formation And Civilization trans. Edmund Jephcott (Oxford: Blackwell, 1982) p.261.
- 12: ibid., pp.76-77.
- 13: Louis Montrose: "Eliza, Queene Of Shepheardes" And The Pastoral Of Power in Renaissance Historicism: Selections From English Literary Renaissance eds. Arthur F.Kinney and Dan S.Collins (Amherst: The University of Massachussetts Press, 1987) p.35.
- 14: Louis B. Wright: Middle-Class Culture In Elizabethan England (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1935) p.43.
- 15: John Clarke, Stuart Hall and Tony Jefferson: 'Subcultures, Cultures and Class' in Resistance Through Rituals, eds. Stuart Hall and Tony Jefferson (Hutchinson: the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, 1976) p.12.
Quoted in:
Alan Sinfield: Literature In Protestant England 1560-1660 (London: Croom Helm, 1983).
- 16: Elias op.cit., pp. 241-242.
- 17: Karl Marx: Pre-Capitalist Economic Formations ed. Eric Hobsbawm (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1964) p.46.
- 18: R. H. Tawney: Religion And The Rise Of Capitalism (London: Peregrine, 1987) p.155.
In Lawrence Stone: The Crisis Of The Aristocracy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967) there is a table (p.73) which shows that from 1558-1641 55% of all aristocratic families suffered a net loss of at least 10 manors, compared with 4% in 1485-1547. The term 'manor' covers a wide variety of holdings, particularly in terms of size, but it is nevertheless significant that in the later period alienation of estates increased by more than a factor of thirteen. As an additional fact, it is also interesting to note the continual

indebtedness of the Sidney family, due to the building programme undertaken at Penshurst. For contemporary thought on usury, see the following:

M. Phillipus Caesar: A General Discourse Against The Damnable Sect Of Usurie; London 1578

Martin Luther: Works: The Christian In Society; ed. Walther Brandt, Philadelphia 1962

Miles Mosse: The Arraignment And Conviction Of Usurie; London 1595

Henry Smith: The Examination Of Usury In Two Sermons; London 1591

Thomas Wilson: A Discourse Upon Usurye; London 1572

19: Tawney op.cit., p.69.

20: Stone op.cit., p.23.

21: ibid., pp.72-73.

22: ibid., p.88.

23: ibid., p.71. See also Tawney, op.cit., p.142:

Into commerce, industry and agriculture alike, the revolution in prices, gradual for the first third of the century, but after 1540 a mill race, injected a virus of hitherto unsuspected potency, at once a stimulant to feverish enterprise and an acid dissolving all customary relationships.

24: Stone op.cit., p.6.

25: ibid., pp.180-181.

26: Jean Bodin: Six Books Of The Commonwealth trans. M.J.Tooley (Oxford: Blackwell, 1955) p.6.

27: ibid., p.10.

28: ibid., p.203.

29: Thomas Smith: De Republica Anglorum (Menston: Scolar Press, 1970) p.13.

- 30: Thomas Elyot: The Book Named The Governour ed. Arthur Turberville Eliot (Newcastle-upon-Tyne: John Hernaman and Sons, 1834) pp.69-70.
- 31: Stone op.cit., p.280. He glosses the aristocratic vision of marriage as follows:
- The Tudor family was an institution for the passing on of life, name, and property, and it was not until the early seventeenth century that it began to be regarded as an instrument of religious and moral improvement. (p.271)
- 32: Don E. Wayne: Penshurst: The Semiotics Of Place And The Poetics Of History (London: Methuen, 1984) pp.6-7.
- 33: ibid., p.23.
- 34: ibid., p.118.
- 35: Tawney op.cit., p.69.
- 36: Sir Philip Sidney: A Defence Of Poetry ed. J.A. Van Dorsten (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982) p.2.
- 37: ibid., p.26.
- 38: George Puttenham: The Arte Of Poesie eds. Gladys Doidge Willcock and Alice Walker (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1936) p.23.
- 39: ibid., p.24.
- 40: ibid.
- 41: ibid., p.148.
- 42: Samuel Daniel: A Defence Of Ryme (London: Curwen Press, 1925) pp.16-17.
- 43: Antony Easthope: Poetry As Discourse (London: Methuen, 1988) p.94.
- 44: Foucault op.cit. 1970, pp.43-44.
- 45: see Raymond Williams op.cit., pp.31-49.

- 46: Wayne op.cit., p.5.
- 47: Stephen J. Greenblatt: Shakespearean Negotiations (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988) ch.2.
- 48: See also my Introduction, p.p.43-44.
- 49: Macherey op.cit., pp.121-122.
- 50: Catherine Belsey: The Subject Of Tragedy (London: Methuen, 1985) p.2.
- 51: Hayden White: Tropics Of Discourse (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979).
- 52: Lauro Martines: Society And History In English Renaissance Verse (Oxford: Blackwell, 1987).
- 53: Surrey op.cit., p.42. Note that all non-Shakespearean sonnets referred to but not quoted in full in the text appear in the Appendix.
- 54: Wyatt:Complete Poems ed. R.A.Rebholz (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1978).
- 55: Smith op.cit., p.13.
- 56: Belsey op.cit. 1985, p.180.

Chapter 2

The Renaissance Sonnet

As A Discursive Form

This chapter will concentrate on the elements which constitute the generic requirements of the sonnet discourse after the form was introduced by Surrey and Wyatt. In order to do this, it will move on from the basic historical work accomplished in the previous chapter. The objective will be to produce a reading of those sonnet sequences which preceded Shakespeare's own, in terms of theoretically informed relationship between genre and history. This framework will inform the reading of Shakespeare's sonnets themselves in later chapters.

I

Sir Philip Sidney's Astrophel And Stella is the sonnet sequence which most closely identifies the courtly love discourse with the sonnet form. The first sonnet sets the tone for the rest of the

sequence:

Louing in truth, and faine in verse my loue to
 show,
 That the deere shee might take some pleasure of my
 paine:
 Pleasure might cause her reade, reading might make
 her know,
 Knowledge might pitie winne, and pitie grace
 obtaine.
 I sought fit wordes to paint the blackest face of
 woe;
 Studying inuentions fine, her wits to entertaine,
 Oft turning others' leaues, to see if thence would
 flowe,
 Some fresh and fruitfull showre, vpon my sunne-
 burnt braine.
 But wordes came halting out, wanting Inuention's
 stay;
 Inuention Nature's childe, fledde stepdames
 Studdie's blowes:
 And others feete seem'de but straungers in my way,
 Thus great with childe to speake, and helplesse in
 my throwes,
 Biting my tongue and penne, beating my selfe for
 spite;
 Foole saide my muse to mee, looke in thy heart and
 write.

This sonnet depicts the lady conventionally as the
 unavailable woman who causes the lover pain. So
 too, the hope that she will read the sonnets
 'addressed' to her and gain knowledge from them,
 knowledge which will make her relent and pity the
 poet, and eventually bestow her grace upon him, are
 also part of the conventional rhetoric of the
 sonnet. Most of all, however, the sonnet is about
 feeling and writing, and the religious language

informs the muse's admonition that the poet should look in his heart and write. This injunction serves to locate writing within the theory of representation set out by Sidney in his Defence Of Poetry; indeed, he addresses the mechanics of creativity in accordance with this theoretical position of the truth of representation, which is described by Rosalind Coward and John Ellis in the context of mimesis generally:

The whole basis of mimesis is that writing is a mere transcription of the real, carrying it over into a medium that exists only as a parasitical practice because the word is identical to, the equivalent of, the real world.²

Thus, Sidney produces a sequence which will be perfectly referential, a transparent medium through which his real feelings are to be transmitted in the form of the book of poetry.

Sidney's love is therefore constructed entirely along traditional lines, and Astrophel And Stella is full of familiar sonnet motifs. In sonnet 2 the wound the narrator suffers will bleed as long as he lives. In this poem he bemoans the loss of his liberty, but justifies his loss by stating that it is 'praise to suffer tyrannie' (line 11). He writes

that he now uses what remains of his wit to persuade himself that all is well, while at the same time painting his hell, a contradiction which is resolved in his 'love-madness', a form of mental and emotional derangement which reappears in sonnet 4. In sonnet 3 he admits that his mind cannot face up to strange things and that he is unable to grasp problems; he can only copy what nature has wrought in Stella, and this copying of a prior, non-textual reality is presented as unproblematical.

The subjectivity which the sequence constructs for Stella is also quite conventional. One of the material discourses through which subjectivity in general was constituted in the late sixteenth century was the sonnet, and the female subjectivity constructed within its generic boundaries accords with the ideology of the aristocracy. In Sidney's sequence this is accomplished by idealising Stella through the use of religious language. Accordingly, Sonnet 4 attempts to efface the contradiction of earthly sexuality vis-a-vis the sublimated saintliness of the woman by outlining the resultant moral problem and then invoking Stella as a goddess. The meanings generated from the production of female subjectivity are constrained by a mimesis

which misrecognises the conditions of its own production.

Therefore, when sonnet 7 reproduces the dichotomy first invoked in Surrey's sonnet on the veil,

When nature made her chiefe worke, Stellas eyes,
In colour blacke, why wrapt she beames so bright?
(7. 1-2)

the association locates Stella's subjectivity precisely within the sonnet, and not in some prior reality. Sonnet 8 continues this practice, positioning her as the unattainable cold beauty:

Loue borne in Greece, of late fled from his natiue
place,
Forst by a tedious profe, that Turkish hardned
harts
Were no fit markes, to pearce with his fine pointed
darts:
And pleasd with our soft peace, staide here his
fleeting race.
But finding these cold climes, too coldlie him
imbrace,
Not usde to frosen lippes, he straue to find some
part
Where with most ease and warmth, he might employ
his art.
At length himselfe he pearch'd in Stellas face,
Whose faire skinne, beemie eyes, like morning sun
in snowe;
Deceiu'd the quaking boy, who thought from so pure
light,
Effects of liuelie heate in nature needes must
growe.
But she most faire, most cold; made him there take
his flight

To my close hart; where while some fire brands he
did lay,
He burnt vnwares his wings, and cannot fly away.

In this sonnet fire represents metonymically the subject position of the poetic lover, while Stella is represented as his cold opposite. The movement of the sonnet's metaphors therefore plays out in literary terms the standard patriarchal construction of woman's subjectivity as being relative to that of man. Stella is necessarily defined in relation to the poet in such a context; she is the poet's 'other'. In accordance with this, all of the standard qualities of the lady are present in this sonnet: she has exceptionally fair skin, and her eyes beam out light as pure as that of the morning sun. But the description of her face links her with winter in the word 'snowe' in line 9, denying her the 'Effects of liuelie heate in nature' precisely because that heat is attributed to the man. Indeed, the sonnet not only constructs female subjectivity, it manages it in purely oppositional terms. The individual constructed in this sonnet is therefore an idealised aristocratic female subject, one which continues to be implemented throughout the rest of Astrophel And Stella in a mystifying operation which spiritualises the

physical love of the narrator for Stella. Thus Sonnet 9, which is a description of Stella's face in terms of architectural ornamentation, is inevitably contaminated by the coldness formulated in the previous poem. The privileging of the poet's ardour undercuts the description of Stella's beauty, and virtue's court is subverted by the memory of coldness, with the result that her beauty becomes a courtly facade:

Qveene Vertues Court, which some call Stellas
face,
Prepar'd by Natures cheefest furniture:
Hath his front built of Alabaster pure,
Golde is the couering of that statelie place.
(lines 1-4)

The poem continues along these lines, with its description only of the exterior of the court, Stella's cold interior having already been described in sonnet 8. Thus, the convention of the cold beauty is much more than a mere conceit in this sequence, since it represents the 'other' of the poet's 'heat', opposing it to his masculine ardour, and producing a crucial structuring opposition for the sequence as a whole. Stella only attains the full inner beauty which supplements her external beauty when she finally assents to the

poet's advances. The lady's position is therefore constructed in terms of passive resistance, while the man is the active principle, and she only ever reacts to his advances, since she has no independent existence of her own. The chivalric code which is articulated in terms of the metaphor of the 'court' itself here constructs a hierarchy which privileges masculine superiority. One half of this equation, that involving an active masculine principle, is later picked up by Donne in the famous image of the two compasses in A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning, although in this later poem it is explicitly divested of the associations of the aristocratic architectural metaphors:

If they be two, they are two so
 As stiffe twin compasses are two,
 Thy soule the fixt foot, makes no show
 To move, but doth, if th'other do. (lines 25-28)³

In this passage, the 'fixt foot', the woman's soul, moves only if the other, the man's soul, moves first, with the woman's response cast as a reaction to male activity. It is also important to note in this context that it is the woman's soul that is fixed in relation to that of the man.

Sonnet 12 sustains the stately frame of reference, and continues the opposition between

Stella's appearance and her heart, stating that Cupid is not in her heart:

Oh no, her heart is such a Cytadell,
 So fortified with wit, stor'd with disdain:
 That to winne it, is all the skill and paine.
 (lines 12-14)

The sestet of this poem addressed to Cupid inscribes sexual, physical love in her body, but the octave then goes on to deny that love exists in her heart. There is, therefore, a discrepancy between the outward sign and inner substance. This is an interesting contradiction of Sidney's poetic theory, which holds that the outward sign of language always unproblematically represents its object. But here the outward sign is duplicitous, a possible dislocation between theory and practice. This can, however, be explained by the cultural context of a double-sided female subjectivity articulated as a dichotomy of the Madonna and the Whore. Stella's heart has to be invaded in order to bring it into alignment with her face, thereby vindicating the mimetic theory of representation. The use of the imagery of male warfare to win the citadel becomes a metaphor for the tactical manoeuvring needed to make Stella's heart one with the poet's heart, a practice which demands the

construction of a colonised body capable of submitting to the poet's desire.'

Sonnet 13 extends this opposition between the 'face' and the 'heart' by effecting the identification of Stella with the heraldic devices of love, where there is a disjunction between outward appearance and inner feeling. The sequence epitomises the patriarchal economy, which sets up femininity as the unattainable other of the heated subjectivity of the poet, and which now divides it anatomically, with Stella's face having beauty while her heart is empty. Having accomplished this, Astrophel And Stella now sets out on its narrative of the course of the affair, with Stella being slowly infected by the heat of the poet's love. Her subjectivity continues to be defined differentially throughout in relation to that of the poet, as she moves from one position in the discourse of patriarchy, that of unattainable perfection, to another, that of her reciprocation of the poet's love.

However, as in Wyatt and, to a lesser extent, Surrey, the possibility of the disruption of this discourse is also inscribed in Sidney's sequence. The simultaneous representation of sexuality and

the woman's subjectivity as it is inscribed in discourse is again a site of potential subversion. It is possible to retrace the process whereby the physical materiality of the poet's love is sublimated and spiritualised. The lady is placed on the pedestal vacated by the Virgin Mary of the Middle Ages while at the same time signifying the poet's sexual desire for her through the mechanism of the sublimation of sexual energy. It is that displacement of desire onto religious, and hence spiritual, matters which always threatens to disrupt the platonic discourse of the sonnet form. Sidney's sequence is an example of the temporarily successful repression of this potential disruption, by an idealist mystifying of the woman's subject-position, and Astrophel And Stella is the definitive enactment of this fundamentally ideological operation.

Another example of the ability of the sequence to contain disruptive elements can be found in the fact that when Sidney writes about the process of writing he is able to do so without privileging or problematizing the process of self-referentiality. Thus, in an operation which is intrinsically Platonic, the sonnet seeks to efface its own

historicity by locating a higher reality to which it refers transparently. In spite of the fact that to write about writing always runs the risk of revealing the formal, linguistic and ideological operations which lie behind it, in Sidney's sequence the dominant elements are still able to contain emergent elements. Thus, in Astrophel And Stella the process of change brought about by historical pressures on the discourse has not yet proceeded far enough to cause such potential disruptions to become actual disjunctions. It has already been seen that in the first sonnet of the sequence truth and writing are related hierarchically, and that in sonnet 3 the poet is able to copy what nature has wrought in Stella. The sequence develops this relationship. In sonnet 15, for example, the aids of poetic form are useless because they lack 'inward tutch' (line 10). In sonnet 28 he states that he is not allegorising; when he says 'Stella', he names her in accordance with her function as origin of his discourse, in the terms of a Platonic theory of language. The idea of naming in this sonnet, taken from Plato's Cratylus, connects with what has already been said in relation to Stella's subjectivity. The poet

states that he is motivated to write by love, and that he does not want the 'brassen fame' (line 4) of one who uses allegory. The reality of love which he says exists outside the text gives him the power to name Stella in his verse. In platonic terms, the name refers to a really existing physical entity in the manner which Plato's Cratylus describes:

Then a name is an instrument of teaching
and of distinguishing natures, as the
shuttle is of distinguishing the threads
of the web.⁵

But in Michel Pecheux's terms⁶, this distinguishing of natures is a classic operation of the interpellation of the subject; the ideology allows the poet to produce a subject-position for Stella which does not exist in some pre-textual reality. The poet's claim that he is not using any 'quintessence' (line 11), that he is writing in 'pure simplicitie' (line 12), is therefore a piece of literary *leger de main*, and is wholly in keeping with the mimetic theoretical position outlined in the Defence Of Poetry.

It is now possible to state that the discourse of this sequence sets up its 'others' in the sort of operation theorised by Pecheux. Astrophel And

Stella the subjects are wholly identified with the discursive formation that dominates them, and the operation of their positioning is relatively unproblematical. But as Pecheux has observed, the objective interdiscourse of the totality of ideologies is also necessarily re-inscribed in this dominant discourse. It should be added that the elements of interdiscourse, the materiality of language which resists containment by the dominant ideology, provide the possibility of subversion which increases as that ideology ceases to function as a satisfactory means of occluding the contradictions present in material social relations. Therefore, the traces of what determines the subjectivity of the woman are re-inscribed in literary form in the discourse which produces it. However, there is a problem with Pecheux's structural account, in that it tends to accord the dominant discursive formation too much power, when in fact resistance comes from the experience of the negative effects of power. Applied to the experience of social relations in the late sixteenth century, the contradictions caused by these disruptive energies can no longer be contained by the dominant ideology in sequences subsequent to Astrophel And Stella.

As far as Sidney's sequence is concerned, Stella's surrender to Astrophel does not succeed in

disrupting the discourse, even though an important part of her subjectivity involves her refusal to allow the poet to love her:

O joy too high for my low style to show!
 O bliss fit for a nobler state than me!
 Envy, put out thine eyes, lest thou do see
 What oceans of delight in me do flow.
 My friend, that oft saw through all my masks of
 woe,
 Come, come, and let me pour myself on thee.
 Gone is the winter of my misery!
 My spring appears; oh see what here doth grow.
 For Stella hath, with words where faith doth shine,
 Of her high heart given me the monarchy.
 I, I - O - I may say that she is mine!
 And though she gives but thus condition'ly
 This realm of bliss, while virtuous course I take,
 No kings be crown'd but they some covenants make.
(sonnet 69)

This result is itself overdetermined by the ability of the patriarchal discourse to oppose Stella's subjectivity to that of Astrophel. The spring-winter dichotomy, whose material, sexual force is epitomised in the verb 'grow' at the end of line 8, becomes spiritualised in 'faith' in line 9. This takes place in a movement whereby the disclaimer of the first two lines, with their register of social class, is erased by the 'monarchy' of line 10. Stella's acquiescence is the vehicle by which the narrative persona moves into a nobler state, that of kingship, with all of its residual feudal

overtone of ownership coming into play. Stella's surrender is catered for by the discourse, just as her refusal was already positioned. The sonnet is not concerned with what the woman wants, but what the man wants of the woman whom he constructs in his own image. The 'virtuous course' (line 13) attempts to efface this operation by attributing the power to make demands to the woman, but even this does not last. By sonnet 72 it is clear that it is not only Stella's heart that the poetic persona has won, but her body as well:

Venus is taught with Dian's wings to fly;
 I must no more in thy sweet passions lie;
 Virtue's gold now must head my Cupid's dart.
(lines 6-8)

But after Stella's death the discourse is no longer able to enclose meaning and efface contradiction in this manner. The epitaph sonnets at the end of the sequence return the form to that of Surrey's sonnets on death and historical subjects, reintroducing elements other than courtly love. The historical circumstances within which it is possible to write are now changing; those who follow Sidney begin to record this shift, even when they are trying to write wholly within the discourse of courtly love.

II

The production of many 'minor' sequences testifies to the hold the sonnet had over Renaissance poets. Samuel Daniel's Delia⁷ is usually taken as representative in that it contains many standard elements of the genre. The connecting of the elements of the woman and wealth attempts to make them the constitutive elements of a homogeneous discourse in much the same fashion as Wyatt's poem My love took scorn my service to retain tries to make love and feudal obligation contiguous. The first sonnet in Delia offers an example of this process:

Vnto the boundles Ocean of thy beautie
Runs this poore riuer, charg'd with streames of
zeale:

Returning thee the tribute of my dutie,
Which heere my loue, my youth, my playnts reueal.

Heere I vnclaspe the booke of my charg'd soule,
Where I haue cast th'accounts of all my care:
Heere haue I summ'd my sighes, heere I enroule
Howe they were spent for thee; Looke what they are.

Looke on the deere expences of my youth,
And see how iust I reckon with thine eyes:
Examine well thy beauty with my trueth,
And crosse my cares ere greater summes arise.

Read it sweet maide, though it be done but
slightly;

Who can showe all his loue, doth loue but
lightly.

The mechanism which facilitates the project of

homogenising the disparate discourses of love and feudal obligation in the poem is the persistence of economic metaphors which structure the experience of courtly love. This draws together the two meanings of the 'booke' in line 5 as an 'account' in both the narrative and fiscal senses of the term. However, the representation of the poet's love for the woman, and of the woman herself, at once discloses economic considerations and attempts to repress them by idealising the love of the poet for the woman:

 Looke on the deere expences of my youth,
 And see how iust I reckon with thine eyes:
 Examine well thy beautie with my trueth,
 And crosse my cares ere greater summes arise.
(lines 9-12)

The abstract nouns 'beautie' and 'trueth' are here used in the same sentence as the economic metaphors of 'expences', 'reckon' and 'summes'. But this is done in a poem in which the economic metaphors are combined with metaphors of water, producing a sequence of punning which is obviously sexual, with the tributary waters of the lover seeking to fill the ocean which is the woman:

Vnto the boundles Ocean of thy beautie
 Runs this poore riuer, charg'd with streames of
 zeale;

(lines 1-2)

This combination occurs again in line 9, this time specifically in the context of the youth of the lover. It is significant that the reference to the poet's youth comes at this point as a linguistic excess in the poem, and not earlier. The material force of sexuality threatens the idealising impetus of the poem, and has then to be contained by linking it to youth, with all of its attendant connotations of wildness, immaturity and excessive commitment to the material rather than the ideal. The materiality of sex is therefore implicated in a complex aristocratic discourse which is troubled by problems of money, sexuality, and the woman. Wealth and the social position of the lover and of his lady are not so much preoccupations, as assumptions, of this discourse.

Both the sonnet form and the discourse elaborated in it were associated with an aristocratic milieu, and the poet who aspired to socio-literary status was virtually obliged to write a sonnet sequence, as an expression of the desire for upward social mobility. Daniel, it may

be recalled, was not himself an aristocrat, but relied on the patronage of aristocrats, just as a number of his contemporaries, Shakespeare among them, sought patronage and social advancement through their writing. This produced a situation in which poets of lower social class inhabited discourses associated with the upper classes, a situation with great potential for subversion of the dominant discourses.

Michel Foucault has written of the management of the pre-bourgeois sexuality which was so important in these circumstances:

one had to speak of it as a thing to be not simply condemned or tolerated but managed.⁸

The management of sexual energies which takes place in Delia is therefore a textual strategy which sublimates sexual passion; the energy is displaced into a poetic form which is already associated with the aristocracy. When the operation of this form of management becomes clear behind the facade of 'truth' the discourse begins to lose its potency and the suffering 'subject' of the sonneteering lover becomes reduced, through parody, to an object of ridicule. Hence the development of the ironical

references to the form, particularly in the theatre, which comes from a familiarity with the genre.

The religious language which structures the subjectivity of the woman is put under pressure by this movement. In Delia the 'sweet maide' of line 13 in sonnet 1 becomes associated with a language which had been used in connection with the Virgin Mary in the Middle Ages. In sonnet 6 she is described as 'Sacred on earth, design'd a Saint about' (line 8). In sonnet 8 the lover's burning heart is envisaged as sending up the incense of its sighs to heaven.

However, in sonnet 11 there occurs what amounts to a perversion of mariolatry:

Teares, vowes, and prayers win the hardest hart;
 Teares, vowes and prayers haue I spent in vaine;
 Teares, cannot soften flint, nor vowes conuert.
 Prayers preuaile not with a quaint disdaine.
 I lose my teares, where I haue lost my loue,
 I vowe my faith, where faith is not regarded;
 I pray in vaine, a merciles to moue:
 So rare a faith ought better be rewarded.
 Yet though I cannot win her will with teares,
 Though my soules Idoll scorneth all my vowes;
 Though all my prayers be to so deaf ears:
 No fauour thought the cruell faire allowes.
 Yet will I weepe, vowe, pray to cruell Shee;
 Flint, Frost, disdaine, weares, melts and yeelds
 we see.

In this sonnet tears, vows, and prayers, which

should win the hardest heart, are found to be of no use whatsoever to the languishing lover. The sonnet inverts the standard use of the language of mariolatry in that there is no intercession. Mary was the mediatrix between man and God, yet here her place is taken by a woman who is totally immoveable. In this sonnet the woman on a pedestal, the 'Idoll' of line 10, is a statue, in a conflation of the material and the ideal which disrupts the patriarchal ideology informing the poem. The material and the ideal are no longer separate, with the result that this statue's will cannot be won in line 9. The disruption is of course immediately epitomised in the sexual connotations of 'will'. In such a context, what is proposed in the final couplet is a form of sexual harrassment:

Yet will I weepe, vowe, pray to cruell Shee;
 Flint, Frost, Disdaine, weares, melts, and yeelds
 we see.

The poem's iconography reveals a contradiction in the position ascribed to the woman. Patriarchy had made woman the cause of original sin in the figure of Eve and this conflicts with Mary as agent of redemption. Yet in this poem Mary's function is to deny, not to redeem. Thus, the sonnet introduces the possibility of other meanings which are at variance with the

official, theologically sanctioned patriarchal discourse. For the placing of the woman on a pedestal does accord her power over her lover despite the fact that her subjectivity is constructed by patriarchal assumptions, a contradiction which offers a paradigm of the relations between Queen Elizabeth and her male courtiers. In the period of the sonnet's full success this power is fully sublimated into religious language. But there is always a potential for disruption, since the dual attributes of sexuality and redemption are always present as the means of the structuring of the woman's subjectivity, although it is a disruption that can be contained by the narrative of Christianity. Nevertheless, when the discourse begins to disintegrate the dichotomy of sexual attraction and religious unapproachability fragments.

It is at exactly this point in the development of the genre that the poetry of John Donne is produced, the tension between religion and sexuality in his poetry being rooted in precisely this historical movement. The conflation of sexuality and angels in Aire And Angels is an example of this operation. The first four lines of

the poem initiate a comparison between angels and the love of the poetic persona for the woman:

Twice or thrice had I loved thee,
 Before I knew thy face or name;
 So in a voice, so in a shapelesse flame,
 Angells affect us oft, and worship'd bee;

In what is effectively a web of metaphorical exchanges between love and angels, the insubstantiality of the airy bodies taken by angels and the air itself is shown to be equivalent to the difference between the love of men and women. Thus, the poem accomplishes the creation of a hierarchy which privileges the love of men, an operation effected by means of the poem's metaphors, beginning with the man's first sight of the woman's body in line 6: 'Some lovely glorious nothing did I see'. Apart from the obvious and audacious sexual pun on 'nothing', this line establishes the woman's body as an essential nothingness, a kind of absence to be filled by the presence of the lover. The poetic persona's comment on this is that 'Love must not be, but take a body too' (line 10), and the result is that the poet's agency provides the woman with a body:

And therefore what thou wert, and who,
 I bid love aske, and now

That it assume thy body, I allow,
 And fixe it selfe in thy lip, eye, and brow.
 (11-14)

Yet essence is shown to precede substance in a Platonic hierarchy, with the motivation, ironically, being the material sexuality of the woman, which is both acknowledged and denied. The first person pronoun in lines 12 and 13 gives the poet power over the personified love that assumes the woman's body: he is the one who allows the operation to take place, since it is he who bids love to ask. This moves the woman from the essential nothingness of line 6 to an essential passivity in the face of the poet's power. Thus love becomes materialised in the body of the woman, or, as line 15 has it, she is love's 'ballast'. But the next few lines establish that her love needs something superior:

Ev'ry thy haire for love to work upon
 Is much too much, some fitter must be sought.
 (19-20)

This 'fitter' turns out to be the superior love of the poet, which takes the woman's love as its property:

Then as an Angell, face, and wings
 Of aire, not pure as it, they pure doth weare.

So thy love may be my loves spheare;
 Just such disparitie
 As is 'twixt Aire and Angells puritie,
 'Twixt womens love, and mens will ever be. (23-28)

The concentration of these metaphors in the woman's body with the pun on 'nothing' in lines 6 and 8 makes her body, which the poet has constructed, the material location of the rhetorical structure of the poem. It is the physical side of love that causes these problems in Donne's poem, which plays out the tension between the material and the spiritual by idealising the love of the man and emphasising the materiality of the woman's. However, this is accomplished through a repression of the woman's sexuality; she can only ever respond to the poem's active principle, the man, and has no existence independent of him, so that her subjectivity is delineated only in a relation of difference to that of the man.

However, there are several other points which can be made about this poem. The relation between air and angels, defined in terms of their relative purity, becomes caught up in the metaphors of sexuality, with the interesting result that the spiritual world of the angels becomes sexualised just as the love of the man is made more spiritual

than that of the woman, an inevitable result of the way the metaphors criss-cross in the poem. This, taken together with the difficult syntax, so often associated with Donne's 'style', such as that of line 5 ('Still when, to where thou wert, I came'), suggests that the surface diction of the poem is troubled, locating it precisely at the growing divisions in the poetic subjectivity ascribed to women.

III

Spenser's Amoretti,⁹ which was published only four years after Astrophel And Stella, shows similar signs of change to that exhibited in Delia. Although the sequence reproduces many standard elements of the conventional rhetoric of the sonnet, it nevertheless discloses its position at the historical moment of the crisis of the discourse. As with The Faerie Queene, the Amoretti appropriates aristocratic discourse from a position of social inferiority, since Spenser's own status was that of an aspiring gentleman. As an index of social mobility, then, Spenser's sonnets are able to register acutely the beginnings of the

disintegration of the unity of the sonnet form and aristocratic discourse. This produces changes within the elements of the discourse in the sonnet, which is not to promote a reflectionist model of the relationship between text and history; rather, as a mode of production itself, the sonnet produces these changes because of the relative autonomy of its relationship with society. The sonnet does not, therefore, simply represent the social conditions of the time; it is itself an apparatus produced by and within ideology. The result of the changing conditions of representation on the sonnet is that in these poems the conventional praise of the woman's beauty is completely shot through with references to her cruelty. The lady in the Amoretti is represented as being much more consciously cruel to the loving poet than were her predecessors such as Daniel's Delia. They were merely immoveable; she is portrayed as almost malevolent in her refusal of the poet's suit.

The effect her moods have upon the lover therefore begins to move the sequence beyond conventional discursive boundaries. For example, in sonnet 47 the traditional subject position of the woman begins to become less stable:

Trust not the treason of those smyling lookes,
 vntill ye haue theyr guylefull traynes well
 tryde:

for they are like but vnto golden hookes,
 that from the foolish fish theyr bayts doe hyde:
 So she with flattring smyles weake harts doth
 guyde,

vnto her loue and tempte to theyr decay,
 whome being caught she kills with cruell pryde,
 and feeds at pleasure on the wretched prey:
 Yet euen whyllst her bloody hands them slay,
 her eyes looke louely and vpon them smyle:
 that they take pleasure in her cruell play,
 and dying doe them selues of payne beguyle,
 O mighty charm which makes men loue theyr bane,
 and thinck they dy with pleasure, liue with
 paine.

In this sonnet the woman is depicted as man's 'other', a predatory and threatening animal. Her cruelty is without reason; it exists for itself, needing no justification. The woman is aligned with the devil, making the poem almost a rendering of the myth of Eve and the serpent in the Garden of Eden. Given the conventional opposition between the woman's looks and her heart which is so important in Astrophel And Stella, the woman's 'smiling lookes' in the very first line of this poem signify that she is contaminated by the difference between outward show and inner feelings right from the outset. This standard opposition is soon invested with more sinister connotations. The 'guylefull traynes' of her hair in line 2 suggests a

connection with the convoluted coils of the serpent. References to the devil continue with 'tempte' in line 6 and 'beguyle' in line 12. The woman's 'smyling lookes' are read as diabolical 'treason' in a literal demonising of the subjectivity which is so carefully constructed for her. This can be traced to a protestant emphasis on female inferiority, textualised as a fascination with what it condemns.¹⁰ This essentialising of female subjectivity and its positioning in a moral universe effectively represses the mechanisms through which that ascription of a position is made.

Once the subjectivity of the woman is demonised where formerly it was sublimated into sainthood, the traditional religious iconography correspondingly changes. The result is that much more emphasis is now placed on the sexual, physical world. Indeed, the poem is full of references to the material aspect of the woman's subject position; inner accords with outer, as her face and body reflect her heart. But, in accordance with the Pauline view of post-lapsarian woman, the new correspondence is a negative one. The poem catalogues her physical features in this light: her

'lookes' appear in the very first line, establishing the concern with the material aspect; her 'traynes' in line 2 become 'golden hookes' in the following line; line 5 refers to her 'flattering smyles'; line 9 has her 'bloody hands'; and

her eyes looke louely and vpon them smyle:

in line 10. This list inverts the physical descriptions of the lady in conventional sonnet sequences, denigrating her 'lookes' by means of their material link with the devil, so that the beautiful hair, smiles, hands, and, of course, eyes, of the traditional sonnet lady become the lures by which men are enticed to their destruction.

However, once the lover has succeeded in winning his lady, the traditional positive religious element of her subjectivity emerges once more. By way of contrast, Astrophel's attainment of his desire was not conditional upon such a reaffirmation of an idealised femininity; but the dominant ideology is no longer as secure as this in Spenser's Amoretti, where an insecurity requires a reinforcement of the religious language. This is exemplified in sonnet 66:

TO all those happy blessings which ye haue,
 with plenteous hand by heauen vpon you thrown:
 this one disparagement they to you gaue,
 that ye your loue lent to so meane a one.
 Yee whose high worths surpassing paragon,
 could not on earth haue found one fit for mate,
 ne but in heauen matchable to none,
 why did ye stoup vnto so lowly state?
 But ye thereby much greater glory gate,
 then had you sorted with a princes pere:
 for now your light doth more it selfe dilate,
 and in my darknesse greater doth appeare.
 Yet since your light hath once enlumind me,
 with my reflex yours shall encreased be.

This sonnet expresses in sublimated form the economic value of the woman who could have 'sorted with a princes pere'. Here a series of words appropriate to religion is also invested with class values. Hence 'plenteous hand' in line 2 and 'lent' in line 4, with its clever pun on the season of Lent, carry the associations of aristocratic largesse. There are other examples, such as 'meane', also in line 4; 'high worths' in line 5; and 'lowly state' in line 8. In such a complex of connotations 'matchable' in line 7 can be read as positioning the woman in the two spheres of religion and social status. Thus her subjectivity is predicated upon the means by which the nobility simultaneously renewed its wealth and sanctified itself: marriage. The socio-economic construction of female subjectivity in the Renaissance is seldom

put so clearly.

The poem introduces explicitly a further element of change into this complex aristocratic discourse, an element to which reference has already been made: the economic inferiority of the gentleman Spenser. The fact that, for what may be the first time, a social inferior can appropriate a poetic form so long associated with the aristocracy, indicates its new availability to those of other social classes as a means of displaying social aspiration. The loosening of the English social hierarchy which was taking place at the time can therefore be shown to impinge upon the sonnet, which becomes a textualised site of social contestation. Nevertheless, in Spenser's sequence the elements of discourse which comprise the genre are still overdetermined by the interests of the nobility. They are a marker of social status, and are valuable precisely for that reason.

This example of the loosening of the discourse is compounded by the problem of truth and writing, as it is articulated in the Amoretti, and mimesis itself becomes a contentious issue in sonnet 17:

The glorious pourtraict of that Angels face,
 Made to amaze weake mens confused skil:
 and this worlds worthlesse glory to embase,

what pen, what pencill can expresse her fill?
 For though he colours could deuize at will,
 and eke his learned hand at pleasure guide,
 least trembling it his workmanship should spill,
 yet many wondrous things there are beside,
 The sweet eye-glaunces, that like arrows glide,
 the charming smyles, that rob sence from the
 hart:

the louely pleasance and the lofty pride,
 cannot expressed be by any art.
 A greater craftsmans hand thereto doth neede,
 that can expresse the life of things indeed.

In this sonnet poetry cannot represent the pre-
 textual reality of the woman's beauty; it "cannot
 expressed be by any art". Absence has taken the
 place of presence; the self is no longer present in
 linguistic utterance, which suggests a replacement
 of the symbolic by the differential relations of
 signification. However, the history of the sonnet
 in the Renaissance questions a progressive view of
 the change of the sort posited by Michel Foucault
 in his book The Order Of Things, since, as I have
 already argued, the potential for this disruption
 of mimesis was always present. As will be seen
 later with Thomas Watson's Hecatompattia, the
 history of the form contains elements which argue
 for a more synchronous reading. For the moment, it
 is enough to realise that there is no
 correspondence between beauty and the
 representation of beauty in the Amoretti, a

position contrary to that obtaining in Sidney's sequence, where all that the poet needed to do was to 'copy' Stella.

In addition to these problems arising within the ideology, other elements begin to appear. These develop the tradition, and they push back the boundaries of what it is permissible to write about in the sonnet form. One such basic change is the new emphasis given to the lady's 'mind' in the Amoretti. The constituent elements of her subjectivity are now under such pressure that the discourse attempts to reinforce the old subject-position it had created for her. This takes place by means of a Christian view of women which spiritualises the language of exchange, and so harmonises with the aristocratic ideal of marriage. This is related to the new theme of the value of the woman's mind in sonnet 15, in which she is described in terms of the possession of wealth:

YE tradefull Merchants that with weary toyle,
 do seeke most pretious things to make your gain:
 and both the Indias of their treasures spoile,
 what needeth you to seeke so farre in vaine?
 For loe my loue doth in her selfe containe
 all this worlds riches that may farre be found,
 if Saphyres loe her eies be Saphyres plaine,
 if Rubies, loe her lips be Rubies found:
 If pearles, hir teeth be pearles both pure and
 round:
 if Yuorie, her forehead yuory weene;

if Gold, her locks are finest gold on ground;
if siluer, her faire hands are siluer sheene.
But that which fairest is, but few behold,
her mind adornd with vertues manifold.

The poem relates every part of the woman's body specifically to an item of material value. The historical context of the monetary anxieties of the nobility undercuts the poem's attempt to unify her body and her mind precisely because it uses metaphors of wealth; it draws attention to the fact that the body is easily described while the mind is not - it is merely mentioned in the last line. Female subjectivity can therefore be seen to be a product of the relations between noble women and wealth, constructed in the poem as difference, that is, a dichotomy between inner and outer, male and female. The poem is structured around an opposition between material and essential elements which depend for their poetic force upon the placing of the mind in a position of hierarchical superiority over the body; and yet the body is still more easily characterised than the theoretically superior mind. The patriarchal assumptions of the discourse align the woman's value of exchange with categories of intrinsic worth. What this occludes in the poem is the need for material wealth to

sustain a social position. Thus, the metaphors through which the sonnet tries to raise the mind to a position of pre-eminence reveal its own compliance with the actual social value ascribed to the woman's body as a commodity.

Another element of the ideology begins to undergo transformation in the Amoretti. The misery of the lover is described almost for its own sake, as if it were the subject of the poetry, and not the consequence of the woman's refusal. In earlier sequences, the effect of this refusal is that the lover is plunged into despair; but it is a despair which is continually linked to the frustration of desire. In sonnet 25, for example, the whole of the first quatrain is devoted to describing misery, but there is no reference to the cause itself until line 6:

How long shall this lyke dying lyfe endure,
 And know no end of her owne mysery:
 but wast and weare away in termes vnsure,
 twixt feare and hope depending doubtfully.
 Yet better were attonce to let me die,
 and shew the last ensample of your pride:

Sonnets 26, 42, 44, 50 and 57 continue in this vein. 44 is particularly interesting in this respect, since it contains no reference at all to

the cause of the misery, a fact which implies that generic considerations make such a statement unnecessary. This precedes the development of the characters of the melancholy young men and malcontents of Jacobean dramatic and non-dramatic poetry. The traditional pose of the rejected sonneteering lover may be, in part, the literary antecedent of these later figures.

Spenser's sequence therefore begins to produce a disjunction between the sonnet form and the discourse with which it was bound up for so long, a move which was impossible for Astrophel And Stella. With the Amoretti the contradictions which the sonnet already contained in the poems of Surrey and Wyatt are beginning to emerge. In accordance with this, it is possible to state that in a sense these 'private' poems are very political, since they record, in a form associated with the courtly love discourse, the effects of the crisis of the aristocracy.

