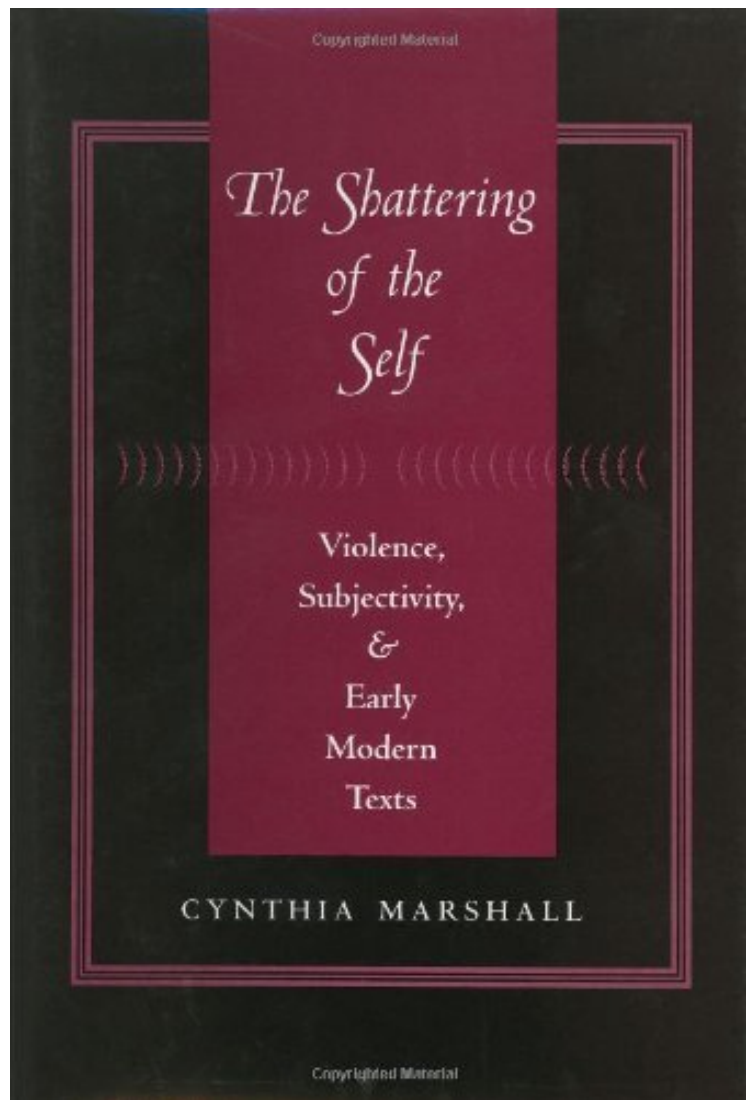


## The Shattering of the Self: Violence, Subjectivity, and Early Modern Texts

Cynthia Marshall

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**Cynthia Marshall : The Shattering of the Self: Violence, Subjectivity, and Early Modern Texts** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Shattering of the Self: Violence, Subjectivity, and Early Modern Texts:

2 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Terror JouissanceBy Bob J. BakerTerror JouissanceThe Shattering of the Selfby Cynthia MarshallOne can approach this book hoping for a part of the answer to "understanding terrorism" and "why do they hate us?" Using a post-Freudian toolkit of literary, gender and film theory on Shakespeare's Titus Andronicus, a play of torture, rape and dismemberment popular in his day and revived in our own,

as well as on other popular and ghastly works of that time, the author explains them, to greatly simplify, as a reaction to the emerging individuality in the Renaissance. This new sense of "self" could not satisfy all the passion and depth of the total personality, and so was a hindrance to the expression of more complete and natural human feelings--which are much more than our con-scious understanding, ethics, mores or religion. In the audience's pleasurable participation in the "shattering" of all that someone called "the seven deadly virtues" there was joy and release for the moment--all within the irresponsible safety of the collective group. This shattering allowed the eventually reassembled "self" ("ego" in Jungian terms) to take into account, become conscious of, some of the previously missing or supplanted complexity. Today, with our "only superpower" ego-formation, we are missing a lot of realities, not only in our individual and national unconscious, but also in the greater world beyond our borders. We don't have to depend on Shakespeare revivals to supply us with corrective violence--we have our own movie/TV monstrosities: Swarznegger/Stallone/StevenKings, etc.. We also have the terrorists on the world stage eager to shatter our self-image, because it's an image that has been supplanting or impinging on the once relatively stable collective selves of the resentful citizens of other places. Think of the defeated South's actor/assassin Booth, drawn to the stage at Ford's Theater; of the stage-struck terrorists from suppressed Chechnya that made their entrance at a Moscow theater. Terrible things happen when man's supposed goodness is overplayed and his dark side denied. We think we're good, the terrorists think they're good. Where does the evil go? It's sometimes played out in local crime, national theaters, on the world stage. We are shattered. Professor Marshall's book is a scholarly, wonderfully wise, detailed and painful examination of how it worked in various media in Shakespeare's time, and more than a hint of what we face today. We were the audience/participants watching re-runs of 9/11 as our sense of invulnerability, our egos, temporarily crumbled. Those we bomb get the same "audience participation." Our reforming sense of self, hopefully, will minimize the future "need" for shattering. It doesn't seem to be going that way, yet.

In *The Shattering of the Self: Violence, Subjectivity, and Early Modern Texts*, Cynthia Marshall reconceptualizes the place and function of violence in Renaissance literature. During the Renaissance an emerging concept of the autonomous self within art, politics, religion, commerce, and other areas existed in tandem with an established, popular sense of the self as fluid, unstable, and volatile. Marshall examines an early modern fascination with erotically charged violence to show how texts of various kinds allowed temporary release from an individualism that was constraining. Scenes such as Gloucester's blinding and Cordelia's death in *King Lear* or the dismemberment and sexual violence depicted in *Titus Andronicus* allowed audience members not only a release but a "shattering" of the self. Marshall draws upon close readings of Shakespearean plays, Petrarchan sonnets, John Foxe's *Acts and Monuments of the Christian Martyrs*, and John Ford's *The Broken Heart* to successfully address questions of subjectivity, psychoanalytic theory, and identity via a cultural response to art. Timely in its offering of an account that is both historically and psychoanalytically informed, *The Shattering of the Self* argues for a renewed attention to the place of fantasy in this literature and will be of interest to scholars working in Renaissance and early modern studies, literary theory, gender studies, and film theory.