Deixis and the renaissance art of self construction[1]

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ABSTRACT

This paper is offered as a contribution to our understanding of both the history of literary style and the psychology of reading. I begin with a comparison with art history, where the development of the technique of linear perspective provides a stylistic boundary-marker between medieval and renaissance styles. Identifying the 'printed voice effect' as an analogous demarcator in literary history, I explore the technical means by which the effect was created, in a set of case-studies representing the emergent genres of essay and dramatic lyric. My analytical model is adapted from Gombrich's account of 'guided projection,' which explains pictorial illusion as the cooperative creation of the artist (who provides the visual cues) and the spectator (who interprets them). I argue that the literary equivalent to the geometric cues of perspective is to be found in the linguistic system of deixis and claim that renaissance texts show an innovative and experimental awareness of the deictic resources of the English language.

KEYWORDS: deixis, renaissance, historicism, self in literature, language and style

1. The printed voice

In the history of art forms, some stylistic innovations seem to demand the title revolutionary, if only because their effects are so striking as to be felt by the non-professional observer. In the western

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pictorial tradition, the renaissance (re)invention of perspective is revolutionary in just this sense. The power to create the illusion of 'a window on the world' or 'a painted point-of-view,' so painstakingly cultivated by Uccello, Dürer and their contemporaries, still provides the hallmark by which today's art-gallery browsers can distinguish a 'typical renaissance' image from its counterpart in the preceding medieval tradition.[2] In literary history, the closest analogy is the emergence of 'the printed voice' effect.[3] Readers of literature and writers of literary gazetteers may quarrel about dating the boundary between pre- and post-renaissance, but they have generally agreed when it comes to characterising the difference between them. Before the great theory wars of the late twentieth-century, the effect was typically described by some variant of the notion of 'self-expression'. Wyatt, for example, was often selected as the harbinger of the modern lyric voice on the grounds of his "dramatic, colloquial ... introspective character" (Speirs 1961: 56), his "emphatic declaration of personal feeling" (Sampson 1941: 141).[4]

What such formulations share is a loose, intuitive equation between a perceived quality in the language of a text (hence descriptors such as *colloquial* or *emphatic*) and the sensed presence of a personality behind the text, its sponsoring self (hence *introspective* or *personal feeling*). Both sides of this equation, not to mention the inferential link between them, were severely mauled by the literary theorists of the 1980s. As the key concepts of 'author', 'self', 'identity' were problematised and the idea of language as a transparent medium of communication was declared untenable, the naïve notion of 'self-expression' was displaced in favour of 'self-representation' or

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[2] Such illustrative pairings are common in art histories addressed to non-specialists. See, for example, the townscapes in Edgerton (1976: 8-9) or the dining tables in Gombrich (1982: 21-22).

[3] *The printed voice* is Browning's term (*The Ring and the Book*, 1868-9, Bk 1, l.167). Griffiths (1988) adopted it as the title of his study of the illusionist function of sound effects in nineteenth-century poetry.

[4] *Renaissance* has the inevitable vagueness of all terms used to demarcate historical periods. I take it that, as a stylistic descriptor, the term subsumes a collection of features, each of which may have a rather different historical distribution. In giving primacy to the printed voice effect, I am not claiming that even this occurs always or only in texts of a certain date. It would not unduly disturb my hypothesis, for instance, if Chaucer's poetry displayed the features described in this paper and Spenser's did not. On the contrary, it might account for the fact that to many readers Chaucer appears more 'modern' than Spenser. For helpful discussion of the periodisation problem, see Spearing (1985).

'self-fashioning'. In the revised critical consensus, the new self which readers encounter in the new (or renewed) genres of the renaissance – lyric, drama, essay, autobiography – is as much the precipitate of a new style of writing as the reflection of a new cultural formation.

From the vantage-point of a twenty-year retrospective, what's striking is the relative failure of this theoretical shift to affect analytical practice. Despite well-publicised maxims, such as "self-fashioning is always, though not exclusively, in language" (Greenblatt 1980: 9), New Historicism – like Old Historicism – has had far more to say about "change in the intellectual, social, psychological, and aesthetic structures that govern the generation of identities" (Greenblatt 1980: 1) than about change in language or style. So although the printed voice is now widely acknowledged to be a triumph not of transcription but of illusionism, it is not well understood, and is too seldom discussed, as a representational *technique*, still less as a technique with its own history of development and change.[5]

The balance seems to me to have been better struck in art history where the evolving treatment of perspective is – or ought to be – methodologically instructive for the historiography of literary self-representation.

Pictorial perspective has, at different times, been treated as a mathematical question and a metaphysical one. The standard textbooks used in art schools in the first half of the twentieth century taught it as a system of projective geometry, whose rules guaranteed the accurate transcription of three-dimensional reality on to a two-dimensional surface. In the second half of the century, this view was challenged by one which saw perspective not as an advance in the representation of the real, but rather as a style symbolic of a revolution in the way reality was conceived. To the inventors of linear perspective, it was claimed, "the real was that which could be proved to occupy a given position in space" (Clark 1956: 35), where space had been reconceived as "the quantum continuum of modern philosophical and mathematical theory" (Panofsky 1960: 118-133) and proof had been redefined as optical demonstration. This ideal of

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[5] Easthope (1983) remains one of the most ambitious attempts to fuse ideological and linguistic approaches to self-representation, though his account is limited by his concentration on iambic pentameter as the mediator of voicing and skewed by his ideological commitment to deconstructing the "bourgeois" illusion of voice, which often hampers his analysis of how it works. A work closer to the spirit and practice of the present paper is Cave (1999).

proof (more colloquially expressed as 'seeing is believing') had the effect of subordinating the quantum continuum to an individual perceiver located in a specific moment of space/time.[6]

