

## Stuart Drama between History and Psychopathology

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**Abstract:** In Stuart drama, the uneasy balance between grandiose conceptions of state and monarchical power and radical skepticism delicately enacted by Shakespeare falls apart. In Shakespeare's later plays like *The Tempest*, it is already clear that the King's two bodies are predicated upon a certain type of secular power - the King as head of a well-delimited territory. This changes with the transition of Britain towards a sea power. As Carl Schmitt and others have shown, the old conceptions do not make convincing sense anymore. Therefore, the Stuart kings tried to reinvent monarchical authority in an 'absolutist' form. In the 'Baroque', highly 'artificial court masque, this image of authority gains a short-lived splendour. In those - much more significant - plays, however, which formally follow the Shakespearean pattern, this show falls apart into the display of bodily fetishism and psychopathology.

6

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**Key-Words:** Stuart Drama and Psychopathology; Absolutist Monarchical Authority; Bodily Fetishism and Psychopathology

### I.

A short preliminary and trivial remark. On the whole, cultural historians are not very keen to apply the term “Baroque” to England, to say nothing of the much vaguer and more heterogeneous area called the British Isles. And, as we all know, the extent to which terms of periodization are really compelling, is not very important anyway. Even so, and even in a conventional way, I would like to support the title and the idea of our conference: In cultural and aesthetic terms, it is possible to see the political transferral of royal power from Elizabeth and the Tudors to James I and the Stuarts as a transition from the Renaissance to the Baroque. The crucial genre of the Stuart court masque

could and should be seen as a 'Baroque' form of art, a multimediu, as it were, with its corresponding complications of stage design, of appearances, illusions, of realities always mythological, and myths always partly real.

My focus is not really there. But the range of implications in the transition from Elizabeth to James cuts right into my central concerns. I want to show three things: First, that there is a far-reaching shift in what the phenomenological sociology of Alfred Schütz called paramount realities, in the crucial combination and interaction of what the sociology of knowledge of Max Scheler conceptualized as real and ideal factors in the reality make-up of a society. Second, that this leads to what some theories today, especially constructivism and the neurosciences describe as the autopoiesis, the self-referentiality, even the autonomy of mental processes. Third, that far beyond all of these theories, beyond (unconscious) neural processes on the one hand, social and cultural codes of real and ideal factors on the other, the most advanced forms of serious Stuart drama discover the autonomy of consciousness or conscious life. We normally have no language for that. Either we are caught in the physico-chemical meaninglessness of neural processes or in the meaning excess of referential – social, cultural, psychological – languages. Therefore, as you will see, we are tempted to call Stuart dramatic images of the conscious life psychopathological. My talk also consists in an effort to do better than my title.

For both Renaissance and Baroque, society and culture are in principle embedded in what in England was called the body politic. This commonwealth (the term refers originally only to England, not, as in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, to the wreck of the empire) was mainly symbolized and enacted by the ruler. The top of the hierarchy includes more or less all of that hierarchy itself. It gives meaning and direction to its religious, political, social and cultural norms and possibilities. The ruler is not only, as the term body politic might suggest, a political leader in the modern, technical sense. Although the leading figure does not determine, he or she prefigures the imperatives and trends of culture at large.

Thus, in Shakespeare, both public action and private interaction are normally deployed around a hard core of socially leading figures of some kind. Even if the action is dominated by power politics in a modern sense, even kings are always tested also for a more comprehensive range of qualities – or defects.

Shakespeare's plays are not portraits of actual Kings or Queens. Not only because of censorship the plays have to be inventions. But, in spite of the manifold levels of play (and plays within plays), they are not mere plays. This happens, at least ostensibly, in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. Then, plays and often literature in general claim aesthetic autonomy. They turn into the "house beautiful" (Walter Pater) of aesthetic education and edification. The house beautiful does no longer represent the essentials of life, but resembles an imaginary museum.

