Introduction

All things from thence doe their first being fetch,
And borrow matter, whereof they are made,
Which whenas forme and feature it does ketch,
Becomes a body, and doth then inuade
The state of life, out of the grisly shade ….
For euery substaunce is conditioned
To change her hew, and sondry forms to don
Meet for her temper and complexion ….

Spenser, *The Faerie Queene*, 3.6.37

For of the soul the body form doth take;
For soul is form, and doth the body make.

Spenser, *An Hymn in Honour of Beauty*, 132

unaccommodated man is no more but such a poor, bare, forked animal as thou art.

Shakespeare, *King Lear*, 3.4.109

Many scholars have analysed the complex physiology and psychology used by Renaissance sages to gain self-knowledge, *nosce teipsum*. Among *general studies* one admires the accounts of Anderson,[1] Baker,[2] Bamborough,[3] Barkan,[4] Bullough,[5] Cornelius,[6] Harvey,[7] Heninger,[8] Hoeniger,[9] Kocher,[10] Lewis,[11] Schoenfeldt,[12] and Soellner.[13]

The rich field of *humour-based passions* is explored by Babb,[14] Baskerville,[15] Campbell,[16] Carscallen,[17] Draper,[18] Filipczak,[19] Lyons,[20] Redwine,[21] Reid,[22] Riddell,[23] Schafer,[24] Schiesari,[25] Shenk,[26] Soellner,[27] States,[28] Temkin,[29] Trevor,[30] and Paster's classics,[31] and the intricacies of *bodily spirits* by Hankins,[32] Harvey,[33] and Verbeke.[34]

The paradoxes of *passion* are explored by Broaddus,[35] Goldberg,[36] Hieatt,[37] Kirsch,[38] Lewis,[39] MacCary,[40] Miller,[41] Nohrnberg,[42] Roche,[43] Silberman,[44] and Traub,[45] and the enormous impact of *self-love* by Battenhouse,[46] Bellamy,[47] Fineman,[48] Gregerson,[49] O'Donovan,[50] Reid,[51] Robertson,[52] Wiltenberg,[53] and especially Zweig.[54]

Rivalling the insights on passion are those on *thinking*: Brentano,[55] Berger,[56] Carruthers,[57] Cavell,[58] Crane,[59] Jorgensen,[60] Klubertanz,[61] Reid,[62] Soellner,[63] Yates,[64] and notably Nuttall.[65] The *inner wits* are ably explained by Harvey[66] and Wolfson.[67]

A culminating aspect of Renaissance psychology is *soul and spirit*. Often

ignored by modern critics, the transcendent essence of human nature is a central concern for Burton,[68] Frye,[69] Kraye,[70] Lottin,[71] Reid,[72] and West.[73] Access to *mystic thinking*, *epiphany*, and *cognitive-affective union* is evaluated by Anderson,[74] Collins,[75] Felperin,[76] Frye,[77] Hunter,[78] Kermode,[79] Kirk,[80] Knight,[81] Martz,[82] Reid,[83] and McGinn's encyclopaedic survey.[84]

But despite this wealth of commentary (in a list far from complete), we do not find a holistic and consistent form of 'Renaissance psychology', for, especially as it influences poetic fictions, it appears in partly incompatible schemes, with each writer producing a distinct, often garbled version of its quirky features. Only writers capable of epic scope offer fictions that suggest a holistic psychology. Spenser and Shakespeare, the best poets of Elizabeth's celebratory post-Armada decade, do give such a comprehensive view of human nature, yet their characters and plots spring from radically distinct psychologies.