It was the achievement of Ernst Gombrich, in works such as *Art and Illusion* (1960) and *The Image and the Eye* (1982), to demonstrate that there is no necessary conflict between the mathematics and the metaphysics of perspective. Key to his argument was the notion of 'guided projection,' a process in which visual cues supplied by the artist are interpreted by the spectator at the prompting of a variety of psychological predispositions, whose origins may be both biological and cultural. On this view, the painted third dimension is the co-operative creation of artist and spectator and the history of its development can be understood as a series of representational challenges, where the experiments and solutions of one generation of artists provide first the opportunities and then the constraints of the next generation.[7]

Gombrich himself likened his activity in relation to art criticism to that of the linguist vis-à-vis literary criticism (Gombrich 1963: 11). It is tempting to take this as a challenge to transfer his enquiry into illusionism from the pictorial to the verbal medium, by making a foray into a 'guided projection' account of the printed voice of renaissance literature. This is what I attempt in this paper by addressing the questions: what are the linguistic cues that prompt readers to 'recognise' a personality or voice in the texts they read? how are these cues deployed and developed by writers of the period's new subjective genres? The nature of renaissance subjectivity itself lies beyond the scope of this discussion. It is *not* my

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[6] Panofsky's influential essay "Die Perspektive als symbolische Form" was published in *Vertrage der Bibliotek Warburg 1924-5* (Leipzig 1927). Its arguments are more readily available to English readers in Panofsky (1940) and chapter 3 of Panofsky (1960). For a statement of the opposing view, see Pirenne (1952). Forensically, the prioritisation of 'ocular proof' (exemplified in *Othello* 3.iii.359-366) displaced the rhetorical proofs which dominated classical traditions of persuasion.

[7] For a succinct account of the mechanisms of 'guided projection,' see the first and last essays in Gombrich (1963). The origins and consequences of the renaissance idea of art-history as progressive problem-solving are discussed in "The renaissance conception of artistic progress" in Gombrich (1966). For a practical illustration, see Clark's description of the attempts by Claude and Poussin to provoke the illusion of recession from a composition of parallel planes (Clark 1956: 77-80); and for the problems which Claude's solutions created for Constable, see Gombrich (1960: 40-1). The final embarrassments of illusionism are well summarised in Gombrich (1960: 236-46).

aim to engage directly with the ideological and cultural questions of selfhood so ably documented and debated by, for example, Taylor (1989), Hanson (1998), Seigel (2005). Ultimately, I would hope, the two kinds of enquiry touch hands, since linguistic self-construction is the necessary scaffolding on which the dramas of personal identity can be staged.

I begin, in section 2, with a technical interlude, establishing the validity of the analogy between perspective and voice and arguing that it is possible to identify a grammar of voice in the same way that we can identify a geometry of point-of-view. In subsequent sections, I examine specific case-studies of self-construction in renaissance texts, focussing on the genres of essay in section 3 and lyric in sections 4 and 5. My discussion concludes, in section 6, with a brief contrast between renaissance self construction and its deconstruction in modernist texts.

2. Deixis and I-witness

Linear perspective can be defined as a method of depicting objects as if viewed from a single fixed spatio-temporal point, their relation to this perceptual centre being the factor that determines their represented size, shape and mutual relations. As so defined, perspective has clear affinities with the linguistic system of deixis, whose primary function is to describe objects in their spatio-temporal relations to a given locutionary centre. In other words, a deictic text is centred on a speaker in the same way as a perspectived painting is centred on a perceiver. If perspective represents an eye-witnessed world, deixis represents an I-witnessed world.

It is important to remember (because easy to forget) that this method of representing the world is by no means inevitable in either the pictorial or the linguistic medium. Objects can be located pictorially without the use of perspective – as in the case of maps – and, similarly, there are ways of describing location in language which avoid or minimise reference to the speaker's own position. Compare, for instance, the two types of locating expression underlined in (1):

(1a)   On the morning of *26th March, 2004*, Sylvia Adamson gave a paper *at the University of Lisbon*. [historical reference]

(1b)   *This* morning I gave a paper *here*. [deictic reference]

In (1a) events are located by what we may call *historical reference*, that is, by anchoring them to the publicly agreed reference-points embodied in calendar and atlas. These are, of course, culturally relative. An English atlas attaches the label *Lisbon* to a place that in Portugal is called *Lisboa*; the Christian calendar dates events from the birth of Christ where the Islamic calendar begins with Mohammed's flight to Medina. Nonetheless, within any given culture, such spatio-temporal anchors have absolute status, in the sense that their reference is transparent and remains constant across users. By contrast, the equivalent spatio-temporal expressions in (1b) are anchored in their speaker and they can only be translated into a framework of historical reference by first establishing the location of the speech-act. When I spoke (1b) at the 15th SEDERI conference, *this morning* referred to 26th March 2004 and *here* to the University of Lisbon. On that occasion, (1a) would have been an acceptable translation. Spoken on other occasions, (1b), unlike (1a), would have quite different temporal and geographical coordinates.

Over the last twenty years, *deixis* has increasingly become part of literary-critical vocabulary and perhaps now needs no preliminary exposition.[8] However, as often happens when a term is transferred across discipline boundaries, its meaning has broadened or metaphorised beyond the narrow construal that will be central to my argument here. For the purposes of this paper, the relevant and distinctive feature of deictic locating terms is that their definitions have to include – directly or indirectly – a reference to the speaker, or, more precisely, to the primary deictic term *I*. It is in this quite technical sense that deixis is 'egocentric' language.[9] The basic meaning of *here*, for example, is 'the place where *I* is' and *now* is 'the time in which *I* is speaking.' In the case of these two terms, the definitional dependence on *I* is so strong that 'I am here now' can never be a lie; it is true by definition in the same way as 'a bachelor is an unmarried man' or 'a triangle has three sides.' And the three

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[8] The dating here is somewhat anglo-centric. Deixis has been familiar to European literary theorists since the work of Bühler (1934: 79-148). Early adopters in the anglophone world include (for the lyric) Leech (1969: 183-204) and Culler (1975: 164-170), (for drama) Elam (1980) and (for narrative) Banfield (1982).