In the English Renaissance especially, plays are triggered by and predicated upon claims of paramount realities, with the ruler at their core. The vital *concerns* of Elizabethan drama, as Carl Schmitt has argued in a remarkable short book on the invasion of play(s) by time and history, could not be invented. The (particularly German) image of the dramatist sitting at home, dipping his pen in blood and achieving world-shaking tragedies is quite misleading. With the pathos of Storm and Stress fading away, Schiller for instance quite knowingly turns into a writer for the literary market of a society remote from the problems his plays unfold. Schiller's great tragic problems tend towards aesthetic decorations for times which are glad to have gotten rid of tragic conflicts, but which miss their tragic grandeur. Nobody knows better than Kathrin Rosenfield how difficult it was for Hölderlin to carve out a rhythm of events and ideas to which tragic inevitability cannot be denied. By contrast, the liberties which Shakespeare takes with respect to so-called sources, are just the converse of his acute knowledge about the problems which hold his audience enthralled (Schmitt 38). Of course, Shakespeare very much writes for a market too. But that market is driven by topical, not by nostalgic concerns.

Schmitt claims, I think rightly so, that a "core of historical reality", that is to say something conceived as a vital historical problem must drive any respectable dramatist. One could call this core a historical and to some extent, with religion being involved, an epistemological apriori. Precisely because it is so important, this core very often cannot be presented in any direct form. It often takes the form of a historical taboo, which lurks invisibly, but unmistakably, in the play's background (51, 17).

In *Hamlet*, such a taboo consists in the question of the mother's, Gertrude's guilt in the death of her husband. That question is extremely obvious. But it is present only as a tacit question in the play. Between 1600 and 1603, the time when the play was

written and produced, the vital concern for England – and Scotland – was the impending death, sooner or later, of Elizabeth. People were speculating about who might be her successor, the most likely candidate being James Stewart (Stuart), the one of Scotland, not the US-American actor. His father, Lord Darnley, had been killed by the Earl of Bothwell, blown up in his house, a murder most probably aided and abetted by Darnley's wife, James's mother Mary Stuart. Mary and Bothwell married in unseemly haste, after Bothwell had divorced his wife in even greater haste. The parallels with the situation in *Hamlet* are hard to miss.

Shakespeare's theatrical troupe was sponsored by the Earls of Southampton and Essex at the time. This group was betting on James as the successor of Elizabeth. The queen took revenge: Essex, her former favourite and possible lover, was executed, Southampton sentenced to death but spared. Immediately after ascending the throne of England, James tried to make up for the punishments Elizabeth had meted out to his supporters. He pardoned Southampton and returned Essex's fortune to his widow (20).

For Schmitt it is obvious that Shakespeare, like all of his contemporaries, had to come to terms with this situation. This meant he had to stage, with *Hamlet*, an analogous 'plot', but that he had to leave out the question of Gertrude's, that is Mary Stuart's guilt, because James, who indeed became the sponsor of Shakespeare's troupe, had always maintained a very close relationship with her. Shakespeare could not portray Gertrude as guilty, because of James; he could not exonerate her completely either, because the public in England believed her guiltily involved.

## II.

Shakespeare then circles around the problem, obscuring it in a sea of discourse devoted to all kinds of problems, but not to the urgent one at hand. In the same way, the "hamletization of the revenger" – a revenger plunging into philosophical discourse on humankind's splendour and misery instead of taking revenge – is a way out of the second dilemma: to have to deal somehow with James as the embodiment of a formally paramount reality, without going into what he brought about – the disruption of real and ideal factors. My thesis is indeed, drastically extending Schmitt's point, that James functioned as a radical withdrawal of food for serious drama – so that, as Coleridge said in a famous bonmot, an exhausted nature appeared, after Shakespeare, to have

produced only tragic dwarfs. (Instead, in his own way, James prepared the way for opera where the relics of paramount realities are sung, that is intensely felt, but not dealt with.) What we normally call Stuart drama mirrors a fascinating, but precarious compulsion to fabricate plays in the disruption of real and ideal factors, in the vanishing of convincing paramount realities. James of course claimed to combine the real and the ideal. He even wrote books about that. But his speculations on demonology, on the divine nature and gift of kings or, in much more modern, too modern vein, on sports, could no longer or not yet be dramatically exploited because they were out of sync with new candidates for paramount realities. I will come back to that in a minute.

