

THE RHETORIC OF HEROISM: A STUDY OF
SHAKESPEARE'S HENRY V

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In the Prologue to Act One of Henry V, Shakespeare presents us with a Chorus which deliberately draws our attention to some basic problems inherent in the play that is about to unfold before us. The subject matter, so the Chorus tells us, concerns the many glorious deeds Henry V performed during his reign. But such a subject, heroic by nature, is more suited to the breadth and scope of the long epic poem than it is to the conciseness demanded by the limitations of a dramatic production. Whereas the epic narrator can describe at length the vast geography, great deeds, and multitudinous forces involved in epic stories, the dramatist has at his disposal a limited number of actors, a small bare stage, and two hours to work with. Under such conditions, says the Chorus, it is going to be difficult to attain the heroic scope and massive dignity demanded by the subject matter. In addition, something quite different happens in the way an audience responds to an epic narrative and the way that same audience would respond to a play on the same subject. In the epic narrative, the audience enters fully and intimately into the artistic process by conjuring up

imaginatively the landscape, the people, and the great battles and wanderings. In a play, however, the actors objectify and visualize for the audience, and while presenting a more concrete and tangible expression of the story, they often get in the way of heroic fantasy through their ineptitude, lack of numbers, or failure to fulfill audience expectation of what a particular character should be like.

Shakespeare was obviously aware of the problems involved in trying to put the epic story of Henry V on the stage. In the very first line of the play he has the Chorus longing for a "Muse of fire" in order to do justice to the "warlike Harry," and further on in the same speech the Chorus apologizes for even daring to present so great a subject on his "unworthy scaffold."¹ Creative genius that he was, Shakespeare knew that the only way he could bridge the gap between these two genres was through the sheer force of his language working on the willing imaginations of his audience. It is the purpose of this present study to examine how Shakespeare borrowed from the

¹ Henry V, Prologue to Act 1, ll. 1, 5, 10. The Complete Works of Shakespeare, rev. ed., ed. Hardin Craig and David Bevington (Illinois: Scott, Foresman & Co., 1973). All subsequent quotations from Shakespeare are taken from this edition.

arts of language, the vast body of rhetorical theory and practice that was at his disposal in the sixteenth century, in order to forge a truly heroic drama. Before embarking on such a study, however, it is first necessary to explore more fully the nature of, and relationship among, the three key terms just introduced: epic, drama, and rhetoric.

Since both "epic" and "drama" are complex terms, and since both have a long history of critical analysis, it seems best to begin this section with the first serious attempt to analyze these two genres, Aristotle's Poetics. At the beginning of his treatise, Aristotle classifies the arts into five categories--poetry, music, dancing, painting, and sculpture--all of which have as their end an imitation of men in action. The key term here is "imitation," by which Aristotle probably meant something like a representation of nature's universal laws, not a servile copy. He begins his analysis of poetic imitation by subdividing poetry into four kinds: epic, tragic, comic, and dithyrambic. He never comes back to the dithyramb and discusses comedy only in order to differentiate it from tragedy. There are scattered sections on epic poetry throughout the essay, but nowhere does Aristotle discuss this genre with anything like the

completeness he gives to tragedy.² Even with these limitations, however, it is still possible to piece together Aristotle's notions about epic and drama and the differences between the two.

In his discussion of tragic drama, Aristotle insists that the central ingredient is conflict, or action: "tragedy is an imitation, not of men, but of action and of life, and life consists in action, and its end is a mode of action, not a quality."³ Further, the tragic dramatist is to focus on one significant action in order to expose the heightened passions involved in a moment of crisis (8. 12). All the events of the play are to lead up to and away from this crisis, the most important sections being the peripeteia (reversal of the situation) and the recognition scenes (6. 10). This focusing of events on a signal moment of intensity is supposed to engage the sympathies of the audience for the hero, arousing in them pity and fear and ultimately purging the audience, sending them home drained and subdued after this single vicarious

² The history play had not yet been born, so, obviously, Aristotle is silent on the subject.

³ Aristotle, On the Art of Poetry, trans. S. H. Butcher, ed. Milton C. Nahm (New York: Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1948, rpt. 1956), 6. 9.

experience.

The epic, says Aristotle, is also an imitation of men in action, but the two poetic genres differ in emphasis. In his discussion of tragic drama, he lays stress upon the plot, the story; in the epic, he makes the characters all-important. As E. M. W. Tillyard points out, for Aristotle "whatever magnificence epic literature possesses comes mainly from the dramatic strength of the heroes, and in a much less degree from the historic dignity or importance of the issues of the story, or from its mythological decorations."⁴ But whatever the relative difference in emphasis upon character in the two poetic forms, Aristotle insisted each was an imitation of men better than those we find in real life. The epic and tragic heroes, in other words, have much in common because of their exalted statures.

Part of the difficulty with using Aristotle to distinguish between the dramatic and epic genres is that most of his comments about the nature of drama are restricted to tragic drama. Also the epic genre is not tragic. As Northrop Frye has pointed out, the epic view

⁴ The English Epic and Its Background (New York: Oxford University Press, 1966), p. 20

of life may contain tragic episodes but only as preludes to a comic resolution. The epic vision sees life as involving a death and resurrection cycle just as in nature we have a winter death and a spring renewal.⁵

In the Poetics, however, Aristotle was not dealing with the different mythos involved in tragedy and epic. In describing tragic drama and associating it with epic he was pointing out the differences in form between the two genres. However, many of the points he makes about the formal nature of tragic drama also apply to comedy. Consequently, Aristotle can still provide us with some useful distinctions between the two genres of drama and epic.

A major area in which epic and drama differ is in the mode of imitation, what we would now call point of view. Epic uses a mixture of both dramatic impersonation and narrative voice while drama presents its characters only through dramatic impersonation--"as living and moving before us" (Poetics, 3. 5). Aristotle seems to prefer the purely dramatic form for its immediacy but also because it

⁵ Northrop Frye, "The Argument of Comedy," English Institute Essays 1948, ed. D. A. Robertson (New York: Columbia University Press, 1949), pp. 58-73; reprinted in Modern Shakespeare Criticism, ed. Alvin B. Kernan (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 1970), p. 169.

makes its point in a concentrated effort; epic, on the other hand, uses impersonation plus the extra dimension of the narrative voice which, while adding weight and scope to the epic, causes it to be loose and somewhat rambling.

The one area in which the two genres differ significantly (apart from meter), and which finally makes drama superior to epic in Aristotle's mind, is that of plot. Each genre was to have organic unity--a beginning, a middle, and an end--and was to obey the laws of probability, but here the similarity ends. Epic poetry is much larger in scale than drama, and this length, plus its narrative form, allows for its great variety of incident, multiplicity of characters, and its freedom to present events simultaneously. This latter factor, says Aristotle, adds mass and dignity to the poem. But it is the epic's greater length that makes it inferior to drama. Because a play is limited, in general, to "a single revolution of the sun" (5. 8), it fulfills the purpose of its imitation more economically; the epic, on the other hand, has less unity because of its multiplicity of episodes and so "must seem weak and watery" (26. 39). Aristotle here implies that length involves some loss of unity and hence renders the epic less pleasurable.

While providing us with many incisive comments about the epic form, Aristotle's Poetics is in no way a complete statement about this classical genre. As W. P. Ker points out, Aristotle "does not imagine it the chief duty of an epic poet to choose a lofty argument for historical rhetoric. He does not say a word about the national or ecumenical importance of the themes of the epic poet."⁶ For him, life is in the drama of the characters. We can only infer from extant works the nature of the epic as the ancient Greek and Latin world conceived it. Paul Merchant in his short treatment of this genre lists five main characteristics. The ancient classical epic, first of all, gets its material from history and legend, and second, includes details from real life. Also, the poem focuses sharply on a central hero who, in his massive isolation, gives the epic a grandeur and universality. Fourth, the epic has a scale, a mass, a weight that no other ancient form of poetry possesses. And finally, the epic composition demands of the epic poet--an almost priest-like figure in ancient society--a massive

⁶ Epic and Romance (1908; rpt. New York: Dover Publications, 1957), p. 18.

concentration and effort.⁷ Also part of the epic form, as it matured into what C. S. Lewis calls its secondary or literary form with Virgil,⁸ are many surface conventions. These include such stock techniques as beginning in medias res, invocations to various muses and gods, epic similes, a descent to the underworld, and gods who take an interest in the affairs of men.

The central impetus of the ancient epic tale, however, was to display heroic human action as the ideal, and even though such actions were rooted in actual fact, the poet's concern was not historical accuracy; rather, he was much more interested in a larger poetic insight into the greatness of the human spirit. But then, as Christianity slowly eclipsed the old religions, it undermined the Greek and Latin humanistic confidence in man and his deeds in the world. More and more, western man began to judge the value of his life by the standards of another order of existence, and so the medieval world had to forge a new ideal of heroism. The obvious model for the new

⁷ The Critical Idiom: 17 The Epic, gen. ed. John D. Jump (London: Methuen and Co., 1971), p. 4.

⁸ A Preface to Paradise Lost (London: Oxford University Press, 1961), pp. 12-31.

Christian hero was the martyr, but for various reasons this subject did not find its way into epic literature.⁹ It is not until the Renaissance looked back to classical antiquity that we once more have attempts to write in the epic mode; however, the intervening centuries had done much to change the ideals and forms of heroism. There is a world of difference between Homer and Virgil, and Dante, Tasso, Ariosto, Sidney, Spenser, and Shakespeare. The medieval world combined the looseness and prettiness of the chivalric romance with its changed world view to forge quite a different kind of long narrative poem. The Renaissance epic writers could not ignore this heritage, and although they deliberately looked back to classical antiquity for epic models, they came up with poems and a theory of epic their Latin and Greek ancestors would not have understood. As Tillyard points out, they certainly used some of the external conventions of antiquity, but the nature and purpose of their writing took on a new

⁹ Tillyard speculates on the reasons why we have no truly great medieval epics: (1) literary Latin failed to alter itself to the new spiritual values found in Christianity, and there were no schools of rhetoric to evolve a new and individual idiom in English; (2) there was no great Christian military victory in the Middle Ages. See The English Epic and Its Background, pp. 113-14.

direction.¹⁰

To begin with, the Renaissance considered the epic the noblest literary form, one that demanded an immense effort from both poet and audience. The new heroic narratives had to be both of high quality and of high moral seriousness presenting exemplary characters of the highest order. This requirement usually resulted in a presentation of the noble acts of the ruling classes acting as models for magnificence, rewarding good and punishing evil. Further, the Renaissance epic strove to embody great truths in historical events in the near or remote or fabulous past and the morality governing them. Tillyard calls this characteristic the choric function of the epic poet, when he becomes the mouthpiece of his age, bearing witness to the system of beliefs or way of life his own time holds sacred.¹¹ Certainly, says Tillyard, there is a timelessness to the epic as to all great literature, but it is more firmly tied than other forms to the group consciousness of an age. Abercrombie, in a happy phrase, says the epic poem must reflect the "accepted

¹⁰ The English Epic, pp. 1-4.

¹¹ The English Epic, p. 52.

unconscious metaphysic" of its time through a known story that is part of the mythology of the audience.¹² Only in this way can it attain the dignity and weight peculiar to the epic. Then, as Tillyard insists, the epic "must have faith in the system of beliefs or way of life it bears witness to."¹³ By its very nature it does not admit of the ironic or of satiric comment.

Finally, like its classical models, the Renaissance epic strove for amplitude, breadth, inclusiveness, the whole of life and its kaleidoscopic variations, not just one isolated incident. Northrop Frye calls this quality the "encyclopedic form" of the epic.¹⁴ Ker also insists that "the whole business of life" comes into the epic story, generalized human experience as well as the trivial realities of everyday life,¹⁵ and Highet insists on "richness" as essential to the epic:

¹² Lascelles Abercrombie, The Epic (London, 1914; rpt. New York: Books for Libraries Press, 1969), p. 39.

¹³ The English Epic, p. 52.

¹⁴ Anatomy of Criticism (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957), pp. 315-26.

¹⁵ Epic and Romance, p. 17.

If it is to have its maximum effect, it must have sumptuously varied imagination or deep philosophical content, or both. It must stretch far back into the past and look forward into the future. It must work upon many emotions, use many arts, contain the achievements of many ages and nations, in order to reflect the energies and complexities of human life.¹⁶

But this is not to say the epic presents an unorganized display of life's many phenomena. On the contrary, Tillyard insists, with Aristotle, that the epic poet must also select, arrange, and organize into a coherent whole, and a whole over which the epic poet is in absolute control.¹⁷

From this brief analysis it can be seen that the epic is a complex form, demanding great knowledge, skill, and sustaining powers from the poet. The only significant works in English to attain this high quality before Shakespeare's time are the Anglo-Saxon Beowulf, Sydney's Arcadia, and Spenser's Faerie Queene, the latter two owing as much to the medieval romance as to the epic tradition.¹⁸

¹⁶ Gilbert Highet, The Classical Tradition (New York: Oxford Press, 1949), p. 161.

¹⁷ The English Epic, pp. 48-50.

¹⁸ For general discussions of the Renaissance epic poem see Tillyard, The English Epic; Lacy B. Smith, The Elizabethan Epic (London: Cape, 1966); W. Macneile Dixon, English Epic and Heroic Poetry (Glasgow, 1912; rpt. New York: Haskell House, 1964; Ker, Epic and Romance).

The only other works with any serious claim to epic status in the age of Elizabeth were, as Tillyard points out, those on the period of the Wars of the Roses, from Richard II's deposition to the death of Richard III.¹⁹

In order to understand why Elizabethans were so interested in this historical period as material for epic writing, it is perhaps necessary to pause for a moment and examine their theories of historiography. To begin with, Tudor writers of history, whether they worked in the form of prose chronicles, poetry, or drama, all saw the purpose of history not to reveal past fact for its own sake, but to use the past for didactic purposes. From the humanist's revival of classical learning, Renaissance historians gained support for their insistence that history was to provide moral, ethical, and political lessons. One studied the past in order to forge a guide to political behavior in the present, even if that only meant stoical endurance of disaster. Analysis of past and more recent, even current, events could serve as a "mirror" to make clearer the virtues and failings of contemporary statesmen.²⁰

¹⁹ The English Epic, p. 212.

²⁰ The most important work on this theme was A Mirror for Magistrates, begun by William Baldwin as a continuation of John Lydgate's Fall of Princes, first printed in 1559 and then enlarged and re-edited six times by 1587.

This didactic view of history, then, is fully in keeping with the humanistic insistence that all forms of writing, epic included, are to help mankind to improve his moral and spiritual life. Another important use of history, and one which allied it most closely to ancient epic aims, was simply to celebrate the past and present glories of one's native land. Because of this demand, much of Tudor history writing has a strong patriotic, nationalistic flavor. Also, history proved fertile ground for documenting one's own political theory. For English historians this propagandistic bias involved such ideas as monarchical absolutism and the passive obedience of dutiful subjects. Finally, Tudor historians saw history as a rational, logical, ordered sequence of cause and effect ordained by a providential God and bearing witness to His wisdom and justice.²¹ The Tudor historian, as Ribner

²¹ This approach of the Tudor historians has been amply documented. Some of the more important discussions of the topic can be found in the following works: Lily B. Campbell, Shakespeare's 'Histories': Mirrors of Elizabethan Policy (San Marino, Calif.: Huntington Library, 1947), pp. 28-84; M. M. Reese, The Cease of Majesty (London: Edward Arnold, 1961), pp. 42-88; Irving Ribner, The English History Play in the Age of Shakespeare (1957; rpt. New York: Barnes and Noble, 1965), pp. 1-29; E. M. W. Tillyard, Shakespeare's History Plays (1944; rpt. New York: Barnes and Noble, 1961), pp. 12 ff. More recent studies of Tudor historiography can be found in Henry A. Kelly, Divine Providence in the England of Shakespeare's Histories

points out, had no compunction about warping history to serve any of these ends.²²

Although Tudor historians covered most of British history from the time of the ancient Germanic invasions, their main focus of interest was that period extending from the ill-fated rule of Richard II (1377-1399) to the coming of Henry VII to the throne in 1485. This last event, according to Ribner, "gave new impetus to historical writing, for among other things, the right of the Tudors to the throne had to be demonstrated."²³ Polydore Vergil, in his Anglica Historia (1534), was the first historian to treat this stretch of history with anything like a coherent thesis. He was commissioned by Henry VII to write a history of England which would justify the new Tudor era, and he did just that. He presented the deposition of Richard II as a crime that God punished by

(Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1970); Robert B. Pierce, Shakespeare's History Plays: The Family and the State (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1971); Moody E. Prior, The Drama of Power: Studies in Shakespeare's History Plays (Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1973); Robert Ornstein, A Kingdom for a Stage: The Achievement of Shakespeare's History Plays (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1972).

²² The English History Play, p. 18.

²³ The English History Play, p. 2.

allowing years of civil war to ravage the country until God finally relented and was pleased to send a deliverer in the person of Henry VII.²⁴ Vergil's work was in Latin, however, and so it was not until Edward Hall published his Union of the two Noble and Illustre Famelies of Lancastre and Yorke (1548) that Vergil's propagandistic view of English history gained a popular audience. Hall freely edited and arranged the facts of history to support the Tudor providential view of the period of history from 1377 to 1485 and in so doing identified God's purposes with those of the Tudors and consecrated what has come to be known as the Tudor Myth.²⁵ But the most important work of

²⁴ See Reese, The Cease of Majesty, pp. 46 ff.

