theories and methodologies

Psychoanalyzing the Prepsychoanalytic Subject

CYNTHIA MARSHALL

But look more carefully [. . .]. [T]here is something other, some strewn matter, that does not absorb [. . .].

—Adam Thorpe, *Ulverton*

DECLARING PSYCHOANALYSIS "FINALLY DEAD AND BURIED" IS "ONE OF THE SEASONAL RITUALS OF OUR INTELLECTUAL LIFE" (Žižek 7). In the latest salvo of this battle, Lee Patterson rehearses the argument that debunking the scientific base of Freudianism renders the theory useless to the humanities, and he objects particularly to the application of psychoanalytic models to medieval texts—an exercise, for him, in anachronistic reasoning. Patterson's claim recalls earlier rounds led by Stephen Greenblatt and, a decade before that, in a more totalizing vein, by Frederick Crews. My title indicates my interest in the dispute: where Patterson calls psychoanalysis an "ambulance" or "hearse" (656), I argue that the theory is less a vehicle to be abandoned or replaced and more something organic and renewable—an evolving body of ideas that provides techniques for reading. However, in this short essay I will not construct an apologia for psychoanalytic theory generally but take on the more limited task of characterizing recent uses of the theory in critical engagements with early modern texts.[1] Salient qualities of this work have been overlooked by those who demonize psychoanalysis (a habit suggested by Žižek's image) or are allergic to anything linked to Freud.

The allergy has probably been heightened by the way psychoanalysis has come to stand in for theory *tout court* in recent debates about critical approaches. The heyday of poststructuralism in the 1970s was followed by the insurgence of a historicism seeking "the touch of the real" in place of theory's abstractions (Gallagher and Greenblatt 31). Although there were objections almost from the beginning that new historicism suffered from a failure to theorize its procedures, the appeal of empiricism, bolstered by the burgeoning of available texts and discovered data, lent historicism an aura of truth that contrasted the complex and sometimes baroque formulations of psychoanalytic and other postmodern theories. Fashioning itself as the pragmatic alternative to theory, historicism continues to

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repress crucial issues of historiography with its emphasis on empiricism or immanence or both. By "repress" I mean to suggest the Marxian and the Freudian concepts of repression: historicism has used its dominance in the academy to oppose and sometimes to quash alternative modes of critical practice, while the symptomatic language of individual historicists indicates an unconscious prohibition of certain ideas.[2] Because historicism has been advanced as a theory in itself rather than as one important aspect of a fully articulated critical practice, key questions concerning the orientation of texts to their temporal moment, the nature of textuality, and the recoverability of the past have often been elided.[3]

We might chart these questions in relation to a widely endorsed paradigm, according to which psychoanalysis claims transcendent truth and inadequately "historicizes its own procedures" (Greenblatt, "Psychoanalysis" 221), while historicism understands truth as immanent in culture. Imposing a false opposition, this formula mischaracterizes psychoanalysis in its current avatars and to some extent in its classic forms; the theory is deeply recursive in its formulations of cultural and individual change, leery of positivist readings of textual surfaces, and less "indifferent" to the claims of history than "grounded in an alternative understanding" of it (Dean 51). By contrast, traditional historiography erases "the act of *making* history" (Belsey 4). Indeed, historicist models may be shackled by their insistence on immanence, since it condemns them to chronicity while mystifying the complexity of textual negotiations over time, including the issue of how textual meaning survives amid shifting contexts.

Tracking recent engagements with the literature of early modernity, we find a set of techniques and ideas that demonstrate the nature of contemporary psychoanalytic claims. In particular, Jacques Lacan's elaboration of psychoanalytic theory in terms of modern philosophy and linguistics and the nuancing of this work by Julia Kristeva, Jean Laplanche, Slavoj Žižek, and others have made an enormous difference in the availability of psychoanalytic models and in their applicability to literary texts. Lacan's positioning of language in the center of psychoanalytic theory—between the subject and the unconscious—informs a methodology for understanding the individual in the context of social codes and structures. Whereas the dynamic therapeutic models drawn from object relations and ego psychology delineate the interaction of a clearly posited self and other, structural and poststructural modes of psychoanalysis, with their emphasis on language, read the text as a trace of the psyche or, alternatively, the psyche as a text (Wright 99–139). Consequently, characters and authors are no longer treated as subjects to be analyzed; instead, the focus falls on textual negotiations between and in symbolic networks.

