

Imagining Self and Inwardness:  
Towards the Invention of Poetic Subjectivity in the  
Sonnets of Sidney and Shakespeare

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I

In the epilogue to *Renaissance Self-Fashioning*, Stephen Greenblatt confesses with a tinge of irony that, contrary to his initial assumption about “the self shaping power over their lives” that Englishmen had in the Renaissance, he has come to realize that “there were . . . no moments of pure, unfettered subjectivity; indeed, the human subject itself began to seem remarkably unfree, the ideological product of the relations of power in a particular society” (256). Following after the dazzling discussion of Renaissance self-fashioning and self-creation, his somewhat abrupt confession of the realization that the idea of an autonomous self is indeed “a cultural artifact” seems to embody, or rather

dramatize, a moment of epiphany in which the Burckhardian desire to anchor bourgeois individualism to the Renaissance sentiment of self-dramatization, or to its recognition of the histrionic power of life, comes to an anticlimactic closure. Greenblatt's confession adds a striking twist to the recognition that the idea of man as an autonomous individual is a fiction, while summoning the sixteenth-century Englishmen's "overwhelming need to sustain the illusion that I am the principal maker of my own identity" (257).

With this rather peculiar way of re-proving the romantic myth of an autonomous self, Greenblatt seems to launch an implicit, sympathetic and ironic critique of the Burckhardian idea of the Renaissance that is said to be anchored by the unity of the subject. But, to return his rhetorical question back to Greenblatt himself, "how could they [even including Burckhardt and Greenblatt] do otherwise?"<sup>1)</sup> Ironically and inevitably, Greenblatt ends up with an image of human being trapped in an ideological conditioning, whether or not he likes it: he does not choose but is chosen by it. Despite his insidious and rhetorical question, however, Greenblatt fails to provide a proper explanation for why they had to "cling to the human subject and to self-fashioning, even in suggesting the absorption or corruption or loss of the self" (257).

The impossibility for Greenblatt's Englishmen (and thus Greenblatt himself) to reject the "false" belief directs us to the Althusserian moment of hailing (or interpellating) by the police officer. Whenever called, you have to turn around

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1) With this question, Greenblatt seems to extrapolate a moment of Lacanian "méconnaissance" in the sense that human beings have to live with beliefs, false or true. Lacanian méconnaissance means "an imaginary misrecognition of a symbolic knowledge (*savoir*) that the subject does possess somewhere" (Evans 109). Therefore, as Lacan points out, méconnaissance "represents a certain organization of affirmations and negations, to which the subject is attached" (qtd. in Evans 109).

and respond to the hailing, but why? That is exactly where Greenblatt just comes short and reveals his theoretical impasse and, as its logical outcome, his political pessimism. The histrionic and pessimistic equivocation in Greenblatt will not much be changed even after Peter Stallybrass's incisive attempt to emend the Althusserian theorem: "within a capitalist mode of production ideology interpellated, not the individual as a subject, but the subject as an individual" (593). Another eminent new historicist, Louis Montrose, also reiterates the same dilemma in the proposition that "the very emergence of a concept of 'privacy' may be construed as an effect of the state's increasing concern to regulate the lives of its subjects" (96).

Among the critics from many different camps that have voiced on the theoretical limitations and impasse of new historicism, Frank Lentricchia locates the problem in "its unlikely marriage of Marx and Foucault, with Foucault as dominant partner" (235). With an effort to recuperate the Marxist moment in Greenblatt, Lentricchia wants to purge "Foucault's key obsessions [sic!] and terms [that] shape Greenblatt's argument" (242). For Lentricchia, therefore, Greenblatt's problem originates from the excessive Foucault which is said to cripple the Marxist vantage points. Against Lentricchia's blame of Foucault on the problems in Greenblatt, I would rather argue that the inability of new historicists to address the formation of Renaissance subject and subjectivity lies in their definition of the subject "as the ideological product of the relations of power in a particular society" (*Self-Fashioning* 256) still within the orbit of a juridico-political interpretation of power.

In opposition to Frank Lentricchia's accusation that "Greenblatt's account of the 'I,' like Foucault's [sic!], will dramatize its entrapment in a totalitarian narrative coincidental with the emergence of the modern world as dystopian" (235), I would suggest that Greenblatt's failure does not come from the

excessive Foucault in his argument, but rather from his insufficient Foucault. In this sense, Greenblatt's narrative of the ways Renaissance men attempted to create the self, therefore, should be re-read and re-articulated as a serendipitous account for how the modern subject comes into being in the 16th century: in other words, the conditions for the possibility of the subject's formation which require subordination and subjection as the essential conditions of subjectivation. The fashionability and fictionality of the self Greenblatt delineates, contra Lentricchia, must come as a modality of Foucauldian power relationship in which the deployment of sexuality plays the central role in forming the modern subjectivity. Here comes the moment that the theoretical lacuna on the part of new historicists calls for the introduction of a Foucauldian genealogy of sexuality, with which to relocate, without becoming a reiteration of "totalitarian" and "dystopian narrative," the relationship between power and subject. Taking up exactly where Greenblatt leaves off, this paper hopes to answer why the Renaissance subject has become the locus for a backward projection of an "individual" as the imagined center of free consciousness and independent judgment. I also like to pay attention to the fact that, as several critics have pointed out, Greenblatt's implicit assumption of the subject as masculine prevents him from conceptualizing the subject and subjectivity in terms of modern bio-power. In other words, new historicists's discussion of the subject does insufficiently reflect the gender configuration of the Renaissance in which, à la Karen Newman, the primary and interior self is always gendered.

