

## "Invisible Bullets": Unseen Potential in Stephen Greenblatt's New Historicism

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In *Shakespearean Negotiations*, Stephen Greenblatt develops a praxis of literary analysis that attempts to rediscover literary texts as both the reflection and the creation of a given historical context. His intention, clearly, is "to look less at the presumed center of the literary domain than at its borders, to try to track what can only be glimpsed, as it were, at the margins of the text" (4). In his first chapter, Greenblatt defines this reciprocal process of historical influence and textual creation as the reflection of influences he identifies as "social energy" (4). He then applies this approach to seemingly unrelated texts, usually a chronicle and a play of the same period, to exemplify the trace of a particular form of social energy. It is very simple.

What is problematic about this approach is that its simplicity belies a much more complex historiography than Greenblatt's analyses will admit. It is not my intention to merely disprove parts of Stephen Greenblatt's theory and its application. Instead, I will attempt to refine his criteria for social energy and social practice by extending the conceptual and historiographical method. This will inform a more comprehensive reading of Greenblatt's primary examples, Thomas Harriot's *A Brief and True Report of the New Found Land of Virginia* (1588) and Shakespeare's *Henry V*, both featured in his second chapter, "Invisible Bullets." Before a critique of Greenblatt's strategy can be made, it is necessary to understand his criteria for social energy and the appropriation of symbols.

In "Social Energy," Greenblatt confesses his desire to "speak with the dead" (1). He intends to recreate a historical moment through analysis of contemporary texts that operate synchronously. This mo-

ment of shared historical context manifests itself through an economy of linguistic and, as such, cultural currency and its consumption. Through the texts of a given period, one can trace the effects of social energy (6); that is, "a subtle, elusive set of exchanges, a network of trade-offs, a jostling of competing representations, a negotiation between joint-stock companies" (7). These traces are extant in metaphor, symbol, synecdoche, and metonymy (11). He is not so much interested in whether a play accurately reflects a social institution, but whether there is an exchange between the play and a given institution:

Inquiries into the relation between Renaissance theater and society have been situated most often at the level of reflection: images of the monarchy, the lower classes, the legal profession, the church, and so forth. Such studies are essential, but they rarely engage questions of dynamic exchange. They tend instead to posit two separate, autonomous systems and then try to gauge how accurately or effectively the one represents the other (11).

The exchange of social energy is limited by what he lists as "certain abjurations": "1. There can be no appeals to genius as the sole origin of the energies of great art. 2. There can be no motiveless creation. 3. There can be no transcendent or timeless or unchanging representation. 4. There can be no autonomous artifacts. 5. There can be no expression without an origin and an object, a *from* and a *for*. 6. There can be no art without social energy. 7. There can be no spontaneous generation of social energy" (12). Although this rubric seems plausible, it assumes relationships that are tenuous at best, or non-existent at the worst.

Greenblatt's statement disallowing genius as the only source of the energy of art is ambiguous, if not unreasonable. If there is reciprocity of energy between society and the artist, then one of the two needs to initiate a particular discourse. Even if one were to suppose that "agents of exchange [...] appear to be individuals," but are "themselves the products of collective exchange" (12), there is artistic singularity that differentiates authors and the texts they produce. Indeed, the concept of symbolic acquisition presupposes such an exchange through artistic representation:

*Symbolic Acquisition.* Here a social practice or other mode of social energy is transferred to the stage by means of representation. No cash payment is made, but the object acquired is not in the realm of things indifferent, and something is implicitly or explicitly given in return for it. The transferring agency has its purposes, which may be more or less overt. (10)

Greenblatt's implicit or explicit "transferring agency" further questions his concept of the somewhat neutral artist. He admits "[t]here can be no expression without an origin and an object, a *from* and a *for*" (12).