This also meant that a theatrical market was much more difficult to identify and to cater to. There was a big market for the court masque, for the self-glorification of the King. That led to a split, never quite healed, in the quarrel between Inigo Jones and Ben Jonson, between (intellectualized) literature and entertainment. Much later, opera emerged as a Baroque and also more future-oriented way out. In 1656, Davenant's *Siege of Rhodes*, set to music by different composers, springs from the difficulties of verbal theatre which, once it went for really topical concerns, was often prohibited. Still later, in 1689, Purcell will compose *Dido and Aeneas*. In Dido's lament "When I am laid in earth" we witness the autonomy of conscious, in this case emotional life produced by opera. The music is Baroque, but the lament is a lament for all times. Stuart verbal theatre, in its most advanced representatives, embarks on the way toward inner autonomy even earlier. But in spoken drama, with the referential urge of language much stronger than in opera, the road towards inner autonomy is beset with greater difficulties. We normally do not sing so often as to manage a satisfactory and substantial escape into the autonomy of an inner world. Some take drugs, others immerse themselves with the help of modern musical technology. Stuart dramatists will be rewarding in their own, a bit more strenuous way.

The real-ideal status of the Stuart monarch contrasts strongly with Elizabeth or the Tudors in general. Their images merged history, dramatic potential and mythological appeal. They posed successfully, in Greenblatt's term, as usable and variable models of self-fashioning themselves. Some scholars see the shift of historical realities – England's development from land to sea power – and its clash with James's absolutistic Scottish landlubber traditionalism reflected in Shakespeare's later, that is Stuart plays. *The Tempest*

especially has been called an exhortation and warning for the “maritime ignoramus” James under whom the navy fell into disrepair. Prospero’s – and Ariel’s – power is a maritime power, depending also on advances in ship technology. These had already been in evidence in the battle with the Armada in 1588, but then neglected under James (Villinger 555, concerning Ariel’s naval tactics, I, 2, 562-564).

In any case: In dealing with the historical and epistemological implications of the English Renaissance and Baroque, we cannot leave aside James’s shift from a comprehensive representative to an isolated relic of paramount realities. The picture of James as a physically and mentally handicapped pedant has been justly corrected. James was well read, a skillful debater who wrote books himself. Both in his personal make-up and in his official status he had, however, been exposed to fearful and conflicting pressures. He had become Scottish king when he was one and half years old. Since then, he had been tossed around between all kinds of personal and clan interests. As a child, he had been kidnapped, imprisoned, repeatedly threatened with death. He was baptised Catholic but taken away from his mother, with whom he maintained very affectionate ties, by her enemies and brought up Protestant. He had to establish and keep up good relations with the deadly enemy of his mother, Queen Elizabeth of England, in order not to spoil his chances to succeed her. Not surprisingly, although quite a scholar, his scholarship was devoted to the wrong subjects. These appear strangely untouched by the direction British and European history was taking: towards the sea and the first British forms of imperialism, colonization and global economy, towards continental European sovereign statehood with organized bureaucratic, financial, police and army structures. Strikingly, it is Cromwell during whose apparently premodern despotic religious reign the vital role of the navy is taken care of (Villinger, 563). The rule of James and Charles I consists in vain, and ultimately fatal efforts to impose royalty as paramount reality. The crown does not exert any leadership in commercial, colonial and naval respects: Both the colonization towards the West and the trade with the Asian East develop without energetic royal support. Moreover, it is the newer type of religion, Puritanism amalgamated with commercialism, which flies in the face of the older orthodox hierarchy, whether Catholic or Anglican. Much, then, as a traditional social hierarchy is insisted upon and partly enforced by the crown, much as it may have been accepted again, in a more tolerant form, in the Hanoverian England of the 18<sup>th</sup> century

(cf. Cannadine, *Class*, 26 f.), it does not stand a chance against the much more fluid, but also much more powerful trends of the time. To sum that up, let me just quote from the book on *British Kings and Queens* by Mike Ashley: "Charles had failed as a king in every respect except authority, and in that he presumed too much" (315). Charles lost his head (sitting on his trunk and neck) because earlier he had lost his head (his political reason).

