

different one of the major genres in which Shakespeare worked. As many scholars have demonstrated, there is no exclusive, categorical force behind these generic distinctions, but they are useful markers of different areas of circulation, different types of negotiation: in the histories, a theatrical acquisition of charisma through the subversion of charisma; in the comedies, an acquisition of sexual excitement through the staging of transvestite friction; in the tragedies, an acquisition of religious power through the evacuation of a religious ritual; and in the romances, an acquisition of salutary anxiety through the experience of a threatening plentitude. None of these acquisitions exhausts the negotiation, for the genre itself or even for a particular play, and the social energies I have detected in one genre may be found in equal measure in another. Plays are made up of multiple exchanges, and the exchanges are multiplied over time, since to the transactions through which the work first acquired social energy are added supplementary transactions through which the work renews its power in changed circumstances. My principal interest is in the early exchanges—in understanding how the energies were first collected and deployed and returned to the culture from which they came—but there is no direct access to these exchanges, no pure moment when the energy was passed and the process began. We can reconstruct at least aspects of the conditions in which the theater acquired its remarkable power, but we do so under the terms of our own interests and pleasures and in the light of historical developments that cannot simply be stripped away.

I had dreamed of speaking with the dead, and even now I do not abandon this dream. But the mistake was to imagine that I would hear a single voice, the voice of the other. If I wanted to hear one, I had to hear the many voices of the dead. And if I wanted to hear the voice of the other, I had to hear my own voice. The speech of the dead, like my own speech, is not private property.



Invisible Bullets

Hearts at Harriot's
 subtraction
 1621 in Harriot's Chest
 1615 Harriot's
 1680

In his notorious police report of 1593 on Christopher Marlowe, the Elizabethan spy Richard Baines informed his superiors that Marlowe had declared, among other monstrous opinions, that "Moses was but a juggler, and that one Heriots being Sir W Raleighs man Can do more than he."¹ The "Heriots" cast for a moment in this lurid light is Thomas Harriot, the most profound Elizabethan mathematician, an expert in cartography, optics, and navigational science, an adherent of atomism, the first Englishman to make a telescope and turn it on the heavens, the author of the first original book about the first English colony in America, and the possessor throughout his career of a dangerous reputation for atheism.² In all of his extant writings, private correspondence as well as public discourse, Harriot professes the most reassuringly orthodox religious faith, but the suspicion persisted. When he died of cancer in 1621, one of his contemporaries, persuaded that Harriot had challenged the doctrinal account of creation *ex nihilo*, remarked gleefully that "a *nihilum* killed him at last: for in the top of his nose came a little red speck (exceeding small), which grew bigger and bigger, and at last killed him."³

Charges of atheism leveled at Harriot or anyone else in this period are difficult to assess, for such accusations were smear tactics, used with reckless abandon against anyone whom the accuser happened to dislike. At a dinner party one summer evening in 1593, Sir Walter Raleigh teased an irascible country parson named Ralph Ironside and found himself the subject of a state investigation; at the other end of the social scale, in the same Dorsetshire

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Chapter Two



Invisible Bullets

Learn to speak in the
 or understand the
 English
 1580

In his notorious police report of 1593 on Christopher Marlowe, the Elizabethan spy Richard Baines informed his superiors that Marlowe had declared, among other monstrous opinions, that "Moses was but a juggler, and that one Heriots being Sir W Raleighs man Can do more than he."¹ The "Heriots" cast for a moment in this lurid light is Thomas Harriot, the most profound Elizabethan mathematician, an expert in cartography, optics, and navigational science, an adherent of atomism, the first Englishman to make a telescope and turn it on the heavens, the author of the first original book about the first English colony in America, and the possessor throughout his career of a dangerous reputation for atheism.² In all of his extant writings, private correspondence as well as public discourse, Harriot professes the most reassuringly orthodox religious faith, but the suspicion persisted. When he died of cancer in 1621, one of his contemporaries, persuaded that Harriot had challenged the doctrinal account of creation *ex nihilo*, remarked gleefully that "a *nihilum* killed him at last: for in the top of his nose came a little red speck (exceeding small), which grew bigger and bigger, and at last killed him."³

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parish, a drunken servant named Oliver complained that in the Sunday sermon the preacher had praised Moses excessively but had neglected to mention his fifty-two concubines, and Oliver too found himself under official scrutiny.⁴ Few, if any, of these investigations turned up what we would call atheists, even muddled or shallow ones; the stance that seemed to come naturally to me as a green college freshman in mid-twentieth-century America seems to have been almost unthinkable to the most daring philosophical minds of late sixteenth-century England.

The historical evidence is unreliable; even in the absence of social pressure, people lie readily about their most intimate beliefs. How much more must they have lied in an atmosphere of unembarrassed repression. Still, there is probably more than politic concealment involved here. After all, treason was punished as harshly as atheism, yet while the period abounds in documented instances of treason in word and deed, there are virtually no professed atheists.⁵ If ever there were a place to confirm that in a given social construction of reality certain interpretations of experience are sanctioned and others excluded, it is here, in the boundaries that contained sixteenth-century skepticism. Like Machiavelli and Montaigne, Thomas Harriot professed belief in God, and there is no justification in any of these cases for dismissing the profession of faith as mere hypocrisy.

I am arguing not that atheism was literally unthinkable in the late sixteenth century but rather that it was almost always thinkable only as the thought of another. This is one of its attractions as a smear; atheism is a characteristic mark of otherness—hence the ease with which Catholics can call Protestant martyrs atheists and Protestants routinely make similar charges against the pope.⁶ The pervasiveness and frequency of these charges, then, does not signal the existence of a secret society of freethinkers, a School of Night, but rather registers the operation of a religious authority, whether Catholic or Protestant, that confirms its power by disclosing the threat of atheism. The authority is secular as well as religious, since atheism is frequently adduced as a motive for heinous crimes, as if all men and women would inevitably conclude that if God does not exist, everything is permitted. At Raleigh's 1603 treason trial, for example, Justice Popham solemnly warned the accused not to let "Harriot, nor any such Doctor, persuade you there is no eternity in Heaven, lest

you find an eternity of hell-torments."⁷ Nothing in Harriot's writings suggests that he held the position attributed to him here, but the charge does not depend upon evidence: Harriot is invoked as the archetypal corrupter, Achitophel seducing the glittering Absalom. If the atheist did not exist, he would have to be invented.

Yet atheism is not the only mode of subversive religious doubt, and we cannot discount the persistent rumors of Harriot's heterodoxy by pointing to either his conventional professions of faith or the conventionality of the attacks upon him. Indeed I want to suggest that if we look closely at *A Brief and True Report of the New Found Land of Virginia* (1588), the only work Harriot published in his lifetime and hence the work in which he was presumably the most cautious, we can find traces of material that could lead to the remark attributed to Marlowe, that "Moses was but a Juggler, and that one Harriots being Sir W Raleighs man Can do more than he." And I want to suggest further that understanding the relation between orthodoxy and subversion in Harriot's text will enable us to construct an interpretive model that may be used to understand the far more complex problem posed by Shakespeare's history plays.

Those plays have been described with impeccable intelligence as deeply conservative and with equally impeccable intelligence as deeply radical. Shakespeare, in Northrop Frye's words, is "a born courtier," the dramatist who organizes his representation of English history around the hegemonic mysticism of the Tudor myth; Shakespeare is also a relentless demystifier, an interrogator of ideology, "the only dramatist," as Franco Moretti puts it, "who rises to the level of Machiavelli in elaborating all the consequences of the separation of political praxis from moral evaluation."⁸ The conflict glimpsed here could be investigated, on a performance-by-performance basis, in a history of reception, but that history is shaped, I would argue, by circumstances of production as well as consumption. The ideological strategies that fashion Shakespeare's history plays help in turn to fashion the conflicting readings of the plays' politics. And these strategies are no more Shakespeare's invention than the historical narratives on which he based his plots. As we shall see from Harriot's *Brief and True Report*, in the discourse of authority a powerful logic governs the relation between orthodoxy and subversion.

I should first explain that the apparently feeble wisecrack about Moses and Harriot finds its way into a police file on Marlowe because it seems to bear out one of the Machiavellian arguments about religion that most excited the wrath of sixteenth-century authorities: Old Testament religion, the argument goes, and by extension the whole Judeo-Christian tradition, originated in a series of clever tricks, fraudulent illusions perpetrated by Moses, who had been trained in Egyptian magic, upon the "rude and gross" (and hence credulous) Hebrews.⁹ This argument is not actually to be found in Machiavelli, nor does it originate in the sixteenth century; it is already fully formulated in early pagan polemics against Christianity. But it seems to acquire a special force and currency in the Renaissance as an aspect of a heightened consciousness, fueled by the period's prolonged crises of doctrine and church governance, of the social function of religious belief.

Here Machiavelli's writings are important. *The Prince* observes in its bland way that if Moses' particular actions and methods are examined closely, they appear to differ little from those employed by the great pagan princes; the *Discourses* treats religion as if its primary function were not salvation but the achievement of civic discipline, as if its primary justification were not truth but expediency.¹⁰ Thus Romulus's successor Numa Pompilius, "finding a very savage people, and wishing to reduce them to civil obedience by the arts of peace, had recourse to religion as the most necessary and assured support of any civil society" (*Discourses*, 146). For although "Romulus could organize the Senate and establish other civil and military institutions without the aid of divine authority, yet it was very necessary for Numa, who feigned that he held converse with a nymph, who dictated to him all that he wished to persuade the people to." In truth, continues Machiavelli, "there never was any remarkable lawyer amongst any people who did not resort to divine authority, as otherwise his laws would not have been accepted by the people" (147).

From here it was only a short step, in the minds of Renaissance authorities, to the monstrous opinions attributed to the likes of Marlowe and Harriot. Kyd, under torture, testified that Marlowe had affirmed that "things esteemed to be done by divine power might have as well been done by observation of men," and the Jesuit Robert Parsons claimed that in Raleigh's "school of Atheism,"

"both Moses and our Savior, the old and the New Testament, are jested at."¹¹ On the eve of Raleigh's treason trial, some "hellish verses" were lifted from an anonymous tragedy written ten years earlier and circulated as Raleigh's own confession of atheism. At first the earth was held in common, the verses declare, but this golden age gave way to war, kingship, and property:

Then some sage man, above the vulgar wise,
Knowing that laws could not in quiet dwell,
Unless they were observed, did first devise
The names of Gods, religion, heaven, and hell
. . . Only bug-bears to keep the world in fear.¹²

The attribution of these lines to Raleigh is instructive: the fictional text returns to circulation as the missing confessional language of real life. That fiction is unlikely to represent an observable attitude in the "real" world, though we can never altogether exclude that possibility; rather it stages a cultural conceit, the recurrent fantasy of the archcriminal as atheist. Raleigh already had a reputation as both a poet and a freethinker; perhaps one of his numerous enemies actually plotted to heighten the violent popular hostility toward him by floating under his name a forgotten piece of stage villainy.¹³ But quite apart from a possible conspiracy, the circulation fulfills a strong cultural expectation. When a hated favorite like Raleigh was accused of treason, what was looked for was not evidence but a performance, a theatrical revelation of motive and an enactment of despair. If the motives for treason revealed in this performance could be various—ambition, jealousy, greed, spite, and so forth—what permitted the release of these motives into action would always be the same: atheism. No one who actually loved and feared God would allow himself to rebel against an anointed ruler, and atheism, conversely, would lead inevitably to treason. Since atheism was virtually always, as I have argued, the thought of the other, it would be difficult to find a first-person confession—except, of course, in fiction and above all in the theater. The soliloquy is lifted from its theatrical context and transformed into "verses" that the three surviving manuscripts declare were "devised by that Atheist and Traitor Raleigh as it is said." The last phrase may signal skepticism about the attribution, but such reservations do not count for much: the "hellish verses" are what

men like Marlowe, Harriot, or Raleigh would have to think in their hearts.