The complex logical attempt to formulate art as the equal influences of the artist and society ultimately returns to the primary role of the artist. Accordingly, his concept of a "transferring agency" that recognizes an origin of some sort ultimately asks the question of artistic intention. Again, Greenblatt compromises his balance between artist and society by stating that "[t]here can be no motiveless creation" (12). From this point forward he uses the concept of intention as the fulcrum to support his assertions of social energy in Harriot and Shakespeare. Before analyzing the intentions Greenblatt identifies in *A Brief and True Report* and *Henry V*, it is necessary to examine his perspective on Elizabethan theater companies and the role of intention in the exchange of social energy.

In the second section of "Invisible Bullets," Greenblatt states that "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" (40). Why would they, considering the dire consequences of such overt action? When John Hayward's *The First Part of the Life and Reign of King Henry IV* (1599) was published without having gone through the censor with a dedication to Robert Devereux, Earl of Essex, both Hayward and Essex were interrogated by the Privy Council (Guy 447-48). Attorney General Edward Coke maintained that Hayward's interpretation of the overthrow of Richard II was "that of a King who is taxed for misgovernment, and his council for corrupt and covetous dealings for private ends" (Guy 449). John Guy states that "Elizabeth's most serious objection to the work was its

popularity among the Londoners, which she took to imply her own unpopularity" (448). Hayward's interrogation was to be the last event to take place before the Privy Council officially charged Essex with treason (Guy 448).

Shakespeare and his company were also honored with a Privy Council interrogation after the Essex faction commissioned them to perform *Richard II* on the eve of Essex's revolt. Subsequent quarto versions of the play were not allowed to include Richard's deposition (4.1) (Bevington 721). Certainly, this is an intense exchange of social energy, but it is doubtful that an Elizabethan theater company would purposely implicate itself in a potentially life and death controversy over treason. Nonetheless, Greenblatt is correct in identifying a transference of social energy between artist and society. Even without a clearly discernible intention, a work of art can both feed and consume such social energy.

### Alternative Appropriations

Although Greenblatt denounces the notion of an "autonomous artifact" (12), and since he cannot accurately determine an artist's intention, there is a kind of artifact that bridges the gulf in explaining the creation of the artist's work and the society from which and for which it is produced. This artifact is not autonomous in the sense that it cannot be interpreted or traced, but rather its composition is the flint upon which both artist and society are kindled. For *Richard II*, this artifact is constituted by the previous histories and plays dealing with the career of Richard II. The story itself is loaded with potential controversy; the play was produced in 1595 and then used by the Essex faction six years later. David Bevington best explains Shakespeare's reworking of the story: "When he wrote the play, Shakespeare presumably did not know that it would be used for such a purpose, but he must have known that the overthrow of Richard II was, in any case, a controversial subject because of its potential use as a precedent

for rebellion" (721). This conceptual potential, or *Vorstellungsmöglichkeit*,<sup>1</sup> is that which an artist could use to create a work that is covert, yet socially *energetic* in Greenblatt's sense of an exchange between author and society. The frequency of this exchange has been explained best by Annabel Patterson in the second chapter of *Reading Holinshed's Chronicles*.

Although Patterson specifically focuses on the *Chronicles*, and I will be returning to her work for my discussion of *Henry V*, she utilizes an approach that is also useful for the discussion of Harriot. She identifies Jürgen Habermas' concept of communicative reason that occupies a region between the mind and the external world. In its final phase, it is termed *Öffentlichkeit* (openness)<sup>2</sup> and it features an internal communicative function as well as an externalized influence upon the social institutions of government and economy (20). Patterson appropriates Habermas and the concept of *Öffentlichkeit* in a very pragmatic way:

Sites of *Öffentlichkeit* work, Habermas claims, in two directions; the one internal, a kind of gathering and strengthening process for the opinions of their members, a process which he elsewhere calls, more strikingly, "radical democratic will formation"; the other external, by way of bringing influence to bear on the seemingly immune, self-regulating and self-sufficient systems of power and money, or government and the economy. (20)