But even James's position already has been convincingly described as ideological and indeed intellectual hopelessness (Schmitt, 31, Haverkamp, 66). For Stuart drama that means that what we call the public, the political sphere was losing its spell-binding status. Nor was it possible to turn to private life which in our modern sense did not exist anyway. With the business drive of Puritanism, there had been beginnings of the separation, well-known to us, between public and private, beginnings also of domestic drama in Elizabethan times. But James never officially acknowledged the importance of Puritan business enterprise, much as he, and especially his successor Charles I, needed the tax money to be extorted from that. Domestic drama, dealing with the destabilization of private life within an economy-driven public sphere – something we have come to know more than we like – came back only in the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

Stuart drama partly evades the dilemma by sticking to, in fact increasing conventional materials. Much more than in Shakespeare, plays wallow in court satire. But that satire, because of its ubiquity and incessant repetition, becomes mechanical, abstract as it were. In Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure* (1603/04), knowledge of the corrupt world turns into an occasion to discover the possible personal corruption of the critics as well (Angelo, Isabella, the Duke). In Marston's *The Malcontent*, about the same time, Malevole, one of these Dukes in disguise driven from his post and regaining it in the end, is just a mouthpiece for a mechanical criticism of the world according to prefixed standards. He is a satirist on stage, deprived of any but the most general object, the corruption of the world, not its implications in a specific situation or for specific people. We hear him talk about corruption, we do not see it in action (cf. Hunter lix f., cf. Harris xxi). Likewise, the struggle between Malevole and the usurper Mendoza is worked out on the level of idea and rhetoric rather than personal will. Even in *Hamlet*, in spite of deep-thought-like rhetoric pushing aside goal-oriented action, verbalization holds the promise of action (Hunter, lxi). Sometimes indeed, it does change into action,

even if that action, like the killing of Polonius, of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, may not strike us as consistent or coherent.

### III.

There is a first consequence. It does not bring us fully into the orbit of my main thesis. But it may at least be entertaining and significant in its own way. In a lot of Stuart drama, as in Shakespeare, high-ranking figures often still populate stage. Even less than Hamlet, however, they know what to do there. More technically: There are hardly any courses of action which command the interest of the audience or even the interest of the figures themselves. That is why actions have to be invented in a new sense. Actions become extreme and/or peripheral. We are tempted to describe them as horrible and at the same time unintentionally comic or grotesque. The bond between action and its significance is severed. But since an audience normally wants to carry home some kind of meaning, actions degenerate into illustrations of moral platitudes.

Let me give you some concrete examples. In Cyril Tourneur's *The Atheist's Tragedy* (1611), for instance, the problem is how to kill off the 'atheist' D'Amville, after he has reached almost all his goals and nobody is left to really oppose and overthrow him. His ambition, hardly an original or surprising one, was to become rich and to leave his riches to his sons. To that noble end, he makes his brother believe that his brother's son Charlemont was killed in the war. His brother duly makes D'Amville his heir; in return, D'Amville kills him. Now his sickly son, Rousard, although stricken with impotence, can marry Castabella who originally was intended for Charlemont. Rousard cannot fill his job as husband; indeed, he feels sorry for his wife to whom destiny has granted only "such a weak and unpleasing bedfellow" (3.4.69). In contrast to his father, however, he is decent enough to die soon, after his vitality has been reduced to the sigh "O" which he keeps whispering at certain intervals (5.1.53, 55, 74, 99). D'Amville's second son, in his turn, is killed in a fight with Castabella's father. Consequently, D'Amville's ambition to leave his riches to his sons cannot materialize anymore. Nor, however, can he be punished and his crimes proven. Charlemont, the only one who could do that because the ghost of his father has told him everything, is also ordered by that ghost to leave revenge to heaven. Moreover, he himself is sentenced to death because he accidentally kills Borachio (!) who was hired by D'Amville to kill

Charlemont. Joyfully, Charemont mounts the scaffold, Castabella, although completely innocent, joins him and wants to die too. Then, something even stranger happens: D'Amville, apparently wishing to take the execution in his own hands, grabs the executioner's axe, "raises up the axe [and] strikes out his own brains" (5.2.241, scene direction). Obviously, like ourselves, he can't believe himself what he did and therefore, before dying, asks the judge: "What murderer was he/That lifted up my hand against my head?" (5.2.243). The time has come to tell him that that murderer, *the* murderer as such, is none but himself. Divine providence overwhelms everybody.