Harriot does not voice any speculations remotely resembling the hypotheses that a punitive religion was invented to keep men in awe and that belief originated in a fraudulent imposition by cunning "jugglers" on the ignorant, but his recurrent association with the forbidden thoughts of the demonized other may be linked to something beyond malicious slander. If we look attentively at his account of the first Virginia colony, we find a mind that seems interested in the same set of problems, a mind, indeed, that seems to be virtually testing the Machiavellian hypotheses. Sent by Raleigh to keep a record of the colony and to compile a description of the resources and inhabitants of the area, Harriot took care to learn the North Carolina Algonquian dialect and to achieve what he calls a "special familiarity with some of the priests."¹⁴ The Virginian Indians believe, Harriot writes, in the immortality of the soul and in otherworldly punishments and rewards for behavior in this world: "What subtly soever be in the *Wirances* and Priests, this opinion worketh so much in many of the common and simple sort of people that it maketh them have great respect to the Governors, and also great care what they do, to avoid torment after death and to enjoy bliss" (374).¹⁵ The split between the priests and people implied here is glimpsed as well in the description of the votive images: "They think that all the gods are of human shape, and therefore they represent them by images in the forms of men, which they call *Kewasowak*. . . . The common sort think them to be also gods" (373). And the social function of popular belief is underscored in Harriot's note to an illustration showing the priests carefully tending the embalmed bodies of the former chiefs: "These poor souls are thus instructed by nature to reverence their princes even after their death" (*De Bry*, p. 72). ↴

*Custom by
noble
here the priests
are fools*

We have then, as in Machiavelli, a sense of religion as a set of beliefs manipulated by the subtlety of priests to help instill obedience and respect for authority. The terms of Harriot's analysis—"the common and simple sort of people," "the Governors," and so forth—are obviously drawn from the language of comparable social analyses of England; as Karen Kupperman has most recently demonstrated, sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Englishmen characteristically describe the Indians in terms that closely replicate their

own self-conception, above all in matters of *status*.¹⁶ The great mass of Indians are seen as a version of "the common sort" at home, just as Harriot translates the Algonquian *weworn* as "great Lord" and speaks of "the chief Ladies," "virgins of good parentage," "a young gentlewoman," and so forth. There is an easy, indeed almost irresistible, analogy in the period between accounts of Indian and European social structure, so that Harriot's description of the inward mechanisms of Algonquian society implies a description of comparable mechanisms in his own culture.¹⁷

To this we may add a still more telling observation not of the internal function of native religion but of the impact of European culture on the Indians: "Most things they saw with us," Harriot writes, "as mathematical instruments, sea compasses, the virtue of the loadstone in drawing iron, a perspective glass whereby was showed many strange sights, burning glasses, wildfire works, guns, books, writing and reading, spring clocks that seem to go of themselves, and many other things that we had, were so strange unto them, and so far exceeded their capacities to comprehend the reason and means how they should be made and done, that they thought they were rather the works of gods than of men, or at the leastwise they had been given and taught us of the gods" (375-76). This delusion, born of what Harriot supposes to be the vast technological superiority of the European, caused the savages to doubt that they possessed the truth of God and religion and to suspect that such truth "was rather to be had from us, whom God so specially loved than from a people that were so simple, as they found themselves to be in comparison of us" (376).

Here, I suggest, is the very core of the Machiavellian anthropology that posited the origin of religion in an imposition of socially coercive doctrines by an educated and sophisticated lawyer on a simple people. And in Harriot's list of the marvels—from wildfire to reading—with which he undermined the Indians' confidence in their native understanding of the universe, we have the core of the claim attributed to Marlowe: that Moses was but a juggler and that Raleigh's man Harriot could do more than he. The testing of this hypothesis in the encounter of the Old World and the New was appropriate, we may add, for though vulgar Machiavellianism implied that all religion was a sophisticated confidence trick, Machiavelli himself saw that trick as possible only at a radical point of

origin: "If any one wanted to establish a republic at the present time," he writes, "he would find it much easier with the simple mountaineers, who are almost without any civilization, than with such as are accustomed to live in cities, where civilization is already corrupt; as a sculptor finds it easier to make a fine statue out of a crude block of marble than out of a statue badly begun by another."¹⁸ It was only with a people, as Harriot says, "so simple, as they found themselves to be in comparison of us," that the imposition of a coercive set of religious beliefs could be attempted.

In Harriot, then, we have one of the earliest instances of a significant phenomenon: the testing upon the bodies and minds of non-Europeans or, more generally, the noncivilized, of a hypothesis about the origin and nature of European culture and belief. In encountering the Algonquian Indians, Harriot not only thought he was encountering a simplified version of his own culture but also evidently believed that he was encountering his own civilization's past.¹⁹ This past could best be investigated in the privileged anthropological moment of the initial encounter, for the comparable situations in Europe itself tended to be already contaminated by prior contact. Only in the forest, with a people ignorant of Christianity and startled by its bearers' technological potency, could one hope to reproduce accurately, with live subjects, the relation imagined between Numa and the primitive Romans, Moses and the Hebrews. The actual testing could happen only once, for it entails not detached observation but radical change, the change Harriot begins to observe in the priests who "were not so sure grounded, nor gave such credit to their traditions and stories, but through conversing with us they were brought into great doubts of their own" (375).²⁰ I should emphasize that I am speaking here of events as reported by Harriot. The history of subsequent English-Algonquian relations casts doubt on the depth, extent, and irreversibility of the supposed Indian crisis of belief. In the *Brief and True Report*, however, the tribe's stories begin to *collapse* in the minds of their traditional guardians, and the coercive power of the European beliefs begins to show itself almost at once in the Indians' behavior: "On a time also when their corn began to wither by reason of a drought which happened extraordinarily, fearing that it had come to pass by reason that in some thing they had displeased us, many would come to us and desire us to pray to our God of England, that

he would preserve their corn, promising that when it was ripe we also should be partakers of their fruit" (377). If we remember that the English, like virtually all sixteenth-century Europeans in the New World, resisted or were incapable of provisioning themselves and in consequence depended upon the Indians for food, we may grasp the central importance for the colonists of this dawning Indian fear of the Christian God.

As early as 1504, during Columbus's fourth voyage, the natives, distressed that the Spanish seemed inclined to settle in for a long visit, refused to continue to supply food. Knowing from his almanac that a total eclipse of the moon was imminent, Columbus warned the Indians that God would show them a sign of his displeasure; after the eclipse, the terrified Indians resumed the supply. But an eclipse would not always be so conveniently at hand. John Sparke, who sailed with Sir John Hawkins in 1564-65, noted that the French colonists in Florida "would not take the pains so much as to fish in the river before their doors, but would have all things put in their mouths."²¹ When the Indians wearied of this arrangement, the French turned to extortion and robbery, and before long there were bloody wars. A similar situation seems to have arisen in the Virginia colony: despite land rich in game and ample fishing grounds, the English nearly starved to death when the exasperated Algonquians refused to build fishing weirs and plant corn.²²

It is difficult to understand why men so aggressive and energetic in other regards should have been so passive in the crucial matter of feeding themselves. No doubt there were serious logistic problems in transporting food and equally serious difficulties adapting European farming methods and materials to the different climate and soil of the New World, yet these explanations seem insufficient, as they did even to the early explorers themselves. John Sparke wrote that "notwithstanding the great want that the Frenchmen had, the ground doth yield victuals sufficient, if they would have taken pains to get the same; but they being soldiers, desired to live by the sweat of other mens brows" (*Hakluyt* 10:56). This remark bears close attention: it points not to laziness or negligence but to an occupational identity, a determination to be nourished by the labor of others weaker, more vulnerable, than oneself. This self-conception was not, we might add, exclusively military: the

hallmark of power and wealth in the sixteenth century was to be waited on by others. "To live by the sweat of other men's brows" was the enviable lot of the gentleman; indeed in England it virtually defined a gentleman. The New World held out the prospect of such status for all but the poorest cabin boy.²³

But the prospect could not be realized through violence alone, even if the Europeans had possessed a monopoly of it, because the relentless exercise of violence could actually reduce the food supply. As Machiavelli understood, physical compulsion is essential but never sufficient; the survival of the rulers depends upon a supplement of coercive belief. The Indians must be persuaded that the Christian God is all-powerful and committed to the survival of his chosen people, that he will wither the corn and destroy the lives of savages who displease him by disobeying or plotting against the English. Here is a strange paradox: Harriot tests and seems to confirm the most radically subversive hypothesis in his culture about the origin and function of religion by imposing his religion—with its intense claims to transcendence, unique truth, inescapable coercive force—on others. Not only the official purpose but the survival of the English colony depends upon this imposition. This crucial circumstance licensed the testing in the first place; only as an agent of the English colony, dependent upon its purposes and committed to its survival, is Harriot in a position to disclose the power of human achievements—reading, writing, perspective glasses, gunpowder, and the like—to appear to the ignorant as divine and hence to promote belief and compel obedience.

Thus the subversiveness that is genuine and radical—sufficiently disturbing so that to be suspected of it could lead to imprisonment and torture—is at the same time contained by the power it would appear to threaten. Indeed the subversiveness is the very product of that power and furthers its ends. One may go still further and suggest that the power Harriot both serves and embodies not only produces its own subversion but is actively built upon it: the project of evangelical colonialism is not set over against the skeptical critique of religious coercion but batters on the very confirmation of that critique. In the Virginia colony, the radical undermining of Christian order is not the negative limit but the positive condition for the establishment of that order. And this paradox extends to the

production of Harriot's text: *A Brief and True Report*, with its latent heterodoxy, is not a reflection upon the Virginia colony or even a simple record of it—it is not, in other words, a privileged withdrawal into a critical zone set apart from power—but a continuation of the colonial enterprise.

By October 1586, rumors were spreading in England that Virginia offered little prospect of profit, that the colony had been close to starvation, and that the Indians had turned hostile. Harriot accordingly begins his report with a descriptive catalog in which the natural goods of the land are turned into social goods, that is, into "merchable commodities": "Cedar, a very sweet wood and fine timber; whereof if nests of chests be there made, or timber thereof fitted for sweet and fine bedsteads, tables, desks, lutes, virginals, and many things else, . . . [it] will yield profit" (329–30).²⁴ The inventory of these commodities is followed by an inventory of edible plants and animals, to prove to readers that the colony need not starve, and then by the account of the Indians, to prove that the colony could impose its will on them. The key to this imposition, as we have seen, is the coercive power of religious belief, and the source of the power is the impression made by advanced technology upon a "backward" people.