Greenblatt's conceptualization of the Renaissance man as "a cultural artifact" or, in Joel Fineman's way of speaking, "the effect of subjectivity," therefore, can and must be substantiated by a proper critique of the (psychoanalytic) belief in the inner truth of sex, in which "sex was thus able to function as a unique signifier and as a universal signified" (Foucault, *History* 154). As part of

bio-power in transforming sexed/gendered bodies into cultural intelligibility, the cultural trope of interiority and authentic self would always operate upon “the fixity of gender identity as an interior depth” (*Gender Trouble* 148). In this deployment of sexuality, the spatial distinction of inner/outer comes hand in hand with the ethical imperative for the individuals to “transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality” (Foucault, “Technologies” 18). The social imperative to fashion and imagine the authentic self is not only compatible with the inscription of masculine subject but also cannot stand without the other. The same can also be true of the traditional dichotomy between soul and body which is not only off the mark but also a critical part of the technologies of disciplinary power in the sense that, as Foucault argues in his *Discipline and Punish*, soul is “the present correlative of a certain technology of power over the body” (29). In opposition to the traditional conceptions of soul both as “an illusion or an ideological effect” and as something “born in sin and subject to punishment” (*Discipline and Punish* 29), Judith Butler following Foucault argues that soul becomes “a figure of interior psychic space,” serving as an instrument of bio-power to invest, configure and cultivate the body (*Gender Trouble* 135). Inasmuch as “the soul is the prison of the body” (*Discipline and Punish* 30), we could argue that “the body is the inscribed surface of events (traced by language and dissolved by ideas), the locus of a dissociated self (adopting the illusion of a substantial unity), and a volume in personal disintegration” (“Nietzsche, Genealogy, History” 83).

In what follows, therefore, I will discuss the ways in which the two representative English sonneteers configure the body in spatial and temporal sense, as a way of localizing “interiority.” In so doing, I will be actively engaged with Foucault’s notion of sexuality which, according to Butler, is “an

open, complex historical system of discourse and power that produces the misnomer of 'sex' as part of a strategy to conceal and, hence, to perpetuate power-relations" (*Gender Trouble* 95), and thereby adding to, or amending, Stallybrass's illustration of interpellating the subject as individual in the context of capitalism and bourgeois democracy. I adopt the Foucaudian explanation of the 17th century as the transitional period from the deployment of alliance ("a system of marriage, of fixation and development of kinship ties, of transmissions of names and possessions") to the deployment of sexuality which "engenders a continual extension of areas and forms of control" (*History* 106). Prompted by Foucault's thesis that the deployment of sexuality, through the transformation of sex into discourse and thereby the dissemination and reinforcement of heterogeneous sexualities, is the linchpin of new technologies of power in Western civilization since 17th century, this paper attempts to call into question and thus re-position the post-Romantic concept of autonomous/inward individual as the foundation of poetic "significance" and truth. Drawing upon Foucault's genealogical study of the deployment of sexuality, I would like to propose in this paper to investigate this phenomenon from the perspective of new modern technologies of normalization and power. With the aid of the confessional mode of poetic persona, the lyrical poets opened up a new avenue by which to imagine the authentic self, glorify the interiority of the desiring self and disseminate/multiply desire's materiality. I will try to illustrate the ways that "the notion of an authentic self" as "a reaction to, or consequence of, self-dramatization" (Fineman 196) participates in, and relates itself to, the process of producing/naturalizing/immobilizing the distinction between inner and outer psychic space. Deployment of the trope of interiority as a center of attributes and desires in the discussion of modern subjectivity, therefore, comes into play in producing (self-)knowledge and truth

about both the exterior and the interior (or body and soul) of the self.

## II

Philip Sidney's sonnet sequence *Astrophil and Stella* (hereafter *AS*) has been considered by many contemporaries and modern critics as a monumental achievement of Elizabethan lyric poetry. Among the things that make his poems peculiar and monumental may be the opening sonnet in which the poetic persona is admonished by the Muse to "look in thy heart, and write," instead of "Studying inventions fine" or "turning others' leaves" (*AS* 1).<sup>2</sup> With the Muse's advice to look into his own heart for the image of Stella, the persona who has been "Biting [his] truant pen" turns to himself as a resource of truthful love and poetry. In other words, the exploration of his own heart becomes an embodiment of linguistic venture for the poet to grasp and represent his inward experience.