Because Lacan's work includes a critique of traditional historiography, it holds vital implications for understanding early texts. Along with other poststructural theorists, Lacan seeks to show the limitation of conceptualizations that do not take account of their symbolic structures. For Lacan, knowledge of the subject is necessarily oblique, because the subject consists of a lack or split. This is a structural point but one Lacan historicizes in his writings—in a specific way, through observation of the "historically and socially specific" forms subjectivity takes (*Ethics* 99), and, more generally, by placing "the Freudian field" as a temporal formation "possible only a certain time after the emergence of the Cartesian subject" (*Four Fundamental Concepts* 47).[4] The latter practice would suggest to a strict historicist that psychoanalytic theory is applicable only to post-Cartesian subjects. However, the psychoanalytic hermeneutic identifies slippages, gaps, and displacements that inhere in our knowledge of the past and that render historical claims and narratives unstable. The historical dimension of Lacanian theory continues to be debated (see Brennan; Dean; Hollywood; Macey; Roudinesco, *Jacques Lacan*). In any case, as his career progressed Lacan embroidered on the

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structural models of his early work, moving beyond the problem of the subject's misalignment with language and focusing more intently on the difficulty of confronting what he called the real, a residue of meaning outside symbolic structuring altogether. Whereas historicists aim in their analyses of texts "to recover [. . .] a confident conviction of reality" (Gallagher and Greenblatt 31), conceiving of the real as truth's anchor, for psychoanalysis the real is what remains inaccessible to discourse. Historicists seek a putatively available real, while psychoanalysis insists on a boundary to what language can contain. To the extent that Lacan posits the real as inevitable, unavoidable, and "always in the same place" (*Ethics* 70), the concept is ahistorical. Significantly, though, the forms through which the real is negotiated are historically and culturally inflected. The idea that the real can be glimpsed in social networks such as popular culture (an aspect made especially available by Žižek) has contributed to a rapprochement between psychoanalytic and materialist theories that had seemed adversarial under structuralism.

While sharing with historicism the notion that past cultures survive only in and through their texts, contemporary psychoanalytic theory resists or even deconstructs the teleological model of subject formation and the oedipal subject it often presupposes. One influential manifestation of interest in Lacanian psychoanalysis with relation to early texts was Joel Fineman's theorizing of a "subjectivity effect" in early modern literature. Fineman powerfully expressed the view that texts do not directly represent the subject but instead allow glimpses of an elusive subjectivity, creating through words "the literary effect of a subject" (82). The limitation was understood to be structural, not a problem with the texts or their authors: language and the subject are inevitably misaligned, at least in what Lacan called the "era of the 'ego'" (*Ecrits* 71). Fineman's observation that "contemporary speculation about subjectivity repeats in a theoretical mode [. . .] what literature accomplishes toward the end of the Renaissance" accordingly carries a double valence (46). On the one hand, theory takes cues from literature, grows from it, fulfills its potential; on the other, any theory that can do no more than repeat what has been accomplished is belated and distinctly disempowered, more translation than theory proper.