IV

In such a context of crisis the sonnet is not only mobilised by poets of other social classes,

but new forms of discourse become available, forms which do not possess the sonnet's history of association with the aristocracy. This new tendency found its fullest expression in the theatre, particularly with its more broad-based social appeal. The growing influence of the theatre has already been noted in connection with the Amoretti. It caused concern among the ruling authorities, who installed an apparatus of censorship. In addition, many divines denounced the effect playgoing could have on morality, particularly because of the London theatres' proximity to the brothels in the suburbs; transvestism was also much cited in the anti-theatre tracts. These well-documented attacks on the theatre amount to a displaced form of the awareness that the theatre could harbour subversive potential, although the moral reasons were usually used as justification, as Jonathan Dollimore has made clear in his essay 'Transgression and Surveillance in Measure For Measure'.¹¹

One of the ways the theatre expressed itself was in relation to the discourses which preceded it in importance. This produced, among other things, an awareness in the drama of the disintegration of the fragile unity of the courtly love discourse and

the sonnet form. One of the basic themes of Shakespeare's Love's Labour's Lost (c.1595), for example, is the emptiness of the convention of courtly love expressed in the sonnet. G. K. Hunter comments on this in his essay 'Poem and Context in Love's Labour's Lost' :

As the context is perceived to be comic, so the sonnet is sucked into the comic mode and becomes one more example of the lengths to which the 'learned...tongue' will go in its efforts to prove that what it desires is also what is right to be desired. Poetry is validated as fiction.¹²

Here a hierarchy is being set up which privileges speech over writing. This is, in fact, a general critical position on the play, which Terence Hawkes has identified:

As love reconciles man to woman, rhyme, which only exists in that it has a vocal, auditory bearing, adds a human, reconciling, oral-aural dimension to speeches which are merely 'penned'. This is the significance of the sonnets in which love is finally expressed in the play.¹³

Here it is the vocal, auditory element of poetry which allows it to transcend the deadness of the written word. Following on from this, it could be said that in the play the dead bookish world of the

court is regarded as inferior to the happy world of speech inhabited by the women forbidden to enter it. But this inevitably registers a devaluing of the tradition associated with the sonnet. For the literary theory of the aristocratic sonneteers, what was written was true; for the play, the relationship is exactly the opposite. This play debunks the aristocratic poetic form through the medium of the relationship between the sexes, and it begins with the ruling patriarchy replaying its standard view of women. As Malcolm Evans argues:

Ferdinand's concept of learning as a struggle against the senses to achieve knowledge normally beyond their scope is firmly in the tradition of Ficino's Neoplatonism, in which the body must be purged of its carnal grossness before the original lustre of the soul is restored to the point where "its natural light shines out, and it searches out the order of natural things". This knowledge is only possible after the battle against the affections" and "the huge Armie of the worlds desires" has been won. To this end, Ferdinand's edict stipulates that "no woman shall come within a mile of my Court" (I.129).¹⁴

Ferdinand's edict therefore assumes that the presence of women can only be detrimental to the pursuit of knowledge, identifying woman with the lures of the flesh. As in the case of Spenser's

sequence, woman is here produced as man's animal 'other', in direct opposition to the representation of the ideal world of man. The punishment which is to be inflicted on any woman who violates Ferdinand's edict reinforces the identification of woman with the flesh, the material world, and incidentally sets up the play's structuring of the speech-writing dichotomy: she would lose her tongue.

However, Berowne's continual vilification of Ferdinand's scholarly intentions undermines the identification of the aristocratic men with the written word. The men move toward the world of speech, which is given a feminine point of reference, undercutting the patriarchal assumptions about women. Berowne therefore becomes one of the most powerful articulators of the attack on the truth value of written forms in the play:

This senior-junior, giant-dwarf, Dan Cupid;
 Regent of love-rhymes, lord of folded arms,
 Th'anoointed sovereign of sighs and groans,
 Liege of all loiterers and malcontents,
 Dread prince of plackets, king of codpieces,
 Sole imperator, and great general
 Of trotting paritors. (III. 170-176)

The irony here is that Berowne nevertheless has to depend upon a sonnet for the success of his suit. But more significant is the fact that here a lord, a member of the class with which the sonnet is

identified, is brought to a point where he recognises the hollowness of the form. Berowne represents the point at which both courtly love and patriarchy intersect, and are subjected to interrogation, within an institution which, as Stephen Mullaney has argued, was geographically positioned on the margins of society.¹⁵

This ironical subject-position can, however, be further analysed, as the play does not simply invert the hierarchies which it questions, rather it leaves them in a state of flux; it 'deconstructs' them. Thus, although speech attacks writing, it is, at the same time, infiltrated by it, as Ferdinand observes of Berowne: 'How well he's read, to reason against reading!' (I.i.94). This deconstruction affects all of the hierarchies and oppositions in the play because they are all articulated as elements in the conflict between writing and speech. Rather than the sonnet being simply sucked in to the comic mode, as G. K. Hunter believes, the play displays it in such a manner that it resists such an easy domestication. In fact, the inclusion of the sonnet reveals the pressures which are causing both the form and the courtly love discourse of which it is a part to be

prised open.

The literariness of the convention of courtly love was therefore recognised and parodied in the drama. Many more examples could be adduced, but it is sufficient to realise that that the custom and practice of the tradition based upon a mimetic theory of the truth-value of language was not only no longer taken for granted, but the philosophy which these plays contain articulated a tension between 'truth' and language itself:

What, gone without a word?
 Ay, so true love should do: it cannot speak;
 For truth hath better deeds than words to grace it.
The Two Gentlemen Of Verona (II.ii.17-18)

The necessity for the drama to realise the alienation effect produced because of its own theatricality, forced it to register the difference between words and deeds, and thus also between thoughts and words. It is interesting to note that the lines just quoted are spoken by the aptly-named Proteus: ever-changing shape replaces true representation. Thus, language ceases to be conceptualised as a transparent medium, and there is no essential, pre-textual self, no transcendent reality which is to be represented mimetically on

stage.

v

As noted earlier, the sonnet already contained the seeds of the disintegration of its relationship with the discourses of the aristocracy. Thomas Watson's Hecatompattia,¹⁶ published in 1582 during the period when the courtly discourse held sway, but before the sonnet's heyday in the 1590s, prefigures some of the changes the tradition was to undergo. The 100 poems in it are not sonnets in the strictly formal sense of the term, as they consist of eighteen lines each. The rhyme scheme is that used in the third quatrain and final couplet of 'Shakespearean' sonnets. But what makes this work particularly interesting is that it is described throughout in the terms usually associated with a sonnet sequence. Each poem is accompanied by a short descriptive introduction, some of which specifically refer to the poems as sonnets; the introduction to the very first poem offers an example:

The Author in this Passion taketh but
occasion to open his estate in loue; the
miserable accidents whereof are

sufficiently described hereafter in the copious varietie of his deuises: and whereas in this Sonnet he seemeth one while to despaire, and yet by and by after to haue some hope of good successe, the contrarietie ought not to offend, if the nature and true qualitie of a loue passion bee well considered.

It would therefore appear that the discourse of courtly love is so completely identified with the sonnet form that it is now natural for any short love poem to be termed a sonnet. It is this sort of identification which allows later plays such as Love's Labour's Lost so successfully to parody the convention in terms of its written manifestations.

There is, however, more than this to the Hecatompethia. The 'sequence' does not follow the narrative pattern of refusal and acquiescence by the mistress which is so familiar in Sidney and Spenser. Instead, poem 79 prepares for a complete rejection of love by the poet. The introduction to the poem sets the tone:

The Author in this Passion seemeth vpon mislike of his wearisome estate in loue to enter into a deepe discourse with him selfe touching the particular miseries which befall him that loueth. And for his sense in this place, hee is very like vnto him selfe... And it may appeare by the tenour of this Passion that the Authour prepareth him selfe to fall from Loue and all his laws as will well

appeare by the sequell of his other Passions that followe, which are all made vpon this Posie, My Loue is Past.

Here love is a madness which has befallen the poet. This is of course a conventional motif; but when the poet enters into discourse with himself, he becomes once more himself, that is, he comes to his senses; indeed, the poem is almost a 'talking cure', as if by writing about his distress the author is able to purge himself of his disease. The poem still assumes an authorial self-presence, but the correspondence between writing and truth is beginning to fissure. Writing the sequence becomes a sort of therapy, a poetic cure for the love-madness rather than its fulfillment. The end result is pointed out by this introductory passage: the poems, or 'Passions', which follow, are the celebration of a fall out of love, the opposite of what happens in the later sequences of Sidney and Spenser.

There then follows a group of twenty poems which experiment in various ways with the general theme of celebration. 'Sonnet' 80 is not a poem at all, but a prose commentary on 81, which it describes as a 'Sonnet following compiled by rule

and number, into the forme of a piller', a Renaissance 'concrete' poem. It should be noted that these poems are still described as sonnets despite their unconventional subject-matter. The sonnet tradition began by imitation but in the Hecatopathia the conventional language of the tradition is found to be inadequate to contain the changing pressures of representation. For example, 'sonnet' 82 is written in such a way that the pattern of letters at the beginning and end of each line can be read vertically, producing a doubly articulated Latin sentence completely separate from the conventional form of the poem itself: 'Amare est insanire', which translates as 'to love is to be mad'. This linking of love to madness undercuts the traditional representation of love in the sonnet, with the result that the Hecatopathia can be read as less concerned with closing off disruption and meaning than the sonnets of Sidney and Spenser. Their sonnets, especially Spenser's, can be read in terms of the potential disruption of the discourse, but in the Hecatopathia this actually takes place, suggesting that a synchronic rather than a diachronic reading of the development of the sonnet genre would be appropriate.

VI

Sir John Davies' nine 'Gulling Sonnets'¹⁷ take the movement of disintegration a stage further than the Hecatompattia. Davies, who had produced the obligatory sonnet sequence required of every poet after Sidney in his Philomel, was well known at the time for his Epigrams. In the Gulling Sonnets he writes in sonnet form poems which parody the conventional sonnet. In sonnet 1 the gods transform the poet-lover into an ass so that he can bear the burden of his love more patiently. In sonnet 3 the subject-position of the poet himself simultaneously changes constantly and yet remains the same through the continual use of anaphora, parodying the paradoxes and word-play so beloved of sonneteers. The fact that such a parody of the sonnet can be made in the form of a sonnet shows that a gap is opening up between the form and the courtly love discourse.

Sonnets 4 and 5 go on to parody the subjectivity allocated to the woman by the tradition, following on from the undermining of the poet's subject-position accomplished in sonnet 3. This prepares the way for sonnet 6, in which truth

and writing are no longer stable. In this poem writing is able to clothe love and hide the truth, a far cry from Sidney's assertion that true beauty can be seen through the writing:

The sacred Muse that firste made love devine
 Hath made him naked and without attire;
 But I will cloth him with this penn of myne
 That all the world his fashion shall admyre:
 (lines 1-4)

The sonnet is seen as the fashionable clothing of a young nobleman; it is a pose, nothing more, the literary equivalent of a mannerist painting.

This parody of the poetic form associated with the aristocracy did no harm at all to Davies' social aspirations. The poem uses the motifs of aristocratic fashion as the vehicle for parody of the sonnet form in a period which saw much sumptuary legislation. This has been traced by Lisa Jardine to a nervousness over wealth and rank, when many merchants and their wives dressed as richly as the nobility:

If we try to sum up the consequences of this legislation, it is as follows: gold, silver and purple were jealously guarded for the use of the hereditary peerage; velvet was the mark of luxury for those who could only claim the rank of gentleman, and even then its use was severely restricted; only knights and those above that rank were entitled to

wear ornate arms or spurs or to furnish their horse with elaborate tackle.¹⁸

Davies's poem specifically uses the extravagant fashions so beloved of some of the youth among the nobility, recalling the uses to which Daniel put aristocratic youth in the first sonnet of Delia. By displacing his parody of the sonnet, and, therefore, his criticism of the discourses of the aristocracy, onto the youth of the upper classes, Davies manages to accomplish his parody from a position of comparative rhetorical safety. But the general point still stands: the sonnet form is being used against the tradition with which it was united for so long.

VII

By the 1590s, then, the sonnet is fully open to appropriation by other discourses, after the success of Astrophel And Stella. The changing pressures of representation allow it to be exposed to new discourses in ways which were not possible before. But the process is piecemeal; in Drayton's Idea's Mirror, first published in 1594 and revised

continuously thereafter,¹⁹ the woman of the tradition becomes wholly idealised. Drayton's sequence moves away from the dangerous ground of the problematical love of a woman who is described in religious language in order to mystify sexuality. The introductory sonnet to the 1619 edition sets out this concentration on the metaphysics of love. In this poem, writing is the true image of mind and therefore cannot mediate conventional love, since the latter is only a pose:

Into these loves, who but for passion lookes,
 At this first sighte, here let him lay them by,
 And seeke else-where, in turning other bookes,
 Which better may his labour satisfie. (lines 1-4)

Accordingly, Drayton's treatment of love will not be that of the the conventional sonneteer. But this assertion is made in a context which is at once retrograde and progressive; retrograde in that the sequence retains a commitment to the truth value of mimetic verse, and progressive in that it moves the tradition in a new direction.

However, the adherence to the idea that language is a transparent medium produces a tension with the fickleness of the 'English Muse' in the sequence, which is, of course, a woman. The

existence of this tension means that on the one hand Drayton idealises woman, while on the other he ascribes a specific mode of behaviour to her. Drayton's sequence is therefore wholly in keeping with the essentialising impetus of the sonnet tradition. The fact that he pushes even further in this direction at a time when the traditional sonnet discourse is beginning to break down makes him an example of those ideologically residual elements which still remain within the form. It is the attempt to essentialise that reveals the sonnet's own historicity:

Reade here (sweet Mayd) the story of my wo,
The dreary abstracts of my endles cares
(Idea's Mirror 1. 1-2)

These sonnets are 'abstracts', dealing with an abstract Platonic concept which requires the sustenance of a dematerialising language associated with the woman as icon. Drayton's lady has no name as such; she is labelled 'Idea' in sonnet 13. By refusing to name her, the sequence further essentialises her, forcing the individual sonnets to deal in the abstract. Such an essentialising operation is also undertaken in Shakespeare's sonnets, but with different results.

VIII

A recent book on Shakespeare's sonnets, Shakespeare's Perjur'd Eye, by Joel Fineman, posits that Shakespeare invents the subjectivity of the modern poet in the sonnets:

This book argues that in his sonnets Shakespeare invents a genuinely new subjectivity and that this poetic subjectivity possesses special force in post-Renaissance or post-Humanist literature because it extends by disrupting what until Shakespeare's sonnets is the normative nature of poetic person and poetic persona.²⁰

Fineman takes as his starting point the subject-position of the author of the poems. The text is an enabling device by which this new self makes itself present:

with their 'will' Shakespeare's sonnets inaugurate and give a name to the modernist literary self, thereby specifying for the future what will be the poetic psychology of the subject of representation.²¹

This very Foucauldian passage locates Shakespeare's sonnets at the moment of the epistemological break which in Foucault's work marks the end of the mediaeval and the beginning of the classical age,

with the passage from symbol to sign. The self which Shakespeare comes upon at this point is located by Fineman within the tradition of epideictic poetry, the poetry of praise:

Shakespeare rewrites praise through the medium of epideictic paradox and in this way invents, which is to say comes upon, the only kind of subjectivity that survives in the literature successive to the poetry of praise.²²

Fineman locates the historical disjunction which affects the sonnet tradition specifically within the problematic of representation. Thus, Shakespeare's 'Perjur'd Eye' records a fall from presence, from the transparent referentiality of aristocratic discourse into the process of signification, a position which accords with some of the points raised in this thesis.

It is, however, possible to move on from Fineman's position. The reading of the history of the sonnet tradition in the present chapter indicates that the passage quoted above oversimplifies the development of literary movements by failing to pay sufficient attention to the heterogeneity of a complex process. A diachronic progression from the poetry of praise to

the subjectivity discovered by Shakespeare is inadequate. The split subjectivity occasioned by the crisis in the dominant ideology at the time of the sonnets was specific to that historical moment. Fineman's etymological play on 'invents', from the Latin 'invenire' (to find), allows Shakespeare to find a subjectivity which is 'there', and which does not change during the next three centuries. The subjectivity produced by the discursive formation of the aristocracy fragmented and was to be replaced by a new negotiation between the aristocracy and the mercantile classes. But for Fineman, Shakespeare's sonnets re-unite subjectivity in a way that has lasted because of their debt to the poetry of praise:

by their grammatical nature, deictics radiate out from a central space of first-person enunciation to which all reference is by formal consequence immediately referred. By formal necessity, therefore, deictics are markers that, whatever they refer to, are oriented toward the speaking self who speaks them, a self who is in this way registered as present to his speech because he is the source or origin of deictic indication.²³

This model of a subject constructed through deictic play enables him to postulate an originary space

towards which deictics point. This formulation needs to be revised in the light of the materiality of the written language of the sonnets; the passage quoted refers often enough to a present speaking self. This model is inadequate because the historical fact of Shakespeare's sonnets denies such a linguistic vocal transparency.

It is similarly possible to develop Fineman's articulation of the differences between the 'young man' sonnets and the 'dark lady' sonnets. He postulates a structural opposition constructed around the differences in subject-matter:

The homosexual thematic developed in the sonnets addressed to the young man - where language, like the desire it mirrors, is 'fair', 'kind', and 'true' - exploits the specular homogeneity endlessly repeated by the orthodox Renaissance sonnet... In the sonnets addressed to the dark lady, however, where we are shown a desire for that which is not admired, we come, instead, upon a heterosexual desire that is strikingly erotic at the same time that we are given the theme of a linguistic heterogeneity purchased at the cost of homogeneous visuality.²⁴

Here the 'young man' sonnets 'mirror' visual reality in their language, while the 'dark lady' sonnets call this traditional literariness into question. The opposition of these two sub-sequences

depends upon whether the 'young man' sonnets do achieve this mirroring, but this thesis will argue that the 'young man' sonnets are not transparently referential. The suggestion that there is a thematic development in the sequence from the idealist position of the 'young man' sonnets to a new heterogeneity in the 'dark lady' sonnets similarly depends upon this adherence of the 'young man' sonnets to the sonnet tradition. In fact, the 'young man' sonnets depart from the tradition in that they are written to a young man, albeit one of superior status to the poet.

The positioning of the 'dark lady' sonnets as a second sub-sequence can also be questioned. Visuality is extremely important in these sonnets, contrary to the locating of a specular economy exclusively in the 'young man' sonnets. As Fineman has noted, the 'dark lady' sonnets are shot through with sexuality, but this sexuality derives its significance from the woman's appearance. The lady's 'darkness' is the basis of a range of movements around the central problem of gender ideology, referring to and interrogating categories of female subjectivity, categories which have been shown earlier in this chapter to be crucial to the

construction of woman in the sonnet tradition.

Fineman's book is valuable in that it locates a disjunction between traditional Renaissance sonnets and Shakespeare's poems. By linking this with the historical and theoretical work outlined in this chapter, it is possible to understand the sonnet genre as a relationship between poetic form and the dominant aristocratic ideology. This relationship always contained potential for disruption and only a synchronic analysis is adequate to explain this. Once the ideology is no longer able to contain or explain the changes in society the sonnet becomes available for parody, and then appropriation by other discourses. Shakespeare's sonnets were produced precisely at the moment of this disintegration, and the categories of subjectivity which can be excavated from them are radically disrupted. This split subjectivity is historically specific; it is not the invention of the modernist literary self because the political rise of the bourgeoisie, with its concomitant assumption of an essentialist self, had not yet occurred. Shakespeare's sonnets record subject-positions which are implicated in the history of their time.

Notes

- 1: Sir Philip Sidney: Astrophel And Stella 1591 (Menston: Scolar Press, 1970).
- 2: Rosalind Coward and John Ellis: Language And Materialism (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1977) pp.71-72.
- 3: John Donne: The Complete English Poems ed. A. J. Smith (London: Allen Lane, 1974). Note that all subsequent quotations from Donne are taken from this edition.
- 4: Donne again provides a later example of the same kind of discursive practice with the use of metaphors of land colonisation in *An Anatomy of the World*.
- 5: The Collected Dialogues Of Plato eds. Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961) p.426.
- 6: Michel Pecheux op.cit., p. 114.
- 7: Samuel Daniel: Delia 1592 (Menston: Scolar Press, 1969).
- 8: Michel Foucault: The History Of Sexuality Vol. 1 trans. Robert Hurley (Harmondsworth: Peregrine Books, 1987) p. 24.
- 9: Edmund Spenser: Poetical Works eds. J.C.Smith and E. de Selincourt (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987).
- 10: See Greenblatt op. cit. 1980, pp.157-192.
- 11: Jonathan Dollimore: 'Subjectivity, Sexuality and Transgression: The Jacobean Connection' in Renaissance Drama New Series XVII 1986 ed. Mary Beth Rose; see also Steven Mullaney: The Place Of The Stage (Chicago and London: Chicago University Press, 1988) pp.47-55; and also Jean E.Howard's essay 'Renaissance Antitheatricity And The Politics Of Gender And Rank In *Much Ado About Nothing*' in Howard and O'Connor op.cit., pp.163-185.

- 12: Shakespeare's Styles: Essays In Honour Of Kenneth Muir eds. Philip Edwards, Inga-Stina Ewbank and G. K. Hunter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980) p.32.
- 13: Terence Hawkes: Shakespeare's Talking Animals (London: Edward Arnold, 1973) pp.66-67.
- 14: Malcolm Evans: Signifying Nothing (Brighton: Harvester Press, 1986) p.52.
- 15: Mullaney op.cit. pp.26-59.
- 16: Thomas Watson: Hecatopathia (London: Edward Arber, 1870).
- 17: Sir John Davies: The Poems Of Sir John Davies ed. Robert Krueger (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975).
- 18: Lisa Jardine: Still Harping On Daughters (Brighton: Harvester Press, 1983) pp.142-145.
- 19: The Works of Michael Drayton ed. J. William Hebel (Oxford: Blackwell, 1933) 5 vols.
- 20: Joel Fineman: Shakespeare's Perjured Eye (Berkeley and London: University of California Press, 1986) p.1.
- 21: ibid., p.29.
- 22: ibid., p.2.
- 23: ibid., p.8.
- 24: ibid., pp.17-18.

Chapter 3

The 'Young Man' Sonnets: 1-17

This chapter will move on from the historical and generic work carried out in the first two chapters, concentrating on the first seventeen of Shakespeare's sonnets. The chapter will read these sonnets against the standard critical position regarding their homogeneity as a group of poems exhorting the young friend to marry. The subjectivity of the young friend as a nobleman will be the basis for this reading. This will provide a means of relating the sonnets to the historical context within which they were produced, and the three chapters on the subjectivities recorded in the poems will build upon this reading.

I

In his commentary on sonnet 1, Stephen Booth exemplifies what has become a standard critical approach to the first seventeen of Shakespeare's sonnets:

Katharine M. Wilson has recently explored the interrelation of sonnets 1-17 and "arguments from a very lengthy, learned, and earnest 'Epistle to a persuade a young gentleman to marriage', which was written by Erasmus and had appeared in Thomas Watson's [widely influential] *The Arte of Rhetorique* in 1553".¹

These seventeen sonnets are therefore seen to be a homogeneous group, which is imbricated in questions of the occasion of the writing of the poems. The result is a criticism that elides the situation represented in the poetry with 'Shakespeare's' own thought.² The operation of this critical practice is exemplified in the following passage from Ingram and Redpath's edition of the poems:

We believe that most honest and intelligent readers of these poems admit that many of them are far from easy to understand. The difficulty is partly due to changes in the senses of particular words, and partly due to the elusiveness, in many places, of Shakespeare's thought.³

This quotation raises two problems: firstly, is the problem of meaning quite so easily reducible to 'changes in the sense of particular words' wrought by the passage of time? And, secondly, what are the criteria for deciding the true meanings intended by the author's elusive thought? In other words, if it

is assumed that the author's thought is the object of critical analysis, what is the nature of the theoretical base and the methodological practice which allows the critic to recognise authorially sanctioned meaning, especially in poems which are traditionally difficult to understand?

The Ingram and Redpath edition is not concerned with the first of these questions, since it assumes that simple changes in meaning can be charted by editorial work. But it does tackle the second:

The question of the nature of the relationship between the poet and the Friend, as it emerges from the sonnets themselves, is clearly distinct from the question of the Friend's identity. We do not intend, in the present edition, to offer and argue for a view of that relationship, though in our notes on individual sonnets we have naturally tried to face particular aspects of it. It may, however, be in place to state our general impression, which is that the relationship was one of profound and at times agitated friendship, which involved a certain physical and quasi-sexual fascination emanating from the young Friend and enveloping the older poet, but did not necessarily include paederasty in any lurid sense. Elizabethan speech habits and literary conventions certainly encouraged a more fulsome and more frankly emotional style of expression in such relations than would prevail today.⁴

This passage is interesting for the way it begins from the assumption that the identity of the friend

is an enigma which it is important for criticism to solve. Similarly, the relationship between the poet and the friend which is the occasion of the writing of these poems is seen as the source of their meaning. Although the editors 'do not intend, in the present edition, to offer and argue for a view of that relationship', they nevertheless, in their notes on the individual poems, 'naturally' try 'to face particular aspects of it'. It is, they suggest, 'natural' that they should pay attention to this puzzle.

The use of the word 'natural' in such a context invites a critique of the assumptions which lie behind the commentary on the sonnets. For this problem of the friend's identity to be taken as a 'natural' area of critical inquiry, there must be a prior order of discourse which designates what is and is not 'natural'. This discourse therefore produces the parameters within which traditional criticism operates, including the emphasis on authorial meanings. Furthermore, the sense of history evoked in the final sentence of the passage quoted above is also necessarily both implied in, and produced by this discourse. The reduction of problems of meaning to semantic change relegates

history to a position of contingency not strictly relevant to the main object of criticism, the author's meaning. An awareness of history is therefore secondary to the critical concern with authorial transhistorical meanings.

It is possible to return the sonnets to history, and hence to evade the essentialism of this position. Eve K. Sedgwick has attempted to do so in her book Between Men: English Literature And Male Homosocial Desire, in which she argues that 'woman' as a gender category enters male discourse in order that her subjectivity can be determined without her co-operation, in what is, in effect, a negotiation between men. Her book contains a chapter on the sonnets that radically historicises the troublesome relationship between the poet and the friend:

The Sonnets present a male love that, like the love of the Greeks, is set firmly within a structure of institutionalized social relations that are carried out via women: marriage, name, family, loyalty to progenitors and to posterity, all depend on the youth's making a particular use of women that is not, in the abstract, seen as opposing, denying, or detracting from his bond to the speaker.⁵

That the power relations implicit in patriarchy

depend upon the marginalisation of women is not a new point; but that the sonnets effect this by means, not of non-homosexual, but a 'homosocial', relationship between the poetic persona and the young man, successfully re-inscribes them within the history from which more traditional, essentialist forms of criticism have sought to divorce them. For Sedgwick, the sexuality of women necessarily becomes an area of crucial importance for this construction of female subjectivity:

My point is of course again not that we are here in the presence of homosexuality (which would be anachronistic) but rather (risking anachronism) that we are in the presence of male heterosexual desire, in the form of a desire to consolidate partnership with authoritative males in and through the bodies of females.⁶

This identification of a sexual politics operating in the sonnets raises fundamental theoretical issues concerning the question of 'subjectivity'. In accordance with Eve Sedgwick's formulation, therefore, my analysis will distinguish between the female sexuality and subjectivity produced in the sonnets and biological difference. The values attributed to the female body in these poems are socially produced, and the connotations associated

with this culturally constructed sexuality become the area in which patriarchy reproduces itself. An alternative theoretical model to that proposed in Stephen Booth's criticism of the sonnets which can be based on this position must, however, take into account the body of theory that most obviously deals with subjectivity: psychoanalysis.

At this point, it is enough to realise that Booth's rhetoric continues the critical concern with the authorial meanings of the poems that was observed in the comments of Ingram and Redpath:

All of us were brought up on the idea that what poets say is sublime - takes us beyond reason; my commentary tries to describe the physics by which we get there.⁷

The phrase 'all of us' recalls the use of 'naturally' in the passage from Ingram and Redpath in an unconscious soliciting of the reader's agreement with the proposition that the poet is explicitly beyond reason as well as beyond history. This is a modern descendant of the theoretical position outlined in Sir Philip Sidney's Defence Of Poetry, discussed in the previous chapter, in which the poet is depicted as an essential being uncorrupted by contingency.

However, there is a conflict within Booth's work concerning the implications of any reference to history, showing that he realises that history poses problems for an essentialist reading of the sonnets:

Both my text and my commentary are determined by what I think a Renaissance reader would have thought as he moved from line to line and sonnet to sonnet in the quarto.⁸

If the author's meaning transcends history, then why should the critic concern himself with, indeed attempt to organise his edition of the poems around, what a contemporary reader would have thought? Clearly a hierarchy of discourses can be shown to be in operation here, whereby the critic can assume that history is transcended by the poet, an assumption that is rendered problematical by a historicised reading which is aware of the relative positions of a Renaissance as opposed to a modern reader. Thus, the universal appeal which is attributed to poetry can be seen to be privileged in relation to those historical conditions within which a contemporary reader of the sonnets was produced. This is not an isolated example, indeed, Booth's ambivalence towards the reader can also be

seen elsewhere:

My notes are as much occupied with investigating the sources of the greatness, the beauty, and, often, the obvious meaning of Shakespeare's sentences as with reviving and revealing that meaning; the notes analyse the processes by which the relevant meanings of Shakespeare's words and phrases and the contexts they bring with them combine, intertwine, fuse, and conflict in the potentially dizzying complexity from which a reader's sense of straightforward simplicity emerges.⁹

Is the reader referred to here a 'modern' reader, or is it the Renaissance reader invoked earlier? This dislocation raises the further question of exactly what constitutes the criteria for deciding which are 'relevant' meanings. The answer to this is to be found in the principle which guides the construction of the editorial gloss:

The general effect of such a gloss is to tell the reader that he is foolish to have let his mind wander into any of the incidental byways towards which the accidents of particular words and idioms beckon him... One can lose some of a poem if one forgets that a Shakespearian clause that makes straightforward logical sense after it has been sorted out must always have required some such exercise by its reader.¹⁰

Once again a reader is invoked, this time in relation to the process of 'sorting out' correct

meanings. Incorrect meanings are 'accidents' of 'particular words and idioms' which, presumably, the editor's knowledge and expertise allow him to discard as irrelevant. Nevertheless, at a later point, the criteria for choosing which meanings are relevant seem to contradict the passage last quoted:

For Shakespeare's contemporaries all these meanings, contradictions, echoes, and suggestions would have been active in the line - all in some way appropriate but none appropriate to all of the others.¹¹

On the one hand, therefore, the reader must always have had to sort out the correct meaning from a myriad incorrect ones, and on the other, the inherent polyvalency of a line requires that all of the meanings remained more or less active for a Renaissance reader. In fact, Booth proposes two different categories of 'reader' here, the one 'modern' and the other a historically reconstructed Renaissance 'subjectivity' whose characteristics are defined retrospectively. It is the retrospective nature of the Renaissance 'reader' that produces the elision between the two in his commentary.

This dislocation can also be detected in his earlier book on the sonnets, An Essay On Shakespeare's Sonnets (1969). Here Booth is concerned to produce a critical theory in which a relatively passive reader submits her/himself to the text:

On the assumption that the source of our pleasure in them must be in the line - to - line experience of reading them, I have set out to determine just what kind of reading experience that is.¹²

The reference to the reader occurs again, in the context of a kind of free formalism:

I have tried to demonstrate that a Shakespeare sonnet is organized as a multitude of different coexisting and conflicting patterns - formal, logical, ideological, syntactic, rhythmic and phonetic.¹³

It is difficult to understand what Booth means by the epithet 'ideological' here, since his concern is with the internal order of the sonnets, rather than with ideology. The key word here is 'internal'; the sonnets are completely self-referential. Ideology is therefore regarded not as that which interpellates individuals as subjects, as in the work of Althusser, but as a series of

ideas that lies behind the formal organisation of the sonnets, with the assumption of a particular operation between author and text based upon the separation between the two. Thus, in spite of the inclusion of 'ideology' in Booth's list, the historical context is not analysed in the actual practice of the reading of the poems:

In the chapters that follow, I will argue that the individual poems are multiply ordered, that the elements of each poem exist in more than one internal order.¹⁴

Booth's Essay therefore goes on to search for authorial meanings which transcend history, in a manner reminiscent of the Ingram and Redpath edition of the sonnets:

When a reader has read through the sonnets in their quarto order and failed to find a consistent ordering principle for them, he is offered some comfort by the implied license for curative rearrangement provided by the well-known absence of any evidence that Shakespeare had any advance knowledge of Thorpe's edition, or, therefore, perhaps of the quarto order of the sonnets.¹⁵

Once more the reader is invoked, qualified this time by the indefinite article, in a book which depends upon the silent agreement of this reader to underpin its essentialist assumptions:

Perhaps the happiest moment the human mind ever knows is the moment when it senses the presence of order and coherence - and before it realises the particular nature (and so the particular limits) of the perception.¹⁶

II

The humanism of his essay allows Booth's work to be linked with psychoanalytical literary theory, some of whose assumptions he shares. This can best be shown starting with a (necessarily) short review of feminist positions regarding psychoanalysis. The multiplicity of viewpoints within feminism is beyond the scope of this thesis, and so the discussion will concentrate on the so-called 'French Feminists', since they, along with Juliet Mitchell, and Jacqueline Rose in Britain, were most closely connected with psychoanalysis. Since the old, imaginary divide between the French theorists and the Anglo-Americans is no longer pertinent due to the more recent emergence of feminist positions informed by the propositions of both these general types, some attention will also be paid to the new syntheses.

A feminist critique of psychoanalysis has been undertaken by Luce Irigaray in the books Speculum de L'autre Femme¹⁷ and Ce Sexe Qui n'est pas Un.¹⁸ The starting point for her analysis is that 'Feminine sexuality has always been theorized within masculine parameters', and she goes on to suggest that the psychoanalytic version of female sexuality 'seems prescribed more by the practice of masculine sexuality than by anything else'.¹⁹

Her texts then proceed to analyse psychoanalysis in terms of its patriarchal assumptions about femininity. The masculine imagery of literature written by men and by women, with the particular example of an emphasis on the visual and specular tropes, and the marginalisation of the feminine in images of the dark continent are the two main elements she singles out as the archetypes which inform the psychoanalytic conception of female sexuality, with all its emphases on inherent masochism, lack of visual genitalia, and weak passivity. At this point in her theory she comes quite close to the Anglo-American analysis of the prescription of gender roles by patriarchy. The political marginalisation of women therefore depends upon a position which is defined for them,

the same kind of critique of patriarchy undertaken by Eve Sedgwick.

In response to this denigration of woman as essentially passive, Irigaray's theory celebrates her sexuality as a means of escaping the patriarchal overdetermination of feminine subjectivity. By giving female sexuality a value of its own which patriarchy denies, she is able to question the political subjection of women, dependent as it is upon feminine passivity.

Another of the French feminists, Helene Cixous, similarly privileges the female against the negative connotations of femininity, and does so in terms of a specifically female writing: 'Woman must write herself'.²⁰ Cixous' 'écriture féminine' and Irigaray's reaction against masculine psychoanalysis are therefore a necessary historical step in the political emancipation of women.

However, the celebration of the female sexuality marginalised by patriarchy has been only the first stage in the feminist movement. The political value of this stage is not in question, but there are philosophical objections to it. The most important of these is that it can be seen to share the essentialist assumptions of patriarchy,

whether or not its authors actually intended their theories to be taken in this way. Thus, their texts can be read as a celebration of what amounts to a position of essential femininity by identifying woman's self with her body, feminine gender roles with female sexuality. An 'écriture féminine' can therefore be read as problematical in its representation of femininity. The celebration of the female marginalised by patriarchy has an initial strategic value, but it can still leave woman marginalised, particularly since it privileges the irrationality which is already an element of the subject positions ascribed to women under patriarchal domination.

A second stage of feminism has appeared, one which built upon the political achievements of the first stage of the celebration of the feminine while attempting to avoid the essentialism which can be associated with it.²¹ This was effected by extending the assault on metaphysical modes of thought undertaken by Jacques Derrida to the area of patriarchal power. The feminist critics of this stage are aware of the metaphysical and ideological nature of the opposition between male and female as it is constructed in terms of masculinity and femininity. Nancy K. Miller, for example, provides an example of this development in feminist theory. In the sphere

of political and cultural practice the same kind of critique has been undertaken in books such as Deborah Cameron's Feminism And Linguistic Theory.²²

However, the feminist writer who articulates the linguistic and semiotic with psychoanalysis in the most useful way for the purposes of this thesis is Julia Kristeva. Her elaboration of a theory of the speaking subject draws on both linguistic and psychoanalytic theory to produce a subject which is continually in process/on trial. It is

a theory of the speaking subject as subject of a heterogeneous process.²³

The theory of a split subject which is always in a process of change, which is never fixed, stable or unitary, has inevitable consequences for a reading of sonnets which so often record such a process of change.

A second product of Kristeva's theory is her concept of intertextuality, or transposition. Based on the Bakhtin group's recognition of the linguistic sign as the site of the intersection of a conflict of ideological and political interests, this concept is also useful for a study of the sonnets. This rereading of Bakhtin provides a third

element of her theory:

The term 'ambivalence' implies the insertion of history (society) into a text and of this text into history.²⁴

Thus, and in a manner which is of direct relevance to the present enquiry, the possibility of constantly receding signifiers is here grounded in a 'history'.

However, it is precisely at this point in her theory that a break in its movement towards revolution can be discerned. Instead of moving on from this assertion of a historical dimension to the text by formulating some kind of dialectical model such as that of Fredric Jameson's Political Unconscious, Kristeva postulates, in a return to Lacan, a self which, although split and continually in process, seems to be anterior to history:

In order to describe the dialogism inherent in the denotative or historical word, we would have to turn to the psychic aspect of writing as trace of a dialogue with oneself (with another), as a writer's distance from himself, as a splitting of the writer into subject of enunciation and subject of utterance.²⁵

The entry of the self into the symbolic order therefore fails to efface residual traces of the

process of subjection; the operation of the writing subject allows these traces to erupt into discursive practice. In Kristeva's theory this split in subjectivity is recuperated for a psychoanalytical, transhistorical relationship grounded in the Oedipal drama, which she ultimately emphasises as matriarchal. She works out this position by going on to promise an articulation of history and psychoanalysis which invokes the social:

Multiple constraints - which are ultimately socio-political - stop the signifying process at one or another of the theses that it traverses; they knot it and lock it into a given surface or structure; they discard practice under fixed, fragmentary, symbolic matrices, the tracings of various social constraints that obliterate the infinity of the process: the phenotext is what conveys these obliterations.²⁶

But, in a regressive move, Kristeva returns to Lacan, to a psychoanalytical interest in the split self, and accordingly goes no further with the socio-political and historical categories which she invokes here.

An example of this lack of a theoretical model grounded in historical specificity can also be found in her early essay From Symbol To Sign. In this essay Kristeva postulates a historical shift in the dominant mode of language from the symbolic to signification:

We shall call this transition a passage from the symbol to the sign and postulate that the novel is a narrative structure revealing the ideologeme of the sign. This obliges us to define the symbol/sign difference.²⁷

This she goes on to effect, characterising the historically later mode of signification as a relatively weakened, arbitrary method of representation, compared with the symbolic. As with Foucault's similar account in The Order Of Things,²⁸ history in this essay is progressive, a problematically diachronic rendering of historical evolution. The mode of signification that replaces the symbolic in this model, which Kristeva calls semiosis, leads on to her later work concerning the semiotic chora, with a concomitant oversimplification of history. She defines the semiotic chora in the following manner:

a non-expressive totality formed by the drives and their stases in a motility that is as full of movement as it is regulated.²⁹

She characterises it as:

Indifferent to language, enigmatic and feminine, this space underlying the written is rhythmic, unfettered, irreducible to its intelligible verbal translation.³⁰

At first Kristeva theorises this femininity simply as an energy which is non-regulated, but the metaphor becomes strained when she links the chora to the pre-Oedipal mother. Thus, the release of certain kinds of discourse which can be re-read in terms of Bakhtin's historicised concept of dialogism, together with Volosinov's theorising of the sign as a site of contestation, the position from which Kristeva herself started out, is reduced to a model produced by psychoanalytical theory. Art, literature, and music, which are all defined as concretising the irruptions of the semiotic chora into discourse, and hence as feminine, are inextricably linked to an essential female: the 'mother' of psychoanalysis. This move risks reduplicating the procedure of the theories of Irigaray and Cixous in the essentialising of femininity. The revolutionary semiotic chora of Revolution In Poetic Language therefore returns to the patriarchal assumptions of psychoanalysis which are inherent in any positing of an essential femininity.

Nevertheless Kristeva's theory does uncover a function of art and literature which genuinely disrupts the established order, although it does

not adequately account for this disruption. In the case of Shakespeare's sonnets, for example, it is possible to theorise the irruption of discourses other than those of the dominant ideology in historical terms. By reducing her discovery to an Oedipal drama, Kristeva produces a theory of visceral response and irrationality which needs to be revised in the light of Raymond Williams' concept of the structures of feeling. His formulation explains the production of poetry in terms of a mixture of feeling and intellect, thereby resisting any evacuation of history. This dialectical relationship explains, for example, the attempt to contain emotional energies by the use of the strict form of the sonnet, utilising the iambic pentameter. The reduction of such historical moves to a semiotic chora is therefore a consequence of Kristeva's concentration on a self defined through psychoanalysis and her concomitant inability to theorise history. This disruption, which in Bakhtin is both political and materialist, is reappropriated by the discourse of psychoanalysis in her work:

Textual experience represents one of the most daring explorations the subject can allow himself, one that delves into his

constitutive process. But at the same time and as a result, textual experience reaches the very foundation of the social - that which is exploited by sociality but which elaborates and can go beyond it, either destroying or transforming it.³¹

The opposition between the self and society set up here is that postulated by orthodox psychoanalysis: the self which plays with the text remembers its own processes which were repressed by the symbolic order as the pre-linguistic semiotic chora irrupts into literature. That is the source in her theory of the 'jouissance' of reading. In a typically psychoanalytical move, this process is then universalised:

Is it because, faced with social norms, literature reveals a certain knowledge and sometimes the truth itself, about an otherwise repressed, nocturnal, secret, and unconscious universe?³²

The pretensions of psychoanalysis to universalism are seldom so open. In fact, Kristeva's more recent texts go even further than this. Possibly fuelled by unconscious doubts about the inability of psychoanalysis fully to account for all human consciousness, including her own semiotic chora, Kristeva's theory is led to posit a nothingness

which is ultimately the basis of the self:

I shall emphasise this notion of emptiness, which is at the root of the human psyche".³³

This emptiness is not, in fact, an essential space which is the basis of the human mind; it is the ultimate sterility of a position outside history, faced with the failure of its own attempt to theorise the social as predetermined by the self.