With the new configuration of poetic inspiration coming from his own "heart" but not from outside or even from his Muse, the persona allocates the irreducible specificity to "heart" as the ground and resource for love and poetry. The heart becomes a "temple" (*AS* 40) to enshrine and cache the image of the beloved and "virtue":

I swear, my heart such one shall show to thee  
 That shrines in flesh so true a deity,  
 That, virtue, thou thyself shalt be in love. (*AS* 4)

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2) Sir Philip Sidney's texts are taken from Katherine Duncan-Jones, ed. *Sir Philip Sidney: A Critical Edition of the Major Works* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1989).

What is inside the “heart” or “my panting breast” (*AS* 50) becomes comparable to a sanctified locus where “my simple soul” (*AS* 3) and “my pure love” (*AS* 72) can reside. By listening to “my heart-strings beat” (*AS* 19) and drawing up “all the Map of my state” (*AS* 6), the poetic persona can make an assertion about his literary originality and, most of all, the uniqueness of his personal experience.

In those sonnets, Sidney configures the bodily part of the heart as a symbolic space for truth or truthful love (“Loving in truth,” *AS* 1) and, thus, as a locus in which personal and individuated experience can be featured and stored. By constructing his own heart as poetic repository, the persona can now announce with pride that “I am no pick-purse of another’s wit” (*AS* 74). His poetic wit becomes equivalent to the coins that the purse may hold, inasmuch the image of “pick-purse” reveals the mercantilistic implication of Sidney’s poetic imagination.<sup>3)</sup> The poetic independence (and thus originality) envisioned in terms of his individuated and spatialized heart as a resource of poetic inspiration and imagination acquires its material concreteness in the conspicuous equation of his poetic stock with the wealth in the purse or vice versa. In fact, his turning into his own heart will make his verse his own property. The truth he believes residing in his heart is related to the proprietary ownership of poetic truth in the territorialized heart in terms that the truth marks off the particular body part as a boundary that includes and excludes. With the spatialization of the heart as a “coffer” of truth, Sidney can also configure the inside which is (re)presented as “heart” now as a priori repository of subjectivity.

What the first sonnet has achieved for the entire sequence is, then,

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3) Of course, his turning to his own heart therefore may make his verse his own property. Inasmuch as the poetic authenticity originates from his own heart, his claim on the originality is not separable from his ownership of the product.



pre-figuring the heart as something “inside” that is always already there. The poetic persona imagines creating in his heart the interior space independent of anything from outside so that he can produce the truth of himself. Asking for himself to look inside the mind enables the desiring subject to turn itself into a speaking subject of presenting the inside or the insideness of heart to the readers: “I cannot choose but write my mind, / And cannot choose but put out what I write” (*AS* 50). Resorting to the physicality of the body, the persona absolutizes and thereby immobilizes the demarcation of the boundary between inside and outside. What is grounded in the heart, supposedly beyond “painting” or outward showing, will show his inner experience even without any motivation or instigation from external things: “My thoughts I speak, and what I speak doth flow / In verse, and that my verse best wits doth please” (*AS* 74).

The verbal rendering of inward states, the poet suggests, is quite the same as describing what Stella already is: “in Stella’s face I read / What love and beauty be; then all my deed/ But copying is, what in her nature writes” (*AS* 3). And thus the poet or the verbal painter of her beauty and virtue has only to “copy” what is already in his heart. If poetry can unerringly transmit what is in his heart, Astrophil could reveal the image of Stella in such an impeccable way that she may pity ‘his self’ and his interior experience: “I am not I, pity the tale of me” (*AS* 45). With the subject and object of poetry in his heart, Astrophil does need to “beg no subject to use eloquence, / Nor in hid ways to guide philosophy” (*AS* 28), because “my heart burns, I cannot silent be” (*AS* 81).

This equation of ‘what is in his heart’ with ‘what Stella is’ brings up an interesting problem with regard to Sidney’s first sonnet, since it now becomes apparent that the inwardness that is supposed to guarantee his poetic independence and originality cannot be separated from the external reality—

Stella or beauty of Stella which, he proposes, is also inside him. Does Stella become inside here while residing outside? Inside of outside? If we follow the logic of poems vigorously, it becomes certain that the inwardness can only be existed insofar as it shows the outward reality of Stella. In fact, his burning heart will only become palpable with “the flames” that his mouth exhales.

But know that I, in pure simplicity,  
 Breathe out the flames which burn within my heart,  
 Love only reading unto me this art. (*AS* 28)

What is ironical is that the beauty and virtue of Stella—the outward reality—have to come back in (ap)proving the authenticity of the persona’s interiority. The referentiality of truth and reality comes in full circle and can stand only in its performative sense. Nothing but the fact of saying that there is the unchangeable and fixed heart inside himself, however, is a ground for the persona to imagine his insideness and its concreteness. The speaking subject, therefore, cannot but come back to a portrayal of the desiring “I” only by which his self comes into being, while transforming (and necessarily alienating) Stella into a voiceless object: “Not thou by praise, but praise in thee is raised; / It is a praise to praise, when thou art praised” (*AS* 35).