Spenser's *Christianized Platonism* prioritizes the soul, his art striving to mirror divine Creation, dogmatically conceived. Spenser looks to the past, collating classical and medieval authorities within memory-devices such as the figurative house in order to reform the ruins of time. Shakespeare's *sophisticated Aristotelianism* prioritizes the body, highlighting physical processes and dynamic feelings of immediate experience, and subjecting them to intense, skeptical consciousness. Shakespeare points to the future, using the witty ironies of popular stage productions to test and deconstruct prior authority, opening the unconscious to psychoanalysis. Spenser and Shakespeare do not simply emulate Plato and Aristotle, who served as catalysts for an immense intellectual evolution of contrary approaches to the embodied soul. The polarity of psychologies in Spenser's and Shakespeare's fictions is radical and profound, resembling the complementary theories of physics, which describes the structure of things either (like Spenser) in the neatly-contained form of particle theory, or (like Shakespeare) in the ever-changing rhythmic cycles of wave theory. These concepts are equally useful, but how do we explain their difference, and how are they related?

Part I: Anatomy of human nature

Chapter 1: We wonder at Spenser's and Shakespeare's quite different depictions of Elizabeth I as a 'fairy queen'. Spenser's epic shows her as Gloriana, a mystic figure arousing her heroic elite to realize the twelve virtues, perfecting the soul in Godlikeness. Shakespeare's comic stage-play also evokes a magnificent mythic queen but in an utterly different realm of 'faerie'. His charismatic 'Titania' is directly experienced, her bodily splendour and witty combative speeches arousing sensual desire not just in elite heroes but in rude commoners who commandeer the play's most engaging scenes. This amazing riposte to Spenser's epic wondrously expanded Shakespeare's own artistry.

We equally wonder at their contrary views of self-love as a touchstone of human psychology. Spenser follows Calvin and Luther in discrediting self-love as shameful, whether in a vain monarch like Lucifera or a common 'losel' like Braggadocchio, causing Redcrosse Knight's wretched fall and Guyon's helpless faint.

In contrast, Shakespeare's characters, great and small, show a positive form of self-love, if carefully managed. His evolving treatment of an admirable self-love follows an alternative tradition, springing from Aristotle, Aquinas, and Primaudaye. Neither poet fully solves the problem of self-love.

Chapter 2: The poets also diverge in portraying the four elemental humours with their passional offshoots. The diverse humoralism of Spenser, Shakespeare, and Jonson is missed by those scholars who assume consistency in Renaissance humoralism, who exaggerate its material causation, ignoring the role of human intellect and divine providence in managing the humours. Spenser controls the humours with the ancient mnemonic device of a figurative house, spiritualising passion in the House of Holiness, and moderating it in Alma's Castle. Spenser's view of humour-based passions (as of the body generally) is quite negative, needing stern moral guidance and Christlike rescue. Shakespeare's quite different depiction of humoral passions appears in the *Henriad*'s main figures – melancholic Henry IV, choleric Hotspur, phlegmatic Falstaff, sanguine Hal. Unlike Spenser's restrictive allegorical view of humour figures (fiery Pyrochles, watery Cymochles, airy Phaedria, earthy Mammon and Maleger), Shakespeare's humour-types are spacious and flexible, all of them gifted with self-conscious speech, some capable of witty mimicry of the others. Moreover, Shakespeare's view of humours and passions evolves greatly, becoming nuanced, changeable, and paradoxical in the tragedies and romances.

Chapter 3: The polarity of Spenser's and Shakespeare's renderings of the psyche is equally apparent in depicting intellect. Alma's stately tour of her bodily castle makes a striking contrast with Lear's impassioned self-stripping – divesting himself of housing, clothing, and sanity as he feelingly identifies with a shivering fool and demon-haunted beggar on a stormy heath. Alma's tour shows the hierarchic harmony of moving from the belly's humoral energies to the heart's passions, to the brain's three 'sages' (inner wits) with their 'allegory of prudence'. Shakespeare's impassioned experiential thinking springs from jolting exposure to natural sensations, the drives of self-love, and the dynamics of enjoying or severing bonds – as shown in Lear's saga and the energies of Juliet's Nurse.

The two poets' contrary view of intellect is fully evident in depicting temptation. Spenser uses the intellectual hierarchy of the 'triple temptation' in hexameral accounts of the Edenic fall (a device so awkwardly used by Shakespeare in *Macbeth*, 4.3 that the scene is often cut). Spenser's triple temptings are complicated by allusion to all the great temptations of epic poetry and by subtle ironic paradox in the temptations by Mammon (2.7) and by Acrasia (2.12). In striking contrast to Spenser's objective and immensely intellectualized allegory of temptation is the riveting passional power and psychoanalytic complexity of Shakespeare's great tempters (Richard III, Iago, Edmund) and self-tempters (Proteus, the Macbeths, Leontes).

