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Proof and Consequences: Inwardness and Its Exposure in the English Renaissance

I have that within which passes show,
These but the trappings and the suits of woe.
—Hamlet, 1.2.85–86

Hamlet's distinction between external appearances and the inner, invisible truth of his grief could hardly have surprised a Jacobean audience. He applies to his own condition a truism endlessly rehearsed in Renaissance sermons, advice literature, coney-catching pamphlets, doctrinal debates, anti-theatrical writings, published reports of foreign and domestic turmoil, treatises on the passions and on the soul. Nor is he original in insisting that others cannot have immediate access to his thoughts and passions. "Everyone may discover his fellow's natural inclinations," claims Thomas Wright in The Passions of the Mind, "not by philosophical demonstration, but only by natural conjectures and probabilities".

For that we cannot enter into a man's heart, and view the passions or inclinations which there reside and lie hidden; therefore, as philosophers by effects find out causes, by proprieties essences, by rivers fountains, by boughs and flowers the core and roots, even so we must trace out passions and inclinations by some effects and external operations.¹

In Basilius Besonen, James I recommends a careful orchestration of the virtuous king's visible gestures and action on the grounds that "they interpret the inward disposition of the mind, to the eyes of them that cannot see farther within him, and therefore must only judge of him by the outward appearance."²

Although English Renaissance conceptions of subjectivity have attracted a good deal of productive attention recently, some of the most stimulating discussions are profoundly uncomfortable with Hamlet's contrast between an "inner" self of superior authenticity and a public self, "trappings and suits" of derivative or secondary status. A few critics claim that the psychological category of the inward or private hardly existed at all in Renaissance England. Francis Barker, for instance, argues that Hamlet's sense of inwardness is "anachronistic," a premature manifestation of what he calls "bourgeois subjectivity." Only in the later seventeenth century, according to Barker, does bourgeois subjectivity come into its own, "redolent with the metaphysics of inferiority."³ Catherine Belsey likewise
complains about those who approach Renaissance plays in search of the “imaginary interiority” of the characters, an interiority that in her view is the imposition of the modern reader rather than a feature of the Renaissance text. Another group of critics, including Jonathan Goldberg, Patricia Fumerton, Ann Rosalind Jones, and Peter Stallybrass, acknowledges that the rhetoric of inwardness and privacy is highly developed in the English Renaissance but maintain that these terms inevitably refer to outward, public, and political factors. Goldberg argues that “the individual derived a sense of self largely from external matrices”; Jones and Stallybrass that “the supposedly ‘private’ sphere . . . can be imagined only through its similarities and dissimilarities to the public world”; Fumerton that Renaissance writers and artists “can only achieve the inner through the outer, the private through the public, the sincere self through self-display.”

The motives for this privileging of public over private are twofold. All these critics, despite differences in the details of their approaches, work from philosophical positions that reject as illusory the possibility of a subjectivity prior to or exempt from social determination. That is, they are making a claim not only about English Renaissance subjectivity but about subjectivity tout court. At the same time, they want to resist what they see as a specious generalization of modern bourgeois assumptions about “the self” to a historically distant culture. Perhaps the historicist argument makes the philosophical argument seem more plausible; for if our intuitions about subjectivity are demonstrably absent in other cultures or periods, then those intuitions are unlikely to represent transcendent truths or transhistorical “brute facts” about human nature. But the philosophical argument does not need to be made in historicist terms—and in fact, in some of its most influential formulations it is not so made—nor does the historicist project require this particular philosophical agenda.

The difference is worth keeping in mind, because philosophical claims about the necessarily social constitution of any subjectivity, Renaissance or modern, sometimes seem to get confused with historicist claims about a specifically early modern form of subjectivity. Some critics apparently minimize or underestimate the significance of conceptions of psychological interiority for the English Renaissance because they imagine that admitting such significance would necessitate embracing a naive essentialism about “human nature.” This is not the case. Surely nineteenth- and twentieth-century convictions about subjectivity are indeed culturally specific phenomena, and we risk misconstruing the Renaissance mentalité if our criticism fails to take into account the immense cultural changes of the last four centuries. But adjusting our analytical categories is a more complicated endeavor than it might seem, since the modern “idea of the subject” is not an idea. It is, rather, a loose and varied collection of assumptions, intuitions, and practices that do not all logically entail one another and need not appear together at the same cultural moment. A well-developed rhetoric of interiority, for instance, may exist in a society that never imagines that such interiority might
constitute a source of political rights. The intuition that sexual and family relations are "private" may, but need not, coincide with strong feelings about the "unity of the subject," or with convictions about the freedom, self-determination, or uniqueness of individuals.

Moreover, the fact that notions of subjectivity are socially constituted neither limits the extent of, nor determines the nature of, the power such notions can possess once they are culturally available. The pressures on thought and behavior exerted by commonly held conceptions of subjectivity are interesting in their own right, regardless of whether it is possible to show that at some level the assumptions upon which they are based are inadequate or misleading. In other words, the effects of a particular set of beliefs are not simply reducible to its causes.

This essay examines some of the important epistemological problems that arise from English Renaissance assumptions about psychological interiority, not in order to reject but rather to refine and advance a historically self-conscious discussion of subjectivity in the early modern period. Instead of dismantling the Renaissance distinction between public and private—asking "Is the distinction consistent or plausible?"—I shall attempt to analyze some of the ways the distinction matters—asking "How does the existence of such categories help shape thought and behavior?" I shall concentrate not, however, upon those places and genres in which the idea of privacy would seem, as it were, to find a natural habitat—the sonnet, the miniature painting, the bedroom, the privy chamber—but rather upon two emphatically public institutions, the courtroom and the theater, which were haunted by an anxiety about their limitations. For what makes Hamlet's claim startling is not its content but its context: What does it mean when one of the components of a dramatic spectacle denies the validity of "show"? I shall argue that some of the affinities between English legal and theatrical rituals arise from a conviction that because Hamlet is right—because there is that within which passes show—the theater like the courtroom must often deal in realities profoundly resistant to what would seem to be the exigencies of the form. My examination of actual trial practice in Tudor and Stuart England, and the philosophical assumptions upon which it is based, will provide a background for a discussion of the quasijudicial discovery of inwardness in Shakespeare's Othello.