Pre- and Post-

Quoting Peter Brooks, Patterson writes that psychoanalytic criticism requires "accepting 'the psychoanalytic view of humans as radically determined by sexuality'" (644n24). For Patterson, the critic's goal should be to understand texts in their historical contexts, and the psychoanalytic view is irrelevant to early texts since it was unavailable to their authors and original audiences. Amy Hollywood, though, defines psychoanalysis as the theorization of the modern West's preoccupation with and even fetishization of "sexual difference and of the processes of substitution through which sexual difference covers over and resolves other, unacknowledged conflicts and losses" (271). Like Patterson, she acknowledges historical change and sees a fixation on sexual difference as a peculiarly modern issue. But while Patterson views psychoanalysis as having essentially invented the focus on sexuality and desire, Hollywood understands the discourse begun by Freud as the theorization of that cultural development. Two notions of theory and textuality are at work, one looking to theory for ways to resolve and settle meaning (or even to invent meaning, although theory's activist role is generally perceived only by opponents), the other using it to probe texts and "*un*settle things" (Strohm 213). Even by Patterson's standards, according to which theory would afford release from sheer chronicity, the historicist position is vitiated by its endless call for temporal relativity.[5]

In psychoanalysis, knowledge of the past is self-consciously a matter of retrofitting historical evidence to existing templates. Freud reading

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Hamlet as civilization's advanced version of *Oedipus* was also Freud reading his own early encounters with Shakespearean drama. Interpreting an oedipal theme by way of *Julius Caesar*, Freud relates, "[S]trange to say, I really did once play the part of Brutus" (*Interpretation* 5: 424). The scientific claims are undercut, or undergirded, by a tracery of remembered words, events, emotions. The theory's recursiveness is particularly appropriate to the Renaissance, especially when contrasted with the chronological and often melioristic assumptions typical of historicism.

A revealing consideration of this back-and-forth temporal movement is Jacques Derrida's reading of Freud in *The Postcard*, a series of meditations on sending and receiving messages, its central motif a postcard with an image of Socrates and Plato, provoking a Derridean riff on intellectual origin (should priority go to Socrates or Plato?), the relation of front to back (which side of a postcard is more crucial?), and Derrida's connection to his intellectual forebears, not least Freud, the Socrates to his Plato. Derrida deconstructs not only Freud's text but also the notion of chronological movement in intellectual life. Unraveling these themes, Derrida returns repeatedly to Freud's "Beyond the Pleasure Principle" and particularly to his account of the child's activity now known as *fort-da*, a game of loss and return (e.g., Derrida 293–337). Readers will recall that this is Freud's effort to understand why his grandson repeatedly threw a toy into his cot (muttering a sound Freud hears as *fort* 'gone') and then retrieved it by the attached string (saying *da* 'there').

Freud first proposes that the game satisfies the child because it allows mastery—a sort of early Montessori learning device—and especially so because Freud glosses the tossed toy as a symbol for the child's mother, whose absences are symbolically controlled in the game. Yet Freud acutely notices that the first half of the game—the *fort* activity of casting the toy away—recurs more often than the other part and thus more often than the completed process, with its supposed reiteration of mastery ("Beyond the Pleasure Principle" 14–16). The child, that is, seems to enjoy pitching his toy away. Although this scenario still allows a reading of the action in terms of mastery, it contradicts Freud's original happy idea of interpretive closure and the notion that satisfaction is reliably simple and unilateral (17). The poignancy of this contradiction is revealed by Freud's disclosure in a footnote that the child's mother, Freud's daughter Sophie, had since died (16n). Freud, then, was not only imposing his ideas and words onto the child's action but also acting out in the text his effort to control loss and grief. And as Lacan points out, the symbolic figuration of Sophie, young Ernest Freud's mother, is inversely related to her presence: "Don't forget," Lacan writes, "when he says *Fort*, it is because the object is here, and when he says *Da* the object is absent." Lacan understands this inversion as the essence of human discourse; the introduction of the symbol "opens up the world of negativity, which constitutes both the discourse of the human subject and the reality of his world in so far as it is human" (*Freud's Papers* 173–74). Freud's text becomes a shared site for pondering the logic of loss and representation. Lacan contributes a way to think of the *fort-da* paradigm not simply in terms of here and there—or, in the broader terms of my argument, of now and then—but in terms of symbolic processes of negotiation.