The poets' divergent portrayal of intellect is also evident in the inverse development of their depictions of moral counsel. Each Spenserian protagonist is objectively educated by wise sages in order to realize his or her virtuous power, but that moral training becomes increasingly narrow and ineffective in the six

legends – from authoritative intellective counsellors in Books 1 and 2, to equivocal counselors in the passional realm of Books 3 and 4, to constrained and problematic counselors in the sensate realm of Books 5 and 6. (Would Spenser invert this development in the final six legends?) Shakespeare's moral counselors also show radical development, but in reverse: from the farcical failure of parents and friars in the early plays (culminating in Polonius), to counsellors transformed by empathic suffering in the mature tragedies, to the romances' artfully effective counsellors, notably Prospero.

Chapter 4: The most comprehensive divergence of Spenserian and Shakespearean psychology concerns 'soul' and 'spirit', the human essence made in God's image. Spenser's initial soul-maidens (Caelia and Alma) inhabit a house made with Christianity's and then Plato's ideal hierarchic forms. No such structure assists Shakespeare's protagonists (Hamlet, Timon, Antony, Prospero) as they view their identity amid changeable clouds or (Juliet and Cleopatra) amid fancies of a noble but discredited beloved. In Shakespeare's darkest play 'soul' nearly vanishes. Though Hamlet and Othello refer endlessly to their soul (the word appears forty times in each play), in *King Lear* the word appears only three times. Equally definitive is the poets' contrary use of 'spirit'. For Spenser it betokens transcendence (soul, supernatural spirits), only rarely referring to bodily spirits; but Shakespeare stresses its embodiment, staging the multilevel meanings of spirit as a continual warfare between bodily and heavenly referents: 'the expense of spirit in a waste of shame …'.

Part II: Holistic design

Building on this radical divergence in the two poets' depictions of psychology, the final three chapters explain how Spenserian psychology shapes the holistic design of his epic, and how Shakespearean psychology shapes the mature dramaturgical form of *Macbeth* and *King Lear*.

Chapter 5: A cornerstone in Spenser's architectural epic is the hierarchic family (man, woman, child or servant), freighted with the patriarchal allegory of Adam and Eve's fall, but transfigured by Christ and the Church. An exciting aspect of Spenser's epic is its radical revision of this allegory. Even in the natural and fallen family (Mortdant, Amavia, Ruddymane) the man is most blamed while the woman lovingly seeks to cure him; and in the sanctified family of Book 1 (Redcrosse, Una, Dwarf) woman as the Church is fully exalted in struggling to reform her wretched male partner into a Christlike warrior. In Books 3–5 Spenser recasts Ariosto's armed virago, endowing Britomart with a chaste prowess that defeats all males, liberating woman from male mastery and from self-induced suffering. The patriarchal building-block is thus drawn into currents of immense social change.

Books 1 and 2 present an intellective allegory in complementary modes, one reforming higher reason (*mens*), the other reforming lower reason (*ratio*), both informed by Christian-Platonic tripartism. Besides the triadic family grouping at the outset of each legend, there are three progressive stages of sin or of temptation (the Sans-brothers in 1.1–6, Orgoglio-Despair-Dragon in 1.7–12; and in Book 2

the three stages of temptation in Mammon's Cave and in Acrasia's Bower). Most comprehensive is the three-level growth of holiness in the spiritual body (House of Holiness), and the three analogous levels of the natural body (Alma's Castle). The goal of each legend is shown in a hierarchic three-part image of Eden.