Second example. In John Webster's famous *The Duchess of Malfi* (1613/14), Ferdinand, Duke of Calabria, and his brother, a Cardinal, punish their sister, the young widowed Duchess because she remarried a man not befitting her rank, the steward of her household, Antonio. In this pursuit, they are ably assisted by their henchman Bosola. One could argue that historically, for such families some punishment would appear plausible. Here, however, it takes, in a sudden outbreak of what we might call sadistic violence in the fourth act, extravagant forms. Staging a false reconciliation, the brothers extend not their own hand, but the hand of a dead person (4.1.43). They fabricate puppets in order to make her believe that her husband and children are dead (4.1.55 ff.). They expose them to the drivel and dance of madmen (4.2.61-114). Finally they have her children and herself strangled (4.2.237-258). More than even with the atheist, the problem is that, because of their top social position, nobody can really punish the trio. Consequently, in ways technically difficult like D'Amville's striking out his own brains while trying to kill others, Ferdinand, the Cardinal and Bosola have to make sure that they kill each other (5.5.53-65). Ferdinand first delivers deadly wounds to the Cardinal and Bosola. Bosola then kills Ferdinand, then the other two die.

Third example. A similar chain reaction of fast knives takes place in Tourneur's second famous play, *The Revenger's Tragedy* (1605/06). This time, four scoundrel brothers – Lussurioso, Ambitioso, Supervacuo and Spurio – kill each other (5.3.41-55). Even before that, the director of the whole show, the revenger Vindice, killed the father of the four, the old lecherous Duke who is guilty of the death of Vindice's mistress. He killed him, by presenting the love-thirsty Duke with the mouth of what appears as a willing lady. In reality, the Duke kisses the poisoned, skillfully made-up skull of Vindice's dead mistress. Furthermore, during his agony, the Duke is forced to watch an

incest scene between his Duchess and his youngest son (3.5.145-222). Again, nobody is there to punish the supreme criminal. Therefore, Vindice himself, an early representative of the media age, assuming that there is no fun in keeping one's deeds a secret, that it is much nicer to boast about them, tells the Duke's successor, Antonio, all about them. To his great surprise, Antonio is not a member of the media age and does not find that funny at all. Vindice is executed. This time, the absurdity of the development can be smoothed out only by moral platitudes of the worst kind: "Tis time to die, when we are ourselves our foes./ When murd'ers shut deeds close, this curse does seal 'em./If none disclose 'em, they themselves reveal 'em" (5.3.110-112). If this were true, police work would be very often much much easier. It is true that today there are people who talk proudly about their (mis)deeds without being caught and punished. But even in our times, that possibility does not materialize too often.

#### IV.

In this summary of events I have been quoting an article of mine published 30 years ago ("Zur Theorie des Tragischen in der Tragödie der frühen Stuart-Zeit", *GRM*, N. F., 29, 1979, 170-184, 170-172) It can't have been an entirely bad article, since it brought me my first professorial job, in the same German university in which Sepp Gumbrecht got his first professorial job too, a sure sign of the high quality of that institution. At that time, I argued that there was a movement within Shakespearean serious drama – tragedies, problem plays, to some extent also history plays - in which the normative obligations of clashing values were hollowed out. In the so-called tragedies, something like a normative reduction of central characters takes place. They come to represent not mutually exclusive binding values. Instead, they turn into 'interesting' personalities (this is Friedrich Schlegel's term) in their own right. In the end, in *Antony and Cleopatra*, that interest must be primarily defined as aesthetic – not moral or even psychological – fascination. Cleopatra, as Enobarbus says, is "a wonderful piece of work". There does not seem to be much of a point in asking why she acts as strangely as she does.

I still think that this thesis is, if not true, at least strongly plausible. Today and now, I want to push into direction of the second and third thesis mentioned in the beginning. The grotesque improbability of action and its simplistic moral interpretation

in early Stuart tragedy, or rather tragicomedy, are transitional stages towards what, in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, will be ultimately described, by various disciplines like systems theory, constructivism and today's neurosciences, as the self-referentiality, the autopoiesis of consciousness. However: Apart from the nice pictures of nuclear magnetic resonance tomography, neural brain activity is more or less indifferent or simply unconscious for us. On the other hand: If affective energies, for example, are built up in such 'unconscious' processes, we will normally transform them into socially and culturally defined emotional codes.

