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The last twenty years have seen a broad and vital reinterpretation of the nature of literary texts, a move away from formalism to a sense of literature as an aspect of social, economic, political and cultural history. While the earliest New Historicist work was criticized for a narrow and anecdotal view of history, it also served as an important stimulus for post-structuralist, feminist, Marxist and psychoanalytical work, which in turn has increasingly informed and redirected it. Recent writing on the nature of representation, the historical construction of gender and of the concept of identity itself, on theatre as a political and economic phenomenon and on the ideologies of art generally, reveals the breadth of the field. Cambridge Studies in Renaissance Literature and Culture is designed to offer historically oriented studies in Renaissance literature and theater which make use of the insights afforded by theoretical perspectives. The view of history envisioned is above all a view of our own history, a reading of the Renaissance for and from our own time.

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Anxious masculinity in early modern England

MARK BREITENBERG

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Mark Breitenberg

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Despite the singular authority designated on the title page, this book is profoundly marked by the voices of other scholars, friends, colleagues teachers and students. I'm grateful to the research staffs at the Furness Library of the University of Pennsylvania, the Huntington Library and the Folger Shakespeare Library, as well as to my superb copy-editor at Cambridge University Press, Deborah McLaughlan. I would also like to thank the remarkably insightful and provocative students I had the pleasure to teach in my Shakespeare seminars at Swarthmore College over the years. Many friends and colleagues have contributed valuable suggestions and encouragement during the process of writing this book, notably: Alex Juhasz, Roxanne Lin, Don Wayne, Adam Haslett, Tom Heacox, Nick Jackiw, Arthur F. Kinney, Peter Erickson, Stephen Orgel, Philip Weinstein and Gail Kern Paster. I am especially grateful to Louis Montrose for his discerning critiques of early drafts and for his advocacy of the project every step of the way.

Eye Oishi endured and elucidated many of the ideas in *Anxious Masculinity* as no one else could. Her voice resonates deeply through the following pages.

Introduction

The central proposition of this book is that the phrase "anxious masculinity" is redundant. Masculine subjectivity constructed and sustained by a patriarchal culture – infused with patriarchal assumptions about power, privilege, sexual desire, the body – inevitably engenders varying degrees of anxiety in its male members. In early modern England, despite a broad and powerful discourse that assumed a natural, divinely ordained basis for authority based on gender and status, signs of anxiety among those whose privilege might have seemed inviolable are widespread; once identified and brought to the surface, masculine anxiety appears as ubiquitous as E. M. W. Tillyard's discoveries of "order" in every facet of Elizabethan life.¹ If Tillyard and the tradition of scholarship he represents could see that earlier historical moment as a static and orderly "picture," my own portrait would be better drawn by the witches in *Macbeth*: a cauldron of bubbling anxieties, a language of unresolvable contradictions and paradoxes, a world gray and ambivalent rather than clear and categorizable. To the extent that we may say "order" prevailed, it did so not because "God hath created everything in its proper place," as Elizabeth's "Homily on Obedience" asserts, but because anxiety, paradox and contradiction could be assimilated, assuaged, contained, or put to some productive use. The same homily also offers a dire vision of its own underside – a kind of cultural unconscious that lurks beneath the theoretically placid surface: "For where there is no ryght ordre, there reigneth all abuse, carnal libertie, enormitie, synne, and Bablonical confusyon."² Against the tranquil model of order, in which hierarchical relationships and circumscribed, individual identities are securely in place, the homily conversely imagines chaos and disorder largely in terms of erotic indulgence riotously out of control: sexuality is by definition an anarchic force constantly besieging the gates of collective order and individual self-control. Most generally, this book dwells at the contradictions that necessarily result from the confrontation between these two depictions: the largely abstract discourse that identifies a natural, God-given social order in which every individual's place is safely and securely

designated over and against a discourse that reveals the volatile lives and practices that such a vision constantly contends with and represses. Specifically, it pursues the confrontation between the “natural” superiority of men and the profound costs of maintaining that superiority.

It must be said at the outset that the images I develop to portray early modern England are as rooted in the cultural moment from which they are drawn as Tillyard’s; they are descriptions and analyses of another culture that in part reflect and derive from our own. I do not see this admission as in any way compromising the value of this book; for me, at least, such an interaction is what makes literary history compelling. Although I have tried to present my sense of the early modern period as persuasively as possible, my own understanding of masculinity in the late twentieth century and my hopes for its radical transformation inform this study every step of the way. Neither an objective, dispassionate account of another culture, nor a political polemic about our own, this book is admittedly a dialogue between the two, an attempt to think about another historical period (one of our many antecedents) from the perspective of the present. It is also, just as importantly, an attempt to interrogate our own culture – to imagine it different and better – by holding up a contemporary critical lens to early modern England.

Masculinity is inherently anxious: according to this argument, anxiety is not a secondary effect of masculinity, nor simply an unpleasant aberration from what we might hypothetically understand as normative. Instead, I argue that masculine anxiety is a necessary and inevitable condition that operates on at least two significant levels: it reveals the fissures and contradictions of patriarchal systems and, at the same time, it paradoxically enables and drives patriarchy’s reproduction and continuation of itself. Thus we may say that anxiety is not only a constituent element of masculinity but also that it is deployed in positive ways; more than merely an unpleasant symptom, anxiety is so endemic to patriarchy that the issue becomes not so much its identification but rather an analysis of the discourses that respond to it – the compensatory or transferential strategies operating behind its representations and projections. Thus anxiety is both a negative effect that leads us to patriarchy’s own internal discord, but it is also an instrument (once properly contained, appropriated or returned) of its perpetuation. If anxiety were *only* a critical lens showing us the contradictions of the system that produced it, we would not see the function, the cultural work, that that physiological and psychological condition accomplishes – it would merely be an effect. And if only an effect, an indicator of cultural or individual turmoil, we might additionally expect (given the considerable, often excessive display of masculine anxiety in this period) that early

modern patriarchy was on the brink of collapse – by all accounts, it was obviously not. Taken on both these levels, anxiety is an inevitable product of patriarchy at the same time as it contributes to the reproduction of patriarchy. In the following pages I thus employ the term as a means of critique and as a way of understanding the considerable resilience – the strategies of containment, re-circulation, appropriation – of a social system whose most fundamental assumption, at least in theory, was the natural inequality of its members.

Anxiety and masculinity: the terms must be wed if only for the obvious reason that any social system whose premise is the unequal distribution of power and authority always and only sustains itself in constant defense of the privileges of some of its members and by the constraint of others; even though historically and culturally specific patriarchal models function with considerable variety, they are by definition forms of social organization that produce distress and disequilibrium. From this premise, it follows that those individuals whose identities are formed by the assumption of their own privilege must also have incorporated varying degrees of anxiety about the preservation or potential loss of that privilege. Once again: the critical task of this book is thus to read masculine anxiety in these two inseparable ways: as a signifier of cultural tensions and contradictions, but also as an enabling condition of male subjectivity in early modern patriarchal culture. Such an analysis draws from Althusser’s definition of ideology as simultaneously illusory *and* constitutive of subjectivity: just as we might seize upon the fissures that lie beneath the interpellation of the subject, masculine anxiety reveals both the contradictions inherent in patriarchal culture and the ways that culture smooths over those contradictions.³

What exactly do I mean by anxiety? How is it possible to employ a term apparently indebted to psychoanalysis in a study of early modern culture? To begin to answer this question, the meaning and context of the term has remained fairly stable since the seventeenth century, although the frequency with which we now employ it is not seen until the first stirrings of psychoanalysis in the late nineteenth century. (Shakespeare, for example, never uses the word but often describes the sense.) In *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, Robert Burton writes that “Love Melancholy” is “full of fear, anxiety, doubt, care, peevishness, it turns a man into a woman . . .”⁴ A few sentences later, he adds, “doubts, anxieties [and] suspicions” appear as more or less synonymous symptoms of the love-melancholic; and finally, “a Lover’s life is full of agony, anxiety, fear, and grief, complaints, sighs, suspicions, and cares” (729: III.2). If we understand anxiety as synonymous with doubt and suspicion, as Burton does, the term is consistent with its postmodern currency – a kind of fear

without knowable referent or cause. In usages from 1603 and 1636, for example, the *Oxford English Dictionary* offers a similar definition: "troubled or uneasy in mind about some uncertain event; being in painful or disturbing suspense."⁵ Anxiety thus describes a state of suspicion without trust, doubt that is incapable of faith, perpetual uncertainty instead of what Othello demands as "ocular proof" (III.iii.365). Indeed, it is possible to say that anxiety is the negative condition against which an age of faith defines itself: in both cases, one responds to an origin or cause that cannot be fully apprehended, and in both cases the response is a copious discourse seeking to discover and affirm the elusive source. The term feels postmodern in Burton's usage and in the *OED* definition because it exists entirely on the level of the signifier: anxiety is a restless, agitated, never-consummated search for something that may not exist, a state in which certainty is always suspended. Additionally, as Burton suggests in his discussions of the melancholic's mental fantasies and delusions, anxiety is self-referential without admitting it—something like a benign or less developed version of paranoia, which Paul Smith usefully defines (for many of the arguments that follow) as the wish "to maintain its rights on a reality which it will yet not recognize as its own offspring or construction."⁶ Following Smith, anxiety may be seen as the result of projecting one's own mental constructions onto the world or onto another person and then mistaking them as objectively true.