Hence Harriot's text is committed to record what I have called his confirmation of the Machiavellian hypothesis, and hence too the potential subversiveness of this confirmation is invisible not only to those on whom the religion is supposedly imposed but also to most readers and quite possibly to Harriot himself. It may be that Harriot was demonically conscious of what he was doing—that he found himself situated exactly where he could test one of his culture's darkest fears about its own origins, that he used the Algonquians to do so, and that he wrote a report on his own findings, a coded report, since as he wrote to Kepler years later, "our situation is such that I still may not philosophize freely."²⁵ But this is not the only Harriot we can conjure up. A scientist of the late sixteenth century, we might suppose, would have regarded the natives' opinion that English technology was god-given—indeed divine—with something like corroboratory complicity. It would, as a colleague from whom I borrow this conjecture remarked, "be just like an establishment intellectual, or simply a well-placed Eliza-

paradox: undermining of order as an establishment produces a further call for further action.

bethan bourgeois, to accept that his superior 'powers'—moral, technological, cultural—were indeed signs of divine favor and that therefore the superstitious natives were quite right in their perception of the need to submit to their benevolent conquerors."²⁶

Now Harriot does not in fact express such a view of the ultimate origin of his trunk of marvels—and I doubt that he held the view in this form—but it is significant that in the next generation Bacon, perhaps recalling Harriot's text or others like it, claims in *The New Organon* that scientific discoveries "are as it were new creations, and imitations of God's works" that may be justly regarded as if they were manifestations not of human skill but of divine power: "Let a man only consider what a difference there is between the life of men in the most civilized province of Europe, and in the wildest and most barbarous districts of New India; he will feel it to be great enough to justify the saying that 'man is a god to man,' not only in regard to aid and benefit, but also by a comparison of condition. And this difference comes not from soil, not from climate, not from race, but from the arts."²⁷ From this perspective the Algonquian misconception of the origin and nature of English technology would be evidence not of the power of Christianity to impose itself fraudulently on a backward people but of the dazzling power of science and of the naive literalism of the ignorant, who can conceive of this power only as the achievement of actual gods.²⁸

Thus, for all his subtlety and his sensitivity to heterodoxy, Harriot might not have grasped fully the disturbing implications of his own text. The plausibility of a picture of Harriot culturally insulated from the subversive energies of his own activity would seem to be enhanced elsewhere in *A Brief and True Report* by his account of his missionary efforts:

Many times and in every town where I came, according as I was able, I made declaration of the contents of the Bible; that therein was set forth the true and only God, and his mighty works, that therein was contained the true doctrine of salvation through Christ, with many particularities of Miracles and chief points of religion, as I was able then to utter, and thought fit for the time. And although I told them the book materially and of itself was not of any such virtue, as I thought they did conceive, but only the doctrine therein contained; yet would many be glad to touch it, to embrace it, to kiss it, to hold it to their breasts and heads, and stroke over all their body with it; to show their hungry desire of that knowledge which was spoken of. (376-77)

Here the heathens' confusion of material object and religious doctrine does not seem to cast doubts upon the truth of the Holy Book; rather it signals precisely the naive literalism of the Algonquians and hence their susceptibility to idolatry. They are viewed with a touch of amusement, as Spenser in the *Faerie Queene* views the "salvage nation" who seek to worship Una herself rather than the truth for which she stands:

During which time her gentle wit she pyles,
To teach them truth, which worshipt her in vaine,
And made her th'Image of Idolatryes;
But when their bootlesse zeale she did restraine
From her own worship, they her Asse would worship fayn.
(1.6.19)²⁹

Harriot, for his part, is willing to temper the view of the savage as idolater by reading the Algonquian fetishism of the book as a promising sign, an allegory of "their hungry desire of that knowledge which was spoken of." Such a reading, we might add, conveniently supports the claim that the English would easily dominate and civilize the Indians and hence advances the general purpose of *A Brief and True Report*.

The apparent religious certainty, cultural confidence, and national self-interest here by no means rule out the possibility of what I have called demonic consciousness—we can always postulate that Harriot found ever more subtle ways of simultaneously recording and disguising his dangerous speculations—but the essential point is that we need no such biographical romance to account for the apparent testing and confirmation of the Machiavellian hypothesis: the colonial power produced the subversiveness in its own interest, as I have argued, and *A Brief and True Report*, appropriately, was published by the great Elizabethan exponent of missionary colonialism, the Reverend Richard Hakluyt.

The thought that Christianity served to shore up the authority of the colonists would not have struck Hakluyt or the great majority of his readers as subversive. On the contrary, the role of religion in preserving the social order was a commonplace that all parties vied with each other in proclaiming. The suggestion that religions should be ranked according to their demonstrated ability to control their adherents would have been unacceptable, however, and the sugges-

tion that reinforcing civil discipline must be the real origin and ultimate purpose of Christianity would have been still worse. These were possible explanations of the religion of another—skeptical arguments about ideological causality always work against beliefs one does not hold—but as we might expect from the earlier discussion of atheism, the application of this explanation to Christianity itself could be aired, and sternly refuted, only as the thought of another. Indeed a strictly functionalist explanation even of false religions was rejected by Christian theologians of the period. "It is utterly vain," writes Calvin, "for some men to say that religion was invented by the subtlety and craft of a few to hold the simple folk in thrall by this device and that those very persons who originated the worship of God for others did not in the least believe that any God existed." He goes on to concede "that in order to hold men's minds in greater subjection, clever men have devised very many things in religion by which to inspire the common folk with reverence and strike them with terror. But they would never have achieved this if men's minds had not already been imbued with a firm conviction about God, from which the inclination toward religion springs as from a seed."³⁰ Similarly, Hooker argues, "lest any man should here conceive, that it greatly skilleth not of what sort our religion be, inasmuch as heathens, Turks, and infidels, impute to religion a great part of the same effects which ourselves ascribe therunto," that the good moral effects of false religions result from their having religious—that is, Christian—truths "entwined" in them.³¹

This argument, which derives from the early chapters of the Epistle to the Romans, is so integral to what John Coolidge has called the Pauline Renaissance in England that Harriot's account of the Algonquians would have seemed, even for readers who sensed something odd about it, closer to confirmation than to subversion of religious orthodoxy. Yet it is misleading. I think, to conclude without qualification that the radical doubt implicit in Harriot's account is *entirely* contained. After all, Harriot was hounded through his whole life by charges of atheism, and, more tellingly, the remark attributed to Marlowe suggests that a contemporary could draw the most dangerous conclusions from the Virginia report. Both of these signs of slippage are compromised by their links to the society's well-developed repressive apparatus: rumors, accusations, police reports. But if we should be wary of naively accepting a version of

reality proffered by the secret police, we cannot at the same time dismiss that version altogether. There is a perversely attractive, if bleak, clarity in such a dismissal—in deciding that subversive doubt was totally produced and totally contained by the ruling elite—but the actual evidence is tenebrous. We simply do not know what was thought in silence, what was written and then carefully burned, what was whispered by Harriot to Raleigh. Moreover, the "Atlantic Republican tradition," as Pocock has argued, does grow out of the "Machiavellian moment" of the sixteenth century, and that tradition, with its transformation of subjects into citizens, its subordination of transcendent values to capital values, does ultimately undermine, in the interests of a new power, the religious and secular authorities that had licensed the American enterprise in the first place.³² In Harriot's text the relation between orthodoxy and subversion seems, at the same interpretive moment, to be both perfectly stable and dangerously volatile.

We can deepen our understanding of this apparent paradox if we consider a second mode of subversion and its containment in Harriot's account. Alongside the *testing* of a subversive interpretation of the dominant culture, we find the *recording* of alien voices or, more precisely, of alien interpretations. The occasion for this recording is another consequence of the English presence in the New World, not in this case the threatened extinction of the tribal religion but the threatened extinction of the tribe: "There was no town where we had any subtle device practiced against us," Harriot writes, "but that within a few days after our departure from every such town, the people began to die very fast, and many in short space; in some towns about twenty, in some forty, in some sixty and in one six score, which in truth was very many in respect of their numbers. The disease was so strange, that they neither knew what it was, nor how to cure it; the like by report of the oldest man in the country never happened before, time out of mind" (378).³³ Harriot is writing, of course, about the effects of measles, smallpox, or perhaps simply influenza on people with no resistance to them, but a conception of the biological basis of epidemic disease lies far, far in the future. For the English the deaths must be a moral phenomenon—this notion for them is as irresistible as the notion of germs for ourselves—and hence the "facts" as they are observed are already moralized: the deaths occurred only

English text
has not got a
moral via the
36 registers
invisible bullets
them is for
invisible
moral intervention
invisible bullets

"where they used some practice against us," that is, where the Indians conspired secretly against the English. And with the wonderful self-validating circularity that characterizes virtually all powerful constructions of reality, the evidence for these secret conspiracies is precisely the deaths of the Indians.³⁴

It is not surprising that Harriot seems to endorse the idea that God protects his chosen people by killing off untrustworthy Indians; what is surprising is to find him interested in the Indians' own anxious speculations about the unintended biological warfare that was destroying them. Drawing upon his special familiarity with the priests, he records a remarkable series of conjectures, almost all of which assume—correctly, as we now know—a link between the Indians' misfortune and the presence of the strangers. "Some people," observing that the English remained healthy while the Indians died, "could not tell," Harriot writes, "whether to think us gods or men"; others, seeing that the members of the first colony were all male, concluded that they were not born of women and therefore must be spirits of the dead returned to mortal form. Some medicine men learned in astrology blamed the disease on a recent eclipse of the sun and on a comet—a theory Harriot considers seriously and rejects—while others shared the prevailing English view and said "that it was the special work of God" on behalf of the colonists. And some who seem in historical hindsight eerily prescient prophesied "that there were more of [the English] generation yet to come, to kill theirs and take their places." The supporters of this theory even worked out a conception of the disease that in some features resembles our own: "Those that were immediately to come after us [the first English colonists], they imagined to be in the air, yet invisible and without bodies, and that they by our entreaty and for the love of us did make the people to die . . . by shooting invisible bullets into them" (380).