Advanced Stuart drama is fascinating because it operates *between* neural indifference and culturally, socially relative codes. This produces a cognitive and conceptual challenge which we often meet, like myself in my title, by talking about psychopathology. We all know meanwhile that we must do better than that. In advanced Stuart drama, we find compelling theatrical images perhaps helping a bit.

I will concentrate only on John Ford, and mainly on one of his plays, *'Tis Pity She's a Whore* (1633). In Ford's plays, socio-historical contours and their significance are blurred. If they are there, they do not matter. One can say, for instance, that the world in *'Tis Pity*, is a "domestic world" (Morris, xvi). There are no kings, dukes, princesses, councils of state. Instead, we get families of some kind, citizens, one "gentleman" and one nobleman, one Cardinal, one friar and a "supposed" physician (list of actors, cf. also 2.52, SD "like a doctor of physic"). He, in reality, is a wronged husband of totally undefined social status, a mere element in complicated intrigues and counterintrigues which we may or may not be able to follow closely. The nobleman Soranzo once speaks about social position (the Roman "gentleman" Grimaldi may be "My equal in thy blood", 1.2.37), but is much more interested in the alleged "lowness" of the Grimaldi's "mind" (38). On the whole, certainly, this world is domestic, private in the sense that the scope of action does not go beyond matters of love, jealousy and adultery. It does not even embrace socially defined family interests. But even this reduced private world has nothing to do whatsoever with the central matter of the play, the incestuous love between Giovanni and his sister, his married sister Annabella.

It goes – almost – without saying that the empirical occurrence of incest, well-known to most societies, its emotional-physical ambiguity and its social tabooing, have made it into a favourite topic of literary and dramatic discourse. Such discourse appears

to able, more than ordinary or even scientific language, to take on borderline actions hard to handle either conceptually or socially.

In our time, in English literature, A. S. Byatt has treated it as a crucial, though by no means exclusive topic in one of the two novellas in her *Angels & Insects* (1992). The same is true for Ian McEwan's *The Cement Garden*, 1978, made into a film, 1993, with Charlotte Gainsbourg. We can fathom the startling radicalness of Ford when we see that Byatt and also McEwan try to explain or make their characters explain how incest can come about: from the doctors and nurses 'games' of children via some more daring gestures later which, once taken for granted, bring about the collapse of the shaky taboo.

Byatt and McEwan are spreading out, that is, partial 'normalizations' of the abnormal. Ford, however, does not even take steps towards normalization. There is only the incontrovertible evidence that things are as they are, because the evidence of experience, while it can hardly be described, cannot be relativized either. In terms of communicative language, that is an enigma. In the beginning, Giovanni, the brother, tries to find justifying reasons for the (f)act. He quickly abandons that effort when a friar opposes him with conventional theological judgment (1.1). In the following scene, he offers his dagger to his sister so that she may kill him, only to lie to her, when she of course spares him, that the Church has permitted their love (1.2.228-239). A mutual oath, but no explanation or motivation, that theirs can be only love or death follows. Once that barrier is broken, no argument, depending on some kind of intelligible meaning, can prevail. For Giovanni, virginity appears as a "pretty toy (...) being lost, 'tis nothing,/And you are still the same" (2.1.10-12). As a thesis, this is difficult to accept. However liberal we may be, hymen and intercourse are and change something, even if agreement on that "something" may be impossible to obtain. Ford seems to make fun of conflicting perspectives when he hands the encouragement: "(...) if a young wench feel the fit upon her, let her take anybody, father or brother, all is one" (2.1.44 f.) over to the "tutress" of Annabella called "Putana". The same enjoyment of futile arguments over what appears to happen anyway breaks forth in the following dialogue with the friar. Editors have noted that Giovanni makes vague use of Neoplatonic ideas about the connection between the good and the beautiful, but that he does not make any effort to bind them together in and as an argument (fn. to 2.5.14-19). Rather, he tortures the friar

with a list of mentionable and playfully unmentionable, but clearly denoted female elements of male enjoyment (2.5.45-58).