II

At his trial on a trumped-up treason charge in 1603, Sir Walter Ralegh complained that the prosecutors had "not proved any one thing against me by direct Proofs, but all by circumstances." Justice Warburton responded:

I marvel, Sir Walter, that you being of such experience and wit, should stand on this point; for so many horse-stealers may escape, if they may not be condemned without witnesses. If one should rush into the king's Privy-Chamber, whilst he is alone, and kill the king . . .
and this man he met coming with his sword drawn all bloody: shall he not be condemned to death?\textsuperscript{9}

Warburton's explication of English legal custom is correct. On the Continent, an elaborate set of rules strictly prescribed the kinds and amount of evidence necessary for conviction. Two eyewitnesses, or a confession—which could be obtained under torture—were ordinarily required for conviction. In England, by contrast, evidentiary rules remained loose, almost chaotic. Under most circumstances torture was impermissible, but, as John Langbein has pointed out, this apparent humanity was made possible by the fact that circumstantial evidence was all that was required for conviction. English courts made no rules about the admissibility of evidence, no qualitative distinction among kinds of proof, until well into the seventeenth century.\textsuperscript{10} The power to convince the jury was all that mattered.

Less than a year after Ralegh's trial, the King's Men performed Othello for the first time. A debate about evidence occurs virtually in the center of the play. To Othello's demands for "ocular proof" of Desdemona's infidelity, Iago maintains that Othello must content himself with "imputation and strong circumstances"—that is, the kind of inferential proof upon which English courts often relied. Othello's eventual acceptance of this argument, of course, leads directly to his downfall. Why should Shakespeare figure the pivotal moment of the tragedy in these terms? What is the relevance of evidentiary concerns to the marital difficulties of a Moor and a Venetian? Why should a play about a disastrous sexual jealousy begin, as Robert Heilman noted long ago, "where some plays end, with a formal legal hearing that clears things up"; why should it "advance by a series of scenes analogous to trials or court actions"?\textsuperscript{11}

The answer lies in the similarity between some of the most fundamental issues of tragic subjectivity, as this play conceives them, and those raised by the procedures for criminal prosecution in Elizabethan and Jacobean England, procedures in many respects unique in Renaissance Europe. Recently, literary critics who have written on English Renaissance crime and punishment have often followed Michel Foucault's lead, concentrating upon the scene of public execution.\textsuperscript{12} But with the notable exception of some executions for treason and heresy, English executions tended to be relatively unspectacular affairs. Hanging by the neck until dead was the uniform method of capital punishment for most felonies under common law; the difference from the more ferocious and more delicately calibrated forms of execution on the Continent attracted considerable comment from contemporaries.\textsuperscript{13} On the other hand, while the Continental trial was conducted in secret and much of the testimony was presented in writing, in England the trial was a public and oral event, sometimes drawing large crowds, and detailed accounts of important or sensational trials were printed shortly after they had occurred. Moreover, the English jury system, unique in Europe, made
local laypeople not only onlookers but participants in the revelatory process. While France, Italy, and Germany put decisions about guilt or innocence into the hands of judges, in England the task of the bench was supposed to be restricted to “finding law,” that is to determining the applicable statutes and precedents. It was up to the English jury to “find fact,” that is, to determine what had really occurred and to deliver a verdict. If an English defendant was convicted by process of common law, his or her punishment was not, as it was on the Continent, what Foucault calls “the public support of a procedure that had hitherto remained in the shade.” Public punishment in England was the final episode in a more protracted public spectacle. The effect of the English system, then, was to displace the focus of public attention from the processes of punishment to the processes of gathering and interpreting evidence. Many criminal trials—probably the vast majority—were perfunctory or uninteresting, just as they are today. But given the right situation, the English public trial could and did become an arena in which urgent questions of interpretation—questions with implications for a wide variety of social and intellectual practices—had to be addressed in practical terms before a large and curious audience.

What was the jury’s “finding of fact” supposed to involve? Cases of witchcraft and treason are particularly instructive, both because prosecutions for these two offences rose sharply in the English Renaissance, and because they are crimes with which Othello is explicitly concerned. In both kinds of cases the problem of assessing guilt was bound up with problems of discovering an inward truth. Elizabethan and Jacobean statutes leave it unclear whether witchcraft is essentially a mental, inward crime—consisting in the secret allegiance to evil powers—or whether it is prosecuted because, like murder or theft, it ruins the lives and properties of others. Contemporary commentators call this the problem of “pact or act”; generally they argue that the pact constitutes the crime and that the social harms that result constitute the evidence for the crime. English juries were notoriously reluctant to convict in the absence of material damages, but strictly speaking the blasted livestock, the wasted children, the possessed neighbors, the milk that refused to become butter were merely the effects or symptoms of witchcraft and not its essence. Reginald Scot points out some of the problems of prosecuting a crime defined in this way in his skeptical treatise The Discovery of Witchcraft. Scrutiny of motives, Scot claims, is simply inappropriate for criminal prosecution:

By which reason everyone should be executed, that wisheth evil to his neighbor . . . But if the will should be punished by man, according to the offense against God, we should be driven by thousands at once to the slaughterhouse or butchery.

The problem is easy for Scot, however, only because he does not believe in witchcraft. Those who do, and who insist that the biblical injunction against witches must be enforced, find themselves in an awkward dilemma. On one hand they
realize that witchcraft can only be discovered by the effects it wreaks in the world—effects that, admittedly, can stem from a variety of causes. “The true marks of a witch, or mental characters, are not easy to be discerned,” writes John Gaule, insisting that because of the unusually high possibility of error in such cases, the evidence for conviction ought to be absolutely compelling. At the same time, the crime is by nature secret and the forces it employs invisible. The witch does not need to be present at the scene of the crime (so alibis cannot avail her) nor, since she does not employ ordinary weapons, are investigators likely to find unmistakable physical signs of her involvement. So Gaule later concedes:

Neither is it requisite that so palpable evidence for conviction should here come in, as in more sensible matters. It is enough if there be but so much circumstantial proof or evidence, as the substance, matter, and nature of such an abstruse mystery of iniquity will well admit.19

The standards of proof, in other words, should be both more stringent and more lenient than they are in other cases. "Circumstantial proof" seemed by its nature dubious, likely to amount to no more than a collection of fortuities. But in witchcraft cases it was normally all that was available.

It is easy to see how this problem arises. Even if juries tended to regard seriously only those cases of alleged witchcraft in which harm had befallen persons or property, they still needed to convince themselves that the defendant had indeed produced the catastrophe in question by some occult means. Their task, therefore, was essentially an inductive one. They had to trace the observable evidence back to its supposed origin in the witch's inscrutable inward perversity.

The crime of treason presents related conceptual and practical problems. According to medieval statute, treason is the crime of "compassing or imagining the death of the king," and this language persists through all the many Tudor and Stuart extensions and reformulations of the law. The legal commentator Fernando Pulton explains:

[The law of treason] doth not only restrain all persons from laying violent hands upon the person of the King, but also by prevention it doth inhibit them so much as to compass, or imagine, or to devise and think in their hearts to cut off by violent or untimely death, the life of the King.