Moreover, where most commentators assume that the child was playing in his cot, Derrida points out that the episode only makes sense if the boy throws the spool into the bedclothes from outside the curtain that surrounds the bed. Derrida dubs this veil or curtain "the *hymen* of the *fort:da*" (316), thereby identifying the game with women's ambiguous place in this (or, some would say, any) symbolic structure—central yet invisible, ambiguously inscribed, as the hymen connotes in opposing ways "both virginity and consummation" (316n). Derrida's placement of the hymen in the middle of the *fort-da* points toward the inaccessibility of women, particularly

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mothers, in discourse, an idea articulated by Julia Kristeva. Building on Lacan's idea that entering the symbolic realm involves crossing a divide that renders early experience inaccessible, Kristeva argues that the maternal body remains unintelligible, necessitating the recursive production of the semiotic realm of early experience. In *The Tears of Narcissus*, Lynn Enterline productively applies this paradigm to early literature, showing the self-defeating attempts of male melancholiacs to ground identity in a maternal body that inevitably escapes their symbolic nexus. Enterline participates in the effort of feminist critics to rediscover the image and resonance of women's experience in early culture—extending psychoanalysis to probe early texts for traces of gendered beliefs and practices.

Poststructural psychoanalytic criticism works in a framework that renders "pre-" and "post-" intellectually ambiguous positions, precisely because literary texts mediate complex relations among past, present, and future. For instance, in *After Oedipus*, Julia Lupton and Kenneth Reinhard see Shakespearean tragedy and psychoanalysis alike as "logically consequent" to oedipal myth (1). Rejecting the notion of stepping outside oedipal formations to construct an objective countermyth, they write brilliantly from inside the labyrinth linking Freud and Lacan to Shakespeare. Another compelling psychoanalytic argument about Shakespeare's relation to earlier and later texts is Ned Lukacher's *Daemonic Figures*, which shows Shakespeare's revisions of received classical and Christian notions of conscience to function like textual revenants in their effect on later formulations of self-consciousness. Through such work, the illusion of recovering the past—or what Sarah Stanbury calls the "relentless presentism" that is "implicit within teleology"—is problematized (94).

Subjects and Objects

Whereas historicists are troubled by the application of a modern theory to early texts, scholars using psychoanalytic theory are more concerned with the status and nature of the textual subject (see, e.g., Pye). The subject for Lacan is not defined in the humanistic terms of interiority or depth. The crucial point, implicit in Freud and made explicit by Lacan, is that the subject does not equal the ego. The speaker, the one who says "I," the conscious self, is only part of the story. There is a "radical heteronomy [. . .] gaping within" (Lacan, *Ecrits* 172); that is, the ego is shadowed by the residue of forces, desires, experiences that exceed symbolic structuration. Lacan for this reason theorizes the subject in several dimensions, positing it in terms of topographical levels (imaginary, symbolic, real) or graphing its orientation toward the objects of desire (*objet a*) and of symbolic authority (Other). In keeping with this concept of the subject's complexity and mobility, psychoanalytic theory values literary texts as packed, patterned utterances that can reveal aspects of the subject outside the ego's containing structure. Historicism, by contrast, typically focuses on the individual ego as subject and attends particularly to the political subject as nominated in social networks—an approach that is poorly equipped to address the misalignment of the nascent subject with symbolic structures.

In the "era of the 'ego,'" certain kinds of subject formation have been naturalized, and the autonomous, heterosexual male subject provides the standard. Psychoanalytic theory affords a way to unsettle or denaturalize these formations. Directing attention beneath the surface of a text, it locates slippages and gaps in subjects' alignment with the shaping symbolic or ideological structures and reads this misalignment as evidence of competing desires in the nascent subject. Valerie Traub offers a particularly fine example of this method in *Desire and Anxiety: Circulations of Sexuality in Shakespearean Drama*. Traub's move to distinguish sexuality from gender enables scrutiny of multiple types of erotic fantasies, traversing in various directions the positions of masculine and feminine subjects.