Patterson points out that, although Habermas has a modern, if not post-modern world in mind, his concept can and should be applied to Renaissance studies. Indeed, for Habermas, most contemporary thinkers "have lost all sense of historical perspective by forgetting their origins in early modern Europe" (20). It is no accident that Patterson's chapter is titled "Intentions." This brings us back to Greenblatt's preoccupation with authorial intention. It is not that the authorial intentions identified by Greenblatt are necessarily wrong, but they exclude the potential of *Vorstellungsmöglichkeit* and the flexible interplay of *Öffentlichkeit*. To illuminate these dynamic exchanges, I will focus on some unexamined segments of Harriot's text. Regarding Shakespeare's *Henry V*, the historiography of *Holinshed's Chronicles* (1587) serves as the primary catalyst.

Greenblatt begins "Invisible Bullets" by citing the trial of Christopher Marlowe and the inclusion of Thomas Harriot as a possible atheist (21). Although he cautiously qualifies the charges as possible "smear tactics used with reckless abandon" to discredit Harriot, he follows Harriot's possible connection with the blasphemous School of Night to posit a thesis of political subversion. Greenblatt admits that "the historical evidence is unreliable; even in the absence of social pressure, people lie readily about their most intimate beliefs" (22). He does, however, equate atheism with political subversion as impacting sixteenth century society. Greenblatt formulates a model of interpretation that focuses on the "relation between orthodoxy and subversion in Harriot's text" (23). He then proposes the application of this model to Shakespeare's history plays in general and *Henry V* in particular.

Reading Between the Lines: Thomas Harriot's *A Brief and True Report of the New Found Land of Virginia*

At the heart of Greenblatt's approach is a comparison between Machiavelli's view of religion as *realpolitik* and Harriot's questioning of Christian rulers and the operation of the state. He implies that religious leaders use religion and the fear of the unknown to maintain civil order. "The *Discourses*," claims Greenblatt, "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" (24). Greenblatt also traces this idea in *The Prince*. For historian Tom McAlindon, Greenblatt's reading of Machiavelli leaves much to be desired.

The religion-as-politic, or "juggling Moses"-theory which takes its name from the reported blasphemy of Marlowe, and its identity with Machiavelli is, according to McAlindon, "circuitous and entirely incorrect" (414):

[T]he relevant chapter in *The Prince* does not say, as Greenblatt claims it does, "if Moses' actions and methods are examined closely," which implies

the unmasking of deceptive appearances. Nor is it concerned with religion. Its theme is that leaders who endure longest are those who rely least on fortune and most on strength of mind and on armed self-defense. (414)

Even if one dismisses McAlindon's statement as inflexible and not befitting the concept of *Öffentlichkeit*, Greenblatt omits Machiavelli's qualification of Moses as a representative who is also a leader. "Turning to those who have become princes by their own powers [*virtu*] and not by accident," writes Machiavelli, "I would say that the most notable were Moses, Cyrus, Romulus, Theseus, and a few others. And though we should not consider Moses, because he was simply an agent sent by God to do certain things, he still should be admired, if only for that grace which made him worthy of talking with God" (16). Moses, then, does not quite fit the mold of the pragmatic politician; he is, as attested by Machiavelli, an agent of God and separate.<sup>3</sup>

Greenblatt's possible misinterpretation of Machiavelli and his intention concerning Moses leads to an interesting reading of Harriot. Before analyzing *A Brief and True Report*, he reiterates Harriot's association with Sir Walter Raleigh, who was accused of treason. He refers to Raleigh as a "poet and a freethinker" and the charge of treason makes it easier for Greenblatt to lump the charge of atheism on top of it. He justifies this with a very tidy syllogism; he asserts that "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" (25). Greenblatt takes the figure of the monarch as God's anointed representative and makes that monarch God. St. Augustine, who was utilized by both Catholics and Protestants in the sixteenth century, clearly sets God apart from both man and angels: "there can be no unchangeable good except our one, true, and blessed God" (XII. 245). The closest that man can achieve is a poor image of God. "We ourselves can recognize in ourselves an image of God [...] of course, it is merely an image and, in fact, a very remote one" (XI. 235). Aside from his exclusion of degrees of sin and the nature of conscience, Greenblatt would require some evidence that Elizabeth I considered herself to be God and not just the representative of God.