But the persona diverts the point by asking a question of readership—how could the readers know “What may words say, or what may words not say, / Where truth itself must like flattery?” (*AS* 35). He draws attention rather to the possibility that writing could become an unreliable means that disguises and hides, rather than reveals and shows, his inward truth and “the anatomy of all my woes” (*AS* 58). He poses a question of whether the poetic language inspired by his “loving in truth” can be a truthful instrument to mediate the

irreconcilable discrepancy between outward show and inward truth. In other words, the poet tries to foreground the elusiveness of language that tends to falter in showing his inward states and truth, while pushing aside the urgent need for questioning the very division of interior and outward. Because, as the persona suggests, it could happen:

. . . like slave-born Muscovite  
 I call it praise to suffer tyranny;  
 And now employ the remnant of my wit  
 To make myself believe that all is well,  
 While with a feeling skill I paint my hell. (*AS* 2)

As in the quoted poem, literary ornateness is often said not to be always commensurate with the inward pain the poetic persona suffers from. Insofar as there is a discrepancy between loving and writing about love, it is inevitable for the persona to struggle in finding “The thorough’st words, fit for woe’s self to groan” (*AS* 57). Anne Ferry argues that Sidney seems to show here “an awareness of ambiguous and shifting relationships between words and what is in the heart” (123):

The fact that the sequence focuses in its opening, and for the first time in English poetry, on the lover’s struggle to write truly about what is in his heart, that it expands so often on this preoccupation, and that so many uses of language are employed to similar ends in its elaboration, make convincing evidence that Sidney’s deepest concerns are involved in this struggle. (Ferry 149)

So the poet may ask, what if the poetic language fails to show what is inside the heart?

But how can the poet be so sure, or make the readers feel sure, if there is anything at all in the heart that his language can unfailingly express and reveal? Now we come back, in a different level, to the initial difficulty he experiences in portraying love in truth at the first line of the first sonnet. So isn't it true that this issue of language comes back and backfires the poet's intention to demarcate inward from outward, because the trope of disguise and revelation is exactly to deploy and produce the distinction between truth and falsehood. This division and distinction, therefore, become always already a matter of language, though in a slightly different sense from what the persona tries to play on. The suspected language ("write I while I doubt to write, and wreak / My harms on ink's poor loss"; *AS* 34) is the only way to reveal and materialize "all my hurts in my heart's wrack" (*AS* 93) as well as "poor Petrarch's long-deceased woes" (*AS* 15). In Judith Butler's words, we may say that "the ideal that is mirrored depends on that very mirroring to be sustained as an ideal" (*Bodies* 14).

The paradoxical impasse of valorizing the inward and the private self in this way, however, lies in the fact that it can only become possible through publicizing/publishing the inside-out of the individuated and interiorized desire of an authentic self. Publicizing and publishing, once again, involve the medium of language that is always intractable without proper, skillful regulation by the poet. Here comes the moment when it becomes "essential" for the poet and its persona to discern "that honey-flowing matron Eloquence" from "a courtesan-like painted affectation" (*A Defence of Poetry* 70). In addition to the anxiety over clothing, as is manifest in the sumptuary laws during the Elizabethan England, Sidney presupposes an essential disjunction between appearance and reality and, thereby, creates the essentialized division between true and false representation in the same way that he wants to demarcate inward from outward. Sidney's attempt to read and express what is in the heart is based

from the beginning upon the assumption that “‘inner’ and ‘outer’ constitute a binary distinction that stabilizes and consolidates the coherent subject” (*Gender Trouble* 134). Sidney’s lyrical poems draw upon the illusion of disclosure of an authentic self which is firmly grounded in its unfathomable and ineffable interiority.

The production of truth at the level of subjection not only legitimizes the authentic self but also obscures the problematic relationship between the lover, Astrophil, and the poet, Philip Sidney. In the poems, we can see that the desiring subject itself is constructed by the invocation of interiority as much as the desired object is produced and re-inscribed on the territorialized body in such a way as to conflate the subject/object with the object/subject. Many critics have taken up the well-known “Rich” sonnet (*AS* 37) as a place in which, with its too transparent allusion to the poet’s relationship with Penelope Rich, the poet imports to the poems an autobiographical sense and thus produces the aura of authentic and real self. But the obviousness of introducing the actual person generates an ironic reading that the poet may screen the difficulty he faces because “of my life a riddle [he] must tell” (*AS* 37). If the relationship is such an obvious fact, however, what is there to be said as “a riddle of life” to the coterie group of which the poet and the beloved are part? To take a step further, I would ask that if there is anything beyond “all beauties which man’s eye can see” and which is “so far from reach of words,” what else does his poem have to do? This ironic reading would rather lead us to the same conclusion that Sidney’s attempt to pin down the truth and falseness always comes back to itself because of the haunting performativity in the configuration. As is explicated in *A Defence of Poetry*, the virtue and value of poetry come with its mimetic nature in teaching readers an ideal knowledge that is worth pursuing and, at the same time, generating a virtuous response from its readers (“to bestow a Cyrus

upon the world to make many Cyruses"; *A Defence of Poetry* 24). That his own heart becomes the (re)source for love and poetry is equivalent to the concept of the authentic or unitary self that is at the center of Western man.