Nonetheless, although Burton uses the term in a way similar to our contemporary usage, the material and ideological foundations for his understanding of the subjectivities that might suffer from anxiety are considerably different from our own. A larger problem than the historical transportability of the term "anxiety," then, is how we can look back at the early modern male subject through critical lenses that derive from ways of thinking which were at best inchoate in that period. Perhaps at the outset we might admit that our own critical models of subjectivity are best understood as allegories, in the way James Clifford employs the term to describe the ethnographer's complicated negotiation between his own culture and the one he writes about. "A recognition of allegory," Clifford writes, "emphasizes that realistic portraits, to the extent that they are 'convincing' or 'rich,' are extended metaphors, patterns of associations that point to coherent . . . additional meanings."⁷ This understanding recognizes that any portrait of another culture we might employ is not just (in part) the creation of the ethnographer, but also that the "truth" of that portrait owes itself to a set of predispositions already in place—"additional meanings" revealed by the model itself. It also implies that the critical models we utilize exist in the same dialogue between the

culture under study and the culture from which we speak. They are heuristic devices that might reveal as much about ourselves as the subjects under study. This is not, of course, to advocate simply collapsing historical or cultural difference in the face of re-writing ourselves in another period; it is instead to recognize that stories we tell about others are additionally stories about our own culture. To employ psychoanalytic tools in theorizing early modern subjectivity, for example, would thus not require the claim that Freud's family drama was formative in that period, rather that our analysis would function as an allegorical story derived in part from our inheritance of Freud's own narratives, a way of opening up early modern culture with the tools available to us.

We might begin such a process by locating the term in the psychoanalytic discourse we have inherited. In *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, Freud defines anxiety as "a particular state of expecting the danger or preparing for it, even though it may be an unknown one." In a subsequent elaboration, he adds, "anxiety . . . protects its subject against fright and so against fright-neuroses."⁸ In these definitions Freud, not unlike Burton, suggests that anxiety in the minds of its sufferers precedes any identifiable cause; indeed, it is the condition of preparation for an anticipated threat whose origin "may be an unknown one." One important objective of this book is to identify the ideological sources of these expectations of fear and danger in early modern patriarchy, to name the systemic origins of masculine anxiety in a way that those who live within that ideology could not.

Anxiety is thus both cause and effect: it is the effect of dangers the subject may not be aware of, but it also anticipates those dangers in advance, whether they are real or not. If we take these definitions as psychological metaphor, we can begin to open up a characteristically early modern instance of male subjectivity at work, even though the material and ideological conditions of the late nineteenth century do not entirely obtain in the early seventeenth century. To take an example that will preoccupy a good deal of this book, Freud's understanding of anxiety leads us to a useful way of thinking about the pervasive masculine anxiety toward female chastity and women's sexuality in general that is so common in early modern texts. The anticipation of being cuckolded, for example, exists prior to any definitive signs of its prospect: cuckoldry anxiety rehearses a play that may never be performed since it is largely a projection of the husband's own fears translated into a story about his wife's inevitable infidelity or concupiscence. It thus becomes important to look at the function of the rehearsal, the importance of representing masculine anxiety independent of any actual source or cause. Of course there are *only* representations and traces of anxiety left to us by another

historical period, but the point is that representations of anxiety exceed any knowable referents; they function as signifiers within a discourse of masculinity, neither independent of actual events, on the one hand, nor transparently indicative of them, on the other. Once this largely psycho-analytical model is in place, the critical task of historicism is to think differently about the specific conditions in the early modern period that may have produced, in this case, cuckoldry anxiety. This critical process informs the central arguments that follow.

As I have suggested, understanding anxiety as an inevitable part of a discourse of masculinity allows us to see more clearly its positive or enabling function in the construction and maintenance (however tumultuous or contradictory) of masculine subjectivity. Freud suggests as much in his claim that anxiety "protects its subject," as if it were a kind of psychic armor intended to safeguard the vulnerable ego within. Freud is once again useful if we imagine his discussion of the child's "fort/da" game as if it were a collective ritual played out among men. By pretending to lose and then find a given object, the child enacts a repetition of that most painful possibility – the loss of his mother. He "stages" her departure not just for the sake of the pleasure of experiencing her return, but especially to exhibit his own control over the game itself. Again imagining this process as an allegory rather than as a literal description, we can view the discourse of anxiety as staging masculine loss and vulnerability for the purpose of maintaining control of the performance of one's gendered identity. Or, more specifically, and indeed ironically, in the repetition or staging of anxiety men compensate for an anticipated danger that derives from the very patriarchal system in which they are engendered as subjects in the first place. This foundational contradiction lies at the heart of the readings that follow and it explicates my earlier conviction that the coupling of "anxious" and "masculinity" is indeed redundant.

But this danger may not literally spring from the potential loss of the mother in a culture where the nuclear family drama was not pre-eminent in the formation of subjectivity, as Freud's reading would have it; masculine vulnerability and the threat of loss exists for both Freud and Shakespeare, but not necessarily for the same reasons. Men need to "make themselves master of the situation," Freud writes, but the perilous "situation" to which they are responding derives ineluctably from an historically specific sex-gender system that anxiously figures masculinity in relation to specific constructions of woman – the very system that is intended to sustain the privileges of its male subjects. I believe that this deep paradox can be found in any patriarchal distribution of power and authority, but in importantly different ways and according to different

economies. Without this recognition, without assiduously looking for what is unique about the early modern sex-gender system at the same time as we employ the critical tools of our own period, we are left with an eternal recurrence of the same – a vision as historically inaccurate as it is politically impotent. This perception drives Gayle Rubin's vital observation that the use of the term "patriarchy" risks eliding over distinctions among the considerable variety of male-dominated political economies: "But it is important – even in the face of a depressing history – to maintain a distinction between the human capacity and necessity to create a sexual world, and the empirically oppressive ways in which sexual worlds have been organized. Patriarchy subsumes both meanings into the same term."⁹ In the following pages I often follow Rubin's lead by opting for her term, "sex-gender system," which better "indicates that oppression is not inevitable in that domain, but is the product of the specific social relations which organize it."¹⁰ Or, I have avoided the universalizing tendency of the term by specifying *early modern* patriarchy as my object of study. Rubin's observation is absolutely necessary if we are to free gender oppression from the realm of historical inevitability, but historicist thinking of this kind should not allow us – especially male critics engaged in feminist critique – to imagine ourselves completely removed from the history of gender oppression that has shaped who we are. We can only speak from a complicated position of complicity and critique: an acknowledgment that we are still at least partly embedded in the history we seek to transform. As a male critic working in the field of gender studies, I understand my most productive contribution to be the interrogation of the masculine subject as historically rather than essentially constituted and thus free of the necessity to re-enact itself in the same ways.

Older accounts of the emergence of a distinctly modern identity in the Renaissance have been decidedly masculine without saying so, as if to ask questions about identity were by definition to ask them about men. It is not surprising to find such an assumption in Jacob Burckhardt's celebration of the "perfecting of the individual" in Renaissance Italy, nor in Tillyard's pronouncement that in Elizabethan England "not only did Man, as man, live with uncommon intensity at that time, but he was never removed from his cosmic setting."¹¹ In these narratives, only men have subjectivities, and only men play a part on the political and cosmic stage. As this book is in some ways yet another study of "Renaissance Man," it is important at the outset to clarify the nature of my project in relation to this tradition. I have attempted here to read the early modern masculine subject *as male* based on the assumption that both "mascu-

line" and "feminine" are historically specific deployments of gender differences sensible only in relation to one another. Since the subject of this study is masculinity, one of my central tasks involves uncovering and deconstructing – in the most general sense – the ways in which the "feminine" functions in the early modern period to legitimate and sustain many of the privileges and prerogatives of men. This is obviously (but not simply) to say that this book is more concerned with how ideas of "woman" function in this period rather than with the actual lives of women, and it is more interested in how those ideas reveal the anxieties and contradictions of masculinity in early modern patriarchy rather than in its oppressive and pernicious effects on women. As to the danger of reproducing in my own criticism the erasure or illegitimacy of women's subjectivities that is such a part of early modern patriarchy, let me say that this book's focuses are also its limitations – limitations that have already been answered by a considerable body of early modern social and literary history that has recovered and studied the lives and writings of early modern women. By delineating my project as such, this book succeeds to the extent that it contributes to the following critical project as articulated by Luce Irigaray: "For what is important is to disconcert the staging of representation according to *exclusively* 'masculine' parameters, that is, according to a phallogocentric order."¹² Or, similarly, to deconstruct in the way that Derrida suggests in his re-formulation of Levi-Strauss' notion of *bricolage*: "the necessity of borrowing one's concepts from the text of a heritage which is more or less coherent or ruined."¹³ Most generally, this book is an attempt to take up the tools and concepts with which early modern patriarchy is built and to use them to take it apart.