Treason, then, is a crime that occurs in the imagination, before and even in the absence of any manifestly treasonous activity. But how is the jury to know what a man has devised or thought in his heart? Pulton continues:

Seeing compassing and imagination is a secret thing hidden in the breast of man, and cannot be known but by an open fact or deed, it is requisite to have some thing or means to notify the same to others before it can be discovered and punished.19

For treason as for witchcraft, then, the "overt act" is the symptom of the crime, not the crime itself, and trials throughout the sixteenth and early seventeenth
century feature arguments over what counts as proof, as what Pulton would call
"notification," that treasonous imaginings have occurred. At his trial Henry
Neville, one of Essex's friends, protested that he had not taken part in Essex's
insurrection itself but merely participated in one of the conferences planning the
rebellion: this, he maintained, "was no more treason than the child in the moth-
er's belly is a child." In his view, treason still in the planning stages, because hidden
and undeveloped, was therefore not yet a crime at all. But the judges replied that
"the compassing of the King's destruction . . . implied in that consultation, was
treason, in the very thought and cogitation." For them treason consisted in
"thought and cogitation," and the consultation was an "overt act," the public man-
ifestation that makes such thoughts liable to prosecution. Much more difficult was
the earlier case of Thomas More, who refused to take the Oath of Supremacy
and declined as well to specify his reasons. His silence seemed to present to
observers a smooth and impenetrable surface; indeed, More reminded the court,
silence was ordinarily construed under common law to signify consent. Where
was the "overt act" that manifested his inward disaffection to the world? In order
to obtain a conviction, the prosecutors had finally to resort to a dubious report of
a conversation in which More was supposed to have denied Henry's authority in
ecclesiastical matters. Shortly thereafter, a new statute classed refusal and silence
themselves as "overt acts"—as the circumstantial proof of what Pulton calls the
"secret thing hidden in the breast of man."

Proceedings against witches and traitors threw into high relief the question
of what relation holds between the overt and the covert, the visible effect and the
invisible cause. Of course, the prosecution of other crimes could also entail ques-
tions of intention; as when a jury had to decide whether a homicide counted as
accidental manslaughter or willful murder. But treason and witchcraft, conceived
as crimes that occur in the mind alone prior to any outward manifestation, pose
in an especially acute form a kind of skeptical dilemma that was hardly new to
the English Renaissance but that nonetheless acquired a special practical urgency
in the upheavals associated with the Reformation and Counter-Reformation.
Sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Catholics and Protestants, Anglicans and
sectarians, as they endlessly debate the role of ceremony, ritual, and other "out-
ward respects" in the act of worship, argue not whether the distinction exists
between what Augustine calls *homo interior* and *homo exterior* but what ought
to be the significance of that distinction. The record of religious persecution in
England and on the Continent is full of heretics who preferred death in torment
to conforming outwardly to a doctrine at variance with their inner convictions.
But the difference between "inward disposition" and the visible but less real
"outward appearance" could create opportunities, too, for religious minorities.
Raphael Holinshed reports that when one Friar Forrest was apprehended in 1537
and accused of secretly rejecting Henry VIII's authority over the English church, he was asked why he had taken the Oath of Supremacy. "He answered that he took his oath with his outward man, but his inward man never consenteth thereeto." On the other end of the religious spectrum the Family of Love, a radical Protestant sect, taught that, provided the heart was right, the true believer might engage in any religious practice prescribed by the authorities without compromising his or her standing with God. And there were secular uses for, and dangers from, the difference between invisible private thoughts and visible public actions. Even Martin Cognot, the author of the Politic Discourses Upon Truth and Lying, who makes the lie the basis of all sin, concedes that "if a man would . . . discover to every man the secret of his mind, he should be counted but a dizzard." The notion that all social life is contingent upon realities not fully perceived or reliably revealed contributes powerfully to what Lacey Baldwin Smith has characterized as "the paranoid mode" of English Renaissance political life: the pervasive suspicion of other people's motives and the conviction that conspiracy was everywhere.

Coping with the inwardness of other people, therefore, requires certain interpretative tools. Social life demands the constant practice of induction, or what the physician John Cotta calls "artificial conjecture": reasoning from the superficial to the deep, from the effect to the cause, from seeming to being. But the inductive process is always liable to error. At times we may, as Thomas Wright says, trace out the roots by the evidence of the boughs and flowers, but, as William Vaughan reminds us, some thoughts and passions are "concealed in a man's heart, as like unto a tree, which in outward appearance seemeth to be most beautiful, and is full of fair blossoms, but inwardly is rotten, worm-eaten, and withered." Hamlet knows that the forms, moods, and shapes of grief could as well be a calculated pretense as the symptoms of a genuine inner state.

Even when there was no intention to mislead, the effect of truthfulness could be difficult to convey to a wary audience. At his execution in 1609 Robert Logan, one of the earl of Gowrie's co-conspirators, professed his repentance to the spectators around the scaffold, but evidently believed that they were unconvincing. So "he for the greater assurance of that his constant and true deposition, promised (by the assistance of God) to give them an open and evident token":

Which he accomplished thereafter; for before his last breath, when he had hung a pretty space; he lifted up his hands a good height, and clapped them together aloud three several times, to the great wonder and admiration of all the beholders.

Of course, even this surprising demonstration has no logical force; it would still be possible to assume that Logan had kept something in reserve, that he was still a performer at the last gasp. Immediately before he was hanged, castrated, disemboweled, and quartered in 1581, the Jesuit Edmund Campion insisted upon his innocence of treason in a graceful and moving speech. "The outward protest-
tations of this man," fumed Anthony Munday, "urged some there present to tears, not entering into conceit of his inward hypocrisy." The possibility of some unexposed residue, some secret motive, could never be wholly discounted even when the gesture of self-revelation seemed most generous and complete.

The problems of interpreting persons under these vexed circumstances are closely analogous to problems of interpretation in other areas. Sixteenth- and seventeenth-century sermons and devotional literature rely heavily on "arguments by design," reasoning inferentially from God's works to His invisible essence, from everyday events to His mysterious providence. Biblical interpreters similarly conceive of the literal text as a husk or veil that simultaneously conceals and indicates the contours of the truth at the sacred core. The traditional task of exegesis, as Frank Kermode writes, "is to penetrate the surface and reveal a secret sense; to show what is concealed in what is proclaimed." At the same time, the perils of using merely external manifestations as interpretive guides are dramatically pointed up by Christ's career on Earth, as well by the content of much of his teaching. Renaissance religious culture nurtures in a wide variety of ways habits of mind that encourage conceiving of human inwardness as simultaneously privileged and elusive, an absent presence "interpreted" to observers by ambiguous signs and tokens. Faith itself, in other words, can encourage a kind of mistrust.