By the same token, I take issue with such politico-historical interpretations of Arthur Marotti, Ann Jones, and Peter Stallybrass. Marotti has explained the sonnet sequence in terms of Sidney's political ambition and frustration (see, for example, Marotti's "Love is not love"). Ann Jones and Peter Stallybrass also argue, "within the poem, the supposedly 'private' sphere of love can be imagined only through its similarities and dissimilarities to the public world of the court" (54). To them, as much as to Marotti, the political status of Sidney becomes the central force of the poems. When the poet talks about "ambition's rage" (*AS* 23) or "my skill in horsemanship" (*AS* 41), it is without doubt that Sidney seems to unfold his political frustration, disappointment, and humiliation in his courtly experience. In the context of Renaissance courtiership, we may read his writing as a brilliant exercise of *sprezzatura* (nonchalance) of a typical Renaissance courtier with a view to getting favor and grace in court.<sup>4)</sup> Considering his writing job as an "unelected vocation," Sidney, for example, in sonnet 90, tries to make an explicit distance once again between himself and his poetic ambition: "In truth I swear, I wish not there should be / Graved in mine epitaph a poet's name." In an attempt to compensate for social losses and defeats, Marotti argues, Sidney conflates political (public) ambition and personal (private) desire in the erotic discourse of lyrics (406-8). What I take issue with in this kind of political interpretation, however, is its failure to take into account the productive and disciplinary aspect of power, as well as its tendency to focus on the juridico-political and regulatory power. Certainly there is politics that

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4) For the definition of "sprezzatura" for the courtier, see Castiglione's first book of *The Book of the Courtier*, trans. George Bull (London: Penguin Books, 1976).

Sidney might have never understood, or only barely sensed, that is so-called “bio-politics.” Sidney’s sonnets certainly sanction the early modern process of subjectivity anchored on the division of inward truth and outward show, while embracing the paradox that the impossibility of a full disclosure of the interiority only stands surety for the possibility of its existence. If we accept the argument that Sidney established his poetry as a mode of procuring self-knowledge and thus self-mastery (self-government), we can also say that the subjecthood he might have envisioned cannot but be “not only a subordination but a securing and maintaining, a putting into place of a subject, a subjectivation” (*Bodies* 34).

### III

Sidney’s endeavor to anchor the poetic subject on his inner reality becomes more palpable when we juxtapose his poems against “the profound medical and physiological underpinnings of Shakespeare’s acute vocabulary of psychological inwardness [in *Sonnets*]” (Schoenfeldt 75). Though to a lesser degree than in his great plays such as *Hamlet*, as Michael Schoenfeldt explains with persuasive force, the somatic language of the *Sonnets* enables Shakespeare’s persona to pit the traditional body-soul opposition against the binary of surface-interiority while constructing a linkage between physiology and psychology. Slightly different from Sidney’s prioritization of the interiority against outward signs, Shakespeare is keen on registering the momentum in the intertwining of the mind and the body and thus taking into consideration the selfhood. Where Sidney begins with underscoring his heart as a locus of his poetic inspiration, of course, Shakespeare’s sonnets introduce the corporeal experience with which to problematize the act of sonneteering and the sonneteering-self and thereby

question the fundamental nature of the panegyric genre.

While working in the tradition of erotic praise, Shakespeare in the *Sonnets* testifies the emergence, or a distinct gesture toward the emergence, of privatized, bourgeois, and psychological identity. Often called the procreation poems, for instance, the first group of Shakespeare's *Sonnets* features what Fineman calls "stylistic or rhetorical peculiarity" that lays anchor on "the relatively anomalous anonymity of the poet at the opening of the sequence, the fact that there is no poet at all in the first few sonnets, no first-person speaker, thematized as such, with reference to whom we locate what we hear" (199-200). It is quite unusual for Elizabethan readers of sonnets to have to wait until the 10th sonnet before hearing about "I" and "me" of the poet or poetic persona. This peculiar beginning of the sonnet sequences, without recourse to the poetic "I," helps the poet set the stage in which he can play on the foreknowledge of the sonnet tradition in such a way as to generate an ironic reading of the entire poems, or at least the procreation sonnets.