In addition to the two decades of feminist critique of early modern patriarchy from literary and social historians, a further displacing of traditional studies of masculinity has come from a growing body of scholarship applying the theoretical work of gay and lesbian studies to Renaissance texts.¹⁴ The central arguments of *Anxious Masculinity* admittedly depend upon and critique interpretive paradigms that are largely, but not entirely, applicable to heterosexual economies of desire as well as to a dyadic model of identity constructed between men and women. However, if it is true (as Alan Bray and others have pointed out) that it is ahistorical to posit heterosexuality and homosexuality as oppositional practices in the early modern period (indeed, neither term even exists), then it need not be the case that hetero and homoerotic discourses or representations of desire are themselves necessarily discrete. At least in the texts I rely upon in this book, the dialectic between masculine subjectivity and erotic desire applies to a spectrum of erotic

practices that vary according to their degree of danger to the preservation of rational, self-controlled masculinity. The inexhaustible body of writing about heterosexual desire from the period (in relation to a comparatively small one about homoerotic desire) of course does not mean that homoeroticism was necessarily rarely practiced or talked about, but it does mean that the cultural codes in which desire is expressed are more often based on heterosexual models even if individual practices are not always consonant with that model. To cite briefly an example I develop in the first chapter, Burton articulates the considerable perils of masculine erotic desire directed at both men and women in the same terms; if anything, homoerotic desire results in a more devastating overthrow of male reason and self-control, but the humoral model of desire functions no differently in relation to either object. In saying this, I by no means wish to suggest that homoerotic desire did not have its own forms of expression, only that those forms were not always exclusive of heterosexuality any more than the reverse. Shakespeare's depiction of Achilles' emasculating desire for Patroclus in *Troilus and Cressida* does not obey a specifically homoerotic sensibility; rather, it shows the debilitating consequences for masculinity of any form of desire in excess.

Francis Bacon, the subject of my second chapter, more than likely preferred sex with boys (as John Aubrey unremarkably reports),¹⁵ but his expression of the new science as the "penetration" of "chaste nature" is clearly embedded in heterosexual discourses of power drawn from the period's concern with marriage, the family and female chastity. Inasmuch as Bacon's version of anxious masculinity derives from his need to preserve status difference as much as to secure gender difference, it appears that gender and gendered desire are very much questions of class, not necessarily one form of sexuality as opposed to another. I doubt Bacon saw any contradiction between his own erotic life and the heterosexual vocabulary in which he thought and expressed himself, nor do I think his work possesses a deeper code that is revealed by his homoerotic practice. Such a way of thinking must wait until the nineteenth century. Indeed, Alan Bray encourages us to think of sexual desire in the early modern period as including a spectrum of practices in which homosociality serves as a more pertinent term for the politically important relations between men, erotic or not. Thus my discussions of homoeroticism in this book arise when the texts under study treat erotic relations between men as part of a generalized discourse of desire and homosociality, not as the silent or repressed Other to "normative" sexuality.

A third aspect of my critical use of the term masculine subjectivity involves the problem of individual agency in relation to the overarching

system of early modern patriarchy. In general I have tried to retain a dialectical understanding of subjectivity in which we are actors as much as acted upon, without which any possibility of change would be negated at the outset. This reciprocity is succinctly described in Louis Montrose's definition of "a process of *subjectification* that, on the one hand, shapes individuals as loci of consciousness and initiators of actions; and, on the other, positions, motivates, and constrains them within networks of power beyond their comprehension or control."¹⁶ One of the advantages of this formulation is that it does not erase the possibility of personal agency or volition in the face of a monolithic cultural network. Rather than choosing between the traditional humanistic model in which the subject is the origin of his actions, and a deterministic model in which he is merely an effect, Montrose positions the subject (following Althusser) as enabled and activated by ideology as much as constrained. Perhaps the most compelling analogy for this model is the public theater itself, where the identities of characters are fashioned in the act of performance. Individuals may be said to be "interpellated" as subjects by the roles they play and by the scripts they enact, but the improvisations of any given performance (and no two are the same) provide opportunities – indeed, encourage – limited but nonetheless vital versions of agency within its malleable structure. Of course, the scripts handed down to a given culture's "players" are inevitably going to possess the same contradictions as the culture itself. We are only interpellated by a consistent, harmonious script provided by a single, all-knowing "author" on the most abstract, theoretical level; in our actual practices, we are given a range of often incompatible possibilities, resulting in a kind of cultural dissonance that can be excavated in the textual traces left to us. Furthermore, the process of subjectification in the theater calls attention to the fact that not only is identity performed, but it is performed publicly in front of an audience, always enacted in relation to and dependent upon an Other – a useful reminder of the specifically social basis of subjectivity in the early modern period.

For my purposes in focusing on masculinity, this analogy is particularly appropriate in terms of the early modern theater, since the performance of gendered identities, so frequently the focus of interest in the plays, is enacted exclusively by males. And just as importantly, it is enacted in front of an audience probably half-composed of women – a revealing model for investigating the dependence of men upon women (or more accurately, their constructions of woman) for the confirmation of their own masculinity. As several critics have argued, the public theater and the opposition it provoked call attention to the constructedness of identity, the alarming possibility in a world of at least theoretical

absolutes that to be male means only to manifest the outward signs of masculinity. In Judith Butler's contemporary version of this idea, "there is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender . . . identity is performatively constituted by the very 'expressions' that are said to be its results."¹⁷ For Butler, this leads to her belief that parody, theatricality, and cross-dressing, for example, are inherently subversive since they "expose the contingent acts that create the appearance of a naturalistic necessity."¹⁸ In terms of the early modern public theater, we can say that the potential for this kind of subversion is always available but not always carried out; indeed, the theater also functioned in many cases to contain the dangerous prospect of non-essential gendered identities that its very composition inevitably opens up. But if nothing else, it is certainly an arena in which these vital questions were confronted.

The analogy between theatricality and identity is an important aspect of Stephen Greenblatt's now-familiar model in *Renaissance Self-Fashioning*, where "self-fashioning is achieved in relation to something perceived as alien, strange, or hostile. This threatening Other – heretic, savage, witch, adulteress, traitor, Antichrist – must be discovered or invented in order to be attacked and destroyed."¹⁹ The theatricality of this process is especially evident in Greenblatt's chapter on *Othello*, in which Iago fosters and exploits Othello's "submission to narrative self-fashioning." According to this argument, Othello exhibits "unmistakably the conditions of theatrical identity, where existence is conferred upon a character by the playwright's language and the actor's performance."²⁰

I have drawn considerably from Greenblatt's version of the self/Other model of identity in the early modern period, particularly his claim that self-fashioning necessarily involves "some effacement or undermining, some loss of self."²¹ In applying this model to a gendered dyad (as Greenblatt does in his chapters on Spenser and Shakespeare), one risks relying the formula in which the subject is always male, the object/Other necessarily female, as if the binarism itself were transhistorical and thus immutable. My objective throughout this study is to employ this model in order to demonstrate the inherent instability and anxiety that results from construing masculinity in this fashion, and to reveal the historical contingencies of the model in order to escape from its apparent essentiality. Thus my attention has been given to the ways in which early modern masculinity relies on a variety of constructions of woman as Other – on the perceived necessity of maintaining a discourse of gendered difference and hierarchy – that reveal in their most excessive moments a deeper suspicion that the model itself may be merely functional rather than descriptive of inherent truth. The extravagant rhetoric of Joseph Swetnam's angry insistence that woman is "nothing else but contrary to

man,"²² or of John Williams' harangue from the pulpit that God "divided male and female, but the devil hath joined them,"²³ belies the very claims each makes and reveals an ideological struggle waged precisely in terms of the binary model itself. My own intervention in this struggle is intended to bring to the surface the historical conditionality of constructing masculinity in these terms and thus to be able to imagine and articulate (as we have certainly begun to do) a series of alternatives.

Following this call for historical specificity, I would now like to build on my earlier remarks about the uses and abuses of psychoanalysis in the hopes of outlining what I see as a largely but not entirely different basis for masculine subjectivity in the early modern period. By now it is almost axiomatic in early modern scholarship to recognize that the seductively descriptive power of psychoanalytic concepts and insights must be weighed against the historically specific construction of terms such as subjectivity, desire, and anxiety. My own premise in this book is that the application of psychoanalysis to early modern subjectivity is a useful (and, to some extent, unavoidable) heuristic device as long as we keep in mind that what Freud and his legacy develop as individual, psychic phenomena exists in the Renaissance as predominately *social* phenomena. While psychoanalysis locates subjectivity in the individual's psychic struggle, the early modern period discovers identity in the more public context we associate with shame cultures, where such factors as property, reputation and status are preeminent. Indeed, quite possibly psychoanalysis articulates what was only beginning to emerge, or perhaps, submerge, in the early modern period. Hamlet is a useful figure for this nascent interiority: his dilemma is surely the result of social factors (loss of place, public title), but his response appears to us as familiar for its interior manifestations.²⁴

Consequently, Freud's descriptions of anxiety must be re-read in the early modern period as social, public phenomena. The nuclear family drama becomes the public theater, court trials and descriptions of community practices such as the Skimmington ritual and the use of the cuckooing-stool, or the securing of property and title through patrilineal inheritance. Thus, whatever we may borrow from Freud's psychic dramas of defense must be re-placed in the context of the public development and display of masculine identity in the decidedly homosocial world of early modern England. For my purposes one of the primary consequences of this recognition is that anxiety is largely a discourse articulated and played out between men, a way for men to confirm their identity through a shared language of suffering and distress. In other words, reading masculine anxiety as a largely social rather than

psychic phenomenon requires an analysis of the productive discourse of anxiety in the culture in which it is manifested: the functions of its statements in specific contexts through the ways it includes and excludes, distributes power and confers legitimacy. To take one example elaborated in my final chapter: even though the experience of jealousy is described so often as the worst form of suffering imaginable, it is nonetheless described over and over again, in every imaginable medium. This observation leads us to look at the importance of staging or articulating anxiety as a way to construct identity by naming a common experience and a shared adversary. If anxiety were a private affair, we could not see as well its discursive function in the production of masculinity.