²⁵ Briefly, the theory is as follows. England's woes began when Henry Bolingbroke returned from exile to reclaim his Lancastrian inheritance wrongfully confiscated by Richard II and in the process also helped himself to the throne. Richard's deposition, a heinous sacrilege against the policy of absolutism, and his subsequent murder set in motion a terrible train of suffering involving generations of perjury, rebellion, tyranny, murder, regicide. Henry IV had to face constant rebellion and civil war during his reign; his son, Henry V, was allowed a brief moment of glory but died young. With the rule of Henry VI, avarice, treachery, and violent ambition surfaced again, resulting in the loss of France and the renewal of civil strife in the Wars of the Roses. Henry VI lost his crown and his life to Edward of York, and once again the pattern repeated itself. Edward also faced power struggles and rebellion, and when he died, his throne was murderously seized by that devil incarnate, Richard III. But now Providence stepped in and directed the tide of events away from the wanton

all was Raphael Holinshed's Chronicles of England, Scotlande, and Irelande, first published in 1577 and later greatly altered and republished in 1587. It was to Holinshed's treatment of the period from Richard II to Henry VII, much influenced by Hall's work, that Shakespeare turned for his great history plays. And it is from Holinshed that Shakespeare learned the dominant idea of his age that rebellion precipitates an inevitable train of discord and civil war.²⁶

Common in all of the writings of history surveyed in the past few pages are many of the qualities of the epic genre as Tillyard has analyzed them. All of the writers, from Polydore Vergil through Daniel, saw in the York-Lancaster dynastic struggles ample moral, ethical, and political lessons that could be applied to their own age.

evil of Richard and his inherited curse to the redeemer, Henry Tudor, Earl of Richmond. At the battle of Bosworth Field the curse resulting from Richard II's murder was finally expiated, and the country turned to peace and harmony under the wise governance of Henry VII, Elizabeth's grandfather. For fuller discussions of this myth, see Campbell, Shakespeare's 'Histories,' Reese, The Cease of Majesty, and Tillyard, Shakespeare's History Plays.

²⁶ See Reese, The Cease of Majesty, p. 58.

And they also explored much of the political theory of their time, such notions as the nature of kingship, the awesome consequences to the country of rebellion or tyranny, and the duties of subjects to king. Further, each writer in varying degrees saw himself as a mouthpiece of his age in propagandizing the so-called Tudor Myth and in reinforcing the notion of cosmic order so dear to Renaissance thinking. Finally, in the sheer scope and inclusiveness of the surge of events from 1377 to 1485 that these writers covered, we certainly have something akin to epic writing.²⁷

Despite this new interest in English history, the Renaissance produced no great epic poems in this area. Samuel Daniel's History of the Civil Wars between the Houses of York and Lancaster represents just such an attempt, as does Michael Drayton's The Barons' Wars, but both poets failed to transfuse their historical material

²⁷ It is important to note here that scientific recording of past events, what we would recognize as modern historiography, was alien to Renaissance writers. They saw history as a form of literature serving didactic and artistic purposes often at the expense of truth, and so their writing has more claim to be considered under the poetic genre of epic than does modern historical writing.

with any great poetic power.²⁸ Far more successful were the many dramatists who were responsible for the great age of the English history play. This new dramatic genre was an uniquely English theatrical form, probably an outgrowth of the religious mystery cycles so popular in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.²⁹ The early writers of English history plays simply took material from the English chronicles and presented a sequential march of historical events across the stage much as the older mystery plays had enacted the panoramic sweep of biblical history. There was little if any attempt to focus these early history plays on a single moment of crisis or a single important character. As a result, their great

²⁸ For the full history of the English historical-epic poem see Reese, The Cease of Majesty, pp. 58-65; Tillyard, The English Epic; Smith, The Elizabethan Epic; Dixon, English Epic and Heroic Poetry.

²⁹ Exactly why this distinctly English theatrical phenomenon occurred has been much debated. R. E. Schelling, The English Chronicle Play (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1902), suggests the great tide of British nationalism and patriotism that accompanied the defeat of the Spanish Armada in 1588. Tillyard, Shakespeare's History Plays, shows the relation of the history play to the defeat of the Armada to be dubious (p. 101), and Ribner, The English History Play, insists patriotism was not responsible for the phenomenon of the English history play. See p. 266. Ribner sees this dramatic genre simply as "the final distinctive manifestation of the new birth of historical writing in England" (p. 2). It seems best, however, to regard this phenomenon as part of the general use of history to propagandize the Tudor Myth.

multiplicity of people and events associates them more with epic writing than with classical tragedy. It was not until the Senecan revival of the mid-sixteenth century began to influence the form of English drama that plays based on English history began to take on a coherent shape, to focus themselves on a single protagonist and on the conflict involved in his attainment and loss of power. The more this shaping and focusing process occurred, the closer we get to the fusion of epic and tragic drama; and this fusion ultimately resulted in the birth of a new dramatic form, the full-fledged English history play.³⁰

Shakespeare's early plays on the ill-fated reign of Henry VI are good examples of the first stage in this process. The subject matter covers the entire sweep of events during the Wars of the Roses in which England was torn by greed, treachery, and sensuality in high places. We watch a long procession of heroes grasping for power and then losing it, some the victims of arbitrary fortune in the tradition of medieval de casibus, others the victims of their own hubris. The sheer scope and multiplicity of events covered by these plays together

³⁰ For a full account of the growth of the history play see Ribner, The English History Play.

with their loose, linear structures align them closely with epic writing. When Shakespeare came to write Richard III, however, we are suddenly in a different world. For the first time the playwright has pulled his story together around the rise and fall of the central character and has portrayed with great skill the intense passions of Richard himself and of those involved in his fortunes. We are now moving much closer to the ancient conceptions of tragic drama. Richard II continues this movement as we witness the heights of lyrical tragedy in the downfall of the sentimental king. These two plays, together with Marlowe's Edward II, represent the best examples we have of the formal blend of epic and tragic drama.

As we move on to the Henry IV and V trilogy, however, Shakespeare moves back toward the epic end of the spectrum. The two Henry IV plays do not end in tragedy, and in them we once more have a linear plot structure and a large number of fully developed characters rather than a single dominant protagonist. But in these plays Shakespeare has much greater control over his plot than he did in the Henry VI trilogy. He now uses the rhetorical principle of parallel and contrast as he covers a broad sweep of events and people; the result is a many-sided exploration of the

nature of kingship instead of a tracing of the conflict involved in the gain and loss of power. Henry V, unabashedly epic, uses the old chronicle play The Famous Victories of Henry V as its source. It represents Shakespeare's only effort to encompass an heroic tone and a great sweep of events in a single play.³¹ Indeed, all the major characteristics of the Renaissance epic can easily be detected. First, the play does not deal in weakness and in tragedy, but in victory, which in itself brings it closer to epic concerns. Then, Henry is an exemplary character motivated by a high moral seriousness and dedication to the public good. He is, as many critics have pointed out, the ideal Christian king, endowed with such virtues as intelligence, integrity, justice, mercy, piety, and above all, magnanimity.³² He represents the

³¹ The entire sequence of eight plays on the York-Lancaster dynastic struggle has often been described as a great English epic. Some critics would break this grouping into two epics, the three parts of Henry VI and Richard III sequence, and the Richard II and 1 and 2 Henry IV and Henry V tetralogy. For further discussion of the matter see Ribner, The English History Play, Chapter 4; Derek Traversi, Shakespeare from Richard II to Henry V (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1957), *passim*; Alvin Kernan, "'The Henriad': Shakespeare's Major History Plays," Yale Review, 59 (1969), 3-32.

³² See particularly J. H. Walter's "Introduction" to the Arden edition of the play (London: Methuen and Company Ltd., 1954), pp. xiv-xviii.

perfect Christian prince described in Castiglione, educated, benevolent, harsh when necessary, thoroughly aware of his human frailty, and trustful of his God. He displays his political astuteness and civil and martial courage in the course of the play, all values sacred to Renaissance sensibilities. Further, he is an historical figure of sufficient remoteness to a sixteenth-century audience to have an aura of legend and a body of mythology built around him. And finally, the linear, episodic structure of the play gives the impression of an epic march of events that Henry participates in. But all these trappings, while certainly contributing to the epic machinery of this play, do not, finally, account for its heroic tone. Shakespeare moves his play away from the linear, episodic chronicle play and into the world of epic, not by imitating the many external conventions of this tradition but by transferring the rhetorical forms of epic narrative into a dramatic construct.

To begin with, the two most important of these rhetorical forms are narration and description which occur mainly in the six speeches of the Chorus. These orations, fraught with epic similes and all the ornate decorations of the high style, contribute toward establishing a sense of the vast geography, nationalistic mood, and high moral

seriousness so essential to the epic. Second, in keeping with the epic emphasis on character, Shakespeare presents his story through a series of pageant-like, grand scenes, each complete in itself and each one serving to develop the ethos of the characters involved. Thus in Act One we have the Bishops wrongfully manipulating the art of disputation in order to persuade Henry to invade France. Act Two shows Henry to be a master orator as he uses the epideictic speech of blame to condemn the three conspirators Scroop, Cambridge, and Gray. Act Three gives us a further insight into Henry's brilliant use of persuasion as he convinces the governor of Harfleur, through the sheer power of his language, to surrender without a fight. Act Four depicts the low point in English fortunes, the weariness and fear the evening before Agincourt, and then Henry's brilliant battle oration the following morning where his soaring language imbues his soldiers with the necessary courage to win against overwhelming odds. Act Five concludes the English campaign with the signing of the peace treaty and Henry's artful wooing of Katharine. Weaving in and out of these focal points and providing the background texture to the story are the French opposition, who, through their inanity and indulgence in the vices of language, project a most

negative ethos and the English soldiers serving under Henry, who provide us with a comic parallel to Henry's grand eloquence. This latter grouping provides the story with its more realistic details and sets the grandness of the epic theme in comic relief.

Reinforcing these major rhetorical structures are the many minor rhetorical forms that Shakespeare used to develop his characters and thereby to keep his play in the world of epic and heroic grandness. The play abounds in set declamatory speeches, all masterpieces of persuasive oratory. The Chorus, as already noted, has six, Henry also has six, and Montjoy, Canterbury, and Burgundy each have one, making a total of fifteen formal orations. Then again, the many scenes of debate and argumentation are full of rhetorical devices, the most notable being Henry's debate with the Bishops in Act One and his discussion with Williams the evening before Agincourt on the justness of the war.³³ Finally, and most important, Shakespeare has woven into the texture of his language a myriad number of schemes and tropes which help to characterize the speakers

³³ Robert Hapgood claims the dominant mode of speech in Henry V is the dispute. See "Shakespeare's Thematic Modes of Speech: Richard II to Henry V," Shakespeare Survey, 20 (1967), 41-49.

and to further create the heroic tone of the play. It is the purpose of this dissertation to study in depth the many rhetorical forms Shakespeare used in this play in order to create an epic atmosphere within the limited confines of a three-hour play.

CHAPTER II

THE CHORUS AS NARRATOR-PERSUADER

Henry V, as Hardin Craig points out, is rhetorically oriented, concerned mainly with techniques of persuasion.¹ Such an approach is not new to Shakespeare. We can see evidence of his extensive rhetorical training in his early comedies and in his other history plays; but in the latter, Shakespeare has used the many principles of rhetoric to portray tyranny as in Richard III or weakness as in the Henry VI plays and in Richard II.² In this play, however, the last of his great histories,³ we see the body of rhetorical theory turned to an entirely different purpose--that of extolling the heroic greatness of an ideal Christian warrior-king. It is to this end that Shakespeare has developed a chorus to a far greater extent than he has

¹ Hardin Craig and David Bevington, eds., The Complete Works of Shakespeare, rev. ed. (Illinois: Scott, Foresman & Co., 1973), p. 737.

² See Michael Manheim, The Weak King Dilemma in the Shakespearean History Play (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1973).

³ Henry VIII, written some years later and of doubtful authorship, is atypical of Shakespeare's history plays, and so must be considered apart from his earlier two tetralogies on the York-Lancaster wars.

ever done in any of his previous plays or than he will ever do again.

Because the inclusion of a chorus is a departure from Shakespeare's usual dramatic format, it has long been the object of critical attention. Samuel Johnson dismissed the choral speeches with his usual cryptic commentary:

The lines given to the Chorus have many admirers, but the truth is, that in them much must be forgiven; nor can it be easily discovered why the intelligence given by the Chorus is more necessary in this play than in many others where it is omitted.⁴

Johnson's dismay is more fully understood when we remind ourselves that it is fully in keeping with his insistence on the integrity of dramatic illusion which he discussed in his Preface to Shakespeare.⁵ Harley Granville-Barker was equally disgruntled at the Chorus for always apologizing and for asking the audience, for heaven's sake, to help him out.⁶ Reese, however, is not bothered by the apologetic tone of the Chorus:

⁴ Samuel Johnson on Shakespeare, ed. W. K. Wimsatt, Jr. (New York: Hill and Wang, 1960), p. 92.

⁵ Samuel Johnson on Shakespeare, pp. 37-39.

⁶ "From Henry V to Hamlet," 1925; revised 1933; selections reprinted in Shakespeare: Henry V, Casebook Series, ed. Michael Quinn (London: Macmillan & Co., 1969), pp. 62-63.

Shakespeare was quite ready to stage a battle when it suited him, and with no apology for the small numbers engaged in it. Its [the Chorus'] function here is to apologize for the unsuitability of any stage for the breadth and sweep of epic.⁷

Reese goes on to point out that Shakespeare uses the Chorus "with boldness and ingenuity to make good some of the deficiencies he so modestly admits."⁸ Charles Williams called the fourth Prologue the greatest thing in the play,⁹ but Peter Erickson finds the "barrage of earnest humility, ostentatious deference, and systematic cajoling . . . difficult to defend against."¹⁰

Perhaps the only fair way to assess the Chorus in this play is to analyze it in terms of function and purpose and of how well it accomplishes what it sets out to do. To begin with, its most obvious role is that of narrator. Shakespeare is covering a great deal of

⁷ M. M. Reese, The Cease of Majesty: A Study of Shakespeare's History Plays (London: Arnold, 1961), p. 91.

⁸ The Cease of Majesty, p. 91.

⁹ "In Honour of King Henry V," in Shakespeare Criticism, ed. Anne Bradley, 1936; rpt. in Shakespeare: Henry V, Casebook Series, ed. Michael Quinn, p. 111.

¹⁰ "Gestures Toward Immortality: The Anxious Pursuit of Heroic Fame in Shakespeare's Henry V," Diss. The University of California at Santa Cruz, 1975, p. 6.

historical material in this play, material that would in epic poetry be pulled together by a narrative voice. Normally, the restrictions of dramatic presentation would force a dramatist to choose one event in the many famous exploits of Henry V, but Shakespeare did not choose to do that. He tried to include the entire epic sweep of Henry's reign, but he had matured sufficiently as a dramatist to recognize the theatrical problems involved. Hence, he crossed genres and turned the epic narrative voice into a chorus to describe and to narrate what was impossible to represent on the stage. To this end, the Chorus begs to be admitted to the play:

. . . for the which supply,
Admit me Chorus to this history. (1 Prologue,
31-32)

Vouchsafe to those that have not read the story,
That I may prompt them. (5 Prologue, 1-2)

In his first Prologue, the Chorus is mainly concerned with gaining admission to the play and with telling us that the events will cover the English conquest of France during the reign of Henry V. The succeeding prologues all introduce specific events in the English campaign which are then dramatized in the following acts, and sometimes they even take us over omitted historical periods. The second Prologue, for example, describes the English preparations for war and the infamous conspiracy against Henry's life.

The third Prologue takes us from Southampton to the siege at Harfleur. Prologue Four describes the mood of the two camps the evening before Agincourt, and Prologue Five takes us over an interval of five years which includes Henry's departure from Calais, his triumphant return home to London, various negotiations with the French, and his return to France to negotiate a treaty and his marriage to Katharine. In the Epilogue the Chorus steps back once again and gives us a wider perspective on the events of Henry's life, eulogizing him as "this star of England" (Epilogue, l. 6) and pointing to future events during the reign of his son, Henry VI.

The most obvious role of the Chorus, then, is that of narrator, weaving together a vast body of historical material into a coherent whole. But if one looks closely at the dialogue and events in each act, it becomes obvious that the narrative function of the Chorus is not strictly necessary. Events explain themselves sufficiently in dialogue and action so that the audience could find its way without the running narrative voice of the Chorus. It seems Johnson's criticism has some basis. If we are to justify the artistic presence of the Chorus, then we must look elsewhere, and even a cursory reading of the six speeches of the Chorus points to a far more important

function than that of narrative. The sheer beauty of the many descriptive passages would, in itself, justify the presence of the Chorus in this play, and when we realize that Shakespeare has deliberately included such descriptive passages for the rhetorical purpose of building up the heroic tone and mood of the play, they become all-important. For example, the bustling excitement of preparations is beautifully captured in the following passages:

Now all the youth of England are on fire
And silken dalliance in the wardrobe lies.
(2 Prologue, 1-2)

For now sits Expectation in the air
And hides a sword from hilts unto the point
With crowns imperial, crowns and coronets,
Promis'd to Harry and his followers.
(2 Prologue, 8-11)

The image in the first passage is a combination of prosopopoeia¹¹ and metonymy of adjunct¹² where, as Robert Dunn points out, "'dalliance' is given life and substance

¹¹ An animal or an inanimate object is represented as having human attributes or addressed as if it were human. See Richard A. Lanham, A Handlist of Rhetorical Terms (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969), hereafter referred to as Handlist. The modern term for this device is "personification."

¹² Metonymy involves substitution of subject for adjunct (one of its qualities), or adjunct for subject, or cause for effect, or effect for cause. See Lanham, Handlist, p. 67.

by its identification with a young man's wardrobe."¹³ We understand immediately and fully the implication that all young men willingly put aside the luxuries of peacetime for the rigors of military discipline. The second passage, another example of prosopopoeia, vividly pictures the reason why the young men are so anxious to lay aside their silken wardrobes. Expectation hides the miseries of war (the sword) with hopes of riches and honors (crowns and coronets) and sits almost like an iconographical representation of an allegorical figure. The rhetorical effect of this image is to exalt the heroics of war almost into a ritualized ceremony.