The dramatic setting or the narrative frame the first 17 sonnets offer in relation to the entire sonnet sequence seems to serve for several different purposes. First, the rather unique opening establishes the intimacy of the speaker to the young man by way of his rather flirtatious addressing; second, it produces the aura of formality in his advice to procreate; and finally, it juxtaposes the above two features with the hint of perversity in young man's self love (or "self-abuse," e.g., "having traffic with thyself alone").<sup>5</sup> As many critics take note, there are plenty of images and metaphors which point to the direction that the young man's reluctance to get married is related to his sexual deviation.<sup>6</sup>

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5) The quotes are from Sonnet 4. For allusions of masturbation, see also sonnet 6 and 20. All Shakespearean quotes are Katherine Duncan-Jones, ed. *The Arden Shakespeare: Shakespeare's Sonnets* (London: Thomas Nelson & Sons Ltd, 1997).



In several places, the speaker himself generates such a suspicion that the young man may indulge himself in the unfruitful expenditure of seed and self-gratification.<sup>7)</sup> By invoking the image of perversity in self-love, the procreation sonnets could construct and foreground the duty of aristocratic masculinity, e.g., the importance of familial reproduction which was crucial to the stability of aristocratic and patriarchal social order.

Within the structure of homosocial and thus heterosexual patriarchy, which itself serves to cover up the uneven relationship between males, Shakespeare's unique opening sonnets not only expose the stereotypicality of femininity and masculinity but also intend to re-establish the division of sexes via the hetero-normative relationships of the speaker and the young man. With the persona's attempt to pile up the image of love which is always already a procreative and thus heterosexual one, the poems make the possible homoerotic relationship between the poet and the young man contained by the image of procreation with its heterosexual content. Critical to the understanding of the entire sonnet sequence, in this context, is to realize that, in this group of poems, marriage is taken as a way of managing the femininity as defined in the subsequent sonnets.

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- 6) If the issue is just a matter of narcissism or self-love, the speaker himself confesses his own way of self-love: "Sin of self-love possesseth all mine eye, / And all my soul, and all my every part; / And for this sin there is no remedy, / It is so grounded inward in my heart" (62).
- 7) In this context, it is interesting to hear that, already in 1640, there was a notorious attempt by John Benson to mutilate the poems in a way of changing the addressee as a woman (see Duncan-Jones 41-43; de Grazia). Therefore, it comes as no surprise that, since its publication, Shakespeare's *Sonnets* has been subject to the effort of purging its homoerotic elements. I think Margreta de Grazia makes sense in saying that "the exclusive interiority that traditional Shakespearean criticism has assumed is not a given of the Shakespearean text at its inception, but rather a dimension that it acquired during its long history of reception" (431).

On the speaker's attempt to position the procreative love anterior to the relationship between himself and the young man, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick says legitimately:

The sonnets present a male-male love that, like the love of the Greeks, is set firmly within a structure of institutionalized social relations that carried out via women: marriage, name, family, loyalty to progenitors and to posterity, all depend on the youth's making a particular use of women that is not, in the abstract, seen as opposing, denying, or detracting from his bond to the speaker. (35)

Despite the subversiveness of the explicit reference to a homo-social relationship between the persona and the young man, the young man sonnets serve as a means to inscribe and re-inscribe "male heterosexual desire, the form of a desire to consolidate partnership with authoritative males in and through the bodies of females" (Sedgwick 38). Playing on the already stale and hackneyed tradition of love lyrics, as Sedgwick delineates with eloquence, the poet in the procreation sonnets promotes a heterogeneous and heterosexual desire. Depending on the essential demarcation between, and its inscription on, the sexes, the poetic persona predicates the procreation sonnets on a diffuse regulatory economy of sexuality. But one thing Sedgwick does not mention is that woman or femininity in the *Sonnets* are only constructed in the process of being articulated and verbalized by the persona. Sedgwick here seems to suppose that the verbal articulation is only to present the reality of sexual economy which is already out there. In addition, the possible irony which comes from the doubleness and duplicity of the young man and the speaker eludes Sedgwick's attention.<sup>8)</sup> Therefore, it is hard for me to agree with Sedgwick

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8) For example, see that the "another self" the persona invokes in Sonnet 10

wholeheartedly when she suggests: “Nevertheless, the Sonnets’ poetic goes to almost any length to treat the youth as a moral monolith, while the very definition of the lady seems to be doubleness and deceit” (41). It is true that the dark lady sonnets are more explicit in addressing her doubleness than the young man sonnets do. But it is not so rare to run into the deceitful young man and its implication in the poems. For example, the “straying youth” is likely to stumble upon “Those petty wrongs that liberty commits” (41) which the speaker says befits “Thy beauty and thy years” (41). Maybe, we should rather take up the issue of how the poems try to subterfuge, in different ways and degrees, the doubleness of the young man and the dark lady.<sup>9)</sup> In sonnet 109, the speaker draws an interesting metaphor of young man as “my Rose,” which, traditionally a symbol of female, now became emblematic of a male. If we link this to “master mistress” in sonnet 20, it is not so difficult to detect the ambiguous and unsettled quality of the relationship between the persona and the young man.