[9] I am not here concerned with derived or extended senses of individual deictic terms or with the wider phenomenon of empathetic deixis, which I have discussed extensively elsewhere, e.g. Adamson (1994, 1995, 2001b). The view of deixis accepted in this paper is expounded in Lyons (1977: 636-724) and Fillmore (1997); its 'egocentric' basis is challenged, though not, I think, demolished by Jones (1995).

terms together *I-Here-Now* constitute the anchoring-point of the wider deictic field of reference, whose other terms specify location in relation to the spatio-temporal nexus this triad creates.[10] In the core deictic repertoire of English (as in the system of perspective), the locations specified are primarily those of distance, objects and events being categorised as either close to the *I* (by the proximal deictics, such as *here*, *this*, *now*) or not close to the *I* (by their distal counterparts *there*, *that*, *then*).

Deixis, then, grammaticalises the speaker's locational relation to the objects of his discourse. This means that while sentences like (1b) do not provide sufficient information for readers to locate objects and events in the public reference frame of their historical or geographical setting, they do enable us to reconstruct the spatio-temporal configuration of a speech setting and infer the relative positions of entities in terms of their comparative distance from the speaker. But *enable* is not the right word here. The power of deictic forms lies in the fact that they *force* us to make inferences in order to make sense. The reader is not the passive recipient of information, but its active co-creator. Take, for instance, the following exchange:

(2)   *Gravedigger*: *Here's* a skull now hath lien you i'th'earth three and twenty years ... Whose do you think it was?
        Hamlet: Nay, I know not.
        Gravedigger: ... *This* same skull, sir, was Yorick's skull, the King's jester.
        Hamlet: *This*?
        Gravedigger: E'en *that*.   (*Hamlet* 5.i.173-181)[11]

We do not need to see a stage production to know that Yorick's skull passes from one protagonist to the other, though neither mentions this happening. The event is plotted grammatically in the patterning of *here-this-this?-that.*

Drama is arguably a special case, in that there is normally an intervenient director to lift the interpretive burden from the reader and there is an actor to take the part of *I* and embody the anchoring-point for deictic terms. In essay or lyric, the presence of an embodied

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[10] Bühler (1934) calls this the deictic *origo* and argues powerfully for its psychological salience. If accepted, his arguments provide an explanation for the reading responses I describe in this paper.

[11] All Shakespeare citations follow the text and line numbering of *The Riverside Shakespeare*, Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1974.

I is pure illusion, which rests on the writer's ability to provoke the reader into co-operative activity. Deixis is the primary resource. As in a perspective painting where, though the eye is not represented, its position can be inferred from the lines of the picture's construction; so in a deictic text, the definitional dependence of the core terms on *I* means that where they are present, an *I* is both implied and positioned. And in a text that combines deictic reference with historical reference, the reader should be able to infer what position the implied speaker occupies in a public spatio-temporal framework. Imagine the examples in (3) as the opening sentences of texts:

(3a)   Napoleon was defeated in the early years of *this* century.
(3b)   *Tomorrow* is Tuesday.

In (3a), provided that we remember *Battle of Waterloo: 1815*, the occurrence of *this* is sufficient for us to infer a speaker located in the nineteenth century; in (3b) the combination of the deictic *tomorrow* with the public reference frame of *Tuesday* allows us to infer an *I* whose *Now* is a specific day of the week, Monday. We make these inferences so automatically that they seem less remarkable to us than they ought. And what we ought to find particularly remarkable in the two cases of (3) is that – in contrast to (1b) and (2) – the term *I* itself is entirely absent from the text. The text's 'speaker' is altogether a collaborative construct of writer's cues and reader's inferences, or, in Gombrich's terms, a classic case of 'guided projection.'[12]

In pursuing the literary consequences of this process, I am not, of course, claiming that deixis is a renaissance invention. On the contrary, it is a pervasive, probably universal, design feature of natural languages. What does seem to be the case, however, is that texts of the Early Modern period show an innovative and experimental awareness of the deictic resources of English. As the following case-studies suggest, the new voice which readers detect in renaissance lyric and essay correlates with a new emphasis on the terms at the deictic centre (*I-Here-Now*) and particularly on the expressive power of opposing *Here* to *There, Now* to *Then*.

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[12] Within linguistics, the most famous example of deictic exegesis is the analysis of *may we come in?* in Fillmore (1973).

3. I am here now

Since Villey (1908), it has been widely accepted that the renaissance essay, as practised by Montaigne and his English imitators, evolved out of the commonplace books and *adagia* of the earlier sixteenth century, in a process characterised as 'the gradual personalisation of an impersonal form' (Gray 1999: 272). How this process manifested itself in the language of the genre has, however, received surprisingly little attention.[13] My first exemplary text is one which may allow us to apprehend the essayistic *I* in the very act of self construction. It provides, at any rate, an interesting test-case for the application of Gombrich's guided projection hypothesis to the printed voice effect.

(4) *I* might say much of the commodities that death can sell a man but briefly, Death is a friend of ours, and he that is [not] ready to entertain him, is not at home[;] whilest I am, my Ambition is not to fore-flow the Tyde, I have but so to make my interest of it, as I may acconnt for it, I would wish nothing but what might better my dayes, nor desire any greater place then the front of good opinion, I make not love to the continuance of dayes, but to the goodnesse of them; nor wish to dye, but referre my self to my houre, which the great Dispenser of all things hath appointed me; yet as I am fraile, and suffered for the first fault, were it given me to chuse, I should not be earnest to see the evening of my age, that extremity of it self being a disease, and a meer return into infancie: So that if perpetuity of life might be given me, I should think what the Greek Poet said, *Such an Age is a mortall evill.* And since I must needs be dead, I require it may not be done before mine enemies, that I be not stript before I be cold, but before my friends; *the night was even now; but that name is lost, it is not now late, but early[;] mine eyes begin to discharge their watch, and compound with this fleshly weaknesse for a time of perpetuall rest, and I shall presently be as happy for a few houres, as I had dyed the first houre I was borne.*[14]

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[13] I refer to the development of the essay in English; Montaigne himself has been better served. See, for example, Cave (1999: 111-127), which traces the links between 'l'emergence du "moi" comme substantif et comme "sujet" dans tous les sens du mot' (Cave 1999: 109).