Were that true, courtiers in disfavor would have been treated as traitors. All the same, for Greenblatt, Harriot's association with Raleigh makes him suspect despite his qualification that "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 [...]" (26). Harriot's report on Virginia "seems to be virtually testing the Machiavellian hypotheses" (26).

Greenblatt equates Harriot's description of native society with English social structure. "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 Algonquin society implies a description of comparable mechanisms in his own culture" (27). He then segues into the Algonquin religious system and its class of priests and their deference to the English; this becomes "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 lawgiver on a simple people" (27). Greenblatt's identification of Harriot's description of Algonquin society and its seemingly suspicious English analogues is the first misuse of *Öffentlichkeit* and *Vorstellungsmöglichkeit*.

It must be remembered that Harriot prefaces his report as a correction to other reports of Virginia which "have not done a little wrong to many that otherwise would have also favored and adventured in the action, to the honor and benefit of our nation, besides the particular profit and credit which would redound to themselves [...]" (1). Harriot is setting out to entice investors and farmers into settling the territory in the New World. Harriot would most likely persuade such "adventurers" by using recognizable metaphors; it makes more familiar what is seemingly foreign. Furthermore, Greenblatt concentrates on Harriot's account of the natives, but neglects the first three-fourths of the text in which Harriot speaks in detail about what he calls "merchantable goods." Certainly, this much of a given report cannot pass for nothing in terms of *Vorstellungsmöglichkeit*, at least not for its in-



tended audience. Greenblatt, however, insists that the core of Machiavellian theory, although commanding the least amount of Harriot's attention, is in his final comment on the natives.

Greenblatt infers that Harriot sees the natives as simplistic with regard to religion because they saw European technology as divinely inspired (27). Although I agree that Harriot saw their religion as incorrect, I question Greenblatt's reliance on the technological disparity between the natives and Harriot as the grounds for Harriot's statement, especially in the light of contrary textual evidence. Just prior to this comment, Harriot compares the natives with the English in relatively generous terms:

In respect of us they are a people poor, and for want of skill and judgment in the knowledge and use of our things, do esteem our trifles before things of greater value: Notwithstanding in their proper manner considering the want of such means as we have, they seem very ingenious; For although they have no such tools, nor any such crafts, sciences and artes as wee; yet in those things they do, they show excellency of wit. (31)

Harriot could be speaking from a Christian perspective that would naturally be chauvinistic in viewing any other belief system as inferior. Indeed, Harriot, an Englishman, is seemingly more tolerant of the Indians than he would be of Catholics. In the face of Greenblatt's inconclusive statements concerning Harriot's alleged atheism, Harriot could, in fact, be devout in his religious practice. Although Harriot's name was used in conjunction with an atheistic epithet at Raleigh's treason trial in 1603, there was never any conclusive evidence against Harriot in 1593 at the Cerne Abbas Inquiry into atheism (Rukeyser 139). Harriot claims to have "[...] made declaration of the contents of the Bible; that therein was set forth the true and only God, and his mightie works that therein was contained the true doctrine of salvation through Christ" (34).