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Lacan's sense of the unconscious as "the discourse of the Other," "structured like a language" allows texts to be read as imaging the psyche (*Ecrits* 172; *Four Fundamental Concepts* 20). The psyche in question in this sort of analysis is not that of the author per se. Instead, the text is understood to reveal a cultural unconscious extending beyond the individual author. A focus on rhetorical structures directs attention to the space of fantasy in which cultural contradictions reside. A sonnet from Thomas Lodge's sequence *Phillis* (1593) provides an opportunity for such analysis:

> I would in rich and golden coloured raine,
> With tempting showers in pleasant sort discend,
> Into faire *Phillis* lappe (my louely friend)
> When sleepe hir sence with slomber doth restraine.
> I would be chaunged to a milk-white Bull,
> When midst the gladsome fieldes she should appeare,
> By pleasant finenes to surprise my deere,
> Whilest from their stalkes, she pleasant flowers did pull:
> I were content to wearie out my paine,
> To bee *Narsissus* so she were a spring
> To drowne in hir those woes my heart do wring:
> And more I wish transformed to remaine:
> That whilest I thus in pleasures lappe did lye,
> I might refresh desire, which else would die.

Lodge's translation from Ronsard is stagily Petrarchan, showy in its use of Ovidian material. Although ostensibly a love poem, the sonnet has nothing of the expected focus on the person of the beloved or even on the speaker's feelings about the beloved. The insistent claim of submission to the beloved accomplishes a paradoxical assertion of the authorial self, especially since the speaker deifies himself, occupying Jove's place, as golden rain and "milk-white Bull" in the evoked myths of Danaë and Io. The plurality and fluidity of identities imagined for the lover—rain, bull, and finally Narcissus—show desire itself, as process, taking precedence over adoration of the stable persona of the beloved. To perpetuate or "refresh desire," the speaker maintains a distance from the desired object, in a way that accords with Freud's *fort-da* pattern (originally proposed to explain why subjects refuse the fulfillment of their desire) and with Lacan's corresponding sense that desire depends on prohibition. Indeed, because perpetuating desire means continually transforming the self, love figures in Lodge's poem as self-erasure. In theme and structure, the poem fosters a masochistic sensibility in which the pleasure taken in love involves dissolution of subjective identity, yet Lodge uses the sadistic imagery of mythical rape to accomplish this paradoxical self-erasure.

Further, the opening and closing focus on Phillis's "lappe" suggests a semipornographic aspect, since *lappe* seems to function with its historically available meaning "the female pudendum" ("Lap, *sb.*[1]"). The sexual meaning of "stalkes" and, by implication, of "flowers" furthers a sense of the poem's slyly announcing exactly those resonances Petrarchianism would sublimate.[6] While not overtly violent, the poem depends on imagery of rape to express a wish for self-eradication—a distinctly sadomasochistic presentation of love and one significantly at odds with the assumption that Petrarchan love poetry idealizes the beloved. A psychoanalytic reading enables recognition of multiple threads in the poem, whereas a historicist focus on lovesickness or a thematic concentration on misogyny yields more limited results. Resisting closure, the poem models and calls for an open-ended theory of reading.

The reader typically takes on considerable importance in Lacanian textual analyses—a development in accord with the larger movement in modern critical theory whereby a prominent reader has displaced binary models of author and text. The historical reader or viewer who is the object of a critic's inquiry is simultaneously the subject reading the text in question. The textual event is thereby triangulated, and for early modern texts, this has meant an extension of theoretical consideration to the history of reading