[14] This passage forms the conclusion to *An Essay on Death*, first published in 1648 in *The Remaines of the Right Honorable Francis Lord Verulam.* The essay was not included in Rawley's (1657) edition of Bacon's writings, which led Bacon's Victorian editor, Spedding, to doubt its authenticity, though he did print it in an appendix to his edition of the *Essays* (see *The Works of Francis Bacon,* ed. J. Spedding, R. Ellis & D. Heath, 7 vols, 1857-74, vol. VI: 600-604). Its authorship, as far as I know, remains undetermined.

This passage provokes a marked division of opinion among readers, some responding to it as a 'printed voice' text, others as a piece of impersonal didacticism in the *ars moriendi* tradition. Almost all readers, however, note a qualitative difference in the finale (here italicised), and those who initially class the text as 'impersonal' often recognise an onset of subjectivity at this point, some reporting a double-take, or difficulty in construal, when what they have taken to be an 'everyman' or 'representative I' turns suddenly into the writer of this very essay, finishing his work and going to bed.

While modern reactions offer no infallible guide to renaissance responses – we read (4) now through the thick lens of all that has since been written in more explicitly autobiographical or confessional genres – readers' consensus on the *shift* in tone in the passage is at least suggestive, particularly as it turns out to correlate with a shift in linguistic structure. The item *I* is pretty evenly distributed through the text. What changes is the grammatical framework in which it occurs. In the finale it is supported by a range of deictic forms that were previously absent or underplayed. Tense is perhaps particularly important. In the first section, the basic tense is the propositional present, the non-deictic tense used for the statement of timeless general truths, such as *death is a friend* or *age is a mortal evil,* and the present of personal time seems to be assimilated to this, recording habitual actions or states of mind and hence giving the 'everyman' quality to such declarations as: *my ambition is* ... or *I make not love* ... In the last two sentences, however, the present tense becomes unmistakably deictic, being put into explicit opposition to a past and a future: *it was night; it is early; I shall be at rest.* And the time contrasts set up by the tenses are repeated and reinforced in the deictic temporal adverbs: *even now ... now ... presently.* History, instead of being contemporaneous, is represented as evolving, moving towards and away from a particular point in its course, that point being the *I* in the moment of utterance. The only instance of a spatial deictic in the passage also occurs in the finale, in *this fleshly weakness.* Semantically echoing the earlier *I am frail*, this phrase attracts a rather different interpretation. Whereas *I am frail* is read as

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The text printed here follows the 1648 version, with the addition of the concluding italics and two clarificatory punctuation marks of the form [;]. The first *not* of the passage does not appear in the original text (1648:12) but is included in the volume's *errata* (1648:103).

a statement of doctrine, *this fleshly weakness* tends to be read as a comment on the writer's physical condition, a declaration of age, sickness or tiredness, as if the deictic *this* invokes a gesture towards the writer's own body in a way that *as I am frail* does not.

On the one hand, then, (4) seems to provide evidence that the occurrence of *I* on its own may not be a sufficient cue to trigger in all readers the recognition of a self behind the page. At the same time, it suggests that the more potent cues lie in the localisation of *I* in a *Here* and *Now*. Apparently our willingness to acknowledge the presence of self has something to do with our being able to place an *I* in time and – perhaps more importantly – in space. Responses to this passage correlate quite suggestively with observations made by Schegloff in his analyses of the opening moves in telephone conversations, where he found a systematic difference in distribution between the formulae 'my name is X' and 'this is X.' The first formula is typically used as self-introduction by a previously unknown caller, while the formula containing the spatial deictic is used only when the act of self-identification is "intended to solicit recognition" (Schegloff 1972: 109, 1979: 47).[15]

There seems also to be some correlation here with the cognitive bases of perspective. Ames's experiments on visual perception – so often cited by Gombrich – showed that it is almost invariably a 'thereness-thatness' experience in which perceivers translate intrinsically ambiguous visual cues into three-dimensional constructions (Ittelson 1952: 21). Wherever the data permits, we recognise, guess at or project objects in space. Readers' responses to texts like (4) point to an equivalent experience in reading, let's call it a 'hereness-nowness' experience, in which we recognise or project the presence of a speaker whenever a text supplies sufficient cues to allow us to place an *I* in a *Here* and *Now*.

Cornwallis, experimenting with the essayistic *I* in (5) below, is careful to provide such locational cues. As the opening move in *Of Alehouses*, he establishes his *I* in richly specific terms, providing

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[15] The spatial basis of identity goes beyond language. Work in social psychology suggests that what distinguishes a person from an object is the possession of what may be called a territorial envelope. The degree to which we recognise personhood in ourselves or others is intimately bound up with our ability to claim or grant occupancy and control of a certain physical space. The size of this space is culturally variable, but in all cultures the invasion or removal of the customary 'personal envelope' is used or interpreted as a denial of full civic existence. See Sommer (1969: 26-38).

readers both with deictic coordinates of the location (*now, here, this*) and with the means to translate them into historical reference (*night, alehouse, ink & paper*). Inverting the strategy of (4), he then modulates from the progressive present of immediate experience (*I am now trying*) into the generalised present of moral adage (*how men bely themselues*).