III

A book which is concerned with the same problems as Kristeva's theory, but which approaches them from a viewpoint which is avowedly materialist and hostile to psychoanalysis, is Anti-Oedipus,³⁴ by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari. Deleuze and Guattari analyse psychoanalysis not in terms of masculine hegemony, like Irigaray, but in terms of its function as a philosophy of western bourgeois capitalism. Psychoanalysis is seen as the culmination of a process within psychiatry which seeks to define mental life purely within the dialectic of the family. The figure of Oedipus is analysed as the means of the oppression of the

discovery of the unconscious:

The great discovery of psychoanalysis was that of the production of desire, of the productions of the unconscious. But once Oedipus entered the picture, this discovery was soon buried beneath a new brand of idealism.³⁵

The productions of the unconscious were therefore straitjacketed by 'Oedipus', an ideological operation which permitted the analyst to describe everything in terms dictated by the discursive practices of bourgeois familial ideology. The clearest statement of Anti-Oedipus against this form of familial psychiatry deserves to be quoted in full:

Insofar as psychoanalysis cloaks insanity in the mantle of a 'parental complex', and regards the patterns of self-punishment resulting from Oedipus as a confession of guilt, its theories are not radical or innovative. On the contrary: it is completing the task begun by nineteenth-century psychology, namely, to develop a moralised, familial discourse of mental pathology, linking madness to the 'Half-real, half-imaginary dialectic of the Family', deciphering within it 'the unending attempt to murder the father', 'the dull thud of instincts hammering at the solidity of the family as an institution and at its most archaic symbols'. Hence, instead of participating in an undertaking that will bring about genuine liberation, psychoanalysis is taking part in the work of bourgeois repression at its most far-reaching level, that is to say, keeping European humanity harnessed to the yoke of daddy-mommy and making no effort to do away with this problem once and for all.³⁶

Having said this, however, it must be stressed that Deleuze and Guattari do recognise that the psychoanalytic model is relevant to a bourgeois society, since what they are concerned with is the reproduction of needs under capitalism. But psychoanalysis uses the Oedipal model with regard to all forms of human sexuality, and the programme of Anti-Oedipus is that of a revolution against this model:

We do not deny that there is an Oedipal sexuality, an Oedipal heterosexuality and homosexuality, an Oedipal castration, as well as complete objects, global images and specific egos. We deny that these are productions of the unconscious.³⁷

'Oedipus' has no objective reality which is somehow inherent in the unconscious; it is a myth which explains the practices of sexuality in capitalist society, and a myth which has been pressed into service on behalf of a psychoanalytic imperialism which wishes to impose its own models upon all aspects of mental life. Their argument continues:

Only in appearance is Oedipus a beginning, either as a historical or prehistorical origin, or as a structural foundation. In reality it is a completely ideological beginning, for the sake of ideology. Oedipus is always and solely an aggregate of destination fabricated to meet the requirements of an aggregate of

departure constituted by a social formation.³⁸

The unconscious itself is the site on which Anti-Oedipus contests the project of psychoanalysis. The argument of Deleuze and Guattari demonstrates that psychoanalysis invests the unconscious with its own particular models, which are then defined as universal. In outright opposition to this operation, Anti-Oedipus proclaims that 'The unconscious is an orphan'.³⁹ Deleuze and Guattari completely deny the familial discourse imposed by psychoanalysis on the unconscious: it is not formed in relation to parents or parental influence through an Oedipal drama. For Anti-Oedipus,

the unconscious itself is no more structural than personal, it does not symbolize any more than it imagines or represents; it engineers, it is machinic. Neither imaginary nor symbolic, it is the Real in itself, the "impossible real" and its production.⁴⁰

If it were not for the limitations imposed on her theory by its adherence to the universalising discourse of psychoanalysis, the Kristevan semiotic chora would offer a theory of the unconscious similar to that articulated by Deleuze and Guattari in Anti-Oedipus, with which it already has many linguistic affinities, but for her the unconscious contains the

traces of the semiotic chora which link it to an Oedipal model, and which informs writing and reading. The irreducibility of meaning in the semiotic chora is so close to, and yet so far from this Anti-Oedipal model:

The unconscious poses no problem of meaning, solely problems of use. The question posed by desire is not "What does it mean?" but rather "How does it work?"⁴¹

The language used in Anti-Oedipus is reminiscent of that which Kristeva uses to describe the semiotic chora at points:

Thus the link between representation-belief and the family is not accidental; it is of the essence of representation to be a familial representation. But production is not thereby suppressed, it continues to ramble, to throb beneath the representative agency that suffocates it, and that it can in return make resonate to the breaking point.⁴²

The machinic unconscious that is stipulated in Anti-Oedipus therefore produces some effects which are, indeed, not unlike those posited by Kristeva. Moreover, Deleuze and Guattari write: 'A machine may be defined as a system of interruptions or breaks'.⁴³ However, the self in Anti-Oedipus differs from the split self produced by the interplay of semiosis and

society. Although there is a partial resemblance to the Kristevan subject in process, the subject in Anti-Oedipus is not part of the system, but a superfluous by-product of the machinic functionings of the unconscious:

The third type of interruption characteristic of the desiring-machine is the residual break or residuum, which produces a subject alongside the machine, functioning as a part adjacent to the machine. And if this subject has no specific or personal identity, if it traverses the body without organs without destroying its indifference, it is because it is not only a part that is peripheral to the machine, but also a part that is itself divided into parts that correspond to the detachments from the chain and the removals from the flow brought about by the machine. Thus this subject consumes and consummates each of the states through which it passes and is born of each of them anew."

This theory therefore posits subjectivity as a by-product of desire, not as a positioning operation overdetermined by society and ideology. A fundamental problem posed for Deleuze and Guattari's theory is precisely how this subject operates in history. The root of the problem is that while they are keen to produce a materialist account of the psychic relationship between the desiring-machine and the social, Deleuze and Guattari are nevertheless not particularly clear on what they mean by 'desire' in

this context. This unfortunately serves to obfuscate the relations between desire on the one hand, and history and the social on the other.

The break which produces subjectivity is only one of three in the process. The other two are, firstly, the break which ensures the continuity of the process by making the products of the machine into new units which then produce new products; and, secondly, the break which completely detaches elements from the process, elements which therefore cannot instigate new processes. The question needs to be asked: what place does ideology occupy in the reproduction or otherwise of this desiring-machine? For Deleuze and Guattari, the break which produces the subject does so at the very limit of the personal and social field: the body without organs, their metaphor for the characteristic schizophrenic multiplicity which produces the subject almost by accident on the very frontiers of society and self, at the point where desire invests and changes the social. This is the crucial point: desire produces the social, but the lack of a definition of exactly what constitutes this desire means that there is a tendency to essentialise desire. For Deleuze and Guattari desire is not fixated on a lack; rather,

it always has no subject, since the production of desire annihilates the subject which was on the frontier. This destruction is the pre-requisite for the production of desire, which then instigates the production of a new, equally ephemeral, fragmented subject, in a new round of activity in an ongoing process. The result is that within theory, products continually set in motion new productions unaided by any outside pressures:

Like all the other breaks, the subjective break is not at all an indication of a lack or need, but on the contrary a share that falls to the subject as a part of a whole, income that comes its way as something left over. (Here again how bad a model the Oedipal model of castration is!) That is because breaks or interruptions are not the result of an analysis; rather, in and of themselves, they are syntheses. Syntheses produce divisions.⁴⁵

The crucial phrase here is 'in and of themselves'; the theory of subjectivity proposed here is that of a completely self-referential desire. The shifting, nomadic subject which is always killed and resurrected in different forms by the productions of the unconscious is the fleeting, partial object (partial because it is never completed) which the personal and social have in common. This shifting

subject is never subjected to ideology in this formulation; indeed, the desire which produces it is totally separate from the social, as is made clear in the book's introduction: 'The flows and productions of desire will simply be viewed as the unconscious of the social productions'.⁴⁶ The problem raised above is a slight faltering in this project but, as mentioned earlier, Deleuze and Guattari go even further than this:

The truth of the matter is that social production is purely and simply desiring-production itself under determinate conditions. We maintain that the social field is immediately invested by desire, and that libido has no need of mediation or sublimation, any psychic operation, any transformation, in order to invade and invest the productive forces and the relations of production. There is only desire and the social, and nothing else.⁴⁷

This is effectively a reformulation of the Marxist concept of need, of that which is necessary for the sustenance and reproduction of material life. Deleuze and Guattari's theory in Anti-Oedipus has value insofar as it recognises that psychoanalysis is a historically specific method of analysis which has tried to universalise its own theory in an operation that is overdetermined by ideology. The important point for this thesis is that, as a model for

subjectivity in the sonnets, psychoanalysis is inadequate, as is shown in Anti-Oedipus.

A reading of psychoanalysis in which the same sort of critique is made, but without the problematical formulation of desire, is that given by Peter Stallybrass and Allon White in their book The Politics And Poetics Of Transgression.⁴⁸ Such a historicised reading can produce a flexible theory of the subject which, I will argue, will be of particular relevance to an analysis of Shakespeare's sonnets.

As I have argued in my Introduction, Fredric Jameson, in The Political Unconscious⁴⁹, provides a model of history which is particularly useful from this point of view. He wishes to restore history to the text, but not in a way which reduces it to the level of a vulgar materialism. This leads to a dialectic between history and text which privileges neither, with history only ever existing in mediated, textual form, and, conversely, text being always already contaminated by history. This radical politicization of the unconscious, which proposes history as an already textualised absent cause, records in mediated form the political structures which constitute the

unconscious. The relevance of this theory to a reading of the sonnets is obvious insofar as, in consequence, it can now be stated that the sonnets are a site of historical contestation in the sense proposed by Bakhtin and Volosinov. This contestation is irreducibly ideological, and hence allows a reading of the production of subjectivity at a specific moment in the Renaissance. This does not smuggle in the author by a back door; rather, it denies the possibility of reading the author in the text precisely because the elements out of which subjectivity was historically constituted are multi-referential, that is, they refer to more than one discourse. The sonnets therefore record the historical conditions which produced the subject, and, as I argued earlier, these conditions were not fully overdetermined by the dominant ideology, which was itself in a state of crisis. Thus, what traditional criticism considered the difficult richness of the language of the sonnets, is, it will be suggested, the inevitable result of the consequent ability of their language to refer more openly than is normal to other discourses than the dominant. This is precisely what Jameson refers to in his suggestion that reading necessarily

constitutes a rewriting of the relationship between text and history at a given moment. Such a dialectic acknowledges that it is theoretically possible to sustain a deconstructionist free-play of the signifier, but it also implicitly politicises, and thereby sets limits to, the radical indeterminacy of a post-modernist reading of fragmentation. Such a model of the political unconscious will enable this thesis to postulate its theory of the subject in the Renaissance. As far as this relates to the reading of the first seventeen sonnets which now follows, the concentration of historically specific multiple meanings permits the sonnets to be read as more contradictory and fragmented than a conventional critical practice would allow. My investigation of subjectivity in the sonnets will involve a methodology which will attempt to pay attention to this limited plurality, and will therefore be concerned with dispersed thematic elements rather than with the production of a chronological narrative of a love affair. This thematic reading will lead to points at which a sonnet, or part of one, will be quoted in relation to a particular theme or motif, and will be returned to later in a different context. This strategy will enable the production of an

investigation of the themes of the sonnets that will have much bearing upon the concern with subjectivity. The dispersion of thematic elements throughout the sequence is symptomatic of the relatively unconstrained subject-positions the sonnets produce. In this sense, Shakespeare's sonnets form a collection of poems in which associations of the tightness of the sonnet form play off against generic assumptions about an overall narrative scheme addressed by a sequence. Such a simple association will be rendered problematical in my reading of these poems.

IV

The crisis of identity which the sonnets record is, in accordance with the theory outlined above, a direct result of determinate historical circumstances. This implies that the suggestion of a thematic of homogeneity in the first seventeen poems constitutes, at best, a partial reading. These poems prepare for the remainder of the collection by moving away from the unitary subject positions and identities required by the dominant ideology towards a fragmentation of subjectivity.

This can be seen even in the motif of the family, which seems at first sight to provide a unifying foundation for the first seventeen sonnets, concerned as they are with the marriage of the young man and the reproduction of the social relations of the family. Initially this issue is conducted strictly in the terms of the ideology of the nobility, informing the language of the first two sonnets in particular, but its force then seems to wane. Hereafter, the poetic persona's exhortations to the young man to marry become phrased more and more in terms which are personal rather than familial. In sonnet 2, but more especially in sonnet 3, the call to marry is justified by the new copy of the young man the marriage would produce, so that when the marks of time with which sonnet 2 opens have done their worst, the young man's beauty will continue to be preserved in his descendants:

This were to be new made when thou art old,
 And see thy blood warm when thou feel'st it cold.
 (2.13-14)

This marks the beginning of the historical shift in the period from an aristocratic to a bourgeois familial discourse, with the institution of

patriarchy providing elements of continuity between the two. Such an investigative questioning of aristocratic discourse can already be seen in sonnet 1:

From fairest creatures we desire increase,
 That thereby beauty's rose might never die,
 But as the ripper should by time decease
 His tender heir might bear his memory:
 But thou, contracted to thine own bright eyes,
 Feed'st thy light's flame with self-substantial fuel,
 Making a famine where abundance lies -
 Thyself thy foe, to thy sweet self too cruel.
 Thou that art now the world's fresh ornament
 And only herald to the gaudy spring
 Within thine own bud buriest thy content,
 And tender churl mak'st waste in niggarding.
 Pity the world, or else this glutton be -
 To eat the world's due, by the grave and thee.

As well as the meaning of 'a famine' being made where once was 'abundance', line 7 can be read with the sense of a 'famine' being produced where abundance (as a noun) lied about its ability to reproduce itself. The theme of the young man's reproduction of himself is here already beginning to become detached from the ideology of the noble family. The agricultural metaphor sustained by 'abundance' and 'famine' is particularly suggestive in the context of the reproduction of the aristocracy, as they derived much of their wealth, as well as their prestige, from a traditional conception of land ownership. There is a further reference here to the prevalent practice

of aristocratic conspicuous consumption, which produces famine from abundance.⁵¹ Such a reading proposes a devaluation of the noble family which, on another level, the sonnet is trying to reproduce. This suggests that meaning is already destabilised from the very outset, and a reading which produces a unitary meaning for these sonnets fails to recognise their polyvalency, and the resultant plurality of meanings which is historically precise.

The devaluing of the function of the young man's reproduction of nobility continues in line 10 of the sonnet:

And only herald to the gaudy spring

Here 'only' can be read as an index of the young man's uniqueness, according him immense prestige in keeping with his function as heir and continuation of the noble family. But it can also be taken to mean 'merely'; the young man is 'merely' a herald to future generations, an inversion of the importance accorded ancestors by the nobility in an age which was obsessed with status that was becoming separated from substance. In such a context, a further current sense of 'merely' (OED)

as one of a diminishing group also raises the question of impoverished noble fortunes and decaying families. In addition, and following on from this, the now obsolete meaning of 'gaudy' as 'trickery' (OED) reinforces this instability.

However, the ideal of marriage to which the poet exhorts the young man, is still very much a patriarchal one. Sonnet 1 mystifies sexual difference in the standard manner of sonnet sequences, seeking to efface the construction of the subject-position allotted to the woman in an aristocratic marriage:

Within thine own bud buriest thy content
(line 11)

As 'bud' was Renaissance slang for the female breast, the line can be read as an instruction to the young man to bury both his own happiness and 'content' - his seed - in his own female breast. 'Bud' can be taken to represent woman by a simple metonymy, so that the young man's ownership of a woman is elided by the possible reference to his own breast. The real conditions of the woman's economic subjection are transcended by the unification of both sexes in the young man, an

example of a conservative use of the image of Hermaphroditus.

A similar sort of mystification links the figure of the woman with religion in sonnet 3, another familiar sonnet motif:

Look in thy glass and tell the face thou viewest,
 Now is the time that face should form another,
 Whose fresh repair if now thou not renewest,
 Thou dost beguile the world, unbless some mother.
 For shere is she so fair whose unear'd womb
 Disdains the tillage of thy husbandry?
 Or who is he so fond will be the tomb
 Of his self-love to stop posterity?
 Thou art thy mother's glass, and she in thee
 Calls back the lovely April of her prime;
 So thou through windows of thine age shall see,
 Despite of wrinkles, this thy golden time.
 But if thou live rememb' red not to be,
 Die single and thine image dies with thee.

In this sonnet, the woman who is subjected to the dictates of the patriarchal family through marriage is produced as a virginal figure going forward to a fate reserved for her, one which she welcomes and one for which she has been prepared by her internalisation of the values of the patriarchal order itself. This is accomplished through language which recalls very strongly the archetype of this feminine subjectivity, the Virgin Mary: 'unbless some mother' in line 4 recalls the 'blessed mother', and 'unear'd womb' in line 5 has an

obvious reference to virginity. However, both of these phrases involve the use of negatives, undercutting the virginal stereotype. Thus, marriage becomes a dual operation of female subjectivity, undoing the subject-position of virginity and replacing it with that of marriage, the only condition upon which the patriarchal order is prepared to accept the woman because it needs her in order to reproduce itself. The changing of surnames epitomises this exchange from the family of the father to the family of the husband. These associations, however, also begin to devalue the religious metaphors, in the same way that the familial discourse of the nobility is devalued. The specifically Christian elements of the poem, such as the reference in lines 7-8 to the Christ who allowed himself to be buried in the tomb to save mankind, lays bare the contiguity of the religious discourse with that of the noble family in the ideology of the aristocracy. This is particularly apparent in the identification of the young man with Christ in a conflation of the meanings of resurrection and 'res-erection'.

The religious connotations of the vocabulary establish further connections with aristocratic

ideology through the combination of virginal metaphors with the colonisation of the woman as land, which has already been noted in the previous chapter as a motif used by Daniel and Donne, among others. The agricultural metaphors of lines 5-6 provide a useful example:

For where is she whose unear'd womb
Disdains the tillage of thy husbandry?

In the sonnets this complex of connotations resonates particularly acutely with the contemporary preoccupation of the nobility with land as the source of their wealth and prestige, and this produces the extended movement of agricultural motifs in sonnet 12:

When I do count the clock that tells the time,
And see the brave day sunk in hideous night,
When I behold the violet past prime,
And sable curls all silvered o'er with white,
When lofty trees I see barren of leaves,
Which erst from heat did canopy the herd,
And summer's green all girded up in sheaves
Borne on the bier with white and bristly beard;
Then of thy beauty do I question make
That thou among the wastes of time must go,
Since sweets and beauties do themselves forsake,
And die as fast as they see others grow,
 And nothing 'gainst time's scythe can make defence
 Save breed to brave him when he takes thee hence.

Lines 3-6 set up a context of rural associations which then invests the connotations of war in lines

6 and 7, with 'girded' in line 6 and the funeral 'bier' in line 7. This reinforces the aristocratic discourse of productive land - violet, sable, lofty trees, the herd, and summer's green - with the contiguous discourse of the warrior function of the feudal landowning nobility.

However, the crisis in this ideology at the time of the production of the sonnets allows them to register a sense that 'Nature' is an ideological construct. This follows directly on from the association of the aristocracy with land, and it is not surprising to find these connotations in a context of the reproduction of the noble family (and, hence, its wealth) through marriage. These overderminants of the agricultural metaphors link 'Nature' with the ideology of the aristocracy. The very first sonnet has an example in the word 'riper' in line 3, which is a rare form of 'ripener':

But as the riper should by time decease

The OED cites a passage from 1572 which fixes this meaning as source for this definition. 'ripener' would be a reasonable meaning for the word in the aristocratic discourse. But, since the

aristocracy's dominant discursive position is being challenged, the word's other associations are just as relevant. Thus, in Middle English the word 'riper' denotes a maturative agent - manure - a meaning which was still current in the Renaissance, although it is now obsolete. This allows a reading to be produced which sees the agricultural discourse articulated in sonnet 1 as an agency through which decay and regeneration are fused as part of a simple process. This plurality of meanings supports Bakhtin's theorising of the contradictory materiality of discourse, the principle of 'dialogism', in which he postulates that the linguistic sign is a site of ideological struggle.⁵² In accordance with this theoretical position, the line from sonnet 1 can be seen to relate to the associations of more than one discourse. The line is not an isolated example of such 'dialogism' in the poem. In line 7 of the same sonnet, which I have already quoted, the 'lies' of the nobility again subvert the line's agricultural imagery. At one linguistic level the agricultural discourse of the aristocracy is being recorded as a set of 'lies', and such tension is evident in other poetry of the time, as Don E. Wayne has argued in

relation to Ben Jonson's poem To Penhurst:

At the center of Jonson's concept of Nature are the images of the family and of the house as home. The house is still an aristocratic house, and the family still bears traces of the feudal extended household, including blood relations, servants, and members of the surrounding community under the protection of the paterfamilias. But there are other connotations as well. These include the equation of power and personal identity with private property, the image of house and land as the visible domain of property and identity, the notion of home and family as the legitimating nucleus of that material domain, and a corresponding view of history.⁵³

Thus, in Jonson's poem, the aristocratic family is beginning to be invested with the connotations associated with the bourgeoisie, but that transition is still in process, giving rise to contradictions. The familial ideology which was to be the end result of this process is not a possibility for the young man of the sonnets, since his subjectivity is determined by the prior, aristocratic version of the family. This shift reveals that categories of Nature are ideological, as Don E. Wayne writes:

Part of the function of "To Penshurst" is to negate or to hide the element of accumulation which is a necessary

component of the concept of wealth and exchange that Jonson represents as both natural and normal.⁵⁴

and:

The "magical nature" at Penshurst is a surrogate for surplus labor and for the Sidneys' power over the labor of others.⁵⁵

In the sonnets, the dislocation of this ideology produces a linguistic excess which supplements the themes sanctioned by the dominant ideology. This gives rise to the possibility of the sort of reading of individual lines and words that I have already described. The terms normally used for such a phenomenon - ambiguity, paradox, word-play and so on - are inadequate here since they implicitly sustain a unified but complex discourse which usually has its 'origin' in an authorial consciousness. This functions to preserve an essential meaning, whereas in these poems the dominant ideology is both confirmed and denied. This is, however, not to postulate retrospectively a kind of pluralism, as the contradictions that ideology can no longer contain are beginning to emerge in literary discourse in this period in such

a tight poetic form. Thus, discourse does not explode into plurality because the historical conditions within which the sonnets are produced precludes the possibility of such a movement; instead, the polyvalency which results produces extra meanings which have made these poems so difficult for traditional criticism to account for, given its adherence to unitary meaning.

One of the most powerful embodiments of this excess is the reference to time in these poems. In sonnet 3 it is present as a threat only:

Die single and thine image dies with thee.
(line 14)

Here the young man is told that he will die without a record of his beauty if he does not marry. But time very quickly becomes a much more disruptive element, against whose images the aristocratic family can offer no defence. The first sonnet sets the initial tone which this final line of sonnet 3 recapitulates: the young man needs to beget an heir so that his beauty might continue to exist despite all that time can do. The mortality of the individual will therefore be overcome by the propagation of the family.

However, in sonnet 5 'time' becomes the image of unfruitful sexuality:

Those hours that with gentle work did frame
 The lovely gaze where every eye doth dwell
 Will play the tyrants to the very same
 And that unfair which fairly doth excel:
 For never-resting time leads summer on
 To hideous winter and confounds him there,
 Sap checked with frost and leaves quite gone,
 Beauty o'ersnowed and bareness everywhere.
 Then were not summer's distillation left
 A liquid pris'ner pent in walls of glass,
 Beauty's effect with beauty were bereft,
 Nor it nor no remembrance what it was.

But flow'rs distilled, though they with winter
 meet,
 Leese but their show, their substance still lives
 sweet.

Lines 5-6 enmesh summer in a complex of meanings which stresses the inevitability of time's effects. 'confound' can mean to defeat in a debate ('leads summer on' supplies a sense of an ongoing conversation in which winter draws summer on to a conclusion which is in winter's favour); it also has the now obsolete meaning of 'bringing an enemy utterly to ruin' (OED). There is an additional obsolete meaning of 'to ruin or corrupt'. This leads on to 'checked' in line 7, which recalls the frost-patterns of winter. The sexual connotations of 'lusty leaves' are therefore modified by their conjunction with a set of references to winter. The

same effect occurs in the following line, in which the white face of beauty is emphasised with 'o'ersnowed'; winter provides too much whiteness for beauty to remain intact:

Beauty o'ersnowed and bareness everywhere

Here 'bareness' adds the baldness of old age to an ironic recalling of the beauty of the bare body. But there is much more to the line than this, as the whiteness which is the conventional colour of beauty in the Renaissance is here produced as being too white. This gives beauty a negative connotation: too much beauty is as barren as winter. There is perhaps a suggestion here of 'White Devils', that is, beauty is attractive but dangerous, which is particularly interesting in this context of marriage poems, as white is also the colour of the virginal bride's dress. Thus, marriage becomes the institution within which women can lose their virginity but still remain chaste, catering for the threat of female sexuality. This links with the Winter's Tale, where sexuality and the female body are paradoxically both threatening and legitimised, the means by which the aristocracy reproduces itself, but also the instrument through

which its power may be undermined. Marriage therefore transforms the woman's body from innocent beauty to experienced matron, with both positions contained within the patriarchal discourse; the beautiful white bride must be domesticated in order to render her beauty harmless.

'Old age' and 'winter' move on from this to initiate a complex of connotations of the seasons and reproduction that resonates with the discourses of Nature and the family. The movement of the seasonal motif begins to turn nature against the associations of the aristocratic family almost immediately in sonnet 6:

Then let not winter's ragged hand deface
 In thee thy summer ere thou be distilled:
 Make sweet some vial; treasure thou some place
 With beauty's treasure ere it be self-killed.
 That use is not forbidden usury
 Which happies those that pay the willing loan;
 That's for thyself to breed another thee,
 Or ten times happier be it ten for one.
 Ten times thyself were happier than thou art,
 If ten of thine ten times refigured thee:
 The what could death do if thou shouldst depart,
 Leaving thee in posterity?
 Be not self-willed, for thou art much too fair,
 To be death's conquest and make worms thine heir.

In the first line of this sonnet the word 'ragged' sets winter against aristocratic wealth in a particularly effective manner, because of connotations of poverty. But this 'ragged hand' will

eventually deface not only the young man's beauty, but also the nobility itself. This sets up an opposition between the noble family on the one hand, and time and winter on the other, an opposition which disrupts the ideological unity of the nobility and Nature, even as it also recuperates decay for a natural process. Sonnet 7 extends the aristocratic ideology of 'Nature' through the use of the common pun on 'sun/son':

Lo, in the orient when the gracious light
 Lifts up his burning head, each under eye
 Doth homage to his new-appearing sight,
 Serving with looks his sacred majesty;
 And having climbed the steep-up heav'nly hill,
 Resembling strong youth in his middle age,
 Yet mortal looks adore his beauty still,
 Attending on his golden pilgrimage.
 But when from the highmost pitch, with weary car,
 Like feeble age he reeleth from the day,
 The eyes ('fore duteous) now converted are
 From his low tract and look another way.
 So thou, thyself outgoing in thy noon,
 Unlooked on diest unless thou get a son.

Even the golden description of the sun, the poetic equivalent of the young man, has a degree of ambivalence, as 'serving' in line 4 echoes the sense of 'time-serving' which, according to the OED, was a phrase first used in 1584. Thus, the aureate language of the young man's beauty can be read as marked by its own disruption, which leads

on, through the meanings released by the pun, to affect the noble family as well. Time, in short, introduces the aristocratic family to its own disintegration, but this formulation effectively mythologises a determinate history.

It has already been pointed out that the aristocracy encountered very real economic difficulties at this time, particularly in connection with its capacity for conspicuous consumption, and it is not surprising to find traces of this in the sonnets. Sonnet 4 in particular offers a good example:

Unthrifty loveliness, why dost thou spend
 Upon thyself thy beauty's legacy?
 Nature's bequest gives nothing but doth lend,
 And being frank she lends to those are free.
 Then beauteous niggard why dost thou abuse
 The bounteous largess given thee to give?
 Profitless usurer, why dost thou use
 So great a sum of sums yet canst not live?
 For having traffic with thyself alone,
 Thou of thyself thy sweet self dost deceive.
 Then how when nature calls thee to be gone,
 What acceptable audit canst thou leave?
 Thy unused beauty must be tombed with thee,
 Which used lives th'executor to be.

The poem deploys the imagery of usury to link money with the nobility in 'legacy' in line 2. The ancestral generations of the noble family thus become the condition of the young man's beauty,

associating him with the full discursive implications of the connection between the institution of the family and the contemporary associations of connoted by monetary wealth. In line 4 'free' can refer to any free person, but had the specific contemporary sense of a gentleman in particular (OED). It also refers to the noble ideal of magnanimity and generosity, a sense continued with 'bounteous' and 'largess' in line 6.

However, the dominant ideology was very ambivalent towards the practice of usury at the time, and this ambivalence affects the imagery of usury as it is used in this poem. In Chapter 36 of Capital volume 3, Marx makes it quite clear that usury plays an ambiguous role in the economy of the period. Recalling the quotation from Hobsbawm's introduction to Pre-Capitalist Economic Formations used in the previous chapter, one of the prime conditions for the development of capitalism is the accumulation of monetary wealth. In such a context usury can be said to subvert feudal economic relations at the same time as it sustains them, which accounts for the ambivalence with which the figure of the usurer was treated in Renaissance plays and literary texts. The moral economy of feudalism projected associations of usury onto an ethnic minority, the Jews, who had ironically been banished from England in 1292. The

resultant mythologising of usurious practice is no longer possible to sustain once the social hierarchies begin to disintegrate. In this context usury becomes available as a category to be colonised by a mercantilism which masks a nascent capitalism.

Such contradictions regarding wealth resonate particularly acutely in sonnet 4, and are immediately apparent with 'unthrifty' in line 1. This allows the context of the nobility's 'largess' to be given a historical location, since one of the factors which plunged the social class into debt was their capacity for conspicuous consumption in a period of rising inflation. The word 'spend' later in the same line reinforces this. Thus, the poem negotiates the contemporary aristocratic problem of expenditure by linking it to the youth of the young man, in a move reminiscent of that employed in Daniel's sequence Delia. However, this negotiation is unable fully to succeed in negating the anxiety about wealth, as evinced by the logical contradiction in line 5, which states that the young man is a miser if he spends all of his beauty on himself, but is at the same time 'thrifty' if he does so. There appears to be no demarcation between

thriftiness and the negative connotations of the miser. This kind of ambivalence continues: 'deceive' in line 10 can mean to cheat or defraud, as well as to beguile.

The problem generated by money anxieties is further heightened by the illegality of usury. The inability of Renaissance theorists to determine exactly what constituted legitimate forms of interest as opposed to usury goes back to the medieval church's prohibitions of the practice of usury. But trade needed some sort of system of interest to compensate for the risks concomitant with investment, so there was much fudging of the issue. This informs the discourse on money in these poems, as evidenced in sonnet 6:

Make sweet some vial; treasure thou some place
 With beauty's treasure ere it be self-killed.
 That use is not forbidden usury
 Which happies those that pay the willing loan;
(lines 3-6)

The attempt to negotiate the problems raised by interest leads this poem to rationalise as non-usurious the 'treasure' of lines 3 and 4 because it makes those involved happy, in lines 5-6. The poetic display of the position of the aristocracy with regard to money necessarily involves the

process of reproduction in this sonnet. But this produces a contradiction: the illegality of usury is not sufficiently effaced by the happiness it gives in lines 5-7, opening up a fissure between the ruling class and the law they are supposed to uphold.

There is, therefore, a link with the discourse of law in these poems. Sonnet 2 is particularly interesting in this respect:

When forty winters shall besiege thy brow
 And dig deep trenches in thy beauty's field,
 Thy youth's proud livery, so gazed on now,
 Will be a tottered weed of small worth held.
 Then being asked where all thy beauty lies -
 Where all the treasure of thy lusty days -
 To say within thine own deep-sunken eyes
 Were an all-eating shame and thriftless praise.
 How much more praise deserved thy beauty's use,
 If thou couldst answer, "This fair child of mine
 Shall sum my count and make my old excuse" -
 Proving his beauty by succession thine.

This were to be new made when thou art old,
 And see thy blood warm when thou feel'st it cold.

The child which is to be the 'sum' of the young man's time on earth in line 11 is to be the proof (the following line has 'proving') of his success. These terms clearly recall legal language, a common theme in the poem. Thus 'livery' in line 3 has the contemporary sense of the delivery of property into someone's possession through a lawsuit or will

(OED). In line 9 'use' has a specific sense of the act of possessing or using land in legal terminology (OED) -and land is the property of the nobility. There is a further, very precise reference to the sumptuary laws⁵⁶ in the word 'livery', recording the nobility's anxiety about their position at a time when the ownership of land as an index of social prestige is beginning to be challenged by the possession of money. The sumptuary laws were enacted to attempt to force people to wear clothes befitting their station, which was defined in terms of the aristocratic conception of rank. This records the fact that a noble could no longer be sure that rank could be recognised by the richness of his or her apparel, because lower classes could now afford the same kinds of clothes, and the same expensive materials.

This context which informs 'livery' subverts the assumptions of representation, set out by Sidney in his Defence Of Poetry, that signs refer to a prior reality. Clothes are only ever an outward show, and can be removed at will, undercutting any assumptions that they may refer substantially to a person's status. This inevitably affects the assumptions of the aristocracy

regarding social position, as revealed by their attempt to enact a range of laws concerned with clothing. It records an anxiety about exactly what constitutes nobility when the outward signs associated with it are so easily appropriated by other social groupings.

Thus, there is a level at which the aristocratic assumptions are undercut throughout this poem. For example, 'proud' in line 3 carries with it a strong sense of overweening pride, allowing the pride associated with the nobility to be interpreted as arrogance. In line 4 'tottered' gives nobility itself the connotations of a form of show, an outward arrogance which receives its fall because of the word's denotation of the unsteady walk of a person who is about to fall (OED). The proverb 'Pride comes before a fall' is not irrelevant here. In addition, 'tottered' was an alternative form of 'tatters' (OED); the outward show of the clothing of the nobility can therefore be read as being reduced to rags. This particular reading can be continued with 'weed' in the same line, which adds a further set of unpleasant connotations to an evolving picture of an impoverished class. Its basic reference to wild

nature signifies an uncontrollable 'nature' which aristocratic ideology attempted to domesticate. It was also a term for clothing - 'mourning weeds'. Finally, it was contemporary slang for 'a poor, leggy, loosely-built horse' (OED): linked with 'tottered' in its sense of an unsteady walk, this subverts the associations of the horse as the noble beast on which the aristocracy rides to war. Thus, the imagery here recapitulates the fact that riding and owning horses is residual in terms of a warrior nobility.

The last image is one of many which contradict the particular ideals associated with the nobility in these first seventeen poems. In sonnet 1, for example,

Thou that art now the world's fresh ornament
(line 1)

a sense of 'fresh' as unsophisticated marks the young man with the connotations associated with aristocratic youth discussed earlier. But this also produces the nobleman as unsophisticated in opposition to the worldly wisdom usually accorded him. In line 12 of the same poem,

And tender churl mak'st waste in niggarding.

the oxymoron 'tender churl' renders the 'tender' noble and the lower-class 'churl' contiguous. Similarly, the imagery of war can, as in the image of the horse in sonnet 2, be read against the nobility, who associated themselves so strongly with it. The fact that the time-winter association is employed using the terminology of war turns war against the nobility, as in 'besiege' and 'field' at the beginning of sonnet 2, which encapsulates the associations of the battlefield and the farming field in the same word:

When forty winters shall besiege thy brow
 And dig deep trenches in thy beauty's field,
(lines 1-2)

Here the introduction of the motif of the passage of time adds to the unsteady walk of 'tottered' a further sense which introduces qualifies the associations of a sort of balancing act between life and the death which 'Will be' at the beginning of line 4:

Will be a tottered weed of small worth held.

The connotations of 'weed' as unpleasantly withered and useless introduces time and death to nature, carrying them into the contemporary meaning of

'small' in the same line as a 'weak pulse' (OED).

It is hardly surprising, then, that if these disjunctions can be excavated in the supposedly homogeneous first seventeen sonnets, then the process by which the dominant ideology interpellates subjectivity may itself be radically unstable, constituting a crisis of aristocratic identity. This produces a situation in which the sonnets play out the construction of subjectivity according to the dictates of the dominant ideology, and at the same time register alternatives to it. This places the sonnets very specifically in a determinate history, denying that in them Shakespeare discovers a form of subjectivity which is genuinely transhistorical. Louis Montrose has attempted to theorise this kind of historical reading of subjectivity:

I believe that we should resist the inevitably reductive tendency to think in terms of a subject/structure opposition. Instead we might entertain the proposition that subject and structure, the processes of subjectification and structuration, are interdependent, and thus intrinsically social and historical; that social systems are produced and reproduced in the interactive social practices of individuals and groups; that the possibilities and patterns for action are always socially and historically situated, always limited and limiting; and that there is no necessary

relationship between the intentions of actors and the outcome of their actions.⁵⁷

This kind of theoretical positioning of the subject is particularly useful for a reading of the first seventeen sonnets which recognises that in them the only subject-position available is that of the grammatical subject in language. Subjectivity in Shakespeare's sonnets is historically limited in the way Montrose argues, but the ideology which interpellates this subjectivity is in crisis, in that it can no longer make sense of social conditions. This relative freedom is a historically temporary one, producing in the sonnets a sequence which is at the same time true to the dominant ideology and in opposition to it; the collection is structured around responses to the historical crisis in terms of a relatively open reaction. Thus, a subversive reading can be produced, with suppressed historical discourses beginning to break through a hitherto smooth ideological surface.

This institutes a crisis in representation which the sonnets are unable to resolve, and for which the anxiety over clothing, for example, serves as a thematic focus for a much more

disturbing disjunction between appearance and material reality. The spaces which have opened up here in the dominant ideology are taken over by a language which resists the mimetic constraints proposed in Sidney's Defence Of Poetry. For example, the looking 'glass' in sonnet 3 introduces time in the two senses of the sand glass and the spectacles which were already available at the time, and which were associated with the failing vision brought on by old age:

Look in thy glass and tell the face thou viewest
(line 1)

But in addition to this the word recalls the mirrors of representation, inevitably contaminating mimesis in this context with negative associations of old age and irrelevance. This locates the sonnets' preoccupation with the passage of time in a context of the undercutting of the practice of mimesis. Thus, in line 4,

Thou dost beguile the world, unbless some mother

'beguile' brings falseness into mimesis. This duplicitous visualisation continues with 'glass' in line 9, which recalls the associations of line 1,

and 'windows' in line 11:

So thou through windows of thine age shalt see,
and, finally, with 'image' in the last line of the
poem:

Die single and thine image dies with thee.

There is therefore a sense in which mimesis is not only inadequate to the new social situation, but is in fact noted to be a falsifying operation, an ideology.

The fascination with language continues throughout these early sonnets. In sonnet 5, which was quoted in full earlier, 'frame' links the outcome of the 'gentle work' of intercourse - the young man - with the process of ideological subjection in the meaning of 'enframe':

Those hours that with gentle work did frame
The lovely gaze where every eye doth dwell
(lines 1-2)

The 'lovely gaze' which is framed reifies the young man's subjectivity. This takes place in close proximity to a slide of meaning which reproduces the dislocation in the ideology occasioned by the

text's recognition of its operation of subjection in the meaning of 'enframe': 'every' in line 2 had the contemporary meaning of 'each of two' as well as 'every other' (OED). The play on 'unfair' and 'fairly' in line 4 has the same disruptive effect.

In such circumstances the possibility is raised that the young man's refusal to marry can be read as a disruption of the aristocratic familial ideology. Thus, in sonnet 8 the imagery of music is thrown into discord by the young man:

Music to hear, why hear'st thou music so sadly?
 Sweets with sweets war not, joy delights in joy.
 Why lov'st thou that which thou receiv'st not
 gladly,
 Or else receiv'st with pleasure thine annoy?
 If the true concord of well-tuned sounds,
 By unions married, do offend thine ear,
 They do but sweetly chide thee, who confounds
 In singleness the parts that shouldst bear.
 Mark how one string, sweet husband to another,
 Strikes each in each by mutual ordering;
 Resembling sire, and child, and happy mother,
 Who all in one, one pleasing note do sing;
 Whose speechless song, being many, seeming one,
 Sings this to thee: "Thou single wilt prove
 none."

The 'Music to hear', which is the young man, becomes a discord which is chided by music. The music which was the young man is now in disharmony with itself, a specific instance of the split in subjectivity. It is interesting to note that the

music which is disrupted by his refusal to marry is a metaphoric articulation of the ideal family in lines 9-13:

Mark how one string, sweet husband to another,
Strikes each in each by mutual ordering;
Resembling sire, and child, and happy mother,
Who all in one, one pleasing note do sing;

The harmony and integration of this family, in which patriarchal power is effaced through 'mutual ordering', is now being threatened, and in a way that recalls The Merchant Of Venice:

The man that hath no music in himself,
Nor is not mov'd with concord of sweet sounds,
Is fit for treasons, stratagems and spoils;
The motions of his spirit are dull as night,
And his affections dark as Erebus.
Let no such man be trusted. (V.i.83-88)

Here Lorenzo's speech carries the same message that sonnet 8 gives to the young man. In the sonnet, the patriarchal family is in crisis because one of its members, indeed the heir, has refused to marry, and in so doing has denied the 'mutual ordering'.

In fact, another 'self' appears in sonnet 10:

Make thee another self for love of me,
(line 13)

The 'other self' of this line prefigures the analysis of this split which takes place formally

in sonnet 11:

As fast as thou shalt wane so fast thou grow'st -
 In one of thine, from that which thou departest,
 And that fresh blood which youngly thou bestow'st
 Thou mayst call thine, when thou from youth
 convertest.

Herein lives wisdom, beauty and increase;
 Without this, folly, age, and cold decay.
 If all were minded so, the times should cease,
 And threescore year would make the world away.
 Let those whom nature hath not made for store,
 Harsh, featureless, and rude, barrenly perish.
 Look whom she best endowed, she gave the more;
 Which bounteous gift thou shouldst in bounty
 cherish.

She carved thee for her seal, and meant thereby
 Thou shouldst print more, not let that copy die.

Here the young man's progeny will not only guarantee his immortality, but will actually constitute another self for him, and this informs the play on 'growing'. The young man's subjectivity departs from itself at the end of the second line, followed by a split in time itself, with 'youngly' in line 3 referring to the young man's youth in the present time of the poem, and also to his future youth as his own son. But even this is immediately undercut with 'store' in line 9. The uniqueness of the young man as opposed to the mass of those who have not been set aside is also at another level a reduction of his function to that of a breeding animal, since 'store' could denote 'livestock' in

this period (OED). His uniqueness can therefore be read as merely the sum total of describable breeding characteristics, a reading reinforced by the undertones of the accident of aristocratic birth in line 10, which replays the argument that those who have the most are also the best. In this context, the metaphors of print in the poem begin to suggest a context of literature which is developed later on, in that the literary work can constitute immortality for the young man.