Although Greenblatt tries to piece together other textual betrayals of Harriot's alleged atheism and thus political subversion, his argument fails. In speaking about Harriot's supposed proclivity for the "juggling Moses"-theory of religion as *realpolitik*, Greenblatt states that "it

is misleading [...] 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 [...]” (34). Once again, this argument faces its toughest opposition from Harriot himself who closes his *Brief and True Report* by thanking God for the opportunity to serve his country through his exploration and report. His pronouncement echoes Augustine with regard to the singularity of God. What is remarkable is that Harriot couches his praise in terms that most resemble the words of a subject addressing a lord: “Thus referring my relation to your favorable constructions, expecting good success of the action, from him which is to be acknowledged the author and governor not only of this but all things else, I take my leave of you, this month of February, 1588” (41). Harriot maintains a position that is self-righteously, and appropriately, Christian and nationalistic. He defers to his social superiors yet keeps them temporally separate from Godhead. In a period that actively sought out atheism and sedition and was, itself, unable to convict Harriot, it is hard to accept Greenblatt's conviction that Harriot was hatching and promulgating atheistic and treasonous statements. What is remarkable, however, is Greenblatt's construct of a text that is covertly subversive.

#### Alien Voices: Shakespeare's *Henry V*

Greenblatt traces two discourses throughout *A Brief and True Report* and *Henry V* that contribute to the circulation of social energy; these are “the testing of a subversive interpretation of the dominant culture” and the “recording of alien voices or, more precisely, of alien interpretations” (35). These operations serve a paradoxical function. They enforce the official ideological position of a society while subverting it at the same time. For Greenblatt, Harriot's Machivallian reasoning tests the idea that religious idealism is the core of society by admitting the voices of the Indians as signifiers of both English and

Indian culture. The facets of Indian culture, in this case religion, are wrong because they are not Christian. Those similarities in the English religion, though not wrong, are questioned because of the comparison to Indian culture.

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 monolithic power that ultimately denied the possibility of plenitude, just as the subversive hypothesis about European religion is tested and confirmed only by the imposition of that religion. (37)

Greenblatt's operation of conceptual testing through the recording of alien voices which produces and circulates social energy would be effective if it did not rely on problematic assumptions of authorial intention. As pointed out, one highly questionable interpretation, in this case Greenblatt's reading of Machiavelli, is enough to endanger the entire analysis.

The *Vorstellungsmöglichkeit* that Greenblatt uncovers cannot, however, be denied. The key to unlocking the subversity within the careful, officially recognized text lies within what is *not* said, rather than what is stated. Annabel Patterson's reading of *Holinshed's Chronicles*,<sup>4</sup> which is Shakespeare's main source for *Henry V*, incorporates subversity through other voices without relying upon an identifiable authorial intention as the motivation. Patterson identifies the necessity of multiple voices to represent various opinions. These voices are, themselves, representative of various socio-economic levels.

Given the nature of post-Reformation experience, which set Protestants and Catholics against each other in changing patterns of domination and repression, a national history should not and could not be univocal, but must shoulder the responsibility of representing diversity of opinion. Wherever possible, moreover, diversity should be expressed as multivocality, with the *Chronicles* recording verbatim what they found in earlier historians or contemporary witnesses. A corollary of this principle was that although the individual chroniclers might hold and express strong opinions of their own, especially on religion, the effect of the work *as a whole* would be of incoherence [...]. (7)

In addition to this, Patterson defines what she calls the "anthropological level" of the *Chronicles*. "Not only were they produced by middle-class citizens self-consciously acting as such," states Patterson, "but they registered, as part of the drive toward completeness and multivocality, a greater interest than we have supposed in the voices and views of the groups below them, the common people, the artisanal and laboring classes" (7).