Another highly effective descriptive passage can be found in the third Prologue where the Chorus vividly describes the departure from Southampton:

. . . Suppose that you have seen
 The well-appointed king at Hampton pier
 Embark his royalty; and his brave fleet
 With silken streamers the young Phoebus fanning:
 Play with your fancies, and in them behold
 Upon the hempen tackle ship-boys climbing;
 Hear the shrill whistle which doth order give
 To sounds confus'd; behold the threaden sails,
 Borne with th' invisible and creeping wind,
 Draw the huge bottoms through the furrowed sea,
 Breasting the lofty surge. (3 Prologue, 3-13)

¹³ "'A Crooked Figure': The Functions of the Tropes and Similes in Shakespeare's History Plays," Diss. The University of Wisconsin, 1970, p. 125.

As Robert Dunn has pointed out, the previous two passages are more intellectual, combining as they do the abstract with the concrete in a striking way.¹⁴ This section, however, is sensuous description at its best. We can see and hear all the bustling activity associated with the excited and majestic beginnings of the French campaign. The passage is full of rhetorical tropes all contributing to the heroic atmosphere. The metonymy in line five, "embark his royalty," points to the main quality Henry displays as he leaves Southampton, which is further reinforced by associating him with Phoebus in line six. The anthimerea¹⁵ in "silken streamers," "hempen tackle," and "threaden sails" (ll. 6, 8, 10) intensifies the visual quality of this scene, and the synecdoche¹⁶ in lines nine and ten, "the shrill whistle which doth order give / To sounds confus'd," adds to the general excitement. Also,

¹⁴ "'A Crooked Figure,'" pp. 125-26.

¹⁵ Functional shift, using one part of speech for another, here turning nouns into adjectives by adding the inflection "en." See Lanham, Handlist, p. 9.

¹⁶ Synecdoche substitutes the part for the whole, the genus for the species, the antecedent for the consequent, or the consequent for the antecedent. It is a trope concerned with division. See Lanham, Handlist, p. 97.

the combination of double synecdoche in lines ten through twelve--"threaden sails . . . draw the huge bottoms through the furrowed sea"--combined with the metaphor in line thirteen--"breasting the lofty surge"--contributes to the grandeur and majesty of the fleet as it sets sail for France.

Perhaps the most striking instance of heroic description in the choruses, however, is to be found in the fourth Prologue. We have here a most impressive example of Shakespeare's ability to evoke a mood:

Now entertain conjecture of a time
 When creeping murmur and the poring dark
 Fills the wide vessel of the universe.
 From camp to camp through the foul womb of night
 The hum of either army stilly sounds,
 That the fix'd sentinels almost receive
 The secret whispers of each other's watch:
 Fire answers fire, and through their paly flames
 Each battle sees the other's umber'd face;
 Steed threatens steed, in high and boastful neighs
 Piercing the night's dull ear; and from the tents
 The armourers, accomplishing the knights,
 With busy hammers closing rivets up,
 Give dreadful note of preparation:
 The country cocks do crow, the clocks do toll,
 And the third hour of drowsy morning name.

(4 Prologue, 1-16)

The first three lines are a marvel of compacted figures. "Creeping murmur" and "poring dark" are both instances of metonymy, "creeping" being an adjunct to the general murmur of night noises, which is also a synecdoche of species, and the "poring" being at once an effect of the

dark and a pun on the word "pour"--i.e., it is necessary to strain the eyes in order to see. This latter image prepares nicely for the metaphor of the universe as a vessel in the next line. The total effect of the three lines is one of liquid motion and darkness and the sound of secret movements and preparations, all placed against the perspective of the universe. Then the night, described as a "foul womb" in line four, gives us the paradox of the darkness being at once a place of safe enclosure and yet also ominous because of the war preparations going on. Line five continues the night noises in the onomatopoeia of "hum" and the alliteration of "stilly sounds."¹⁷ The balancing of the two armies against each other is captured in the isocolon¹⁸ of lines eight and ten, "fire answers fire . . . steed threatens steed," and the note of apprehension is captured in the descriptive metaphors of "paly flames" and "umber'd face" of lines eight and nine. The pounding alliteration in line fifteen, together with a second instance of isocolon,

¹⁷ Onomatopoeia--use or invention of words that sound like their meaning. See Lanham, Handlist, p. 69.

¹⁸ Repetition of phrases of equal length and usually corresponding structure. See Lanham, Handlist, p. 62.

--"the country cocks do crow, the clocks do toll"-- emphasizes the slow passage of time through this dreadful night of anticipation.

Such is the general atmosphere of gloom and foreboding and anxious preparation on the field at Agincourt the night before the great battle. Then, the Chorus gives us two passages of further description, one for each side. For the over-confident and eager French, the night is a "cripple," "tardy-gaited," a "foul and ugly witch" that "doth limp . . . tediously away." The English, on the other hand, tired, ill, and vastly out-numbered, sit "like sacrifices" by their fires, their faces appearing as so many "horrid ghosts." This string of metaphors and similes adds greatly to the heroic tone of this scene, for Shakespeare has exaggerated both the arrogance of the French and the wretchedness of the English through the images in order to exalt the courage of his hero. Against this magnificent description of soul-gnawing anxiety, Shakespeare now presents us with his hero as he walks through the camp cheering up his army and bolstering their courage. Twice he is described in metonymic terms as the "royal captain" with a "royal face," and his perigrinations are underlined with another combination of alliteration and isocolon in line thirty: "walking from watch to watch,

from tent to tent." The Chorus points out such qualities as his modesty, his cheerfulness, his majesty, his magnanimity, and ends with a beautiful extended simile comparing him to the sun that shines on all and thaws cold fear (ll. 43-45). The final metonymy in line forty-seven, "a little touch of Harry in the night," sums up the gracious modesty of this warrior-hero that has traditionally made him so popular with his army and associates him with the mythic healing touch that is supposed to reside in the king.

To this heroic courage of Henry V, first witnessed in the siege of Harfleur and crowned in the great victory of Agincourt, the Chorus gives final tribute in the fifth Prologue. Once more Henry's greatness and his modesty are pointed to in a type of combined metonymy and symbolism in the "bruised helmet" and "bended sword" he refuses to carry before him through the city of London (l. 18). The two military accoutrements become symbols of his martial greatness and of the dangers he has undergone, and as adjuncts to his person they beautifully describe both his courage and his humility in a single telling line. This speech also contains two epic similes comparing Henry at once to a "conqu'ring Caesar" and to a hopefully victorious

Essex.¹⁹

The cumulative effect, then, of the descriptions in these five speeches is one of exalted heroism. They are rich in cosmic metaphors all designed to build up the exalted and unifying world order so vital to the epic. So Henry is associated with Mars (1 Prologue, 6), with "young Phoebus" (3 Prologue, 6), with "conqu'ring Caesar" (5 Prologue, 28), with the sun (4 Prologue, 43). Then he is referred to as the "star of England" (Epilogue, 6), and finally, as "the mirror of all Christian kings" (2 Prologue, 6). Further, he is constantly invoked by metonymic descriptions such as the "warlike Harry" in the first Prologue and "embark his royalty" in the second Prologue. The instances where he is named (1 Prologue, 5; 2 Prologue, 11; 3 Prologue, 29; 4 Prologue, 47; 5 Prologue,

¹⁹ The second simile is unfortunate. The play was written before Essex returned home from his Irish campaign, unsuccessful and in disgrace. For Shakespeare's original audience, recollection of the incident might have stirred feelings of heroism, but it has since been lost in the byways of history except as an example of inglorious defeat. In such cases, it is always best to evoke a military hero of proven stature, not take a chance on a contemporary unknown. Shakespeare seldom falls prey to this type of immature writing. See Moody E. Prior, The Drama of Power: Studies in Shakespeare's History Plays (Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1973), p. 390, n. 7; Robert Adger Law, "The Choruses in Henry the Fifth," University of Texas Studies in English, 35 (1956), 11.

25), he is called by the familiar "Harry" which in itself is a type of metonymy since it indicates Henry's modesty and the love his people hold for him. Further, in describing the two opposing armies the Chorus makes liberal use of majestic metaphors. So he refers to the battleground as "the vasty fields of France" and asks us to imagine "two mighty monarchies" separated by "the perilous narrow ocean" (1 Prologue, 12, 20-21). When the English army departs from Southampton, the Chorus describes it as "a city on th' inconstant billows dancing" so extensive is this great fleet. Then again, at the beginning of the richly poetic fourth Prologue, he asks us to imagine the "poring dark" filling the "wide vessel of the universe," and describes night as a "foul womb" containing the humming sounds of both armies (4 Prologue, 2-5). Finally, in the Epilogue, he tells us Fortune made Henry's sword because he achieved "the world's best garden" (Epilogue, 6-7). This last metaphor suggests that the kingdoms Henry now possesses have attained a peace and security under his leadership, almost the primeval harmony of Eden. The grandeur of such metaphoric language does much to build up the cosmic dimensions required by any artistic construct claiming to be epic.

Erickson, however, finds the descriptions of the Chorus intrusive, insulting to the audience, annoying, as "time after time, the Chorus' epic tease leaves nothing to the imagination." On the one hand, says Erickson, the Chorus insists on his utter dependence on our imaginations to compensate for his own and his theatre's limitations; yet, on the other hand, he "insists on spoon-feeding us every step of the dramatic way."²⁰ But such a conclusion is to misunderstand the very nature of fictive illusion. Just as the epic narrator does not hinder but rather shapes and directs the course of our imaginations, so surely the Chorus does likewise in this play. In order to perform this role, the Chorus constantly bewails the inadequacy of physical representation on the stage and encourages us, the audience, to let our imaginations have free play. And certainly the richly suggestive metaphoric language he uses aids us greatly in associating the proper epic tone and atmosphere with Henry's great deeds.

The primary orientation of the Chorus, however, is not narrative and descriptive but rhetorical, seeking as he does to persuade us, the audience, to enter creatively

²⁰ "Gestures Toward Immortality," pp. 5-6.

into the imaginative experience of the play. His first Prologue is a deliberative speech cast in the form of an hypothetical proposition; consequently, the appeal he uses is basically logical. Put into a formula, this first Prologue would run something like the following: "If only (lines 1-4) . . . then would (lines 5-8) . . . ; but it is not possible (lines 8-16) . . . , so let us (lines 17-34). . . ." In order to reinforce his logical approach, the Chorus also has to establish his own ethos and he does so in a variety of ways. The most important technique he uses is what Peacham calls "parrhesia" which he defines as follows:

[It is] a forme of speech by which the Orator speaking before those whom he feareth, or ought to reverence, and having somewhat to say that may either touch themselves, or those whom they favour, preventeth the displeasure and offence that might be takne, as by craving pardon afore hand, and by shewing the necessitie of free speech in that behalfe, or by some other like forme of humble submission and modest insinuation.²¹

So the Chorus asks our pardon for "the flat unraised spirits that hath dar'd / On this unworthy scaffold to bring forth / So great an object" (ll. 8-11), and he calls

²¹ The Garden of Eloquence (London, 1593), p. 113.

us "gentles," flattering us and asking our indulgence and help in an overwhelming task. In other words, the Chorus takes us into his confidence by calling our attention to his humility before the grandeur of his theme and enlists our help in a task that he is inadequate to perform by himself. From the very beginning of the play, then, our critical faculties are softened since we are also involved in the play-making with the Chorus, a man we like and trust for his candor and humility.

But the logical and ethical appeals couched in this opening Prologue are not enough in themselves to account for the persuasiveness of the speech. Shakespeare here marshals all his poetic and rhetorical powers in order to make the longings of the Chorus the longings of the audience, to move them to mighty sentiments, and to stir up in them his own vehement affections. Renaissance theorists call this "exuscitatio," the stirring up of others to like or dislike through the strong passion of the speaker himself.²² And in order to accomplish this effect, Shakespeare makes use of two key figures of pathos,

²² See Sister Miriam Joseph, Shakespeare's Use of the Arts of Language (New York: Columbia University Press, 1947), p. 389.

exclamation and erotema.²³ The exclamation occurs in the first few lines as the Chorus longs for "a Muse of fire," "a kingdom for a stage," "princes to act," and "monarchs to behold the swelling scene." The erotema occurs in the series of rhetorical questions which are designed to point out the inadequacy of the physical theatre:

. . . can this cockpit hold
The vasty fields of France? or may we cram
Within this wooden O the very casques
That did affright the air at Agincourt?
(11. 12-14)

These two figures are excellent means whereby the Chorus stirs up the emotions of wonder and admiration in the audience and enlists their support in overcoming the temporal restrictions of language and physical space. The other means Shakespeare uses in his pathetic appeal are the many schemes and tropes that make up the poetic fabric of the speech. There are eight instances of hyperbaton,²⁴ eight examples of contracted or elided words and syllables, and numerous grammatical omissions (ellipses), all employed

²³ Exclamation is self-explanatory. Erotema, or interrogatio, although expressed in the form of a question, does not ask for information, but is rather a device whereby the orator affirms or denies something strongly. See Sister Miriam Joseph, p. 389.

²⁴ A generic figure covering any departure from ordinary word order. See Lanham, Handlist, p. 56.

to achieve a rhythmic flow and conciseness of expression. Lines one through four contain a zeugma²⁵ through which the single understood verb "I wish for" governs a series of objects--a muse, a kingdom, princes, monarchs. Lines twenty-nine through thirty-one contain a diazeugma²⁶ in which the Chorus now makes one noun cover a number of verbs. So our "thoughts" must "deck . . . carry . . . jump . . . turn," in order to flesh out the heroic details. Both of these schemes have a repetitive effect and impress the audience once again with the magnitude of the task before it. The speech also abounds in alliterations, the effect of which is to support the rhythmic flow of the majestic blank verse. And apart from the beautiful fourth Prologue, this speech is perhaps the richest in metaphoric schemes in the entire play.²⁷ This brilliant use of

²⁵ One verb governs several congruent words or clauses, each in a different way. See Lanham, Handlist, p. 120.

²⁶ One subject with many verbs. See Lanham, Handlist, p. 35.

²⁷ There are some fourteen metaphors, two similes, one conceit of allegory (the famous dogs image of lines 6-8), one mythological allusion, seven examples of synecdoche, mainly clustering around the metaphor of the stage and the theatre, one metonymy of effect, and three personifications. Such a linear enumeration, however, in no way attests to the brilliant way Shakespeare has woven his images together to provide a single poetic experience.

images quickly defines the various relationships involved and compresses the general longings of the Chorus into a tumble of concrete metaphors. For example, the picture of Henry as "the port of Mars" is extended through four lines which encompass a variety of rhetorical tropes:

Then should the warlike Harry, like himself,
Assume the port of Mars; and at his heels,
Leash'd in like hounds, should famine, sword and fire
Crouch for employment. (ll. 5-8)

The synecdoche of the genus "port of Mars" relates Henry to the class of warriors of which Mars is the mythical archetype, and the following simile, "like himself," suggests Henry is as much the archetype as Mars. The second simile, extended into a small allegory, personifies famine, sword, and fire and compares them to dogs that Henry is about to unleash. Also, famine, sword, and fire become metonymy of effect, caused by the general category of war whose effects Henry will use and ultimately defeat. Such a dense layering of images is typical of this speech and of Shakespeare's maturing style.

This prologue, then, is a masterpiece of persuasive oratory, which accomplishes its purpose--that of establishing the ethos of the Chorus and also of cementing the relationships among the author, the Chorus, the audience, the actors, and the play itself. Nor is Shakespeare content to assume all these elements are firmly

bound together for the duration of the play. At the end of Prologue One, the Chorus again begs our patience and kindness, and in Prologue Two, after directing our imaginations toward the conspiracy at Southampton, he promises not to offend our stomachs with the sea passage. This chatty tone is continued in Prologue Three as once again the Chorus reminds us to "still be kind" (l. 34) and in Prologue Four as he asks us to bear in mind "true things by what their mock'ries be" (l. 53). In Prologue Five he asks us to "admit th' excuse / Of time, of numbers and due course of things / Which cannot in their huge and proper life / Be here presented" (ll. 3-6), and in the Epilogue, his task accomplished, he makes his final plea for acceptance: ". . . And, for their sake / In your fair minds, let this acceptance take" (ll. 13-14). It is interesting to note that the Epilogue, which steps back and takes a general view of the play and even events outside the play, is written in sonnet form. Perhaps Shakespeare used this genre to prove that much can be said "in little room" (Epilogue, 3), that an epic story can indeed be pressed into the confines of the two-hour traffic of our stage if only the audience is willing to co-operate, even participate.

From the above discussion, then, it is evident that the Chorus, far from being meddling and obtrusive, performs an extremely important function in this play. As a low-profile stage manager,²⁸ he constantly creates and then breaks the dramatic illusion and forces us to regard critically the many processes that go into the creation of a play. This self-conscious awareness of the play as a play has become fairly common in the modern theatre and has given birth to a new critical term, "metatheatre."²⁹ The effect of this technique in Henry V is to keep the audience critical and detached, to keep them constantly aware that what they are watching is not real life but a dramatic re-enactment of an historical period that takes many liberties with actual events. Nor does this Chorus

²⁸ Erickson, "Gestures Toward Immortality," p. 5.