A similar operation of a shift in subjectivity occurs in sonnet 12, quoted earlier, in relation to time. It has already been observed that the ideology of nature can be read against aristocratic discourse, but so too can the ideology of time, since the lineage of the aristocratic family was held to be one of its defining characteristics. This dislocation of a motif previously associated with the nobility accompanies the introduction of the new ideology of the individual, forcing the poetic persona of the sonnets to appeal to the self-interest of the young man in terms of his own survival against time. The monosyllabic first line of this sonnet immediately introduces a sense of the monotonous progress of linear time in the sound

of a clock, with its heavy alliteration on 'c' and 't'. This links time to the split in subjectivity recorded in line 10 by 'themselves forsake'. In addition, the linguistic innovation of the use of 'canopy' as a verb in line 6 has an effect similar to that of the grammatical slides and word-play observed earlier in sonnet 6. This produces a context in which even the second self which will be the young man's child becomes inadequate:

O that you were yourself, but love you are
 No longer yours than you yourself here live.
 Against this coming end you should prepare,
 And your sweet semblance to some other give.
(lines 1-4)

The argument now is that the young man should reproduce, since he is not fully himself; this will at least bequeath his 'sweet semblance' to his child, using the aristocratic ideal of inheritance as part of the attempt to persuade the young man to marry.

Sonnet 17 then prepares an answer regarding the problem of subjectivity which may be extended to the sonnets as a whole:

Who will believe my verse in time to come
 If it were filled with your most high deserts?
 Though yet heav'n knows it is but as a tomb
 Which hides your life, and shows not half your
 parts.

If I could write the beauty of your eyes,
 And in fresh numbers number all your graces,
 The age to come would say, "This poet lies -
 Such heav'nly touches ne'er touched earthly faces."
 So should my papers, yellowed with their age,
 Be scorned, like old men of less truth than tongue,
 And your true rights be termed a poet's rage
 And stretched meter of an antique song:

 But were some child of yours alive that time,
 You should live twice in it and in my rhyme.

Here the question of how to secure immortality is proposed in terms of an analogy between the verse as progeny of the poet and the child as progeny of the young man. This is accomplished in the poem by the use of religious metaphors; a structure of religious belief is here being appropriated for a structure of belief in the power of writing. Writing becomes a form of permanency, but it follows that it is also necessarily a separation of the subject from its immortality; hence the second line of sonnet 6, which was quoted above. Angelo records such a fragmentation of the subject in

Measure For Measure:

When I would pray and think, I think and pray
 To several subjects. Heaven hath my empty words,
 While my invention, hearing not my tongue,
 Anchors on Isabel. (IV. ii. 1-4)

Here 'several' can be taken to denote 'different' and/or 'divided'. Language, or writing in the case

of the sonnets, therefore obfuscates rather than represents. The attempt of the sonnets to make the young man immortal through language is therefore rendered problematical from the very outset.

Sonnet 17 makes an attempt to unite the literary and the social by the appropriation of religious metaphors. In the first line, 'believe' is almost an invocation to the power of written language. The almost biblical intensity is reinforced by 'verse' in the same line. In line 2, 'fill'd' can be taken to refer to both the material and the immaterial, allowing a reference to the reproduction of the young man at the same time as reinforcing the power of poetry. This is helped by the meaning of 'fill'd' in relation to pregnancy (OED quotes 1607 as the date of the first use of the word with this meaning; a case could be made for an earlier usage here). The word can also refer to the nobility's function of filling state offices.

The religious discourse permeates the poem, with the echo of deity in 'most high' in line 2 and 'heaven' in line 3 introducing the poem's use of specifically Christian terminology. In line 4, 'life' can be taken to refer to the spiritual life.

In line 6, 'number' recalls the numbered verses of the bible; it is also the title of one of the books of the Old Testament. In the same line, 'graces' links with 'touches' in line 8 to give a sense of the 'grace', or sacrament, of confirmation.

However, the conjunction of the power of religion with the power of the literary word does not succeed in producing a homogeneous discourse. The balance between the literary and the religious is undermined even as it is produced. This takes place in a way that ultimately privileges the literary word over its religious counterpart. This is already the case with 'verse' in the first line with the meaning of poetic verse. There is also a sense in which the just 'deserts' (line 2) of the young man can be accommodated by the poetry, without the need for the religious language. In the opposition of heaven and the tomb (with a concomitant recollection of the language of sonnet 3), the poetry itself takes over time's function of the eventual entombment of the young man. Here the poetry is both a monument to the young man and an artifact which is able to hide his life and show only half his parts. The result of this operation is that the young man becomes reconstituted as a

wholly literary character, a construct whose fate is bound up with that of the poems, and one who exists only in the poems. The word 'knows' in line 3 reinforces this sense, as it can be taken to be both the acknowledgement of the poetry as 'but' a mere record, and also as recognising it as unique, in a similar play to that on the word 'only' in sonnet 1:

And only herald to the gaudy spring
(line 10)

This ambivalence is continued in later in sonnet 17 with 'hides':

Which hides your life, and shows not half your
parts.
(line 4)

There is also an additional meaning of 'hides' as a unit of land measurement, burying the landownership of the nobility in the same tomb as the life - material and immaterial - of the young man. Thus, the poem asserts its power to disclose and hide the young man; it is able to perform contradictory functions. In short, it has complete power over the young man's name for posterity. Also, the now obsolete meaning of 'parts' as a reading in a book

(OED) textualises the young man as the embodiment of all of the meanings of 'parts', as he is himself a book made up of 'parts'. The word can refer to a literary work; the sexual parts; a particle of time; a part in a play; a person's talents - 'a man of many parts'; a piece of land or territory; and, finally, a political faction or party. Meaning here is plural, with the line resonating with different elements of an ideology which has now begun to fragment.

The literary work now takes over the young man's fame. In line 5, 'write', as well as its more obvious applications to the written word, has a now obsolete meaning available at the time of to draw or figure (OED):

If I could write the beauty of your eyes,

This constitutes the young man as a product of the poetry - literally written into the verse. This process of aestheticisation is a radical departure from the theory of mimesis, textualised in the poem as a paraphrase of Sidney's dictum that the poet never lies:

The age to come would say, "This poet lies -
Such heav'nly touches ne'er touched earthly faces".
(lines 7-8)

Here the text states that the coming age will not believe that such beauty existed, a direct denial of the conventional mimetic position. Accordingly, in such a context it is not surprising to find a subversion of the conventional 'eye' imagery of the Petrarchan sonnet in line 5. In line 9 'papers' continues the domination of the literary, together with a sense of 'less truth than tongue' which privileges literature as a result of the falseness of the spoken word:

So should my papers, yellowed with their age,

However, the line can also be read as a statement that literature has 'less truth than tongue', prefiguring the dissatisfaction with the power of literature which is produced in later sonnets, as well as a disjunction in the practice of representation. For this particular sonnet, however, the hegemony of writing is secure. The ultimate power of naming is even appropriated for poetry through 'termed' in line 11. The new freedom from mimesis is stated explicitly in line 12, with 'stretched' implying that older poetry ('antique song' - and note the echo of insanity in 'antique') would be stretched beyond its limits by the material that these poems are able to accommodate.

The power of writing allows Sonnet 17 to appropriate other elements of the dominant ideology. This has already been noted in relation to the discourse of the land, which is continued with 'earthly' in line 8. The sense of the earth of an animal such as a badger links the land with the ability of the tomb to hide the young man. The discourse of the law is also used in such a manner, with 'papers' in line 9 recalling legal papers, and 'rights' recalling legal rights.

However, in the context of the subversion of mimetic representation, these elements are inevitably contaminated by their close proximity to writing. This poem therefore produces the power of writing as a new ideology, but it is an ideology which is immediately seen to be inadequate, since it produces elements which refuse ideological containment. Sonnet 17 is the final poem in a group which, far from being homogeneous, uses the dominant ideology in a double manner, allowing each of the preceding poems to interrogate it in the moment that they affirm it. The result is a radical disintegration of subjectivity.

Notes

- 1: Stephen Booth ed.: Shakespeare's Sonnets (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1977) p.135. The quotation is from Katharine Wilson: Shakespeare's Sugared Sonnets (London and New York: 1974) pp.146-7.
- 2: Works of criticism on the sonnets include the following:
- Stephen Booth: An Essay On Shakespeare's Sonnets (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1969)
- Joel Fineman op.cit.
- Edward Hubler: The Sense Of Shakespeare's Sonnets (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1952)
- Hilton Landry ed.: New Essays On Shakespeare's Sonnets (New York: AMS Press, 1976)
- J.B.Leishman: Themes And Variations In Shakespeare's Sonnets (London: Hutchinson, 1961)
- Philip Martin: Shakespeare's Sonnets (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972)
- Giorgio Melchiori: Shakespeare's Dramatic Meditations (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1976)
- Kenneth Muir: Shakespeare's Sonnets (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1979)
- John Padel: New Poems By Shakespeare: Order And Meaning Restored To The Sonnets (London: The Herbert Press, 1981)
- Joseph Pequigney: Such Is My Love: A Study Of Shakespeare's Sonnets (Chicago and London: Chicago University Press, 1985)
- A.L.Rowse: Shakespeare's Sonnets: The Problems Solved (London: MacMillan, 1973)
- Brents Stirling: The Shakespeare Sonnet Order: Poems And Groups (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1968)
- R.J.C.Wait: The Background To Shakespeare's Sonnets (London: Chatto and Windus, 1972)
- David K.Weiser: Mind In Character: Shakespeare's Speaker In The Sonnets (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1987)
- Katharine Wilson: Shakespeare's Sugared Sonnets (London and New York 1974)
- James Winny: The Master-Mistress (London: Chatto and Windus, 1968)

- 3: W.G. Ingram and Theodore Redpath eds.:
Shakespeare's Sonnets (London: University of
London Press, 1964) p.ix.
- 4: *ibid.*, p.xi.
- 5: Sedgwick *op.cit.* p.35.
- 6: *ibid.*, p.38.
- 7: Booth *op.cit.* 1977 p.x.
- 8: *ibid.*, p.ix.
- 9: *ibid.*, pp.xii-xiii.
- 10: *ibid.*, p.xiv.
- 11: *ibid.*, p.xvi.
- 12: Booth *op.cit.* 1969 p.ix.
- 13: *ibid.*
- 14: *ibid.*, p.1.
- 15: *ibid.*, p.2.
- 16: *ibid.*, p.14.
- 17: Luce Irigaray: Speculum De L'Autre Femme,
translated as Speculum Of The Other Woman
trans. Gillian C.Gill (Ithaca, New York:
Cornell University Press 1985).
- 18: See Elaine Marks and Isabelle de Courtivron
eds.: New French Feminisms (Brighton:
Harvester, 1980) pp.99-106.
- 19: *ibid.*, p.99.
- 20: *ibid.*, p.245.
- 21: See the following:
Deborah Cameron: Feminism And Linguistic Theory
(London: MacMillan, 1985)
Alice Jardine and Paul Smith eds.: Men In
Feminism (London and New York: Methuen, 1987)
Julia Kristeva: Desire In Language: A Semiotic
Approach To Literature And Art trans. Leon S.

- Roudiez (Oxford: Blackwell, 1980)
- Julia Kristeva: The Kristeva Reader ed. Toril Moi (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986)
- Julia Kristeva: Revolution In Poetic Language trans. Margaret Waller (New York and Guildford: Columbia University Press, 1984)
- Julia Kristeva: POwers Of Horror: An Essay On Abjection trans. Leon S. Roudiez (New York, Guildford: Columbia University Press, 1982)
- Marks and de Courtivron op.cit.
- Juliet Mitchell: Psychoanalysis And Feminism (Harmondsworth: Pelican Books, 1975)
- Nancy K. Miller: Subject To Change: Reading Feminist Writing (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988)
- Nancy K. Miller ed.: The Poetics Of Gender (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986)
- Judith Newton and Deborah Rosenfelt eds.: Feminism And Social Change (London and New York: Methuen, 1985)
- Toril Moi ed.: French Feminist Thought: A Reader (Oxford: Blackwell, 1987)
- Toril Moi: Sexual/Textual Politics: Feminist Literary Theory (London: Methuen, 1985)
- Jacqueline Rose: Sexuality In The Field Of Vision (London: Verso, 1986)

- 22: Cameron op.cit.
- 23: Kristeva op.cit. 1986 p.30.
- 24: ibid., p.39.
- 25: ibid., p.44.
- 26: ibid., p.122.
- 27: ibid., pp.63
- 28: Foucault op.cit. 1989 pp.42-44.
- 29: Kristeva op.cit. 1986 p.96.
- 30: ibid., p.97.
- 31: ibid., p.117.
- 32: ibid., p.207.
- 33: ibid., p.242.

- 34: Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari: Anti-Oedipus (London: Athlone Press, 1984).
- 35: *ibid.*, p.24.
- 36: *ibid.*, p.50.
- 37: *ibid.*, p.74.
- 38: *ibid.*, p.101.
- 39: *ibid.*, p.49.
- 40: *ibid.*, p.53.
- 41: *ibid.*, p.109.
- 42: *ibid.*, p.296.
- 43: *ibid.*, p.36.
- 44: *ibid.*, pp.40-41.
- 45: *ibid.*, p.41.
- 46: *ibid.*, p.xviii.
- 47: *ibid.*, p.29.
- 48: Stallybrass and White *op.cit.*
- 49: see my Introduction, pp.48-51.
- 50: Note that all references to Shakespeare's sonnets are from Booth *op.cit.* 1977.
- 51: See Stone *op.cit.* pp.86-87 on conspicuous consumption.
- 52: Bakhtin *op.cit.* 1968. pp.368-436.
- 53: Wayne *op.cit.*, p.26.
- 54: *ibid.*, p.125.
- 55: *ibid.*, p.126.
- 56: See Jardine *op.cit.* pp.141-165.
- 57: Louis Adrian Montrose: 'Renaissance Literary Studies And The Subject Of History' in English Literary Renaissance 16 (1986) pp.9-10.

Chapter 4

Subjectivity I: The Friend

In this chapter I will be concerned to trace the subjectivity of the friend, the young man of the marriage sonnets. However, it must be made clear at the outset that in my use of the term 'subjectivity' I do not intend to elide the very real historical differences between the Renaissance and the age of the Cartesian ego. This is a distinction that Francis Barker has been careful to make in his book The Tremulous Private Body (1984):

Pre-bourgeois subjection does not properly involve subjectivity at all, but a dependent membership in which place and articulation are defined not by an interiorized self-recognition - complete or partial, percipient or unknowing, efficient or rebellious - (of none the less socially constituted subject-positions), but by incorporation in the body politic which is the king's body in its social form.¹

Subjectivity in the Renaissance, then, is to be understood in terms of an ideological interpellation which is historically specific. The figure of the friend in Shakespeare's sonnets

inscribes in the sonnets the process of subjection at the precise moment when the dominant ideology is forced to renegotiate its own position and the social relations which function as its supports. It is therefore possible to read these poems as constituting subject positions as a literary response to a crisis at the precise historical point of their production.

I

In his book Shakespeare's Perjur'd Eye Joel Fineman characterises the subjectivity of the poet's young friend in terms of a specular homogeneity as distinct from the treacherous heterogeneity of the 'dark lady'. However, as was pointed out in an earlier chapter of this thesis,² such a distinction depends for its force upon an oversimplified opposition between the two, since Shakespeare's young man sonnets play on the conventional sonnet rhetoric of outward female beauty. Here it is the male friend who has beauty, while the woman is 'dark' and this rhetoric produces a disjunction in Shakespeare's sequence. The 'outward show' of the woman's beauty, which was a motif in both Spenser and Sidney, is

attributed to a man, while it is, paradoxically, the dark woman's appearance which is the object of the poetic persona's desire. The duplicitous interior of the woman characterised in sonnet sequences has now become displaced onto her exterior, while her exterior beauty has been displaced onto the man.

It is therefore impossible for Shakespeare's sonnets to replay the operation undertaken in the sequences of Sidney and Spenser. The initial disjunction between the appearance and the 'mind' of the woman, characterised in these earlier sonnets by means of the terminology of love, is resolved by the poetic persona's pursuit of the woman. The result is that her mind becomes one with her body in a form of inverted presence: in the rhetoric used, her personality becomes devoted to Cupid. Her subjectivity is therefore reconstituted by the discourse of courtly love by an operation that erases the initial disjunction between her material body, which was characterised as always perfect for love, and her mind. Such an operation does take place in Astrophel And Stella, but it is undercut in Shakespeare's sonnets because the physical aspect of the woman's subjectivity is

appropriated for a man.

In my last chapter I argued that the first seventeen sonnets subvert the familial ideology of the aristocracy, even as they articulate it. The subjectivity of the young man correspondingly shifts from its aristocratic determinants to a position which is sensitive to more than one discourse. Thus, as the friend's subjectivity ceases fully to be interpellated by the dominant ideology, so the sonnets can be read as the articulation of a historical crisis in this ideology. The result is that the friend's subjectivity in the remainder of the collection is predicated upon this change, while the various subject positions which he occupies can be traced to the distinct historical relations pertaining to the time of the writing of the poems. Therefore it can be argued that the subjectivity of the friend does not depend upon his relationship to the poet, as Joel Fineman contends, but rather that both subjectivities are constructed in a relation of difference. This relation is itself imbricated in a material opposition between two mutually antagonistic social positions.

II

The inability of the dominant ideology fully to interpellate the friend's subjectivity constitutes a crisis in representation which these poems attempt to resolve. They do so, initially, by colonising aspects of the subjectivity which the courtly love tradition had constructed for woman. Sonnet 18 is a case in point. Usually described as a poem which links the 'marriage sonnets' to the rest of those concerned with the friend, it colonises the specular attributes of the subjectivity created for woman by patriarchy on behalf of men:

Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?
 Thou art more lovely and more temperate:
 Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May,
 And summer's lease hath all too short a date;
 Sometime too hot the eye of heaven shines,
 And often is his gold complexion dimmed;
 And every fair from fair sometime declines,
 By chance or nature's changing course untrimmed:
 But thy eternal summer shall not fade,
 Nor lose possession of that fair thou ow'st,
 Nor shall death brag thou wand'rest in his shade,
 When in eternal lines to time thou grow'st.
 So long as men can breathe or eyes can see,
 So long lives this, and this gives life to thee.

Here the friend is described as having the physical qualities characteristic of the women of earlier

sonnet sequences. The repetition of 'fair" (lines 7 and 10), combined with 'lovely' in line 2, appropriates these qualities for the sun of lines 5-6, with a concomitant recalling of the play on sun/son in sonnet 7. In fact, the complex of meanings in line 3 goes even further than this, with the naming of the month of the virgin Mary. The ideal beauty of the woman of the sonnet genre is here detached from the connotations of female deceit and duplicity, as evinced by Spenser's sequence in particular. This separation lays the groundwork for the 'dark lady' of the later sonnets, since the space that remains for her to occupy is the darker side of the split subjectivity of madonna/whore. Line 3 contains a whole series of meanings which reinforce this reading: 'buds' was Renaissance slang for the female breast, and, taken with 'darling', which was the name for a variety of apple at the time (OED), Mary's opposite, Eve, can be discerned in conjunction with her sexuality and the forbidden fruit of the apple in the Garden of Eden. The beauty hitherto attributed to women is now owned by men, as the friend 'ow'st' it in line 10. The poem closes with a promise of immortality for the friend 'so long as men can breathe' (line

13).

This process is continued in sonnet 20, which has attracted much discussion because of the confusion it has generated over the homosocial appropriation of beauty:

A woman's face, with nature's own hand painted,
 Hast thou, the master mistress of my passion -
 A woman's gentle heart, but not acquainted
 With shifting change, as is false women's fashion;
 An eye more bright than theirs, less false in
 rolling,
 Gilding the object whereupon it gazeth;
 A man in hue all hues in his controlling,
 Which steals men's eyes and women's souls amazeth.
 And for a woman wert thou first created,
 Till nature as she wrought thee fell a-doting,
 And by addition me of thee defeated,
 By adding one thing to my purpose nothing.

But since she pricked thee out for women's
 pleasure,

Mine be thy love, and thy love's use their
 treasure.

In his book The Master-Mistress, James Winni offers this poem as a critical appraisal of the friend. But his reading depends upon a modern heterosexuality, rather than a Renaissance homosociality; Winni argues that:

Only an oddly imperceptive reader could mistake this sonnet for a complimentary address. Few men, however good looking, would enjoy being told that they were designed to be women; and one who had just reached manhood would be still less amused if his sex were called into question, however wittily.³

This leads him to postulate a critical attitude for the friend which results in the poet ascribing female doubleness to him:

Here as earlier in the sequence, the poet associates the friend's equivocal sexual nature with hypocrisy and double-dealing. In sonnet 20 he reassures himself that although the friend has the delicate beauty of a woman, he is without the fickleness and inconstancy that characterise feminine behaviour. In this attempt to secure himself the poet ignores the warning signs of divided being which he himself noticed previously. Even without the bisexuality which is so clear an index of the friend's contradictory nature, a man who has all hues in his controlling must be able not only to attract men of every kind, but to adopt any shape at will. It would be easier to resist the implications of this ambiguous phrase if later episodes of the sequence did not reveal the friend's duplicity; or if Shakespeare's idea of the young man did not associate self-love with deception from the first sonnet.⁴

This passage is important because it provides an example of criticism predicated upon a notion of subjectivity which does not recognise the disjunction between Renaissance and Cartesian subjection. It leads to an inability to cope with 'the friend's contradictory nature'. The critic wants coherence here, and supplies it in terms of a narrative which moralises upon 'the friend's

duplicity'. This is a misrecognition of the text's dynamic movement between stereotypes of masculinity and femininity, of what is, in fact, the structuring opposition of sonnets 20-42. The patriarchal impulse requires women to be superficially opposed to men whereas in reality, female subjectivity is an effect of masculine discourse. In this connection one should recall a useful definition of patriarchy used by Eve Sedgwick:

relations between men, which have a material base, and which, though hierarchical, establish or create interdependence and solidarity among men that enable them to dominate women.⁵

Thus, women are positioned as socially inferior to men in a hierarchical structure. The result of this, as far as Shakespeare's sonnets are concerned, is that male discourse has available to it for the process of colonisation aspects of that subjectivity which it has already constructed for women. Symptoms of this can be seen in the first seventeen sonnets, which move away from the familial ideology of the nobility, and in sonnet 18 and beyond, with their insistence on beauty. In such a context, then, the sonnets record and

produce a dilemma: the friend's subjectivity recuperates one element of female subjectivity for the homosocial order, but what was constructed as feminine duplicity must be left as a defining characteristic of the woman. This produces the concomitant reinforcing of the image of the essential duplicity of woman in the later sonnets, while sonnet 20 appropriates beauty by means of an outdoing of Petrarchan motifs, particularly in lines 1-8.

For Joel Fineman however, this sonnet positions the subjectivity of the friend as a relation of difference from the poet:

As subject and object of the poet's love - "Mine be thy love" - and as subject and object of woman's love - "and thy love's use their treasure" - the young man becomes in the sonnet the erotic figure of the difference between man and woman. And it is as such an intermediate being that the poet addresses him, with an ambiguous and conflicted desire which is half spiritual and half bodily because divided between the homosexual and the heterosexual.⁶

Eve Sedgwick's theorising of homosocial desire renders this passage an inadequate description of the friend's subjectivity because it lacks the historicity characteristic of her account. But

there is a further problem. The differential subjectivity Fineman assigns to the poet depends upon the positions of the friend and the dark lady remaining stable. This permits him to locate the poet's subjectivity as a heterogeneous space between the two. But when the historical relations of homosocial patriarchy are taken into consideration, the subjectivities Fineman assigns to the young man and the dark lady are found to be themselves unstable.

In the case of the subjectivity of the friend, this instability is caused by the very appropriation of beauty which positions him. The masculine/feminine interpellation which takes place in sonnets 20-42 does not succeed in ensuring that duplicity remains specifically female in the terms of the conventions of the sonnet. This interpellation takes place, firstly, by means of the power of poetry itself, which is linked to representation in sonnet 21:

O let me true in love but truly write,
 And then believe me, my love is as fair
 As any mother's child, though not so bright
 As these gold candles fixed in heaven's air.
 (lines 9-12)

This passage marks a disjunction between

Shakespeare's sonnets and the literary theory of representation. Here the poet, 'true in love', will 'truly write', that is, will represent the friend faithfully. But the passage also denies that the friend is as beautiful as the ideal reality which is encapsulated metonymically in 'gold candles fixed in heaven's air'. This disjunction returns in sonnet 24:

Yet eyes this cunning want to grace their art;
 They draw but what they see, know not the heart.
(lines 13-14)

Here the representation of the friend is unable fully to include his personality, a recapitulation of the difference between outward show and internal reality which was an important theme in Astrophel And Stella. But there is a further disjunction here: this difference between appearance and reality caused the poetic persona great grief in Sidney's sequence, and it became his task to make Stella's harsh interior identical with her lovely exterior, that is, to make her completely love's subject. In these sonnets, however, the narrative persona recognises the same disjunction, but revels in it. This is evidenced in sonnet 25:

Let those who are in favour with their stars
 Of public honour and proud titles boast,
 Whilst I whom fortune of such triumph bars,
 Unlooked for joy in that I honour most.

(lines 1-4)

This leads on to the final couplet:

Then happy I that love and am beloved
 Where I may not remove, nor be removed.

The couplet recognises the impossibility of changing the friend in the way Stella was changed, in a statement which records yet another difference between the two sequences: in Shakespeare's sonnets the object of the narrator's love already returns his love.

This produces a situation in which the poems link verse and time in a monument to the friend. This is a theme in the first seventeen sonnets, and is picked up again in the couplet of sonnet 19:

Yet do thy worst, old time; despite thy wrong,
 My love shall in my verse live ever young.

The sequence continues this association by means of the age difference between the poet and the friend, a commonplace of criticism, as in the octave of sonnet 32:

If thou survive my well-contented day,
 When that churl death my bones with dust shall
 cover,
 And shalt by fortune once more re-survey
 These poor rude lines of thy deceased lover,
 Compare them with the bett'ring of the time,
 And though they be oustripped by every pen
 Reserve them for my love, not for their rhyme,
 Exceeded by the height of happier men.

But this poem is followed immediately by one which acknowledges that there are, nevertheless, problems with the love these sonnets articulate as poetry. Sonnet 33 extends the common pun on son/sun to a metaphor for the friend's temperament, which in sonnet 18 was 'more lovely than a summer's day':

Full many a glorious morning have I seen
 Flatter the mountain tops with sovereign eye,
 Kissing with golden face the meadows green,
 Gilding pale streams with heav'nly alchemy,
 Anon permit the basest clouds to ride
 With ugly rack on his celestial face,
 And from the forlorn world his visage hide,
 Stealing unseen to west with this disgrace.
(lines 1-8)

Here the language associated with the sun has connotations which mark it out as aristocratic: 'glorious' in line 1; 'sovereign' in line 2; and 'golden' and 'gilding' in lines 3 and 4. The ideal world of mimesis is also brought into play, with 'heav'nly' in line 4 and 'celestial' in line 6. Similarly, the clouds which cover the sun's face

are described as 'basest', a term which is associated with the lower classes. Exactly the same procedure is followed in sonnet 34:

Why didst thou promise such a beauteous day
 And make me travel forth without my cloak,
 To let base clouds o'ertake me in my way,
 Hiding thy bravery in their rotten smoke?
 (lines 1-4)

The class register of these lines is a direct result of the inscription of power relations in the sonnets. These power relations take the form, in this sequence, of the relation between the poetic persona and the friend, as in the first four lines of sonnet 25, which I have already quoted. The poet joys in what he 'honours' most, a verb which again has class connotations, implying that the friend is of a higher social status than the poet. Sonnet 26 is a full articulation of this difference:

Lord of my love, to whom in vassalage
 Thy merit hath my duty strongly knit,
 To thee I send this written ambassage,
 To witness duty, not to show my wit.
 Duty so great, which wit so poor as mine
 May make seem bare, in wanting words to show it,
 But that I hope some good conceit of thine
 In thy soul's thought, all naked, will bestow it;
 Till whatsoever star that guides my moving
 Points me on graciously with fair aspect,
 And puts apparel on my tottered loving,
 To show me worthy of thy sweet respect.
 Then may I dare to boast how I do love thee;
 Till then, not show my head where thou mayst
 prove me.

Here the first two lines play out ideologically the social relations of feudalism. The poetic persona owes fealty to the friend because of his social status, but the friend's 'merit' knits the duty more strongly. The relations of obligation which are a determining feature of feudalism are thus obfuscated through the friend's 'merit': those in power, those who have the most, are also the best, the literal rendering of the Greek 'aristocracy'. It is the duty owed to this feudal superior which occasions the writing of this sonnet, which itself takes the form of a 'written ambassage'. The star of line 9 is particularly revealing in such a context, in that it echoes Sidney's Stella. But again there is a difference between the two sequences: in this sonnet the language of appearance is held to be both an adequate, and also a necessary component of love. This points up the contiguity of the discourses of courtly love and Platonic mimesis. The verb 'to show' occurs three times, in lines 4, 12, and 14, and the poem utilises metaphors of clothing: 'bare' in line 6; 'naked' in line 8; 'fair aspect' in line 10; and 'apparel' and 'tottered' in line 11. It is only when his love is clothed properly that the poetic

persona can 'dare' (line 13) to be 'worthy of thy sweet respect' (line 12).

Despite these power relations, however, there is a sense in which the poems record an ambivalence regarding the substance, indeed, the subjectivity, of the friend. The clouds on the face of the sun in sonnets 33 and 34 have already been cited, shadowing the sun's beauty with an excess which it cannot contain, and these two poems are not alone in this respect. The restlessness produced by love in sonnets 27 and 28 does not become a full-blown treatment of melancholy, as it did in previous sequences. Instead, the friend is a shadow that troubles the poet's sleep in sonnet 27:

For then my thoughts, from far where I abide,
Intend a zealous pilgrimage to thee,
And keep my drooping eyelids open wide,
Looking on darkness which the blind do see.
Save that my soul's imaginary sight
Presents thy shadow to my sightless view,
Which like a jewel hung in ghastly night,
Makes black night beauteous, and her old face new.
(lines 5-12)

Here the emotion which produces these troubles is not itself addressed; rather, the poem is a description of the 'shadow', a reversal of the standard sonnet motif of visual beauty. The result is a radical disintegration of the specular world.

The poet looks on the darkness which is seen by the blind; his soul's imaginary sightless view sees the friend's shadow, whose brightness turns ghastly black night beautiful in a movement that prefigures the treatment of the 'dark lady' in the later poems. The positioning of this poem amongst sonnets which address the friend's visual beauty interrupts them with an inversion of the conventional topos, inscribing them with a shade of uncertainty that will begin to subvert the ostensible subjectivity of the friend.

This continues into the next poem, sonnet 28, although the poetic persona is anxious to retain the friend's visual beauty:

When sparkling stars twire not, thou gild'st the
even. (line 12)

The following two sonnets similarly record and attempt to efface the problems of the friend's love:

But if the while I think on thee, dear friend,
All losses are restored, and sorrows end.
(30.13-14)

And yet it was the same friend who put the poet in this situation to start with:

When in disgrace with fortune and men's eyes,
I all alone bewEEP my outcast state, (29.1-2)

The poet has been 'outcast', and the echo of a verb here requires a subject - the friend. These poems acknowledge the root cause of the problem, which is the recognition of a hierarchy of social relations that supports the differential subjectivities of the two figures of the addressor and the friend, and yet the one who caused it is also the cure. As Eve Sedwick has noted:

Nevertheless, the Sonnet's poetic goes to almost any length to treat the youth as a moral monolith; while the very definition of the lady seems to be doubleness and deceit.⁷

This is a crucial point: the sonnets recognise that the friend is duplicitous, and yet they attempt to efface that duplicity. This is the consequence of the interpellation of the friend's subjectivity in terms of visual beauty. However, by transferring an element of the traditionally conceived female subjectivity found in previous sequences onto the figure of the friend, these sonnets separate duplicity from physical beauty and appropriate the latter characteristic for a homosocial relationship, shorn of its moral implications. The

poems move dynamically between the friend and, until after sonnet 126, an absent female subjectivity, in terms which are recognisably gender stereotypes. By taking beauty away from the woman, the sonnets appropriate the 'madonna' image for the man, leaving the obverse, the figure of the duplicitous whore, for the woman. But by the very fact that the madonna element was originally part of a gendered female subject position, the movement of recuperation of a male subjectivity is not a simple one. The subjectivity of madonna/whore is a masculine construction, and the two positions constitute a false dialectic in male discourse. To attempt to isolate one characteristic from this dialectic is difficult, since the value system on which it depends for its meaning requires the interrelation of the two terms. Thus, no matter in what context each term is used, its dialectical partner is evoked, even if only residually. This is why duplicity remains as a residual element of the friend's subjectivity, even though he becomes the object of the poet's veneration, and it is also the reason for the sonnets' attempt to efface duplicity in the friend, a strategy that Eve Sedgwick has observed.⁸

This duplicity is therefore attributed to the gendered stereotype of feminine changeability in the later sonnets, when it is the woman who is being addressed, but in these earlier poems it is attributed to the stereotype of the wanton young noble, an ideological operation which has already been shown to be at work in Daniel's Delia. The sonnets not only record this dynamic movement between the stereotypes, they reveal their own complicity in the project, through the complex structure of the narrative persona of the poems:

And 'gainst myself a lawful plea commence,
 Such civil war is in my love and hate,
 That I an accessory needs must be
 To that sweet thief which sourly robs from me.
(35.11-14)

The fact that these are the final lines of a poem which tries to reconcile the friend and efface his duplicity is all the more remarkable in this context.

Sonnet 36 continues the attempt to efface the friend's wrongs. Here identity in love is no longer a Platonic identity of selves:

Let me confess that we two must be twain,
 Although our undivided loves are one. (lines 1-2)

A fissure has opened up between the two that cannot be filled, a paradigm of the failure of the project in the sonnets themselves. These lines from sonnet 36 precede the Platonism of sonnet 39, inevitably rendering it questionable:

O how thy worth with manners may I sing,
 When thou art all the better part of me?
(lines 1-2)

This theme is picked up again in the much more equivocal sonnet 40:

Lascivious grace, in whom all ill well shows,
 Kill me with spites, yet we must not be foes.
(lines 1-2)

It is at this point in the sequence that the duplicity which is threatening from within the subjectivity constructed for the young man is displaced onto his youth:

Those petty wrongs that liberty commits,
 When I am sometime absent from thy heart,
 Thy beauty and thy years full well befits. (40.1-4)

Here youth is proffered as a period of irresponsibility and wilfulness, producing a distinction between masculine irresponsibility and feminine wantonness. Thus, in these sonnets, the friend is not to be blamed for his misdemeanours;

indeed, it is almost as though he is expected to give in to temptation because of the combination of beauty and youth. This is a far cry from the demonising of female duplicity which takes place later on in the sequence, and relies for its success upon the erasure of the moral implications of duplicity from the friend's subjectivity.

The patriarchal nature of these gendered subject-positions comes to the fore in sonnet 37:

As a decrepit father takes delight
 To see his active child do deeds of youth,
 So I, made lame by fortune's dearest spite,
 Take all my comfort of thy worth and truth.
(lines 1-4)

The difference in age between the poet and the friend is invoked in a poem that depends for the success of its construction of the patriarchal family upon the friend's 'worth and truth'. Yet in the context of the problems raised for this formulation by the friend's duplicity, it is not surprising to find a 'shadow' once again:

So then I am not lame, poor, nor despised,
 Whilst that this shadow doth such substance give,
 That I in thy abundance am sufficed,
 And by a part of all thy glory live.
(lines 9-12)

Thus, even the construction of a masculine subjectivity is menaced by the shadow of female duplicity.

The strains placed upon the sequence by the dynamic of masculine/feminine interpellation constitute the driving force of the rhetoric of sonnet 41:

Ay me, but yet thou might'st my seat forbear,
 And chide thy beauty and thy straying youth,
 Who lead thee in their riot even there
 Where thou art forced to break a twofold truth:
 Hers, by thy beauty tempting her to thee,
 Thine, by thy beauty being false to me.

(lines 9-14)

The sequence is unable to use the motifs associated with duplicity because they are to be assigned to the woman. The result is that the sonnets are required to find a way to rationalise these disjunctions, and they do so by locating them again in the friend's youth. Duplicity is subsumed by 'riot' in this poem, a disruptive sexuality whose moral implications are neutralised by its association with the licence of the young nobleman. When applied to woman, of course, licence becomes promiscuity in accordance with the logic of gendered subjectivity and the power relations within which it is inscribed. In this context, it

is the threat to the patriarchal noble order posed by the production of bastard children that must be eliminated. However, the operation of the ideology is not simple in this poem, as the linking of youth and beauty in lines 3 and 10 shows. Youth alone is inadequate to explain the friend's duplicity; even the addition of his social position in line 5 with 'gentle' is insufficient:

Gentle thou art, and therefore to be won.

The two meanings of 'gentle' are instructive here, as is 'therefore'; the young man is a nobleman, and is 'naturally', 'therefore', 'to be won'. Beauty, the primary constituent element of the friend's subjectivity, here becomes associated with his duplicity. The beauty which was appropriated from the woman's subjectivity is now being recontextualised as it moves from the female to the male sphere. However, the duplicity which was ascribed to her remains as a residual element transferred to the friend's subjectivity, thus rendering the ideology of gender roles more unstable than in previous sequences. This partially explains the venom with which the duplicity of the woman is castigated; female beauty

is dangerous, and both the material sexual passion which it arouses and the power it possesses will later be excoriated in conjunction with the demonising of the 'dark lady'. The duplicity associated with beauty is beginning to blur the distinctions between the subject position of the friend and that of the woman. The necessary generic assumption that the woman is an object of desire causes further problems in this respect, since she is characterised as lacking physical beauty. The result is that, just as duplicity invades the subject position of young man, so too is there a disjunction between beauty and the subject position of the woman. The sonnets attempt to efface these problems through an extreme denigration of the passion the woman arouses, in a manner analogous to the linking of the young man's youth to his false doubleness. The fact that both operations fail to achieve their objectives testifies to the historical pressures that are being placed on normative subject positions by the crisis in the ideology of the aristocracy.

As the sequence continues, the description of the friend's duplicity changes, and the attempts to efface it continue to falter. Thus, the complimentary sonnet 53 begins with doubt, recapitulating the shadows familiar from previous poems:

What is your substance, whereof are you made,
 That millions of strange shadows on you tend?
 (lines 1-2)

As these lines introduce a poem which celebrates the friend's beauty, they can be seen to recognise a split in the beautiful 'subject' which the sequence tries to set out for him; the sonnets record their failure to produce a unitary subject for the young man, even as they make the attempt to do so. James Winny also senses this dislocation:

Even those sonnets which address the friend as a normally substantial being are not always certain of him. When his nature is not equivocal, his sincerity is often in doubt; and the poet suffers much from the friend's inconstancy, which develops towards the hypocrisy and untruthfulness of being which are later disclosed.⁹

Although Winny reads the friend's duplicity as part of a developing narrative, he does, however, recognise the sonnets' own inscription of the radically divided subject. But the moralising imperative implicit in the tone of sympathy with the suffering poet is an inadequate critical strategy in the face of the sonnets' production of subject-positions. In effect, it misses the point: the critic is interested in the moral weaknesses of

the friend's character, when in fact the sonnets are involved in the construction of subjectivities which are differentiated in a hierarchical relationship predicated upon homosocial power. In this model, the friend's duplicity is a consequence of a formalistic shift, a recuperation of certain elements of a subject position ascribed to woman. In the patriarchal economy of the sonnets, these terms then alter their meaning depending on the gender of the subject with whom they are associated. Duplicity becomes the active principle of 'riot' when it is applied to the man; it is denigrated as promiscuity when it is recognised in a woman who refuses to remain passive.

III

It is precisely at this point that the sequence attempts to efface the split in the friend's subjectivity by rendering him immortal, elevating him to a position removed from contingency. Sonnet 54 begins this project in earnest, with the first two lines characterising the friend as true, again in spite of all the sonnets' own evidence to the contrary:

O how much more doth beauty beauteous seem,
By that sweet ornament which truth doth give.

Indeed, the poem goes on to unite the friend's interior self with his exterior beauty through the metaphor of the rose:

The rose looks fair, but fairer we it deem
For that sweet odor which in it doth live.
(lines 3-4)

The poem ends by fixing the friend's 'truth' and thus inscribing his immortality directly in the power of poetry itself:

And so of you, beauteous and lovely youth,
When that shall fade, by verse distils your
truth. (lines 13-14)

There are two ways of looking at this sonnet. The first, and easier, is simply to read it in accordance with its manifest content. The second is to read it symptomatically, in terms of its latent propensity towards an essentialising and a dehistoricising of subjectivity. An essentialist mimesis becomes the means by which the verse will sustain for ever the truth and beauty of the friend. Sonnet 55 is the definitive enactment of this project:

Not marble nor the gilded monuments
 Of princes shall outlive this pow'rful rhyme,
 But you shall shine more bright in these contents
 Than unswept stone, besmeared with sluttish time.
 When wasteful war shall statues overturn,
 And broils root out the work of masonry,
 Nor Mars his sword nor war's quick fire shall burn
 The living record of your memory.
 'Gainst death and all oblivious enmity
 Shall you pace forth; your praise shall still find
 room,
 Ev'n in the eyes of all posterity
 That wear this world out to the ending doom.
 So, till the judgement that yourself arise,
 You live in this, and dwell in lovers' eyes.

Here Platonic idealism is shown to produce writing
 as a guarantee of essence. By making writing the
 instrument by which immortality is secured, the
 sonnet attempts to remove the friend's subjectivity
 from a curiously feminised contingency, 'sluttish
 time'. Writing is therefore presented as a
 masculine permanence. In order to consolidate this
 position, the sequence has to separate writing from
 time in such a way that contingency is rendered in
 terms of a series of negative images. Moreover, as
 a subsidiary strategy, destructive contingency is
 contained within a larger 'natural' movement
 whereby history is subsumed into an order of
 nature. This is precisely what happens in other
 sonnets which share the same thematic concern. In
 sonnet 60, for example, this takes place in terms

of the natural human lifespan:

Nativity, once in the main of light,
 Crawls to maturity, wherewith being crowned,
 Crooked eclipses 'gainst his glory fight,
 And time that gave doth now his gift confound.