For a moment, as Harriot records these competing theories, it may seem to us as if there were no absolute assurance of God's national interest, as if the drive to displace and absorb the other had given way to conversation among equals, as if all meanings were provisional, as if the signification of events stood apart from power. Our impression is intensified because we know that the theory that would ultimately triumph over the moral conception of

epidemic disease was already present, at least metaphorically, in the conversation.³⁵ In the very moment that the moral conception is busily authorizing itself, it registers the possibility (indeed from our vantage point, the inevitability) of its own destruction. ^{Why not?}

But why, we must ask ourselves, should power record other voices, permit subversive inquiries, register at its very center the transgressions that will ultimately violate it? The answer may be in part that power, even in a colonial situation, is not monolithic and hence may encounter and record in one of its functions materials that can threaten another of its functions; in part that power thrives on vigilance, and human beings are vigilant if they sense a threat; in part that power defines itself in relation to such threats or simply to that which is not identical with it. Harriot's text suggests an intensification of these observations: English power in the first Virginia colony depends upon the registering and even the production of potentially unsettling perspectives. "These their opinions I have set down the more at large," Harriot tells the "Adventurers, Favorers, and Wellwishers" of the colony to whom his report is addressed, "that it may appear unto you that there is good hope that they may be brought through discreet dealing and government to the embracing of the truth, and consequently to honor, obey, fear, and love us" (381). The recording of alien voices, their preservation in Harriot's text, is part of the process whereby Indian culture is constituted as a culture and thus brought into the light for study, discipline, correction, transformation. The momentary sense of instability or plenitude—the existence of other voices—is produced by the monological power that ultimately denies the possibility of plenitude, just as the subversive hypothesis about European religion is tested and confirmed only by the imposition of that religion. We may add that the power of which we are speaking is in effect an allocation method—a way of distributing to some and denying to others critical resources (here primarily corn and game) that prolong life. In a remarkable study of the "tragic choices" societies make in allocating scarce resources (for example, kidney machines) or in determining high risks (for example, the military draft), Guido Calabresi and Philip Bobbitt observe that by complex mixtures of approaches, societies attempt to avert "tragic results, that is, results which imply the rejection of values which are proclaimed to be

fundamental." Although these approaches may succeed for a time, it will eventually become apparent that some sacrifice of fundamental values has taken place, whereupon "fresh mixtures of methods will be tried, structured . . . by the shortcomings of the approaches they replace." These too will in time give way to others in a "strategy of successive moves," an "intricate game" that reflects the simultaneous perception of an inherent flaw and the determination to "forget" that perception in an illusory resolution.³⁶ Hence the simple operation of any systematic order, any allocation method, inevitably risks exposing its own limitations, even (or perhaps especially) as it asserts its underlying moral principle.

This exposure is most intense at moments when a comfortably established ideology confronts unusual circumstances, when the moral value of a particular form of power is not merely assumed but explained. We may glimpse such a moment in Harriot's account of a visit from the colonists' principal Indian ally, the chief Wingina. Wingina, persuaded that the disease ravaging his people was indeed the work of the Christian God, had come to request that the English ask their God to direct his lethal magic against an enemy tribe. The colonists tried to explain that such a prayer would be "ungodly," that their God was indeed responsible for the disease but that in this as in all things, he would act only "according to his good pleasure as he had ordained" (379). Indeed, if men asked God to make an epidemic, he probably would not do it; the English could expect such providential help only if they made sincere "petition for the contrary," that is, for harmony and good fellowship in the service of truth and righteousness.

The problem with these assertions is not that they are self-consciously wicked (in the manner of Richard III or Iago) but that they are disarmingly moral and logically coherent; or rather, what is unsettling is one's experience of them, the nasty sense that they are at once irrefutable ethical propositions and pious humbug with which the English conceal from themselves the rapacity and aggression, or simply the horrible responsibility, implicit in their very presence. The explanatory moment manifests the self-validating, totalizing character of Renaissance political theology—its ability to account for almost every occurrence, even (or above all) apparently perverse or contrary occurrences—and at the same time confirms

for us the drastic disillusionment that extends from Machiavelli to its definitive expression in Hume and Voltaire. In his own way, Wingina himself clearly thought his lesson in Christian ethics was polite nonsense. When the disease spread to his enemies, as it did shortly thereafter, he returned to the English to thank them—I presume with the Algonquian equivalent of a sly wink—for their friendly help, for "although we satisfied them not in promise, yet in deeds and effect we had fulfilled their desires" (379). For Harriot, this "marvellous accident," as he calls it, is another sign of the colony's great expectations.

Once again a disturbing vista—a skeptical critique of the function of Christian morality in the New World—is glimpsed only to be immediately closed off. Indeed we may feel at this point that subversion scarcely exists and may legitimately ask ourselves how our perception of the subversive and orthodox is generated. The answer, I think, is that the term subvert for us designates those elements in Renaissance culture that contemporary audiences tried to contain or, when containment seemed impossible, to destroy and that now conform to our own sense of truth and reality. That is, we find "subversive" in the past precisely those things that are not subversive to ourselves, that pose no threat to the order by which we live and allocate resources: in Harriot's *Brief and True Report*, the function of illusion in the establishment of religion, the displacement of a providential conception of disease by one focused on "invisible bullets," the exposure of the psychological and material interests served by a certain conception of divine power. Conversely, we identify as principles of order and authority in Renaissance texts what we would, if we took them seriously, find subversive for ourselves: religious and political absolutism, aristocracy of birth, demonology, humoral psychology, and the like. That we do not find such notions subversive, that we complacently identify them as principles of aesthetic or political order, replicates the process of containment that licensed the elements we call subversive in Renaissance texts: that is, our own values are sufficiently strong for us to contain alien forces almost effortlessly. What we find in Harriot's *Brief and True Report* can best be described by adapting a remark about the possibility of hope that Kafka once made to Max Brod: There is subversion, no end of subversion, only not for us.

Shakespeare's plays are centrally, repeatedly concerned with the production and containment of subversion and disorder, and the three practices that I have identified in Harriot's text—testing, recording, and explaining—all have their recurrent theatrical equivalents, above all in the plays that mediate on the consolidation of state power.

These equivalents are not unique to Shakespeare; they are the signs of a broad institutional appropriation that is one of the root sources of the theater's vitality. Elizabethan playing companies contrived to absorb, refashion, and exploit some of the fundamental energies of a political authority that was itself already committed to histrionic display and hence was ripe for appropriation. But if he was not alone, Shakespeare nonetheless contrived to absorb more of these energies into his plays than any of his fellow playwrights. He succeeded in doing so because he seems to have understood very early in his career that power consisted not only in dazzling display—the pageants, processions, entries, and progresses of Elizabethan statecraft—but also in a systematic structure of relations, those linked strategies I have tried to isolate and identify in colonial discourse at the margins of Tudor society. Shakespeare evidently grasped such strategies not by brooding on the impact of English culture on far-off Virginia but by looking intently at the world immediately around him, by contemplating the queen and her powerful friends and enemies, and by reading imaginatively the great English chroniclers. And the crucial point is less that he represented the paradoxical practices of an authority deeply complicated in undermining its own legitimacy than that he appropriated for the theater the compelling energies at once released and organized by these practices.

The representation of a self-undermining authority is the principal concern of *Richard II*, which marks a brilliant advance over the comparable representation in the *Henry VI* trilogy, but the full appropriation for the stage of that authority and its power is not achieved until *Henry IV*. We may argue, of course, that in this play there is little or no "self-undermining" at all: emergent authority in *Henry IV*—that is, the authority that begins to solidify around the figure of Hal—is strikingly different from the enfeebled

command of Henry VI or the fatally self-wounded royal name of Richard II. "Who does not all along see," wrote Upton in the mid-eighteenth century, "that when prince Henry comes to be king he will assume a character suitable to his dignity?" My point is not to dispute this interpretation of the prince as, in Maynard Mack's words, "an ideal image of the potentialities of the English character,"³⁷ but to observe that such an ideal image involves as its positive condition the constant production of its own radical subversion and the powerful containment of that subversion.

We are continually reminded that Hal is a "juggler," a conniving hypocrite, and that the power he both serves and comes to embody is glorified usurpation and theft.³⁸ Moreover, the disenchantment makes itself felt in the very moments when Hal's moral authority is affirmed. Thus, for example, the scheme of Hal's redemption is carefully laid out in his soliloquy at the close of the first tavern scene, but as in the act of *explaining* that we have examined in Harriot, Hal's justification of himself threatens to fall away at every moment into its antithesis. "By how much better than my word I am," Hal declares, "By so much shall I falsify men's hopes" (1.2.210–11). To falsify men's hopes is to exceed their expectations, and it is also to disappoint their expectations, to deceive men, to turn hopes into fictions, to betray.

At issue are not only the contradictory desires and expectations centered on Hal in the play—the competing hopes of his royal father and his tavern friends—but our own hopes, the fantasies continually aroused by the play of innate grace, limitless playfulness, absolute friendship, generosity, and trust. Those fantasies are symbolized by certain echoing, talismanic phrases ("when thou art king," "shall we be merry?" "a thousand pound"), and they are bound up with the overall vividness, intensity, and richness of the theatrical practice itself. Yeats's phrase for the quintessential Shakespearean effect, "the emotion of multitude," seems particularly applicable to *Henry IV* with its multiplicity of brilliant characters, its intensely differentiated settings, its dazzling verbal wit, its mingling of high comedy, farce, epic heroism, and tragedy. The play awakens a dream of superabundance, which is given its irresistible embodiment in Falstaff.

But that dream is precisely what Hal betrays or rather, to use his own more accurate term, "falsifies." He does so in this play not by a

decisive act of rejection, as at the close of 2 *Henry IV*, but by a more subtle and continuous draining of the plentitude. "This chair shall be my state," proclaims Falstaff, improvising the king's part, "this dagger my sceptre, and this cushion my crown." Hal's cool rejoinder cuts deftly at both his real and his surrogate father: "Thy state is taken for a join'd-stool, thy golden sceptre for a leaden dagger, and thy precious rich crown for a pitiful bald crown" (2.4.378-82). Hal is the prince and principle of falsification—he is himself a counterfeit companion, and he reveals the emptiness in the world around him. "Dost thou hear, Hal?" Falstaff implores, with the sheriff at the door: "Never call a true piece of gold a counterfeit. Thou art essentially made, without seeming so" (2.4.491-93). The words, so oddly the reverse of the ordinary advice to beware of accepting the counterfeit for reality, attach themselves to both Falstaff and Hal: do not denounce me to the law for I, Falstaff, am genuinely your adoring friend and not merely a parasite; and also, do not think of yourself, Hal, as a mere pretender, do not imagine that your value depends upon falsification.

The "true piece of gold" is alluring because of the widespread faith that it has an intrinsic value, that it does not depend upon the stamp of authority and hence cannot be arbitrarily duplicated or devalued, that it is indifferent to its circumstances, that it cannot be robbed of its worth. This is the fantasy of identity that Falstaff holds out to Hal and that Hal empties out, as he empties out Falstaff's pockets. "What hast thou found?" "Nothing but papers, my lord" (2.4.532-33).³⁹ Hal is an anti-Midas: everything he touches turns to dross. And this devaluation is the source of his own sense of value, a value not intrinsic but contingent, dependent upon the circulation of counterfeit coin and the subtle manipulation of appearances:

And like bright metal on a sullen ground,
My reformation, glittering o'er my fault,
Shall show more goodly and attract more eyes
Than that which hath no foil to set it off.
I'll so offend, to make offense a skill,
Redeeming time when men think least I will.

(1.2.212-17)

Such lines, as Empson remarks, "cannot have been written without bitterness against the prince," yet the bitterness is not incompatible with an "ironical acceptance" of his authority.⁴⁰ The dreams

Hal's value based on devaluation of himself

of plentitude are not abandoned altogether—Falstaff in particular has an imaginative life that overflows the confines of the play itself—but the daylight world of 1 *Henry IV* comes to seem increasingly one of counterfeit, and hence one governed by Bolingbroke's cunning (he sends "counterfeits" of himself out onto the battlefield) and by Hal's calculations. A "starveling"—fat Falstaff's word for Hal—triumphs in a world of scarcity. Though we can perceive at every point, through our own constantly shifting allegiances, the potential instability of the structure of power that has Henry IV and his son at the pinnacle and Robin Ostler, who "never joy'd since the price of oats rose" (2.1.12-13), near the bottom, Hal's "redemption" is as inescapable and inevitable as the outcome of those practical jokes the madcap prince is so fond of playing. Indeed, the play insists, this redemption is not something toward which the action moves but something that is happening at every moment of the theatrical representation.