Thus my use of the term "anxious masculinity" is intended to convey the internalization of specifically social tensions that are endemic to the early modern sex-gender system, the very tensions that produce the masculine subject in the first place. And, as I have suggested, if anxiety occupies such a formative position in the development of the masculine subject, it must also be understood as possessing an enabling function. Although writers from the period such as Burton always use the word in its debilitating sense, the very "expression" of anxiety, recalling Freud's definition, contributes in a positive way to the formation and positioning of masculinity if only by upholding the discursive authority of the writer in relation to the supposed source of his anxiety and, in so doing, by linking him to fellow sufferers.

In an essay from 1986 entitled "Psychoanalysis and Renaissance Culture," Stephen Greenblatt argues against using psychoanalytic concepts to discuss early modern subjectivity through a discussion of the exemplary story of Martin Guerre. Here Greenblatt shows that Guerre's subjectivity is the product and not the cause of a broad set of social relations, including status, wealth, property rights and communal and familial relations, all of which secure a "name" in a very social sense. Since identity can only be accomplished in front of others, we are led to the formula that also preoccupied Greenblatt in *Renaissance Self-Fashioning*: "identity is only possible as a mask, something constructed and assumed."²⁵ This leads to the conclusion that "[p]sychoanalysis is, from this perspective, less the privileged explanatory key than the distant and distorted consequence of this cultural nexus."²⁶ For my purposes, one of the important consequences of this re-figuring of the bases for early modern identity is that, again following Greenblatt, it is difficult to posit the individual body as the key to subjectivity since it functions as the effect of various contestatory social factors, a way of thinking scientifically supported in the early modern period by humoural psychology.

If we apply this insight to a specifically masculine identity, we find an array of cultural anxieties implanted in the male body — not at all a certainty according to early modern psychology and anatomical science. For example, as my opening chapter contends, humoural psychology comprehends the male body as constantly in need of regulating its dangerous but nonetheless essential fluidity: the ability to do so depends upon the vigilance of male reason, which can be easily overturned for a number of reasons, as Burton illustrates over hundreds of pages in *The Anatomy of Melancholy*. Thus, on a corporeal level (always at the same time psychological), masculinity is understood scientifically as precarious — the enemy may be named “femininity” but it resides within the very definition of masculinity proffered by humoural science in the first place. To follow another, well-known line of early modern anatomical science, the structural similarity between male and female reproductive organs handed down from Galen meant that, as Stephen Orgel has written, “the line between the sexes was blurred, often frighteningly so.”²⁷ Since the differentiation between men and women is a matter of degree (more or less heat, the descent of the genitals), anatomical science presents an intrinsic contradiction to the belief in essential, God-given sexual difference. “The frightening part of the teleology for the Renaissance mind,” Orgel continues, “is precisely the fantasy of its reversal, the conviction that men can turn into — or be turned into — women; or perhaps more exactly, can be turned *back* into woman, losing the strength that enabled the male potential to be realized in the first place.”²⁸ From the perspective of anatomical science, we may thus understand masculine anxiety as a social phenomenon (arising from the contradictions endemic to patriarchy) that is played out reciprocally in the male body, a body that is the site of socially constructed anxieties about sex and gender but is by no means their origin.

Such observations challenge psychoanalytic accounts that rely upon a single key or original experience to explain the formation of the masculine subject. Among the most persuasive of these approaches, critics such as Coppélia Kahn and Janet Adelman have argued in different studies that masculine identity is achieved through the difficult negotiation of separating from the mother, an originary moment that is re-enacted throughout the man’s life. Thus, in Kahn’s account, men’s need for control over women’s sexuality “arises from this disparity between men’s social dominance and their peculiar emotional vulnerability to women.”²⁹ Similarly, for Adelman, this “primitive infantile terror” leads to a recurring “fantasy of maternal malevolence,” and a desire to free [oneself] from “the suffocating maternal matrix.”³⁰ The explanatory power of each of these narratives is considerable, especially when they

suspend the originary moment and begin to analyze socio-political phenomena on their own terms, such as Kahn’s brilliant discussion of cuckoldry anxiety as “an affair between men.”³¹ Even if we grant the existence of a powerful mother-son bond in the early modern period, conceding with Adelman that the role of wet-nurses is not categorically different from that of mothers, we are still left with a single explanatory origin for masculine anxiety, one that considers the political only insofar as it reflects or derives from the psychological. Inasmuch as all interpretations are in varying degrees allegories of the interpreters’ own personal and cultural situations, to borrow again James Clifford’s use of the term, one cannot discount psychoanalytic readings merely on the basis that the period under study precedes the analytical model, or because the affective bonds analyzed by psychoanalysis may not have been as prominent as they have become since. My departure from the models used by Kahn and Adelman is shaped by my belief that the psychological state is better applied as the name given to the interiorization of social (and thus political) factors, a process that is as uneven and contradictory within individuals as it is in the social field itself. Understanding interiority in this way encourages a much more varied account of masculine subjectivity, one that is not harnessed to an originary moment but instead exists as the contestatory site of an array of disequilibrating forces. It thus seems more profitable to see a given moment of masculine anxiety as intersected by a variety of cultural tensions not derived from the psyche so much as implanted there. For example, if we look briefly at the pervasive use of drowning at sea as a symbol of masculine loss, the explanation of maternal engulfment does not take into account the way Gail Kern Paster reads humoural psychology as a model in which an excess of fluids constitutes an anatomically-based threat to the (male) individual.³² We could, in response, argue that the anxiety toward fluidity in humoural psychology is an effect of the repressed, original scene, but that would fail to recognize how humoural psychology re-writes specifically cultural tensions — in this example those based on humoural science. Nor would the exclusively psychoanalytic reading recognize the simple fact that in a society dependent on ocean travel for its commerce and exploration, drowning is as much a real danger as a symbolic one.

This multiplicity of factors acting in an apparently psychological drama is illustrated by a brief anecdote from *The Anatomy of Melancholy*. At this point in Burton’s account, he is discussing male jealousy, or the fear of being cuckolded, as one of the most disabling symptoms of the melancholic. Burton relates quite nonchalantly and without any commentary the story of a baker who became so obsessed by the prospect of his wife’s adultery that he “gelded himself to try [her]

honesty" (847: III, 3). The first definition of "geld" in the *OED* – "to deprive (a male) of generative power or virility, to castrate or emasculate"³³ – might suggest a psychoanalytic reading of the baker's self-mutilation as, perhaps, a masochistic response to his own original fear of castration. According to this approach, he paradoxically castrates himself as a way of taking control of his childhood. Or, one could read this anecdote as a version of cuckoldry anxiety, an encoded fear of castration, in which case the baker would be pre-empting his wife's symbolic power to castrate him if she were to commit adultery. The first reading may be understood in Freudian terms, since the baker acts against the threat of losing his penis, while the second reading might draw from Lacan's understanding of the symbolic function of the phallus in the symbolic realm. Both explanations depend on figuring male identity in terms of the presence or absence of the penis/phallus, and thus both see the threat of masculine lack as essentially or symbolically linked to anatomy.

But a different interpretive narrative ensues if we define gelding as removing the testicles, a sense more developed in the second definition from the *OED*: "to deprive of some essential part, to cut down the resources of . . ." ³⁴ Here the "logic" of the baker's act is evident in a different way: he cuts off his testicles in order to know with certainty that if his wife becomes pregnant, she has certainly committed adultery, since he is now unable to impregnate her himself. Although this explanation appears to be the most obvious, it still possesses considerable complexity and paradox, since the baker has deliberately given up the patrilineal basis for his identity in order to be certain of his wife's chastity. But since the regulation of women's sexuality has no meaning outside of a patrilineal system, the baker's solution to his anxiety ignores the social code which produced his anxiety in the first place. In other words, he abides by the cultural imperative that figures his identity in relation to his wife's chastity, but in so doing he destroys another – the patrilineal basis of his identity dependent upon his offspring. Masculine identity in patrilineal cultures largely derives from the "resources" men inherit, including his status, and what he is able to pass on to his children. The baker claims his own power to disseminate property and status by committing an act that at the same time prevents dissemination. How are we to explain this contradiction? Any psychological explanation – and clearly there is some psychological process at work here – must interpret the baker as having internalized the social system in which his identity is shaped and conferred. In his self-castration he enacts upon himself the vulnerability of men in patrilineal cultures since their identities depend to

a large extent on the proper dissemination of property and status through women. The baker's desire to maintain *control* over his own dissemination – even if it means castration – overwhelms even the dissemination itself.

One might say that this explanation is really a claim for the importance of representation over actuality, since the baker has represented or enacted his control at the expense of actually losing it. Or, he decides in favor of actively representing himself rather than passively being represented by his wife as a cuckold. And of course, in addition to placing the anecdote in the context of a patrilineal culture, the telling of the story in Burton's book requires another level of analysis, since the anecdote functions in that written context regardless of whether it ever really happened. Thus yet a third level of analysis would consider what it means to articulate the baker's act of self-castration – in *The Anatomy* and in the culture where it presumably had some currency. This brief analysis illustrates the interpretive process I have adopted in *Anxious Masculinity*: select a text or textual moment that displays an excessive response to a specifically masculine anxiety, search for the cultural tensions or contradictions that inform the response, then consider the function of the articulation within a specifically textual (or literary) context as well as in the general context of early modern patriarchy.