Layered within this multivocality is the voice of authoritative erudition. In the margins of the *Chronicles* lie learned references to past recordings of the history. This strategy allows an individual chronicler to fit within an officially recognized precedent, but at the same time break from that tradition by blending the past account with the contemporary account. Patterson states that "[...] the typographical strategy of the *Chronicles* was to indicate the source of a particular passage in the margin, although it is not clear when an older authority is no longer speaking, and the convention is not scrupulously observed" (35). It is this very process that Greenblatt touches upon but does not fully explore in his analysis of *Henry V*.<sup>5</sup>

In looking at Shakespeare's *Henriad*, Greenblatt puts the reader in the position of a Harriot, "surveying a complex new world, testing upon it dark thoughts without damaging the order that those thoughts would seem to threaten" (56). Regarding *Henry V*, Greenblatt correctly states that "we have all along been both colonizer and colonized, king and subject" (56). I differ from Greenblatt's view of the play as a register of "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 [...]" (56). Greenblatt's quick evaluation that the king's authority is based upon bad faith and falsification (63) is problematic. For Greenblatt, the king's actions are periodically and momentarily questioned, but are subsumed and thus resolved by the larger enterprise of war and England's right to the French throne.

Although Greenblatt begins his analysis with Fluellen's comparison of Henry with Alexander the Great and comes to the chorus only later,

it is necessary to work the play chronologically to better understand the manifestation of social energy through *Vorstellungsmöglichkeit* and Patterson's appropriation of *Öffentlichkeit*. Regarding the chorus, Greenblatt points to the fact that the audience is

prodded by constant reminders of a gap between real and ideal [...] the ideal king must be in a large part the invention of the audience [...]. *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. (63)

He puts his finger on the very quintessence of the Pattersonian model of subversity, the "gap between real and ideal." Shakespeare's chorus is not unlike Holinshed's preface in that Holinshed had "rather chosen to shew the diversitie" of opinion among his predecessors than "by over-ruling them [...] to frame them to agree to [his] liking" (Patterson 35). This "choice" of Holinshed's provides the gaps between the earlier accounts and his contemporary narratives of history, thereby leaving room for the reader's interpretation. Shakespeare's appeal to the audience to "[p]iece out our imperfections with your thoughts; / Into a thousand parts divide one man," (23-24) accomplishes a similar effect. Greenblatt, however, takes this appeal to the audience to an extreme by suggesting that "all kings are 'decked' out by the imaginary forces of the spectators [...]" (64). This echoes his earlier equation between king and God.

This equation is questionable in Shakespeare's play and plainly denied in the *Chronicles*. After the English victory at Agincourt, Fluellen professes his allegiance to the king as long as the king remains an honest and thus God-fearing man, "I need not to be ashamed of your Majesty, / praised be God, so long as your Majesty is an honest man" (4.7.113-15). Henry exclaims, "God keep me so" (4.7.116). The notion

that the king and God are two different entities is clear. Holinshed's account of the terms of surrender also exemplify this separation between temporality and the divine. In reference to Charles and Isabel of France, Henry states that he honors them "as it fitteth and seemeth so worthie a prince and princesse to be worshipped, principallie before all other temporall persons of the world" (115). Once again, Greenblatt has taken a conceptual potential to a monolithic, if not dubious conclusion. His reference to the chorus' reliance on the audience, however, informs a fruitful record of alien voices.

Greenblatt states that "by yoking together diverse peoples—represented in the play by the Welshman Fluellen, the Irishman Macmorris, and Scotsman Jamy, who fight at Agincourt alongside the loyal Englishmen—Hal symbolically tames the last wild areas in the British Isles [...]" (56). What is remarkable is the fact that Holinshed does not comment on the tribal mixture of the army; they are all "Englishmen" (60-115). Greenblatt takes advantage of this departure from Holinshed to analyze the recording of the various dialects of the represented tribes. He is, however, mistaken when he claims that "the verbal tics of such characters interest us because they represent not what is alien but what is predictable and automatic" (57). He points to Fluellen's comparison of Henry and Alexander the Great regarding Alexander's drunken murder of his best friend and Henry's symbolic murder of Falstaff. Greenblatt states that "the moment is potentially devastating" (57). He points to Henry's coldness in rejecting Falstaff, a coldness that was affirmed in an earlier act. In the second act the hostess summons Falstaff's friend and simply states, "[t]he King has kill'd his heart. Good husband, come home presently" (2.1.88-89).