(5) I Write *this* in an Alehouse, into which I am driuen by night, which would not giue me leaue to finde out an honester harbour. I am without any copany but Inke, & Paper, & them I use in stead of talking to my selfe: my Hoste hath already giuen me his knowledge, but I am little bettered, I am *now* trying whether my selfe be his better in discretion. The first note *here* is to see how honestly euery place speakes, & how ill euery man liues: not a Poste, not a painted cloth in the house, but cryes out, *Feare God*, and yet the Parson of the Town scarce keeps this Instruction. It is a straunge thing how men bely themselues: euery one speaks well, and means naughtily. They cry out if man with man breake his word, & yet no Body keepes promise with vertue.[16]

In (4) and (5) we see the emergence of the renaissance essay as a printed voice genre. Both texts show the tug of the genre's origins in commonplace books and compilations of *sententiae*: in (4), by the *I*'s alignment with historical precedent (*I should think what the Greek poet said ...*), in (5), by the moral allegorisation of what originally appeared a random concrete location. Both texts may seem (to us reading now) disconcerting in the way they manage the transition between impersonal and personal modes. But both – and this is the point of importance to the present enquiry – bear eloquent witness to the power of the grammatical configuration *I-Here-Now* to effect the transition by cuing our 'recognition' of a situated self.

4. Where is here?
Deictic reference has certain problematic qualities, arising from the fact that deictic terms are, by their nature, relative and opaque in reference. Their relativity follows from their egocentricity. Because they are definitionally dependent on *I*, their referential meaning varies according to the identity occupying the *I*-role, which in turn may vary with successive speech acts. This causes no difficulty in spoken communication, where we are used to the turn-taking of

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[16] Apart from my italicised deictics, the text follows that of the 1600 first edition of *Essayes. By Sir William Corne-waleys the younger, Knight. Of Alehouses* is no. 22 in this collection.

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conversation between visible participants. It is the condition of writing that turns relativity into opacity. *Wish you were here*, for instance, can be written on postcards from all over the world and only the picture on the front of each will enable the recipient to give the *here* a geographical attachment. A sentence that is purely deictic, such as *come here soon,* may be said to express relationship without reference; it is specific in the set of spatio-temporal relations it proposes but opaque concerning the entities and identities which occupy the relational points. Hence the potential problems of construal. Compare the deictic exchange from *Hamlet* in (2) with another famous deictic utterance in the same play, Polonius's *Take this from this, if this be otherwise* (*Hamlet* 2.ii.156). In context, the third *this* in the sequence refers fairly obviously to 'the current state of affairs' (or Polonius's diagnosis of them), but what does he mean by *take this from this*? Like (2), it encodes a stage direction: the actor is clearly invited to point at two entities. But what entities? Whereas in (2) the demonstratives were textually associated with a specified prop (the skull), the implied stage direction for Polonius is purely deictic, allowing a variety of possible realisations (Elam 2001: 181).

In this example, the information deficit seems less a deliberate ambiguity on Shakespeare's part than an oversight, the result of thinking as a dramatist, with the actor's body and gestures solidly present to his mind's eye. The actor will, in any case, resolve the question in performance, so there will be no ambiguity for the audience. The case is very different for non-dramatic texts. In drama, as in oral literature, the *Here* and *Now* are automatically shared by a text's speaker and audience. In literature written for reading, *Here* and *Now* are notably *not* shared; like *There* and *Then,* they have to be established through the words of the text. This is is exactly the task that Cornwallis conscientiously undertakes in (5). Not so Wyatt in an earlier experiment with deixis, the rondeau printed as (6) below. This poem employs a traditional form (the riddle) and takes a traditional topic (it entertains the possibility of literally losing one's heart to a lover). What is new – as far as I know – is the extent to which both form and topic are made to hang on the opposition between the deictic locating terms *there* and *here* (introduced as the first rhyme words) and on their qualities of relativity and opacity.

(6)   Helpe me to seke for I lost it *ther*
         and if that ye have founde it ye that be *here*
         and seke to convaye it secretely
         handell it softe & trete it tenderly
         or els it will plain and then appere
         but rather restore it mannerly
         syns that I do aske it thus honestly
         for to lese it it sitteth me to neere
           Helpe me to seke

         Alas and is there no remedy
         but have I thus lost it wilfully
         I wis it was a thing all to dere
         to be bestowed and wist not where
         it was myn hert I pray you hertely
           Helpe me to seke.[17]

The first line sets up the riddle – what is *it*? The dénouement solves the mystery by supplying a referent (*it was myn hert*) and in doing so turns the previously neutral 'help me to seek' into a plea for reciprocity. This is reinforced by wordplay: the final *hertely* – already foregrounded by its echo of *hert* – could be attached either to the preceding *pray* (pray heartily) or to the following *helpe* (heartily help) and by extension either to *I* or to *you*, an ambiguity which acts as a figure for the mutual ownership of 'my heart' while teasing us about the degree of seriousness with which its 'loss' is to be regarded. But if readers are to solve the riddle before being given the answer, they need to posit referents for the *there* and *here* of the opening two lines. One plausible interpretation is that they represent something like the Latin *istic* and *hic* – *there/istic* is 'where you are' and *here/hic* is 'where I am,' so that the riddle hinges on the paradox of a speaker who categorises 'you' as distinct and distant 'there' yet simultaneously as an occupant of his own 'here' (which could be construed as either 'in this room' or 'in my heart'). At the end of the poem, this paradox is transferred to the *You*, who is invited to seek something which is actually inside herself, her own heart, which by the logic of the paradox, is also his. The identity of *there* and *here* thus matches the mutuality of *hertely*: opening and closing wordplay coincide, both attacking the notion that the lovers exist as separable beings who occupy separate places.

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[17] BL Egerton 2711 fol.15r (Helen Baron's transcription).