(lines 5-8)

The processes of nature are here being made to stand for history. Thus, historicity, appropriately naturalised, is itself foregrounded in a relation of difference to essence. Different from history, essence transcends it through writing. The characterisation of time as 'sluttish' in line 4 of sonnet 55, and the denigration of war in lines 5-8, move these poems away from an aristocratic interpellation of subjectivity in this context. In addition, 'sluttish' gives time a specifically feminine character in the patriarchal economy of the sequence in a poem which describes as 'wasteful' (line 5) the war which was a constitutive feature of the aristocracy in chivalric discourse.

However, the positing of immortality as the complete preserve of poetry paradoxically marks these poems indelibly with their historicity even as they try to escape it. It marks also a second element of this shift, since it records their

production at the beginning of the change from an oral to a literate culture. Thus, the friend's immortality is predicated upon an attempt to produce a wholly literary subjectivity, the result, in language, of an ideological interpellation which can be traced to a determinate history. This reading is at variance with criticism which takes the claim of immortality in these poems to be identical with what the twentieth century critic sees as a transcendent essence. For example, in his book Shakespeare's Sonnets, Philip Martin argues that:

What distinguishes Shakespeare is that he values the identity of the beloved; he recognizes that the beloved has his own personal immortality, in no way dependent on poetry.¹⁰

Here the use of the term 'identity' posits an immortal (universal) phenomenon that transcends a transparent language. This formulation essentialises the personality of the friend as a timeless identity, when in fact his subjectivity is constructed as a relation of difference. A theoretical awareness of the interpellation of subjectivity would have enabled Martin to produce something other than an essentialist reading, one

which would disclose the disjunctions that arise from the perception of the splitting of subjectivity in these poems. Martin goes on to discuss the judgement day theme at the end of sonnet 55 as support for his position but, crucially, without taking into consideration contemporary Renaissance history or ideology. The timeless human essence which is the soul of the friend is an implicit concern of the critic; hence the word 'recognizes' in the passage just quoted, as though the essence were there simply to be recognised. Martin continues:

The Christian after-life has given Shakespeare's imagination more to embrace. It is the couplet which finally confirms the breadth and range of Shakespeare's vision, his sense of two autonomous immortalities, the artistic and the personal. Of these, it is the personal which is the ultimate one. There will be a judgement day when the self will arise. Meanwhile, there is the temporary immortality of art, which witnesses to the beloved before the whole of time, this side of the ending doom.¹¹

Here Christianity permits the sonnet to transcend time in a passage which is concerned with the contents of personality. The self which this passage invokes is divided from the realm of the artistic and from language in a criticism which

totally ignores history, resulting in a separation of the self from the realm of politics. The immortality invoked in these poems is a rhetorical response to a historically specific disruption of the dominant ideology.

In fact, the sequence is unable to sustain its rhetoric of immortality, as can be seen in sonnet 64:

When I have seen by time's fell hand defaced
 The rich proud cost of outworn buried age,
 When sometime lofty towers I see down razed,
 And brass eternal slave to mortal rage,
 When I have seen the hungry ocean gain
 Advantage on the kingdom of the shore,
 And the firm soil win of the watery main,
 Increasing store with loss, and loss with store,
 When I have seen such interchange of state,
 Or state itself confounded to decay,
 Ruin hath taught me thus to ruminare,
 That time will come and take my love away.

This thought is as a death, which cannot choose
 But weep to have that which it fears to lose.

This poem meditates upon the destructive power of time, without once mentioning immortality. It does so, revealingly, through images with aristocratic associations: 'rich proud cost' (line 1); 'lofty towers' (line 2); 'brass' (line 4); 'kingdom' (line 6); 'store' (line 8); and 'state' (lines 9 and 10). However, as well as the religious associations of church 'brass' and the military connotations of

'brass' cannon, the aristocratic appropriation of nature can also be discerned in the vocabulary: 'store' materialises the relations of production which sustain the 'rich proud cost', the 'lofty towers', the 'kingdom' and the 'state'. Not only does this sonnet, and others also, textualise historicity as abstracted time, it also appropriates that history for a vocabulary of Nature. In general, it may be argued that the sonnets mythologise time. Historically specific change of the sort impinging upon the sequence and disrupting normative subjectivity is textualised as an abstract vocabulary of change, emptying history of specificity in the same kind of movement as was traced by Don E. Wayne in his book Penshurst: The Semiotics Of Place And The Poetics Of History, to which I referred earlier.¹²

Sonnet 65 continues the attempt to produce immortality, but its last lines are equivocal:

O none, unless this miracle have might
That in black ink my love may still shine bright.

Here a miracle is needed for the project of immortality to succeed; the subjunctive 'may' inscribes uncertainty in the poem. The promise of

sonnet 55 to deliver immortality is now conditional upon the transforming power of history textualised as the abstractions of 'time' and 'nature'; the process of myth creation here is articulated as an attempt to produce the miracle required at the end of sonnet 65. This essentialism effectively restructures the ideal world of mimesis, adapting it in response to the threat to the stability of the friend's subjectivity.

However, the fact that mimesis can be adapted in such a manner indicates that it is not necessarily foreclosed to change. As a result, representation itself is now found to be duplicitous; in sonnet 67, for example, the literary theory associated with the aristocracy is inevitably contaminated by the falseness of the friend, one of its members:

Ah wherefore with infection should he live,
 And with his presence grace impiety,
 That sin by him advantage should achieve,
 And lace itself with his society?
 Why should false painting imitate his cheek,
 And steal dead seeing of his living hue?
 Why should poor beauty indirectly seek
 Roses of shadow, since his rose is true?
 Why should he live, now nature bankrupt is,
 Beggared of blood to blush through lively veins?
 For she hath no exchequer now but his,
 And, proud of many, lives upon his gains.
 O him she stores, to show what wealth she had,
 In days long since, before these last so bad.

The poem returns to the theme of duplicity uncovered in earlier sonnets, implicitly acknowledging that the attempt to efface the split in the friend's subjectivity by essentialising him has failed, and, incidentally, making nonsense of any criticism which tries to read the sonnets in terms of a developing narrative.

Here metaphors of disease and sin link the friend with false representations of his beauty in a poem which constantly returns to and denigrates aristocratic motifs. Thus, 'lace' and 'society' in line 4; 'roses' in line 8, with its inevitable echo of the Wars of the Roses and, therefore, anxiety about lineage; 'blood' in line 10; and 'exchequer' in line 11, all serve to recognise that the aristocracy is inherently diseased. The couplet makes the friend the icon of a now degenerate nobility. The fiscal metaphors are particularly revealing here, with 'bankrout' in line 9; 'Beggared' in line 10; 'exchequer' in line 11; 'gains' in line 12; and 'wealth' in line 13.

The historical circumstances of the contemporary financial crisis of the aristocracy produce in this poem a diseased, bankrupt nobility, as it discloses the conditions of production of the

ideology which sustains its power. The use of 'nature' in line 9 epitomises this ideology as a metonymy. But the fact that this nature is still characterised as inherently feminine, with 'she' in line 11, retains patriarchal power relations, as her 'exchequer' is actually 'his'. Sonnet 68 continues along these lines:

Thus is his cheek the map of days outworn,
 When beauty lived and died as flow'rs do now,
 Before these bastard signs of fair were borne,
 Or durst inhabit on a living brow -
 Before the golden tresses of the dead,
 The right of sepulchers, were shorn away,
 To live a second life on second head -
 Ere beauty's dead fleece made another gay.
 In him those holy antique hours are seen,
 Without all ornament, itself and true,
 Making no summer of another's green,
 Robbing no old to dress his beauty new;
 And him as for a map doth nature store,
 To show false art what beauty was of yore.

Here bastardy is a grafting onto nature of illegitimate children, with nature standing for the 'natural' lineage of the noble family. Grafting is a form of manipulation, by which illegitimate elements are grafted onto the shoots of the nobility. Both are then united in an operation of re-legitimisation, a point with particular contemporary resonances, since the moneyed mercantile classes were being brought in to

revitalise the aristocracy. Sonnet 68 is not an isolated instance of this particular aspect of the ideology. Similar uses of the imagery of grafting can be found elsewhere, for example in Marvell's poetry, particularly in The Mower Against Gardens:

And yet these Rarities might be allow'd,
 To man, that sov'raign thing and proud;
 Had he not dealt between the Bark and Tree,
 Forbidden mixtures there to see.
 No Plant now knew the Stock from which it came;
 He grafts upon the Wild the Tame:
 That the uncertain and adult'rate fruit
 Might put the Palate in dispute.
 His green Seraglio has its Eunuchs too;
 Lest any Tyrant him outdoe.
 And in the Cherry he does Nature vex,
 To procreate without a sex.
 'Tis all enforc'd; the Fountain and the Grot;
 While the sweet Fields do lye forgot:
 Where willing Nature does to all dispence
 A wild and fragrant Innocence. (lines 20-34)¹³

In this poem Man interferes with the 'natural' order of nature, enforcing (line 31) a graft of tame stock upon the wild. For Marvell's poem, change is forced from the outside, an unnatural phenomenon. Once again the vocabulary of a poem relies upon sexual connotations for some of its resonances; the unnatural regime forced upon nature is one without natural, procreative sex. Both sonnet 68 and Marvell's poem set out an opposition between an old nobility, as in lines 33-34 of

Marvell here, and a new aristocracy that is seen as illegitimate. There is a politics operating here that is implicitly conservative, arguing for a traditional nobility in the face of very real historical pressures. The dominant ideology is forced to re-negotiate its position, and this operation is registered in Marvell's poem and sonnet 68 as a devaluation of an ancient lineage that is represented as 'natural'.

In Shakespeare's sonnets, this naturalising operation makes use of the aristocratic lineage, with the sequence relating the friend's beauty to that of previous generations of nobles, but the strategy does not succeed in effacing the problems posed by the changing conditions of representation for the friend's subjectivity. The aristocratic ideology is no longer capable of sustaining its interpellation of the friend's subject position, leading on inevitably to the couplet of sonnet 69:

But why thy odor matcheth not thy show,
The soil is this, that thou dost common grow.

The pressure on representation, which in sonnet 70 will be epitomised in 'slander', forces the poetry to register a dislocation between the theory of

epresentation and the language in which it is produced. Here the sonnets record a breakdown in mimesis; the friend is represented as pure beauty at the same time as other false paintings imitate his cheek, as in line 5 of sonnet 67,

Why should false painting imitate his cheek,

but he is also found to be duplicitous. The paradoxical result, for mimesis, is that the imitation characterised as false turns out, in fact, to be the correct one.

The sequence moves on to try to enclose this disruption as a local one with sonnet 70. Here the criticism of the previous poem is attributed to 'slander':

That thou art blamed shall not be thy defect,
For slander's mark was ever yet the fair;
The ornament of beauty is suspect,
A crow that flies in heaven's sweetest air.
(lines 1-4)

But the image of the crow renders the 'suspect' 'ornament of beauty' equivocal at the very least. James Winny notes the consequences of this limited apology:

But 'ornament of beauty' suggests that the friend's good looks may be only skin-deep, and the term carries implications

of spuriousness developed in other sonnets. The image of a crow staining a pure sky strengthens this impression. The friend is a morally equivocal figure, whose beauty must give rise to doubts even while his seeming purity is admitted to be genuine.¹⁴

Although Winny's account is characterological, as opposed to a concern with objective social relations, he is nevertheless aware that the subjectivity of the friend is not stabilised through beauty; indeed, the observation that his spuriousness is developed in other sonnets is crucial, as it shows that the attempt made in sonnet 69 to contain the dislocation caused by duplicity is a vain one.

Sonnet 94 acknowledges the political effects of this disruption:

They that have pow'r to hurt, and will do none,
 That do not do the thing they most do show,
 Who moving others are themselves as stone,
 Unmoved, cold, and to temptation slow -
 They rightly do inherit heaven's graces,
 And husband nature's riches from expense;
 They are the lords and owners of their faces,
 Others but stewards of their excellence.
 The summer's flow'r is to the summer sweet,
 Though to itself it only live and die;
 But if that flow'r with base infection meet,
 The basest weed outbraves his dignity.

For sweetest things turn sourest by their deeds;

Lilies that fester smell far worse than weeds.

Much critical energy has been spent on analysing this sonnet, particularly because it seems to have nothing whatsoever to do with its immediate context of the poems to the friend. As James Winny puts it:

Over the whole sequence of a hundred and fifty-four sonnets, although most are addressed to the friend or the mistress, some of the most powerful of them are impersonal pronouncements, which if relevant to the story make no allusion to any of the three main characters. Sonnet 94, 'Those that have power to hurt', and sonnet 129, 'The expense of spirit', figure in this small but important group of poems which lie outside the story.¹⁵

Here an opposition is set up between those sonnets which are concerned purely with 'the story' and those which have wider relevance. This of course relies upon the controlling idea of the 'story' of the sonnets as a developing linear narrative, a concept which this thesis has argued is inadequate for a reading that wishes to acknowledge the historical disruptions of normative subjectivity which are produced in these poems. Winny glosses his comments later on, in his analysis of the poem itself:

The emphasis of the passage falls squarely upon an idea of withdrawal from life, of a disinclination to commit the self to any positive relationship or course of action. Such a person has power

but declines to use it, refuses to put his potentialities to the test of practice, allows others to be drawn to him but offers no return of kindly feeling; remaining stonily passive and aloof.¹⁶

This passage relies for its force upon a commitment to characterological study, allowing the critic to write of the friend as if he were a real person whose character could be discerned through the transparent medium of the text. Winny continues:

By holding back the main clause of his sentence until the fifth line, Shakespeare gives himself room to establish this quality of character firmly enough for his unexpected judgement to catch the reader off balance: *They rightly do inherit heaven's graces*. If his ironic tone were not evident, the inconsistency of this conclusion with the picture of arid, ungenerous nature which it follows, and the bitter energy of the line, should reveal Shakespeare's purpose.¹⁷

Here Winny is following Empson's earlier analysis of the poem as ironic:

it is agreed that *They that have power to hurt and do none* is a grave piece of irony, but there the matter is generally left.¹⁸

The twofold division of the sense of the poem into an opposition between octave and sestet in Winny's

analysis is a direct result of this reading. The concern here with character obscures the historical fact of the relationship between power and subject position; what is being stated is that those who have power to hurt, and yet do not use it to hurt, 'rightly' inherit heaven's graces; note the echo of what has been called the theory of divine right, as well as the association of legal rights. The key word here is 'ironic', and the irony depends upon the characterological criticism which underpins the analysis. This reading needs to be revised in the light of the investigation of subjectivity and ideology in the sonnets undertaken in this thesis.

Giorgio Melchiori has recognised the importance of the political in this context:

The fact that it is political, and therefore not in line with the subject-matter of the rest of the sonnets, is the reason why no.94 is considered a difficult poem.¹⁹

In the light of the general argument which I have sought to advance in this thesis, it is now possible to take Melchiori's insight further: this sonnet cannot be read as separated from the other poems because it articulates explicitly the power relations they explore. Because of its troubled

existence in earlier sonnets in the sequence, the aristocratic ideology is exposed as a wholly inadequate means of sustaining the friend's subjectivity; sonnet 94 is the definitive statement of this discovery. Criticism has seemed unwilling to acknowledge the importance of the political in the poem; this is perhaps why Joel Fineman's book does not mention this poem at all, despite the controversy that has surrounded it; subjectivity in Shakespeare's sonnets is, precisely, specific to the historical moment of their production, and sonnet 94 records this fact.

Melchiori's formal analysis of the poem provides a framework for a reading which takes ideology into account. He too divides the poem into octave and sestet:

We are confronted, as so frequently in Shakespeare, with a double structure: metrically the sonnet is of the English type, but from the point of view of the logical structure it is Petrarchan, with a clear division into octave and sestet.²⁰

But he does not simply oppose the two sections, and this critical strategy results in a crucial observation:

More than divided, octave and sestet seem unrelated to each other: they use different codes. In the octave the subjects are persons, men (They, others), in the sestet the subjects are flowers, weeds, 'things': Animate versus Inanimate, or, the world of Men versus the world of Nature. There is therefore a relation between the two parts, but it is a relation by contrast. And it is enough to remember the dominating doctrine of correspondences in the sixteenth century to recognize a further relation: the world of Nature reproduces exactly the microcosm of Man, and vice versa. In other words, the one (the world of Nature) is a metaphor for the other (the world of Man) - *the sestet is a metaphor for the octave*. It will be useful to keep this in mind when exploring the meaning of the sonnet.²¹

Melchiori goes on to analyse these correspondences in terms of lexical patternings, but his description of the poem is equally relevant for a reading which discloses the aristocratic ideology as it is produced in the poem. Thus, the octave can be said to describe the subjectivity of those who possess power in relatively straightforward terms, while the sestet provides the metaphor of the same subjectivity upon which the couplet's epigram is based. In accordance with this reading, it can be seen that the aristocratic connotations of the language of the octave extend into the sestet with the class associations of lines 11 and 12.

But if that flow'r with base infection meet,
The basest weed outbraves his dignity.

Here the monosyllabic 'flow'r' represents metonymically the nobility in its association with the fleur de lis - the lily flower which festers in the final couplet. This infection of the noble flower by the basest weed replays the irruption of duplicity into the subject-position constructed for the friend.

The language of power which began with the dichotomy of the 'Master-mistress' in sonnet 20 is now being interrogated as the subject of a sonnet. Sonnet 94 replays the essentialising operation noted earlier in relation to sonnet 68, but in this later poem the operation is much more problematical. The root of this problem is that the octave notes a necessary disjunction between outward show and inner reality. A sense of an aristocratic form of acting is therefore inscribed in the poem, an inevitable consequence of the attempt to essentialise an aristocracy that is caught up in the history of objective social relations. The aristocratic ideology has itself now become a subject, disclosing the conditions of its own production. The interpellation of masculinity/

femininity undertaken in sonnets 20-41 failed because the patriarchal ideology was unable fully to sustain the gender stereotypes which it formulated; as it recuperated beauty for the friend, so it inevitably carried along with it the element of duplicity. The constant recognition of this duplicity in the poems cannot be acknowledged as such, precipitating the essentialising impetus of the mythology of 'time' and 'nature', the very ideology which was constructed through aristocratic discourse. It is the failure of this project that produces the representation of the aristocracy's ideal subjectivity in sonnet 94, and also, simultaneously, the recognition of a split in that subjectivity.

Nevertheless, there are sonnets following this one which replay the associations of beauty, again arguing for a recognition that the sequence cannot be read in terms of a straightforward narrative. Thus, although sonnet 95 continues the disease motif of 94, it does so through the metaphor of a different flower associated with the nobility, the rose:

How sweet and lovely dost thou make the shame
 Which, like a canker in the fragrant rose,
 Doth spot the budding beauty of thy name!

(lines 1-3)

This immediately introduces an element of difference from the previous poem, epitomising the lack of a coherent narrative scheme in the sequence. This is followed by a poem which replays the discourse of time; only a reading which sees the sonnets as structured around an interspersing of recurring themes and concerns, rather than a narrative, is able to trace out the determinate history which is articulated in these poems. This makes more sense of the sonnets' constant shifting from theme to theme than a criticism which privileges unity, and also has the added advantage of being able to explain this shifting in terms of the production of an unstable collection. This thematic interspersing produces another flower, the violet, in sonnet 99 which, despite the fact that it follows 94, is not linked to disease:

The forward violet thus did I chide:
 Sweet thief, whence didst thou steal thy sweet that
 smells

If not from my love's breath? (lines 1-3)

Similarly, sonnet 106 reproduces the aristocratic ideology of chivalry after 94 has dissected it, and 126 performs the same operation with time.

The crisis in the aristocratic ideology therefore precipitated a crisis in representation, with important consequences for subjectivity. Shakespeare's sonnets are incapable of replaying the standard sonnet sequence as the record of a love affair because the circumstances within which writing is produced have changed from the days of Sidney and Spenser, and even then the sonnet can already be shown to contain the seeds of this discontinuity, as I have argued in earlier chapters. The essentialising impetus produces an attempt to evade the physical body, the sexuality which is the root cause of the friend's duplicity and the history within which he is necessarily inscribed. These poems actually textualise homosocial relations, and, later on with the 'dark lady' sonnets, the heterosexual relations which underpin the homosocial order, at the very point at which they try to de-materialise the friend's self through a Platonic movement.

Notes

- 1: Francis Barker: The Tremulous Private Body (London: Methuen, 1984) p.31.
- 2: See Chapter 2 earlier, pp.123-182.
- 3: Winny op.cit., pp.152-153.
- 4: ibid.
- 5: Sedgwick op.cit., p.3.
- 6: Fineman op.cit., pp.274-275.
- 7: Sedgwick op.cit., p.41.
- 8: ibid., pp.28-66.
- 9: Winny op.cit., p.204.
- 10: Martin op.cit., p.158
- 11: ibid., p.158.
- 12: See Chapter 1 earlier, pp.90-91.
- 13: The Poems And Letters Of Andrew Marvell ed. H. M. Margoliouth (Oxford: Clarendon, Press 1971).
- 14: Winny op.cit., p.126.
- 15: ibid., p.26.
- 16: ibid., pp.164-165.
- 17: ibid., p.165.
- 18: William Empson: 'They that have power" in Some Versions of Pastoral (London: The Hogarth Press, 1986) p.89.
- 19: Melchiori op.cit., p.35.
- 20: ibid., p.38.
- 21: ibid.

Chapter 5

Subjectivity II: The Addressor

And The Friend

In this chapter I intend to trace the relations between the subjectivity of the friend, which I interrogated in the previous chapter, and the poetic persona of the poems. This is not to seek a re-inscription of authorial presence in the sonnets; rather, it is to assert that the subject positions ascribed to the poetic persona are themselves socially constituted, and are defined through a series of differential relations to the subjectivity of the friend. This difference is predicated upon an unequal power relation whose importance for the friend I charted in chapter 4. My concern now is to analyse the effects of this relation upon the persona of the poet while retaining an awareness of the historical specificity of these differentially constituted subjectivities.

I

The changing relationship between the sonnet as a literary form and the conditions of textual production in the Renaissance contributes in Shakespeare's sonnets to the construction of a poetic persona which is different from those preceding it in other sequences. This is a consequence of the opening of a social rift between the practising poet and the conventions associated with the form itself.¹ In sequences such as those of Spenser and Sidney the individual sonnets contribute to the continuous narrative of a love affair. These narratives interpellate woman in accordance with the ideology of the aristocracy. Their overriding concern is with the masculine production of a female subjectivity which the figure of the woman then internalises. The poetic persona itself remains relatively unproblematical throughout this operation, although in Spenser's Amoretti tensions begin to emerge because of the difference in social status between the lady and the poet:

TO all those happy blessings which ye haue,
 with plenteous hand by heauen vpon you thrown;
 this one disparagement they to you gaue,
 that ye your loue lent to so meane a one.
(Amoretti 66; 1-4)

Here it is the inferior social status of the addressor that provides the opportunity for praise of the lady, in direct contrast to the position of, for example, Sidney in Astrophel And Stella, or the earlier poems of Surrey and Wyatt. The metaphors of saintliness used in Spenser's poem seek, in effect, to efface the rhetorical posture of earlier sonnets in which the lady is described as a figure of diabolical malevolence who wilfully refuses the poet's love. Again, this produces a contradiction of the situation which prevails in earlier sequences, in which the subject-position of the poetic persona is entirely in homosocial sympathy with the ideology that produces the female subject. Thus, in Sidney's case, the poetic persona is itself aristocratic, whereas in Spenser's sequence the addressor comes from lower social origins, although he operates from within the boundaries prescribed by an aristocratic discourse. Spenser's sonnets try to negotiate the social gap from within the parameters of aristocratic ideology, but his

sequence does not interrogate the contradictions, rather, it reveals the contradictions that ideology is designed to efface. This is the reverse case of the public theatre, which replays the elements out of which ideology is constructed, but at a distance. In the latter case, the attempt from below to appropriate aristocratic poetic discourse has the same inadvertent effect of disclosing the operations of ideology.²

However, the historical changes which took place between these sequences and Shakespeare's sonnets produce in the latter a concern with the subject positions of the poetic persona which is different from that in either Sidney or Spenser. The dominant position of the aristocracy which was so secure in Astrophel And Stella, and which was already beginning to come under pressure in the Amoretti, was being challenged by the time Shakespeare's sonnets were produced. By this time, the problem of the addressor's social status becomes so acute that a gap opens up between the poetic persona and the aristocratic discourse. The formal consequence of this in Shakespeare's sonnets is the division of the previous subject position of the addressor into the two 'characters' of the poet

and the noble young friend. It is this historical fact which occasions Giorgio Melchiori's characterisation of Shakespeare's sonnets as 'dramatic':

Normally in Shakespeare's sonnets we find a truly dramatic dialogue between two characters: the persona of the poet himself (the speaking I, not the man William Shakespeare) and a 'you', the actor playing the role of a lovely boy, a worthy or unworthy mistress, possibly a rival poet. The poems are dramatic in so much as the speaker and his interlocutors act out a drama.³

The crucial word here is 'act', and the fact that it is a verb should not go unnoticed. Shakespeare's sonnets place the poetic persona in an active dynamic relation with the other 'characters'. The sonnet is a 'dramatic' medium *per se*, but what differentiates Shakespeare's sonnets from those of his predecessors is that there is a significant change in the elements of that drama. However, unlike Melchiori, I shall not be concerned with the sonnets as 'dramatic', but as literary phenomena, a point to which I shall return later in this chapter.

Nevertheless, Melchiori's observation is an important one: it recognises that the poetic

persona is related not only to a woman, but also to two other men, an unusual development of the normative considerations of the sonnet form. The subject-matter of the poems is much more complex than that of conventional sequences precisely because of historical pressures on subjectivity, and this results in the inscription of a 'homosocial' thematic in Shakespeare's sonnets in a manner which is absent from earlier sequences. In fact, the situation in these poems is even more complex than this might at first suggest, as one of the 'characters' is a rival poet. The homosocial aspect of the poems is, as a result, not simply a question of establishing a male bonding in relation to the terrain constituted by the female body. There is also a sense in which the homosocial is negotiated as a securing of the patronage of an authoritative male against competitors. The increased interrogation in these circumstances of the dominant ideology forces it to re-negotiate its position, precluding a simple repetition of the power relations of a sequence such as Astrophel And Stella. Thus, in Shakespeare's sonnets, the poetic persona is not merely an agency of the aristocratic ideology; it is in fact distanced from it, while

simultaneously attempting to re-articulate it. The figure of the friend serves as a metonymic representation of the aristocracy, as it is no longer enough in the changed circumstances for these poems to assume the full compliance of the poetic persona in its ideology. This inevitably establishes a relation of difference between the friend and the poet's persona which is inscribed in the sonnets, and as the friend is characterised as a member of the nobility, the difference between them is predicated upon considerations of social power. However, that relationship is not a simple one, since the sonnets do not function in such a way as to provide an unproblematical support of power. Rather, they negotiate a series of spaces across which the economy of power traverses. Since power inscribes its others even as it inscribes itself, the deployment of elements of ideology here can be read in such a way as to disclose contradictions in the ideology itself.' Thus, the very articulation of ideological materials can be shown to expose contradiction, which is represented in such a way as to produce an inadvertent 'estrangement' effect. Unlike Althusser's position in 'A Letter on Art',⁵ therefore, this thesis does

not theorise art as somehow distanced from ideology. Rather, I wish to argue, *pace* Macherey and Balibar,⁶ that art generally functions as a mode of ideological production, and that because of the disjunctions which may be perceived in Shakespeare's sonnets, we are able to recover the conditions of that production.

In accordance with this statement, then, Shakespeare's sonnets can be shown to be explicit about their concern with power. In sonnet 25, for example, the difference in social status between addressor and addressee is set out quite clearly:

Let those who are in favour with their stars
Of public honour and proud titles boast,
Whilst I whom fortune of such triumph bars,
Unlooked for joy in that I honour most. (lines 1-4)

Here an opposition is constructed between the poet's position and that of those in receipt of 'public honour' upon whom fortune smiles. The sonnet's predication of the poet's position upon a lack of 'fortune' presupposes the social reality of the unequal power relations while subscribing to an ideological motif which functions as the index of his inferior social status. The use of 'honour' in line 4 is significant in this context, as it echoes

the 'public honour' of line 2, linking the friend he honours with those blessed by fortune. Also, 'joy' records the persona's wholehearted acceptance of the situation, while at the same time deconstructing the 'honour', which is contingent upon the acquisition of 'proud titles'. Thus, line 4 also wrenches 'honour' from its customary usage of the 'public honour' of line 2. The twofold division of 'honour' into separate private and public spheres is a means by which the addressor appropriates 'public honour' for his own position; in this way, the term 'honour' itself now becomes a site of struggle. This opposition between private and public 'honour' splits the private 'honour' into two separate meanings: it can be read either as respect for one of superior social position, or an illicit admiration. This renders the term 'honour' unstable, problematising the ideology of that 'honour' which is already inscribed in a hierarchical society. By a metonymy, therefore, it is possible to read 'honour' here as standing for those terms through which the nobility articulates its own world. Thus, following Volosinov and Bakhtin,⁷ it is possible to view the linguistic sign itself as a site of ideological contestation,

as the lowly addressor attempts to appropriate the discourse of the socially superior addressee in an inversion of the normal relations of power. Nevertheless, it must be observed that this appropriation does not transcend the predominant power relations altogether.

It is in such a context of inversion that the poetic persona subscribes to patriarchy in sonnet 37:

As a decrepit father takes delight
 To see his active child do deeds of youth,
 So I, made lame by fortune's dearest spite,
 Take all my comfort of thy worth and truth.
 For whether beauty, birth, or wealth, or wit,
 Or any of these all, or all, or more,
 Entitled in thy parts do crowned sit,
 I make my love engrafted to this store. (lines 1-8)

In this sonnet it is possible to discern the contradictions which the homosocial relations attempt to resolve. The poetic persona is again set up in opposition to the subject-position of the friend, who is characterised as 'crowned' by beauty, birth, wealth and wit. The poet, who is 'decrepit' and 'made lame' by fortune, in a manner analogous to that of sonnet 25, takes all his comfort from the friend's 'worth' and 'truth', indices of value which resonate with all of the

epistemological and teleological connotations of the ideology of the aristocracy. The image of the poet as patriarch is qualified in this context by his passivity in the face of the noble friend, an almost archetypal rendering of homosocial power in the Renaissance. The poem then moves on, inverting the differential relations between the two figures of the addressor and the addressee by making the addressor the father-figure. Thus, from the outset the poem inverts the normal relations of patriarchal power. The sonnet produces a literary fantasy by means of this inversion and exchange of roles, but, in these historical circumstances, it is a fantasy which can, for some, become a material reality. Thus, the desire which is at the root of the poem's inversion destabilises the hierarchical relationship between the poetic persona and the young man, the desire for upward social mobility subverting the friend's superior position. This desire is quite in accordance with the careers of many historical personages, and it cannot go unremarked that Shakespeare himself used the wealth he accumulated through the theatre to buy himself a manor house at Stratford, and to acquire a gentleman's coat of arms.⁸

These are only two of many sonnets which refer to the social difference between the friend and the poetic persona, interspersing elements of homosociality throughout the sequence. The addressor's position is constantly represented as powerless and worthless as compared with that of the friend. Thus, in sonnet 48, the friend's wealth far surpasses that of the poet:

But thou, to whom my jewels trifles are,
(line 5)

Similarly, in sonnet 49 the legal system, another element of the structure of power relations, favours the friend:

And this my hand against myself uprear
 To guard the lawful reasons on thy part -
 To leave poor me thou hast the strength of laws,
(lines 11-13)

These examples suggest that the persona of the poet is defined in relation to the aristocratic ideology as represented by the figure of the friend. The young man is, therefore, a metonym for the aristocracy, and the poet's relationship with him is also his relationship with the ideology which inscribes a subject-position for him. The dominant ideology can therefore be read as interpellating

the subjectivity of the persona in much the same way that it interpellated woman in previous sequences, and as it goes on to do later on in this one. However, it is more fruitful to read these poems as exploring different facets of what is an unstable relationship (unlike in the case of woman). In these circumstances the addressor uses the motif of the achievement of immortality through verse to invert the dichotomy of patronage/patristic superiority in his favour, an alternative version of patriarchy which permits the writer to appropriate to himself a power normally inscribed in the patriarchal relations of the aristocratic family.⁹ The instability of the subjectivity of the addressor is an inevitable consequence of this movement, the textual inscription of which is the utilisation of a discourse normally associated with heterosexual love in a homosocial discourse. In these sonnets, therefore, literature fulfils the function of reproducing the young friend, the function he has so far failed to undertake literally, for himself biologically, in accordance with the familial ideology of the nobility. The poems recognise the crisis in the ideology, but fail to produce an alternative since there is no

other discourse available for transforming the elements of familial ideology at this particular historical moment. The deployment of these elements therefore produces a historically specific form of destabilisation, a sequence which has no linear narrative, being interspersed with poems which harmonise with the ideology on the one hand, and poems which lay bare the conditions of that ideology's production on the other.

This implies that the terms in which the partial recognition is articulated are themselves confused. Sonnet 87 records such confusion:

Farewell, thou art too dear for my possessing,
 And like enough thou know'st thy estimate.
 The charter of thy worth gives thee releasing;
 My bonds in thee are all determinate.
 For how do I hold thee but by thy granting,
 And for that riches where is my deserving?
 The cause of this fair gift in me is wanting,
 And so my patent back again is swerving.
 (lines 1-8)

Here the social difference, which is praised in the earlier poems cited above, becomes itself the vehicle for a change in the relationship between the two figures. Furthermore, even the vocabulary used is almost identical to that of the previous poems: the friend's wealth is immediately recalled in the first line, while 'bonds' in line 4 refers

to the superior legal status of the friend as a member of the ruling class. However, 'bonds' also refers to the legal covenant of obligation through the vocabulary of apprenticeship, converting the relations of sonnet 48 to a patriarchal fantasy in which the friend is apprenticed to the addressor.¹⁰ Once again the traditional relations of feudalism are inverted, recalling the Christopher Sly induction in The Taming Of The Shrew, although in the case of the play the management of the Lord's staging of the inversion lays bare the constitution of aristocratic interpellation. In the sonnet, the addressor is again contesting the grounds of the aristocratic ideology which articulates relations of power in the Renaissance. Thus, the poem uses the metaphors of apprenticeship to make the friend's position 'determinate', rather than the addressor's. This movement is what constitutes the subjectivity of the addressor in these poems, inscribing it very precisely, at a particular historical moment of crisis.

II

A reading of Shakespeare's sonnets which seeks to trace the split which is produced in the addressor's subjectivity by the precise historical relations of the time must take into account the differences between Renaissance and twentieth century subject positions. These poems are situated at the precise moment of a crisis in the aristocracy which is as yet unresolved; they are therefore able to relate both to residual and emergent ideological elements. A symptom of this is, of course, the interspersing of poems which reinforce some aspects of the dominant ideology with poems which challenge it. It is of fundamental importance to realise that, although it is in crisis, the ideology of the aristocracy is still the dominant paradigm. As Francis Barker has argued, the subject-positions produced by this ideology are rooted in the material body:

The proliferation in the dramatic, philosophical and political texts of the period of corporeal images which have become dead metaphors for us - by a structured forgetting rather than by innocent historical wastage - are the indices of a social order in which the body has a central and irreducible place. Whether judicially tortured as the

visible sign of the vengeance of the king
 on the transgressor, or disassembled
 lovingly on stage in the cause of poetry,
 it is the crucial fulcrum and crossing
 point of the lines of force, discursive and
 physical, which form this world as the
 place of danger and aspiration.¹¹

Following on from this argument, it is now possible to state that, as a series of transitional texts, Shakespeare's sonnets both record the position of the material body as a constitutive element of subjectivity, and also begin to move away from it. The split subject positions of the poems, both accepting and denying aristocratic interpellation, are linked at a fundamental level with the physical body. This leads the poetic persona to be both joined with and separated from the friend in a material, physical vocabulary. The elements which emphasise physical identity with the friend are epitomised by sonnet 62:

Sin of self-love possesseth all mine eye,
 And all my soul, and all my every part;
 And for this sin there is no remedy,
 It is so grounded inward in my heart.
 Methinks no face so gracious as is mine,
 No shape so true, no truth of such account,
 And for myself mine own worth do define,
 As I all other in all worths surmount.
 But when my glass shows me myself indeed
 Beated and chopped with tanned antiquity,
 Mine own self-love quite contrary I read;
 Self so self-loving were iniquity.

'Tis thee, myself, that for myself I praise,
Painting my age with beauty of thy days.

The conventional Petrarchan motif of the lovers-as-one is here recuperated for the homosocial relationship between the figures of the poet and the friend. The first line of the couplet solves the riddle of the preceding three quatrains of the poem in these terms, positioning the poetic persona's subjectivity in the material unification of himself and the friend in a single body. Thus, the 'self-love' (line 1) characterised as 'grounded inward in my heart' (line 4) is explicated through identification with the vocabulary used in connection with the friend's beauty in the second quatrain. This unites the persona of the poet with the friend in a manner normally associated in sonnet sequences with the heterosexual love of the poet and his lady.

However, the Platonic identification with the friend is only one of many images in the complex of contradictory elements which constitutes Shakespeare's sonnets. It is itself an incomplete identification, as both before and after sonnet 62, there are poems which insist on the distance between the two figures, even while deploring it.

This is foreshadowed in the couplet of sonnet 30:

But if the while I think on thee, dear friend,
All losses are restored, and sorrows end.

The persona of the poet is thus able to meditate on the separate subject of the friend, a logical contradiction of the situation set up later in sonnet 62. Sonnets 50 and 51 pick up this separation in terms of a journey away from the friend, the precise opposite of the use Sidney makes of his journey towards Stella.¹² Sonnet 50 introduces the motif:

How heavy do I journey on the way,
When what I seek (my weary travel's end)
Doth teach that ease and that repose to say,
Thus far the miles are measured from thy friend.
(lines 1-4)

The vocabulary contains many aspects which are physical descriptions of the effects of travel upon the poet's body: 'heavy' in line 1; 'weary' in line 2; the postures of 'ease' and 'repose' in line 3; and the verb 'measured' in line 4. The emphasis here is upon physical separation, and this is displaced in both poems onto the horse, the beast of burden which carries the poet:

The beast that bears me, tired with my woe,
Plods dully on, to bear that weight in me,

As if by some instinct the wretch did know
 His rider loved not speed, being made from thee.
 (50. 5-8)

and

Thus can my love excuse the slow offence
 Of my dull bearer, when from thee I speed -
 From where thou art, why should I haste me thence ?
 Till I return, of posting is no need.
 O what excuse will my poor beast then find,
 When swift extremity can seem but slow? (51.1-6)

Thus, in sonnet 50, the horse is tired with the poet's woe, a 'wretch' that instinctively knows that it must move slowly. This is picked up in sonnet 51, with its play on relative speeds, where the horse is 'dull' (line 2) and 'poor' (line 5). These poems therefore rely heavily upon images of physical exhaustion as they separate the poet and the friend. The Platonic unification of sonnet 62 is a motif which is prepared for in this particular deployment of a physical language. The play on the convention of the Platonic unity in love allows these poems to refashion generic considerations, which are epitomised in the reformulation of the motif of the journey in Astrophel And Stella. However, through the metaphors of exhaustion, sonnet 51 displaces the genre's eroticism, and, hence, emotion, onto the figure of the animal in

the poem. This introduces a discontinuity within the genre itself, since the friend is a man, a disjunction analogous to the residual duplicity which is taken into the subjectivity of the friend along with the motif of beauty. There is therefore an emotional residue which does not accord fully with the power relations between the two men. Here a series of conventional motifs is being utilised for a homosocial project, and this change inevitably introduces a discontinuity between Shakespeare's sonnets and those of his predecessors.

The separation which is produced in these poems becomes even more problematical for the dominant aristocratic discourse in sonnets which address the friend's duplicity. I investigated the effects this has upon the subjectivity of the friend in the last chapter, but here I am more concerned with what this means for the subject-position of the poetic persona. In the chapter on the friend, I noted that the appropriation of physical beauty for the friend's subjectivity necessarily entails the inclusion of residual elements of duplicity as well. This then leads to a disruption of the subjectivity constructed for the friend, the

literary production of the crisis in the ideology of the aristocracy. This duplicity has crucial effects upon the persona of the poet as well.

These effects are themselves specific to this precise historical moment. The recognition of duplicity in the friend widens the effect of separation between him and the poet, the inevitable result of the new pressures which are being brought to bear on the discourses articulated in the sonnet form. Shakespeare's sonnets displace the concerns of physical heterosexual love which played such an important role in previous sequences, but are forced to use the vocabulary associated with the courtly love discourse in the new circumstances because the ideology has not yet fully been transformed by emergent pressures. The emotional residue which accompanies the attempts to unite the poet and the friend physically renders these attempts unsuccessful. These sonnets therefore textualise a necessary denial of the physical body of the sonnet genre in the context of homosocial relations, while retaining the language associated with the body as a source of metaphor. Hence, the beginnings of the retreat into the private world in these poems foreshadows the Cartesian ego through

the function of the denial of the body as repression. But again, it must be stressed that this process is piecemeal and never wholly completed. Sonnet 27, which I quoted earlier in relation to the effects duplicity produces in the friend's subjectivity, provides examples of these effects upon the poetic persona also:

Weary with toil, I haste me to my bed,
 The dear repose for limbs with travel tired,
 But then begins a journey within my head
 To work my mind, when my body's work's expired.
 For then my thoughts, from far where I abide,
 Intend a zealous pilgrimage to thee,
 And keep my drooping eyelids open wide,
 Looking on darkness which the blind do see.
 Save that my soul's imaginary sight
 Presents thy shadow to my sightless view,
 Which like a jewel hung in ghastly night,
 Makes black night beauteous, and her old face new.
 Lo thus by day my limbs, by night my mind,
 For thee, and for myself, no quiet find.

In this poem the physical world begins to be replaced by an internal mental landscape. The first phrase, "Weary with toil", sets up the physical body as the concern at the beginning of the poem. In line 2 'travel' epitomises the distance from the friend, explaining the qualification of 'repose' with 'dear': rest is expensive only because the poet is far away from the friend. The use of the intransitive verb 'haste' in line 1 as a transitive

verb with 'me' as its object reinforces the placing of subjectivity in the body in such a context.