The "problem of other minds" as it engages English Renaissance thinkers and writers thus often presents itself as a question not so much of whether those minds exist as of how to know what they are thinking. The short treatise Skeptic, or Speculation, attributed to Walter Ralegh, argues against the authority of sense perceptions on the grounds that each individual, necessarily limited to the evidence of his own senses, cannot know whether the perceptions of others correlate with his own, nor to what extent anyone's perceptions give an accurate idea of "outward objects." Different people manifestly vary in their tastes and interests, and the perceptions of beasts are likely to differ from human perceptions even more radically:

If a man rub his eye, the figure of that which he beholdeth seemeth long, or narrow; is it not then likely, that those creatures which have a long and slanting pupil of the eye, as goats, foxes, cats etc., do convey the fashion of that which they behold under another form to the imagination, than those that have round pupils do.

The progress of this argument is interesting. Ralegh destabilizes a commonsense notion of direct access to things-in-themselves by insisting that the internal working of other minds, what he calls their "inward discourse," is remote and inaccessible.

I may tell what the outward object seemeth to me; but what it seemeth to other creatures, or whether it be indeed that which it seemeth to me, or any other of them, I know not.
But this perspectivism seems to strengthen, not weaken, the impulse to investigate those minds. Ralegh’s treatise is remarkable not for its solipsism but for its attempt to reconstruct the “inward discourse” of the beast and the alien; he tries to duplicate in himself the different conditions of animal perception, rubbing his eye into the shape of a cat’s eye in order to see as a cat sees. At the same time, the skeptical principles that generate this attempt doom his empathy to remain inevitably unsatisfying and incomplete.

So the interpretation of other people is fraught with problems. But set against all this epistemological ambiguity—indeed, provoked by that ambiguity—is the desire for a reliable means for achieving certainty. Moreover, the implicitly or explicitly theistic context in which the problem of human inwardness is posed as a problem in the first place provides at the same time a standard of what would constitute such certainty. Inwardness in the English Renaissance is almost always formulated in terms of a double spectatorship. When Thomas Wright declares that “hearts... be inscrutable, and only open unto God,” he is typical in defining inscrutability as a relative and not an absolute phenomenon. The difference between the inner and the outer man is a function of the difference between the limited, fallible human observer and the unlimited divine observer, “unto whom all hearts be open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid.” The work of interpretation is thus imagined as a process by which limited human spectatorship might approach divine omniscience.

When such investigation was effectively pursued, in a successfully conducted criminal trial, what did the jury expect to discover? John Cotta writes in The Trial of Witchcraft:

Many offenses... there are, neither manifest to sense, nor evident to reason, against which only likelihood and presumptions do arise in judgment: whereby notwithstanding, through narrow search and strict examination, circumspect and curious view of every circumstance... unto the depth and bottom by subtle disquisition fathomed, the learned, prudent, and discerning judge doth oft detect and bring to light many hidden, intestine, and secret mischiefs.

In trials for witchcraft, the accused was stripped and her whole body shaved in an attempt to find a “witch’s mark,” a hidden nipple in her “secret parts” at which she was supposed to suckle her familiar. This abnormality at a liminal area where inwardness and outwardness met seemed to provide a satisfactory basis for inferring horrible motives and desires further within.

The jury’s process of discovery in other cases, too, was usually represented as an unveiling of something that nonetheless remained invisible, beyond sight. This visible invisibility is called the “prodigious,” the “unnatural,” the “unspeakable,” the “monstrous.” (“How much more than too too monstrous shall all Christian hearts judge the horror of this treason?” asks the earl of Northumberland, rhetorically, at the trial of one of the Gunpowder Conspirators.) Thus, as we have
already seen, Judge Warburton rationalizes the looseness of English evidentiary law, when Raleigh challenges it, in terms of a story about monstrous inwardness, an unnatural crime in the Privy Chamber. The language of monstrosity is characteristically vague, equally applicable to murder, theft, treason, witchcraft, sodomy, or whatever, so that an accusation of one particular crime tends to slide easily into an accusation of generalized criminality. And the monstrous is a slippery category in other respects as well. It is something the speaker or beholder desperately wants to differentiate himself from, define himself against. But the discovery of monstrosity is put into the hands of a jury of peers, chosen by their apparent resemblance to the defendant. They discover what seems absolutely alien, but they are equipped for this discovery by their similarity to what they investigate.\(^\text{30}\)

In order to discover monstrosity the jury examines tokens, traces of a truth imagined as concealed inside the defendant. The purpose of the judicial inquiry—the evidence-gathering stage always, and the punishment stage sometimes—is to make that truth publicly available. Edward Coke, presiding at the trial of the Gunpowder Conspirators, describes to the prisoners the rationale behind the form of execution that awaits them: the traitor’s “bowels and inlay’d parts [are] taken out and burnt, who inwardly had conceived and harbour’d in his heart such horrible treason.”\(^\text{44}\) The traitor comes to the scaffold quite literally to spill his guts, to have the heart plucked out of his mystery. The corporeal way inwardness is sometimes conceived in the English Renaissance has perhaps misled critics who think of the body as something displayed, something “wholly present” to observation.\(^\text{42}\) But only the surface of the body, strictly speaking, is really visible, and even that is normally “cloaked,” a favorite Renaissance word for hypocrisy. In sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century England its interior is still mysterious in a way perhaps hard to recapture in an age of medical sophistication, and in a way quite precisely analogous to the mysteriousness of human motives and desires.

England’s idiosyncratic lack of articulated evidentiary standards and forms, in what was in many respects a highly formal judicial system, seems to reflect the notion that the jury’s process of decision making, however difficult it sometimes became, essentially involved interpretative skills so fundamental to everyday social existence that codified rules and specialized legal expertise were hardly requisite. Nonetheless, the social judgments the jurors were imagined as practicing constantly in their own lives, and which equipped them for their role in the trial, were notoriously subject to error. The connection between outward, public symptom and inward, private cause was universally acknowledged to be tenuous and falsifiable. Under such circumstances, although a flexible attitude toward evidence may in fact have more often produced just verdicts than a strict and formal procedure, it could not provide the same basis for theoretical confidence that a more systematic approach could: it did not allow prosecutors, judges, or
juries to content themselves in the knowledge that the formalities, at least, were being observed.

How might the jury's performance be made more reliable in the life-and-death matter of common-law felony prosecutions? The prisoner in the dock, asked how he or she would plead, had to answer, "I put myself upon God and my country." The formula both announces and obscures the difference between divine and human vision, the difference so crucial to Renaissance conceptions of inwardness. Are God and the "country" invoked separately because they are not imagined as working together? Or were they rather supposed to collaborate? Edmund Campion, on trial for treason in 1581, told the jurors that his trial ought to be a "mirror" of "the dreadful Day of Judgment." More than two decades later, Sir John Croke similarly describes the trial of Henry Garnet in the language of Revelations:

This person and prisoner here at the bar, this place, and this present occasion and action, do prove that true, which the author of all truth hath told us; that . . . there is nothing hid that shall not be made manifest, there is nothing secret that shall not be revealed and come in public."