For Greenblatt the potential devastation is thwarted by Fluellen's approval of the king who, "[...] being in his right wits and his good judgements, turn'd away the fat knight with the great belly doublet" (4.7.46-48). As soon as Fluellen finishes his analysis, the king triumphantly enters. Greenblatt also sees the hanging of Bardolph as another incriminating moment that is subsumed within the greater political event of war (58). For these reasons, he concludes that "nei-

ther the English allies nor the low-life characters seem to fulfill adequately the role of aliens whose voices are 'recorded'" (58).

One must, however, remember Fluellen's injunction—"[i]t is not well done, mark you now, to take the tales out of my mouth, ere it is made and finished. I speak but in the figures and comparisons of it [...]" (4.7.42-43). Because Greenblatt cannot discern authorial intention behind the dialogue between Fluellen and Gower, he assumes that subversion was not complete. Understandably, Greenblatt sees negation of that subversity in Fluellen's recognition of Bardolph's hanging as justice, "[...] for if, look you, he were my brother, I would desire the Duke to use his good pleasure, and put him to execution; for discipline ought to be used" (3.6.54-56). This reaction of Fluellen's should not be surprising since the *Chronicles* provide the precedent. "[...] [A] souldier tooke a pix out of a church, for which he was apprehended, and the king not once remooved till the box was restored, and the offender strangled. The people of the countries thereabout, hearing of such zeale in him, to the maintenance of justice, ministered to his armie victuals, and other necessaries, although by open proclamation so to doo they were prohibited" (77). The marginal notations beside this account read, "Justice in warre" and "Note the force of justice." In the Pattersonian mode, subversion has been achieved.

There cannot be open antagonism toward the monarch, either in the play or in reality; it has to come in the "gap between the real and ideal" (Greenblatt 63). As Fluellen points out, he speaks in figures and comparisons. Like the marginalia in the *Chronicles*, Fluellen uses a reference to the past as a springboard into a commentary on the present. He begins by asking Gower the name of the town in which "Alexander the Pig" was born (4.7.12). Gower quickly corrects him only to find that Fluellen meant *big* "or the great, or the mighty, or the huge, or the magnanimous" (4.7.16). The joke seems to be on Fluellen who mispronounces English through his Welsh dialect, but is it? He raises the comparison between Alexander and Henry with regard to murder:

If you mark Alexander's life well, Harry of Monmouth's life is come after it indifferent well, for there is figures in all things. Alexander, God knows, and you know, in his rages, and his furies, and his wraths, and his cholers, and his moods, and his displeasures, and his indignations, and also being a little intoxicates in his prains, did, in his ales and his angers, look you, kill his best friend, Clytus. (4.7.31-39)

Gower is quick to correct him by insisting that "our king is not like him in that; he never kill'd any of his friends" (4.7.40-41). Fluellen then instructs Gower not to interrupt him, and makes it clear that Henry's rejection of Falstaff, whose name Fluellen cannot remember, was the right thing to do.

Despite Fluellen's departure from his own comparisons between Henry and "Alexander the Pig," the comparison is nonetheless present even as a denial or emendation to the comparison. As a scrupulous, loyal subject, Gower is quick to correct Fluellen's tangential if not tedious comparison of Alexander and Henry. When it comes to the murder or rejection of friends, Fluellen can retreat into ignorance of the identity of the rejected companion, "he was full of jests, and gipes, and knaveries, and mocks—I have forgot his name" (4.7.48-50). Surprisingly, Gower knows the identity and quickly fills in the blank of "Sir John Falstaff" (4.7.51) and completes Fluellen's comparison that first mentions murder and then denies it. Fluellen then affirms Gower's answer, "that is he" (4.7.52). The king then enters triumphantly.