However, 'But' at the beginning of the second sentence in the poem, at the beginning of line 3, interrupts the usual logical flow of the first quatrain. The mind now takes over, sending thoughts on a 'zealous pilgrimage' (line 6) to the friend, with the effect of keeping the body awake; this is epitomised by means of the metonymy of the eyelids in line 7. The place of the subject is now shifting from the body to the mind, with the material body being quickly replaced in the poem by a series of oxymora which depend, crucially, upon a play on the conventional sonnet motif of sight: the darkness which the blind see; the imaginary sight of the soul; and a sightless view which nevertheless sees the friend's shadow and the transforming effects it has upon 'ghastly night'.

The impossible sight of the mind's eye does not, however, see the friend; rather, it is his shadow which comes into view, prefiguring the difficulty the sonnets will have with the friend's duplicity. The specular homogeneity which was the traditional product of the sonnet discourse of the aristocracy is no longer able to apprehend the

physical body in these changed circumstances. This leads inevitably to the final line: the poet's persona and the friend are both set adrift from their customary subject positions. It is impossible for both of them to find 'quiet'.

Sonnet 28 continues the themes of 27, but with more ambivalence:

How can I then return in happy plight
 That am debarred the benefit of rest -
 When day's oppression is not eased by night,
 But day by night and night by day oppressed?
(lines 1-4)

The night-time journey of the mind in sonnet 27 is no longer confined to the night; night and day are now inextricably mixed, and the uncertainties of sonnet 27 oppress the persona in both. The body cannot find 'rest' in line 2 because subjectivity is no longer stable: it is not clear whether the 'I' of the first line, and 'am' in the second, are the old physical subjects of the dominant discourse, or the new psychological ones of the mind. This is, of course, a displacement of a restlessness that has to do with social status, and also with absence from the hierarchical superior who can guarantee social status.¹²

Such a radical indeterminacy establishes a

connection with the first signs of duplicity in the friend in lines 9-10:

I tell the day to please him thou art bright,
And dost him grace when clouds do blot the heaven.

The pun on sun/son hovers in the background here, and the suspicion of duplicity in the friend produces the last four lines of the sonnet:

So flatter I the swart-complexioned night,
When sparkling stars twire not, thou gild'st the even.

But day doth daily draw my sorrows longer,
And night doth nightly make grief's length seem longer.

The contrary 'But' at the beginning of the final couplet immediately contradicts the effect the friend has upon the evening in line 12.

The responses this elicits from the poet's persona are the 'sorrows' and 'grief' at the end of the poem. Such responses record, to use Giorgio Melchiori's terminology, the dramatic tension between the two roles of friend and persona. The dynamic relation between the two produces sorrow and grief in the poetic persona as the inevitable result of the friend's duplicity, a duplicity which is predicated upon representation of an absent subject. The impossible sight of sonnet 27 and the

conflation of day and night in sonnet 28 contextualise these results of the friend's duplicity as the production of a dislocation in the aristocratic discourse, a result of the problems which stem from the attempt to unite the two physically. As far as the poetic persona is concerned, its subjectivity cannot remain stable when the determining ideology, the metonymy which is the friend, is itself unstable. This instability arises as much from the social disparity between the two as from the fact that they are both male, with the necessary and concomitant displacement of eroticism that that entails.

The ideology of the aristocracy is forced to attempt to negotiate these new problems through a re-articulation of the courtly discourse in the sonnets, but the reformulation itself discloses the very contradictions it is designed to efface. It appears responsive to the tensions being generated, and represents its own concerns in terms of a hierarchical relation in which its own dominance is distinguished from its inferior 'others'. Therefore, although the ideology is in crisis, it continues to retain the power to sustain subject-positions. There is a recognition in the sonnets of

the growing failure of the discourse to operate unproblematically, but at the same time the sonnets themselves return to it obsessively as the moment of a break in the smooth narrative of subjectivity. This problem can be seen in sonnet 29:

When in disgrace with fortune and men's eyes,
 I all alone beweep my outcast state,
 And trouble deaf heav'n with my bootless cries,
 And look upon myself and curse my fate,
 Wishing me like to one more rich in hope,
 Featured like him, like him with friends possessed,
 Desiring this man's art, and that man's scope,
 With what I most enjoy contented least;
 Yet in these thoughts myself almost despising,
 Haply I think on thee, and then my state,
 Like to the lark at break of day arising
 From sullen earth, sings hymns at heaven's gate;
 For thy sweet love rememb'ed such wealth brings,
 That then I scorn to change my state with kings.

Metaphors of wealth constantly appear in this sonnet: 'fortune' in the first line; 'state' in lines 2, 10 and 14; 'rich' in line 5; 'possessed' in line 6; 'wealth' in line 13; and 'kings' in line 14. Many of these words also carry connotations of power, which is revealing, since in the sonnet the poet of lesser status has been cast off by the noble friend. There are several words which refer to the lesser status of the poet in this context: 'disgrace' in line 1; 'outcast' in line 2; and

'bootless' in line 3. The disparity in wealth and power between the two figures is seldom articulated so clearly.

And yet, despite the yearning for status which features strongly in lines 6-8, the poet's sorrows end when he remembers the reciprocal love of the friend: the one who causes his sorrow is also the one who can cure it. This is of course an ideological mystification, and it occurs because there is no other available discursive means capable of dealing with this relationship. This is not an isolated example; the couplet of sonnet 30 produces exactly the same resolution:

But if the while I think on thee, dear friend,
All losses are restored, and sorrows end.

This operation continues even when the duplicity of the friend is fully recognised:

Yet him for this my love no whit disdaineth;
Suns of the world may stain when heaven's sun
staineth. (33.13-14)

The persona continues to love the friend in spite of his duplicity; the power relations between the two are unstable, but they do not transcend the

boundaries of the homosocial. Moreover, a further distinction needs to be made; the relationship between the addressor and the friend is mapped out across the axis of a homosocial structure which cuts across class boundaries, but which is complicated by them. A dynamic contradictory relation between class and the homosocial is in operation here. The addressor performs an ideological mystification of the friend's duplicity in order, precisely, to efface the recognition of that duplicity. The sun/son pun is most informative in this respect, as it shows that the homosocial relation is inscribed in nature, and hence mystified. The tension here is a result of the use of a discourse associated with heterosexual love for a homosocial purpose, and this is also what lays this poem, and others, open to an anachronistic reading which privileges the homosexual.

III

The instability caused by the crisis extends further than the subject positions of both the

friend and the poetic persona, to the 'dark lady' later in the sequence. However, a further element of the ideology of the aristocracy is undermined here, the one which was given the most literary attention at the time: the theory of representation. With subjectivity itself in confusion, it is not surprising to find that representation, in the traditional sense laid down by Sidney, Puttenham and the Rhetorics,¹⁴ also becomes dislocated. The possibility of tracing this dislocation in the Renaissance at the theoretical level has recently been raised by Steven Mullaney in his book The Place Of The Stage (1988), in which he argues that:

In *The Place Of The Stage*, literary analysis is conceived as not an end in itself but as a vehicle, a means of gaining access to tensions and contradictions less clearly articulated in other cultural forums but all the more powerful for their partial occlusion. Literature itself is conceived neither as a separate and separable aesthetic realm nor as a mere product of culture, but as one realm among many for the negotiation and production of social meaning, of historical subjects, and of the systems of power that at once enable and constrain those subjects.¹⁵

Renaissance aesthetics are therefore implicated in wider questions of social meaning. Shakespeare's

sonnets, with their location at the period of transition towards a literate populace, record and produce a re-negotiation of the ideological function of representation. The contemporary association of mimetic theory with aristocratic poets and theorists can be read in much the same manner as the association of the sonnet form with the courtly love discourse; representation is also in crisis.¹⁶

This is apparent in sonnet 27, which I discussed at some length earlier in this chapter. The play upon the oxymora of impossible sight represents to the persona the shadow of the friend. The privileged topos of the sonnet convention, the sense of sight which was the means by which Cupid shot his physical arrows into the heart of the lover, is here divorced from the physical world. The mind's eye is unable to represent the friend himself, that is, in his bodily form. It is only capable of presenting the friend's 'shadow':

Save that my soul's imaginary sight
Presents thy shadow to my sightless view.
(lines 9-10)

The historical move towards the location of the subject in the psychological self problematises

representation for the sonnets. The theoretical position of such a discourse depends upon the transparent referentiality of language for its force. But when representation requires a recognition of the friend's falseness to the addressor, the ideology begins to break down, and it is this breakdown which Foucault and Kristeva have characterised as the move from symbol to sign, from representation to signification.¹⁷ The Neoplatonic language of mimesis requires the friend to occupy the position of the ideal reality which is represented; when the friend is found to fail to live up to that ideal, the way is open for the addressor to contest the grounds of social superiority. The beginnings of this movement can be discerned in sonnet 43:

When most I wink, then do my eyes best see,
 For all the day they view things unrespected,
 But when I sleep, in dreams they look on thee,
 And darkly bright, are bright in dark directed.
 Then thou, whose shadow shadows doth make bright -
 How would thy shadow's form form happy show
 To the clear day with thy much clearer light,
 When to unseeing eyes thy shade shines so!
 How would, I say, mine eyes be blessed made,
 By looking on thee in the living day,
 When in dead night thy fair imperfect shade
 Through heavy sleep on sightless eyes doth stay!
 All days are nights to see till I see thee,
 And nights bright days when dreams do show me
 thee.

However, in this poem day and night are interchangeable; the day is dark because the friend is not present, and the night is bright because the poet sees him in his dreams. The sonnet undercuts conventional representation because the daytime sense of sight sees only "things unrespected"; in this case the eyes of the sonnet tradition see something other than the version of materiality produced in earlier sequences. The oxymora of dark brightness and bright shadows, together with the use of the rhetorical figure of *traductio*, the changing of words around related root parts of speech,¹⁸ are the symptoms of this undercutting of representation at the lexical level. Hence, the social fantasy is restrained by the poem's waking hours.

In fact, the sonnet even attributes power to the friend's shadow in lines 5-8. The form of his shadow, which has such brightness in the night, would be able to 'form happy show' in the dullness of daytime. The use of 'show' here, at the end of line 6, removes this power from the sphere of representation. Mimesis was supposed to represent a superior and transcendent mode of reality, which in Sidney, of course, becomes the Christian heaven.

But the new, immaterial subject will form a 'happy show', not a substance. Just as there is no language adequate to replace mimesis in the historical circumstances of these sonnets, so too there is no discourse with the power fully to take over from representation in its moment of crisis. Thus, the language of the sonnets is one which can no longer point with precision and confidence to the 'origins' necessary to sustain mimesis. The sonnets in fact embody a historically constituted mode of signification which is radically unstable; all that can be used in sonnet 43 is a terminology which opposes the bodily subject to the shadows of the night. As Jacques Derrida has shown,¹⁹ simply to reproduce a binary opposition of this sort is to fail to transgress the boundaries of the signifying system which sets it in place. Thus, the opportunity to transform the system is lost; in this particular case, the fact that no ideology has yet emerged to replace that of the aristocracy precludes the complete and radical disruption of representation. The sonnets do not simply reproduce the relations of power, but are nevertheless unable to move on from the contradictions they articulate. Their inability to do so permits a symptomatic,

historicised reading which can uncover the conditions of the production of aristocratic ideology. Thus, the sonnets record the crisis in representation, but cannot transcend it, a situation analogous to their response to the crisis in the power relations themselves.

It is no coincidence that some of the sonnets which use the shadow motif, such as sonnet 43, come immediately after the failure of the interpellation of the friend's subjectivity in terms of the stereotypes of masculinity/femininity.²⁰ As I demonstrated in the last chapter, the recuperation of beauty for a masculine subject inevitably contains residual elements of duplicity, and this sows the seeds of the project's ultimate failure. The fact that these poems are followed by sonnet 43 and other, similar poems, reveals a link between the subjectivity of the friend and mimesis. The failure of the former precipitates the production of poems which encompass the failure of the latter, inevitably affecting the subjectivity of the poet's persona in poems such as Sonnet 44:

If the dull substance of my flesh were thought,
 Injurious distance should not stop my way;
 For then, despite of space, I would be brought,
 From limits far remote, where thou dost stay.
 No matter then although my foot did stand

Upon the farthest earth removed from thee;
For nimble thought can jump both sea and land,
As soon as think the place where he would be.
But, ah, the thought kills me that I am not thought
To leap large miles when thou art gone,
But that, so much of earth and water wrought,
I must attend time's leisure with my moan.
Receiving nought by elements so slow
But heavy tears, badges of either's woe.

Again there is a play here on the axis of materiality/insubstantiality, and again there is a reluctant return to mimesis, insofar as the poem is ultimately concerned with a reunification of the addressor with the friend. However, the poem does record an ambivalence towards mimesis: if there is a direct relationship between thought and flesh, there is also a prescription that the friend should also be what he seems. This does not accord with the reality of the friend's duplicity towards the addressor. The poem poses the problem differently: if the addressor were 'thought' rather than 'flesh', he would be able to transcend problems caused by the physical temporal and spatial world. This conflation of the material and the immaterial produces a thought which is articulated in material terms: it jumps both sea and land in line 7, as soon as it thinks the place where it would be. It has the material effect of killing the persona in

line 9 because he is not composed of immaterial thought, and therefore is unable to accomplish his desired end. However, in line 12, the addressor acknowledges that he is subject to time. This follows on from the recognition, which links time with death, that he is in fact not thought, and so must remain separate from the friend. The sonnet is therefore itself a material trace, a textualisation of the dialectical relation between the literary and the historical.

The occurrence of the motif of time in sonnet 44 links with the practice of representation in a way that recalls the attempt of the sequence as a whole to essentialise the friend.²¹ Sonnet 19 exemplifies this attempt, which is made in terms of a literary idealising of the friend:

Yet do thy worst, old time; despite thy wrong,
My love shall in my verse ever live young.
(lines 13-14)

The written sonnets will be the vehicle by which the poet's love and the friend, the object of that love, to outlive time. This links mimesis specifically to an essentialising impetus of a kind which was not present in Sidney's sequence. The convention of *aere perennius* is here responding to new pressures on representation, with the result that the sonnets

foreshadow the idealism of the Cartesian ego. But again it must be stressed that the sequence fails in this project because the nascent, emerging ideology of the bourgeoisie is as yet unable to replace the aristocratic discourse.²² The mythology of the aristocracy is crumbling; the re-negotiation of social relations made necessary by the new wealth of the mercantile classes and the relatively impoverished condition of the aristocracy demystifies the ideological motif of the superior aristocrat as the best embodied in the etymology of the term itself. There is a connection here with Richard II, with the analogy of a king who is unsuited to rule, despite all that the ideology claims on his behalf, although the play continues to operate within the terms of a ruling elite: aristocracy versus an absolutist monarch. The sonnets therefore have to pursue their essentialising operation in the terms of the dominant ideology, at the same time that they recognise infidelity in the figure of the representative of the aristocracy in the sequence, and hence instability in subjectivity.

The consequences of this historically specific compromise fragment the subjectivity of the poet's

persona in a particular way. The attempt to essentialise the friend through writing, by implication, is also an attempt to essentialise the subjectivity of the poetic persona of the addressor. The sonnets constantly refer to the addressor at the very points they essentialise the friend by means of writing, predicating the subject position of the persona upon this idealist premise.

Sonnet 21 furnishes an example:

So is it not with me as with that muse,
 Stirred by a painted beauty to his verse,
 Who heav'n itself for ornament doth use,
 And every fair with his fair doth rehearse
(lines 1-4)

Here representation is unproblematical; the poem remains within the tradition of mimesis, unlike a muse which is stirred by a merely 'painted' beauty. However, the words 'use' in line 3, and 'rehearse' in line 4 imply that the process of metaphorical representation can be practised falsely, by a mere 'rehearsal' of set formulae. Even so, in line 9 of the same sonnet, there is a statement that its representation is true:

O let me true in love but truly write

These poems, which occur relatively early in the

sequence, are not isolated in this respect; sonnet 38 follows much the same theme:

How can my muse want subject to invent,
 Whilst thou dost breathe, that pour'st into my
 verse
 Thine own sweet argument, too excellent
 For every vulgar paper to rehearse? (lines 1-4)

The use of 'subject' in line 1 is significant, as it links the subjectivity of the friend simultaneously with the persona and with representation. This subjectivity, which I have already characterised as predicated upon the material body, has been hidden from criticism by what Francis Barker recognised as a 'structured forgetting'. Thus, Stephen Booth writes in his commentary on this poem:

In much the mock-literal way that sonnets 36, 37, 39 and 40 probe the traditional hyperbolic metaphor by which sonneteer and beloved are a single being, this sonnet investigates the implications both of the idea that the worth of a poem is determined by the worth of its subject and of the metonymy by which a writer is his works.²³

The crucial phrase here is "single being"; for the Renaissance sonnet, the lover and the beloved are united in material terms, rather than in terms of being, the ontological category of Cartesian

philosophy. Nevertheless, Booth does acknowledge the importance of the operation that is taking place in this sonnet, although he misrecognises its implications and produces the 'metonymy by which a writer is his works'. Expressive totality is rendered problematical by these sonnets, with the result that the situation is not as straightforward as Booth implies. Following Foucault, it is much more useful to consider discourse as constructing a hierarchy predicated upon differential relations. The positioning of the 'others' of the dominant discourse can therefore be seen to be an ideological operation, which functions to contain potentially disruptive elements. Such a theoretical perspective allows the production of a reading which supplements the initial level practised by Booth, and permits a further move in the analysis of these poems. This further move is one that involves a formulation of the relationship between the literary mode of the sonnets and the historical moment of their production. In such a reading, the relationship between the addressor and the friend, which is articulated in terms of physical subjects, can be seen to involve the poetic persona in the essentialising impetus of representation. They are,

crucially, related in purely literary terms, rather in terms of a simple representation of a prior reality. The result is that they inscribe the 'other' of the discourse, incorporating a material property of language which is not transparently reflective, and this subverts the ideology through the addressor's contestation of the social grounds. It is this complex interrelationship which produces the subjectivity of the addressor in these sonnets.

In sonnet 76, the persona explicitly questions these relations:

Why is my verse so barren of new pride,
 So far from variation or quick change?
 Why with the time do I not glance aside
 To new-found methods, and to compounds strange?
 Why write I still all one, ever the same,
 And keep invention in a noted weed,
 That every word doth almost tell my name,
 Showing their birth, and where they did proceed?
 O know, sweet love, I always write of you,
 And you and love are still my argument.
 So all my best is dressing old words new,
 Spending again what is already spent:
 For as the sun is daily new and old,
 So is my love still telling what is told.

The poem acknowledges that other possibilities for writing exist, which accords on the theoretical level with Michel Pecheux's formulation of 'interdiscourse', the contradictory materiality out of which partial, ideological accounts of reality

are constituted.²⁴ Hence the sonnets acknowledge elements other than those of the dominant ideology, only to return to the subject-matter which they have already addressed. Sonnet 76 keeps "invention in a noted weed" (line 6), using "noted weed" (clothing) as a metonym for the noble friend. Thus, "every word doth almost tell my name" (line 7) links the poetic persona's subjectivity with the young man, but, crucially, cannot quite fulfil the promise of naming which it makes.

The sequence continues along these lines, with a series of similar conceits in 98-105. However, sonnet 116, with its assertion of the persona's unchanging love, contrasts with the duplicity of the friend:

Let me not to the marriage of true minds
 Admit impediments. Love is not love
 Which alters when it alteration finds,
 Or bends with the remover to remove.
 O no, it is an ever-fixed mark
 That looks on tempests and is never shaken;
 It is the star to every wand'ring bark,
 Whose worth's unknown, although his height be
 taken.
 Love's not time's fool, though rosy lips and cheeks
 Within his bending sickle's compass come.
 Love alters not with his brief hours and weeks,
 But bears it out ev'n to the edge of doom.
 If this be error and upon me proved,
 I never writ, nor no man ever loved.

At the beginning of this poem the poet's subject-

position is the only certainty in the midst of change. The change of grammatical subject from 'me' in line 1 to 'Love' in line 2 glosses the first sentence with the second, identifying the persona with love. This leads to the final couplet, which states that the truth of the assertion can be tested on the poet. But this couplet is conditional, with the appearance of an 'if' which denotes an uncertainty, allowing the sonnet to refer to two different outcomes at once. The poem is a statement of fundamental importance for the sequence as a whole; despite all of the changes the poems detect in the young man, the poet remains constant. Thus, the poetic persona remains in the position of the lover, fixed in the subject-position interpellated by the aristocratic ideology, even when the discourse, the friend and representation are in a state of relative flux; this is denoted by the 'If' of line 13. The persona is able to perceive the changes, and to refer to other discourses, the foreshadowing of a newly emergent discourse of the self as a psychological entity, which is nevertheless unable to change subject-positions. The emergence of this psychological 'subject' entails a re-negotiation of

the discursive links between the sonnet form and aristocratic ideology. In effect, the discourse of courtly love is being appropriated on behalf of this newly emergent position. The formal consequence of this movement is that the conventional subject-position of the aristocratic sonneteering lover is split into two separate male 'characters'. This produces a series of sonnets which can be read symptomatically in such a way as to recover the conditions through which the dominant ideology works to construct particular subject-positions.

In such circumstances, the love to which the poetic persona clings in sonnet 116 is already enmeshed within the discourse of the aristocracy. In effect, the poem sets up love as a metaphysical unity; there are no different kinds, but only one true love. This unity proves to be fragile, an inevitable consequence of the pressures upon representation at this historical moment. There is no separate vocabulary for homosocial relationships upon which the sonnets can draw, with the result that they are forced to rely upon the language of heterosexual love. This slippage produces a situation in which the poetic persona who makes

grand claims for the stability of his position in sonnet 116, fails to sustain this essentialist subjectivity in sonnet 121:

'Tis better to be vile than vile esteemed,
 When not to be receives reproach of being.
 And the just pleasure lost, which is so deemed,
 Not by our feeling but by others' seeing.
 For why should others' false adulterate eyes
 Give salutation to my sportive blood?
 Or on my frailties why are frailer spies,
 Which in their wills count bad what I think good.
 No, I am that I am, and they that level
 At my abuses reckon up their own;
 I may be straight though they themselves be bevel.
 By their rank thoughts my deeds must not be shown,
 Unless this general evil they maintain -
 All men are bad and in their badness reign.

The physical subject here opposes itself to others in a differential relationship, the beginning of the distinction between public and private, and here again emergent ideological elements are foreshadowed. The language describing the position of the addressor is material: 'feeling' in line 4 qualifies 'pleasure' in line 3; the persona has 'sportive blood' in line 6; he is 'straight' in line 11; and he acts with 'deeds' in line 12. By way of contrast, the new psychological subjectivity of the 'others' is delineated in immaterial terms: 'seeing' in line 4 is accomplished by 'others' false adulterate eyes' in line 5, denigrating a

type of eyesight which is different from that usually found in the sonnet convention; these eyes give 'salutation' in line 6, and spy upon the persona's frailties, counting them bad in their 'wills'; also, their 'thoughts' show the persona's deeds in line 12, maintaining the 'general evil' of the last line. Although love no longer sustains the persona's subjectivity, he nevertheless retains a material identity, as in the first two lines of the poem: it is better to be 'vile' than to be 'vile esteemed' in the sense of the new subject-position this would entail. 'Being' here is the material being of the Renaissance, not shadowy substance, the immaterial eyesight represented in the sonnet which has haunted the sequence almost from the outset. Thus, the persona declares 'I am that I am' in line 9, with an important gloss: 'they that level/At my abuses reckon up their own'. Those 'others' that speculate upon the poet's abuses do so in terms which do not relate properly to his position, but which are, in fact, projections of their own defects onto the persona of the addressor. The poem therefore questions the interpellation of the addressor by others, recalling the arraignment of Vittoria in The White

Devil, in which Monticelso interpellates her as
whore, as subject of the law:

Oh your tale instructs your language!
You see my lords what goodly fruit she seems,
Yet like those apples travellers report
To grow where Sodom and Gomorrah stood,
I will but touch her and you straight shall see
She'll fall to soot and ashes. (III.iii.62-67)²⁵

Here juridical power predicates the subject-
position enforced upon Vittoria in much the same
way that the 'others' of sonnet 121 attempt to
inscribe the addressor within a recognisable
boundary. Vittoria functions in a manner analogous
to the poetic persona in these poems, in that
because of her supplemental character, she exposes
the constitutive processes of masculine discourse.
Again, it is Giorgio Melchiori who provides a
framework for an analysis which takes into account
such a contestation of subjectivity:

The operative word is *seeing* - not inner
vision, but external appearances. The
sense of sight is emblematic of the lack
of real vision.²⁶

In fact, the sense of sight which is described in
the poem is incapable of 'real' vision - that is,
appropriate vision. Melchiori correctly draws
attention to the realm of the political in this

context:

The confusion between the social and ethical codes is further exposed and deplored here, and the reference to the sexual domain, where such confusion is most common, appears particularly appropriate.²⁷

The 'confusion' he identifies here may be recognised as an ambivalence towards the discourse of courtly love associated for so long with the sonnet form. The unpacking of the elements of this discourse which has taken place in Shakespeare's sequence renders the discourse problematical. The poem reveals a deeper conflict: it recognises, by its insistent play upon sexuality, a link between the two positions of the addressor and the 'others' in the sonnet, and therefore between two discourses of sexuality, the aristocratic, and the newly emerging 'protestant ethic'. There is thus a level at which the articulation of sexuality itself is brought within the purview of ideology.²⁸

This disruption of the sexual politics of the sonnets follows the pattern I have observed with the other elements of the subjectivity of the poetic persona. But despite the recognition of the disruption, this subjectivity remains predicated

upon the aristocratic ideology. Once again these poems record a disjunction which they do not advocate.

The sequence moves on to prompt a re-negotiation of homosocial power relationships in these circumstances, as is made clear in sonnet 124:

If my dear love were but the child of state,
It might for fortune's bastard be unfathered,
As subject to time's love, or to time's hate,
Weeds among weeds, or flow'rs with flowers
gathered.

No, it was builded far from accident;
It suffers not in smiling pomp, nor falls
Under the blow of thrall'd discontent,
Whereto th'inviting time our fashion calls.
It fears not policy, that heretic
Which works on leases of short numb' red hours,
But all alone stands hugely politic,
That it nor grows with heat, nor drowns with
show'rs.

To this I witness call the fools of time,
Which die for goodness, who have lived for crime.

The conditional rhetorical mode of the first quatrain postulates that the 'child of state' might be 'fortune's bastard', a possibility that is emphatically denied by 'No' at the beginning of line 5. The form of the state that is denied here, which is glossed by the reference in line 4 to an aristocracy that is only one class among others, is associated with a Machiavellian position regarding

the negotiation of power relations, both among elements of the aristocracy itself, and between them and other social classes. The sonnet explicitly denies the historicising trajectory of contingency and 'accident' (line 5) that such a view of power relations would entail for the aristocracy, and attempts to essentialise their position as a result, by a managing of the tensions that point to their involvement with the temporal pressures of history.

Nevertheless, the second quatrain can be read as analysing the ideology as a hypocrisy, revealing the elements of its production. The persona's love does not suffer in 'smiling pomp', subject to the 'blow of thralled discontent' as is the 'fashion'. The duplicity of the friend has become the falseness of the aristocracy as a class. This continues in the third quatrain, with 'policy', 'that heretic', which echoes the political expediency of the Catholic Machiavelli. Line 10 recalls a much earlier sonnet:

And summer's lease hath all too short a date
(18.4)

but contradicts the sentiments of sonnet 18, mocking them with the phallic imagery of lines 11-12. The couplet ends the poem with a nobility which has died 'for goodness' when in fact they 'have lived for crime': they are "fools of time". The patriarchal basis of aristocratic power is articulated here through a discourse of time and natural lineage, and is criticised for its criminality. Here, at the conceptual level, representation is the means through which the formal separation of the narrative persona from the young man is effected. The aristocratic discourse has now become visible to the persona it interpellated, producing a poem which discourses upon ideology. Sonnet 125 continues this analysis:

Were't ought to me I bore the canopy,
 With my extern the outward honouring,
 Or laid great bases for eternity,
 Which proves more short than waste or ruining?
 Have I not seen dwellers on form and favour
 Lose all and more by paying too much rent
 For compound sweet forgoing simple savour,
 Pitiful thrivers, in their gazing spent?
 No, let me be obsequious in thy heart,
 And take thou my oblation, poor but free,
 Which is not mixed with seconds, knows no art,
 But mutual render, only me for thee.

Hence, thou suborned informer! A true soul
 When most impeached stands least in thy control.

The sliding syntax of the first line, in which the phrase 'to me' can be taken as the object either of 'Were't ought', implying obligation, or of 'I bore the canopy', implying reflexivity, epitomises the addressor's reflection upon the ideology which constituted his subjectivity. The self has become divided; the 'outward honouring' is separate from inward feeling, in a way which earlier sonnets denied was the case. Line 3 picks up the time motif again, only for the idealising project to be questioned in line 4. The result is that this sonnet not only questions the ideology, but also the attempt of the sequence as a whole to respond to the crisis in representation.

The persona of the addressor now goes so far as to separate itself from noble patronage. The 'dwellers on form and favour' lose everything because they depended upon aristocratic patronage; this sophisticated 'compound sweet' is opposed to the implicitly natural 'simple savour'. The ideology of nature is thus turned against the nobility, in whose "gazing" the 'pitiful thrivers' are 'spent', recalling the loss of noble lands through the practice of conspicuous consumption, and the effects this had upon the tenants.²⁹

Once again, however, in the third quatrain the persona does not abandon his subject-position. He will be 'obsequious in thy heart', offering a forgetting of the recognition of the ideology. This recognition is provisional, as the comment 'poor but free' reveals. There is also a further denigration of the practice of the aristocracy in the phrase 'mixed with seconds', which echoes the distribution of food to the poor of the estate after the noble family has eaten.³⁰ This is followed by an almost sarcastic 'mutual render', recalling the ideological discourse of the mutual obligations of feudalism which in fact attempted to mystify hierarchical power relations. The quatrain delineates the subjectivity of the persona, but in spite of the devastating analysis of the conditions of production, he nevertheless returns to the aristocratic discourse, in a bargain of 'only me for thee'.

However, this air of striking a bargain again echoes the 'mutual' obligations of feudalism, explaining the ambivalence with which it is surrounded in this context. This leads to the final couplet, in which the young man is characterised as a 'suborned informer', the agent of the ideology.

The poem ends with a statement to the effect that a 'true soul' is 'least in thy control' 'when most impeached'; a person who is most in danger from the law is the least controlled by the ideology, a statement which bears witness to the lack of control the aristocratic discourse is now able to exert over its subjects. The issue here is 'transgression' in the Foucauldian sense: punishment is meted out to those whom the ideology fails to interpellate, those who transgress its dictates.³¹ The final couplet also replays the standard operation of a dominant ideology defining itself against other ideologies, and thus the poem reveals the negotiation of power at its most fundamental level.

The split subjectivity which is the product of this operation is retained by sonnet 126. Thus, unlike earlier poems in the sequence, the disjunctions in sonnets 124 and 125 are not followed by poems which recapitulate other themes, in a manner of interspersing. Sonnet 126, the final poem of those addressed to the young friend, is not even formally a sonnet, but a series of six rhymed couplets. Here, even the formal requirements of the genre can be seen to be breaking down:

O thou, my lovely boy, who in thy pow'r
 Dost hold time's fickle glass, his sickle hour,
 Who hast by waning grown, and therein show'st
 Thy lovers withering, as thy sweet self grow'st -
 If nature, sovereign mistress over wrack,
 As thou goest onwards still will pluck thee back,
 She keeps thee to this purpose, that her skill
 May time disgrace, and wretched minute kill.
 Yet fear her, O thou minion of her pleasure;
 She may detain but not still keep her treasure.
 Her audit, though delayed, answered must be,
 And her quietus is to render thee.

The first couplet asserts the friend's power over time, only for this power to be overturned in the remainder of the poem. The young man is only a 'minion' of nature's pleasure, and death awaits him. The idealising impetus has now completely failed, and time returns in the form of death's sickle (line 2). Thus, the inexorable progress of time will affect the friend in much the same way that it affected the persona of the poet in sonnet 73:

That time of year thou mayst in me behold,
 When yellow leaves, or none, or few, do hang
 Upon those boughs which shake against the cold,
 Bare ruined choirs, where late the sweet birds
 sang.
 (lines 1-4)

The literary word is found in this sonnet to be inadequate to sustain the attempt to essentialise the addressor, and by implication, that of the

addressee as well. The crisis in the ideology had originally precipitated this project, and its failure leaves the addressor a divided subject, acutely aware of the constructed nature of his own existence, which is itself a production within ideology.

Notes

- 1: See Chapter 2, pp.123-182 earlier.
- 2: See Mullaney op.cit., pp.126-129; see also Graham Holderness, Nick Potter and John Turner: Shakespeare: The Play Of History (London: MacMillan, 1988) pp.85-88.
- 3: Melchiori op.cit., p.29.
- 4: See Michel Foucault 'The Order Of Discourse' in Robert Young ed.: Untying The Text: A Post-Structuralist Reader (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1987) pp.51-76).
- 5: reprinted in Essays On Ideology; op.cit.
- 6: See Macherey and Balibar: 'On Literature As An Ideological Form' in Young op.cit., pp.79-99.
- 7: See Bakhtin op.cit. 1981 pp.259-442; and V. N. Volosinov: Marxism And The Philosophy Of Language trans. Ladislav Matejka and I.R.Titunik (New York: Seminar Press, 1973) pp.17-24.
- 8: See S. Schoenbaum: William Shakespeare: A Documentary Life (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1975) pp.161-194.
- 9: see Lawrence Stone (The Family, Sex And Marriage In England, (1500-1800) (London: Peregrine, 1988, and The Crisis Of The Aristocracy; and Catherine Belsey: The Subject Of Tragedy.
- 10: See Wright op.cit., pp.69-70.
- 11: Barker op.cit., p.23.
- 12: See appendix for Astrophel And Stella 84 and 85; see also Donne's Good Friday 1613: Riding Westward.
- 13: The passage just quoted from sonnet 28 is reminiscent of Antonio's illness in The Merchant Of Venice. This raises again the problem of the retrospective imposition of modern readings, as both could be read in terms

of a sexual meaning behind the surface 'restlessness'. Following Eve Sedgwick op.cit., pp.5-11 it becomes clear that such a reading is anachronistic.

14: see Sidney op.cit. 1982, and Puttenham op.cit.

15: Mullaney op.cit., p.x.

16: See Weimann op.cit. pp.215-224 and Jonathan Dollimore: Radical Tragedy (Brighton: Harvester, 1989) pp.70-82 for analyses of the crisis in representation.

17: See Foucault op.cit. 1989, pp.42-44 and The Kristeva Reader.

18: See Puttenham op.cit., ch.xix.

19: See Derrida op.cit. 1976, pp.27-73 in particular.

20: See Chapter 4 earlier.

21: Again see Chapter 4 earlier.

22: See Barker op.cit., pp.25-32, for an analysis of Hamlet with similar concerns.

23: Booth op.cit. 1977 p.196.

24: See pp.44-48 earlier.

25: John Webster: The White Devil ed. Elizabeth M. Brennan (London: Ernest Benn Limited, 1978).

26: Melchiori op.cit., p.88.

27: ibid., p.89.

28: See Foucault op.cit. 1987 p.24.

29: See Stone op.cit. pp.143-154.

30: See To Penshurst.

31: See Foucault in Young op.cit. pp.51-76.

32: See Watson op.cit., and pp.167-170 earlier.

Chapter 6

Subjectivity III: The 'Dark

Lady' Sonnets

In this chapter I propose to develop a reading of the sonnets based upon the theorising of subjectivity advanced in earlier chapters. Here I will be concerned firstly with the subjectivity of the woman of the later sonnets, the so-called 'dark lady'. A.L. Rowse begins his chapter on the 'dark lady' in his book Shakespeare The Man with the following contentious statement:

It would seem to have been towards the end of 1592 that a still more serious complication entered the relationship, to endanger it further. The snake had already entered paradise, and destroyed its pristine innocence, with a woman. This was the woman with whom Shakespeare became infatuated - and who made him suffer correspondingly - and with whom he had involved his patron.¹

This is a somewhat journalistic reformulation of a familiar critical position, in the setting out of a view of the 'dark lady' as a danger to what Eve Sedgwick calls the 'homosocial' relationship

between the poet and the young friend of the earlier sonnets. Rowse takes the characters of the sonnets literally, as people through whose narratives Shakespeare's life must be reconstructed.

It is, however, possible to move on from the type of criticism exemplified by Rowse's book to a reading which takes into account relations of power in the Renaissance. Indeed, it may be argued that patriarchal ideology produced woman's subjectivity in the sonnet tradition in terms of a heterosexual love discourse. The implications of this for the mythology of the aristocracy have already been discussed earlier,² and it has also been noted that this ideology was in crisis in the late sixteenth century. The effect of this crisis upon the subjectivity of the woman will constitute the concern of the first part of the present chapter.

The second part will be concerned with the subjectivity of the addressor in his relationship with the 'dark lady', since the crisis in representation renders the subject position of woman problematical, and this in turn creates difficulties for the masculine subjectivity of the addressor. The twin ideologies of patriarchy and

the aristocracy are forced to re-negotiate the terrain upon which they construct woman's subjectivity in these poems. This combines with the split in the addressor's subjectivity and the consequent disclosure of the production of homosocial power relations as they emerge at this point in the English Renaissance. It is the consequent historical pressures placed upon the sonnet as Shakespeare utilises the form, which will be the main focus of analysis in the second half of the chapter.

I

The first of the sonnets explicitly concerned with the 'dark lady', sonnet 127, immediately places the woman's-subject position in context. The sonnet utilises the vocabulary of inheritance as it sets out its characterisation of the woman:

In the old age black was not counted fair,
 Or if it were it bore not beauty's name.
 But now is black beauty's successive heir,
 And beauty slandered with a bastard shame;
 For since each hand hath put on nature's pow'r,
 Fairing the foul with art's false borrowed face,
 Sweet beauty hath no name, no holy bow'r,
 But is profaned, if not lives in disgrace.
 Therefore my mistress' eyes are raven black,
 Her eyes so suited, and they mourners seem
 At such who, not born fair, no beauty lack,

Sland'ring creation with a false esteem.
 Yet so they mourn becoming of their woe,
 That every tongue says beauty should look so.

Here an opposition is being set up between 'the old age' and 'now'. The previous age is the concern only of the first two lines, and is characterised as one in which 'black was not counted fair', or at least 'bore not beauty's name'. The echoes of wealth in 'counted' and of succession in 'bore ... name' accord with the discourses of aristocratic inheritance. Beauty is thus interpellated, in the phrase 'beauty's name', as the subject of this ideology, and the sonnet articulates the interpellation of beauty in terms of a referential theory of language. Since 'black' is specifically differentiated from 'fair', the implication is that in the 'old age' language stood in a perfect referential relationship with external objects. The poem therefore mythologises the past through its utilisation of the same theoretical framework as in Sidney's Defence of Poetry.

However, there is an important shift in the relationship between 'foul' and 'fair' in the new age. Lines 5-6 record this shift, leading on to

Therefore my mistress' eyes are raven black,
 (line 9)

Here the 'dark lady' is constituted as such because of the new circumstances. She problematises representation and therefore draws attention to the literary materials out of which her subjectivity is constructed; biographical details such as the actual identity of the 'dark lady' are therefore not strictly relevant to the politics of the sonnets. What is taking place in this sonnet is an inversion of the terms of the conventional sonnet associations of beauty with woman, but it is an inversion which is always only partial. The 'foul' 'imitates' the fair (line 6), thus problematising these implicitly moral categories, in a manner which is similar to Malcolm's formulation in

Macbeth:

All things foul would wear the brows of grace,
Yet grace must still look so. (IV.iii.23-24)

The partial displacement which takes place in the sonnet reproduces the ambivalence which marks the relationship with the young friend, who has all of the signs of duplicity, and yet cannot be fully acknowledged as such. It also produces the demonising of the 'dark lady' and of female sexuality generally.

This sonnet therefore moves beyond the conventional representation of beauty, and consequently reconstitutes a discourse with which to sustain its interpellation of woman's subjectivity. In this reconstituted poetic discourse nature is interpellated as a prior innocence. Once beauty problematises the patriarchal relations in the 'new age', it is repositioned as an illegitimate product of nature, and is consequently demonised through a process of bastardisation. This ideological operation points up the inadequacies of the standard sonnet process of the idealising of the woman. The madonna figure of Astrophel And Stella was already becoming a demonised figure in the Amoretti, and Shakespeare's sonnets represent the culmination of this historical movement. At the same time as woman is demonised, the sexuality she represents and the passion it provokes in the addressor are also demonised. In these sonnets, unlike the homosocial project of the young man poems, sexuality is linked specifically to the woman. Sexuality is thus effectively feminised, and therefore relegated to a position where it can be demonised by association with the figure of the woman, as part of a

containing operation which seeks to counter the threat posed by sexuality to the homosocial order.

A further consequence of this movement can be seen in the power arrogated to the poet through the metonymy of the hand in line 5. Nature is no longer a given, prior reality which is then to be represented, but is here reshaped by the poet. This entails a necessary displacement of the ideal terms in which nature was constituted, for example, in Sidney's Defence of Poetry, and, later, in poems such as Ben Jonson's To Penshurst. Indeed, there is in this sonnet a glimmering of the independent position to be secured for the figure of the poet which Ben Jonson articulates in the following way in To Penshurst:

Where comes no guest, but is allow'd to eate,
 Without his feare, and of the lord's owne meate:
 Where the same beere, and bread, and self-same
 wine,
 That is his Lordships, shall be also mine.
 And I not faine to sit (as some, this day,
 At great mens tables) and yet dine away. (61-66)

Here the object of Jonson's desire is a more powerful social niche for the poet, in which he no longer has to rely upon the vicissitudes of aristocratic patronage; he will have the same status as the lord of the manor. The symptom of

this historical move away from dependence upon the nobility in Shakespeare's sonnet is the poet's control over the nature which was constituted by aristocratic ideology; no longer is the poet merely the transparent medium through which ideal reality is to be transmitted.