Deictically, the most interesting feature of this mysterious little poem is that its status as riddle *depends* on the referents for both *there* and *here* being withheld, a withholding which is in turn dependent on the medium of writing, since a gesture would dissolve the mystery immediately and a gesture (of hand or eye) would be the automatic accompaniment to the speaking of *there* and *here*.[18] Once the message is written and the gesture is removed behind the page, deictic forms become dangerously – or interestingly – opaque. So in (6), apart from the interpretation I have proposed, there is also the possibility that *there* refers to some place outside the domain currently occupied by *I* and *you* (Latin *illic* as opposed to both *hic* and *istic*), but known to both of them (for instance, 'there in the garden where we plighted our troth'). Equally, there's the possibility that *you* refers not to a singular addressee but to a general audience and that the scenario of the poem is one in which the speaker is appealing for public pressure to be brought to bear on his defecting lover.[19] I am not here concerned to argue for one reading over another. My point is rather that, as in the case of Polonius's speech, provided that the spatial relationships dictated by the deictic oppositions are preserved, the reader (like the actor) is free to construct any possible world with which they are consistent.

Wyatt's experiments with deixis raise the same questions as his experiments with metre. As an anonymous *TLS* reviewer once put it: "the mystery of Wyatt is simply whether he knew what he was doing or whether he did not" (Muir 1963: xlvi). In the metrical case, early criticism thought not, effectively endorsing Tottel's decision to regularise Wyatt's practice when transferring his poems from manuscript to print in *Songes and Sonettes* of 1557; more recent criticism, following Stevens (1979), has provided more generous explanations, centring on Wyatt's conscious negotiation between outgoing (accentual) and incoming (syllabo-tonic) systems of stress. As far as I know, no equivalent exploration has been undertaken of his deictic practice and the effect on it of his position at the watershed between oral and literate genres or manuscript and print cultures. For the moment, then, it remains an open question whether

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[18] Describing experiments to test children's acquisition of deictic terms, Tanz notes the considerable difficulties of suppressing the experimenter's instinctive gestures by hand or eye movements while producing deictic messages. (Tanz 1980: 84)

[19] Both are possible in Wyatt's usage, where *you/ye* can have either singular or plural reference while a single addressee can be either *you* or *thou* (the distributional rationale would repay study, but none, to my knowledge, has yet been attempted).

in (6) he is the exploiter or the victim of the hiddenness of printed *Here*. But the fact that (6) occurs only in the Egerton manuscript and, unlike poems appearing alongside it, was not copied into other collections may suggest that for many sixteenth-century readers the pleasures of this text were outweighed by its difficulties.

5. Putting *You* in the picture

Shifting genre from essay to lyric has required a revision of the verbal image of self from which I began. The configuration *I-Here-Now* seemed sufficient to cue the printed voice effect in (4) and (5), but in the period's dramatic lyrics a fourth term is typically added. A *You* is posited as sharing the *I*'s spatio-temporal location. In this, the language of lyric resembles, arguably borrows from, the language of drama itself. As Elam (1980: 139) points out "drama consists first and foremost precisely in this, an I addressing a you here and now"; and in case that seems a truism, he reminds us of Honzl's claim that the deictic configuration *I-You-Here-Now* is not a universal but *became* important as a compositional device for Greek dramatists and was a crucial innovation in the development of Greek tragedy, away from recitation/narrative towards dialogue/action (Honzl 1976: 118-27).[20] The equivalent innovation for the renaissance dramatic lyric was to bring *You* onstage as someone other than the text's primary reader/audience. As a transitional text, (6), as we have seen, is ambiguous (or uncertain) in this respect.

You has always been a somewhat problematic item for the traditional spatio-temporal account of deixis, since it is not clear where it belongs on the proximal-distal axis. The neatest solution would be to align *You* with *There* and *Then* as some expositors have done (for example, Traugott & Pratt 1980: 275), but this is not wholly satisfactory and others have classed it instead as a proximal deictic (for example, Green 1992: 126). Some languages appear to encode a tripartite division of space – as with Latin *hic, istic, illic* – in which `where *You* is' forms a separate centre of reference, distinct both from *Here* ('where *I* is') and *There* ('where *I* is not'). In English, though, *You* remains spatially ambiguous, an ambiguity most

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[20] In the terms I have been using here, the configuration *I-You-Here-Now* of drama displaced the *They-There-Then* of traditional narrative. Adamson (2001b) charts the development of narrative styles in terms of analogous shifts in deictic configuration, from (for example) the *I-Was-Now* of seventeenth-century conversion narrative to the *He/She-Was-Now* of nineteenth-century novel.

obviously manifested in the regulation of the deictic verb *come*. Typically *come*, like *hither*, describes movement towards 'the place where *I* is'; but it can also be used of movement towards 'the place where *You* is,' even when this involves movement *away* from *I*. Hence (7a) is a normal sequence, while (7b) is only dubiously acceptable:

(7a) I'll send him tomorrow. He'll come to see you at ten.
(7b) ?I'll send him tomorrow. He'll go to see you at ten.

But it may not be necessary to assign *You* a place in the proximal-distal plan. Arguably, the *I-You* relationship is only incidentally spatial; primarily it is dialogical. *You* relates to *I*'s role as locutionary agent rather than spatio-temporal point. In the dramatic lyric, therefore, *You* and the *You*-centered forms are particularly important in establishing I as an inhabitant of *social* space. By the *You*-centred forms, I mean primarily imperatives and interrogatives, both of which prompt us to infer an *I-You* dialogue, even when the presence of an *I* or a *You* has not been explicitly stated. The power of these forms in creating the printed voice effect is particularly evident in the poetry of Donne, which, for many readers, epitomises renaissance self-representation.