²⁹ According to Lionel Abel, Metatheatre: A New View of Dramatic Form (New York: Hill and Wang, 1963), "metatheatre is the necessary form for dramatizing characters who, having full self-consciousness, cannot but participate in their own dramatization." The term does not describe a new type of drama; rather, it is a new way of looking at all drama that is highly self-conscious. Abel sees Hamlet and Falstaff as the two supreme examples in Shakespeare of what he calls "self-referring characters." The most extreme example, of course, is Pirandello's Six Characters in Search of an Author. See pp. 59-72.

merely want us to make up in our imaginations the difference between the terribly inadequate theatrical representation of Henry's life and the actual facts; he wants us to go much further and to idealize these facts into the grand world of heroic epic, a world that is full of awe and wonder, where Henry is a great king, remote, majestical, public. As Abel points out, Shakespeare, of all European dramatists, was the only one possessed by a complete confidence in the powers of the imagination to accomplish such a result.³⁰

In the modern theatre, dramatists often deliberately blur the distinctions between reality and illusion, making the point that there is no objective reality, that life is only the way we subjectively want it to be and so perceive it. Shakespeare was also fascinated with the relationship between dramatic illusion and the real world--witness the elaborate parody in the "Pyramus and Thisby" farce in A Midsummer Night's Dream and the ubiquitous metaphor of life and the theatre throughout his work. It is the function of the Chorus in this play to keep us constantly aware of the play as a play, not merely to persuade us to accept his mixing of the epic genre with the dramatic, but also

to aid him in accomplishing the almost impossible task of doing justice on the stage to Henry's great life, a task that can be fully realized only through the creative powers of the imagination.

Before moving on to the play itself, it is necessary to make one final point about the Chorus. There has been much critical discussion about whether the Chorus is the authentic voice of the poet or a persona. E. E. Stoll insists it is Shakespeare speaking, and Sprague agrees.³¹

Clifford Leech, however, warns us against accepting the Chorus as the author's voice without qualification.³²

And the Chorus himself refers to the author in the third person (Epilogue, 2). It is my contention that the Chorus is as much a dramatic construct as any other character in the play and that he has his own distinctive personality. He is obsequious, humble, full of self-apology, romantic, highly poetic, and skilled in oratory. Further, as Craig

³¹ E. E. Stoll, "Shakespeare's Presentation of a Contemporary Hero," in Poets and Playwrights, 1930; rpt. in Shakespeare: Henry V, Casebook Series, p. 104; A. C. Sprague, "Shakespeare's Henry V: A Play for the Stage," in Shakespeare's Histories: Plays for the Stage, Society for Theatre Research, selections reprinted in Shakespeare: Henry V, Casebook Series, p. 194.

³² "Shakespeare's Prologues and Epilogues," in Studies in Honor of T. W. Baldwin, ed. Don Cameron Allen (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1958), p. 162.

points out, the Chorus unabashedly approves of Henry's military posture.³³ Everything he says is in total admiration of Henry and his deeds; and his language, the rhythms of his speech, his rhetorical gestures, all contribute to the massive and unified effect of heroism. Thus, the Chorus may come across to some audiences as boyishly romantic and naive and so an object of satire.³⁴ I would agree with those critics who disparage the ironic interpretation of the Chorus. This play is not in the vein of Troilus and Cressida and Antony and Cleopatra where the seamy side of military heroics in all its self-seeking pettiness is exposed at every turn. Shakespeare does not directly tamper with what is to our minds the simplistic hero-worship of the Chorus. What the Chorus offers us is one view of Henry V and one view of life, a view that is certainly legitimate and admirable but not complete. We have to look at the rest of the play, particularly the

³³ Introduction to the play in The Complete Works, p. 737.

³⁴ For discussions of satire in the play, see Allan Gilbert, "Patriotism and Satire in Henry V," in Studies in Shakespeare, ed. Arthur D. Matthews and Clark M. Emery (Florida: University of Miami Publications in English and American Literature, 1, 1953), 40-64; C. H. Hobday, "Imagery and Irony in Henry V," Shakespeare Survey, 21 (1968), 107-14.

scenes involving the Bishops and the low comedy group, for the more "realistic" approach to life and warfare. Shakespeare has deliberately set up his Chorus as an intermediary between himself and his audience for the rhetorical purposes just outlined. Nowhere does he invalidate this voice by ironic undercutting, and those critics who would make the Chorus ironic by juxtaposing his view of events with those of Pistol and his cohorts misread the play. The idealized approach to historical events the Chorus offers is as valid as the realistic politicking of the Bishops, the cynical thievery of Pistol, the pedantic blustering of Fluellen, and the fearful wishes of the young boy in Act Three who would give all his fame for a pot of ale and safety during the siege at Harfleur.

After World War II, Korea, and Vietnam, we tend to look with a jaundiced eye on all war in general and wars of aggression in particular. We can perhaps appreciate the beauty of the poetry in the Chorus' speeches, but we have difficulty associating ourselves, emotionally or intellectually, with the idealization of military events. Modern film, poetry, and fiction have done much to nullify the grandness of war, so if the heroic gesturing of the Chorus leaves some modern audiences cold, it is small

wonder. But we must remind ourselves that Shakespeare's audience, while very much aware of the miseries of war, still saw it as a chance for honor and fame.³⁵ And in the Shakespearean scheme of things, the essentially romantic view of life offered by the Chorus, while not complete in and by itself, presents a beauty and consolation to the soul that should not be discarded. For complete cynicism, we need to look at Jacobean tragedy and the modern theatre, not the Chorus in Henry V.

³⁵ See particularly C. B. Watson, Shakespeare and the Renaissance Concept of Honor (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1960).

CHAPTER III

A JUST WAR: SOPHISTIC RHETORIC

According to the traditional notions of epic, the central hero can be fully defined only in a war setting; in Henry V, Shakespeare certainly has his war. However, the French-English conflict of 1413-1422 in which Henry V invaded France to make good his claim to the French throne presents some serious problems to any artist attempting to shape it into an English epic. A war where one's native land is attacked and the invading hordes are kept at bay by the home troops against overwhelming odds is heroic by its very nature. A war where one's own nation is the aggressor is a different situation. Shakespeare was considerably helped along by the current mythology of Henry's royal greatness but this, in itself, would not have been enough to carry the story on stage.¹ In order to maintain Henry's heroic stature and the sympathies of the audience for him in a war of aggression, Shakespeare had to deal with some facts of this campaign in a highly

¹ See Moody E. Prior, The Drama of Power: Studies in Shakespeare's History Plays (Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1973), Chapter XVI, for a full account of the political myth surrounding Henry V.

delicate manner. It is the contention of this chapter that Shakespeare approached the problem in two ways. First of all he made out the clergy, the persuaders of invasion, to be little more than sophisticated manipulators and thereby put the major portion of the responsibility for the war on them, not on Henry. Second, he removed any feelings of sympathy we may have for the French by depicting them as grossly incompetent and fatuous.

i

Before looking at the Archbishop's techniques of persuasion in Act One of the play, it is best to review briefly the historical facts of Henry's claim to the French throne. As Peter Saccio points out, Henry made his claim on two grounds, treaty and inheritance.² The treaty in question was that one signed at Bretigny (1360) which granted his great-grandfather Edward III certain lands in France.³ A more serious claim, however, lay in Henry's

² Shakespeare's *English Kings* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), p. 75. I am indebted to Saccio's discussion of the life of Henry V for much of the following information.

³ This treaty was signed during one phase of the Hundred Years' War (1377-1453) which Edward III had initiated and which Henry renewed when he invaded France in 1415.

genealogy. Charles IV of France had one heir, a daughter, Isabella, who married Edward II of England and who bore him Edward III, Henry's great-grandfather. Upon Charles' death in 1328, the French throne was claimed for Edward III in his mother's right. It was already French law that no woman could inherit the throne, but there was no provision denying an inheritance passing through a woman to a male heir. The French, understandably not wanting an English King, quickly resurrected an old Salic law to cover this contingency, so the French crown went to Charles' cousin, Philip of Valois, who became Philip VI. Much of the English campaign in France under Edward III was an attempt to secure the French throne for Edward, which he felt was rightfully his, so Henry's claim was not something he thought up by himself but was merely a renewal of the policy initiated by his great-grandfather.

All this antiquarian legalism would strike a modern audience as absurd, a ridiculous rejection of the verdicts of history and current political fact. But, as Saccio points out, the inheritance of property by the correct blood lines was an extremely serious matter in the Middle Ages and long after.⁴ It was precisely because Richard

⁴ Shakespeare's English Kings, p. 78.

II had confiscated the considerable inheritance of Henry's father that he had gained the support of the English nobles in deposing Richard. Consequently, when Henry asks the Archbishop, "May I with right and conscience make this claim?" (1. 2. 96), he is asking a perfectly legitimate question both for his own time and for Shakespeare's.

The only problem with using the inheritance argument to justify invading France, however, is that it nullified not only Henry's claim to France but also his position as King of England. Technically, if one accepts the principle that the crown can be inherited through a female, then the English crown rightfully belonged to Edmund Mortimer, the Fifth Earl of March, who was descended from the third son of Edward III through a female whereas Henry V was descended from the fourth son. Consequently, it was Mortimer, not Henry, who should have been King of England and who should have claimed the French titles.⁵ The assumption behind Henry's own position as King of England--possession is nine-tenths of the law--he chooses to ignore in relation to Charles VI's position as King of France.

⁵ Hobday makes this same point in his essay "Imagery and Irony in Henry V," Shakespeare Survey, 21 (1968), 110-11.

It is this legal question surrounding Henry's claim to the French throne that Shakespeare incorporates into the first act of his play. In the first scene, the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Bishop of Ely are discussing a bill that is about to be passed in Parliament which will cause the Church to lose half of her possessions. We know from the dialogue that the Archbishop has been casting about for a way to prevent this from happening. After a long digressive panegyric on the virtues of this new king, Canterbury tells Ely (and the audience) that he has hit upon a solution. He has offered Henry a large sum of money to help finance the invasion of France, which he hopes will divert the King's attentions from Church lands. There is no mention at this point of the rightness of Henry's claim. Fundamentally self-serving, this action at best can be regarded as a politically expedient maneuver, at worst as an out and out bribe. Henry, to his credit, seems to have demurred about the legality of his claim to France, so the Archbishop lets us know he is about to answer Henry's queries. The formal disputation over this point occurs in Scene Two.

Taken together, these two scenes have been the subject of much critical controversy. Hazlitt scowled that "Canterbury gave the King carte blanche . . . to rob and

murder in circles of latitude and longitude abroad to save the possessions of the church at home,"⁶ and A. W. Schlegel firmly put the blame on both sides: "His [Henry's] learned bishops . . . are as ready to prove to him his indisputable right to the crown of France, as he is to allow his conscience to be tranquillized by them."⁷ In this century, H. B. Charlton stated that Henry is trapped into declaring war by "the machinations of a group of men whose sole and quite explicit motive is to preserve their own revenues." He then continues his deprecation by turning on Henry: "Hal, in fact, owes his political achievement not as did his father, to his own insight, but to something so near to intellectual dullness that it permits of his being jockeyed into his opportunities."⁸ E. M. W. Tillyard agrees with this assessment, pointing out that as a thinker, Henry is "quite passive, leaving

⁶ Characters of Shakespeare's Plays (1817); selections reprinted in Shakespeare: Henry V, Casebook Series, ed. Michael Quinn (London: Macmillan & Co., 1969), p. 36.

⁷ Lectures on Dramatic Art and Literature (1809-11); selections reprinted in Shakespeare: Henry V, Casebook Series, p. 35.

⁸ Shakespeare, Politics, and Politicians (English Association, Pamphlet 72, 1929), p. 16.

the business to others."⁹ A. C. Bradley, in his Oxford Lectures on Poetry, gives Henry more credit, pointing out that Henry turns to the Archbishop for what he knows very well the learned prelate will tell him out of the Church's self-interest.¹⁰ Richmond also feels that Henry cunningly stage-manages this scene and that he extorts from the Bishops the money for his war that he would otherwise have had to get from Parliament. Not only is Henry a manipulator, says Richmond, but he is also a moral hypocrite since he lays full responsibility for the war on the head of the Archbishop.¹¹ Derek Traversi is not quite so harsh. He points out that the King's mind is already made up and that in these two scenes he is not looking for advice but for a public statement from the subservient Archbishop on the justice of his cause. The basic flaw in Henry's character, says Traversi, is "his willingness to shift the responsibility upon others, to use their connivance to obtain the justification which he continually,

⁹ Shakespeare's History Plays (London: Chatto and Windus, 1944; rpt. New York: Barnes and Noble, 1964), p. 310.

¹⁰ (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1902), p. 257.

¹¹ Shakespeare's Political Plays (New York: Random House, 1967), p. 188.

insistently, requires."¹² But wherever we want to put the blame, Traversi insists that the play opens in a setting of political intrigue. Hobday, in a later essay, argues that Protestant and anti-clerical London would have assumed that the two Popish Prelates were up to no good,¹³ and, although taking a somewhat more moderate position, Prior agrees that the play opens in an atmosphere of devious politics.¹⁴ Battenhouse, on the other hand, feels that Henry is much to blame. As he puts it, "his [Henry's] launching of a quarrel with France is managed with such an adroit show of 'right' and of 'conscience' that no one within the world of the play seems to recognize the counterfeit of justice that is being fabricated."¹⁵

While not as numerous, the defenders of the clergy are equally vehement. Robert Ornstein says, "there is nothing devious in Canterbury's relation with the King and nothing that smacks of hypocrisy in his patriotic fervor."

¹² Shakespeare from Richard II to Henry V (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1957), p. 171.

¹³ "Imagery and Irony in Henry V," p. 109.

¹⁴ The Drama of Power, p. 270.

¹⁵ Roy W. Battenhouse, "Henry V as Heroic Comedy," in Essays in Honor of Hardin Craig, ed. Richard Hosley (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1962), p. 326.

He feels that the King and the Bishop understand each other and play the game well, both ready "to render unto Caesar what is Caesar's and to worship the King this side of idolatry."¹⁶ John Dover Wilson also attempts to vindicate the integrity of the Bishops and insists that the French war was a righteous war which a virtuous king was bound in honor to undertake.¹⁷ Most of these critics also try to argue that Henry insists passionately that he be told the truth.¹⁸ As Sister Judith O'Malley puts it, "surrounded by his mighty lords and counselors, Henry solemnly and . . . sincerely seeks from the Archbishop of Canterbury

¹⁶ A Kingdom for a Stage: The Achievement of Shakespeare's History Plays (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1972), p. 179.

¹⁷ The Fortunes of Falstaff (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1943; rpt. New York: Macmillan Co., 1944; 2nd rpt. Cambridge paperback, 1964), and his "Introduction" to the Cambridge edition of the play (Cambridge University Press, 1947; 2nd rpt. ed. 1964), pp. xix-xxiv. J. H. Walter in his "Introduction" to the Arden edition of the play (London: Methuen & Co., 1954), argues in a similar vein. See pp. xxii-xxiii. See also M. M. Reese, The Cease of Majesty: A Study of Shakespeare's History Plays (London: Arnold, 1961), pp. 323-24.

¹⁸ Campbell, Shakespeare's 'Histories': Mirrors of Elizabethan Policy (San Marino, Calif.: Huntington Library, 1947); Irving Ribner, The English History Play in the Age of Shakespeare, 2nd ed. (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1965), p. 189; Dover Wilson's "Introduction."

spiritual light in matters of import to his kingdom and that of France."¹⁹ Winny agrees, "The King is sincere in wishing to be cleared by religious authority before undertaking the war against France, and the Archbishop seems to be offering sincere advice."²⁰ Finally, both Reese and Walter agree that to read this opening sequence ironically is not consistent with Shakespeare's portrayal of Henry as "the mirror of all Christian kings."²¹ Perhaps the only way to settle this critical dispute is to analyze carefully the rhetorical validity of Canterbury's persuasive techniques, remembering that Shakespeare, thoroughly trained in the fundamentals of logic and rhetoric, knew what he was doing in these two scenes.

To begin with, the formal debate in Scene Two is what contemporary rhetoricians would have called a dialectical

¹⁹ Sister Judith Marie O'Malley, Justice in Shakespeare: Three English Kings in the Light of Thomistic Thought (New York: Pageant Press, 1965), p. 41.

²⁰ James Winny, The Player King: A Theme of Shakespeare's Histories (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1968), p. 180.

²¹ Reese, The Cease of Majesty, p. 323; Walter, "Introduction."

disputation,²² and the main figure of disputation used is what Peacham called anacoenosis, when "the Orator seemeth to aske counsell of his adversary, or to deliberate with the Judges what is to be done. . . ." ²³ In its barest outlines, this disputation can be divided into five main sections. The first section (ll. 7-8), which is a two-line exchange of salutations between the principals Henry and Canterbury, constitutes a kind of exordium. Lines 9 to 32 contain Henry's warning to the Archbishop to argue nothing but the truth, and they also bring up the first possible objection to the invasion of France, the so-called Salic Law. Lines 33 to 135 constitute the third main division in the disputation in which Canterbury argues against the Salic law and is then joined by a chorus of persuaders urging the invasion. The fourth section (ll. 136-220), which deals with the second main objection, the

²² "Disputation is a contention about some question taken in hand, either for finding out of truth, or else for exercise sake, and there be foure kindes of disputation . . . the second is called Dialecticall, which belongeth to probable opinion." Thomas Blundeville, The Arte of Logike (London, 1617), p. 187. As Sister Miriam Joseph points out, disputation deals with the probable, which has the inherent capacity to generate arguments on both sides of a question. See Shakespeare's Use of the Arts of Language (New York: Columbia University Press, 1947), p. 375.

²³ The Garden of Eloquence, p. 110.

Scots problem, is also argued down by the two Bishops. The fifth and final section (ll. 221-233) contains Henry's formal statement of resolve.