The jury trial is supposed to bring human vision in line with divine vision—like God, the jury is supposed to see into the heart of the accused and discern the truth there. But how is it to perform this feat? Justices and defendants alike frequently express the hope that God would "instruct" the jurors so that they would reach the correct verdict. But the jury trial is itself a replacement for the medieval trial by ordeal, which had been discredited by God's apparent reluctance to interfere with human juridical procedures. No one could be sanguine about an automatic correlation between God's verdict and the jury's.

In fact, the best the jury can do is to approach certainty in an asymptotic curve, evaluating the available tokens, traces, and effects of a guilt that cannot be perceived directly. Interestingly, under such circumstances the sincerity of the jury's decision—the fact that it reaches a "verdict according to conscience"—becomes crucially significant. It is as if the invisible inwardness of the defendant were rendered accessible, or at least as accessible as it could ever become, by the jurors' resort to their own inwardness, as they look within their hearts and find a verdict there. The same word, conviction, stands both for the jurors' state of mind and for the imputation of a set of actions to the accused. The procedure tellingly resembles Raleigh's in Skeptic, or Speculation: he claims that the animal's mind is unknowable from our perspective, but at the same time tries to reproduce its "inward discourse" by rubbing his own eye to make his perceptions more closely approximate the goat's or the fox's. The potential dangers in this procedure are recognized by those who, like John Cotta, exhort the jury scrupulously to maintain "a true difference between that which our imagination doth represent to us, from within the brain, and that which we see without by the outward sense."45
The trial both exacerbates a sense of the inconclusive character of circumstantial evidence, and by its pressure toward a verdict, forces a certain repression of the hermeneutic difficulties involved in obtaining "conviction."

The English trial, then, is a ritual of discovery that attempts to perform the highly desirable but technically impossible feat of rendering publicly available a truth conceived of as initially—and perhaps inescapably—inward, secret, and invisible to mortal sight. In this sense the trial is a paradigm of all social relations that seem to rely upon a more or less highly developed capacity for accurate surmise. It exploits abilities that are supposed to be widely dispersed among the populace, as other skills of governance are certainly not imagined to be during this period. On the other hand, these "easy," normal, everyday skills are almost impossible to codify, or to employ with any absolute certainty of success. Inference, empathetic projection, the careful weighing of probability, an openness to divine guidance: all are supposed to help the jury reach a verdict, but nothing can provide a sure means of escaping the limitations set upon even the most scrupulous human observation.

III

Othello, set in Venice and Cyprus, does not stage in any literal way the procedures of English justice. But the plot replicates the difficulties with which the English criminal courtroom often had to deal. Iago's temptation of Othello, as I have already mentioned, centers upon a discussion of what would constitute adequate proof of Iago's suggestion that Desdemona is unchaste. Although Othello initially insists upon "ocular proof"—the strongest kind of evidence in both English and in Continental courts—he almost immediately modifies his demand:

Make me to see't; or at the least so prove it
That the probation bear no hinge nor loop
To hang a doubt on.

(3.3.369–71)

With this revision he allows Iago to begin eroding his original evidentiary scruples, extending the category of acceptable proof to include mere "imputation, and strong circumstances."

Iago exploits Othello's irresolution in an interesting way. "In Venice they do let God see the pranks / They dare not show their husbands," he tells Othello. "It is impossible you should see this" (3.3.206–7, 407). He pretends that the practical difficulty of surprising an illicit couple in bed represents a real epistemological limitation. Thus he encourages Othello to imagine adultery as an essentially invisible crime, in the same category with treason or witchcraft, fully displayed only before the omniscient eye of God. In this scheme, Othello's apparently unexcep-
tionable demand for ocular proof comes to represent an impossible aspiration to the absolute knowledge of another person.

Othello: By heaven, I'll know thy thought!
Iago: You cannot, if my heart were in your hand.

(3.3.166–67)

Iago tantalizes Othello by reminding him of the limitations of his “mortal eyes” and then, by pretending to satisfy his longing, encourages him to imagine them as overcome. Othello lives out the epistemological dilemma of the English juryman to whom everything is supposed to be manifest but who is nonetheless forced to depend upon clues and surmises, who must treat as clearly visible that which is inevitably beyond sight. He supposes he is pursuing the kind of insight he attributes to his mother’s friend, the Egyptian charmer who “could almost read / The thoughts of people” (3.4.57–58). But what he actually relies upon is circumstantial evidence—Iago’s flag and sign of love; Desdemona’s “token,” a handkerchief misleadingly mislaid. Either Othello must accept a degree of uncertainty in his relation to Desdemona, or he must repress his awareness of his own limitations as an observer.

Why does he choose the latter course? An alien in a place where the natives cultivate a sophisticated awareness of the difference between spurious surface and inward truth, Othello represents himself as incapable even of innocent hypocrisy. “My parts, my title, and my perfect soul/Shall manifest me rightly,” he declares when he hears of Brabantio’s opposition to his marriage (1.2.31–32); he assumes that the soul is as visible as parts and title to anyone who cares to look. Even late in the play, after he has killed Desdemona, Othello imagines the supremely precious object as a world made “of one entire and perfect chrysolite”—that is, flawlessly perspicacious. Othello is thus, as Stephen Greenblatt notes, deeply attracted to the notion of confession, to a discourse of absolutely sincere revelation to religious or legal authorities. But whereas confession is ordinarily an admission of guilt, for Othello it constitutes a theatrical display of innocence. He has, he claims, nothing to hide. In a play in which, as Patricia Parker demonstrates, problems of narrative unfolding are foregrounded, Othello insists that he is always already unfolded. He does not so much tell his story to the Venetian court as he recounts having told it to Desdemona—and that telling is itself a repetition of a narrative previously offered to Brabantio, who now (ironically enough) accuses him of secret practices. This energetic guilelessness is perhaps compensatory, involving as it does a denial or avoidance of potential discrepancies between surface and interior: a counterstrategy to the Venetian racism that, in its more benign but still humiliating form, imagines Othello as a white man unaccountably lodged inside a black body.

Since Othello initially either lacks or repudiates Hamlet’s sense of that within which passes show, it may seem curious that he proves so susceptible to Iago, the
character who articulates most fully and cynically the difference between "compliment extern" and "the native act and figure of the heart." Othello capitulates to Iago's slanders because they seem to allow him to preserve one version of his fantasy of perfect transparency: the fantasy that others are absolutely transparent to him. He grants that Desdemona's innocent looks may conceal a corrupt inward truth, but they do not successfully conceal anything from him: he imagines her deceptive surface penetrated by his omniscient gaze.