It has long been a critical commonplace to characterise and praise Donne's poems in terms of their 'conversational tone' and 'dramatic openings.' Commentators trying to explain these effects in terms of the language of the poetry traditionally attributed them to the presence of colloquialisms (such as *for Gods sake* or *busy old fool)* and the use of violent vocabulary (such as *batter my heart* or *spit in my face)*. But while it is true that Donne's language does manifest these features, their presence does not adequately account for the effects described, since the same illusion of voice can be achieved by diction that is neither colloquial, as in 'is she not passing fair?' nor markedly violent, as in 'do have some of this banana!' or 'may we come in?' What these examples have in common with each other and with a Donne poem is their deployment of deictic forms. And Leech's suggestion (1969: 191-193) that deixis is the crucially functional feature in the famous Donne effects is supported by a distributional study of his language; for whereas violent and colloquial vocabulary can and does occur at any point in a poem, the deictic elements are more unevenly distributed, often with a marked concentration in the opening lines or stanza. It is, perhaps above all,

Donne's practice of opening with an interrogative or imperative form coupled with a supporting spatial deictic that has given generations of readers so immediate and strong an impression of peeping into or eavesdropping on "definite situations in individual lives" (Redpath 1967: xxxiii). *The Flea* is typical:

(8)   Marke but this flea, and marke in this,
           How little that which thou deny'st me is;
           It suck'd me first, and now sucks thee,
           And in this flea, our two bloods mingled bee;
           Thou know'st that this cannot be said
           A sinne, nor shame nor losse of maidenhead,
           Yet this enjoyes before it wooe,
           And pamper'd swells with one blood made of two,
           And this, alas, is more then wee would doe.

           Oh stay, three lives in one flea spare,
           Where wee almost, yea more then maryed are.
           This flea is you and I, and this
           Our mariage bed, and mariage temple is;
           Though parents grudge, and you, w'are met,
           And cloysterd in these living walls of Jet.
           Though use make you apt to kill mee,
           Let not to that, selfe murder added bee,
           And sacrilege, three sinnes in killing three.

           Cruell and sodaine, hast thou since
           Purpled thy naile, in blood of innocence?
           Wherein could this flea guilty bee,
           Except in that drop which it suckt from thee?
           Yet thou triumph'st, and saist that thou
           Find'st not thy selfe, nor mee the weaker now;
           'Tis true, then learne how false, feares bee;
           Just so much honor, when thou yeeldst to mee,
           Will wast, as this flea's death tooke life from thee.[21]

This poem begins with a heavy concentration of deictics, especially in the first line, where there are two deictic forms – imperative *mark!* and demonstrative *this* – and both are repeated. Both are also dual in function, acting first to establish by inference the existence of the *I*, even before its formal entrance as *me* in line 2, and second to relate that *I* to a particular dialogical and spatial context: the imperative prompts us to infer the presence of an

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[21] Text from Donne, *Poems*, 1633: 230-231.

addressee while the demonstrative introduces a particle of the physical environment. In fact, the conjunction of the imperative with a proximal demonstrative (*this flea* rather than *that flea*) goes a long way towards establishing the physical contiguity of all three protagonists. The imperative in addition sets the tone of the implied dialogue as that of a power relation in which the speaker is, or would be, dominant.

Mark but this flea should also be contrasted with *mark but this poem*. That is to say, as soon as an addressee is acknowledged to exist, we are made aware that it is someone other than us, the readers. By contrast, Ben Jonson's opening *Have you seene but a bright Lillie grow?* seems to address its readers directly, inviting us to become a participant in the poem's speech act.[22] This is a question that any reader can, after all, answer, whereas Donne's imperative is one that no reader can obey. The *You* of Jonson's poem remains outside the text, Donne's *You* is firmly located in that hidden *Here* which the text prompts us to co-create.

The Flea is a well-known and much discussed poem.[23] My present aim is not to offer yet another exegesis but simply to highlight the conscious experimentalism in its use of deictic terms. Like many of his contemporaries, Donne not only exploits the illusionist force of deictics, but simultaneously shows his awareness of the properties of his tools. In (8) the ambiguities of temporal *now*, spatial *this* and dialogical *you* are all pressed into service.

The simplest case is *now*. It occurs in both first and last stanzas, but of course with different translations into chronological time (in stanza one, the flea *now sucks thee*, by stanza three it is dead). In this respect, the poem imitates drama, where a *now* in Act 1 almost inevitably refers to a distinct phase of time and action from a *now* in Act 5. One of Donne's finest technical achievements is to convey the transition between disparate *Now*s without the aid of either a visible embodied action or a direct narrative. Instead, the action is posited as taking place between the stanzas and the reader is cued to reconstruct the plot from the sequence of stanza-initial imperative or interrogative forms: *oh stay, three lives in one flea spare* (i.e. the lover responds to the argument of stanza 1 by trying to kill

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[22] Often printed as the final stanza of *Her Triumph*, Jonson's *Have you seen...* appears in some manuscripts as a separate poem, and in one as the first stanza of another poem. For details, see Herford & Simpson (1947: 134-5).

[23] For another linguistically-based discussion, see Bradford (1993: 40-45).

the flea, but is restrained); *hast thou since/ purpled thy nail?* (infer: she has killed it anyway).

Fish (1972) has drawn attention to Donne's tendency to play off against each other two distinct senses of *this*: the gestural/ physical demonstrative (as in Polonius's 'take *this* from *this*') and the – historically secondary – abstract/textual anaphor (as in 'I've heard *this* before'). In *The Flea*, the oscillation between the two is recruited as part of the argument. *This* occurs ten times in the poem, six times in the first stanza alone. Three of these six occurrences point unequivocally to the posited empirical reality: *this flea* (l.1), *this flea* (l.4) *this [flea] enjoyes* (l.7); two (l.5, l.9) are readily analysed as textual pointers, each recapitulating in summary form the statement of the preceding line; one – the last word of the first line – is arguably ambiguous: does it mean 'mark in the argument that follows'? or 'mark in the generalisation that the flea represents'? Or is it simply an elliptical repetition of *this flea*? The reader has to pause over this question (if only because it affects the intonation pattern with which the phrase *mark in this* is read) and the uncertainty, once admitted, permeates the whole stanza. In the ensuing plethora of *this*es, concrete and abstract referents are easily confused, until finally there seems to be no instance of *this* that could not be replaced with *this flea.* The flea can't be 'called a sin,' what 'we would do' (if we dared) is less than a flea. Whatever reading is decided upon for each instance – and readers display a wide variety of decisions and indecisions –, the slight check while the decision is made itself plays into the speaker's overall polemical strategy, to replace the large fearsome abstractions invoked by the lover – *sin, shame, honor* – with a concrete particular, whose small size renders her fears ridiculous. After the first stanza, the issue is apparently decided: the four remaining instances of *this* are unambiguously physical.