In a proper disputation, the aim of both sides is to search out the truth, so, ideally, a debate is open-ended. Such is not the case in this sequence. Both disputants have already decided where they want to end up. We know the desires of the Bishops from Scene One, and, at the end of Scene Two, we discover that Henry has already sent his challenge to the French before ever consulting the clergy. Further, a fully worked-out debate gives equal time to both sides of the dispute and argues both the pro and con sides of the issue under question. What we have here is a somewhat truncated form of disputation. Henry plays the devil's advocate and brings up two possible objections to the invasion of France. The arguments of the Archbishop against these objections are given far more space than Henry's reasoning, and nowhere are the positive advantages of the forthcoming campaign spelled out. For Henry, such advantages would involve his desire for further power, for money and lands, and a cause for his restless nobles to think about other than internal rebellion. And we already know the real advantages to the Bishops. What we have in this scene, then, is not an honestly

worked-out disputation which seeks truth and justice on a theoretical level but a typical piece of political strategy-planning which is a mixture of debate, diplomacy, and self-interested negotiation, all supposedly for the fairly customary reasons of state and the national interest.²⁴

Many critics have tried to defend Henry in this sequence by pointing out that he is a conscientious ruler properly seeking out advice and examining thoroughly the issues with his learned and wise counselors before embarking on something so serious as war.²⁵ A close analysis of the type of rhetoric involved in the actual disputation, however, points to some serious problems. While Henry may be sincere in going through the proper channels before committing his country to war, those persons he consults are certainly not sincere in their response. Their deviousness becomes abundantly evident in their replies to Henry's searching questions.

Henry's adjuration to Canterbury before the latter begins his long oration on the Salic law is, as Palmer

²⁴ See Prior, The Drama of Power, p. 264.

²⁵ Prior quotes Erasmus and other Renaissance secular treatises on war to defend Henry in this scene. See pp. 324 ff.

points out, a model of princely righteousness.²⁶ He warns the Archbishop to "justly and religiously unfold" his arguments, and three times he invokes the name of God in his solemn charge to Canterbury. Henry is thoroughly aware of the horrors of war and in all good conscience cannot enter into it lightly. The Archbishop's reply, however, is not nearly so straightforward. Goddard calls it a colossal piece of ecclesiastical casuistry, and Palmer agrees.²⁷ Derek Traversi suggests the oration is a perfunctory piece of flatness "which no one could possibly hear without indifference,"²⁸ and John Dover Wilson points out that it is too windy for modern tastes and so becomes ironic.²⁹ Babula makes the point that "no audience simply hearing this complicated and twisting explanation could have much idea what it means," although Wilson attempts to defend Shakespeare's writing here by suggesting that Shakespeare's audience, being rhetorically

²⁶ John Palmer, Political Characters of Shakespeare (London: Macmillan & Co., 1945), p. 221.

²⁷ Harold C. Goddard, The Meaning of Shakespeare (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1951; rpt. Phoenix Books, 1960), I, 220; Palmer, Political Characters of Shakespeare, p. 222.

²⁸ Shakespeare from Richard II to Henry V, p. 170.

²⁹ "Introduction," p. xxiv.

minded and litigious, would have loved to hear a good pleader proving France belonged to them.³⁰ Prior dismisses this reasoning as no more than a hopeful guess.³¹ However an audience would react to this speech,³² a close analysis reveals it to be admirably structured. Canterbury begins his oration with a highly formal exordium in which he demands attention in the name of the King (ll. 33-35). In the next section, his narratio (ll. 35-42), he states the problem to be discussed, the question of the Salic law the French have used to bar Edward III and his descendants from the French throne. The refutatio occupies the main part of the speech (ll. 43-95), and attempts to argue against the Salic law on two grounds. Canterbury first attempts to prove that the Salic law, which was composed in German territory, does not apply to France (ll. 43-64), and then he switches to the argument that many French kings themselves have inherited through the female (ll. 64-85). In his confirmatio (ll. 98-100) he quotes the

³⁰ William Babula, "Whatever Happened to Prince Hal? An Essay on Henry V," Shakespeare Survey, 30 (1977), 49; Wilson, "Introduction," p. xxiv.

³¹ The Drama of Power, p. 271.

³² In most productions I have seen of this play, the audience has laughed when Canterbury calls his explanation "as clear as is the summer's sun" (l. 2. 86).

Book of Numbers to further substantiate the legality of inheriting through the female and ends his oration with an emotional peroration in which he urges Henry to the wars in the name of his (Henry's) ancestors (ll. 100-14).

Canterbury's mustering of the voluminous facts in this speech builds up his own credibility (his ethos) although the main appeal he uses is logical. However, the three logical structures he uses prove, on examination, to be fallacious. His first refutation can be reduced to a syllogism:

Major Premise:	It is law that no woman shall succeed in Salic land.
Minor Premise:	France is not Salic land.
Conclusion:	Therefore, a woman may succeed in France.

According to Sister Miriam Joseph, a properly worked-out syllogism must have three main parts. The antecedent is the subject of the conclusion and is called the minor term, here "a woman." The major term, or consequent, is the predicate of the conclusion--"may succeed in France." The middle term is that which appears as the subject of the major premise and the predicate of the minor premise. There is no such term in the above syllogism. Further, in order for a syllogism to be valid, says Sister Miriam Joseph, "at least one premise must be affirmative, for from two negative premises no conclusion can be drawn,

since, obviously, if neither term of the conclusion is related to the middle term in the premises, one cannot thereby determine their relation to each other."³³ Since there are two negative premises in Canterbury's first refutation, it is logically fallacious. To put it another way, the terms are not properly distributed, so we do not have a sound equation. The conclusion simply does not follow from the premises.

In his second refutation, Canterbury argues from example, trying to establish precedent. He lists three examples of French kings who did inherit from women and draws the conclusion that since the French disregard their own laws, so may Henry. Even though a thousand people break a particular law, however, the law itself stands. Further, Canterbury's examples are unfortunate. The first two, King Pepin and Hugh Capet, were both deposed, and in the latter case the title of King of France, as Canterbury himself admits, "was corrupt and naught" (l. 73). Capet had to justify himself as the legitimate heir of Charles the Great through a woman. The third example, that of King Lewis the Tenth, is similar to Henry's own situation as son of an usurper. To quiet his conscience,

³³ Shakespeare's Use of the Arts of Language, p. 356.

Lewis also searched his lineage for a legal inheritance through a woman.³⁴

Finally, the quotation from the Book of Numbers can be construed as an appeal to illegitimate authority. It is Canterbury's strongest appeal since it supposedly carries spiritual endorsement; but Canterbury is making too big an inductive leap in applying an obscure line from scripture to a temporal question of inheritance.

Having, so he thinks, firmly and logically dispensed with the main objection to Henry's claim, Canterbury now switches to the pathetic appeal and urges his sovereign to battle by calling on his honor. Just as his mighty ancestors distinguished themselves at the battle of Crécy, so must Henry distinguish himself if he is to uphold the family tradition. Canterbury is now joined by a chorus of persuaders as Ely, Exeter, and Westmoreland echo the call to honor; Westmoreland adds the clincher that just as Henry's ancestors had cause and means and might, so does he.

³⁴ The illogic of citing the example of the French usurpers is noted by Goddard, The Meaning of Shakespeare, p. 221, Battenhouse, "Henry V as Heroic Comedy," pp. 172-74, and Karl P. Wentersdorf, "The Conspiracy of Silence in Henry V," Shakespeare Survey, 27 (1976), 267.

Henry makes no attempt whatever to refute the logic of his courtiers on the question of his legitimate claim through lineage; rather, at this point, he turns the discussion to a second and more practical problem, that of the Scots. And once again we have fallacious reasoning. Henry starts the argument by pointing to historical fact. Whenever his great-grandfather went with his forces into France, the Scots took advantage of the situation and invaded England. Canterbury and Ely pick up Henry's lead, and Ely quotes a proverb to summarize the situation:

But there's a saying very old and true,
 "If that you will France win,
 Then with Scotland first begin." (ll. 166-68)

Having reinforced his maxim with two metaphors, one calling Scotland a weasel and another a mouse, he then develops an enthymeme from it. Reduced to a formula, it would read as follows:

Major Premise: "If that you will France win
 Then with Scotland first begin."
 Minor Premise: We want to win France.
 Conclusion (from Exeter): Then we had better
 stay home and deal with Scotland
 first.

Obviously, this is not the desired conclusion, so Exeter tries to vitiate it by saying England is strong enough to fight on two fronts. This point gives Canterbury his cue, and he next launches into an elaborate analogy comparing

the workings of a commonwealth to a community of bees. While a fascinating comparison, the analogy illustrates only the Renaissance principle that a commonwealth depends on order, of which the end is obedience to a lawful ruler. It does not prove that a kingdom remains just as strong when it divides its forces. At the end of his speech, Canterbury gets carried away and launches into a whole series of further analogies to support his inference "that many things, having full reference / To one consent, may work contrariously" (ll. 205-06). In other words, Canterbury has attempted to overcome the second main obstacle to the French wars by the fallacious use of analogy as proof. The disputation now ends as Henry declares his resolution that "France being ours, we'll bend it to our awe, / Or break it all to pieces" (ll. 224-25).

What we have in this opening sequence, then, is a whole series of fallacious arguments used to promote a self-interested course of action. The bishops want to keep their possessions and one way of doing so is to convince Henry to war against France. In this, they are eminently successful. Working for them is the simple fact that Henry wants the French throne. As Brown puts it, the debate is conducted in an atmosphere of mutual

calculation.³⁵ The sequence is little more than a ritualized show in which both sides know where they want to end up. But of the two disputants, Henry is far less culpable. He does not use warped logic or fallacious reasoning to support his claim to the French throne; rather, he merely asks pointed questions and then depends on his Bishops to answer them honestly. Henry has often been blamed for shifting the moral responsibility for the war onto the clergy, but we must remember the very strong position of the Church in both spiritual and temporal affairs, not only in medieval England but also in Shakespeare's time. The voice of the Church was simply not to be taken lightly. Further, Henry's supposedly "hidden" education notwithstanding,³⁶ he would have been far less trained in the subtleties of logical disputation than were his learned clerical advisors. It is perfectly understandable that he, a layman in the art of logic, should accept the advice of the experts. As Shakespeare presents them, the Bishops' declared self-interest and

³⁵ "Gestures Toward Immortality," p. 37.

³⁶ In response to Canterbury's bemusement in Act I at Henry's sudden learning, Ely comments that Henry has "obscur'd his contemplation / Under the veil of wildness" (1. 1. 63-64).

their shoddy and devious argumentation force them to bear the brunt of the responsibility for this war.

ii

Before their resounding defeat at Agincourt, the French, as Shakespeare presents them, come across to us in a thoroughly negative light. Shakespeare represents them bickering among themselves, indulging in trivial word play, and boasting of their superiority. The effect of this treatment is to lessen audience sympathy for the country that is being invaded and to minimize the fact that Henry is conducting a war of aggression. It is not until the French have been defeated and they are about to sign the treaty declaring Henry heir to the throne of France that they rally their dignity. This change in treatment is particularly evident in Burgundy's fine oration in Act Five wherein he pleads for peace and in the French Queen's endorsement of this plea.

But when we first meet the French in Act One, they are insulting and arrogant. The French Ambassador has come to England directly from the Dauphin to bring a rejection of the claims Henry has made to French territories. The rejection is couched in highly insulting terms which make reference to Henry's wayward youth and is

accompanied by the further insult of the tun of tennis balls. Obviously, the Dauphin does not take the English seriously, and his lack of diplomatic cunning continues throughout the play. In Act Two the French King warns his nobles to prepare themselves for the anticipated English invasion, and once more the Dauphin scorns to recognize the seriousness of the challenge to French peace. His stupidity lies in the fact that he rejects legitimate intelligence as to the power and determination of the English forces and depends rather on rumor and his own version of Henry's reputation:

For, my good liege, she is so idly king'd,
Her sceptre so fantastically borne
By a vain, giddy, shallow, humorous youth,
That fear attends her not. (2. 4. 26-29)

The Constable is irritated by the shallow insight of the Dauphin, and both he and the French King again urge serious preparation.

This mental anemia of the Dauphin is more fully developed in Act Three, where instead of concentrating on war strategies, he indulges in a vacuous and hyperbolic praise of his horse. Shakespeare's technique here is to dissipate any positive response the audience might have toward the Dauphin by making him out to be totally inane. He does this by assigning to him a whole series of language

vices. The most obvious one the Dauphin indulges in is hyperbole, which in itself is not a vice; however, his excessive use of this trope becomes what Peacham describes as *bomphiologia*, or the exaggerated inflation of both words and matter.³⁷ The following section is a representative example:

What a long night is this! I will not change my horse with any that treads but on four pasterns. Ça, ha! he bounds from the earth, as if his entrails were hairs; le cheval volant, the Pegasus, chez les narines de feu! When I bestride him, I soar, I am a hawk: he trots the air; the earth sings when he touches it; the basest horn of his hoof is more musical than the pipe of Hermes. (3. 7. 11-19)

The Dauphin continues with his extravagant mythological allusions, associating his horse not only with Pegasus and with Hermes but also with Perseus (1. 22). His embarrassed audience (the Constable and Orleans) are at first polite, but as the Dauphin gets carried away into redundancy (*pleonasmus*) they become bored and insulting at the stupidity and triviality of the heir apparent. When the Dauphin announces, brags rather, that he once wrote a sonnet in praise of his horse, Orleans initiates a witty interchange between the three that is fraught with

³⁷ The Garden of Eloquence (1577), sig. Gii^r.

bawdy double talk, the vice called cacemphaton.³⁸ This is a favorite device in Shakespeare, and in the comedies he uses it to portray exuberance and high spirits, mainly in the scenes concerning the battle of the sexes.³⁹ Here, however, associated with a horse, the technique becomes almost a parody and shows the French nobles to be in possession of a sophisticated prurience rather than high spirits. Lily B. Campbell suggests this sequence reveals the effeminacy and degeneration of the French, and indeed, the entire interchange has an air of thinly veiled, insulting decadence, which the obtuse and self-centered Dauphin completely misses.⁴⁰ Then again, on the morning of Agincourt, the Dauphin takes to the field singing the praises of his horse, treating the upcoming battle as little more than a tournament. His total lack of insight and his smug stupidity leave no room for audience sympathy when the Dauphin later wails his defeat and histrionically

³⁸ See Richard Lanham, A Handlist of Rhetorical Terms (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969), p. 123.

³⁹ He also uses it, magnificently, in the many interchanges between Hal and Falstaff to produce pure, rollicking comedy.

⁴⁰ Shakespeare's 'Histories,' p. 284.

suggests, "lets stab ourselves" (4. 5. 7).⁴¹

More intelligent, but equally repulsive, are most of the other French nobles. Once the Dauphin has departed in the above scene (3. 7), Orleans and Constable participate in a language battle in which they further indulge in bawdy double talk and witty put-downs of their Dauphin. The word play, fraught with such rhetorical schemes as antanaclasis, asteismus, and paronomasia,⁴² points out the essential triviality of the French court, and the elaborate proverb game beginning in line 119 and continuing on for sixteen lines reinforces the feeling of bored inactivity of these aristocrats.

In addition to their trivial talk, the French nobles display no respect for their English foe and spend most of their time indulging in ethnic slurs. The Constable

⁴¹ Haldeen Braddy tries to defend the Dauphin by mustering a great deal of scholarship to prove how much medieval Frenchmen loved their horses. He concludes that the Dauphin's hyperbole is appropriate and not frivolous. His argument, however, is unconvincing. See "Shakespeare's Henry V and the French Nobility," Texas Studies in Literature and Language, 3 (1962), 199.

⁴² Antanaclasis: shifting of a repeated word from one meaning to another. See Lanham, Handlist, pp. 8-9. Asteismus: facetious or mocking answer that plays on a word. Lanham, Handlist, p. 18. Paronomasia: punning, playing on sound or meaning of words. Lanham, Handlist, p. 73. See ll. 88-89, 92-93, 99-100, 104.

in Act Three calls the English "barbarous" (3. 5. 4), and Brettagne, in the same scene, contemptuously and repeatedly refers to the English foe as "Norman bastards" (3. 5. 10). The most telling descriptions of the English, however, occur in Act Four as the Constable and Grandpré describe their foe on the morning of Agincourt. Both speeches are battle orations spurring on the French as they enter the field. But the speeches contain no heroic sentiment or lofty rhetoric; rather, the two nobles concern themselves almost exclusively with disparaging their foe. In his oration, the Constable points out again and again that the task is so undemanding that the French need hardly trouble to brace themselves for battle.⁴³ Merely to make an appearance in the field will "suck away their souls" (4. 2. 17) and leave England "shales and husks of men" (4. 2. 18). Indeed, so worthless are they, says the Constable, the superfluous French lackeys and peasants could easily defeat "such a hilding foe" (11. 25-29). This speech, rather than making us despise the English, turns on the speaker and isolates him as arrogant and imperious. Traditionally, the English sympathize with the underdog

⁴³ Winny makes this point in The Player King: A Theme of Shakespeare's Histories (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1968), pp. 197-98.

and reject the strutting braggart, no matter how true his boasting. The force of this speech works not to the disparagement of the English but to the dishonor of the French.

Grandpré's following speech is even more destructive of French honor. He calls the English "island carrions" (4. 2. 39), their banners "ragged curtains" (1. 41), their horsemen "fixed candlesticks" (1. 45), and their horses "poor jades" (1. 46) who "lob down their heads" (1. 47) with "the gum down-roping from their pale-dead eyes" (1. 48). This run of descriptive adjectives and verbs finds its climax in the synecdoche of genus where Grandpré associates the English with a sorry Mars:

Big Mars seems bankrout in their beggar'd host
And faintly through a rusty beaver peeps.
(11. 43-44)

He ends his vividly pictorial description with the comment:

Description cannot suit itself in words
To demonstrate the life of such a battle
In life so lifeless as it shows itself.
(11. 53-55)

Whether the English really were as badly off as Grandpré describes is a debatable point. There is evidence that they were indeed in a pitiable state, and to engage in battle at all under these conditions underscores not their poverty of spirit but their heroic courage. Once

again, Grandpré's deprecation is more an exposure of French arrogance than it is an insult to the state of the English army.