Thus, sonnet 127 is concerned with a radical difference between the 'old age' and 'now', between the past and the present. The 'old age' is an idealised past, the result of a process of mythologising which empties it of a determinate history. In these circumstances, the representational language normally utilised in the sonnet convention loses its capacity for simple reflection. Thus, in sonnet 127 there is a contradiction between the mythology and the linguistic innovation which renders that mythology problematical. The sonnet embodies a material conflict between emergent and residual aspects of ideology, articulated as a relation between an idealised past, the subject of nostalgic recollection, and a problematical historical present. The use of 'But' at the beginning of line 3 sets out the opposition between the two periods: 'now is black beauty's successive heir'. This is

followed by 'bastard' in line 4, with all the traditional moral connotations of illegitimacy linked with the now morally inverted present. The construction of an innocent and ordered nature therefore produces in this sonnet illegitimacy as its anarchic 'other'. The violation of patriarchal authority by means of a promiscuous female sexuality which it cannot control is then displaced into the very same moral hierarchy which interpellates the subjectivity of the 'dark lady'. This sonnet therefore notes that the disjunction between the 'old age' and 'the new' poses a problem for the continuation of the patriarchal interpellation of the female subject. The poem sets out this disjunction, and then seeks to resolve it in terms of a moral hierarchy that accords with the concerns of the patriarchal order.

Revealingly, the poem goes on to use metaphors of colour to introduce an opposition between the two ages, and then expands upon the connotations of black to favour the past and to denigrate the present. This foreshadows the epigrammatic utterance of the ambivalent figures of the witches in Macbeth:

Fair is foul, and foul is fair
(I.i.10)

although in the sonnets the inversion produced by the radical reformulation of the relationship between signifier and signified has yet to go as far as this. Thus, for sonnet 127, 'Sweet beauty hath no name', language no longer accords with its proper subject, and the sacredness of beauty has been profaned. Signification is therefore beginning to drive a wedge between words and things, and mimesis cannot contain the contradictions this engenders. The 'dark lady' becomes the icon of the new circumstances, a literary persona created in response to the changing conditions of representation.

However, the poems still attempt to contain this new female subject within a subjectivity inscribed within the ideology of patriarchy. This project takes place in terms of an opposition between the poetic persona's adherence to the past and the 'dark lady's' position, which in sonnet 127 is described as

Sland'ring creation with a false esteem.
(line 12)

The opposition between the two positions is a consequence of the division between the

characteristics of the homosocial discourse and the generic requirements of the sonnet form on the one hand, and the problems posed for this discourse by the position of the 'dark lady' on the other. Thus, although the sonnet produces the speaker's lady as black in accordance with the new age, her subjectivity is still constituted by affiliation to the prior concerns of patriarchal ideology.³

This patriarchal economy produces sonnets in which the ideology seems relatively stable in the terms of the 'old age', interspersing the "dark lady" poems with sonnets which are analogous to those about the 'lovely boy' earlier in the sequence. Sonnet 128 provides an example as, of course, do sonnets 153 and 154. There are no references at all to the lady's blackness in any of these three poems, although there are references to elements of a feminised sexuality in the use of terms such as 'desire' and 'heat'.

In general, however, the lady's characterisation as 'black' is an important ideological motif in these poems. It produces the opposition between the dark lady of the new circumstances and the conventional female figures of previous sequences which structures sonnet 130.

And, as noted previously, it forms the basis for the production of her subject-position and the subsequent denigration of that constructed subjectivity. The ostensible opposition sonnet 127 sets up between the two ages is therefore a rhetorical device for the propagation of the discourse of patriarchy in the new age of signification, characterised in moral terms as false representation. Here the aesthetics of the sonnet form effectively contain the subjectivity of the woman. Thus, artistic closure constitutes an enactment of subjection itself. The characterisation of the woman as moral blackness must therefore be read in a manner which is attentive to this process of subjection, and only a symptomatic reading can uncover the operation of this aesthetic and political closure. Sonnet 131 marks the beginning of this characterisation of the 'dark lady', utilising familiar elements of an already established courtly discourse:

Thou art as tyrannous, so as thou art,
As those whose beauties proudly make them cruel;
For well thou know'st to my dear dotting heart
Thou art the fairest and most precious jewel.
Yet in good faith some say that thee behold
Thy face hath not the pow'r to make love groan;
To say they err I dare not be so bold,
Although I swear it to myself alone.
And to be sure that is not false I swear

A thousand groans but thinking on thy face
 One on another's neck do witness bear
 Thy black is fairest in my judgement's place.
 In nothing art thou black save in thy deeds,
 And thence this slander as I think proceeds.

This poem echoes the cruelty of Spenser's lady in the Amoretti⁴, thus utilising a motif which is already present in the sonnet discourse. In the first quatrain the addressor states that the woman is using his fondness for her to take advantage of him just as if she were one of the beauties of line 2. The second quatrain reaffirms her power over him, but problems arise in the third quatrain, in which the syntax is so complex as to make several different readings possible. Thus, although 'I swear' could be read as having the verbal phrase 'to be sure that is not false' as its object, it could also be read as taking 'A thousand groans' as its object; the syntactical confusion is intensified by the lack of a clear linkage between lines 9 and 10 and 'One on another's neck' at the beginning of line 11.

The impossibility of producing a single authoritative reading for such a quatrain renders the location of precise subject-positions problematical. Thus, uncertainty is injected into

the relationship between the addressor and the woman in a manner which goes beyond the circumstances in the Amoretti, although the situations are analogous. However, the concern of Shakespeare's sonnet with representation is a useful index of the changing context within which representation now operates. The vocabulary at this precise point is legalistic, the language of courtroom oaths: 'swear' appears in lines 8 and 9, linking the two quatrains; 'false' is used in line 9; 'witness' appears in line 11; and 'judgement's place' appears in line 12. These juridical metaphors link woman as subject of the law with her identity as subject of literary representation. The linguistic protocols of the sonnet here reveal the discursive connections between disparate elements of the dominant ideology. In these terms, the representation of the woman's blackness in the sonnets about the 'dark lady' becomes the legal proof of her moral blackness.

As was noted with sonnet 131, this moral blackness is contextualised in the poems in terms of the woman's cruelty to the suffering poet. The first quatrain of sonnet 132 furnishes a further example:

Thine eyes I love, and they as pitying me,
 Knowing thy heart torment me with disdain,
 Have put on black, and lying mourners be,
 Looking with pretty ruth upon my pain.

This is much more than an extension of the poet's angst regarding the lady's cruelty, as is intimated by the oxymoron of 'pretty ruth' in line 4. There is here a disjunction between beauty and blackness, a direct result of the appropriation of beauty for the figure of the young man in the homosocial discourse of the earlier sonnets. The problem this raises for the relationship between the poetic persona and the lady is fundamental to the later poems, since, in order for there to be a subject for these sonnets, the lady must hold some attraction for the addressor in terms of the generic requirements of the sonnet discourse. And yet, all of the elements which would be attractive in this sense have already been allocated to the young friend. In the terms of the sonnet convention, this produces a neat new conceit, which takes up the remainder of sonnet 132:

And truly not the morning sun of heav'n
 Better becomes the grey cheeks of the east,
 Nor that full star that ushers in the ev'n
 Doth half that glory to the sober west
 As those two mourning eyes become thy face.
 O let it then as well beseem thy heart,
 To mourn for me, since mourning doth thee grace,

And suit thy pity like in every part.

Then will I swear beauty herself is black,
And all they foul that thy complexion lack.

Here the conceit of beauty as black, epitomised in the concluding couplet, masks a crucial operation. The overlap in the 'Shakespearean' arrangement of the second quatrain into line 9 draws attention to this operation at the formal level. This enlarged quatrain produces a line in which the conventional eye motif becomes the woman's face. The blackness of her face sets up woman in opposition to the young friend by means of the familiar pun on sun/son in line 5, which recalls its earlier use in sonnet 7. The woman's subjectivity is not only different from that of the young man, but the difference is predicated upon its standing in opposition to a hierarchically superior masculine subject-position, and this whole operation threatens to invert the terms of the mystificatory discourse about nature.

Later sonnets expand upon the commonplace of feminine wiles in masculine discourse. In an earlier chapter, the madonna/whore dichotomy was seen to have disintegrated, with the 'madonna' element being appropriated for the young friend,

while all that remained for woman from her previous, idealised subject-position was the duplicity of the 'whore'.⁵ Linked with the metaphors of blackness in opposition to the 'sun' of the young man, the separation of these elements produces the convoluted series of lies in sonnet 138 and the dichotomy between the eyes and heart of the addressor in sonnet 141.

In the latter poem the lady's physical blackness is purely visual, as the poetic persona states that it is his heart that loves what his eyes despise:

In faith I do not love thee with mine eyes,
 For they in thee a thousand errors note;
 But 'tis my heart that loves what they despise,
 Who in despite of view is pleased to dote.

(lines 1-4)

Here a gap opens up in the discourse of mimesis; not only is there no longer the conventional sonnet correspondence between the appearance and the inner character of the lady, but also there is no such correspondence for the addressor either. It is not possible for these poems to reproduce the power play of Sidney's Astrophel And Stella, where the project is to make Stella's outward appearance accord with her inner self, to make her heart as

fit as her body for love.⁶

This division of the body fragments the senses into a series of metaphors which register a disjunction between the outer, physical world and the traditional images of the sonnet form. This disjunction has crucial consequences for Shakespeare's sonnets as a whole, since the crisis in representation which they record inscribes in them the historical moment of their production, necessitating a revision of the interpellation of woman's subjectivity which is articulated in previous sonnet sequences. The consequences of this fact for the homosocial order of the young man sonnets are obvious, since homosocial power relations depend for their effectiveness upon the continuing passivity of woman as the essential precondition for a sustaining of the patriarchal economy, even in this new context. The attempts of the later sonnets to maintain the subjection of woman in the sonnet form therefore generally destabilises the poems' reproduction of homosocial relations in the changed circumstances of representation.

The result is the equivocation of sonnet 142, the first couplet of which provides an example of

what is much more than word-play in the context of these political considerations:

Love is my sin, and thy dear virtue hate,
Hate of my sin, grounded on sinful loving.

These two lines pack into the disturbed relationship between the woman and the addressor connotations both of religion and of wealth. The oxymoron of 'sinful loving' disrupts any simplistic chiasmic syntactical pattern of love-sin-virtue-hate. In strictly moral terms, it is impossible to produce a reading which could differentiate between the dark lady and the poetic persona here. The blackness has therefore become a constitutive element of the subject position of the addressor, laying bare the processes of the construction of subjectivity in the sonnets at their most fundamental level. Here ideology no longer serves to occlude the differential constitution of gendered subjectivities.

Such changes in the conventional discourse of the sonnet form are constitutive in the case of sonnet 145:

Those lips that love's own hand did make
Breathed forth the sound that said, I hate,
To me that languished for her sake.
But when she saw my woeful state

Straight in her heart did mercy come,
 Chiding that tongue that ever sweet
 Was used in giving gentle doom;
 And taught it thus anew to greet:
 I hate she altered with an end,
 That followed it as gentle day
 Doth follow night, who like a fiend
 From heav'n to hell is thrown away.
 I hate from hate away she threw,
 And saved my life saying, not you.

In this sonnet woman's subjectivity is no longer simply a matter of 'darkness'. Just as the addressor's own subject position was rendered unstable in sonnet 142, so too the subjectivity which was allotted to woman becomes impossible to maintain in sonnet 145. The first couplet begins the poem with a conventional motif, which is then completely inverted at the end of line 2 with 'I hate'. At the formal level, this disruption of the sonnet discourse is accompanied by a dislocation of the 'Shakespearean' sonnet arrangement, with the standard grammatical unit of the first quatrain being reduced to three lines.

Furthermore, there then occurs a break in the syntactical logic of the sonnet with the connectives 'But' at the beginning of line 4 and 'thus' in line 8. At first, the octave seems to be stating, by means of 'But', that mercy comes 'straight' into the woman's heart after her

declaration of hate. However, this is then followed by a return to the hatred through 'thus', which as a conjunction seems to have no other possible referent, especially with the use of 'anew' in the context of the new inversion of love into hate. The discontinuity this effects for the sonnet is a result of the slide from the mode of the contrary to the continuous 'thus'. Such a severe disruption at the syntactical level indicates a discursive inability to fix the woman in the subject position prescribed for her by patriarchy. Such a reading is supported by the movement of the metaphors of the third quatrain. Here the woman, who has until now been vilified for the 'darkness' and the concomitant duplicity associated with her subject position, is nevertheless still hated in the 'altered' (line 9) circumstances of this sonnet.

Once again, the syntax becomes very disjointed, as the object of 'I hate' in line 9 can be taken to be either 'she altered', or the rest of the line as a whole, 'she altered with an end'. This disjunction extends to the remainder of the quatrain, with there being no clear referent for 'it' in line 10: 'it' could refer either to 'she altered' or 'an end'.

The final couplet does not resolve this problem, which is much more than a mere ambiguity; the

uncertainty of the relationship between the 'I' and 'she' in line 13 produces a final line which again inverts the conventional love discourse of the sonnet. By saying 'not you', the woman is hardly doing anything unusual for a sonnet lady. What is unusual is the addressor's acceptance of this refusal.

Such a complex sonnet, with its constant inversion of the conventional discourse of love, has no unitary meaning. Because of this, the poem's own inability to remain within the conventional discursive parameters of the sonnet genre does not give rise to a new relationship with the woman. The sonnet plays, especially in the final lines, with its own grammar in a linguistically self-conscious manner. The poet and the lady become, as a result, simultaneously subject and object of representation. Nevertheless, the poem continues to state the same hatred of the woman as was the case with earlier 'dark lady' sonnets, even though the syntactical confusion shows that the woman's position can no longer be contained by the subjectivity constructed for her.

The stance of the addressor inscribes the contemporary historical problems posed for

patriarchy in the sonnets. Although the dominant ideology as a whole is in crisis, patriarchy continues to try to interpellate woman as its subject. The history of this attempt, its successes and failures, is well documented,⁷ and it implies that the move toward increased regimentation even of upper class women which was a hallmark of the rise of strict protestantism was a response to the failure of the ideology of the aristocracy to continue to control women. Thus, sonnet 145 denigrates woman while attempting to control her, as can be seen in the final couplet. The woman's power of refusal records the poem's inability to sustain the subjectivity constructed for her.

The crisis in literary representation is symptomatic of the larger failure of patriarchal ideology. The subtraction of the element of beauty from the subjectivity of the woman by the young man sonnets leaves her subject position unstable. This produces a dislocation in the conventional heterosexual rhetoric of the sonnet discourse, so that the idealised lady of earlier sequences is, literally, an impossible vision in the changed circumstances of Shakespeare's sonnets. These poems focus explicitly upon sexuality as the source of

the lady's darkness. The sonnets interrogate the woman's sexuality in terms of the patriarchal assumptions lying behind the sonnet convention. There are inevitably wider socio-historical ramifications resulting from the inscription of hierarchical patriarchal relations within these poems. The ostensibly private 'dark lady' sonnets can therefore be shown to be implicitly political in nature, and the consequences of the shift from the realm of the ideal to that of the physical are recorded in the disjunctions which characterise the treatment of the woman.

One of the political repercussions of this shift is the overturning of the homosocial relationship between the addressor and the young man, as Eve Sedgwick has noted:

The dark lady is, for the most part, perceptible only as a pair of eyes and a vagina, but even in such a fragmentary form she disrupts that earlier vision of heterosexuality in which it had denoted mainly a broad avenue of patrimonial continuity among males. The irruption of an actual female onto the scene coincides with the disappearance of the children, miniature fathers, who were to have been the object of the sexual union in the early sonnets; and it also coincides with the end of the rhetoric urging the youth to keep the paternal roof in good repair.⁸

Thus, the historical circumstances which led to the production of a series of homosocial sonnets also transform the heterosexual discourse so radically that patriarchy is shown to be unable to sustain its hierarchical relations. The sonnets articulate the woman's sexuality as morally corrupt in response to the unsettling effects of her 'irruption', hence the theological point of the demonising of her sexuality.

It is this situation which produces sonnet 129, the poem which, more than any other, fully denigrates the woman's sexuality:

Th'expense of spirit in a waste of shame
 Is lust in action, and till action lust
 Is perjured, murd'rous, bloody, full of blame,
 Savage, extreme, rude, cruel, not to trust,
 Enjoyed no sooner but despised straight,
 Past reason hunted, and no sooner had,
 Past reason hated as a swallowed bait,
 On purpose laid to make the taker mad;
 Mad in pursuit, and in possession so,
 Had, having, and in quest to have, extreme,
 A bliss in proof, and proved, a very woe,
 Before, a joy proposed, behind, a dream.

All this the world well knows, yet none knows
 well

To shun the heav'n that leads men to this hell.

Despite the excoriation of female sexuality as represented in the person of the 'dark lady', which the poem characterises as 'lust', the concluding couplet renders a final denial of that sexuality

impossible. In his chapter on this sonnet, Giorgio Melchiori locates this equivocation in the context of a discussion of Richard Levin's account of sonnet 129:

Levin does not seem to realise that the dramatic quality of this sonnet is in fact due to the co-presence of as many conflicting meanings as possible, and what he calls incoherence is merely the ambiguity of feeling and expression, the contradictoriness of the speaker's position.⁹

Melchiori is careful to point out that the conflicting meanings he discerns in the poem are themselves implicated in wider questions of historicity. He goes on to discuss the structuralist reading of the poem by Jakobson and Jones,¹⁰ and it is at this point that he makes his own position clear:

In fact, the Jakobson-Jones analysis is an example of the limitations as well as of the uses of structural linguistics when applied to literary criticism. Its insights on the level of pervasive features, sound-patterns, and phonetic organization, are extremely valuable; but they become critically relevant only when placed within a wider referential semantic context.¹¹

It is now possible to link Melchiori's statement with the historical work carried out earlier in

this thesis, and to suggest that this sonnet requires to be read in relation to the political context of the patriarchal construction of female subjectivity. As Melchiori has noted, the sonnet consists of a series of contradictory elements, which are the result of the disruption in the sonnet discourse of heterosexual love brought about by the changing historical circumstances. Since the woman of the sonnet convention has no existence except as the object of the addressor's desire, the heterosexual relationship between the woman and the addressor of this sequence is rendered unstable because, as this sonnet states, the woman still attracts the addressor despite her association with hell. In fact, this sonnet goes much further than Spenser's poem, since the woman is a temptress precisely because of her association with hell and sin. The generic constraints of the form continue to require the woman to be attractive, even as these sonnets demonise her sexuality, and this leads to a situation in which the contradictions which the dominant ideology sought to efface, erupt through its surface.

Sonnet 129 therefore records the process of production of the patriarchal discourse in the

moment that it articulates its interpellation of female subjectivity. Moreover, the contradictions embodied in this poem have further consequences for the subjectivity of the addressor himself, as Eve Sedgwick has realised:

The heterosexuality that succeeded in eclipsing women was also, as we have seen, relatively unthreatened by the feminization of one man in relation to another. To be feminized or suffer gender confusion within a framework that includes a woman is, however, dire; and, as we shall see, any erotic involvement with an actual woman threatens to be unmanning. Lust itself (meaning, in this context, desire for women) is a machine for depriving males of self-identity (Sonnet 129).¹²

In Shakespeare's sonnets the heterosexual conventions of previous sonnet sequences can be seen to be breaking down. As these conventions were constructed by patriarchy at a time when the sonnet discourse was able to interpellate female subjectivity relatively successfully, in the changed historical circumstances of these poems involvement with a woman becomes dangerous insofar as it leads to the eclipse of masculinity itself. In these sonnets sexuality is therefore a form of transgression which threatens to kill the masculine, disrupting the homosocial order. The

situation is analogous to that description of transgression suggested by Jonathan Dollimore when he argues that:

If we can indeed discern in the demonising of sexuality a relegitimation of authority we should not then conclude that this is simply due to an ideological conspiracy; or rather it may indeed be conspiratorial but it is also ideological in another, more complex sense: through a process of displacement an imaginary - and punitive - resolution of real social tension and conflict is attempted.¹³

The demonising of sexuality is thus an attempt to manage gender relations in a time of crisis on behalf of the dominant ideology. In these circumstances Shakespeare's sonnets are unable to sustain the subjectivity constructed for women without putting it in question and the uncertainty this generates extends to the hierarchically superior subjectivity constructed for the addressor as well. At the root of this development is the move from the ideal woman of previous sonnet collections to the sexual body of the 'dark lady', and it is this that prompts the denigration of female sexuality in sonnet 129.

However, this disruption in the addressor's subjectivity is displaced onto passion, with the

result that he decries not only female sexuality, but the lust it arouses in men. It is this lust 'in action' which is 'Th'expense of spirit'; even without action, it is 'perjured, murd'rous, bloody' and so on. An opposition is being set up here between the spirit and the body which privileges a Platonic, quasi-religious separation of the spirit from the body. However, the material world is now too compelling to be rejected, and this produces a radical discontinuity between the world (woman) and the spirit (man), and this discontinuity destabilises the patriarchal binary opposition of masculinity and femininity.

In his chapter on the poem, Melchiori draws attention to the time scheme in the context of the resultant characterisation of lust:

The opening lines are clear: they define lust in action. They establish an ideal (or historical) present - Is - which is the moment of action - in fact the sexual act. But the rest of the sonnet, after taking that moment as its starting-point, moves all the time backwards and forwards from it.¹⁴

This movement allows the lust in action to be represented as a 'swallowed bait/On purpose laid to make the taker mad;' in lines 7-8. When it has

attained its object, it is found to be, in retrospect, a 'dream' (line 12). The outcome is one of fantasy, rather than substance, an inversion of the resolutions of previous sonnet sequences. Indeed, such an inversion recalls the fairing of the foul in sonnet 127, and foreshadows the shifts from love to sin in sonnet 142. The 'heav'n' which the dream at first appeared to be in sonnet 129, becoming transformed into its opposite, 'hell', in the last line, is particularly resonant, in that it draws a distinction between spiritual fantasy and material reality while retaining a moral categorisation for each one. Sexuality occupies a low position within a moral economy, but it is still a constituent element of experience, and its compelling power destabilises the interpellation of oppositional subject positions.

Given this context, the occurrence of the image of the dream at precisely this point is significant. It epitomises the crisis in representation which was the condition for the production of these poems, signifying that what seemed to be a heaven was in fact its opposite. To use Michel Pecheux's terms¹⁵ the ideological appropriation of certain linguistic meanings from

the generality of the language available (his word for this is 'interdiscourse') can be shown to be at work. The dominant ideology can no longer contain contradiction, and the subject-position occupied by the addressor incorporates a recognition of disjunction from within the ideology itself. Sonnet 129 can therefore be read in such a way as to permit the recovery of meanings which relate to elements excluded by the dominant ideology.¹⁶

The changes which were sweeping through the discourses practised in the sonnet form are therefore necessarily inscribed in this poem, taking the shape of a conservative sexual politics, the 'political unconscious' of Shakespeare's sonnets. Accordingly, as Eve Sedgwick has noted, the subjectivity of the addressor in these sonnets is troubled by the irruption of a woman into the homosocial world they try so carefully to sustain. The response to this irruption in sonnet 129 is the demonising of the lust the woman provokes in the addressor. This can now be read as an ideological strategy: the addressor's subject-position is no longer secure, and a return to the ideology of sexual difference and gendered subjectivity is necessary to shore it up. Hence the resolving

couplet of sonnet 129, in which the 'heaven' of sexual activity leads men to hell, since it forces spirit to engage with the material world. The sonnet follows the discursive logic of the move from Virgin to Whore, from the ideal to the sexual, but because both of these are positions within patriarchy, the poem seeks to maintain the patriarchal power relations by denigrating female sexuality as the efficient cause of the lust it arouses. The articulation of the compulsion to lust is here an important fragmentation of the traditional Christian position. The description of lust allows the sonnet to deviate from the model of prescriptive sexuality associated with Christianity, producing a disjunction between morality and action, restraint and feeling.

It is clear, then, that sonnet 129 attempts to control the subject position of the woman at the very point at which that control is most threatened. In these circumstances it is not surprising that the result is a poem full of disjunctions. By attempting to sustain the patriarchal interpellation of female subjectivity through the strategy of a displacement of sexuality onto lust, the poem 'protests too much'. The

forcefulness of its fourteen-line attack on passion is undercut by the disjunctions revealed in the addressor's own subject-position in the final couplet. These two lines record the discontinuity which is the relation of Shakespeare's sonnets to those of his predecessors through metaphors of 'heaven' and 'hell'. The idealised love of previous sequences is now a hell of sexuality, and, as the final couplet states, no man shuns this hell despite prior knowledge of the consequences. The result is that the construction of a demonic catalogue of the features of lust actually inscribes the anarchic 'other' of patriarchy within the poem itself, and thus offers an opportunity for discursive resistance to interpellation that is recoverable through a symptomatic reading of the sonnet. The consequences for the addressor's subjectivity are profound. The hierarchically superior position constructed by patriarchy for male subjectivity is necessarily rendered unstable in such circumstances.

II

Eve Sedgwick analyses the disruption of the addressor's subject position in sonnets 135 and 136. She approaches the breakdown of gendered subjectivity through a close textual reading which pays attention to the collocation of various connotations of the word "will", and, hence, the possibility of a blurring of gender identities:

The nonsensical iteration (14 "will"s in Sonnet 135) tells the whole story: it has to point to a double entendre, and double entendre, by definition, can mean only one thing. But this double entendre means too many things; it is the name of at least one, probably two, and possibly three of the men involved; it is an auxiliary verb with the future tense; it is a common noun meaning (roughly) desire; it means penis; it means vagina. Its gender bearings are, far from neutral, but wildly and, as it turns out, dangerously scattered.¹⁷

Her argument that the function of double entendre is dispersed among many possible meanings becomes crucial in relation to the linking of the meanings of the poet's name and female sexuality; she continues:

What seems most striking in the poem's treatment of "will" is the extension of the word (as, really, its main meaning) to the female genitals, considering that

its first meaning on this particular stage must have been as a male name, the poet's own and perhaps his beloved's. Why should he do this?¹⁸

Here the male name is linked with female sexuality, and the question at the end of the passage acknowledges the consequences for male subjectivity in the sonnets. Sedgwick notes the concomitant problematising of gender identity:

Differently put, for a man to undergo even a humiliating change in the course of a relationship with a man still feels like preserving or participating in a sum of male power, while for a man to undergo any change in the course of a relationship with a woman feels like a radical degeneration of substance.¹⁹

This explains the vehemence with which the addressor excoriates female sexuality and the lust it arouses in him, for example in sonnet 129, while earlier poems in the sequence constantly try to sustain the relationship between the addressor and the young man, even as they acknowledge the difficulty of doing so. Homosocial considerations bring about this difference in gender treatment, but the inability of patriarchy to control the woman and the concomitant failure of the displacement of this inability onto 'lust'

radically destabilises the homosocial order.

Once again, however, it must be stated that the process of disintegration this entails is not a homogeneous one that unfolds through the progression of the sequence. As with the recognition of the duplicity of the friend in earlier sonnets, poems which record the disruption of the homosocial discourse are interspersed among sonnets which seem to be relatively conventional in their representation of a love affair. Sonnet 128 serves as an example of this process:

How oft, when thou my music play'st
 Upon that blessed wood whose motion sounds
 With thy sweet fingers when thou gently sway'st
 The wiry concord that mine ear confounds,
 Do I envy those jacks that nimble leap
 To kiss the tender inward of thy hand,
 Whilst my poor lips, which should that harvest
 reap,
 At the wood's boldness by thee blushing stand.
(lines 1-8)

Here the grammatical movement of the first quatrain flows smoothly from line to line, helped by the fact that the last word of each of the first four lines is a verb. The comma at the end of line 4 establishes the standard Shakespearean logic scheme, with the second quatrain being concerned with a different theme.

However, taken in the context of other sonnets such as the problematical sonnet 129 which follows immediately after this one in the sequence, this interspersing has the effect of further fragmenting the sonnet discourse. Poems such as sonnet 128 in effect draw attention to themselves because of their proximity to disruptive elements. They attempt to sustain the conventional rhetoric in the face of the breakdown of that rhetoric, with the result that they only intensify the fragmentation of the discourse.

The subjectivity of the addressor does not remain immune to these effects. As noted previously, the fact that the heterosexual nature of the discourse requires the lady to be attractive despite her characterisation as 'dark' inevitably destabilises the subject position of the poetic persona. This occurs in the midst of the interspersing noted above, leading to a situation in which the 'dark lady' motif becomes the terrain upon which the political struggle for control over female subjectivity is played out. Furthermore, and as a necessary corollary, the 'dark lady' sonnets disclose the failure of this operation. These poems play out the 'radical degeneration of substance' in

the subjectivity of the addressor noted by Eve Sedgwick.

Sonnet 132 exemplifies the occurrence of this movement. The first quatrain establishes the 'black' quality of the woman, by means of the standard sonnet metonymy of the eyes:

Thine eyes I love, and they as pitying me,
Knowing thy heart torment me with disdain,
Have put on black, and loving mourners be,
Looking with pretty ruth upon my pain.

So far, this is little more than a variation on the standard conceit of the pain of the lover. But the sonnet finishes with a couplet that once again inverts the conventional love discourse:

Then will I swear beauty herself is black,
And all they foul that thy complexion lack.

These lines are reminiscent of the treatment of Othello, where mimesis is put in question in Shakespeare's play in a similar manner. There is, at first, a disjunction between Othello's colour and the conventional motifs associated with it, which is recuperated for a moral economy later in the play. This is a similar operation to that which occurs in sonnet 132. Both Othello and the 'dark lady' are attractive, that is, are objects of

desire. But, at the same time, both carry connotations of repugnance. Blackness therefore points to a problematising of representation in this context, further serving to epitomise the difficulty the sonnets have in sustaining female subjectivity. The sonnet attempts to adapt to the new circumstances of representation by inverting the old subjectivity previously constructed for the woman. Crucially, this subjectivity requires, in the changed circumstances of the appropriation of the original beauty of the sonnet discourse for the young man, a new definition of female beauty. The old mimetic beauty was that represented in previous sequences, but this is no longer relevant. The attractiveness of the woman in Shakespeare's sonnets no longer depends upon mimesis. This implies a shift within the sonnet form away from the idealising impetus with which it was associated and the consequences for the addressor's own subjectivity are profound. There is no longer a direct correspondence between word and object; signification muddies the clear pool of transparent referentiality.

Sonnet 137 clearly signposts the problems associated with this shift away from mimetic

representation. The political repercussions are many, as these sonnets are now committed to the reconstruction of female subjectivity within a poetic form long associated with a now redundant mimesis:

Thou blind fool love, what dost thou to mine eyes,
 That they behold and see not what they see?
 They know what beauty is, see where it lies,
 Yet what the best is take the worst to be.
 If eyes corrupt by over-partial looks
 Be anchored in the bay where all men ride,
 Why of eyes' falsehood hast thou forged hooks,
 Whereto the judgement of my heart is tied?
 Why should my heart think that a several plot,
 Which my heart knows the world's wide common place?
 Or mine eyes, seeing this, say this is not
 To put fair truth upon so foul a face?

In things right true my heart and eyes have erred,

And to this false plague are they now transferred.

The recurrence of 'fair' and 'foul' in line 12 marks this poem as being deeply implicated in the process of signification, locating it very precisely within the context of a contemporary theorising of language. This leads to the position which Bacon advocates in The Advancement of Learning:

Poesy is a part of learning in measure of words for the most part restrained, but in all other parts extremely licensed, and doth truly refer to the imagination, which, being not tied to the laws of matter, may at pleasure join that

which nature hath severed, and sever that
 which nature hath joined; and so make
 unlawful matches and divorces of
 things.²⁰

The discursive association of nature and law marks Bacon's text with an acknowledgement on behalf of the dominant ideology that poetry can, under certain conditions, resist control. In this passage 'licensed', has the same function of policing disjunction as the moral excoriation of female sexuality in the sonnets.

Analogously, the reappearance of 'foul' and 'fair' in sonnet 137 records a sense of outrage at the poem's inability to control gendered identity. This sonnet uses the motif of the eyes to represent the subjectivity of the poetic persona, a significant development of the motif from its conventional usage. The poem questions representation in line 2, but then recognises the ideological status of mimesis in the first place with the acknowledgement that beauty 'lies' at the end of line 3. For this sonnet, idealist representation is no longer adequate. The triple use of the verb 'to be' in lines 3-4 straddles the 'lies' of beauty; being, the essential category of

representation, is found to be a lie. The poem recognises that beauty is already constructed by the ideology of mimesis, as are the motifs associated with it in the sonnet form.

A further, startling, development then takes place in line 5. The eyes which have epitomised the addressor's subjectivity are now themselves characterised as 'corrupt'. The 'over-partial looks' of the love discourse are 'anchored in the bay where all men ride'. There is here more confusion over the conventional connotations associated with female subjectivity, as the 'bay where all men ride' is the same safe harbour of Wyatt's 'My Galley Charg'd With Forgetfulness': female sexuality. Yet the eyes associated with women in the discourse have already been used in connection with the addressor. The end result is that the 'corrupt' eyes can refer to either sex, marking the body as a site of contestation. The eyes and the safe harbour become constituent elements of female subjectivity in a cultural construction based on sexual difference. The fact that this process can be discerned at work in sonnet 137 shows that the ideology can no longer efface the conditions of its own production.

The question which comprises lines 7-8 then moves on to the inevitable effects upon the subjectivity of the addressor. It is not clear whether it is the standard sonnet association of eyes with the woman, or this poem's association of eyes with the addressor's own persona that is being questioned. The fact that each interpretation is as likely in this context as the other dislocates the subject-position of the addressor. This links with the next question, that of lines 9-10, with 'that' referring to a subject that is indefinite. The split in the 'heart' of these two lines encapsulates the persona's inability to leave behind his subject position within the homosocial order, even though he is able to question his own interpellation. In line 9, the heart thinks that the 'that' of lines 7-8 is a 'several plot'. Here the connotations of 'several' as separation and as more than one play an important part in the construction of gendered subjectivity. Thus, in line 10, the heart knows this to be 'the wide world's common place', in accordance with patriarchal ideology. The question of lines 11-12 returns the sonnet to the disruption of representation, with the result that the eyes which

are the addressor are left asking an unanswered question.

These questions, which disrupt the normal Shakespearean arrangement of the logic of the third quatrain, lead the sonnet to a couplet which completely deprives the ideology of mimesis of any force. In strict representational terms, it would be impossible for the heart and eyes to err in 'things right true', but the new historical circumstances produce 'this false plague'. But 'this' in the final line does not refer to any one obvious item, leaving the subjectivity of the addressor within the problematic of patriarchal ideology even though it is found to be no longer adequate. Only the context of the sequence as a whole could rectify this lack of a referent, which would of course be the 'dark lady', who has already been characterised in demonic terms. The lack of an operation of a simple interpellation within sonnet 137 problematises subjectivity, with the resultant production of a dialectic in the sonnet between the addressing of a male subjectivity, followed by that of a female subjectivity. This indeterminacy links with the replaying of the construction of literary representation in sonnet 122, in a disjunction

between actual physical beauty and its poetic manifestation. This leads to a reluctance to specify the nature of the addressee within the sonnet itself. It is only the positioning of the poem prior to sonnet 126 that supplies a sense of a male addressee. The final couplet makes it clear that the addressee is insufficiently beautiful to be remembered for his/herself:

To keep an adjunct to remember thee
Were to import forgetfulness in me.

But in sonnet 137 no such refusal of the interpellation of beauty is possible; the dialogism in the poem between the male and female subjectivities produces an attempt to idealise a situation, to resist the movement of history in favour of a conservative politics.

This resolution is much more radical than those of other poems which deal with the 'dark lady', such as the sequence of 'lies' in sonnet 138, with the concomitant sexual pun, and the cruelty of the woman as represented in sonnets 139 and 140. Sonnet 141 recapitulates, with a couplet that uses the same 'plague' as sonnet 137:

Only my plague thus far I count my gain,
That she that makes me sin awards me pain.

Here 'sin' begins a motif that continues through sonnet 142 and, of course, is picked up again in sonnet 144. The religious metaphor is brought in to reinforce the ideal and juridical metaphors of previous sonnets to make adjustments which are political rather than merely aesthetic. This occurs just as sonnet 144 is about to produce a further set of meanings through its contiguity to sonnets 142 and 143, which does not postulate a strict sequential organisation. The metaphor of sin is one of the constitutive elements of the subjectivity of the 'dark lady' as Whore, recalling the physical, sexual connotations which are demonised earlier. Sonnet 144 sharpens these distinctions:

Two loves I have of comfort and despair.
 Which like two spirits do suggest me still;
 The better angel is a man right fair,
 The worser spirit a woman coloured ill.
 To win me soon to hell, my female evil
 Tempteth my better angel from my side,
 And would corrupt my saint to be a devil,
 Wooing his purity with her foul pride.
 And, whether that my angel be turn'd fiend,
 Suspect I may, yet not directly tell,
 But being both from me both to each friend,
 I guess one angel in another's hell.
 Yet this shall I ne'er know, but live in doubt,
 Till my bad angel fire my good one out.

In this sonnet, Shakespeare anticipates Donne, where, as Thomas Docherty has argued²¹ the poet

struggles to maintain an imperial superiority over the woman. For Donne this constitutes a crisis of male identity; in Shakespeare's poems sexuality is feminised, the worser spirit, the female evil of lines 4-5, being the same demonised figure familiar from sonnet 129. Such an excoriation of female sexuality recalls what Peter Stallybrass identifies as the unnatural sexuality associated with the Witches and Lady Macbeth in Macbeth:

On the one hand, there are the (virtuous) families of men; on the other hand, there are the antifamilies of women. And her, the notorious question, 'How many children had Lady Macbeth?' is not entirely irrelevant. For although Lady Macbeth says, 'I have given suck' (I.vii.54), her children are never seen on the stage, unlike the children of Duncan, Banquo, Macduff, and Siward. Are we not asked to accept a logical contradiction for the sake of symbolic unity: Lady Macbeth is both an unnatural mother and sterile? This links her to the unholy family of the Witches, with their familiars and their brew which includes 'Finger of birth-strangled babe' and the blood of a sow which has eaten its own litter (IV.i.30 and 64-65).²²

Similarly, in sonnet 144 the subject-position of the woman is constructed by means of difference predicated upon a religious metaphor which depends for its force upon the identity of the man being completely unproblematical. The poem literally

demonises the woman, and yet it also accords her power: she will be able to corrupt the poetic persona all the more easily if she can corrupt his better angel. Thus, the sonnet demonises woman because she threatens to subvert the homosocial order, and accordingly it plays out the addressor's recognition of patriarchal ideology. The persona can only 'suspect' that his good angel has been transformed into its opposite. The poetic persona's intermediate position between the two locates him as the site of contestation between the discourses they represent. In a sense, the poem plays out a 'psychomachia', externalising the addressor's desire in terms of a bifurcation along the axis of patriarchal ideology. This fragmentation positions the friend as superior mind, and the 'dark lady' as the lower bodily stratum, in an attempt to resolve the disruption of the homosocial order that results from the irruption of the woman into the relationship between the addressor and the friend. Representation is not adequate to contain the disruptions that occur in the poem. Hence it is unable to sustain the subjectivity of the woman, and this destabilises the subject position of the addressor as well. Nevertheless, he is unable to

move away from his designated position, despite an awareness that there is a possibility that not only he, a subject of the ideology, can be corrupted, but that his good angel, the noble young man, may also have been transformed. As noted above, the opposing of the demonised woman and the angelic young friend sets up a dialectic between the intelligence and rationality of the friend and the sexual, lower bodily stratum epitomised by the woman. Hence, the man is characterised as the intelligence, while irrational emotion becomes the subjectivity of the woman. The resultant difference between masculine and feminine is therefore not neutral, rather, it is shot through with power relations. Metaphors of disease have an important role here, as the woman threatens masculinity with death. Such metaphors constitute the vocabulary by which the poem notes the crisis in the ideology; hence the final couplet, in which the addressor states that he can only live in doubt of the truth of the situation until his bad angel 'fires' his good one out. The fires which burn out venereal disease become a means by which this sonnet feminises sexuality while at the same time demonising it, with the concomitant result that

evil itself is sexualised. By moralising gender in terms of the disease of female sexuality, the poem stages Genesis in archetypal terms, with the young friend as Adam tempted by the Satan/'dark lady' figure.

The uncertainty over the outcome of this operation in the poem will exist until the woman acts; the implication is that no action that the friend can take can dispell this uncertainty. The patriarchal discourse is finally deprived of one of its fundamental premises: the gendered difference of active and passive, with the male being the active principle.

The disease motif continues in sonnet 146, producing a poem which continues to record the conflict of identity in terms of religious metaphors:

Poor soul, the centre of my sinful earth,
 these rebel pow'rs that thee array,
 Why dost thou pine within and suffer dearth,
 Painting thy outward walls so costly gay?
 (lines 1-4)

This particular rendering of the sonnet, taken from Stephen Booth's edition, excises a repetition of the phrase "My sinful earth" at the beginning of the second line which makes perfect sense as a

rhetorical figure of anaphora. Such a repetition provides the image of three concentric circles, the soul, the sinful earth, and the rebel powers. The last, borrowed from the rebel angels of Genesis, politicises the crisis in subjectivity. The sonnets are now explicit about their concern with power relations. The ideology has now been stripped away, and representation paints 'the outward walls so costly gay' while the soul pines within and suffers dearth. There is no longer any correspondence between outward show and inward reality; in fact, the old subjectivity associated with mimesis is now literally dead:

Why so large cost, having so short a lease,
 Dost thou upon thy fading mansion spend?
 Shall worms, inheritors of this excess,
 Eat up thy charge? Is this thy body's end?
(lines 5-8)

The connotations of wealth and power are obvious here, particularly with the echo of 18.4:

And summer's lease hath all too short a date;

The earlier poem, with its insistence upon the homosocial order, is recalled in a sonnet which records the death of this order. The irruption of the 'dark lady' onto the scene has forced the

discourse to come to grips with the problem of the subjection of woman, and much has occurred between the two uses of the phrase.

The result of this death is a series of sonnets which detail the radical split in the addressor's subjectivity. In sonnet 147 the dominant metaphor is of disease:

My love is as a fever, longing still
 For that which longer nurseth the disease,
 Feeding on that which doth preserve the ill,
 Th'uncertain sickly appetite to please.
(lines 1-4)

From the outset, this disease is associated with the woman. The continuation of the fever is assured by its fixation with the woman, who is castigated in the final couplet:

For I have sworn thee fair, and thought thee
 bright,
 Who art as black as hell, as dark as night.