In the long run, it is true, Annabella, cannot defend herself against some moral interpretation of incest. She has become pregnant by her brother. Pregnancy – by her brother, but being married to Soranzo - pushes her into a psychologically pressurizing and socially definable situation. She repents and betrays the secret. Her brother kills her and quite a few other people. Ultimately he is killed himself. Yet, to the last, he stubbornly separates the activity and experience of incest from its interpretation, theological, moral, social or otherwise. In these perspectives, and in these perspectives only, the “incestuous villain”, persisting in his ‘perversity’, is psychopathological. But the more interesting thing is that while it is hard to avoid the term, the arguments over psychopathology are either simplistically dogmatic (especially the friar) or fairly confused and incoherent (for both see e.g. 2.5). The experience, on the other hand, especially on Giovanni’s side, is couched in a language which, while it does not suggest meaning, is utterly transparent and clear. Perhaps one should call it lucid. Not even Annabella’s marriage to Soranzo is unable to disturb its quality: Giovanni finds “no change/Of pleasure in this formal law of sports (...) She is still one to me, and every kiss/As sweet and as delicious as the first (...) Let poring book-men dream of other worlds (...) I’d not change it for the best to come:/A life of pleasure is Elysium” (5.3.6-16). Even after he learns that Annabella has betrayed the secret, he does not blame the pregnancy but suspects that the husband has found some erotic technique which gives her even more pleasure:”Hath your new sprightly lord/Found out a trick in night-games more than we/Could know in our simplicity?” (5.5.1-3). If we need a concept, we could say that a phenomenology of techniques (“formal law of sports”, “trick in night-games”) occupies the normally empty space between the physiology of the brain and the meanings of emotions.

Giovanni does not primarily distinguish between sin, or psychopathology, and normalcy, but between an activity and experience which grants lucid pleasure and one which does not:”(...) yet when they but know/Our loves, that love will wipe away that rigour/Which would in other incests be abhorred” (5.5.71-73). His enigmatic explanation, troubling commentators, why he has to kill his sister, might be related to that. In killing her, an act he must “glory” in, “honour” commands love (5.5.86, 91). It is

difficult to say what honour might mean for him, But perhaps it marks the boundary between the autonomy of lucid experience and social codes. As a value half private, half social, it comes into play, because the lucidity of autonomous, because technically produced pleasure must be protected.

We seem to have been drawn into a both archaic and very modern world. In this world, the clarity of autonomous action and experience, nearly drowned in the confusion of social codes, comes back in extreme forms at what we are mostly tempted to call the margins of psychopathology. Likewise, Ford's *The Broken Heart* (around 1630), although set in the aristocracy of ancient Sparta, projects the autonomy and clarity of inner dynamics into what a critic has called a "frightening modernity". Within the "strange truth" (subtitle) of *Perkin Warbeck* (1634), a play based on historical facts of the late 15<sup>th</sup> century, the con man Warbeck claims the English throne. He is supported, for a while by James IV of Scotland, then fails and is ultimately executed. However, he grows into his assumed role and develops an inner independence, indeed greatness. It is related to, if not identical with the noble melancholy analyzed so searchingly in Ford's time in Robert Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621). Melancholy often appears historically conditioned. Many, too many analyses have been devoted to its alleged waves in 16<sup>th</sup>/17<sup>th</sup> century England and 18<sup>th</sup> century Germany. But in Burton's gigantic 1300-pages encyclopedia it does look pretty unconditional and universal, too.

Ford's phenomenology of the experience of technique is couched in explicit images. We have reason to assume that these point to a dynamics of our inner worlds which we do not come to terms with. In retrospect, even the improbability of killing procedures in *Tourneur* can be seen as the clarity of techniques which take over once the repertoire of meanings has been exhausted. Probably we are dealing with a combination of inner dynamics and techniques involved different degrees and mixtures in Arthur Schnitzler's *Das weite Land*, a play filled to the brim with psychological and social codes, but where a duel is both social code and formal technique for achieving the death of a rival as a bare fact whose clarity needs no commentary apart from the phrase, stripped of all connotations, "Dead he is". The mixture shows up in the clarity of killing in Corsican blood revenge (which Anne Knudsen once described). Here it is representable only as significant silence or song. We might also think about the even more problematic clarity of violence which our own time has become so fatally fond of.