The general impression created by the French camp before their defeat, that of haughty superiority, is redeemed only by two characters, the herald Montjoy and Katharine. In this play given over to the masculine world of heroism, Katharine offers a softer and more positive touch to the French world. Her French lesson, fraught with innocent double entendres, is delightful, and her innocent attempt to learn the language of her future conqueror and husband helps to mitigate the inanity of the French court she lives in. Montjoy performs the function of herald and fulfills his role with crisp authority. His set speech in Act Three in which he confronts Henry concerning the latter's march to Calais is a beautiful piece of stylized Euphuism. He opens his oration with a couple of aphoristic antitheses that clearly set out the French position:

"though we seemed dead, we did but sleep: advantage is a better soldier than rashness" (3. 6. 127-28). In the rest of the speech, he relies mainly on a series of balanced isocolons to enumerate the situation on both sides:

England shall repent his folly, see his weakness,
admire our sufferance. (11. 132-33)

Bid him therefore consider of his ransom; which must proportion the losses we have borne, the subjects we have lost, the disgrace we have digested. (ll. 133-36)

For our losses his exchequer is too poor; for the effusion of our blood, the muster of his kingdom too faint a number; and for our disgrace, his own person, kneeling at our feet, but a weak and worthless satisfaction. (ll. 137-41)

There is nothing here in this crisply competent speech of the frivolous or unworthy that so marks the language of the other French nobles. Even Henry is impressed and he tells Montjoy, "Thou dost thy office fairly" (l. 148). Professional as he is, however, Montjoy's speeches contain none of the magnificent poetry or lofty heroic sentiment that so marks the language of Henry and the Chorus. Indeed, his one oration is in prose. We can certainly admire him, but we do not identify emotionally with his attempt to persuade Henry to surrender.

Up until their defeat at Agincourt, the dominant impression we get of the French is, as Reese puts it, one of boastfulness, bickering, and essential triviality."⁴⁴ Their insolence, points out Dorothy Cook, and the predominance of their rhetoric without supporting deeds most

⁴⁴ The Cease of Majesty, p. 329.

reveal their general impotence.⁴⁵ Further, we are never, suggests Ornstein, given the French counterparts to Fluellen and his group, so we never really feel for the French cause.⁴⁶ We see only the aristocrats in their hubris, folly, and effeteness, and so when French bodies litter the field at Agincourt we rejoice in the magnificent victory of the English and do not mourn over the destruction of the foolish. The French have been insulting, arrogant, and stupid throughout the play, have used mercenaries to do their fighting, and have murdered innocent baggage boys behind the English tents. To them war was not a glorious opportunity to win honor by fighting a worthy foe but a game, a sport. As Shakespeare presents them, the French deserved what they got, and their defeat, in spite of their superior numbers and superior preparedness, greatly contributes to the heroic atmosphere Shakespeare is attempting to build around his hero, Henry V.

Burgundy's oration in Act Five, however, marks a shift in Shakespeare's treatment of the French. The war is over, Henry has emerged the victor, and it is now time

⁴⁵ "Henry V: Maturing of Man and Majesty," Studies in the Literary Imagination, 5 (1972), 116.

⁴⁶ A Kingdom for a Stage, p. 102.

to negotiate the terms of peace. Burgundy's speech is an admirably structured piece of deliberative rhetoric in which the French noble urges the two sides to make peace at the negotiating table. In his exordium he points out how hard he has worked to bring the two parties "unto this bar" (5. 2. 27), and then launches into his explicatio with a rhetorical question demanding why "Peace . . . should not . . . put up her lovely visage" (5. 2. 34-37). Then, his confirmatio offers two highly persuasive reasons for avoiding future war, the desolation of the countryside that has been left to grow unrestrained and unkempt (ll. 38-53) and the barbaric depths to which civilized society has sunk during the carnage and destruction (ll. 54-62). Finally, his peroration (ll. 63-67) once again asks why Peace should not "expel these inconveniences / And bless us with her former qualities" (ll. 66-67).

Burgundy's speech captures our attention not only through its persuasive reasoning but also through its vivid descriptive poetry. In order to emphasize the waste and corruption of the landscape, Burgundy lists a whole series of specific details. The vine lies unpruned (ll. 41-42), the hedges are grown together "like prisoners wildly over-grown with hair" (l. 45), and the once tended fields now teem with "docks, rough thistles, kecksies,

burs" (l. 52). The metaphoric language and imagery here give us a powerful vision of the disorder in nature that results from war, and Burgundy next extends his picture to a similar disorder in human society where "our children grow like savages" (l. 59). For the first time, suggests Winny, the play shows a concern for France and presents one of her nobles as sensitive to the moral and physical destruction caused by war.⁴⁷ This terrible destruction certainly has increased Henry's power, but by accepting the terms of peace, he now has in his hands the ability to rectify the destruction.

Then, after Henry has accepted the terms of the treaty, Queen Isabella gives voice to the general French desire for peace and harmony between the two kingdoms as she gives her daughter, Katharine, to the victorious Henry. As they combine their hearts in one, she tells them, so will they combine the two realms in one. In her final blessing over the couple, Isabella symbolically extends her prayer that nothing will hurt their marriage to a devout wish that nothing will harm the new peace that has cemented England and France. She prays that neither "ill office" nor "fell jealousy" will "thrust in between

⁴⁷ The Player King, p. 204.

the paction of these kingdoms, / To make divorce of their incorporate league" (5. 2. 291-94).

It is entirely fitting that Shakespeare should try at the end of his play somewhat to redeem the impression of vacuousness that he has given of England's enemy. After all, Henry is now heir to the kingdom of France, and the French are his colleagues and future subjects. The final note of harmony, symbolized in his marriage to Katharine, reinforces the greatness of Henry's heroic victory and contributes to the general epic atmosphere of the play.

CHAPTER IV

THE HERO AS RHETOR

Central to any epic treatment of a legendary historical period is the epic hero, and whatever magnificence such a work possesses comes from the dramatic strength of his representation.¹ Consequently, in Henry V Shakespeare has marshaled all his poetic energies to give Henry a grandness befitting his heroic reputation. Many of the critics who write on this play admire Shakespeare's epic treatment of Henry's story, but there are also a significant number who read the play as a bitter denunciation of war in general and Henry and his wars against France in particular. For Hazlitt, Henry was a hero "ready to sacrifice his own life for the pleasure of destroying thousands of other lives," a man who "because he did not know how to handle his enormous power, undertook to do all the mischief he could." He was in short a very "amiable monster."² Bernard Shaw called him a "jingo

¹ See discussion on p. 5 of this dissertation.

² Characters of Shakespeare's Plays (London, 1890); selections reprinted in Shakespeare: Henry V, Casebook Series, ed. Michael Quinn (London: Macmillan and Co., 1969), pp. 36-37.

hero," an "able young Philistine more suited to be a gamekeeper or a farmer,"³ and Bradley dismissed him as merely the most "efficient" of Shakespeare's characters."⁴ Gould called him a perfect hypocrite and a prig,⁵ and John Masefield outdid himself in scorching epithets. He called Henry common, careless, selfish, callous, cold-blooded, quite without feeling.⁶ More recently, Hobday has called him a "murderer" and has pointed out that Shakespeare, faced with such a protagonist, had to resort to an ironic treatment of this historical period.⁷ On the other side of the critical fence, Henry has been seen as the model of the ideal man and king. Schlegel called him Shakespeare's favorite hero in English history possessed with every virtue, Dowden saw him as the ideal

³ Dramatic Opinions (New York: Brentano's, 1906), II, 426.

⁴ Oxford Lectures on Poetry (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1909; rpt. London: Macmillan and Co., 1959), p. 256.

⁵ "Irony and Satire in Henry V," originally published as "A New Reading of Henry V," The English Review, 1919; reprinted in Shakespeare: Henry V, Casebook Series, p. 83.

⁶ William Shakespeare (London: Williams & Norgate, 1909; rpt. New York: Holt, 1911), pp. 112-13.

⁷ "Imagery and Irony in Henry V," Shakespeare Survey, 21 (1968), 109.

practical king, full of courage, warmth, modesty, and integrity, and Sidney Lee extolled his high heroism that evokes "a sense of pride among Englishmen that a man of his mettle is of the English race."⁸ Campbell agrees he is the ideal English hero, and Walter details at great length the qualities he possesses as the ideal Christian King.⁹ Prior, while qualifying his praise somewhat, still agrees that Henry is the "near perfect epic hero," and Berman goes a step further by arguing that he is the model of a humanistic prince."¹⁰ Finally, Ribner reads the tetralogy as a Renaissance mirror for princes with Henry

⁸ A. W. Schlegel, Lectures on Dramatic Art and Literature, 1809-11; selections reprinted in Shakespeare: Henry V, Casebook Series, pp. 34-36. Edward Dowden, Shakspere: A Critical Study of His Mind and Art (1875); selections reprinted in Shakespeare: Henry V, Casebook Series, pp. 42-47. Sidney Lee, ed., Henry V (1908); critical comments reprinted in Shakespeare: Henry V, Casebook Series, p. 59.

⁹ Lily B. Campbell, Shakespeare's 'Histories': Mirrors of Elizabethan Policy (San Marino, California: Huntington Library, 1947), p. 15; J. H. Walter, "Introduction" to the Arden ed. (London: Methuen & Co., 1954), pp. xiv-xxiv.

¹⁰ Moody E. Prior, The Drama of Power: Studies in Shakespeare's History Plays (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1973), p. 272; Ronald Berman, "Introduction" to Twentieth Century Interpretations of Henry V, ed. Ronald Berman (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1968), p. 9.

as the model of military and civil virtues.¹¹

And then there are the fence straddlers. Richmond argues that Henry is not infallible, that he grows in the course of the play. Winny details at great length what he calls Henry's crises of doubt, and Traversi reads the play as a study in the conflict between reason and passion that its central character undergoes.¹² L. C. Knights feels that Shakespeare's attitude toward the King is complex and critical, that the play is a deliberate contrast between personal and public roles, and that the conflict comes in the wrenching apart of the two worlds.¹³ Ornstein also reads guilt into the play. He feels Henry is beset with the need for self-justification and continually searches for "a baptismal clearness of

¹¹ The English History Play in the Age of Shakespeare, 2nd ed. (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1965), pp. 169-93.

¹² H. M. Richmond, Shakespeare's Political Plays (New York: Random House, 1967), p. 186; James Winny, The Player King: A Theme of Shakespeare's Histories (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1968), Chapter IV; Derek Traversi, An Approach to Shakespeare, 2nd ed. (New York: Doubleday, 1956), pp. 187-98.

¹³ "Shakespeare's Politics: With Some Reflections on the Nature of the Tradition," Proceedings of the British Academy, 43 (1957), 114-32; selections reprinted in Shakespeare: Henry V, Casebook Series, pp. 228-37.

reputation and place."¹⁴

It appears, then, that a major difficulty with the play is the character of Henry, for while every reader or theatregoer can admire his courage, self-assurance, and integrity, he is also vaguely disturbed by Henry's pride, violent language and action, and seeming hypocrisy. Perhaps these contraries in Henry's nature can best be explained in terms of the Herculean myth.¹⁵ In classical versions of this story, Hercules represents the warrior-hero possessing extraordinary strength, valor, and fortitude coupled with a self-assurance and self-centeredness which almost amounts to inordinate pride. Further, this figure is capable of a savage anger and violence but is also, strangely enough, regarded as a benefactor of humanity. In most versions of this myth, the hero is not excused from his moral defects but rises above them in his capacity for sheer energy and in his obsessive drive to push to the outermost reaches of human capability and even beyond. Such a man, suggests Waith, demands

¹⁴ A Kingdom for a Stage: The Achievement of Shakespeare's History Plays (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1972), p. 184.

¹⁵ I am indebted to Eugene M. Waith, The Herculean Hero (New York: Columbia University Press, 1962), for the following summary.

admiration simply because of his natural superiority and vast energy:

His exploits are strange mixtures of beneficence and crime, of fabulous quests and shameful betrayals, of triumph over wicked enemies and insensate slaughter of the innocent, yet the career is always a testimony to the greatness of a man who is almost a god--a greatness which has less to do with goodness as it is usually understood than with the transforming energy of the divine spark.¹⁶

While the many classical versions of the Herculean myth, continues Waith, emphasize the hero's primitive strength which is "never completely transmuted by the refining power of more civilized ideals," his greatness lies in the fact that he "is touched with the strangeness and mystery which belong to a demigod."¹⁷ This godlike aura that he carries with him accounts for his great appeal, and if not a sympathetic character in the ordinary sense of the word, he inspires in the other characters, suggests Waith, an "extraordinary love and loyalty and becomes almost an object of veneration."¹⁸ Such self-absorption, says Waith, "is a concomitant of the primitive

¹⁶ Waith, p. 16.

¹⁷ Waith, p. 17.

¹⁸ Waith, p. 26.

areté which makes obligations to others secondary to the hero's devotion to his own integrity."¹⁹ Finally, it is the wondrous excess in Hercules that in the end causes him to defy society and which brings about his extraordinary suffering and death.²⁰

The many gods and heroes of classical antiquity did not disappear with the coming of Christianity but were transformed by allegory into types of Old Testament heroes and even types of Christ. Medieval literature and art constantly exhibits this fondness for typology, which is carried over into the Renaissance as many of the old heroes are revitalized and Christianized by being given symbolic value. This process can be seen in the Renaissance versions of the Herculean myth. In the process of being Christianized, however, many contradictions occur in the figure of Hercules. His great excess is admired as "magnanimity," what Aristotle calls "greatness of soul,"²¹

¹⁹ Waith, p. 24. Waith defines areté as the Greek term for the ideal of nobility, his great "moral energy." See p. 15.

²⁰ Henry's story differs significantly from the Herculean myth here as his story ends in victory, not in tragedy.

²¹ Nichomachean Ethics, trans. J. A. K. Thomson (London: Whitefriars Press Ltd., 1953; rpt. 1958), Book Seven, p. 193.

but it is also close to that most dangerous of faults in the Christian scheme of things--pride. To offset this moral deficiency, Renaissance writers have turned the rough warrior-hero into a model of reasonable control and moderation, a paradigm of reason subduing passion.²² In a second contradictory pattern, the Christianized Hercules is both the great individual and the selfless benefactor, a hero who in fighting for himself also saves the world.²³ Next, Hercules' legendary anger was contrary to the self-control and moderation of the passions that Renaissance ethics insisted on. Consequently, Renaissance writers defended Hercules' anger as "that justifiable anger which is not opposed to reason and which the great man requires in his struggle with a corrupt world. It is evidence of greatness."²⁴ Finally, although the new Renaissance Herculean hero is still capable of great violence, he is characterized as much by his piety as he is by his martial deeds.

²² Waith, pp. 40-41.

²³ Waith, p. 43.

²⁴ Waith, p. 45.

From the above summary, it is obvious that the Herculean story can be treated from two different points of view, as the tragic downfall of a man possessed with extraordinary hubris or as an epic celebration of his great accomplishments. Renaissance writers, in general, agreed that heroic poetry was superior to the tragic because it had a greater power to move an audience to wonder, and, as Sidney puts it, "moving is of a higher degree than teaching."²⁵ Hercules' great attraction, suggests Waith, was his ability to evoke this wonder and admiration; consequently, Renaissance portrayals of the Herculean figure in drama slowly moved away from the tragic and toward epic representations, "as if they were needed for the portrayal of so admirable a hero."²⁶

Shakespeare's treatment of Henry V obviously falls within the Renaissance re-definition of the Herculean hero. Henry possesses an inordinate pride, is violent in his language and in his anger, and is guilty of equivocation. Further, he is endowed with great military virtues as well as piety. Because of his greatness, he is

²⁵ Sir Philip Sidney, A Defense of Poetry, ed. J. A. Dorsten (London: Oxford University Press, 1966; rpt. 1973), p. 39.

²⁶ Waith, pp. 55-59.

able to command great devotion and loyalty, even love, from his followers, all of which make possible his great victories. Henry's greatness as Shakespeare represents him, however, lies not so much in his martial victories but in the sheer power of his oratory. It is Henry's command of language and the immensity of his skill as a rhetorician that most moves his many audiences to act and most moves us, the theatre audience, to wonder. It is the purpose of this chapter to explore the source of Henry's great appeal to us as the new Christianized Herculean hero, his powers as a rhetor.

i

In the course of this play, Henry constantly displays his superb powers as a master rhetorician. He indulges in no less than six formal speeches, five of which are epideictic and marked by grand rhetorical flourish. The first of these is his reply to the Dauphin's tennis balls insult in Act One. In the first part of the speech, Henry shows his verbal dexterity by picking up the insult and bouncing it back to the Dauphin through his Ambassador

in an elaborate metaphor of tennis.²⁷ Henry's technique of argument is called *matastasis*, a scheme in which the speaker turns back an insult or objection against the person who made it.²⁸ As Henry says:

When we have match'd our rackets to these balls,
We will, in France, by God's grace, play a set
Shall strike his father's crown into the hazard.
Tell him he hath made a match with such a wrangler
That all the courts of France will be disturb'd
With chaces. (l. 2. 261-66)

Next, Henry attempts to build his own *ethos* by acknowledging the Dauphin to be right in his assessment of his (Henry's) youth, but wrong in assuming he is still wild and irresponsible.²⁹ In another elaborately extended metaphor, Henry calls himself a sun that will rise in full glory, "dazzle all the eyes of France," and "strike the Dauphin blind to look on us" (l. 2. 279-80). This cosmic image associates Henry not only with the heavenly bodies but with the supreme heavenly body and, ultimately,

²⁷ Such an elaboration is called *catachresis*. See Richard A. Lanham, A Handlist of Rhetorical Terms (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1969), p. 21.