Between them Othello and Iago develop a way of comprehending Desdemona that corresponds closely with the judicial models provided in such abundance throughout the play: an inquiry that defines inwardness as guilty secrecy. Once Desdemona becomes a "cause" to be investigated, what is discovered, almost inevitably, is monstrosity. For just as it did in actual legal proceedings, an intuition of invisible monstrosity provokes most of the legal proceedings in the play: the inquiry into what Brabantio claims is Othello's foul and secret sorcery; Othello's investigation into what he describes as the "monstrous" behavior of the revelers and which Cassio attributes to "the invisible spirit of wine"; and finally, the discovery of the "monstrous act" of murder when Desdemona cries out behind the closed curtains of the marriage bed. In this environment Iago functions as a sort of poet of monstrosity, lovingly dwelling on the gross issue, the monstrous birth, the unnatural thought, the palace into which foul things intrude.

When Othello comes under the spell of Iago's rhetoric of monstrosity he unknowingly makes serious compromises.

It was my hint to speak—such was the process:
And of the cannibals that each other eat,
The Anthropophagi, and men whose heads
Do grow beneath their shoulders.

(1.5.141–44)

Othello’s courtship of Desdemona suggests that monstrosity has a positive valence—the allure of the marvelous or the exceptional. Desdemona loves him not because he is a wealthy curled darling of her nation but because he and his story are "passing strange." Othello’s acceptance of conventional notions of criminal monstrosity becomes part of the complicated self-hatred that fuels both his jealousy and his final suicidal gesture. For his white colleagues define miscegenation in the same terms they use for adultery, as a monstrous union potentially productive of "gross issue."

Foh! one may smell in such a will most rank,
Foul disproportion, thoughts unnatural!

(3.3.237–38)

Iago exploits the slipperiness of the language of monstrosity to especially perverse effect in this passage, entrapping Othello in a bizarre logic that makes
Desdemona’s “unnatural” devotion to her black husband evidence for her “monstrous” infidelities.

Desdemona, protesting that she has not offended Othello “either in discourse of thought or actual deed” (4.2.185), invokes the standard of guilt applied to thought crimes like treason or witchcraft in order to deny the validity of the charge. Complexities in the way her virtue is defined, however, leave her vulnerable. For a discrepancy between surface and interior is one of the hallmarks of female modesty: Iago himself praises the woman who “could think and ne’er disclose her mind” (2.1.157). The judicial imagination is likely to construe this reserve or hiddenness as duplicity. Moreover, although Desdemona protests that the difference between interior and exterior is not significant in her relationship to Othello, she is unable to bring her invisible conscience into court, and equally unable to force her judge to acknowledge the cogency of the unseen. For Othello imagines he can see everything, that there is no difference between the way one knows oneself and the way one knows other people. But chastity is as invisible as Iago claims infidelity to be—Desdemona’s “honor is an essence that’s not seen” (3.4.16). Stanley Cavell has therefore argued brilliantly that the mere fact that Desdemona possesses a “discourse of thought” to which her husband is not privy terrifies Othello.47 Cavell diagnoses the hero’s skeptical problem as an inability to empathize, to grant to Desdemona the privileges of subjectivity he grants to himself. I would argue, on the contrary, that Othello suffers from a kind of empathetic excess, fatally accepting a European outlook when it is least in his interests, inappropriately applying to Desdemona the conditions by which he defines himself. This is indeed a form of skepticism, but it is the kind that we have seen Raleigh practicing, in which the inaccessibility of the other produces not solipsism but a dubious attempt to reconstruct an alien point of view from the inside.

For loving not wisely but too well means making the beloved comprehensible as a version of oneself: fair warrior, captain’s captain, general’s general. Othello realizes himself in a narrative mode, in confession or storytelling—even in his last moments, as T.S. Eliot complains, he is imagining his career as it will be retold in the letters of the Venetian ambassadors.48 Desdemona’s susceptibility to Othello’s story, on the other hand, is the consequence of her own relative inexperience. The apparent eventlessness of Desdemona’s life, confined within her father’s household, makes her as exotic to a man like Othello as he is to her. What kind of narrative can be constructed for the female subject, the greedy ear that devours up discourse? Othello’s image suggests a sort of narrative black (or white) hole; as woman and as listener Desdemona is both perfect counterpart and absolute negation, a possibility both intensely desirable and intensely alarming to the phallic narrator. He does not know how to imagine Desdemona apart from her history, but, in the world of the play, for a beautiful young woman to have a history can mean only one thing. Insofar as she is a person she must have something to narrate, but if she has something to narrate she is no longer innocent.
“O curse of marriage, / That we can call these delicate creatures ours/ And not their appetites!” (3.3.272–74). Othello laments his wife’s separateness, even while puzzling over the sense in which she is his own. Unaware of, or unwilling to acknowledge, the difference between one’s knowledge of oneself and one’s knowledge of other people, he is easily led by Iago to confuse the third-person narration he constructs for and imputes to Desdemona with a first-person narration imagined as self-evidently authentic. Thus as the play proceeds he becomes unable to distinguish between what is proper to him and what to Desdemona. “Nature would not invest herself in such shadowing passion without some instruction,” he tells himself (3.4.38–40), confusing the possible origins of passion, projecting onto Desdemona his own fears and anxieties. In a striking and characteristic passage Othello tells Desdemona, immediately before he smotherers her, not to plead innocence, because she cannot “choke the strong conception / That I do groan withal” (5.2.60–61). By this point in the play he has entirely reversed their roles in the tragic drama: the fertile young woman lying in what will become her deathbed becomes a strangler, the strangler a fertile woman crying out in labor. Discovering, he thinks, Desdemona’s monstrosity, he wishes it upon, creates it for, himself: as Emilia says, jealous souls

are not ever jealous for the cause,  
But jealous for they’re jealous. It is a monster  
Begot upon itself, born on itself.  

(3.4.157–59)

Like the jury that looks within itself to discover the polluted conscience of the criminal, a pollution otherwise inaccessible, Othello looks within himself and finds a corruption he attributes to Desdemona. He is wrong, of course, but wrong in a way that the interpretative process, so defined, seems to invite, because the activities of evidence gathering and of interpreting others are intimately tied up with a process of projection. “By heaven, thou echo’st me / As if there were some monster in thy thought / Too hideous to be shown!” (3.3.110–12). Othello’s monster is an echo, a reverberation of the self ascribed to the other.

The insidiousness of the quasijudicial inquisitorial procedures Othello employs lies in their seductive resemblance to the ordinary processes of romantic love. Desdemona’s first thought, when Othello tells her the story of his life, is that “she wished / That heaven had made her such a man” (1.3.161–62). To marry Othello, in other words, is the next best thing to being him. “I saw Othello’s visage in his mind,” Desdemona declares triumphantly to the Venetian senators (1.3.214), imagining that the relation between lovers looks beyond the obvious in order to discover the hidden, erasing the boundary between public and private, outward and inward, the way one sees and the way one is seen. It does not occur to her to submit Othello’s story to the skeptical criteria Iago invokes when he characterizes the traveler’s tale of marvels as “fantastical lies.” Collaborating in
Othello's fantasy that his autobiographical narration is self-evidently true, Desdemona imaginatively leaps the gap between self-knowledge and the normally more limited and conditional knowledge of another.