The historical narrative which I have found most useful for my explorations of anxious masculinity argues, in general, that the early modern sex/gender system experienced an especially heightened period of agitation and unrest. "Fears of an impending breakdown of the social order have been common in many periods of history," D. E. Underdown writes, but never "were they more widespread, or more intense, than in early modern England: the 'crisis of order' detected by modern historians in the sixty years before the civil war accords with the perceptions of many people in that period."³⁵ In the years demarcated by Elizabeth's ascension in 1559 and the beginning of the Puritan revolution in 1640, England confronted and negotiated profound changes in virtually all aspects of its economic, political and social fabric. These changes were registered to a large extent in competing, often contradictory, conceptions of the family and, consequently, in the roles of men and women. This is largely due to the fact that the family in the early modern period was an especially politicized institution; it was made to serve as an analogy for virtually all other relations in society – between God and man, the monarch and the people, husbands and wives, masters and servants. Here we might pause to consider William Gouge's often repeated definition from "Of Domesticall Duties" (1620), originally delivered as a series of controversial sermons in London: "A family is

... a little Commonwealth . . . a school wherein the first principles of government and subjection are learned . . . So we may say of inferiors that cannot be subject in a family; they will hardly be brought to yield such subjection as they ought in Church or Commonwealth."³⁶ Gouge's portrait emphasizes the disciplinary and instructive role of the family as the "school" that shapes individual subjectivities within a set of hierarchical social relations; one's "subjection" to religious and political authority is analogous to and derived from authority in the family. However "natural" and God-given the proper relations of authority and obedience might have been in theory, they were increasingly perceived as disruptive in practice, hence the motivation to articulate models of social order such as Gouge does in "Of Domestical Duties," or in the typically dire vision of the puritan Philip Stubbes: "Was there ever seen less obedience in youth of all sorts, both menkind and womenkind, towards their superiors, parents, masters and governors?"³⁷

Gouge's vision of social order assumes a set of analogies between the three most central social institutions of the early modern period – the family, the state and the church – but it also extends to the proper governance of the self, especially men. This view is corroborated in John Dod and Robert Clever's "A Godly Forme of Household Government" (1612): "It is impossible for a man to understand how to govern the common-wealth, that doth not know to rule his own house, or order his own person; so that he that knoweth not to govern, deserveth not to reign."³⁸ Here masculine identity is portrayed as a potential site of disorder and misrule, a "state" in and of itself whose competing elements must display proper obedience and "subjection" to the internal authorities of reason and self-control. What we might in the twentieth century call individual, psychic anxiety or disorder is thus understood by Gouge as neither a consequence of social disorder nor an origin; it is rather a homologous realm in which similar forms of disorder are reciprocally enacted. Thus the fear of "an impending breakdown" perceived by Underdown in society at large was played out simultaneously (at least in theory) on the level of the individual – an individual who is not only interpellated by competing ideologies but who is also, according to the physiological composition advanced by humoral psychology, constantly at war with himself.

I cannot in this brief overview begin to analyze the multiplicity of factors at work in early modern England's "crisis of order," but a general sketch of its evidence and sources will help to substantiate my claim for the endemic anxiety of its masculine subjects. This historical field is not so much the background for my analysis of individual texts, but rather the cultural field in which a variety of texts and practices –

including those I focus on – are circulated and exchanged. Thus when I refer to a "discourse of masculine anxiety" I mean to situate masculinity as the site of contestations and contradictions that were perceived on a broadly social level as well as in the bodies and psyches of individual men. The perceptual framework of homologies and correspondences described above make it impossible to do otherwise.

The evidence for what Underdown describes as the "crisis in gender relations in the years round 1600,"³⁹ or for Susan Borro's more specific understanding of the period as particularly "gynophobic,"⁴⁰ may be drawn from a wide variety of sources. I wish to focus on those most relevant to the texts discussed in this book. Particularly important for my discussion of adultery and cuckoldry anxiety in several chapters in the records of the ecclesiastical and consistory courts, where sexual crimes were tried with such increasing frequency that by the end of the 1570s they outdistanced all other offenses brought to suit. Lawrence Stone notes the "staggering number of prosecutions in Church courts for sexual offences in the Elizabethan period."⁴¹ Many of these cases were defamation suits involving sexual slander, often brought by women who sought to defend their reputations, which not surprisingly were almost exclusively attached to their sexual behavior. (The reputations of men were conferred or threatened by a wider set of issues.) As Susan Dwyer Amussen notes, sexual insults "became increasingly common for both men and women over the period [1560–1640], but throughout (if the general charge of being a whore is included), they were of greater concern to women."⁴² These statistics support the argument for a social basis for identity in what has been described as a shame culture, where public perception confirms or withholds an acceptable identity. Further signs of the growing perception that sexual behavior required greater regulation and attention may also be found in the steady stream of bills initiated by parliament that proposed more severe punishment for adultery, fornication and bastardy, although only in the last case were the bills significantly implemented.⁴³

The double standard toward punishing sexual crimes and sexual slander is particularly evident in the prosecution of illegitimate births, which began to increase alarmingly (at least according to the records) in the 1570s, tapering off only in the decade before the revolution.⁴⁴ James' statute of 1610 reveals that bastardy was perceived as the exclusive responsibility of women and a sign of their promiscuity: "Every lewd woman which shall have any bastard which may be chargeable to the parish, the justices of the peace shall commit such woman to the house of correction, to be punished and set to work, during the term of one whole year."⁴⁵ The severe punishment for giving birth outside of wedlock

was largely based on economic concerns, as bastards were the responsibility of local parishes. But the fact that men could not as easily be held accountable encouraged the ideas that social and domestic order depended upon the regulation and scrutiny of women's sexuality – perceived “by nature” to be more prone to transgression. As Lawrence Stone observes, “fornication and adultery were exclusively male prerogatives,” but “women were regarded as more lustful in their appetites.”⁴⁶ The gross injustice of this double standard was surely apparent to the women who suffered from it. In her response to Joseph Sweeney's vitriolic condemnation of women, for example, “Escher Sowerman” (a pseudonym almost certainly adopted by a woman) writes: “Likewise, if a man abuse a maid and get her with child, no matter is made of it – but as a trick of youth; but it is made so heinous an offence in the maid that she is disparaged and utterly undone by it.”⁴⁷

A similar preoccupation with the supposed link between the dangers of women's infidelity and social unrest shows up in the increased visibility of accusations against scolds or domineering wives in this period. Before “the middle of the sixteenth century,” Underdown points out, “the authorities do not seem to have been particularly concerned with them” [scolds] . . . From the 1560s, however, many places began to show an increasing concern about the problem.⁴⁸ At the same time, evidence of a deeper anxiety toward women perceived as insubordinate can be found in a variety of rituals that were intended to ridicule dominated or cuckolded husbands and to punish their “unruly” wives. The cucking-stool was utilized more frequently in this period, and reports of skin-mingtons or “rough music” processions – public dramatizations of “the woman on top,” in Natalie Davis' phrase – are in England increasingly directed at wives who in some way have abused their husband's authority.⁴⁹ Similarly, the accusation of witchcraft was often made against women perceived as scolds or as sexually incontinent; it thus provided a convenient outlet for a variety of social and sexual tensions by scapegoating especially widows and poor women for any one of a number of supposed inversions of the normative order. Although Keith Thomas downplays the specifically sexual aspect of witchcraft, he nonetheless observes that “the mythology of witchcraft was at its height at a time when women were generally believed to be more sexually voracious than men.”⁵⁰

Many of these same anxieties fueled the controversy about women that was waged in a series of pamphlets printed in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries – the well-known “querelles des femmes” debates in which women for the first time responded in print to misogynistic charges directed against them. I shall discuss some of these treatises in

chapter five; for the moment they serve as yet another indication of the period's impassioned preoccupation with the status of women, the proper behavior for husbands and wives and the disruptive potential of sexuality – particularly women's. A brief passage from Sweeney's “Arraignment of Lewd, idle, froward, and unconstant women” (1615) illustrates (or perhaps, caricatures) the considerable anxiety and vulnerability generated in men by women who were not, as the litany goes, “chaste, silent and obedient”: “For women have a thousand ways to entice thee and ten thousand ways to deceive thee . . . They lay out the folds of their hair to entangle men into their love; betwixt their breasts is the vale of destruction; and in their beds there is hell, sorrow, and repentance.”⁵¹ Sowerman responds to this and to other of her adversary's diatribes by locating them as projections of men: “Do not say and rail at women to be the cause of men's overthrow, when the original root is in yourselves.”⁵² In this claim Sowerman perceptively gives the lie to the tendency among men to scapegoat women as the source of their own anxieties, and in a familiar formula I discuss in several chapters, she more importantly exposes the very construction of woman as an Other who either confirms or disrupts masculine identity. This model is also at stake within the “querelles des femmes” debate about the controversy generated by a few actual women who dressed publicly in masculine attire. The “Hic Mulier” and “Haec Vir” pamphlets that describe this occurrence in 1620, if nothing else, demonstrate that the prevailing anxiety about gender roles and identities could be set off by otherwise insignificant events. The volatility of the practice additionally reveals the tenuousness of masculine identity as constructed according to a particular expression of what it means to be female: if women wear men's clothing, how can men know who *they* are? Many recorded male responses to these women are clearly in excess of any real danger cross-dressing (clearly not a widespread fashion) might have posed. For example, James ordered his clergy “to inveigh vehemently in their sermons against the insolence of our women.”⁵³ The period was decidedly nervous about social disorder in general and, at least from the perspective of men, that threat was all too easily located in misogynistic caricatures of women and in depictions of female sexuality as monstrous or destructive to themselves.