The same yoking of the unstable and the inevitable may be seen in the play's acts of recording, that is, the moments in which we hear voices that seem to dwell outside the realms ruled by the potentates of the land. These voices exist and have their apotheosis in Falstaff, but their existence proves to be utterly bound up with Hal, contained politically by his purposes as they are justified aesthetically by his involvement. The perfect emblem of this containment is Falstaff's company, marching off to Shrewsbury: "discarded unjust servingmen, younger sons to younger brothers, revolted tapsters, and ostlers trade-fall'n, the cankers of a calm world and a long peace" (4.2.27-30). As many a homily would tell us, these are the very types of Elizabethan subversion—the masterless men who rose up periodically in desperate protests against their social superiors. A half century later they would swell the ranks of the New Model Army and be disciplined into a revolutionary force. But here they are pressed into service as defenders of the established order, "good enough to toss," as Falstaff tells Hal, "food for powder, food for powder" (4.2.65-66). For power as well as powder, and we may add that this food is produced as well as consumed by the great.

Shakespeare gives us a glimpse of this production in the odd little scene in which Hal, with the connivance of Poins, reduces the puny tapster Francis to the mechanical repetition of the word "Anon":

Prince: Nay, but hark you, Francis: for the sugar thou gavest me, 'twas a pennyworth, was't not?

Francis: O Lord, I would it had been two!

Prince: I will give thee for it a thousand pound. Ask me when thou wilt, and thou shalt have it.

Poins: (*Within*) Francis!

Francis: Anon, anon.

Prince: Anon, Francis? No, Francis; but tomorrow, Francis; or, Francis, a' Thursday, or indeed, Francis, when thou wilt.

(2.4.58-67)

The Bergsonian comedy in such a moment resides in Hal's exposing a drastic reduction of human possibility: "That ever this fellow should have fewer words than a parrot," he says at the scene's end, "and yet the son of a woman!" (2.4.98-99). But the chief interest for us resides in Hal's producing the very reduction he exposes. The fact of this production, its theatrical demonstration, implicates Hal not only in the linguistic poverty upon which he plays but in the poverty of the five years of apprenticeship Francis has yet to serve: "Five year!" Hal exclaims, "by'r lady, a long lease for the clinking of pewter" (2.4.45-46). And as the prince is implicated in the production of this oppressive order, so is he implicated in the impulse to abrogate it: "But, Francis, darest thou be so valiant as to play the coward with thy indenture, and show it a fair pair of heels and run from it?" (2.4.46-48).

It is tempting to think of this particular moment—the prince awakening the apprentice's discontent—as linked darkly with some supposed uneasiness in Hal about his own apprenticeship.⁴¹ The momentary glimpse of a revolt against authority is closed off at once, however, with a few obscure words calculated to return Francis to his trade without enabling him to understand why he must return to it:

Prince: Why then your brown bastard is your only drink! for look you, Francis, your white canvas doublet will sully. In Barbary, sir, it cannot come to so much.

Francis: What, sir?

Poins: (*Within*) Francis!

Prince: Away, you rogue, dost thou not hear them call?

(2.4.73-79)

If Francis takes the earlier suggestion, robs his master and runs away, he will find a place for himself, the play implies, only as one of the "revolted tapsters" in Falstaff's company, men as good as dead long before they march to their deaths as upholders of the crown. Better that he should follow the drift of Hal's deliberately mystifying words and continue to clink pewter. As for the prince, his interest in the brief exchange, beyond what we have already sketched, is suggested by his boast to Poins moments before Francis enters: "I have sounded the very base-string of humility. Sirrah, I am sworn brother to a leash of drawers, and can call them all by their christen names, as Tom, Dick, and Francis" (2.4.5-8). The prince must sound the base-string of humility if he is to play all of the chords and hence be the master of the instrument, and his ability to conceal his motives and render opaque his language offers assurance that he himself will not be played on by another.

I have spoken of such scenes in *Henry IV* as resembling what in Harriot's text I have called *recording*, a mode that culminates for Harriot in a glossary, the beginnings of an Algonquian-English dictionary, designed to facilitate further acts of recording and hence to consolidate English power in Virginia. The resemblance may be seen most clearly perhaps in Hal's own glossary of tavern slang: "They call drinking deep, dyeing scarlet, and when you breathe in your watering, they cry 'hem!' and bid you play it off. To conclude, I am so good a proficient in one quarter of an hour, that I can drink with any tinker in his own language during my life" (2.4.15-20). The potential value of these lessons, the functional interest to power of recording the speech of an "under-sinker" and his mates, may be glimpsed in the expressions of loyalty that Hal laughingly recalls: "They take it already upon their salvation, that . . . when I am King of England I shall command all the good lads in Eastcheap" (2.4.9-15).

It may be objected that there is something slightly absurd in likening such moments to aspects of Harriot's text; *Henry IV* is a play, not a tract for potential investors in a colonial scheme, and the only values we may be sure Shakespeare had in mind, the argument would go, are theatrical values. But theatrical values do not exist in a realm of privileged literariness, of textual or even institutional self-referentiality. Shakespeare's theater was not isolated by its wooden walls, nor did it merely reflect social and ideo-

logical forces that lay entirely outside it: rather the Elizabethan and Jacobean theater was itself a *social event* in reciprocal contact with other social events.

One might add that *1 Henry IV* itself insists upon the impossibility of sealing off the interests of the theater from the interests of power. Hal's characteristic activity is playing or, more precisely, theatrical improvisation—his parts include his father, Hotspur, Hotspur's wife, a thief in buckram, himself as prodigal, and himself as penitent—and he fully understands his own behavior through most of the play as a role that he is performing. We might expect that this role playing gives way at the end to his true identity: "I shall hereafter," Hal has promised his father, "Be more myself" (3.2.92–93). With the killing of Hotspur, however, Hal clearly does not reject all theatrical masks but rather replaces one with another. "The time will come," Hal declares midway through the play, "That I shall make this northern youth exchange/His glorious deeds for my indignities" (3.2.144–46); when that time *has* come, at the play's close, Hal hides with his "favours" (that is, a scarf or other emblem, but the word *favor* also has in the sixteenth century the sense of "face") the dead Hotspur's "mangled face" (5.4.96), as if to mark the completion of the exchange.

Theatricality, then, is not set over against power but is one of power's essential modes. In lines that anticipate Hal's promise, the angry Henry IV tells Worcester, "I will from henceforth rather be myself, /Mighty and to be fear'd, than my condition" (1.3.5–6). "To be oneself" here means to perform one's part in the scheme of power rather than to manifest one's natural disposition, or what we would normally designate as the very core of the self. Indeed it is by no means clear that such a thing as a natural disposition exists in the play except as a theatrical fiction: we recall that in Falstaff's hands the word *instinct* becomes histrionic rhetoric, an improvised excuse for his flight from the masked prince. "Beware instinct—the lion will not touch the true prince. Instinct is a great matter: I was now a coward on instinct. I shall think the better of myself, and thee, during my life; I for a valiant lion, and thou for a true prince" (2.4.271–75). Both claims—Falstaff's to natural valor, Hal's to legitimate royalty—are, the lines darkly imply, of equal merit.

Again and again in *1 Henry IV* we are tantalized by the possibility of an escape from theatricality and hence from the constant pressure

instinct of
power and
more of power:
an improvisation
show

of improvisational power, but we are, after all, in the theater, and our pleasure depends upon there being no escape, and our applause ratifies the triumph of our confinement. The play operates in the manner of its central character, charming us with its visions of breadth and solidarity, "redeeming" itself in the end by betraying our hopes, and earning with this betrayal our slightly anxious admiration. Hence the odd balance in this play of spaciousness—the constant multiplication of separate, vividly realized realms—and militant claustrophobia: the absorption of all of these realms by a power at once vital and impoverished. The balance is almost perfect, as if Shakespeare had somehow reached through in *1 Henry IV* to the very center of the system of opposed and interlocking forces that held Tudor society together.

iii

When we turn, however, to the plays that continue the chronicle of Hal's career, *2 Henry IV* and *Henry V*, we find not only that the forces balanced in the earlier play have pulled apart—the claustrophobia triumphant in *2 Henry IV*, the spaciousness triumphant in *Henry V*⁴²—but that from this new perspective the familiar view of *1 Henry IV* as a perfectly poised play must be revised. What appeared as "balance" may on closer inspection seem like radical instability tricked out as moral or aesthetic order; what appeared as clarity may seem now like a conjurer's trick concealing confusion in order to buy time and stave off the collapse of an illusion.⁴³ Not waving but drowning.

In *2 Henry IV* the characteristic operations of power are less equivocal than they had been in the preceding play: there is no longer even the lingering illusion of distinct realms, each with its own system of values, its soaring visions of plenitude, and its bad dreams. There is manifestly a single system now, one based on predation and betrayal. Hotspur's intoxicating dreams of honor are dead, replaced by the cold rebellion of cunning but impotent schemers. The warm, roistering noise overheard in the tavern—noise that seemed to signal a subversive alternative to rebellion—turns out to be the sound of a whore and a bully beating a customer to death. And Falstaff, whose earlier larcenies were gilded by fanta-

sies of innate grace, now talks of turning diseases to commodity (1.2.248).

Only Prince Hal seems in this play less merely calculating, subject now to fits of weariness and confusion, though this change serves less to humanize him (as Auerbach argued in a famous essay) than to make it clear that the betrayals are systematic. They happen to him and for him. He need no longer soliloquize his intention to "falsify men's hopes" by selling his wastrel friends: the sale will be brought about by the structure of things, a structure grasped in this play under the twinned names of time and necessity. So too there is no longer any need for heroic combat with a dangerous, glittering enemy like Hotspur (the only reminder of whose voice in this play is Pistol's parody of Marlovian swaggering): the rebels are deftly, if ingloriously, dispatched by the false promises of Hal's younger brother, the primly virtuous John of Lancaster. To seal his lies, Lancaster swears fittingly "by the honor of my blood" (4.2.55)—the cold blood, as Falstaff observes of Hal, that he inherited from his father.

The recording of alien voices—the voices of those who have no power to leave literate traces of their existence—continues in this play, but without even the theatrical illusion of princely complicity. The king is still convinced that his son is a prodigal and that the kingdom will fall to ruin after his death—perhaps he finds a peculiar consolation in the thought—but it is no longer Hal alone who declares (against all appearances) his secret commitment to disciplinary authority. Warwick assures the king that the prince's interests in the good lads of Eastcheap are entirely what they should be:

The Prince but studies his companions
Like a strange tongue, wherein, to gain the language,
'Tis needful that the most immodest word
Be look'd upon and learnt, which once attain'd,
Your Highness knows, comes to no further use
But to be known and hated. So, like gross terms,
The Prince will in the perfectness of time
Cast off his followers, and their memory
Shall as a pattern or a measure live,
By which his Grace must mete the lives of other,
Turning past evils to advantages.