The second person pronoun, as I have said, is spatially ambiguous in that *You* may be located either *Here* or *There*. In (8), this optionality is central to the speaker's enterprise, which is to persuade the addressee to move from her modest distance into a sexually available proximity. The huge proliferation of *this* in the poem is in itself part of the suasive rhetoric, since its effect is constantly to associate the *You* with the spatial position of the *I*. But Donne plays with the proximal-distal ambiguity of *You* in another way, too, by distinguishing between the *thou* of stanzas 1 and 3 and the *you* of stanza 2. At the period when the poem was written, *thou* and *you* as singular address forms functioned, at least residually, as

markers of a proximal-distal opposition in social space, but the rationale of such an alternation here is not immediately obvious (unless we infer a more estranged and reproachful tone in stanza 2).[24] It is possible, however, that another kind of distinction is in play: the *thou* stanzas are directly focussed on the speech situation and its development (these are the stanzas in which *now* also occurs, registering the passage of time during the speech event). By contrast, the middle stanza focusses more on the background to the present situation; its concern is with habitual rather than current events and with the factors that have kept the lovers thus far apart (*parents grudge; use make you apt to kill me*). What this pattern suggests is that Donne may be groping for a distinction, not formally encoded in English, between what may be called the vocative-*You* and the referential-*You,* reserving *thou* for the addressee in the role of dialogical partner and using *you* as a simple identifying label (equivalent to a name). If this surmise is correct, then the alternation of *thou* and *you* in this poem is a rhetorical strategy that matches the attempt to replace abstract *this* with physical *this;* that is, the conversion of the distal or merely referential *you* into an intimate *thou* furthers the enterprise of inducing a physical intimacy in defiance of the lover's reluctance. Her recognition of their paradoxical oneness in *this* flea will be accompanied and confirmed by her acceptance of the role of the speaker's *thou.* The poem ends (proleptically?) on the *me/thee* rhyme that has been available but avoided in previous stanzas.

6. Conclusion

What we find in these renaissance experiments in self construction is an exploitation of the illusionist capacities of the deictic third dimension coupled with an exploration of its concomitant problems of ambiguity and opacity of reference. The general aim seems to be to represent a localised *I* (neither panchronic nor panoramic) and an *I* whose *Here* and *Now* are distinct from and hidden from the *Here* and *Now* of its readers. On the whole, the hiddenness of *Here* is accepted as a challenge. The reader is invited to undertake an act of reconstruction and is given sufficient cues to recognise/project a speaker in a spatio-temporal speech setting which can be mapped on to a coherent possible world. The most radical of my texts in this

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[24] There is a substantial scholarly literature on pronouns of address. The topic is covered briefly by Adamson (2001a: 226-231), extensively by Wales (1996: 50-84).

respect is the earliest, Wyatt's rondeau (6), which has something in common with his contemporaries' experiments in anamorphic perspective, where the depicted object is visually unconstruable until you know (and adopt) the point of view from which it was constructed.[25] In (8), it may seem that the fixed point of I-witness is violated, in that the poem's two instances of *now* have divergent time references, but they are not mutually exclusive and the overall effect is to situate the implied dialogue within an implied narrative. Similarly, in the seventeenth-century genre of conversion-narrative, which I have not discussed here because I have dealt with it extensively elsewhere, Bunyan and others take the seemingly paradoxical deictic configuration *I-Was-Now* and naturalise it as a verbal image of memory, a cue for readers to project a self-remembering-self (Adamson 1994, 2001b). This is not to say that more tricksy cases can't be found. Donne's *The Paradox* and Herbert's *The Bag*, for instance, both take advantage of the condition of textuality – particularly the fact that readers can't see who is saying "I" – to create unresolvable conundrums about their speaker's identity. But as Donne's title indicates, these are creative deviations from an accepted norm, which, as in renaissance experiments in pictorial perspective, centres on the task of testing or honing the instruments of illusionism.

In modernist writing, by contrast, the enterprise of illusionism itself comes under attack. Hence it is the obstacles to the reconstruction of a coherent self that are emphasised, in same way as modernist painting obstructs the reconstruction of a fixed point perspective. Deictic opacity becomes a metaphor for a more general sense of epistemological confusion or, in more extreme cases, the coherence of the deictic centre is put into question. The modern lyric voice is heard in the kind of writing that continually provokes readers into the attempt to identify a precise localised viewpoint, but denies them the information necessary for success. The *I* that is 'here now' is displaced by an *I* that may be, as Eliot puts it in *Four Quartets*, "here/ or there or elsewhere." It is this deconstructed self that has attracted most interest among those writing on deixis in

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[25] The most famous example is Holbein's The Ambassadors; see also the anamorphic portrait of Edward VI by an unknown artist (National Portrait Gallery). Shakespeare defines anamorphism in *Richard II,* 2.ii.18-20 as: "perspectives, which rightly gaz'd upon/ Show nothing but confusion; ey'd awry/ Distinguish form."

literature.[26] What I have attempted to show in this paper is that the renaissance art of self construction is no less remarkable, although, as in the case of illusionist painting, its technical achievements have been veiled from us by its very success.

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[26] For my own account of the post-romantic phases of self-representation, see Adamson (1998: 661-679).

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