Also during this period, an abundance of marriage manuals, practical handbooks describing the duties and responsibilities of husbands and wives, are printed in response to a growing readership increasingly interested in such matters, such as Gouge's “Of Domestical Duties” and guides for choosing a spouse such as Alexander Nicholes “A discourse of marriage and wiving” (1615). The vast majority of these treatises are

result of the homologous relationship between the family and every other institution: correspondences and homologues provide an easy way of thinking of one thing in terms of another. Indeed, many of the signs of agitation in the early modern sex/gender system (especially the evidence from the courts) appear to have subsided by 1660, after which, according to Amussen, “[g]ender became less tied to other aspects of the social system; the family became less central to political and social order.”⁶⁰ Thus, in addition to the forms of social discontent particular to the early modern period, the centrality of the family provides an available discourse for linking or assigning those discontents to women. Perhaps we are now witnessing a similar linkage in the contemporary emergence of “family values” as part of a conservative political vocabulary just as women are beginning to occupy greater positions of authority and independence.

Similar to the late twentieth century as well, social historians have located in the early modern period a number of material and ideological transformations that contributed to a general sense of crisis in the efficacy of traditional institutions. This “crisis of order,” in Underdown’s phrase, occurs in the period’s sex/gender system as older concepts of marriage and the roles of men and women undergo reconsideration and debate. But it is also the case that other aspects of social disorder not directly connected to gender and sexuality are nonetheless figured or articulated in that sphere; once again, the functional homology between the family and the state provides this conduit. As I have suggested above, nowhere is this more evident than in the period’s obsession with female chastity, which is so often described as the linchpin of every other aspect of the social network. About this issue we may say in general that a wife’s chastity functioned to secure and preserve actual economic interests (patrilineal inheritance and the avoidance of bastardy), but that it also functioned symbolically as a more generalized guarantee of social order and cohesion. Thus, in the case of female chastity, we are always dealing with a material history that is informed by the considerable weight of symbolic capital. The frequently expressed anxiety on the part of husbands toward their wives’ chastity – indeed, the just as frequently articulated *anticipation* of his own cuckoldry as if it were a fact of marriage – derives not merely from an actual threat but more from the symbolic functions assigned to women’s sexuality in the period. Once again, it is revealing that accusations of infidelity and sexual slander in the courts decrease dramatically once the family declines in its expressly political function.

This relationship between material conditions and symbolic capital reveals a significant contradiction in the early modern period between

the increased demand for women to contribute to the labor force and the threat this responsibility posed to the supposedly natural gender hierarchy. The combination of growing inflation until about 1620 and a series of poor harvests throughout the 1590s led to an increase in vagrancy, poverty and crime, which in turn stretched the resources of village parishes, additionally contributing to a more generalized fear of disorder.⁶¹ (Since parishes were largely responsible for supporting bastards, the idea of unconstrained female sexuality was perceived as even more threatening.) The contradiction that emerges in this time of hardship is that although women play a greater, more independent role in the family’s economic affairs, that same independence also exacerbates fears and anxieties among men – anxieties which are then located in women’s sexuality. Women achieved positions of greater responsibility in household economies, contributing to the idea of the family as an economic partnership (albeit a still hierarchical one), but that degree of equality was at the same time perceived as threatening. Once again, the analogue to our own period – now twenty-five years into a profound transformation of its own labor force along gender lines – is readily apparent.

The emergence of a new concept of the family, largely inaugurated by Protestantism, additionally complicated and confused the socially prescribed roles of men and women, resulting in what Amussen calls a “double message”⁶²: on the one hand, a husband still (in theory) maintained absolute authority within the family, a position legitimated by his analogous relationship to God and to the king; but on the other hand, the idea of marriage as a companionate partnership characterized by mutual respect appeared to elevate the wife’s position from a merely subordinate role. In *Of Domesticall Duties*, Gouge argues that the husband “ought to make her [his wife] a joint governor of the family with himself, and refer the ordering of many things to her discretion.” But he also maintains that if the husband “be wise and conscionable in observing [his duties], his wife can have no just cause to complain of her subjection.”⁶³ Although clearly the husband’s ultimate authority is never in question, there is nonetheless a good deal of potential ambiguity between the wife’s “subjection” and her status as “joint governor.” As Amussen points out, “such vague formulations were troubling in a society which valued clear lines of authority.”⁶⁴ It is worth mentioning that, especially after James’ ascension in 1603, an analogous debate was taking place between the king and parliament, in which the latter body was demanding a version of “joint governorship” or consensual rule against James’ insistence on absolute authority – indeed, the two spheres could not be *imagined* separately. In the case of the family, there can be

written by men.⁵⁴ The prevalence of such texts is undoubtedly due in part to the growth in literacy among men and women, but their emergence in a period that was re-negotiating its understanding of the roles of men and women in the family also suggests a growing anxiety about the potential for disorder, especially among women. Suzanne Hull notes the essentially instructive character of many of these books, adding that the "man as instructor was a deep-seated concept." She adds:

Male authors gave women directions on how to dress (with decorum befitting their rank), how to talk (as little as possible), how to behave toward their husbands (with subservience, obedience), how to walk (with eyes down), what to read (works by and about good and godly persons, not romances), and how to pray (frequently). Men wrote about how to know if a woman would conceive; then men wrote the midwifery books when they did (presumably after some further action by a man). They were particularly fond of instructing women in how they were to behave toward their husbands.⁵⁵

Hull points out that these wide-ranging instructions were not necessarily followed, adding that the fact that women were reading them at all "perhaps inadvertently opened the door a crack for more independence." But it seems clear that the need to "write" women's behavior in such a panoptical fashion, to instruct women in experiences so completely alien to men's own (such as childbirth, midwifery and cooking), and to maintain by writing the role of authority over women's lives, can only derive from the male perception that women required instruction in order to combat their supposedly transgressive nature. Thus we see the same paradoxical formula for masculine anxiety operating in the guidebooks as in the accusations against witches and scolds: men scurry about trying to contain a threat to their authority that they have themselves constructed in the first place. They possess an anxious "need to know" women that is fed by their construction of women as essentially incapable of self-government, a quality which itself functioned as perhaps the most important basis for distinguishing men from women. No better description of this anxiety can be found than Virginia Woolf's observation in the British Museum, 300 years later, when she writes in *A Room of One's Own*: "... when the professor insisted a little too emphatically upon the inferiority of women, he was concerned not with their inferiority, but with his own superiority. That was what he was protecting, rather hot-headedly and with too much emphasis, because it was a jewel to him of the rarest price."⁵⁶

Finally, the imaginative literature and public drama of the period offers yet another indication that the general "crisis of order" was played out through issues involving gender and sexuality. As Leonard Tennenhouse has written, the period "seemed bent on figuring out the

permissible and forbidden forms of sexual relations."⁵⁷ The vast number of plays that attempt to negotiate male jealousy and cuckoldry anxiety, the securing of marriage as a form of delivery from anarchic sexual desire, the portrayal of shrewish or scolding women, the punishment of aristocratic women who transgress status and sexual boundaries, all indicate the very same concerns that fuel the controversies I have delineated thus far. At the same time, the Petrarchan poetry and sonnet sequences, raised to a new height of popularity in the 1590s, often utilize the opposite yet complementary version of the misogynistic portraits in their idealization of women as chaste, unattainable objects of desire. These examples by no means exhaust the considerable evidence for perceiving this period as deeply concerned with and in many cases anxiously troubled by relations between men and women, but they indicate at least some of the cultural forms in which masculine anxiety was negotiated. As I have suggested, that this anxiety should find expression in a variety of symbolic forms is by no means surprising since anxiety is by definition a condition of distress in excess of any particular referent or cause that must be negotiated discursively. We may thus read these texts and practices as collective projections; that is, as attempts to make sense in representation of what is largely confused and illogical in practice. This is not to suggest that the symbolic forms resolve the tensions and contradictions from which they derive; indeed, in the readings that follow I attempt to reveal the residual masculine anxieties that lie beneath the apparent resolutions offered in the texts themselves. In this sense, we may say that the representations by men of women's sexuality, chastity and general behavior attempt to assuage the anxieties which propel them into existence in the first place, but they never fully succeed in this cultural work if only because they find the cause not in themselves but in others. As Jane Anger poignantly remarks in her treatise of 1589, "men's dishonesty is revealed by the fact that they often cloak their lustfulness in railing criticisms of women."⁵⁸

The most obvious projection that occurs in the texts I discuss is the construction of women as either the site or the cause of social dislocations that occur in political, religious and economic institutions. Underdown's observation that "late Elizabethan and Jacobean writers do seem to have been uncommonly preoccupied by themes of female independence and revolt"⁵⁹ is persuasively explained by a process in which deep structural and ideological tensions in society are conveniently located and addressed in the figure of the unruly or disobedient woman. Although this practice of scapegoating women is by no means unique to early modern England, it may have been more readily available as a

little doubt that husbands received competing instructions as to the roles and behaviours they were supposed to enact – a recipe, one imagines, for inconsistency if not confusion on their part.

The ambivalence resulting from this new conceptualization of the family also contributed to an anxiety among men toward the fidelity of their wives. As Protestantism increasingly valorized the nuclear family as a microcosm of the state, women were more likely to be idealized as chaste and obedient wives rather than as virgins – formerly the paragon of Catholic femininity. The new prescription for wives involved a precarious balance between an earlier veneration of sexual renunciation and a new emphasis on female generativity. Thus the considerable clamor for chastity in marriage so prevalent in the period in part derived from the tension between an insistence on the sexual restraint of wives while still acknowledging the necessary role of women's sexuality in procreation – what Lawrence Stone calls “matrimonial chastity.”⁶⁵ This tension can only have been exacerbated by the belief that women could not conceive without orgasm – women's sexual pleasure was fundamental but it also potentially threatened (at least in the male imagination, since women were by definition less able to govern themselves) her ability to remain chaste. The husband was expected to give his wife enough satisfaction to avoid her being obliged to go elsewhere, but not to arouse her so much as to provoke extra-marital sex – a recipe for masculine anxiety if ever there was one. Perhaps the strain involved in maintaining these conflicting constructions of female sexuality contributed to the gradual decline of the belief in the mutual orgasm theory of conception during the seventeenth century. In any case, among men the belief contributed to the complementary yet extreme depictions of women's sexuality as either monstrous and excessive or, in the case of the “good” wife, little more than a necessary aspect of procreation.