(4.4.68-78)

At first the language analogy likens the prince's low-life excursions to the search for proficiency: perfect linguistic competence, the "mastery" of a language, requires the fullest possible vocabulary. But the darkness of Warwick's words—"to be known and hated"—immediately pushes the goal of Hal's linguistic researches beyond proficiency. When in 1 *Henry IV* Hal boasts of his mastery of tavern slang, we are allowed for a moment at least to imagine that we are witnessing a social bond, the human fellowship of the extreme top and bottom of society in a homely ritual act of drinking together. The play may make it clear, as I have argued, that well-defined political interests are involved, but these interests may be bracketed, if only briefly, for the pleasure of imagining what Victor Turner calls "communitas"—a union based on the momentary breaking of the hierarchical order that normally governs a community.⁴⁴ And even when we pull back from this spacious sense of union, we are permitted for much of the play to take pleasure at least in Hal's surprising skill, the proficiency he rightly celebrates in himself.

To learn another language is to acknowledge the existence of another people and to acquire the ability to function, however crudely, in another social world. Hal's remark about drinking with any tinker in his own language suggests, if only jocularly, that for him the lower classes are virtually another people, an alien tribe—immensely more populous than his own—within the kingdom. That this perception extended beyond the confines of Shakespeare's play is suggested by the evidence that middle- and upper-class English settlers in the New World regarded the American Indians less as another race than as a version of their own lower classes; one man's tinker is another man's Indian.⁴⁵

If Hal's glossary initially seems to resemble Harriot's practical word list in the *Brief and True Report*, with its Algonquian equivalents for *fire, food, shelter*, Warwick's account of Hal's intentions suggests a deeper resemblance to a different kind of glossary, one more specifically linked to the attempt to understand and control the lower classes. I refer to the sinister glossaries appended to sixteenth-century accounts of criminals and vagabonds. "Here I set before the good reader the lewd, lousy language of these loitering lunks and lazy lorels," announces Thomas Harman as he intro-

duces (with a comical flourish designed to display his own rhetorical gifts) what he claims is an authentic list, compiled at great personal cost.⁴⁶ His pamphlet, *A Careat for Common Cursitors*, is the fruit, he declares, of personal research, difficult because his informants are "marvellous subtle and crafty." But "with fair flattering words, money, and good cheer," he has learned much about their ways, "not without faithful promise made unto them never to discover their names or anything they showed me" (82). Harman cheerfully goes on to publish what they showed him, and he ends his work not only with a glossary of "peddler's French" but with an alphabetical list of names, so that the laws made for "the extreme punishment" of these wicked idlers may be enforced.

It is not clear that Harman's subjects—upright men, doxies, Abraham men, and the like—bear any more relation to social reality than either Doll Tearsheet or Mistress Quickly.⁴⁷ Much of the Careat, like the other cony-catching pamphlets of the period, has the air of a jest book: time-honored tales of tricksters and rogues, dished out as realistic observation. (It is not encouraging that the rogues' term for the stocks in which they were punished, according to Harman, is "the harmans.") But Harman is concerned to convey at least the impression of accurate observation and recording—clearly, this was among the book's selling points—and one of the principal rhetorical devices he uses to do so is the spice of betrayal: he repeatedly calls attention to his solemn promises never to reveal anything he has been told, for his breaking of his word assures the accuracy and importance of what he reveals.

A middle-class Prince Hal, Harman claims that through disseminating he has gained access to a world normally hidden from his kind, and he will turn that access to the advantage of the kingdom by helping his readers to identify and eradicate the dissemlers in their midst. Harman's own personal interventions—the acts of detection and apprehension he proudly reports (or invents)—are not enough; only his book can fully expose the cunning sleights of the rogues and thereby induce the justices and shrieves to be more vigilant and punitive. Just as theatricality is thematized in the Henry IV plays as one of the crucial agents of royal power, so in A Careat for Common Cursitors (and in much of the cony-catching literature of the period in England and France) printing is represented in the text itself as a force for social order and the detection of criminal

fraud. The printed book can be widely disseminated and easily revised, so that the vagabonds' names and tricks may be known before they themselves arrive at an honest citizen's door; as if this mobility were not tangible enough, Harman claims that when his pamphlet was only halfway printed, his printer helped him apprehend a particularly sly "counterfeit crank"—a pretended epileptic. In Harman's account the printer turns detective, first running down the street to apprehend the dissemler, then on a subsequent occasion luring him "with fair allusions" (116) and a show of charity into the hands of the constable. With such lurid tales Harman literalizes the power of the book to hunt down vagabonds and bring them to justice.

The danger of such accounts is that the ethical charge will reverse itself, with the forces of order—the people, as it were, of the book—revealed as themselves dependent on dissembling and betrayal and the vagabonds revealed either as less fortunate and well-protected imitators of their betters or, alternatively, as primitive rebels against the hypocrisy of a cruel society. Exactly such a reversal seems to occur again and again in the rogue literature of the period, from the doxies and morts who answer Harman's rebukes with unflinching, if spare, dignity to the more articulate defenders of vice elsewhere who insist that their lives are at worst imitations of the lives of the great:

Though your experience in the world be not so great as mine [says a cheater at dice], yet am I sure ye see that no man is able to live an honest man unless he have some privy way to help himself withal, more than the world is witness of. Think you the noblemen could do as they do, if in this hard world they should maintain so great a port only upon their rent? Think you the lawyers could be such purchasers if their pleas were short, and all their judgements, justice and conscience? Suppose ye that offices would be so dearly bought, and the buyers so soon enriched, if they counted not pillage an honest point of purchase? Could merchants, without lies, false making their wares, and selling them by a crooked light, to deceive the chapman in the thread or colour, grow so soon rich and to a baron's possessions, and make all their posterity gentlemen?⁴⁸

Though these reversals are at the very heart of the rogue literature, it would be as much of a mistake to regard their intended effect as subversive as to regard in a similar light the comparable passages—most often articulated by Falstaff—in Shakespeare's his-

stories. The subversive voices are produced by and within the affirmations of order; they are powerfully registered, but they do not undermine that order. Indeed, as the example of Harman—so much cruder than Shakespeare—suggests, the order is neither possible nor fully convincing without both the presence and perception of betrayal.

This dependence on betrayal does not prevent Harman from leveling charges of hypocrisy and deep dissembling at the rogues and from urging his readers to despise and prosecute them. On the contrary, Harman's moral indignation seems paradoxically heightened by his own implication in the deceitfulness that he condemns, as if the rhetorical violence of the condemnation cleansed him of any guilt. His broken promises are acts of civility, necessary strategies for securing social well-being. The "rowsy, ragged rabblement of rakehells" has put itself outside the bounds of civil conversation; justice consists precisely in taking whatever measures are necessary to eradicate them. Harman's false oaths are the means of identifying and ridding the community of the purveyors of false oaths. The pestilent few will "fret, fume, swear, and stare at this my book," in which their practices, disclosed after they had received fair promises of confidentiality, are laid open, but the majority will band together in righteous reproach: "The honourable will abhor them, the worshipful will reject them, the yeomen will sharply taunt them, the husbandmen utterly defy them, the labouring men bluntly chide them, the women with clapping hands cry out at them" (84). To like reading about vagabonds is to hate them and to approve of their ruthless betrayal.

"The right people of the play," a gifted critic of *2 Henry IV* observes, "merge into a larger order; the wrong people resist or misuse that larger order."⁴⁹ True enough, but like Harman's community of vagabond-haters, the "larger order" of the Lancastrian state in this play seems to batten on the breaking of oaths. Shakespeare does not shrink from any of the felt nastiness implicit in this sorting out of the right people and the wrong people; he takes the discursive mode that he could have found in Harman and a hundred other texts and intensifies it, so that the founding of the modern state, like the self-fashioning of the modern prince, is shown to be based upon acts of calculation, intimidation, and de-

cent. And these acts are performed in an entertainment for which audiences, the subjects of this very state, pay money and applaud.

There is, throughout *2 Henry IV*, a sense of constriction that is only intensified by the obsessive enumeration of details: "Thou didst swear to me upon a parcel-gilt goblet, sitting in my Dolphin chamber, at the round table by a sea-coal fire, upon Wednesday in Wheeson week . . ." (2.1.86–89). We may find, in Justice Shallow's garden, a few twilight moments of release from this oppressive circumstantial and strategic constriction, but Falstaff mercilessly deflates them—and the puncturing is so wonderfully adroit, so amusing, that we welcome it: "I do remember him at Clement's Inn, like a man made after supper of a cheese-paring. When 'a was naked, he was for all the world like a fork'd redish, with a head fantastically carv'd upon it with a knife" (3.2.308–12).

What remains is the law of nature: the strong eat the weak. Yet this is not quite what Shakespeare invites the audience to affirm through its applause. Like Harman, Shakespeare refuses to endorse so baldly cynical a conception of the social order; instead actions that should have the effect of radically undermining authority turn out to be the props of that authority. In this play, even more cruelly than in *1 Henry IV*, moral values—justice, order, civility—are secured through the apparent generation of their subversive contraries. Out of the squalid betrayals that preserve the state emerges the "formal majesty" into which Hal at the close, through a final, definitive betrayal—the rejection of Falstaff—merges himself.

There are moments in *Richard II* when the collapse of kingship seems to be confirmed in the discovery of the physical body of the ruler, the pathos of his creatural existence:

throw away respect,
Tradition, form, and ceremonious duty,
For you have but mistook me all this while.
I live with bread like you, feel want,
Taste grief, need friends: subjected thus,
How can you say to me I am a king?

(3.2.172–77)

By the close of *2 Henry IV* such physical limitations have been absorbed into the ideological structure, and hence justification, of kingship. It is precisely because Prince Hal lives with bread that we

can understand the sacrifice that he and, for that matter, his father have made. Unlike Richard II, Henry IV articulates this sacrifice not as a piece of histrionic rhetoric but as a private meditation, the innermost thoughts of a troubled, weary man:

Why rather, sleep, lest thou in smoky cribs,
Upon uneasy pallets stretching thee,
And hush'd with buzzing night-flies to thy slumber,
Than in the perfum'd chambers of the great,
Under the canopies of costly state,
And hush'd with sound of sweetest melody?
(3.1.9-14)

Who knows? Perhaps it is even true: perhaps in a society in which the overwhelming majority of men and women had next to nothing, the few who were rich and powerful did lie awake at night. But we should understand that this sleeplessness was not a well-kept secret: the sufferings of the great are one of the familiar themes in the literature of the governing classes in the sixteenth century.⁵⁰ Henry IV speaks in soliloquy, but as is so often the case in Shakespeare, his isolation only intensifies the sense that he is addressing a large audience: the audience of the theater. We are invited to take measure of his suffering, to understand—here and elsewhere in the play—the costs of power. And we are invited to understand these costs in order to ratify the power, to accept the grotesque and cruelly unequal distribution of possessions: everything to the few, nothing to the many. The rulers earn, or at least pay for, their exalted position through suffering, and this suffering ennobles, if it does not exactly cleanse, the lies and betrayals upon which this position depends.