As Patterson points out, the *Chronicles* utilize marginal references to past works but then depart from those citations in an inconspicuous way; an official representation is maintained even as a subjective departure is made (7). Fluellen raises the issue of betrayal while never once betraying his own loyalty to the king. Like the readers of the *Chronicles*, Gower can and does pick up on this comparison that is only present in the marks of its own erasure. Despite Greenblatt's elimination of Henry's low-life friends as part of the record of alien voices, their voices register most loudly and most clearly. They make up, as Patterson defines it, the "anthropological level" (7) of the play. The hostess' affirmation of the cause of Falstaff's death, the king's



betrayal, is reiterated by Fluellen. Subversity is registered from the lowest levels of society to nearly the highest. Yet, both speakers are loyal subjects. The subversity lies within the *Vorstellungsmöglichkeit* of the text. The *Öffentlichkeit* exists within the very "gap[s] between the real and ideal" that Greenblatt identifies.

The last problematic portion of Greenblatt's analysis of *Henry V* is his analysis of Henry's explanation of war to the soldier Williams in act four. Williams states "[...] if the cause be not good, the King himself hath a heavy reckoning to make [...]" (4.1.134-35). Greenblatt responds from a perspective that once again equates the king with Godhead:

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. (61)

For Greenblatt, the inconsistency is really not so much in what Henry says but by his actions following the English victory. "If by nightfall Hal is threatening to execute anyone who denies God full credit for the astonishing English victory," he writes, "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" (62). For Greenblatt, a king who can say that for the soldier who has washed "every mote out of his conscience" death "is to him advantage" (4.1.179-80), and then threaten a punishment of death to whomever "take that praise from God / Which is his only" (4.8.115-16) assumes Godhead.

This would be consistent with Greenblatt's "juggling Moses"-theory of religion as *realpolitik*. Unfortunately, the paradigm is too tightly linked with the intention to deceive to allow Greenblatt's analysis the flexibility of *Öffentlichkeit* that is so essential. If the king's power relies

upon "bad conscience" and falsification, why then would Henry upbraid the Archbishop of Canterbury to advise him honestly:

My learned lord, we pray you to proceed, / And justly and religiously unfold / Why the law Salique, that they have in France, / Or should, or should not, bar us in our claim; / And God forbid, my dear and faithful lord, / That you should fashion, wrest, or bow your reading, / Or nicely charge your understanding soul / With opening titles miscreate, whose right / Suits not in native colors with the truth. [...] Therefore take heed how you impawn our person, / How you awake our sleeping sword of war— / We charge you, in the name of God, take heed. (1.2.9-23)

What is interesting is that the layman is reminding the clergyman of his religious obligation. This is hardly the speech of a "juggling Moses." Greenblatt's example of the king's speech to Williams contains the formulation of hierarchy with which Henry is consistent throughout the play: "Every subject's duty is the King's, but every subject's soul is his own" (4.1.175-76).

Steven Greenblatt has identified a reciprocal exchange of social energy between theatrical texts and historical, non-literary documents. His attempt to find an authorial intention and then trace that intention from a subversive text to its social context is, however, problematic. Greenblatt's insistence upon a singular motive behind both *A Brief and True Report* and *Henry V* renders implausible readings of both texts. By applying Annabel Patterson's appropriation of Habermas' *Öffentlichkeit*, through a multivocal text, Greenblatt's original suggestion of social energy is not only more easily identified but more accurately posited. Indeed, *Vorstellungsmöglichkeit* manifests itself in both the historical, non-literary documents such as *Holinshed's Chronicles* as well as Shakespeare's *Henry V*.

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## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>My coinage.

<sup>2</sup>My translation.

<sup>3</sup>For comparison of Greenblatt's misreading, see Vickers, 249-50.

<sup>4</sup>I shall use the third volume of the Ellis edition of the *Chronicles*. All page citations are taken from this third volume.

<sup>5</sup>I shall use *The Riverside Shakespeare*.

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