In this brief account of the social history of early modern England I have addressed only some of the issues and transformations that contribute to the agitations and contradictions in the period's sex/gender system. A more expansive account would need to consider many secondary but nonetheless contributory factors, such as the considerable demographic mobility of the period, especially evident in London, or the profound reconfiguration in its status delineations, which leads Stone to conclude that “families were moving up and down in the social and economic scale at a faster rate than at any time before the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.”⁶⁶ As I discuss in my chapter on Francis Bacon, the perceived endangerment of the aristocratic body was frequently figured once again in terms of the purity or impurity of the female body – patrilineal privilege was symbolically and actually confirmed by the

regulation of female sexuality. Another consideration that especially fuels the dramatic and literary work before 1603 is certainly Elizabeth's anomalous position at the apex of authority in such an otherwise thoroughly patriarchal power structure. And finally, it is worth noting the seemingly paradoxical role taken up by James as the leading “pater familias” who nonetheless openly displays his homoerotic affection, at least within the orbit of his court.

The anthropologist James Clifford analyzes the function of ethnographic allegory as “a practice in which a narrative fiction continuously refers to another pattern of ideas or events. It is a representation that ‘interprets’ itself.”⁶⁷ While I would by no means consign the historical narrative I have just sketched to the realm of fiction, it is nonetheless important to recognize that no rendering of another historical period or another culture can ever speak from a position of objectivity, a position outside one's own ideological and conceptual framework. This book is a kind of ethnography of early modern England; my informants are the textual traces I have chosen to listen to, my focus is on the ways that one of our own antecedent cultures constructs and legitimates masculinity and in so doing enables and constrains its male members. Among the broad set of practices known as “new historicism,” some recent literary histories have benefited from the ethnographic model if only to encourage a recognition of our own “pattern of ideas or events” that shape what we say about another culture.

As I suggested at the outset of this introduction, such an acknowledgment should not be perceived as undermining the authority of our claims about another period but rather as an opportunity to engage dialectically in a simultaneous interpretation of ourselves. We are thus better served by understanding the production of meaning as, in Michael McCauley's phrase as a “the constitution of [the] text through an intertextuality whereby two texts are brought together and fused: the constituted discourse of the Renaissance and the constitutive discourse of scholar himself.”⁶⁸ Such an observation opens up the nature of the voice we bring to the dialogue: the personal investments in the truths we advance and the political consequences for the historical moment from which we speak. A “recognition of allegory,” Clifford concludes, “requires that as readers and writers of ethnographies, we struggle to confront and take responsibility for our systematic constructions of others and of ourselves through others. This recognition need not ultimately lead to an ironic position – though it must contend with profound ironies. If we are condemned to tell stories we cannot control, may we not, at least, tell stories we believe to be true.”⁶⁹

Each of the following chapters is a kind of story in its own right written about a single text or a configuration of texts from the period roughly between the late Elizabethan period and the Puritan revolution. In the chapters where I have sustained a long discussion of a single author, a particular work or, in the case of Bacon, an entire corpus, my objective has been to locate these stories within what Foucault called the "discursive formation" of early modern England. This kind of historicism involves trying to uncover the "traces of social circulation," to borrow Greenblatt's phrase,⁷⁰ that are embedded in and between literary and non-literary texts. I have also tried to maintain a dialectical approach between a systematic level of analysis, in which we might identify broadly ideological patterns, and a more focused analysis of unique discernments of those patterns in specific texts and by individual authors. Even though each of the authors whose works I discuss are players in the same cultural script, they also occupy various and perhaps conflicting roles, and they write in different genres for different audiences. Consequently, we cannot overlook the unique perspectives of each author nor the often different interests served by particular texts.

I have mostly suspended traditional ways of ordering the material addressed in this book – by author, chronology, genre or overarching theme – since to do so seemed like an unwieldy attempt to impose unity and wholeness where none really existed. If we are only left with traces of earlier cultures, fragments that even if collected in their entirety would still not transparently provide a unified picture, then it would seem almost disingenuous to offer one's own account of that culture as a smooth and logical narrative. This book may be better read as a collection of interventions, each pursuing the dialectic of desire and anxiety in the discursive construction of masculine subjectivity in early modern England. Nor is it possible to offer an overriding logic for the texts that I have included – so many suggested themselves that I am now aware more of its omissions rather than what I have managed to include. My process of selection has been motivated for the most part by an interest in the way certain issues and problems are negotiated in these texts, in some cases by the prominence of a given author and in others by his or her relative obscurity, still in others by the sheer accident of serendipitously falling upon something during the course of my research. The recurrence of Shakespeare may be explained by my own training and by his cultural predominance, but also by my admission (as in some critical circles it would have to be) that Shakespeare's imaginative examinations of masculinity are usually more complex and more subtle than that of any of his contemporaries, or at least that they more richly manifest his culture's anxieties about gender and sexuality. Indeed, I

once imagined that if somehow Iago and Emilia could find it in themselves to co-write a book, little in the following pages would be left to say.

Nonetheless, despite these disclaimers and caveats, it might still be useful to my readers to provide some introduction to the specific discussions that follow. I begin with Robert Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy*, chronologically the last of my selections but in many ways more characteristic of the generation before its twenty year period of composition. Burton's lengthy tome provides a material basis for many of the ensuing discussions since its preoccupation is with a psychological state understood as inseparable from the corporeal body. *The Anatomy* is thus especially useful at the beginning of a book on masculine subjectivity since it reminds us right off that, under the sway of humoral psychology, the early modern period imagined identity as derived from the often contentious fluids of the body, not as the largely mental condition that displaced this model in the Enlightenment. *The Anatomy* also introduces another fundamental difference between early modern conceptions of the subject and many of those that followed: the assumption that the corporeal body, the body politic and nature itself were homologically similar, even to the point where conditions in one could directly affect the other. Burton's very serious meditations on planetary influences on mental states, or herbal remedies for melancholy, are by no means the superstitious beliefs of a hermetic scholar; they depend upon an understanding of the essential correspondences and homologies that define and give meaning to everything and everyone in the world. Contemporary criticism that insists on the political or social aspect of early modern literature, medicine, biology, psychology, or any other discourse, is certainly involved in current critical fashion, but it is also acknowledging the linkages and connections that made the world comprehensible to that period.

This realization also underscores my discussion of Bacon's "new science" in the second chapter. Here I read Bacon's corpus as a body of writing shaped by – indeed, inseparable from – an aristocratic body whose basis of privilege was being challenged and a construction of the female body that required constant surveillance to secure its chaste purity. Thus Baconian science not only negotiates with the received scientific tradition since Aristotle, it is also in dialogue (less intentionally) with early modern beliefs about domestic relationships, female chastity, the endangered royal prerogative and the increasingly porous status delineations that preoccupied the Jacobean period. Especially in this chapter, I have also discussed the form in which his texts are written – the medium in which knowledge is disseminated for Bacon – as another

level that intersects with non-scientific discourses. Here the key word is "disseminate," which I utilize in both the general sense – to pass along, impart – but also in its etymological connection to semen as that which is passed to women to insure procreation and (ideally, he would say) to maintain patrilineal descent. Bacon's version of anxious masculinity derives in part from the potentially hazardous dependence on women required by this dissemination; consequently, the "plain and simple style" he advocates encodes an attempt to avoid the "unfortunate" mediation of women and female sexuality.

The third chapter further develops the function of the figure of female chastity in relation to masculine honor among men through a close reading of Shakespeare's "The Rape of Lucrece." Here my interest is in showing the inescapable circularity between the desire to possess and the possession by one's desire; for Tarquin, the "sundry dangers of his will's obtaining" and his compulsion "to obtain his will resolving:" This poem perhaps best exemplifies one of the most pervasive themes of *Anxious Masculinity*: masculine desire – directed at either men or women – is a destabilizing if not self-destructive force, one that requires constant vigilance by reason and self-control. (This is also one of Burton's central preoccupations and anxieties in *The Anatomy*). And yet, the very economy of desire that upholds honor and reason as important constituents of masculinity additionally places men under constant attack: the object of masculine desire must be published – known among other men – for it to accrue honor and value for its possessor, but the very same publication leads to the *loss* of ownership of that object. In the poem, Collatine's honor is achieved only through the publication of Lucrece's celebrated chastity, but it is that publication that impels Tarquin to rape her. This chapter additionally builds upon the idea of publication and masculine authorship to discuss the homology between sexual and textual corruption, as exemplified particularly in the printer John Day's prefatory note to an early Elizabethan play – Sackville and Norton's *Gorboduc*.