Books 3 and 4 present a passional allegory, again in the complementary modes of transcendence and immanence. Britomart enforces female ascendancy in both legends, not only by her skill with arms, enhanced by chaste integrity and a providential dynastic goal, but also by her indifference to the men's competitive quest for supremacy through 'merit'. Her identity is elaborated in three heroic women (Florimell, Belphoebe, Amoret) who as her subtypes exemplify the gifts of the Graces. In these legends the males who are the four women's counterparts (Artegall, Marinell, Timias, Scudamour) are shown as defectively flawed, so that liberation and reunion are achieved by the women's own prowess and endurance, aided by mothers and female deities. These legends include analogues for a female theology: quests to sustain virgin integrity and to marry, Incarnation by virgin birth, Trinitarian identity, epiphanic unveilings and transfigurations (with demonic parodies), and female endurance of a Passion.

Books 5 and 6 present a sensate allegory, showing the need for virtuous power in the most material conditions of life. Both Gloriana and Arthur are exposed to literal material circumstances that render all decisions suspect and subject them to sad confusion. Spenser's figuring allegory in Books 1–6 as an ontological descent is evident in the narrowing (ever-more-specific) identity of Duessa, of Timias, and of the satyrs (or salvages). Does this narrowing symbolism show Spenser's growing despondency about Irish terrors, or is the allegorical descent ('dilation') in Books 1–6 a part of his holistic design, laying a basis for reversal in Books 7–12?

Chapter 6: To assess the quite different holistic design of Shakespearean dramaturgy, we first observe his exploitation of 'epiphany' – the apprehension of a wondrous other. Unlike Spenser's objective education of protagonists in an intellectualized house, Shakespeare subjects his protagonist to revolutionary inner change by an epiphanic encounter at the centre of each passional cycle. Each play forms a chiastic symmetry, beginning with a two-act cycle (in which Act 2 reacts to and completes Act 1) and ending with a two-act cycle (in which Act 5 completes the arc of Act 4); between these two large cycles is an intense one-act cycle, often with no known source. These transformative encounters recall five Biblical epiphanies of the wonder of Jesus: nativity, baptism, transfiguration, resurrection/ascension, crucifixion. Shakespeare achieves meaningful epiphany only gradually, for in early plays it is sensational, farcical, laughable or horrifying, but in the mature plays the epiphanies systematically illuminate the soul's powers.

In *Macbeth* the chiastic sequence neatly divides into three murders in which genuine epiphany is progressively occluded: killing the king centres the opening two-act cycle, killing his best friend centres Act 3, killing a mother and children centres the final two-act cycle. The three murders suggest a Freudian 'repetition compulsion', but unlike many critics who see the regicide as Oedipal and as the only important slaying, I read the three murders as progressive and psychically conjoined, diminishing the Macbeths as they travesty the three great psychic

cathexes of human development – from sublimation, to projection, to introjection – methodically annihilating all capacity for bonding. *King Lear* provides a complementary sequence of three shamings, again forming a chiastic 2–1–2 cycle of acts, but now paradoxically enforcing psychic recovery through stripping and through Lear's epiphanal encounters with Goneril at the centre of Acts 1-2, Poor Tom at the centre of Act 3, and Cordelia at the centre of Acts 4–5.

Chapter 7: Regarding Spenser's holistic design, do the Mutabilitie Cantos conclude his epic or point to its final half, since they discredit the pagan gods' authority, reform the titaness Mutabilitie (unlike the demonized titanomachias of Books 1–6), and show an inconclusive pastoral pageant on Arlo Hill? Spenser's ordering of deadly sins (*FQ* 1.4), when compared with Dante's pattern of sins, of purgations, and of ascensions in the *Commedia*, offers a vital clue to the format of *The Faerie Queene* – based on the principles of Christian-Platonic psychology we have surveyed. Much evidence suggests Elizabeth I would have admired a mystic structuring of this epic that so honours her.

As for Shakespeare's attentiveness to last things, we explore the theme of 'summoning' in *Hamlet* and *King Lear*, both concerned – as in *The Summoning of Everyman* – with 'readiness' and 'ripeness' in the face of death and judgment. In *The Tempest*'s deft collocation of all social levels and artistic genres, and its odd convergence with Spenserian allegory, we debate the insistence on Shakespeare's secularism by examining the range of meaning in Prospero's 'Art'.

Notes

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