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and theatergoing. Barbara Freedman's *Staging the Gaze*, for instance, understands the effects of Shakespearean comedy by means of Renaissance optical theories. Freedman shows theatrical comedy's displacements, perspectival positionings, and compounding and layering of meanings to enact an early version of Lacanian themes (see also Armstrong). My work on John Foxe's *Acts and Monuments* centers on the experience of a different kind of audience (*Shattering*, ch. 3). Tracing Foxe's efforts to encourage readers to identify actively with the Marian martyrs who suffered death at the stake, I explore his use of grotesque details and impossible positionality. Foxe purposefully challenges the repose of readers to recuperate them for the Protestant church. My argument does not focus on the martyrs as subjects. Rather, I am interested in Foxe's rhetoric as it obliquely reveals the position and anticipated response of his audience. The extent and intensity of Foxe's enormous influence on other early modern texts, especially the speed with which it was echoed in fiction (e.g., Nashe's *The Unfortunate Traveller*), indicate that *Acts and Monuments* was significant in the imaginative mindscape of early modern readers. An analysis that overlooks the reading dynamic—and most of the criticism of Foxe to date has been empiricist in orientation—misses a crucial aspect of how this text came to be a monument to a moment in the history of reading when accounts of torture were used to consolidate England's national identity. By considering the text's rhetorical claims on its readers, we can see how *Acts and Monuments* contributes to the unfolding dynamics of popular literacy and to the identity structures that reading promoted.

Psychoanalysis and Discourse

Lacanian theory depends largely on the Freudian concept of negation, whereby "the content of a repressed image or idea" is permitted into consciousness "on condition that it is *negated*." Negation provides a method of striking a balance with disruptive or even destructive energies. It offers "intellectual acceptance of the repressed, while at the same time what is essential to the repression persists" (Freud, "Negation" 235–36). Indeed, Freud connects the proper functioning of thought to negation. Lacan, following Freud's lead, generally supposes an inverse or oblique relation between truth and what is said (as in his analysis of *fort-da*). Yet he does not posit a looking-glass world in which everything reliably means the opposite of what it claims; language and desire remain mobile. Psychoanalytic theory provides tools for exploring the subject's complexities, such as the orientation toward social authority. Equally important, it can help expose the mechanism of cultural negation, whereby, for instance, men project hysteria onto women (see Hollywood), or an attraction to violence is attributed to those who must be carefully monitored, or aggression toward the beloved is swathed in the images of erotic myth, as in Lodge's poem. As a theory keenly attuned to issues of transference and countertransference, psychoanalysis urges a habit of self-scrutiny that is advantageous in negotiating the difficulty (or impossibility) of critical objectivity. A Lacanian psychoanalytic method avoids fixing author, reader, and text in entrenched positions as subject or object, instead maintaining a fluid position for each in relation to a structure of language.

The question of objectivity points to a larger issue here, one that has dogged psychoanalysis since its inception: the discourse's status as a science. Freud's assertions notwithstanding, in the academy psychoanalysis is now considered primarily humanistic. Of course, part of the allure of critical theory has been its promise of rigor and method to a fragmenting literary culture, although rarely do literary scholars, whatever their critical orientation, claim access to absolute truth. Lacan's sense of the density and opacity of language radically disables Enlightenment notions of an available truth of the subject. In the Lacanian work I am considering, the provisional quality of theoretical claims is underlined (e.g.,

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Lupton and Reinhard 208–29; Marshall, "Doubled Jaques" 392). This is not a topos of uncertainty or modesty but an admission of the contingency of knowledge about literary (or other) texts. Texts, like their creators, are never finally solved but can only be understood in continually unfolding ways (see Felman; Strohm). Humanists play scientists unconvincingly.[7]