The next chapter also takes up an Elizabethan work by Shakespeare – the early comedy *Love's Labor's Lost* – introduced by way of a discussion of Montaigne's fascinating essay, "Upon some verses of Vergil," translated by John Florio in 1603. If my previous discussion of Shakespeare's "Lucrece" depended on "publication" to activate a destructive contradiction in the masculine economy of desire, in *Love's Labor's Lost* the key term is deferral. As in the poem, erotic desire is encouraged and inflamed by the perceived value of the desired object in an economy that fetishizes female chastity. However, similar to the Petrarchan tradition that informs the comedy, consummation must be deferred if the object of desire is to retain its value for the desiring male subject. If masculinity is

constituted by the act or process of desiring, then satisfaction becomes something to be feared even though it is what impels this erotic economy in the first place. This inherent contradiction leaves men hovering anxiously between the desire for conquest and possession, on the one hand, and the fear (sometimes horror) of the cessation of desiring, on the other. As Shakespeare writes in sonnet 129, "Th' expense of spirit in a waste of shame . . . [is] Enjoy'd no sooner but despised straight."

The principal focus of chapter five is to develop the idea that erotic desire is threatening to men in part because it is perceived as effeminizing. This is an especially anxiety-producing prospect in a period where a biological basis for sex differentiation (as Thomas Laqueur has shown) was far less secure than it has become since. If masculine identity is fundamentally unstable, then the assertion of gender difference – especially where it is most adamantly expressed – functions as a way to compensate for the lack of anatomical guarantee of difference. I pursue this proposition by looking at anti-theatrical tracts, the cross-dressing controversy, a number of the polemical defenses and excoriations of women, and at some of the responses to these attacks written by women – especially Jane Anger's *Her Protection for Women*. As Anger suggests, debate are projections of what men fear most about themselves – the purpose being to construct gender and sex differences in order to maintain the basis of masculine superiority. As in all my arguments throughout the book, this dynamic again exemplifies the perceived need among men to construct "woman" in a way that appears to serve their interests but which, in fact, tortures and agitates them at nearly every turn, undermining the masculinity that this idea of "woman" is intended to legitimate.

Finally, the concluding chapter offers a discussion specifically of male sexual jealousy. Along with the fear of cuckoldry, sexual jealousy will have made many appearances in the book before this final chapter – it is easily the most pervasive masculine anxiety in all the texts I discuss. In this chapter, Shakespeare's extraordinary anatomy of masculinity in *Othello* is threaded through a variety of non-literary texts – treatises, popular pamphlets, religious tracts – in order to demonstrate once again that masculine anxiety (in this chapter from male sexual jealousy) is endemic to early modern patriarchy – symptomatic of its "normal" operations rather than an aberration or unfortunate disease. This chapter also plays considerably with the double sense of the word "knowledge" as a critical form of masculine empowerment: on the one hand, carnal knowledge (sexual ownership), and on the other, inter-

pretive knowledge, needing to know women as a means of panoptical control in which woman is figured as a set of signs requiring interpretation. *Othello* is largely about the intermingling – the interdependence, perhaps – of these two definitions. But the ultimate tragedy of this play is that Othello does not realize that his false and insidious constructions of Desdemona are the cause of his jealousy and of the play's final violence. Nor does he realize the inherent self-destructiveness of a model of identity in which “woman” functions as the Other – the guarantee or legitimization – of masculine identity. When Othello cries, “When I love thee not, / Chaos is come again” (III,iii,93-94), he is imagining not so much the end of his own love for Desdemona, but rather the dire prospect of not being loved by her – in effect, of not being at all. This model of dependence on an Other would be sufficient cause for anxiety alone, but what makes it such a paradigmatic instance of anxious masculinity in general – what makes it so tragically self-fulfilling – is that it operates in relation to a false idea of “woman” rather than to women themselves. And because this model is so fundamental to masculine identity in the first place, because it has already shaped who men imagine themselves to be, the alternative can very well appear as chaos. In the world of *Othello*, this lies behind Iago's observation, “I never found man that knew how to love himself” (I,ii,316-317) – perhaps the most appropriate introductory epithet to *Anxious Masculinity*. But it is not the most appropriate conclusion: if we can identify the historically specific operations of early modern patriarchy, acknowledge the residual effects of that history as well as confirm our distance from it; if we can bring to the surface the contradictions and anxieties that have shaped masculinity rather than merely acting on its symptoms; indeed, if we can listen to women, or to characters like Emilia in *Othello*, then perhaps Iago's trenchant remark might lose some of its stinging accuracy.

As I have suggested, the historical narrative that I developed above to characterize the early modern England as experiencing a “crisis” in its traditional sex/gender system seems to me both “true” as a compelling description of that period and, at the same time, a pertinent and productive allegory for our own historical moment. This is not meant to suggest an exact parallel between late twentieth-century America and the early modern period in England – such a comparison would obscure the considerable transformations that have occurred during that span. Nor does it claim that no other period in between experienced changes or reconfigurations in its sex/gender system – culture is always, of course, a continual process of retrenchment and modification. In the process of writing this book I have been particularly attentive to contemporary

allegories of the issues I discuss, both on a broadly social level but also in my own personal life.

Our own version of a “crisis of order” in terms of sexuality and gender has also developed out of difficult economic times, dramatic re-configurations in the nuclear family, a new code of sexual behavior. And if the early modern period witnesses a burgeoning feminism among the women who take up their pens in the “querelles des femmes” pamphlets, our own has been led by the considerable achievements of the feminist movement in the last twenty-five years. But if there are now innumerable contemporary versions of women such as Jane Anger and Esther Sowernam – men whose responses to women's social and economic gains and to the changes in gender roles take the form of retrenchment in traditional values, misogynistic scapegoating of women for the supposed failure of the nuclear family, aggression and violence toward women that masks their own insecurity and vulnerability. Anxious masculinity may no longer lead to the cuckooing stool or to the accusation of witchery, but it has certainly been at work in our legal system, where celebrated cases involving sexual harassment, paternity rights, rape, gay and lesbian parenting, Lorena Bobbitt's infamous castration of her husband and the widely followed trial of O. J. Simpson for allegedly murdering his wife in a jealous rage have become national preoccupations. And in perhaps the most visible display of anxious masculinity, Hollywood has recently released a number of films that may be said to comprise a new genre, one I have not surprisingly termed “anxious masculinity films”: the most widely viewed and discussed include “Fatal Attraction,” “The Hand That Rocks the Cradle,” “Basic Instinct,” “Sea of Love” and “Disclosure,” films that typically focus on aggressive, independent women who in a variety of ways threaten the men with whom they are involved. Most often, the threat they represent is transformed into an unavoidable yet dangerous female eroticism, as if female independence can only be figured in terms of threatening sexuality; or, in some cases, women are constructed as an interpretive dilemma, a set of unreliable signs, the indecipherability of which becomes another indication of their fearful independence; and just as typically, they are depicted as endangering the nuclear family. More often than not, the female protagonist is punished for her transgression: she functions as the scapegoat whose degradation restores the normative order, still by most people construed as the nuclear family, the man on top, women's sexuality properly under control. Hollywood could find enough of these plots in Jacobean drama to last well into the next century were it not so seemingly determined to portray contemporary life as if it had no history.

The primary focus of this book is, of course, a culture and historical period radically different from the present. But it is not a culture that bears no relevance to our own, if only because it is one of our most influential antecedents. But more than that: we have not left many of the assumptions of early modern patriarchy behind – if Susan Faludi (among others) is right in her book, *Backlash*, we are not even necessarily moving along a progressive path. It thus still seems to me very important for men to look at ourselves and especially at our patriarchal histories with more critical acuteness than we often do, and to build from that awareness less anxious ways of responding to the social and political changes we are witnessing. If anxiety is a symptom of a fear without knowable cause, then a knowledge of the histories we have inherited is the first and most crucial step toward filling in the sources of our fears and thus freeing ourselves from their self-destructive grip. *Anxious Masculinity* is an attempt to insert contemporary, western masculinity back into history in order to allow us to identify part of the cultural legacy we still carry with us, and finally, in my most optimistic moments, to allow us to envision and enact that history differently.

1 Fearful fluidity: Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy*

How many strange humours there are in men!

Democritus to the Reader, p. 39

There is an unmistakable sense in reading the *Anatomy of Melancholy* that Burton derived a good deal of pleasure and satisfaction not only from his own experience of melancholy but, perhaps even more, from the inscriptive act of dissecting and describing its multifarious forms of self-consuming anxiety and suffering – after all, he wrote and re-wrote the book for over twenty years. This is especially evident in the third partition, where Burton anatomizes “love-melancholy,” the most destructive form of the disease, frequently defined elsewhere as “inordinate love.” In this lengthiest and most often expanded part of Burton’s ever-swelling book, subject matter and textual matters are dialectically poised: either the body of the text valiantly tries to contain the over-flowing nature of the disease or, failing that, comes to resemble the psychological body of the melancholic. In the following passage, we could substitute “book” for “love,” as many readers of the *Anatomy* would attest: “But this love of ours is immoderate, inordinate, and not to be comprehended in any bounds. It will not contain itself . . . or apply to one object, but is a wandering, extravagant, a domineering, a boundless, an irrefragable, a destructive passion.” (655: III.2, my emphasis). The experience of love-melancholy and the inscriptive act of anatomization are linked by resemblance as well as by opposition.

This dynamic is quite apparent on the level of Burton’s authorial relationship to his text. Although Burton claims, in loyal Baconian fashion, “I respect matter, not words” (in part because “[p]retentious style is not a manly distinction”), “words” are also the “matter” of the book if only because verbal excess is characteristic of the melancholic (25). Begun in 1620, the *Anatomy* continuously swells and bulges through its five editions during Burton’s lifetime; a posthumous edition (1651) includes additions made up to his death in 1640. In his continuous writing and revising of the *Anatomy*, Burton appears motivated not so