²⁸ Lanham, Handlist, p. 67.

²⁹ This rhetorical ploy is called *paramologia*, conceding a point either from conviction of its truth or to use it to strengthen one's own argument by giving away a weaker point in order to take a stronger. See Lanham, Handlist, p. 71.

according to the Renaissance system of correspondences, with the Godhead itself.³⁰ Then, with all the grandeur of an avenging angel, Henry hurls out his threat of future destruction that is to be wreaked upon the French:

And tell the pleasant prince this mock of his
 Hath turn'd his balls to gun-stones; and his soul
 Shall stand sore charged for the wasteful vengeance
 That shall fly with them: for many a thousand widows
 Shall this mock mock out of their dear husbands;
 Mock mothers from their sons, mock castles down;
 And some are yet ungotten and unborn
 That shall have cause to curse the Dauphin's scorn.
 (1. 2. 281-88)

The rhetorical trope involved here is called cataplexis, "a threatening of punishment, misfortune, or disaster,"³¹ and is entirely in keeping with the violence so often associated with the Herculean hero. The double "p"s in line 281 draw attention to the ironic insult Henry spits out to the Dauphin, and the hard alliterative "c"s in line 288 reinforce the grand threatening tone of the whole passage. Five times Henry bounces on the word "mock" with amazing verbal skill, once more turning the Dauphin's

³⁰ See E. M. W. Tillyard, The Elizabethan World Picture (London: Chatto and Windus, 1958), passim.

³¹ Lanham, Handlist, p. 21.

insult back on him.³² Finally, Henry ends his oration with a plea to God to bless his "rightful hand in a well-hallow'd cause" (l. 293) and a cryptic dismissal of the ambassadors in a clipped and threatening couplet:

. . . and tell the Dauphin
His jest will savour but of shallow wit,
When thousands weep more than did laugh at it.
(l. 2. 294-96)

A much more intense epideictic speech of blame occurs in Act Two when Henry confronts the three conspirators, Cambridge, Scroop, and Grey, and pronounces sentence on them. As in the previous speech of denunciation, Henry has a full assemblage of English nobles present and so his elaborate rhetoric is as much for their benefit as it is for that of the three sinners. He begins his speech by rejecting any possibility of mercy for the three traitors and then condemns each one in turn. Cambridge and Grey he accuses of disloyalty to him as their protector and source of honor and revenue. But he reserves the bulk of his speech and his emotion for Lord Scroop, who was also his

³² The rhetorical schemes here include plocé, "repetition of a word with a new signification after the intervention of another word or words" (Lanham, Handlist, p. 77); epizeuxis, "emphatic repetition of a word with no other words between" (Lanham, p. 46); and antanaclasis, a homonymic pun (Lanham, p. 9). Each of these devices of repetition has a hammering effect which greatly adds to the angry and insulting tone of the passage.

friend. Not only did Scroop fall for French money, an understandable weakness in human nature, but in the process he also betrayed that most sacred of Renaissance bonds, friendship. Because of the heinousness of Scroop's treason, Henry flings all the power of his stinging denunciation at him, rising at times to the full eloquence of the angry prophet Isaiah condemning the wayward Israelites.³³ He opens his address to Scroop with a rhetorical question full of reproach and even accuses him of being less than human:

But, O,
What shall I say to thee, Lord Scroop? thou cruel,
Ingrateful, savage and inhuman creature!
(2. 2. 93-95)³⁴

Then, Henry goes on to outline the reasons for his great disillusionment with Scroop:

Thou that didst bear the key of all my counsels,
That knew'st the very bottom of my soul,
That almost mightst have coin'd me into gold,
Wouldst thou have practis'd on me for thy use.
(2. 2. 96-99)

³³ See particularly Isaiah, 1. 2-15; 65. 2-4. The rhetorical figure involved here is indignatio, a general term for impassioned speech or loud, angry speaking. See Lanham, Handlist, p. 59.

³⁴ The rhetorical figure called epiplexis is involved here. Lanham defines it as "asking questions in order to reproach or upbraid, rather than to elicit information. See Lanham, Handlist, p. 44.

Scroop, says Henry, has been his intimate friend; as a result, his hypocrisy smacks of the most extreme ungratefulness.³⁵ With grand rhetorical flourish, Henry proclaims that he has difficulty believing the enormity of Scroop's betrayal particularly when the only motivation was money. Finally, Henry attributes the awesome venality of Scroop's actions to diabolical influence:

And whatsoever cunning fiend it was
That wrought upon thee so preposterously
Hath got the voice in hell for excellence.
(2. 2. 111-13)

Then, still stunned by the seeming lack of good reason for Scroop's action, Henry launches into an entire litany of denunciations:

Show men dutiful?
 Why, so didst thou: seem they grave and learned?
 Why, so didst thou: come they of noble family?
 Why, so didst thou: seem they religious?
 Why, so didst thou: or are they spare in diet,
 Free from gross passion or of mirth or anger,
 Constant in spirit, now swerving with the blood,
 Garnish'd and deck'd in modest complement,
 Now working with the eye without the ear,
 And but in purged judgement trusting neither?
 Such and so finely bolted didst thou seem.
 (2. 2. 127-37)

35 The figures here are inter se pugnancia, "pointing out hypocrisy or inconsistency to an opponent's face" (Lanham, Handlist, p. 60); exprobatio, "reproaching someone as ungrateful or impious" (Lanham, Handlist, p. 69).

The general rhetorical method Henry employs here is that of climax, a mounting by degrees through words or sentences of increasing weight and in parallel construction.³⁶ He also combines the figures of epimone and anthypophora³⁷ in a series of patterned constructions that give his denunciation almost a liturgical, antiphonal quality. Each rhetorical question brings up a virtue common to men, and the insistent application to Scroop's denial of that virtue hammers relentlessly at his duplicity. Henry then crowns his ringing accusations with the ultimate metaphor in calling Scroop's betrayal "another fall of man" (2. 2. 142). There is not much to say after this final blow, so Henry merely commands the immediate arrest of all three traitors.

The reaction to Henry's impassioned oratory is immediate. The three conspirators fairly scramble in their abject apologies and even welcome their coming executions. And then once again Henry turns on the offenders with his just anger as he pronounces sentence. He re-iterates their crimes of treason, murder, and bribery and orders

³⁶ See Lanham, Handlist, p. 24.

³⁷ Epimone: a refrain, a frequent repetition of a phrase or question. See Lanham, Handlist, p. 44.
Anthypophora: asking questions and answering them, p. 9.

their deaths not out of personal revenge but out of a just consideration for the good of the commonwealth. In other words, we have here the Herculean hero who can be violently angry but who is also the benefactor of society. It is necessary for these poisonous elements to be purged from the commonwealth if social order is to be maintained.

Henry's ethos throughout this speech is one of offended majesty, intensified in the language by his constant use of the royal "we." Cambridge, Scroop, and Grey have not only betrayed his person, but they have also betrayed their country by conspiring against its king, and the rhetoric in this speech all works to underscore this awesome fact. But Shakespeare has omitted a most important factor in the conspiracy in order to maintain the proper ethical stance he is attempting to build around Henry. Holinshed states quite clearly that the conspiracy was motivated not by French money but by a desire to put Edmund Mortimer, Cambridge's cousin, on the throne. In other words, the Southampton plot is part of a much larger dynastic struggle against the Lancastrian Kings that started the moment Henry IV ascended the throne.³⁸

³⁸ See the Aumerele plot, Richard II, 5. 3.

Cambridge hints at this fact in his self-justification, but nowhere is the real reason for the conspiracy spelled out. Goddard and Wentersdorf agree that modern audiences would not pick up the unmentioned motives but that the original audiences would certainly have done so.

Wentersdorf then speculates on a silly reason for this omission: "The conspirators," he says, "remain silent on this point because they do not want to jeopardize the survival of their families: they hope that the King will acknowledge their restraint by mitigating the almost inevitable suffering of their innocent wives and children."³⁹ Such reasoning is to me a blatant example of a critical fallacy. We cannot speculate on un verbalized motives of characters in a play since they are not real people. If the dynastic issue is left unmentioned, it is because Shakespeare chose not to bring it up for his own dramatic purposes. Here, he did not want to tarnish the heroic image of Henry as a betrayed and stern justicer by calling attention to any weakness in the legitimacy of

³⁹ Harold C. Goddard, The Meaning of Shakespeare (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951; rpt. Phoenix Books, 1960), I, 229; Karl P. Wentersdorf, "The Conspiracy of Silence in Henry V," Shakespeare Quarterly, 27 (1976), 275-79.

his kingship. And Goddard's and Wentersdorf's contention that the original audience would have noticed this omission gives to the sixteenth century theatre-goer a sophistication and an education that seems to me unwarranted.

Shakespeare's concern in this scene is to use an historically authentic plot against Henry for the sole purpose of displaying his hero's eloquence and his fine ability to handle civil disorders. The omissions did not worry him as an artist, and they need not worry us. The effect of this scene is ultimately to reveal an important side of Henry's heroic nature, his righteous anger, his stern sense of justice, and his ability to act swiftly when the occasion demanded.

Another speech in which Henry shows his stern, even violent nature is his oration to the citizens of Harfleur. His purpose in this speech is to convince the citizens to surrender to him, and the appeal he uses is highly emotional. The rhetorical figure that dominates his speech is that of cataplexis, a threat of punishment, misfortune, or disaster which Henry presents to the citizens in the form of an "either . . . or" proposition: either they surrender to him, or they bring upon themselves the direst

of consequences.⁴⁰ And it is the vivid description of these consequences that makes for the rhetorical power of this speech. Most of the metaphors Henry uses have to do with extreme violence. So if Harfleur does not surrender, Henry will not rest until "in her ashes she lie buried" (3. 3. 9). Along with this image of death, Henry describes his soldiers in terms of a synecdoche of the part for the whole and warns against their violence:

And the flesh'd soldier, rough and hard of heart,
In liberty of bloody hand shall range
With conscience wide as hell, mowing like grass
Your fresh-fair virgins and your flow'ring infants.
(3. 3. 10-14)

Then, in a string of three personifications, he graphically describes the horrors of a siege. He tells the citizens it means nothing to him "if impious war, / Array'd in flames like to the prince of fiends" (3. 3. 15-16) destroys their city, or if their pure maidens "fall into the hand / Of hot and forcing violation" (3. 3. 20-21). Once the horrors of war are loosed, "what rein," asks Henry, "can hold licentious wickedness / When down the hill he holds his fierce career?" (ll. 22-23). Being now more specific, Henry warns Harfleur that once the siege starts, he will no more have control over his soldiers, that murder, spoil,

⁴⁰ See p. 100 of this dissertation.

and villainy, which he describes as "contagious clouds," will defile their daughters, kill their reverend fathers, and spit their "naked infants . . . upon pikes" (ll. 34-38). Then, in a final graphic simile he promises that the mothers will howl as did "the wives of Jewry / At Herod's bloody-hunting slaughtermen" (ll. 39-41).

This speech contains some of the most graphic and visually concrete imagery in all of Shakespeare's writing. The references to death and hell and blood and war and fire and rape all contribute to its rhetorical persuasiveness, and, in a strange way, to Henry's stature. The many threats point to the more violent side of Henry's Herculean nature which was hinted at in his long oration to the conspirators. He is certainly no sentimental romantic, and when called upon to be the harsh warrior-soldier in line with ancient epic heroes he is fully capable.⁴¹ Walter defends Henry by saying that the threats to the citizens sound horrible enough, "but he [Henry] was precisely and unswervingly following the rules of

⁴¹ Indeed, Henry here sounds more like the pagan Tamberlaine than the mirror of all Christian kings. This similarity has been noted by Robert Egan in "A Muse of Fire: Henry V in the Light of Tamberlaine," Modern Language Quarterly, 29 (1969), 15-28.

warfare."⁴² To Henry's credit, when he did take the town he ordered his soldiers to "use mercy to them all" (3. 3. 54), and in his later march across France he expressly forbade his soldiers to loot or to plunder. Indeed, it is just such an action that proves the downfall of Bardolph. Perhaps the violent rhetoric can be taken as just that, mere rhetoric, to accomplish a peaceful surrender and thereby to avoid unnecessary bloodshed. Or what makes more sense, Henry is once again displaying his affinity with the Herculean myth. The violence associated with the mythic Hercules is still present, but it has been controlled and disciplined by Henry's rhetorical ability. The sheer force of Henry's mighty speech moves his audience to admiration and to do exactly what Henry wants them to do, surrender.

The two orations in which Henry attains the peak of his persuasive eloquence, however, are the battle speeches to his soldiers at Harfleur and Agincourt. Both speeches are directed at the soldiers to spur them on to great boldness and courage in battle, but the circumstances of the two situations are different and dictate different approaches on Henry's part. In the battle outside Harfleur,

⁴² "Introduction," p. xxviii.

the soldiers are riding high on the first wave of their French campaign; consequently, it is relatively easy for Henry to whip them to great deeds. In his exordium he addresses his soldiers as "dear friends," immediately establishing a bond between himself and his audience. Then, in his first appeal, he tells them how they ought to behave in a war through a whole series of imaginative figures. In peacetime, modesty and humility are the appropriate attitudes, he says, but wartime demands something sterner, "the action of the tiger" (3. 1. 6). Then, Henry goes on to elaborate through a number of synecdoches and similes how his soldiers should "disguise fair nature" (1. 8). They should "lend the eye a terrible aspect . . . let it pry through the portage of the head / Like the brass cannon" and let the brow hang over the eye "as fearfully as doth a galled rock / O'erhang and jutty his confounded base" (11. 9-13). After this string of densely packed metaphors, Henry then switches his appeal and uses the figure of anamnesis⁴³ as he spurs his soldiers on in the name of their ancestors:

On, on you noblest English,
Whose blood is fet from fathers of war-proof!
Fathers that, like so many Alexanders,

⁴³ See p. 101, note 32 of this dissertation.

Have in these parts from morn till even fought
 And sheath'd their swords for lack of argument.
 (3. 1. 17-21)

His first appeal is to the nobles in his following, but he also tries to include the common soldiers, the yeomen, telling them their "mean" and "base" backgrounds have nothing to do with their essential courage. He ends his oration with two more metaphors, the first calling his soldiers "greyhounds" and the second calling the upcoming battle a "game" (ll. 31-32). In the final line of the speech--"Cry 'God for Harry, England, and Saint George!'" (l. 34)--Henry appeals to the soldiers' personal loyalties to their country and to their spiritual obligation to fight like good Christian soldiers.

In this speech, Henry is attempting to instill into his soldiers the spirit of aggression, hence the sometimes violent metaphors. Since the English are still relatively fresh and are still carried away by their initial patriotic spirit, Henry can take this approach with them, knowing he has a receptive audience.

The situation on the morning of Agincourt, however, is a different story. The English are tired, dirty, ill, and vastly outnumbered. As they look over the jaunty enemy, Westmoreland verbalizes all their fears and the essential spirit of the English when he exclaims: "O

that we now had here / But one ten thousand of those men in England / That do no work today!" (4. 3. 16-20). Henry knows that going into battle with such a negative attitude is destructive, so, fearing for his army, he launches into a highly eloquent and persuasive oration, one of the most eloquent in all of Shakespeare's history plays.

Henry knows that the mood of his audience is one of fear and demoralization. Bates and Williams had given him an insight into how his common soldiers feel about the upcoming battle when they debated together the previous night. As Bates had put it, he bet the King wished he were "in the Thames up to the neck," and then adds the further comment, "and I by him . . . so we were quit here" (4. 1. 20-22). Nor is this fear and apprehension limited to the common soldier as Westmoreland has just shown. And Henry is not totally sure of himself either as he lets us know in his soliloquy after leaving Bates and Williams. In order to overcome such depression and anxiety, Henry now has to muster all his skills of pathetic oratory in order to instill the necessary courage in his men. In deciding which approach to take, Henry knows he cannot appeal to their physical advantages since they have none; he must depend on the strength of their commitment to the ideal of honor, which he skillfully approaches. In his exordium,

he sets up a balanced construction and posits two alternatives, one favorable and one unfavorable:

If we are mark'd to die, we are enow
To do our country loss; and if to live,
The fewer men, the greater share of honour.
(4. 3. 20-22)

The rhetorical scheme working here is antanagoge⁴⁴ with the possibilities of living or dying balanced against one another. What Henry is doing here is turning their greatest liability, their small numbers, into a rallying point, and he develops this idea throughout his speech. The fact that they are so few will increase the honor of their victory a thousandfold, so he repeats again and again that he would not wish one man more from England.

In this speech, Henry is working against logic since reason tells him as well as his men that their chances of victory are slim. Because of this fact, he must try to whip up his men to such an emotional state that they will perform in an extraordinary fashion. The main rhetorical ploy he uses to accomplish this aim is that of repetition, of hammering again and again at the same sounds and words and ideas until they become a war cry. There is

⁴⁴ Ameliorating a fault or difficulty implicitly admitted by balancing an unfavorable aspect with a favorable one. See Lanham, Handlist, p. 9.

alliteration in almost every line, and there are some seven instances of conduplicatio,⁴⁵ the repeated sounds and words carrying an almost hypnotic effect. The word "honor" rings like a bell three times, "Crispin" is repeated seven times, and "day" appears ten times. Lines 60-62 are a marvel of compacted figures of repetition as Henry once again tries to turn their few numbers into a rallying point:

We few, we happy few, we band of brothers;
For he today that sheds his blood with me
Shall be my brother. (4. 3. 60-62)

We have here alliteration in the repeated "w"s and "b"s, anaphora in the repeated "we"s, epistrophe in the repeated "few"s, and conduplicatio in the repetition of the word "brother." The effect of these repetitive figures is to emphasize the togetherness of the English host not only among themselves but also with their King; Henry is one of them, sharing their fear and their peril, and this point is made four times in these three lines.