Iago and Othello likewise erase such boundaries, or imagine themselves erasing them, by reading themselves into others. To Iago, the idea of crime is easy; his cynicism a villain's self-knowledge. Othello's own anxieties produce his suspicion of Desdemona. Evidence is in the eye of the beholder. This sounds like a familiar perspectivism, akin to what Ralegh offers in Skeptic, or Speculation. What the perceiver sees is determined by himself, not by what is "out there." But Ralegh's treatise allows a luxury of deferred judgment that Shakespeare's play, like the criminal trial, does not finally permit. This is not a tragedy that sidesteps moral absolutes. When Othello discerns that Iago has a horrible conceit shut up in his brain, he is quite correct, in a way he does not yet understand. The problem is not just that people create their own monsters but also that the monsters are out there and hard to find: the authorized means for detecting them are both deeply, inescapably unreliable and, at the same time, impossible to abandon.

The fundamental doubts cast on evidentiary procedure in Othello put its spectators in an uncomfortable position. We see more than Othello sees because we hear Iago's soliloquies, see Emilia give him the napkin, but not because we occupy a different order of perceptual reality. Ben Jonson's Volpone provides an instructive comparison as another play full of trial scenes in which the protagonists ruthlessly exploit the difference between insiders and outsiders, and in which possession or witchcraft becomes an important issue for the court. Volpone's Venice is full of rich interiors carefully protected from the public view, and its characters are constructed on the same pattern as their houses, a shell around a secret, valuable core. "Show 'hem a will. Open that chest," Volpone tells Mosca at the beginning of the last act. Indeed the universal preoccupation of most of the characters throughout the play is a "will" hidden within a "chest": the concealed intention of a supposed invalid, whose slight and ambiguous utterances and gestures require interpretation by a servant posing as skilled diviner. But throughout the play, the privacy the characters suffer and enjoy with respect to one another contrasts markedly with their total exposure on the public stage. In the trial scenes, we watch the mystified characters struggle to learn what we know already. The difference between spectators and characters is like the difference between divine omniscience and the circumstantial knowledge available to human beings—in the terms of the English Renaissance court, it is the difference between God and the "country," the limited, fallible human jury. The plot of Volpone indeed suggests that a reliance upon the external and the visible is dangerous. But by exempting the author and his audience from epistemological limitations that it seems to represent as universal, Jonson vindicates the public medium of the theater even as he seems to subvert it.49 Volpone reassures its spectators of the validity of the theatrical mode by putting privacy on display.
In *Othello*, by contrast, the hidden realm remains incompletely revealed in the theater. The inquiries in the play involve a series of events unseen by us: a courtship and a wedding that occur before the play begins; the mysterious movements of a Turkish fleet; an offstage quarrel between Cassio and Roderigo; Desdemona’s nonexistent affair with Cassio. Throughout the first two acts we are constantly asked to imagine Othello and Desdemona in the sexual act, an act that takes place offstage if, indeed, it ever takes place at all. Although favored with Iago’s confidence, the audience never gets a satisfactory account of his motives: while Volpone’s final act of will is an act of revelation, an “uncasing,” Iago makes a defiant vow of silence. Like Othello, we must depend upon circumstantial evidence when we might have expected all to be revealed.

In *Othello* the capacity, or incapacity, to know another is as pertinent to the relation between spectator and character as it is between character and character. Even while the play encourages an intense identification with the suffering characters, the nature of their suffering suggests that such identification is highly problematic in its motives and often in its consequences. The same mechanisms that seem to break down the boundaries between self and other simultaneously insist that those boundaries can never really be eliminated. Perhaps this is why *Othello* has struck a number of critics as a play in which “aesthetic distance” is unusually difficult to maintain. The impulse to interrupt, to tell Othello that he is wrong about Desdemona, seems so overpowering because there is a minimal epistemological boundary between characters and audience.

Recent critics like Barker and Belsey, who have claimed that the Renaissance lacked a conception of inwardness or privacy, have pointed to the dominance of the theatrical mode in this period to support their point, connecting it with a faith in the ultimate validity of what is displayed. But *Othello* and plays like it suggest that the theater is as epistemologically problematic as social life itself. Truth exceeds public methods of representation, whether that truth be Cordelia’s love, Desdemona’s fidelity, or Hamlet’s “that within which passes show.” What can be seen on the stage is only part of the truth, an evidence of things not seen, or not entirely seen. The English Renaissance theater, and the Shakespearean theater perhaps most self-consciously, struggles like the English Renaissance courtroom with the limitations and potential falsifications involved in the process of making visible an invisible truth.

Notes

I have presented versions of this paper at the Modern Language Association, Renaissance Society of America, and Shakespeare Association of America annual conferences; and as a lecture at the University of Wisconsin, the University of Virginia, the
University of Western Ontario, Cornell University, Ohio State University, Princeton University, the University of Florida, and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. I am indebted to the audiences on these occasions for their many thoughtful comments. I would also like to thank Fred Everett Maus, James Turner, Richard Helfgerson, and the editors of Representations for helpful specific suggestions.


6. Various forms of the philosophical argument are made in general terms by such writers as Freud, Marx, Foucault, Lacan, Derrida, and Wittgenstein; except in the case of Foucault, perhaps, their arguments do not stand or fall upon a particular reading of Renaissance culture. Anne Perry makes the historian’s argument apparently without sharing the philosophical agenda that motivates such critics as Barker or Belsey—although she, too, regards Renaissance conceptions of interiority as relatively undeveloped: “Only some poets, and those almost exclusively in sonnets, seemed to have concerned themselves with what a modern writer would call the inner life”; The Inward Language: Sonnets of Wyatt, Sidney, Shakespeare, Donne (Chicago, 1983), 14.

7. For helpful discussions of various conceptions of subjectivity, personal identity, individuality, and so on, and the complex ways such conceptions overlap and intersect, see the essays in John Perry, ed., Personal Identity (Berkeley, 1975), and Amelie Oksenberg Rorty, The Identities of Persons (Berkeley, 1976).

8. Since Aristotle, dramatic critics have drawn parallels between the public arts of the courtroom and the public arts of the theater. Moreover, the special fascination of English Renaissance drama with legal issues has long been recognized, and often attributed either to the legal background of many of the playwrights or to the fascination of their contemporaries with legal affairs. In Poetic and Legal Fiction in the Aristotelian Tradition (Princeton, N.J., 1986), Kathy Eden demonstrates, from a perspective quite different from my own, the significance of some of the connections between legal and poetic rhetoric in classical and Renaissance literature.