After sonnet 20, there is a shift of focus to the poetic persona and his love of a young man from the portrait of him who is unwilling to marry and, thus, unable to love in a particular sense. With the harmonious combination of outward beauty and inward virtue which are considered to compose of the unified personality of the young man, the poetic persona creates the poetic subject and thus subjectivity by essentializing the personality of the young man and the persona. To preserve the memory of his beauty, the poet invokes the

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presupposes that there are two selves, true and false: and the true self, which is “for love of me,” is the self free from self-love, in other words, separated from the self which has indulged in narcissistic pleasure.

9) It is understandable why Sedgwick wants to juxtapose the young man and the dark lady in terms of doubleness and “monolith.” While agreeing, once again, with her criticism on the implicit gender politics of the *Sonnets*, I would rather call for a focus on the ways the doubleness features in all the characters, even including the speakers.

imaginative power of poetry which is rhetorically in proportion to the productive sexuality. The rhetorical power of poetry is invoked as a way to perpetuate the presence of youth in his representation. If the ephemerality of the beauty can turn itself into immortality by marriage and poetry, in other words, by sexual and linguistic intercourse, “the living record of your [young man’s] memory” (55) is not only alive in the posterity but also in the poetry about his beauty. His verse with which to immortalize and perpetuate the beauty of the young man: “Not marble, nor the gilded monuments / Of princes, shall outlive this powerful rhyme” (55). If the outward beauty of the young man is equivalent to his inward virtuousness, the young man has only to “Let him[a poet] but copy what in you[him] is writ” (84).<sup>10</sup> As in Sidney, the aesthetic concern with the process and medium of representation brings to the fore the issue of false representation: “Yet eyes this cunning want to grace their art: / They draw but what they see, know not the heart” (24). The idealizing vision of “eye” and “I” is so fragile that it can in any moment turn into eyes “which have no correspondence with true sight” (148). Therefore, it is almost impossible to miss the obvious irony and the suspicion lingering in such a line: “every tongue says beauty should look so” (127). The persona knows very well that visual images of reflection and reflexive image of vision may end up with “Fairing the foul with art’s false borrow’s face” (127). The invocation of “blind fool love,” which makes eyes “see not what they see” (137), reveals poetic anxiety over the truth of his vision which is fundamental to the authenticity of his persona as a poetic subject.

That the young man becomes the object of the poet’s veneration and the subject in the love relationship with the persona, as Fineman elaborates, helps

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10) It is worth noting that Sidney also uses the word “copy” to define the role poetry plays in materializing the truth and beauty of Stella.

Shakespeare introduce “into literature a subjectivity altogether novel in the history of lyrics” (48). Shakespeare’s poetry takes itself as its own subject to the extent that “turning its attention to itself and to its own authorial production, the poet’s own poetry, rather than his divinity, now will sanctify, as best it can, the poet’s self” (Fineman 194). By taking himself, or, rather say, his self, as an object of reflection and thereby making the subjective self an object, Shakespeare’s *Sonnets* opens up the gate to the introduction of the poetic performance as the locus of truth and self-knowledge:

As subject and object of the poet’s love—“Mine by thy love”—and as subject and object of woman’s love—“and thy love’s use their treasure”—the young man becomes in the sonnet the erotic figure of the difference *between* man and woman. And it is as such an indeterminate being that the poet addresses him, with an ambiguous and conflicted desire *because* divided between the homosexual and the heterosexual. (Fineman 274-75)

The poems put into question the epideitic subject, as well as the subject of the epideitic tradition: “what can mine own praise to mine own self bring? / And what is ’t but mine when I praise thee?” (39). As Fineman shows, “the sonnets themselves explicitly take up the relationship between the way they speak, and what they speak, and the figured first person who is ostensibly the speaker of their speech” (83). The efforts in the *Sonnets* to establish identity, based upon the binaries of subject and object, private and public, and signifier and signified, lend itself to the reality of its illusionary autonomy.

The unconventionality of the speaker’s love to the young man and to the dark lady displays “a kind of disjunctive physicality that essentializes, realizes, [and] materializes the rhetoricity of a novel poetics whose novelty consists of the way it conceives itself to be the differentiating repetition of the poetry of

praise" (Fineman 263). With the complaint that there is nothing "new to speak" (108), the persona launches an anti-Petrarchan campaign which is a double task to accommodate itself to traditional sonneteering ideals, while playing upon the banality of panegyric ideals in the sonnet tradition. The introverting duplication of the conventional panegyric in the dark lady sonnets plays upon "the tired literariness of what now is seen to be a merely epideitic gesture" (Fineman 155). The Petrarchan tradition of impossibility in the sense of ineffable love and requited desire leads the persona to the recognition of his writing as both an imitation of the age-old tradition of panegyric and an attempt to make a particular, and thus personal, sense of love. By fabricating the dark lady as "the simulacrum of an incompatible similitude" (175), Fineman argues, Shakespeare seems to propose a subject of "a heterogeneous desire constituted by its own division" (22). Through the appropriation of sexuality in a way to erase the inherent duplicity of the persona and the young man, Shakespeare's sonnets attempt to stabilize and fixate the subjectivity on the persona and/or the poet with the aid of the distance the persona makes to keep from the tradition of poetic idealization in panegyrics. As much as in the young man sonnets where the speaker attempts to separate the paired characteristics of the young man so as to provide a stable subject position, the persona in the dark lay sonnets works toward creating and thus separating spiritual masculinity from physical femininity. As in sonnet 24, his body parts like "heart" and "bosom" would become a medium through which to deploy images of love, but, at the same time, he realizes that the "true image" consists in the realm of interiority which can only be mediated through such physical parts and senses.