As so often, Falstaff parodies this ideology, or rather—and more significantly—presents it as humbug *before* it makes its appearance as official truth. Called away from the tavern to the court, Falstaff turns to Doll and Mistress Quickly and proclaims sentimentously: “You see, my good wenches, how men of merit are sought after. The undeserver may sleep when the man of action is call’d on” (2.4.374–77). Seconds later this rhetoric—marked out as something with which to impress whores and innkeepers to whom one owes money one does not intend to pay—reurs in the speech and, by convention of the soliloquy, the innermost thoughts of the king.

This staging of what we may term anticipatory, or proleptic, parody is a major structural principle of Shakespeare’s play. Its effect is not (as with straightforward parodies) to ridicule the claims of high seriousness but rather to mark them as slightly suspect and to encourage guarded skepticism. Thus in the wake of Falstaff’s burlesque of the weariness of the virtuous, the king’s insomniac pathos reverberates hollowness as well as poignancy. At such moments *Henry IV* seems to be testing and confirming a dark and disturbing hypothesis about the nature of monarchical power in England: that its moral authority rests upon a hypocrisy so deep that the hypocrites themselves believe it. “Then (happy) low, lie down! / Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown” (3.1.30–31): so the old pike tells the young dace. But the old pike actually seems to believe in his own speeches, just as he may believe that he never really sought the crown, “But that necessity so bow’d the state / That I and greatness were compell’d to kiss” (3.1.73–74). Our privileged knowledge of the network of state betrayals and privileged access to Falstaff’s cynical wisdom can make this opaque hypocrisy transparent. Yet even with *Henry IV*, where the lies and the self-serving sentiments are utterly inescapable, where the illegitimacy of legitimate authority is repeatedly demonstrated, where the whole state seems—to adapt More’s phrase—a conspiracy of the great to enrich and protect their interests under the name of commonwealth, even here the state, watchful for signs of sedition on the stage, was not prodded to intervene. We may choose to attribute this apparent somnolence to incompetence or corruption, but the linkages I have sketched between the history plays and the discursive practices represented by Harriot and Harman suggest another explanation. Once again, though in a still more iron-age spirit than at the close of *Henry IV*, the play appears to ratify the established order, with the new-crowned Henry V merging his body into “the great body of our state,” with Falstaff despised and rejected, and with Lancaster—the coldhearted betrayer of the rebels—left to admire his still more coldhearted brother: “I like this fair proceeding of the King’s” (5.5.97).⁵¹

The mood at the close remains, to be sure, an unpleasant one—the rejection of Falstaff has been one of the nagging “problems” of Shakespeare criticism—but the discomfort only serves to verify Hal’s claim that he has turned away his former self. If there is

frustration at the harshness of the play's end, the frustration confirms a carefully plotted official strategy whereby subversive perceptions are at once produced and contained:

My father is gone wild into his grave;
For in his tomb lie my affections,
And with his spirits sadly I survive,
To mock the expectation of the world,
To frustrate prophecies, and to rase out
Rotten opinion. . . .

(5.2.123-28)

iv

The first part of *Henry IV* enables us to feel at moments that we are like Harriot, surveying a complex new world, testing upon it dark thoughts without damaging the order that those thoughts would seem to threaten. The second part of *Henry IV* suggests that we are still more like the Indians, compelled to pay homage to a system of beliefs whose fraudulence only confirms their power, authenticity, and truth. The concluding play in the series, *Henry V*, insists that we have all along been both colonizer and colonized, king and subject. The play deftly registers every nuance of royal hypocrisy, ruthlessness, and bad faith—testing, in effect, the proposition that successful rule depends not upon sacredness but upon demonic violence—but it does so in the context of a celebration, a collective panegyric to “This star of England,” the charismatic leader who purges the commonwealth of its incorrigibles and forges the martial national state.

By yoking together diverse peoples—represented in the play by the Welshman Fluellen, the Irishman Macmorris, and the Scotsman Jamy, who fight at Agincourt alongside the loyal Englishmen—Hal symbolically tames the last wild areas in the British Isles, areas that in the sixteenth century represented, far more powerfully than any New World people, the doomed outposts of a vanishing tribalism.⁵² We might expect then that in *Henry V* the mode that I have called recording would reach its fullest flowering, and in a sense it does. The English allies are each given a distinct accentual notation—“a utt’ red as prave words at the pridge as you shall see in a summer’s day”; “By Chrish law, ‘tish ill done! The work ish give over”; “It sall

be vary gud, gud feith, gud captens bath, and I sall quit you with gud leve”—a notation that helped determine literary representations of the stock Welshman, Irishman, and Scotsman for centuries to come. But their distinctness is curiously formal, a collection of mechanistic attributes recalling the heightened but static individuality of Jonson’s humorous grotesques.

The verbal tics of such characters interest us because they represent not what is alien but what is predictable and automatic. They give pleasure because they persuade an audience of its own mobility and complexity; even a spectator gaping passively at the play’s sights and manipulated by its rhetoric is freer than these puppets jerked on the strings of their own absurd accents. Only Fluellen (much of the time an exuberant, bullying prince-pleaser) seems at one moment to articulate perceptions that lie outside the official line, and he arrives at these perceptions not through his foreignness but through his relentless pursuit of classical analogies. Teasing out a Plutarch-like parallel between Hal and “Alexander the Pig”—“There is a river in Macedon, and there is also moreover a river at Mommouth,” and so forth—Fluellen reaches the observation that Alexander “did, in his ales and his angers, look you, kill his best friend, Clytus.” Gower quickly intervenes: “Our King is not like him in that; he never kill’d any of his friends.” But Fluellen persists: “as Alexander kill’d his friend Clytus, being in his ales and his cups; so also Harry Mommouth, being in his right wits and his good judgments, turn’d away the fat knight with the great belly doublet. He was full of jests, and gipes, and knaveries, and mocks—I have forgot his name.” Gower provides it: “Sir John Falstaff” (4.7.26-51).

The moment is potentially devastating. The comparison with drunken Alexander focuses all our perceptions of Hal’s sober cold-bloodedness, from his rejection of Falstaff—“The King has kill’d his heart” (2.1.88)—to his responsibility for the execution of his erstwhile boon companion Bardolph. The low-life characters in the earlier plays had been the focus of Hal’s language lessons, but as Warwick had predicted, the prince studied them as “gross terms,” no sooner learned than discarded.

The discarding in *Henry V* is not an attractive sight but is perfectly consistent with the practice we have analyzed in Harman’s *Caveat*. Indeed in a direct recollection of the cony-catching litera-

“all men are created equal”

ture, Fluellen learns that Pistol, whom he had thought "as valiant a man as Mark Antony" (3.6.13-14), is "a rogue, that now and then goes to the wars, to grace himself at his return into London under the form of a soldier" (3.6.67-69). "You must learn to know such slanders of the age," remarks Gower in a line that could serve as Harman's epigraph, "or else you may be marvellously mistook" (3.6.79-81). And how does Fluellen learn that Pistol is one of the slanders of the age? What does Pistol do to give himself away? He passionately pleads that Fluellen intervene to save Bardolph, who has been sentenced to die for stealing a "pax of little price." "Let gallows gape for dog, let man go free," rages Pistol, "And let not hemp his windpipe suffocate" (3.6.42-43). Fluellen refuses; Bardolph hangs; and this attempt to save his friend's life marks Pistol as a "rascally, scald, beggarly, lousy, praggling knave" (5.1.5-6). By contrast, Hal's symbolic killing of Falstaff—which might have been recorded as a bitter charge against him—is advanced by Fluellen as the climactic manifestation of his virtues. No sooner is it mentioned than the king himself enters in triumph, leading his French prisoners. This entrance, with its military "Alarm" followed by a royal "Flourish," is the perfect emblematic instance of a potential dissonance being absorbed into a charismatic celebration. The betrayal of friends does not subvert but rather sustains the moral authority and the compelling glamour of power. That authority, as the play defines it, is precisely the ability to betray one's friends without stain.

If neither the English allies nor the low-life characters seem to fulfill adequately the role of aliens whose voices are "recorded," *Henry V* apparently gives us a sustained, even extreme, version of this practice in the dialogue of the French characters, dialogue that is in part presented untranslated in the performance. This dialogue includes even a language lesson, the very emblem of "recording" in the earlier plays. Yet like the English allies, the French enemies say remarkably little that is alien or disturbing in relation to the central voice of authority in the play. To be sure, several of the French nobles contemptuously dismiss Hal as "a vain, giddy, shallow, humorous youth" (2.4.28), but these terms of abuse are outmoded; it is as if news of the end of *Henry IV* or of its sequel had not yet crossed the Channel. Likewise, the easy French assumption of cultural and

social superiority to the English—"The emptying of our fathers' luxury, / Our scions, put in wild and savage stock" (3.5.6-7)—is voiced only to be deflated by the almost miraculous English victory. The glamour of French aristocratic culture is not denied (see, for example, the litany of noble names beginning at 3.5.40), but it issues in overweening self-confidence and a military impotence that is explicitly thematized as sexual impotence. The French warriors "hang like roping icicles / Upon our houses' thatch," while the English "Sweat drops of gallant youth in our rich fields!" (3.5.23-25). In consequence, complains the Dauphin,

Our madams mock at us, and plainly say
Our mettle is bred out, and they will give
Their bodies to the lust of English youth.
(3.5.28-30)

Thus the affirmation of French superiority is immediately reprocessed as an enhancement of English potency. By the play's close, with a self-conscious gesture toward the conventional ending of a comedy, the sexualized violence of the invasion is transfigured and tamed in Hal's wooing of Princess Katherine: "I love France so well that I will not part with a village of it; I will have it all mine. And, Kate, when France is mine and I am yours, then yours is France and you are mine" (5.2.173-76). Acknowledgment of the other has now issued in the complete absorption of the other.

As for the language lesson, it is no longer Hal but the French princess who is the student. There is always a slight amusement in hearing one's own language spoken badly, a gratifying sense of possessing effortlessly what for others is a painful achievement. This sense is mingled at times with a condescending encouragement of the childish efforts of the inept learner, at times with delight at the inadvertent absurdities or indecencies into which the learner stumbles. (I spent several minutes in Bergamo once convulsing passersby with requests for directions to the Colleone Chapel. It was not until much later that I realized that I was pronouncing it the "Coghion!"—"Balls"—Chapel.) In *Henry V* the pleasure is intensified because the French princess is by implication learning English as a consequence of the successful English invasion, an invasion graphically figured as a rape. And the pleas-

ing sense of national and specifically male superiority is crowned by the comic spectacle of the obscenities into which the princess is inadvertently led.⁵³

If the subversive force of "recording" is substantially reduced in *Henry V*, the mode I have called explaining is by contrast intensified in its power to disturb. The war of conquest that Henry V launches against the French is depicted as carefully founded on acts of "explaining." The play opens with a notoriously elaborate account of the king's genealogical claim to the French throne, and, as in the comparable instances in Harriot, this ideological justification of English policy is an unsettling mixture of "impeccable" reasoning (once its initial premises are accepted) and gross self-interest.⁵⁴ In the ideological apologies for absolutism, the self-interest of the monarch and the interest of the nation are identical, and both in turn are secured by God's overarching design. Hence Hal's personal triumph at Agincourt is represented as the nation's triumph, which in turn is represented as God's triumph. When the deliciously favorable kill ratio—ten thousand French dead compared to twenty-nine English⁵⁵—is reported to the king, he immediately gives "full trophy, signal, and ostent," as the Chorus later puts it, to God: "Take it, God, / For it is none but thine!" (4.8.11-12).