10. For a discussion of the difference between the regular Continental use of judicial torture (that is, torture employed during the evidence-gathering stage) and its relatively infrequent use in England, see James Heath, Torture and English Law (Wexford, Conn., 1982). In Torture and the Law of Proof (Chicago, 1977), John Langbein connects the Continental practice with strict evidentiary rules; if one could convict only those criminals who confessed, one had a very strong motive to compel that confession. He shows how both the relative infrequency of torture in England, and its abolition on the Continent in the eighteenth century, are directly linked not to the greater humaneness of prosecutors but to the acceptance of a loose evidentiary standard. Despite this loose-
ness, both Langbein and John Bellamy, in *Criminal Law and Society in Late Medieval and Tudor England* (New York, 1984), argue that in the course of the sixteenth century English courts begin to pay more attention to the orderly gathering of evidence and its presentation in court. In *Probability and Certainty in Seventeenth-Century England* (Princeton, N.J., 1983), 163-93, Barbara Shapiro describes the way the related development of the English law of evidence in the seventeenth century reflects changes in the general intellectual climate during this period; the origins of the phenomena she describes can be traced in accounts of sixteenth-century criminal trials.


14. Green, *Verdict According to Conscience*, provides not only a helpful discussion of the significance of the distinction between finding fact and finding law in the English criminal trial, but an illuminating account of the way the distinction is reimagined in the course of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.


16. Neither of these crimes was new to the English Renaissance, but both were prosecuted with a zeal unknown in previous ages, and in both cases the definition of the crime was significantly expanded. For an account of the sudden upsurge in witchcraft prosecution in the sixteenth and early seventeenth century, see Keith Thomas, *Religion and

17. Thomas, Religion and the Decline of Magic, 435–68, plausibly ascribes the ambiguity of English conceptions of witchcraft to its double origin in indigenous popular belief, which emphasized maleficium, and an intellectual tradition that emphasized allegiance to the devil. (Contemporaries do not, however, make a clear distinction between the two positions.)


20. Fernando Pulton, De Pace Regis et Regnis, viz. a Treatise Declaring Which be the Great and General Offences of the Realm (London, 1610), 108. In The Third Part of the Institutes of the Laws of England . . . (London, 1644), the important Jacobean jurist Edward Coke reviews the question of evidence in treason cases in similar terms, stressing that an insistence upon an "overt act" protects the defendant.

21. Francis Bacon, A Declaration of the Practices and Treasons Attempted and Committed by Robert, Late Earl of Essex, and His Complices (London, 1601), K2r.


23. For a representative tract in which both Protestant and Catholic positions use Augustine's formulations to draw different conclusions, see, e.g., A True Report of the Private Colloquy between M. Smith, alias Norrize, and M. Walker (London, 1624). The topic of this dialogue is the relationship between the "outward and extrinsical" and the "inward or secret." A different version of the distinction between the outward and the inward man descends from an Aristotelian distinction between appearances and internal or essential forms. Walter Ralegh is drawing upon the Aristotelian tradition, for instance, rather than the Augustinian one, when he opens his History of the World (London, 1614) by asserting that "it is not the visible fashion and shape of plants and of reasonable creatures that makes the difference of working in the one and of condition in the other, but the form internal" (Alv). A similar distinction is important in the ontology and ethics of stoicism, which was enthusiastically revived in the Renaissance.


26. In Treason in Tudor England: Politics and Paranoia (Princeton, N.J., 1986), Lacey Baldwin Smith argues that Tudor childrearing practices among the middle and upper classes rendered members of the ruling elite susceptible to paranoia: "The central feature of the paranoid cognitive response to life is not simply suspicion . . . . It is the conviction that things are never as they appear to be—a greater and generally more sinister reality exists behind the scenes—and the corollary that what is standing hidden in the wings, prompting, manipulating, but always avoiding exposure to the footlights, is the presence of evil" (36). The theatrical analogies that seem to come naturally to Smith in this description are, as I shall suggest later in the essay, hardly coincidental.

30. Anthony Munday, A Discovery of Edmund Campion and His Confederates ... (London, 1582), G1v.
32. Perhaps the theistic assumptions and model for human inwardness in the Renaissance are one reason why, as Stephen Greenblatt has noted in “Invisible Bullets: Renaissance Authority and Its Subversion,” Glyph 8 (1981): 40–61, atheism seems to have proven an impossible conceptual position for the strenuous sixteenth-century self-fashioners of whom he writes.
33. Though he concentrates on French rather than English texts, and on skepticism about the phenomenal world rather than about other minds, Richard Popkin, in his History of Scepticism from Erasmus to Descartes, revised ed. (New York, 1964), provides a helpful overview of the development of philosophical skepticism in the sixteenth century and its connection to doctrinal problems posed by the Reformation and Counter-Reformation.
34. Walter Ralegh, Skeptic, or Speculation (London, 1651), 4. Ralegh adapts his arguments from the first book of Outlines of Pyrrhonism, a late-classical work by Sextus Empiricus. In Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare (Chicago, 1980), 224–25, Stephen Greenblatt describes the power relations that he sees as implicit in the act of empathy, an act not merely of generosity but of penetration and occupation. This analysis is helpful in understanding Ralegh’s variety of skepticism, and also bears upon my discussion below of the jury’s investigative practice.
35. Ralegh, Skeptic, or Speculation, 20.
36. Wright, Passions of the Mind, 27.
38. Cotta, Trial of Witchcraft, 18.
40. In “The Cultural Politics of Perversion: Augustine, Shakespeare, Freud, Foucault,” Genders 8 (1990): 1–16, Jonathan Dollimore describes how the orthodox Christian—originally Augustinian—insistence that evil is merely a privation of good, rather than a real principle in itself, complicates the relationship between normality and perversion, the natural and the unnatural, by including the latter within the former even while insisting upon their crucial disparities. The uncanny, parodic quality of evil so construed helps explain the complicated relationship of differentiation and identification in both the English jury trial and in Othello.
42. Barker, Tremulous Private Body, 74; see also his comments on “the spectacular visible body,” 23–26. In Renaissance Fictions of Anatomy (Amherst, Mass., 1985), Devon Hodges helpfully explores sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century conceptions of the dissected body.
43. Cobbett’s State Trials, 1:1070. 44. Ibid., 2:217.
45. Cotta, Trial of Witchcraft, 83.
46. Greenblatt, Renaissance Self-Fashioning, 220–34.

49. I mean here to be contrasting two plays, not two dramatists; the privileging of the audience is by no means the rule in Jonson's works. The controversial finale of *Epicene*, for instance, demonstrates to the audience that they too have succumbed to the wiles of one of the characters. For a more extended analysis of the position of the spectator in Renaissance drama in general and *Othello* in particular, see Katharine Ensminger Maus, "Horns of Dilemma: Jealousy, Gender, and Spectatorship in English Renaissance Drama," *ELH* 54 (1987): 595–83.