## IV

For the conclusion of this essay, I would suggest that if we want to understand the workings of hetero-sexual norms in the formation of the subject, it is necessary for us to grapple with the etymological and epistemological reciprocity of object and subject, in other words, subjectivity is always already predicated upon the notion of subjection. Taking up the sonnet sequences by Philip Sidney and William Shakespeare as a fault line of the early modern subjectivity, I have discussed in this essay the ways that Renaissance English lyrical poems become a topos where we could witness an emerging deployment of modern sexuality. In these sonnet sequences, I recognize the ways in which the binary juxtaposition of public and private tends to privilege privacy and the interior as the inexhaustible source / resource of meaning and significance. In Sidney's and Shakespeare's poems, for instance, we have speakers or poetic personae who are prone to confess and dramatize personal pains and agonies they might go through in the name of unrequited and unfulfilled love and desire. In this way, they could enable the presumed interiority of the self to become a locus of (self-)knowledge and (self-)mastery. In efforts to sublimate the extramarital desire inherent in the medieval courtly love tradition and thereby immortalize their love objects, the two sonneteers imagine and juggle with the integrity and centrality of the poetic subject in quite distinctive ways.

The privileged interiority in lyrical poems as a dominant trope of Renaissance culture enables us to speculate on the ways sonneteering self and/or its poetic persona pave the way for, or make an illusion of, construction of privacy as a symbolic space for autonomous individual. The repeated practice of imagining the self in Renaissance lyrics, I have argued, serves to create a modern subjectivity that presupposes internal stability and distinctiveness. The

confessional mode in Sidney's and Shakespeare's lyrical poetry, attesting to "a discourse of truth concerning themselves" (*History* 64), plays an important role in producing, reproducing and circulating what is considered as knowledge and truth about the self. The self-representation of the poetic persona in lyrics is commensurate with the desire to turn the performative sense of identity into an impossible ideal of the masculine subjectivity and thereby to construct inwardness as a field of intelligibility. In this sense we can say that the legibility and intelligibility of the subjectivity become "a process of materialization that stabilizes over time to produce the effect of boundary, fixity, and surface we call matter" (*Bodies* 9).

By exploring the ways that, in the sonnets of Sidney and Shakespeare, the self becomes "something to write about, a theme or object (subject) of writing activity" ("Technologies" 27), I have tried to back up my postulation of the late 16th and early 17th century as a period when the emergent notion of an autonomous and sovereign individual becomes operative in tandem with the deployment of sexuality. In showing the ways lyric poets and their poetic personae are aspiring to (or imagining they could) invent poetic subjectivity and thus, if I borrow Greenblatt's phrase once again, fashion the self, this paper points up the critical juncture in the history of modern subjectivity that is arrested and registered in the field of literary representation.

**주제어:** 소네트, 근대 초기 영국, 주체성, 내면성, 필립 시드니, 윌리엄 셰익스피어, 시적 주체



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**Imagining Self and Inwardness:  
Towards the Invention of Poetic Subjectivity in the  
Sonnets of Sidney and Shakespeare**

Abstract

Tai-Won Kim

This paper takes up Sir Philip Sidney's *Astrophil and Stella* and Shakespeare's *Sonnets* in a way of re-thinking about the early modern subjectivity in England. First I try to locate the privileged interiority in lyrical poems as a dominant trope of Renaissance English culture; particularly Sidney's sonnets are read as an exemplary case in constructing a private and internal locale of heart as a symbolic space of autonomous individual. Then, I discuss Shakespeare's *Sonnets* in terms of how the persona puts his poetic subject itself into question by interweaving his gendered notion of sexuality with the genres of sonnet and panegyric. Where Sidney begins with underscoring his heart as a locus of his poetic inspiration, Shakespeare introduces the procreativity of sexuality with which to problematize the act of sonneteering and the sonneteering-self and thereby question the fundamental nature of the panegyric genre. In discussing the representative Renaissance English poets, this paper tries to prove that the self-representation of the poetic persona in lyrics turns out to be commensurate with the desire to turn the performative sense of identity into an impossible ideal of the masculine subjectivity and thereby to construct inwardness as a field of intelligibility.

Key Words

early modern England, inwardness, interiority, Philip Sidney, William Shakespeare, sonnet, poetic subject