Hal evidently thinks this explanation of the English victory—this translation of its cause and significance from human to divine agency—needs some reinforcement:

And be it death proclaimed through our host
To boast of this, or take that praise from God
Which is his only.

(4.8.114-116)

By such an edict God's responsibility for the slaughter of the French is enforced, and with it is assured at least the glow of divine approval over the entire enterprise, from the complex genealogical claims to the execution of traitors, the invasion of France, the threats leveled against civilians, the massacre of the prisoners. Yet there is something disconcerting as well as reinforcing about this draconian mode of ensuring that God receive credit: with a strategic circularity at once compelling and suspect, God's credit for the killing can be guaranteed only by the threat of more killing. The element of compulsion would no doubt predominate if the audi-

ence's own survival were at stake—the few Elizabethans who openly challenged the theological pretensions of the great found themselves in deep trouble—but were the stakes this high in the theater? Was it not possible inside the playhouse walls to question certain claims elsewhere unquestionable?

A few years earlier, at the close of *The Jew of Malta*, Marlowe had cast a witheringly ironic glance, worthy of Machiavelli, at the piety of the triumphant: Renneze's gift to God of the "trophy, signal, and ostent" of the successful betrayal of Barabas is the final bitter joke of a bitter play. Shakespeare does not go so far. But he does take pains to call attention to the problem of invoking a God of battles, let alone enforcing the invocation by means of the death penalty. On the eve of Agincourt, the soldier Williams had responded unenthusiastically to the disguised king's claim that his cause was good: But if the cause be not good, the King himself hath a heavy reckoning to make, when all those legs, and arms, and heads, chopp'd off in a battle, shall join together at the latter day and cry all, "We died at such a place"—some swearing, some crying for a surgeon, some upon their wives left poor behind them, some upon the debts they owe, some upon their children rawly left. I am afraid there are few die well that die in a battle, for how can they charitably dispose of any thing, when blood is their argument? (4.1.134-43)

To this the king replies with a string of awkward "explanations" designed to show that "the King is not bound to answer the particular endings of his soldiers" (4.1.155-56)—as if death in battle were a completely unforeseen accident or, alternatively, as if each soldier killed were being punished by God for a hidden crime or, again, as if war were a religious blessing, an "advantage" to a soldier able to "wash every mote out of his conscience" (4.1.179-80). Not only are these explanations mutually contradictory, but they cast long shadows on the king himself. For in the wake of this scene, as the dawn is breaking, Hal pleads nervously with God not to think—at least "not to-day"—upon the crime from which he has benefited: his father's deposition and killing of Richard II. The king calls attention to all the expensive and ingratiating ritual acts that he has instituted to compensate for the murder of the divinely anointed ruler—reinterment of the corpse, five hundred poor "in yearly pay" to plead twice daily for pardon, two chantries where priests say mass for Richard's soul—and he promises to do more.

Yet in a moment that anticipates Claudius's inadequate repentance of old Hamlet's murder, inadequate since he is "still possess'd / Of those effects" for which the crime was committed (*Hamlet* 3.3.53-54), Hal acknowledges that these expiatory rituals and even "con-
trite tears" are worthless:

Though all that I can do is nothing worth,
Since that my penitence comes after all,
Imploring pardon.

(4.1.303-5)⁵⁶

If by nightfall Hal is threatening to execute anyone who denies God full credit for the astonishing English victory, the preceding scenes would seem to have fully exposed the ideological and psychological mechanisms behind such compulsion, its roots in violence, magical propitiation and bad conscience. The pattern disclosed here is one we have glimpsed in 2 *Henry IV*: we witness an anticipatory subversion of each of the play's central claims. The archbishop of Canterbury spins out an endless public justification for an invasion he has privately confessed would relieve financial pressure on the church; Hal repeatedly warns his victims that they are bringing pillage and rape upon themselves, but he speaks as the head of the invading army that is about to pillage and rape them; Gower claims that the king has ordered the killing of the prisoners in retaliation for the attack on the baggage train, but we have just been shown that the king's order preceded that attack.⁵⁷ Similarly, Hal's meditation on the sufferings of the great—"What infinite heart's ease / Must kings neglect, that private men enjoy!" (4.1.236-37)—suffers from his being almost single-handedly responsible for a war that by his own earlier account and that of the enemy is causing immense civilian misery. And after watching a scene in which anxious, frightened troops sleeplessly await the dawn, it is difficult to be fully persuaded by Hal's climactic vision of the "slave" and "peasant" sleeping comfortably, little knowing "What watch the King keeps to maintain the peace" (4.1.283).

This apparent subversion of the monarch's glorification has led some critics since Hazlitt to view the panegyric as bitterly ironic or to argue, more plausibly, that Shakespeare's depiction of Henry V is radically ambiguous.⁵⁸ But in the light of Harriot's *Brief and True Report*, we may suggest that the subversive doubts the play con-

tinually awakens originate paradoxically in an effort to intensify the power of the king and his war. The effect is bound up with the reversal that we have noted several times—the great events and speeches all occur twice: the first time as fraud, the second as truth. The intimations of bad faith are real enough, but they are deferred—deferred until after Essex's campaign in Ireland, after Elizabeth's reign, after the monarchy itself as a significant political institution. Deferred indeed even today, for in the wake of full-scale ironic readings and at a time when it no longer seems to matter very much, it is not at all clear that *Henry V* can be successfully performed as subversive.

The problem with any attempt to do so is that the play's central figure seems to feed on the doubts he provokes. For the enhancement of royal power is not only a matter of the deferral of doubt: the very doubts that Shakespeare raises serve not to rob the king of his charisma but to heighten it, precisely as they heighten the theatrical interest of the play; the unequivocal, unambiguous celebrations of royal power with which the period abounds have no theatrical force and have long since fallen into oblivion. The charismatic authority of the king, like that of the stage, depends upon falsification.

The audience's tension, then, enhances its attention; prodded by constant reminders of a gap between real and ideal, the spectators are induced to make up the difference, to invest in the illusion of magnificence, to be dazzled by their own imaginary identification with the conqueror. The ideal king must be in large part the invention of the audience, the product of a will to conquer that is revealed to be identical to a need to submit. *Henry V* is remarkably self-conscious about this dependence upon the audience's powers of invention. The prologue's opening lines invoke a form of theater radically unlike the one that is about to unfold: "A kingdom for a stage, princes to act, / And monarchs to behold the swelling scene!" (3-4). In such a theater-state there would be no social distinction between the king and the spectator, the performer and the audience; all would be royal, and the role of the performance would be to transform not an actor into a king but a king into a god: "Then should the warlike Harry, like himself, / Assume the port of Mars" (5-6). This is in effect the fantasy acted out in royal masques, but Shakespeare is intensely aware that his play is not a courtly enter-

tainment, that his actors are "flat unraised spirits," and that his spectators are hardly monarchs—"gentles all," he calls them, with fine flattery.⁵⁹ "Let us," the prologue begs the audience, "On your imaginary forces work. . . . For 'tis your thoughts that now must deck our kings" (17-18, 28). This "must" is cast in the form of an appeal and an apology—the consequence of the miserable limitations of "this unworthy scaffold"—but the necessity extends, I suggest, beyond the stage: all kings are "decked" out by the imaginary forces of the spectators, and a sense of the limitations of king or theater only excites a more compelling exercise of those forces.

Power belongs to whoever can command and profit from this exercise of the imagination, hence the celebration of the charismatic ruler whose imperfections we are invited at once to register and to "piece out" (Prologue, 23). Hence too the underlying complicity throughout these plays between the prince and the playwright, a complicity complicated but never effaced by a strong counter-current of identification with Falstaff. In Hal, Shakespeare fashions a compelling emblem of the playwright as sovereign "juggler," the minter of counterfeit coins, the genial master of illusory subversion and redemptive betrayal. To understand Shakespeare's conception of Hal, from rakehell to monarch, we need in effect a poetics of Elizabethan power, and this in turn will prove inseparable, in crucial respects, from a poetics of the theater. Testing, recording, and explaining are elements in this poetics, which is inseparably bound up with the figure of Queen Elizabeth, a ruler without a standing army, without a highly developed bureaucracy, without an extensive police force, a ruler whose power is constituted in theatrical celebrations of royal glory and theatrical violence visited upon the enemies of that glory. Power that relies on a massive police apparatus, a strong middle-class nuclear family, an elaborate school system, power that dreams of a panopticon in which the most intimate secrets are open to the view of an invisible authority—such power will have as its appropriate aesthetic form the realist novel.⁶⁰ Elizabethan power, by contrast, depends upon its privileged visibility. As in a theater, the audience must be powerfully engaged by this visible presence and at the same time held at a respectful distance from it. "We princes," Elizabeth told a deputation of Lords and Commons in 1586, "are set on stages in the sight and view of all the world."⁶¹

Royal power is manifested to its subjects as in a theater, and the subjects are at once absorbed by the instructive, delightful, or terrible spectacles and forbidden intervention or deep intimacy. The play of authority depends upon spectators—"For 'tis your thoughts that now must deck our kings"—but the performance is made to seem entirely beyond the control of those whose "imaginary forces" actually confer upon it its significance and force. These matters, Thomas More imagines the common people saying of one such spectacle, "be king's games, as it were stage plays, and for the more part played upon scaffolds. In which poor men be but the lookers-on. And they that wise be will meddle no farther."⁶² Within this theatrical setting, there is a notable insistence upon the paradoxes, ambiguities, and tensions of authority, but this apparent production of subversion is, as we have already seen, the very condition of power. I should add that this condition is not a theoretical necessity of theatrical power in general but a historical phenomenon, the particular mode of this particular culture. "In sixteenth century England," writes Clifford Geertz, comparing Elizabethan and Majapahit royal progresses, "the political center of society was the point at which the tension between the passions that power excited and the ideals it was supposed to serve was screwed to its highest pitch. . . . In fourteenth century Java, the center was the point at which such tension disappeared in a blaze of cosmic symmetry."⁶³

It is precisely because of the English form of absolutist theatricality that Shakespeare's drama, written for a theater subject to state censorship, can be so relentlessly subversive: the form itself, as a primary expression of Renaissance power, helps to contain the radical doubts it continually provokes. Of course, what is for the state a mode of subversion contained can be for the theater a mode of containment subverted: there are moments in Shakespeare's career—*King Lear* is the greatest example⁶⁴—when the process of containment is strained to the breaking point. But the histories consistently pull back from such extreme pressure. Like Harriot in the New World, the Henry plays confirm the Machiavellian hypothesis that princely power originates in force and fraud even as they draw their audience toward an acceptance of that power. And we are free to locate and pay homage to the plays' doubts only because they no longer threaten us.⁶⁵ There is subversion, no end of subversion, only not for us.

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