The return to the failure of mimesis here is by now familiar, but this occurs in the context of a poem which states that:

Desire is death, which physic did except.
(line 8)

Heterosexual desire kills the addressor. Crucially, this death records the fact that the homosocial

paradigm depends upon the successful subjection of woman, and that the failure of this operation puts in jeopardy the position of hierarchical superiority constructed for man.

Sonnet 148 continues this recognition in terms of the sonnet convention, a case of the form being turned against the discourse it articulated for so long:

O me! what eyes hath love put in my head,
Which have no correspondence with true sight!
Or if they have, where is my judgement fled,
That censures falsely what they see aright?
(lines 1-4)

The second question receives no clear answer, leaving the addressor once more in a position where he is aware of the ideology, even though he cannot move away from it. This split is fully articulated in sonnet 149:

Canst thou, O cruel, say I love thee not,
When I against myself with thee partake?
Do I not think on thee when I forgot
Am of myself all tyrant for thy sake?
Who hateth thee that I do call my friend?
On whom frown'st thou that I do fawn upon?
Nay, if thou lour'st on me, do I not spend
Revenge upon myself with present moan?
What merit do I in myself respect,
That is so proud thy service to despise,
When all my best doth worship thy defect,
Commanded by the motion of thine eyes?
But, love, hate on, for now I know thy mind;
Those that can see thou lov'st, and I am blind.

Line 2 states the position: the addressor is on the side of the woman, against himself. In line 3 he becomes tyrant over himself for her sake. The stance of the unrequited lover in previous sequences never led to an identification of this sort, of the poet with the lady. However, yet again it must be stressed that this identification is only partial, as the addressor is still content to remain within the power structures of patriarchy, despite their perceived inadequacy.

Not only is the woman uncontrolled by the ideology, but, as this poem shows, a position of female power is beginning to be developed as a result. However, the adherence of the poetic persona to patriarchal power relations forces a representation of this power as a split in the man. He is the one who is tyrant over himself; he revenges himself upon himself when he notes her displeasure. But it is important to note that despite the split in the addressor's subjectivity, the woman never attains a position from which she can dominate power relations. All that occurs is an inversion that is always only partial. She is the locus of the crisis in the homosocial order, and although she resists total control, she never quite

manages to overturn the system, and she never supersedes the superior position accorded to man by in the structure of social relations. Woman always threatens to disrupt patriarchy as an excess, and can only be controlled by means of a moral discourse.

The sequence ruminates around the key questions thrown up by the crisis in the ideology, and this is what produces the interspersing of poems which are relatively conventional. Thus, sonnet 150 recapitulates what has gone before many times:

O from what pow'r hast thou this pow'rful might,
With insufficiency my heart to sway? (lines 1-2)

Again there is a hint of demonic power, an articulation of patriarchy's incapacity to understand its failure to contain the woman, and the consequent mythologising operation effected through religious metaphors. Thus, despite the appearance of emergent elements in the sonnets, the practice of literary representation remains within the problematic of aristocratic patriarchal discourse.

Notes

- 1: A.L. Rowse: Shakespeare The Man (London: MacMillan, 1973) p.87.
- 2: See Chapters 1,2,4 and 5 earlier.
- 3: See pp.303-304 earlier.
- 4: See pp.150-153 earlier.
- 5: See Chapter 4 earlier.
- 6: See pp.129-132 earlier.
- 7: See especially Belsey op.cit. 1985 pp.129-148.
- 8: Sedgwick: op.cit., p.36.
- 9: Melchiori: op.cit., p.125. He is discussing Richard Levin: 'Sonnet CXXIX as a "Dramatic" Form', p.176.
- 10: Roman Jakobson and Lawrence G. Jones: Shakespeare's Verbal Art In Th'Expench of Spirit (The Hague: Mouton, 1970).
- 11: Melchiori op.cit., p.127.
- 12: Sedgwick op.cit., p.36.
- 13: Jonathan Dollimore: 'Transgression And Surveillance In Measure For Measure' in Dollimore and Sinfield op.cit., p.74.
- 14: Melchiori op.cit., p.144.
- 15: Pecheux op.cit., esp. ch.7.
- 16: Macherey op.cit., pp.51-53.
- 17: Sedgwick op.cit., p.38.
- 18: *ibid.*, p.39.
- 19: *ibid.*, p.45.

- 20: Francis Bacon: The Advancement Of Learning ed. Arthur Johnston (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1974) p.80.
- 21: Thomas Docherty: John Donne Undone (London: Methuen, 1986) pp.51-87.
- 22: Peter Stallybrass: 'MacBeth and Witchcraft' in Focus On MacBeth ed. John Russell Brown (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1982) p.198.

Conclusion

My reading of subjectivity has stressed that there is no clear narrative line in the sonnets. This is a direct formal consequence of the crisis in representation. The historical pressures of the late sixteenth century demand change within the discourses of the sonnet genre, and the result is that Shakespeare's sonnets are unable simply to reproduce the discourses associated with previous sequences such as Astrophel And Stella.

I have argued that Shakespeare's sonnets attempt to produce a resolution of these difficulties by investing the sonnets' subject positions with new resonances. These positions are themselves constructed out of the elements associated with previous sequences, with which they enter into an intertextual relation. Hence, the young friend's subjectivity is produced by an appropriation of the beauty of the conventional sonnet lady, and the "dark lady" is demonised all the more through the ascription of a lack of beauty as a constitutive element of her subjectivity. This textual structuring is itself predicated upon the

historical changes which I investigated in the first two chapters, with the added proviso that the sonnets do not simply reflect or express this history. Rather, they comprise a mediation of the historical pressures, an aestheticising that is predicated upon a precise relationship with material historical change. Hence, the nature of subjectivity disclosed in my reading reveals an ideology in crisis.

The symptomatic reading of the sonnets which makes up the main part of the thesis uncovers the operation of this ideological resolution. The sonnets can be seen, in such a context, to be an attempt to manage historical change in the face of a crisis in the sphere of a conservative sexual politics. The relationship between the friend and the poetic persona is firmly rooted in a specific homosocial hierarchy, and the excoriation of woman is an inevitable consequence of this social relation.

The meanings which the sonnets produce are therefore overdetermined by socio-historical circumstances. I argued in my introduction that traditional criticism has been unable to uncover the relationship between the sonnets and the moment

of their production because of the assumption of an authentic poetic voice that guarantees authorial presence. This assumption has led to the effacing of history and the elaboration of a whole body of criticism that has read the sonnets as autobiographical. This thesis attempts to return the sonnets to history, reacting against the essentialising humanist impulse of this sort of criticism. Thus, it is possible to note that the reluctance of the humanist critic to come to terms with the historical discontinuities that produce conflict has led to a totalising narrative of the love of Shakespeare as embodied in the sonnets; disjunction is resolved in the author's person. My project has been to question this operation as itself an ideological one, and to move beyond it to a reading which radically historicises the sonnets.

It is this historicising strategy that has underpinned the reading of subjectivity in the sonnets. My reading has attempted to avoid the temptation to read the sonnets in the given order of the 1609 Quarto. I see the treatment of woman in the later sonnets as a product of the same history as the treatment of the friend in the earlier poems. The 'dark lady' poems are predicated upon a

degeneration of the subjectivity allotted to woman in previous sequences, but this formal consequence of the "young man" sonnets has not led, in my reading, to the narrative of a love affair. In fact, as pointed about above, such a result would be an ahistorically reductionist one.

At the tactical level, my reading has taken into account many of the sonnets that have not been analysed by critics to the same extent as, for example, sonnet 94. This strategy has allowed me to address the points on which humanist criticism has been silent, and has had the added methodological advantage of insisting that there is no unitary meaning for the sequence as a whole. Moreover, this strategy has also enabled the thesis to attempt to avoid repeating the errors of traditional criticism. I have tried not to impose twentieth-century values on the text in a reductionist manner. Rather, I have been constantly aware of the interplay of my own reading practice with these Renaissance poems and their history. The result has been an acknowledgement of historical difference, with an attention to the history of the sonnets' own literary production.

The operation of the returning of a specific

history to the destabilisation of identity that takes place in these poems has permitted a realisation that no easy demarcation between public and private is possible. To impose such a distinction between the two spheres upon the sonnets would be an anachronism, since these categories do not yet exist in their recognisably modern form in the Renaissance. There are elements of this development in Montaigne and Machiavelli, but it does not receive a full philosophical justification until later, with the advent of Descartes' philosophy. The social system that enacts subjection in the sonnets does not yet include this dichotomy, and the awareness of historical difference has helped to place the sonnets precisely in a determinate history.

These poems are therefore intrinsically political in nature. They do not exist in a realm of aesthetics which is separable from political practice. Thus, I do not accept Althusser's theorising of the 'internal distantiating of art'.¹ Such a distinction has already been made by Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg in their introduction to Marxism And The Interpretation Of Culture:

Moreover, the title situates Marxism at the center of such developments and thus suggests the need to transgress the line that has traditionally separated culture from social, economic, and political relations.²

This statement corroborates my general argument that Shakespeare's sonnets exemplify and mediate the relationship between politics and aesthetics.

It is this theoretical position that has permitted a reading of Shakespeare's sonnets as inevitably affected by the pressures of historical change upon the sonnet form. In such circumstances, it is not possible for the sonnets simply to reproduce either the conventional woman of earlier sequences, or their conventional narrative of a love affair. Instead, the sonnets are riven with contradiction and new forms of subject material. They set out a relation between the addressor and the hierarchically superior young friend that does not allow the addressor fully to break away from the homosocial ideology that positions him, even though the operation of this positioning is rendered visible. They set out a relation between the addressor and woman that demonises her while at the same time acknowledging that, since these are

sonnets, she is nevertheless to be loved. A disjunction therefore opens up between the ideal woman of earlier sequences and the overdetermined demonising of the 'dark lady' in this collection. There is here a contradiction between platonism and materialism, since the veracity of the material world has its own imperatives.

Such contradictions destabilise the subjectivity of the addressor precisely at the intersection of the power relations that dominate him. The poems constantly note incoherence in the aristocratic ideology that overdetermines them, and yet they are unable fully to break away from it. This situation permits a reading of the ideology that takes into account the fact that there are, at this juncture, limitations upon discursive resistance to interpellation. The sonnets open up the ideological production of subject-positions to analysis.

The means by which this analysis has been accomplished has involved the utilisation of a methodology informed by a dialectical relationship between theory and practice. I alluded to this aspect of the thesis in my introduction, but its operation in the body of the work should now be

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explored.

The basis of the relationship is that theory consolidates practice, and that historicised practice permits a check on the validity of a theoretical position. Thus, at the formal level, there is and can be no easy separation between theory and practice. It is this dialectic that has facilitated a reading of the sonnets in a manner that pays attention to the cultural production of difference, what Nelson and Grossberg have characterised in the following terms:

If the meaning of a text is not intrinsic to it but rather the product of a system of differences into which the text is articulated, then any text is open to multiple readings. Thus it is doubtful that one can, in fact, actually (and decisively) read the meaning and politics of a text or a practice simply by a straightforward encounter with the text itself or by mechanically applying some interpretive procedure. If meaning itself is overdetermined, the effects of any cultural practice (including criticism) can be both multiple and contradictory.³

This theoretical formulation has helped to facilitate a reading of the interpellation of subject positions in the sonnets. The interplay between the various subjectivities is not an internal one between historical personages. In this

sense, Giorgio Melchiori's characterisation of the poems as 'dramatic' is misleading. Bakhtin's term 'dialogic' is more appropriate: the subject positions relate to one another in multiple specific moments, rather than in terms of an unfolding narrative. Once again, it is important to note that the result of this operation is that the sonnets are seen not to be dramatic in a humanist way. The relations are historically precise.

The consequence of all this has been that I have used a model of split subjectivity. The multiplicity of relations between the various subject positions which is symptomatic of this split is constrained by historical factors. Thus, the model tries to re-inscribe subjectivity within a historical framework. This is, of course, a crucial part of the thesis, but it has wider implications also, especially in terms of the debates in current critical theory.

My positing of a dialectical relationship between theory and practice has been accomplished in tandem with another dialectic, that between text and history. This has enabled me to read subjectivity in historically specific terms. Thus, following Fredric Jameson, it is possible to argue

that the subject positions inscribed in the sonnets are the textual trace of a determinate history. This theoretical position has allowed me to avoid a crude determinism on the one hand, and the post-modernist propensity to fragmentation on the other. In accordance with this position, my questioning of a grand narrative in the sonnets is not the production of a post-structuralist radical indeterminacy. Rather, I have constantly been at pains throughout the thesis to check the overdetermination of the poems against a concrete history. Thus, the addressor can produce a questioning of his interpellation of the dominant ideology, but the cultural constraints that impose limits upon his subjectivity do not allow him to break free entirely from this interpellation.

The sonnets are therefore the site of a pluralism, but it is a pluralism that is limited in a historically specific manner. The concern of my thesis has been, in this light, with the historical moment of the intervention of the sonnets in a range of cultural practices.

These practices are, of necessity, bound up with the discourse of representation. And it is in terms of representation that I theorise history.

History does not itself have an essential existence; it can be traced in the sonnets through a series of representations. In accordance with the work of Macherey and Balibar on art and ideology,⁵ then, the connection between history and literary form produces in Shakespeare's sonnets an ideologically overdetermined mediation of historical change. Thus, the field of representation is determined at any single point by a dialectical relationship between the literary form of the sonnets and the historical moment of their production.

Notes

1: Louis Althusser: 'Letter On Art' in Essays On Ideology op.cit.

2: Nelson and Grossberg op.cit., p.1.

3; ibid., p.8.

Appendix

Sonnets by Surrey

I never saw you, madam, lay apart
 Your cornet black, in cold nor yet in heat,
 Sith first you knew of my desire so great
 Which other fancies chased clean from my heart.
 Whiles to myself I did the thought reserve
 That so unaware did wound my woeful breast,
 Pity I saw within your heart did rest;
 But since ye knew I did you love and serve,
 Your golden tress was clad alway in black.
 Your smiling looks were hid thus evermore,
 All that withdrawn that I did crave so sore.
 So doth this cornet govern me alack,
 In summer sun, in winter breath of frost;
 Of your fair eyes whereby the light is lost.

Diverse thy death do diversely bemoan.
 Some, that in presence of that lively head
 Lurked, whose breasts envy with hate had sown,
 Yield Caesar's tears upon Pompeius' head.
 Some, that watched with the murderer's knife,
 With eager thirst to drink the guiltless blood,
 Whose practice brake by happy end of life,
 Weep envious tears to hear thy fame so good.
 But I that know what harboured in that head,
 What virtues rare were tempered in that breast,
 Honour the place that such a jewel bred,
 And kiss the ground where as thy corse doth rest
 With vapoured eyes; from whence such streams avail
 As Pyramus did on Thisbe's breast bewail.

Th'Assyrians' king, in peace with foul desire
 And filthy lust that stained his regal heart,
 In war that should set princely hearts afire
 Vanquished did yield for want of martial art.
 The dent of swords from kisses seemed strange,
 And harder than his lady's side his targe;
 From glutton feasts to soldier's fare a change;
 His helmet far above a garland's charge.
 Who scarce the name of manhood did retain,
 Drenched in sloth and womanish delight,
 Feeble of spirit, unpatient of pain,
 When he had lost his honour and his right,
 Proud time of wealth, in storms appalled with dread,
 Murdered himself to show some manful deed.

Sonnets by Wyatt

Diverse doth use, as I have heard and know,
 When that to change their ladies do begin,
 To mourn and wail and never for to lin,
 Hoping thereby to pease their painful woe.
 And some there be that when it chanceth so
 That women change and hate where love hath been
 They call them false and think with words to win
 The hearts of them which elsewhere doth grow.
 But as for me, though that by chance indeed
 Change hath outworn the favour that I had,
 I will not wail, lament, nor yet be sad
 Nor call her false that falsely did me feed
 But let it pass and think it is of kind
 That often change doth please a woman's mind.

My love took scorn my service to retain
 Wherein me thought she used cruelty
 Since with goodwill I lost my liberty
 To follow her which causeth all my pain.
 Might never care cause me for to refrain
 But only this which is extremity,
 Giving me naught, alas, not to agree
 That, as I was, her man I might remain.
 But since that thus ye list to order me
 That would have been your servant true and fast,
 Displease thee not my dotting days be past
 And with my loss to live I must agree;
 For as there is a certain time to rage
 So is there time such madness to assuage.

I abide and abide and better abide,
 And after the old proverb, the happy day.
 And ever my lady to me doth say,
 'Let me alone and I will provide.'
 I abide and abide and tarry the tide
 And, with abiding, speed well ye may.
 Thus do I abide, I wot, alway,
 Neither obtaining nor yet denied.
 Aye me, this long abiding
 Seemeth to me, as who saith,
 A prolonging of a dying death
 Or a refusing of a desired thing.
 Much were it better for to be plain
 Than to say 'Abide' and yet shall not obtain.

My heart I gave thee, not to do it pain;
 But to preserve, it was to thee taken.
 I served thee, not to be forsaken,
 But that I should be rewarded again.
 I was content thy servant to remain
 But not to be paid under this fashion.
 Now since in thee is none other reason,
 Displease thee not if that I do refrain,
 Unsatiated of my woe and thy desire,
 Assured by craft to excuse thy fault.
 But since it please thee to fain a default,
 Farewell, I say, parting from the fire:
 For he that believeth bearing in hand,
 Plougheth in water and soweth in the sand.

Was I never yet of thy love grieved
 Nor never shall while that my life doth last.
 But of hating myself that date is past,
 And tears continual sore have me wearied.
 I will not yet in my grave be buried
 Nor on my tomb your name yfixed fast
 As cruel cause that did the spirit soon haste
 From th'unhappy bones by great sighs stirred.
 Then if an heart of amorous faith and will
 May content you without doing grief,
 Please it you so to this to do relief.
 If otherwise ye seek for to fulfil
 Your disdain, ye err and shall not as ye ween,
 And ye yourself the cause thereof hath been.

I find no peace and all my war is done.
 I fear and hope, I burn and freeze like ice.
 I fly above the wind yet can I not arise.
 And naught I have and all the world I seize on.
 That looseth nor locketh, holdeth me in prison
 And holdeth me not, yet can I scape no wise;
 Nor letteth me live nor die at my device
 And yet of death it giveth me occasion.
 Without eyes I see and without tongue I plain.
 I desire to perish and yet I ask health.
 I love another and thus I hate myself.
 I feed me in sorrow and laugh in all my pain.
 Likewise displeaseth me both death and life,
 And my delight is causer of this strife.

My galley charged with forgetfulness
 Thorough sharp seas in winter nights doth pass
 'Tween rock and rock; and eke mine enemy, alas,
 That is my lord, steereth with cruelty;
 And every oar a thought in readiness
 As though that death were light in such a case.
 An endless wind doth tear the sail apace
 Of forced sighs and trusty fearfulness.
 A rain of tears, a cloud of dark disdain
 Hath done the wearied cords great hindrance,
 Wreathed with error and eke with ignorance.
 The stars be hid that led me to this pain.
 Drowned is reason that should me comfort
 And I remain despairing of the port.

Unstable dream, according to the place,
 Be steadfast once or else at least be true.
 By tasted sweetness make me not to rue
 The sudden loss of thy false feigned grace.
 By good respect in such a dangerous case
 Thou brought'st not her into this tossing mew
 But madest my sprite live my care to renew,
 My body in tempest her succour to embrace.
 The body dead, the sprite had his desire;
 Painless was th'one, th'other in delight.
 Why then, alas, did it not keep right,
 Returning to leap into the fire,
 And where it was at wish it could not remain?
 Such mocks of dreams they turn to deadly pain.

To rail or jest ye know I use it not,
 Though that such cause sometime in folks I find.
 And though to change ye list to set your mind,
 Love it who list, in faith I like it not.
 And if ye were to me as ye are not
 I would be loath to see you so unkind.
 But since your faith must needs be so by kind,
 Though I hate it, I pray you leave it not.
 Things of great weight I never thought to crave;
 This is but small, of right deny it not:
 Your feigning ways as yet forged them not
 But like reward let other lover have,
 That is to say, for service true and fast,
 Too long delays and changing at the last.

Caesar, when that the traitor of Egypt
 With th'honourable head did him present,
 Covering his gladness, did represent
 Plaint with his tears outward, as it is writ.
 And Hannibal eke, when fortune him shut
 Clean from his reign and from all his intent,
 Laughed to his folk whom sorrow did torment,
 His cruel despite for to disgorge and quit.
 So chanceth it oft that every passion
 The mind hideth by colour contrary
 With feigned visage, now sad, now merry;
 Whereby if I laughed any time or season,
 It is for because I have n'other way
 To cloak my care but under sport and play.

Sonnets from Sidney's Astrophel And Stella

Not at first sight, nor with a dribbing shot,
 Loue gaue the wound, which while I breathe will
 bleede:

But knowne, worth did in tract of time proceede,
 Till by degrees it had full conquest got.
 I sawe and lik'd, I lik'd but loued not,
 I lou'd, but did not straight what loue decreede:
 At length to loues decrees, I first agreede.
 Yet with repining at so partiall lot.
 Now euen that foot-steppe of lost libertie
 Is gone, and now like slaue borne Muscouite:
 I call it praise to suffer tyrannie,
 And nowe imploy the remnant of my wit
 To make my selfe beleue that all is well,
 While with a feling skill I paint my hell.

(sonnet 2)

Let dainty wittes cry, on the sisters nine,
 That brauely maskt, their fancies may be tolde:
 Or Pinders apes flaunt in their phrases fine,
 Enameling their pride with flowers of golde.
 Or els let them in stately glorie shine,
 Ennobling new founde tropes, with problemes old:
 Or with straunge similes, inricht each line,
 Of hearbes and beastes, which Inde or Affricke hold,
 For me in sooth, no muse but one I know,
 Phrases and problemes from my reach doe growe,
 And straunge things cost too deere for my poor
 sprites,
 How then? euen thus, in Stellas face I reede,
 What loue and beauty be, then all my deede.
 But copying is, what in her nature writes.

(sonnet 3)

Vertue (alas) now let me take some rest,
 Thou fet'st a bate betweene my loue and me:
 If vaine loue haue my simple soule opprest,
 Leaue what thou lik'st, and deale thou not with it.
 Thy scepter vse in some olde Catoes brest,
 Churches and schooles are for thy seat most fit:
 I doe confes, (pardon a fault confest,)
 My mouth too tender is for thy hard bit.
 But if that needes, thou wilt vsurping bee
 That little reason that is left in mee.
 And still the effect of thy perswasions prooue,
 I sweare, my heart such one shall shew to thee,
 That shrines in flesh so true a deitie.
 That vertue, thou thy selfe shalt be in loue.
(sonnet 4)

When nature made her chiefe worke, Stellas eyes,
 In collour blacke, why wrapt she beames so bright?
 Would she in beamy blacke like painter wise,
 Frame daintiest lustre mixte with shaddowes light?
 Or did she els that sober hewe deuise,
 In obiect best, to strengthh and knitt our sight:
 Least if no vaile these braue beames did disguise,
 They sun-like would more dazell than delight.
 Or would she her miraculous power shewe,
 That whereas blacke seemes beauties contrarie,
 Shee euen in blacke doth make all beauties flowe:
 But so and thus, she minding loue should bee
 Plaste euer there, gaue him this mourning weede:
 To honour all their deathes, who for her bleede.
(sonnet 7)

Qveene vertues court, which some call Stellas face,
 Prepar'd by natures cheefest furniture:
 Hath his from built of alabaster pure,
 Golde is the couering of that statelie place.
 The doore, by which sometimes runnes forth her grace
 Red porphire is, which locke of pearle makes sure:
 Whose porches rich, with name of chekes indure,
 Marble mixt red and white, doe enterlace.
 The windowes now, through which this heavenly guest
 Lookes on the world, and can finde nothing such,
 Which dare claime from those lightes the name of
 best,
 Of touch they are, that without touch doe touch,
 Which Cupids selfe, from beauties mine did drawe:
 Of touch they are, and poore I am their strawe.
(sonnet 9)

Cypid because thou shin'st in Stellas eyes,
 That from her lookes thy dimnesse now scapes free:
 That those lips swelde so full of thee they be.
 That sweet breath maketh oft the flames to rise,
 That in her brest thy pap well sugred lyes,
 That grace euen makes thy gracious wrongs; that she,
 What word so ere shee speakes, perswades for thee:
 That her cleere voice, lifteth the sunne to skyes.
 Thou countest Stella thine, like those whose powres
 Hauing got vp a breach, (by fighting well)
 Cry victory, this happy day is ours:
 Oh no, her heart is such a cytadell
 So fortified with wit, stor'd with disdain:
 That to winne it, is all the skill and paine.
(sonnet 12)

You that doe search for euery purling spring,
 Which from the rybs of old Pernassus flowes,
 And euery flower (not sweete perhaps) which growes
 Neere there about, into your poems wring.
 You that doe dictionary method bring
 Into your rymes, running in ratling rowes,
 You that old Petrarchs long deceased woes
 With new borne sighes, and wit disguised sing;
 You take wrong wayes, those far-fet helps be such,
 As doe bewray a want of inward tutch,
 And sure at length stolne goods doe come to light.
 But if both for your loue and skill you name,
 You seeke to nurse at fullest brest of fame,
 Stella behold and then begin to write.
(sonnet 15)

You that with allegories curious frame
 Of others children changlings vse to make,
 With me those paines for God-sake doe not take,
 I list not dig so deepe for brasen fame.
 When I see Stella, I doe meane the same
 Princesse of beautie, for whose onely sake,
 The raynes of loue I loue, though neuer slake;
 And ioy therin, though nations count it shame:
 I begge no subiect to vse eloquence,
 Nor hidden waies to guide philosophie,
 Looke at my hands for no such quintessence,
 But know that I in pure simplicitie,
 Breathe out the flames which burne within my hart,
 Loue onely leading me into this arte.
(sonnet 28)

Desire, though thou my olde commpanion art,
 And oft so clinges to my pure loue; that I
 One from the other scarcely can discry:
 While each doe blowe the fier of my hart;
 Now from thy fellowship I needes must part.
 Venus is taught with Dians wings to flye,
 I must no more in thy sweet passions lye:
 Vertues golde now, must head my Cupids dart,
 Seruice and honour wonder with delight,
 Feare to offend, well worthy to appeare:
 Care shining in mine eyes, faith in my spright,
 These things are left me by my onely deare.

But thou desire, because thou wouldst have all:
 Now banisht art, but yet within my call.

(sonnet 72)

Highway since you my chiefe Pernassus be,
 And that my muse to some eares not vnmeete,
 Tempers hir words to trampling horses feete,
 More often than a chamber mellodie,
 Now blessed you beare onwards blessed me,
 To hir where my heart safeliest shall meete,
 My muse and I must you of duety greeete,
 With thanks and wishes wishing thankfully;
 Be you still carefull kept by publike heede,
 By no encroachment wrongd, nor time forgot,
 Nor blam'd for bloud, nor sham'd for sinfull deede,
 And that you know I envie you no whit,

Of highest wish, I wish you so much blisse,
 Hundreds of yeares you Stellas feete may kisse.

(sonnet 84)

Behold my heart the house that thee contains,
 Beware full sailes drown not thy tottering barge,
 Least ioy by nature apt (spirites to enlarge)
 Thee to thy wracke beyond thy limits straines,
 Nor doe like lords whose weake confused braines,
 Not pointing to fit folks each vndercharge,
 Striue in themselues each office to discharge,
 With doing all leaue nothing done but paine,
 But giue seruants their due place; let eies
 See beauties totall sum found in their face,
 Let eares heare speach which will to wonder tyes,
 Let breath suck vp those sweets, let armes imbrace.

(sonnet 85)

Sonnets From Samuel Daniel's Delia

Faire is my loue, and cruell as sh'is faire;
 Her brow shades frownes, although her eyes are sunny;
 Her smiles are lightning, though her pride dispaire;
 And her disdaines are gall; her fauours hunny.
 A modest maide, deckt with a blush of honour,
 Whose seete doe treade greene pathes of youth and
 loue,

The wonder of all eyes that looke vppon her:
 Sacred on earth, design'd a saint aboue.
 Chastitie and beautie, which were deadly foes,
 Liue reconciled friends within her brow:
 And had she pittie to conioine with those,
 Then who had heard the plaints I vtter now.

O had she not beene faire, and thus vnkinde,
 My muse had slept, and none had knowne my minde.

(sonnet 6)

Thou poore hart sacrific'd vnto the fairest,
 Hast sent the incens of thy sighes to heauen:
 And still against her frownes fresh vows repayrest,
 And made thy passions with her beautie euen.
 And you mine eyes the agents of my hart,
 Told the dumbe message of my hidden grieffe:
 And oft with carefull turnes, with silent art,
 Did treat the cruell fayre to yeelde reliefe.
 And you my verse, the aduocates of loue,
 Haue followed hard the processe of my case:
 And vrg'd that title which dooth plainely proue,
 My faith should win, if iustice might haue place.

Yet though I see, that nought we doe can moue her,
 Tis not disdaine must make me leaue to loue her.

(sonnet 8)

Sonnets From Spenser's Amoretti

How long shall this lyke dying lyfe endure,
 And know no end of her owne mysery:
 But wast and weare away in termes vnsure,
 Twixt feare and hope depending doubtfully.
 Yet better were attonce to let me die,
 And shew the last ensample of your pride:
 Then to torment me thus with cruelty,
 To proue your powre, which I too wel haue tride.
 But yet if in your hardned brest ye hide,
 A close intent at last to shew me grace:
 Then all the woes and wrecks which I abide,
 As meanes of blisse I gladly wil embrace.
 And wish that more and greater they might be,
 That greater meede at last may turne to mee.

(sonnet 25)

Sweet is the rose, but growes vpon a brere;
 Sweet is the iunipere, but sharpe his bough;
 Sweet is the eglantine, but pricketh nere;
 Sweet is the firbloome, but his braunches rough.
 Sweet is the cypresse, but his rynd is tough,
 Sweet is the nut, but bitter is his pill;
 Sweet is the broome-flowre, but yet sowre enough;
 And sweet is moly, but his root is ill.
 So euery sweet with soure is tempred still,
 That maketh it be coueted the more:
 For easie things that may be got at will,
 Most sorts of men doe set but little store.
 Why then should I accompt of little paine,
 That endlesse pleasure shall vnto me gaine.
(sonnet 26)

The loue which me so cruelly tormenteth,
 So pleasing is in my extreamest paine:
 That all the more my sorrow it augmenteth,
 The more I loue and doe embrace my bane.
 Ne doe I wish (for wishing were but vaine)
 To be acquit fro my continuall smart:
 But ioy her thrall for euer to remayne,
 And yield for pledge my poore captuyedhart;
 The which that it from her may neuer start,
 Let her, yf please her, bynd with adamant chayne:
 And from all wandring loues which mote peruart,
 His safe asurance strongly it restrayne.
 Onely let her abstaine from cruelty,
 And doe not before my time to dy.
(sonnet 42)

When those renoumed noble peres of Greece,
 Through stubborn pride amongst themselues did iar
 Forgetfull of the famous golden fleece,
 Then Orpheus with his harp theyr strife did bar.
 But this continuall cruell civill warre,
 The which my selfe against my selfe doe make:
 Whilest my weak powres of passions warreid arre,
 No skill can stint nor reason can aslake.
 But when in my hand my tunelesse harp I take,
 The doe I more augment my foes despight:
 And grieffe renew, and passions doe awake
 To battaile, fresh against my selfe to fight.
 Mongst whome the more I seeke to settle peace,
 The more I fynd their malice to increace.
(sonnet 44)

Long languishing in double malady,
 Of my harts wound and of my bodies grieffe,
 There came to me a leach that would apply
 Fit medicines for my bodies best reliefe.
 Vayne man (quod I) that hast but little priefe
 In deep discouery of the mynds disease,
 Is not the hart of all the body chiefe?
 And rules the members as it selfe doth please.
 Then with some cordialls seeke first to appease
 The inward languour of my wounded hart,
 And then my body shall haue shortly ease:
 But such sweet cordialls passe physitions art,
 Then my lyfes leach doe you your skill reueale,
 And with one salue both hart and body heale.
(sonnet 50)

Sweet warriour when shall I haue peace with you?
 High time it is, this warre now ended were:
 Which I no lenger can endure to sue,
 Ne your incessant battrry more to beare:
 So weake my powres, so sore my wounds appeare
 That wonder is how I should liue a iot,
 Seeing my hart through launched euerywhere
 With thousand arrowes, which your eies haue shot:
 Yet shoot ye sharpely still, and spare me not,
 But glory thinke to make these cruel stoures.
 Ye cruell one, what glory can be got,
 In slaying him that would liue gladly yours?
 Make peace therefore, and graunt me timely grace.
 That al my wounds wil heale in little space.
(sonnet 57)

Sonnets From Thomas Watson's Hecatompahia

Where heate of loue doth once possesse th heart,
 There cares oppresse the minde with wondresse ill,
 Wit runns awaye not fearing future smarte,
 And fond desire doth ouermaster will:
 The belly neither cares for meate nor drinke,
 Nor ouerwatched eyes desire to winke:
 Footesteps are false, and waur'ing too and froe;
 The mightsome flow'r of beauty fades away:
 Reason retyres, and pleasure brings in woe:
 And wisdom yeldeth place to black decay:
 Counsell, and fame, and friendship are contem'nd:
 And hatefull shame, and Gods them selues condem'nd.
 Watchfull suspect is linked with despaire:
 Inconstant hope is often drown'd in feares:
 What folly hurtes not fortune can repayre;
 And misery doth swimme in seas of teares:
 Long use of life is but a lingring foe,
 And gentle death is only end of woe.
(sonnet 79)

All such as are but of indifferent capacitie, and haue some skille in arithmetike, by viewing this sonnet following compiled by rule and number, into the forme of a piller, may soone judge, howe much art & study the author hath bestowed in the same. Where in as there are placed many preaty obseruations, to these which I will set downe, may be marked for the principall, if any man haue suchh idle leasure to looke it ouer, as the author had, when he framed it. First therefore it is to be noted, that the whole piller (except the basis or foote thereof) is by relation of either halfe to the other antitheticall or antisillabicall. Secondly, how this posie (Amare est insanire) runneth twyse through out ye columnne, if ye gather but the first letter of euery whole verse orderly (excepting the two last) and then in like manner take but the last letter of euery one of the said verses, as they stand. Thirdly is to bee obserued, that euery verse, but the two last, doth end with the same letter it beginneth, and yet through out the whole a true rime is perfectly obserued, although not after our accustomed manner. Fourthly, that the foote of the piller is orchematicall, that is to say, founded by transilition or ouer skipping of number by rule and order, as from 1 to 3, 5, 7, & 9: the secret vertue whereof may be learned in Trithemius, as namely by tables of transilition to decypher any thing that is written by secret transposition of letters, bee it neuer so cunningly conueighed. And lastly, this obseruation is not to be neglected, that when all the foresaide particulars are performed, the whole piller is but iust 18 verses, as will appeare in the page following it, *per modum expansionis*.

(sonnet 80)

A	At last, though late, farewell olde wellada;	A
M	Mirth for mischaunce strike up a newe alarm;	M
A	And <i>Ciprya la nemica mia</i>	A
R	Retyre to Cyprus Ile and cease thy warr,	R
E	Els must thou proue how reason can by charme	E
E	Enforce to flight thy blyndfold bratte and thee.	E
S	So frames it with me now, that I confess	S
T	The life I ledde in loue deuoyd of rest	T
I	It was a hell, where none felt more then I,	I
N	Nor any with like miseries forlorn.	N
S	Since therefore now my woes are wered less,	S
A	And reason bids me leaue olde wellada,	A
N	No longer shall the world laugh me to scorn:	N
I	I'le choose a path that shall not leade awai.	I
R	Rest then with me from your blinde Cupids carr	R
E	Each one of you, that serue and would be free.	E
	His double thrall that liu's as loue thinks best	
	Whose hand still tyrant like to hurt is prest.	
		(sonnet 81)

Sir John Davies' Gullinge Sonnets

The lover under burthen of his mistress love,
 Which lyke to Aetna did his harte oppresse:
 Did give such piteous grones that he did move
 The heav'nes at length to pity his distresse.
 But for the fates in theire highe courte above
 Forbad to make the grevous burthen lesse,
 The gracious powers did all conspire to prove
 Yf miracle this mischeife mighte redresse.
 Therefore regardinge that the loade was such
 As noe man mighte with one mans mighte sustayne,
 And that mylde patience imported much
 To him that shold indure an endles payne,
 By their decree he soone transformed was:
 Into a patiente burden-bearinge Asse.

(sonnet 1)

As when the bright Cerulian firmament
 Hathe not his glory with black cloudes defas'te,
 Soe were my thoughts voyde of all discontent
 And with noe myste of passions overcast;
 They all were pure and cleare, till at the last
 An ydle, carles thoughte forthe wandringe wente,
 And of that poysonous beauty tooke a taste
 Which does the harts of lovers so torment.
 Then as it chauncethe in a flocke of sheepe
 When some contagious yll breedes first in one,
 Daylie it spreedes, and secretly doth creepe
 Till all the silly troupe be overgone;
 So by close neighbourhood within my brest,
 One scurvy thoughte infecteth all the rest.
 (sonnet 2)

What Eagle can behold her sunbrighte eye,
 Her sunbrighte eye that lights the world with love,
 The world of love wherein I live and dye,
 I live and dye and divers chaunges prove;
 I chaunges prove, yet still the same am I,
 The same am I and never will remove,
 Never remove untill my soule doth flye,
 My soule doth fly and I surcease to move;
 I cease to move which now am moved by yow,
 Am mov'd by yow that move all mortall hartes,
 All mortall hartes whose eyes your eyes doth viewe,
 Your eyes doth viewe whence Cupid shoots his darts,
 Whence Cupid shootes his dartes and woundeth those
 That honor you, and never weare his foes.
 (sonnet 3)

The hardnes of her harte and truth of myne
 When the all seeinge eyes of heaven did see,
 They streight concluded that by powre devine
 To other formes our hartes should turned be:
 Then hers as hard as flynte, a Flynte became,
 And myne as true as steele, to steele was turned,
 And then betwene our hartes sprunge forthe the flame
 Of kindest love which unextinguish'd burned.
 And longe the sacred lampe of mutual love
 Incessantlie did burne in glorie brighte,
 Untill my folly did her fury move
 To recompence my service with despighte,
 And to put out, with snuffers of her pride,
 The lampe of love which els had never dyed.
 (sonnet 4)

Mine eye, myne eare, my will, my witt, my harte,
 Did see, did heare, did like, discerne, did love,
 Her face, her speche, her fashion, judgement, arte,
 Which did charme, please, delighte, confounde and
 move.

The fancie, humpr, love, conceipte, and thoughte
 Did soe drawe, force, intyse, perswade, devise,
 That she was wonne, mov'd, caryed, compast, wrought,
 To thinck me kinde, true, comelie, valyant, wise.
 That heaven, earth, hell, my folly and her pride
 Did worke, contrive, labor, conspire and sweare
 To make me scorn'd, vile, cast off, bace, defyed
 With her my love, my lighte, my life, my deare;
 So that my harte, my witt, will, eare, and eye
 Doth grieve, lament, sorrowe, dispaire and dye.

(sonnet 5)

The sacred Muse that firste made love devine
 Hath made him naked and without attyre;
 But I will cloth him with this penn of myne
 That all the world his fashion shall admyre:
 His hatt of hope, his bande of beauty fine,
 His cloake of crafte, his doblett of desyre;
 Greife for a girdell shall aboute him twyne;
 His pointes of Pride, his Iletholes of yre,
 His hose of hate, his Codpeece of conceite,
 His stockings of sterne strife, his shirte of shame;
 His garters of vaine glorie, gaye and slyte,
 His pantofels of passions I will frame;
 Pumpes of presumption shall adorn his feete,
 And Socks of sullennes exceedinge sweete.

(sonnet 6)

Into the Middle Temple of my harte
 The wanton Cupid did himselfe admitt,
 And gave for pledge your eagle-sighted witt
 That he wold play noe rude uncivill parte.
 Long tyme he cloak'd his nature with his arte,
 And sadd, and grave, and sober he did sitt;
 But at the last he gan to revell it,
 To breake good rules, and orders to perverte.
 Then love and his yonnge pledge were both convented
 Before sad Reason, that old belcher grave,
 Who this sadd sentence unto him presented
 By dilligence, that slye and secreate knave:
 That love and witt for ever should departe
 Out of the Middle Temple of my harte.

(sonnet 7)

My case is this, I love Zepheria brighte.
 Of her I hold my harte by fealtye
 Which I discharge to her perpetuallye,
 Yet she thereof will never me acquite.
 For now supposinge I withhold her righte,
 She hathe distrein'de my harte to satisfie
 The duty which I never did denye,
 And far away impounds it with despite.
 I labor therefore justlie to repleave
 My harte which she unjustly doth impounde,
 But quick conceite which nowe is loves highe Shreife
 Retornes it as esloynde, not to be founde;
 Then, which the lawe affords, I onely crave
 Her harte for myne in withername to have.

(sonnet 8)

To Love my lord I doe knightes service owe,
 And therefore nowe he hath my witt in warde;
 But while it is in his tuition soe
 Me thincks he doth intreate it passinge hard.
 For thoughe he hathe it marryed longe agoe
 To Vanytie (a wench of noe regarde)
 And nowe to full, and perfect age doth growe,
 Yet nowe of freedome, it is most debarde.
 But why should love, after minoritye,
 When I am past the one and twentith yeare,
 Perclude my witt of his sweete libertye
 And make it still the yoake of wardshippe beare?
 I fear he hath an other Title gott,
 And holds my witt now for an Ideott.

(sonnet 9)

Introductory Sonnet To Idea's Mirror (Drayton)

Into these loues, who but for passion lookes,
 At this first sight, here let him lay them by,
 And seeke else-where, in turning other bookes,
 Which better may his labour satisfie.
 No farre-fetch'd sigh shall euer wound my brest,
 Loue from mine eye a teare shall neuer wring,
 Nor in Ah-meas my whyning sonnets drest,
 (A libertine) fantastickly I sing:
 My verse is the true image of my mind,
 Euer in motion, still desiring change;
 And as thus to varietie inclin'd,
 So in all humors sportiue I range:
 My muse is rightly of the English straine,
 That cannot long one fashion intertaine.

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ELR: English Literary Renaissance

PMLA: Publication of the Modern Language Association

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