The crux of the matter remains: what does psychoanalytic theory offer the study of early texts? Can it do any more than, in Fineman's words, "repeat [. . .] what literature accomplishes"? Lacanian psychoanalysis has been criticized for its structuralist models, which seem to erase any space for individual voices. Yet the practice of recent critics indicates instead that Lacanian theory can aid in the analysis of literature's form and function, because it addresses the misfit between the subject and the symbolic order. The theory can be particularly useful in showing how violence and aggression are translated into textuality. Objecting that historicism has reached the point where "we have been left with no limit, internal or external, to the political, no space to reflect upon the specific forms that resistance should take," Tracey Sedinger finds in psychoanalytic theory a tool to enable such reflection. The "discovery of the unconscious warps a positivist epistemology in which representations correspond to external objects" (135, 130–31). Psychoanalysis prizes open the "disjunction between the subject and the social," revealing complexities a positivist approach overlooks (135). Similarly, Elizabeth Bellamy uses Freud's contrast between "repeating" and "working through" when she argues that psychoanalysis can enable the critique of ideology, although she cautions that "a kind of discursive 'acting out' "—deploying psychoanalytic paradigms as analogies and failing to disavow transference—frequently replaces a meaningful working through ("Discourses" 35, 25; Freud, "Remembering").

Historicist criticism by itself has proved unable to delve beneath the surface of symbolic constructions to identify the tensions, desires, anxieties, and discontents that contribute to the changes in forms of subjectivity and in social systems. Historicists' urge to relativize temporally all meaning drives a critical practice that effectively dehistoricizes texts by attempting to freeze them in the moment of original production. Patterson's insistence, for example, that only the meanings available to Chaucer's fourteenth-century audience are valid restricts the text to artifactual status. By contrast, many critics who have recently engaged with early texts from a psychoanalytic angle have carefully attended to historical movement, creating dialogue between discourses and methodologies. The goal is to uncover junctures at which concepts enter or are consolidated in cultural tradition. Such work can therefore contribute to an understanding of the postpsychoanalytic subject and holds particular promise for an emerging interest in ethical criticism. In *Sexuality and Form*, Graham Hammill discovers the incipient outlines of the modern sexual subject in signal Renaissance texts that do not initially appear to involve erotic themes. In *The Rhetoric of the Body*, Lynn Enterline traces the way Renaissance poets put into discourse an attitude (and practice) of violence against women. In *The Shattering of the Self*, my aim is to show how early modern audiences delighted in scenes of erotically charged violence that effectively dispatched the constraints of the emerging model of the autonomous self.

Lacan's central idea was that language is not transparent, and he used words in self-conscious demonstration of this point—a practice that might seem to call into question his work's suitability for literary theory and that complicates the task of any exponent of his thought. Far from providing a Rosetta stone enabling readers to decipher the literary (or another) subject, Lacan helps convince us of the density of literary texts and the remoteness of early, prepsychoanalytic subjects. Nevertheless, by drawing on Lacanian theory, recent students of early modernity have articulated a rich account of the emergent subject in relation to society, outlined the alienating

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structure of language as experienced in the early period, and reconsidered the historiography through which we negotiate these texts. Though backward-looking, the work points forward.

Notes

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[1] My purpose is to identify characteristic trends; I regret that for reasons of space I will not be able to mention many relevant titles.

[2] Examples include Greenblatt's ambivalent relation to psychoanalytic theory, which he uses in *Renaissance Self-Fashioning* and other works but disavows in "Psychoanalysis and Renaissance Culture," and Patterson's confession of an earlier failure to "control my own use of psychoanalytic terminology" (657).

[3] My use of psychoanalysis to critique historicism is indebted to Bellamy, *Translations*; Copjec; Dean; Sedinger; and Skura.

[4] Lacan's historical orientation is evident in his responses to literature: for instance, he finds in courtly love an aesthetic paradigm whose "ethical ramifications" continue to be felt, and he views Sade as "our progenitor or precursor" (*Ethics* 128, 191).

[5] "Theory [. . .] should protect us from ourselves and our culture" (Patterson 679).

[6] *The Oxford English Dictionary* lists two passages from Shakespeare to illustrate "coarse slang" usage of "stalk" to mean an erect penis ("Stalk, *sb.*[1]").

[7] See Roudinesco's *Why Psychoanalysis?* for a cogent and timely defense of psychoanalysis as a practice enabling human freedom and meaningful discourse.

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