Nor is the technique of repetition confined to individual words. Four times Henry declares he would not

⁴⁵ Repetition of a word or words in succeeding clauses (1) for amplification or (2) to express emotion. See Lanham, Handlist, p. 27.

wish for one more person from England,⁴⁶ and then starting in line 41 and continuing on to line 64 he expresses four times the idea that the Feast of St. Crispin, today's festival, will be remembered in after years as a day of great victory. Working coincidentally with the figures of repetition are those of balance. The antanagoge in lines 20-22 has already been noted, but the main figure of balance occurs in lines 24-29 where Henry skillfully uses climax to build up to the word "honour":

By Jove, I am not covetous for gold,
Nor care I who doth feed upon my cost;
It yearns me not if men my garments wear;
Such outward things dwell not in my desires:
But if it be a sin to covet honour,
I am the most offending soul alive.
(4. 3. 24-29)⁴⁷

Along with these figures of repetition, Henry uses a number of other emotional rhetorical devices. The main one is diabolé, a prediction of future events in anticipating the glory that is going to be associated with St. Crispin's day,⁴⁸ and which occupies two-thirds of the

⁴⁶ Lines 23-33. The figure he uses is commoratio, emphasizing a strong point by repeating it several times in different words. See Lanham, Handlist, p. 25.

⁴⁷ See p. 104, n. 36 of this dissertation.

⁴⁸ Lanham, Handlist, p. 33.

entire speech. Also, Henry invokes the names of God and Jove throughout the oration, lending divine sanction to their endeavor. And the epic roll call of names in lines 53 and 54 together with the constant repetition of the name St. Crispin represents emotional oratory at its best. Indeed, St. Crispin becomes, by the end of the speech, a rallying symbol for courage and honor to the English soldiers.

Unlike some of Henry's other speeches, this one contains little poetic imagery, and for a good reason. Henry is not trying to convey abstract ideas to his audience or to meditate on concepts; rather, he is attempting to pull his soldiers up out of the mud of despondency and to whip them to a pitch of eagerness and courage. His appeal is not to their reason but to their emotions, so he uses the figures of balance and repetition to attain a rhythmic, chant-like quality to his oration. The content of the speech is simple and could be reduced to a couple of lines. It is the constant repetition of his message reinforced by the rhythmic sound and flow of his language that hypnotizes Henry's audience and achieves the desired effect. Rabkin calls the King's rhetoric in this speech "stunning," and Goldman comments that we thrill in Henry's eloquence here "as we do when a political leader we admire makes a great

campaign speech: we love him for his effectiveness."⁴⁹
 And this effectiveness is immediately evident as Westmore-
 land swears he would go to battle alone with his king.

Henry's final oration occurs in this same scene as Montjoy enters and once more broaches the subject of surrender and ransom. With great dignity, Henry scorns the offer and in doing so pays tribute to the valor of his troops. He starts his oration with a proverb, and then from it he develops the main theme of his speech:

The man that once did sell the lion's skin
 While the beast liv'd, was killed with hunting him.
 (4. 3. 93-94)

Henry declares they are not dead yet, and, contrary to appearances are still capable. Indeed, so full of valor are my English soldiers, he says, that they can still be deadly even though exhausted and apparently finished:

Mark then abounding valour in our English,
 That being dead, like to the bullet's grazing,
 Break out into a second course of mischief,
 Killing in relapse of mortality. (4. 3. 104-07)

In the remainder of his speech Henry uses clothes imagery to point out again and again the discrepancy between the appearance of his army's condition and the reality of their

⁴⁹ Norman Rabkin, "Rabbits, Ducks, and Henry V," Shakespeare Quarterly, 28 (1977), 286; Michael Goldman, Shakespeare and the Energies of Drama (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972), p. 70.

fighting valor. "Our grayness and our guilt," he says, "are all besmirch'd / With rainy marching in the painful field."⁵⁰ But even though they have endured much, Henry exclaims, "our hearts are in the trim" (4. 3. 110-15). Before the battle is over, his soldiers will be in "fresher robes" as they "pluck / The gay new coats o'er the French soldiers' heads" (11. 117-19).

The complex imagery and the resulting intellectual cast of this speech are perfectly suited both to Henry's purpose and to his audience. He is no longer speaking directly to the body of his soldiers but to the aristocratic Montjoy, hence the more reasoned nature of his appeal. Further, in scorning the French offer of ransom he is attempting to build up his own ethos as a competent commander and a man of his word while at the same time instilling courage in his army by lavishing on them indirect praise. In other words, by publicly denying ransom to Montjoy, Henry is answering the cynical Williams and others of his cast of mind who believe the King will

⁵⁰ There is an interesting use of hypallage in this line. Lanham defines it as an awkward or humorous changing of agreement or application of words. See Lanham, Handlist, p. 56. The interchange of "rainy" and "painful" in this case is not humorous or awkward but emphasizes the ordeal the English have endured and so emphasizes their courage and valor.

allow himself to be ransomed once his soldiers are dead. The answer to Montjoy, then, is as much for the benefit of the English army as it is a response to the French messenger. Henry is in this, for better or for worse, to the end and either will die along with his soldiers or will live to share their glory. And superb rhetorician that he is, Henry gets this message across to his own men at the very brink of war.

In these six orations, then, we have ample evidence of Henry's skills as a rhetorician. His wide range of imagery and his verbal dexterity both support the justness of Canterbury's admiration for his "sweet and honey'd sentences" (1. 1. 50). Further, in each situation Henry displays a shrewd ability to assess both his audience and the demands of the situation at hand. He knows exactly the right approach to take, the right appeal to use, in order to produce the desired effect in his audience whether it be to shame them, to bolster their courage, or to persuade them to a particular course of action. Finally, the sheer sustaining power of his lengthy orations bears witness to his immense creative energy as well as his fine sense of modulation and verbal discipline.

Henry's ethos that emerges in the course of his oratory is unquestionably one of majestic heroism. In his

command of words and his resulting command of men he shows himself regal, poised, dignified, patriotic, humbly submissive to God's will, capable of righteous anger as well as love and mercy, in short, possessing every quality proper to the heroic Christian prince. But as the survey of criticism at the beginning of this chapter indicated, such an idealized portrait, in a play, is in danger of becoming a parody of itself and toppling into irony. In order to somewhat mitigate this danger, to break through this austere and distant royal personage to the man himself, Shakespeare has given us an extremely important sequence, the debate with Williams and Bates on the eve of Agincourt.⁵¹

ii

The sequence in which Henry moves among his soldiers, in disguise, the night before Agincourt has been prepared for by the Chorus in his fourth prologue. Ever the admiring onlooker, the Chorus waxes eloquent on Henry's chief asset as a leader, his ability to inspire:

⁵¹ This scene is marked by what Milton Kennedy would call "rhetorical conversation" and so needs to be included in any discussion of the rhetoric in this play. See The Oration in Shakespeare (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1942), p. 29.

For forth he goes and visits all his host,
 Bids them good morrow with a modest smile
 And calls them brothers, friends and countrymen.
 (4 Chorus, 32-34)

So sweet is his semblance, goes on the Chorus, "that every wretch, pining and pale before, / Beholding him, plucks comfort from his looks" (4 Chorus, 41-42). Unfortunately, this scene exists only in the descriptive rhetoric of the Chorus. As Marilyn Williamson has pointed out, the Chorus here arouses an expectation that Henry's behavior never fulfills.⁵² We do not see him moving among his men dispensing his undaunted courage and healing touch; rather, we see him, in disguise, engaging his men in some rather frank discussions about the justness of the war and the King's responsibility for it. By the end of the sequence, Henry is deeply shaken at the feelings his men reveal as they wait for the morning's battle. Rather than exploring Henry's grand effect on his men as the Chorus promised us, this scene emphasizes their effect on him, and it is unsettling.⁵³

Bates begins the discussion by verbalizing his fears

⁵² Marilyn L. Williamson, "The Episode with Williams in Henry V," Studies in English Literature 1500-1900, 9 (1969), 275-76.

⁵³ Williamson makes this same point. See p. 276.

for the approaching day, and as Henry joins the group, he is questioned about the mood of his supposed leader, Sir Thomas Erpingham. He admits Erpingham is fearful, and then, at Bates' query whether or not the knight's fear has been confided to the King, Henry launches into a mini-oration on the theme that "the king is but a man, / As I am" (4. 1. 104-05). Henry's point seems to be that it is not meet for anxiety to be conveyed to the king since, being human, he is likely to be affected by it and so dishearten his army. This little interchange is interesting for two reasons. First of all, what he is warning Bates and Williams about is actually happening. He, as king, is hearing about the anxieties of his men. Second, Henry seems to be saying here that the king is a privileged person and should be sheltered from the full truth lest it disturb him. Yet Henry is about to hear some unsettling truths from Bates and Williams, truths he could hear only if he put aside for a time the sheltering cloak of his public kingship. And they do indeed disturb him.

The ensuing conversation then centers on two issues, the question of ransom and the responsibilities involved in this war. This latter issue has already occurred to Henry, as we have seen in his debate with the Bishops in Act One. There he accepted unquestioningly their argument

that he could make his claim with "right and conscience" (1. 2. 26), and he repeats his belief here that his cause is "just" and "honourable" (4. 1. 133). But Williams is not convinced. "That's more than we know" (1. 134), he caustically responds, neither supporting Henry in his cause nor denying it. But Bates verbalizes the underlying uncertainty when he declares, "if his cause be wrong, our obedience to the king wipes the crime of it out of us" (4. 1. 138-39). This simple, blunt soldier is here raising some profound issues. He is certainly not convinced the war is a just one, and to alleviate his conscience he lays the moral blame on his king's shoulders. Williams compounds Henry's responsibility by declaring:

But if the cause be not good, the king himself hath a heavy reckoning to make, when all those legs and arms and heads, chopped 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 own, some upon their children rawly left. (4. 1. 140-47)

Williams is perfectly right. Henry indeed has a heavy moral burden and will have much to answer for on Judgment Day. But instead of being silent and letting Henry answer this most serious charge, Williams diverts the conversation into a side issue by declaring, "I am afeard there are few die well that die in battle; for how can they charitably

dispose of any thing, when blood is their argument?" (4. 1. 147-49). Rather than face the central problem, the King's responsibility for the deaths of his soldiers in a war that may be unjustified, Henry latches on to Williams' diversion and launches into another oration arguing that the King is not responsible for the spiritual state of the soldiers who are about to die. He concludes, "every subject's duty is the king's; but every subject's soul is his own" (4. 1. 187-88). His oration, as we have come to expect, is most eloquent and most persuasive, but nowhere does he address the real issue, the King's responsibility for the many deaths per se, regardless of the state of their souls. Awed by Henry's rhetorical powers, however, Williams is persuaded of the secondary issue: "'tis certain, every man that dies ill, the ill upon his own head, the king is not to answer it" (4. 1. 197-98).

Having convinced his audience of this side issue, Henry now returns to the second problem Bates brought up, the question of Henry's ransom. Henry declares he heard the King himself say he would not be ransomed, to which Williams declares just as strongly that he does not believe it. To Henry's rejoinder "if I live to see it, I will never trust his word after" (4. 1. 207-08), Williams spits out his own cynical assessment of a king's word:

You pay him then! That's a perilous shot out of an elder-gun, that a poor and a private displeasure can do against a monarch! you may as well go about to turn the sun to ice with fanning in his face with a peacock's feather. You'll never trust his word after! come, 'tis a foolish saying. (4. 1. 209-14)

The result is an angry interchange between Henry and Williams, the upshot of which is a challenge to be collected after the battle.

What has happened here is that Henry has disguised himself and has walked among his soldiers, expecting them to be as dedicated to the noble ideals of patriotism and honor as he is. He is shocked when he finds out they are frightened and cynical, and in the process he learns something about the nature of royal privilege. It is fine for Henry the King to be concerned about honor and glory, but the common soldier knows he will share little of it, just as he knows his betters often go against their word for the sake of larger interests. Williams is fully aware that his own life is not as important as the King's, and he will not be deluded by rhetorical gestures or promises.

Ever the idealist, Henry becomes angry when Williams questions his integrity. He is stung by the frank brutal honesty he has just encountered partly because his own honesty has been scrutinized but more so because Henry does not like to think he has less than the total love and loyalty and trust of his followers. He is shocked to

realize, as Winny has pointed out, "that the common judgment sees him striking a noble posture only to impress his soldiers."⁵⁴ From the anonymity of his disguise Henry learns there are limits to what his royal position and his eloquence can command from his soldiers. He can expect deference and obedience because he is king; but he cannot prevent his soldiers from having their own thoughts about the war and about himself. And even though he becomes angry at Williams' blunt honesty, he knows he cannot hold him to account for speaking so to a king when he does not know it is a king. The elaborate game Henry later plays on Williams comes from a reassertion of his own good sense and good humor.

After the angry exchange of gages, however, and after Bates and Williams leave, Henry pauses to meditate on what he has just learned. His first reaction is to strike out at what he considers an unfair burden the populace has given him:

Upon the king! let us our lives, our souls,
Our debts, our careful wives,
Our children and our sins lay on the king!
(4. 1. 247-49)

Both Gurr and Hobday see this highly emotional reaction as

⁵⁴ The Player King, p. 193.

an "orgy of self-pity" which indicates Henry's fundamental insecurity.⁵⁵ Palmer argues that Bates and Williams have left Henry face to face with his own responsibility which he may try to evade through specious argument, but when he cannot escape the truth that speaks through these blunt, honest, and simple men, "he bemoans his fate in an excess of self-pity and of almost childish petulance against those who seek to lay so heavy a charge upon his conscience."⁵⁶ If this is indeed the mood behind Henry's initial reaction, it is certainly human and understandable. But it seems to me that in the course of his subsequent meditation on ceremony he manages to intellectualize his hurt and in the process to define more fully for himself the responsibilities of kingship and so his own identity.

A close examination of this, Henry's only soliloquy, reveals it to be typical of Henry's rhetorical cast of mind.⁵⁷ He is not speaking for public effect and

⁵⁵ Andrew Gurr, "Henry V and the Bees' Commonwealth," *Shakespeare Survey*, 30 (1977), 66; Hobday, "Imagery and Irony in Henry V," p. 111.

⁵⁶ *Political Characters of Shakespeare* (London: Macmillan & Company, 1945), p. 242.

⁵⁷ Norman Rabkin suggests this speech is as powerful in its thematic and rhetorical complexity as the St. Crispin's address. See "Rabbits, Ducks, and Henry V," p. 287.

consequently is not interested in using the highly emotional appeals of his formal orations. Rather, he is examining an intellectual question for his own interests and uses a highly complex web of images and other intellectual rhetorical devices as he wrestles with the rather abstruse question of the essence of kingship. The controlling two tropes in this speech are personification and metonymy of adjunct, woven together in such a way as to get at the heart of the problem. Starting in line 256, Henry questions what it is that separates ordinary men from kings and comes up with an adjunct to kingship that common opinion has made represent the essence: ceremony. Then in line 257, Henry personifies ceremony into an idol and begins to address it directly, aiming all his subsequent questioning to this false god:

What kind of god art thou, that suffer'st more
Of mortal griefs than do thy worshippers?
What are thy rents? what are thy comings in?
(4. 1. 258-60)

Ceremony is merely "place, degree, and form," performing no useful function but to create "awe and fear in other men" (ll. 263-64). The true nature of kingship, as Henry has just come to realize, is the essential isolation and the staggering responsibilities a man in power must bear. The only thing that makes such a burden in the least

desirable, the only plus to being a king, is the ego-feeding ceremony. But, as Henry well realizes, the great danger to a king is to mistake all the frivolous adjuncts of kingship--"the balm, the sceptre, the ball, / The sword, the mace, the crown imperial, / The intertissued robe of gold and pearl" (ll. 277-79)--for the essential nature of this most sacred of temporal roles.

Still feeling the burden of his title, and still nursing the idea that the fullness of it is not appreciated, Henry next develops an elaborate simile in which he compares himself to the peasant. The wretched slave fills his body with food, "helps Hyperion to his horse" in the morning, "sweats in the eye of Phoebus" during the day, and at night "sleeps in Elysium" (ll. 286-92). Such men, complains Henry, conduct their affairs from day to day, from year to year, under the watchful eye of the gods and little appreciate "what watch the king keeps to maintain the peace" (l. 300). Interrupted by Erpingham at this point, Henry breaks off his self-indulgent complaining and, when again left alone, accepts his burden and asks his God to help him bear it. He prays that his soldiers will steel their hearts and not be fearful and, in a most telling finale to this sequence, prays that God will not hold him to account in the coming battle for the

Lancastrian sin of deposition.⁵⁸

In this sequence, particularly in Henry's prayer, we have our only insight into the man behind the King. As Palmer puts it, "in this encounter Shakespeare pauses in his presentation of a hero and shows us the heart of a man."⁵⁹ Up until this point, Shakespeare's portrayal of Henry has been detached and static. We have seen him only in public, conscious of his role and acting accordingly. Such a treatment is in keeping with epic concerns, but this is a play, and if we are to identify at all with the protagonist, we must have some feeling for him as a man. If he indulges in sophistries, as Gurr has pointed out,⁶⁰ if he evades questions, and if he indulges in a moment of self-pity, it is not because Shakespeare is trying to anatomize a moral humbug or to show us the depths of self-deception to which a successful political leader may be driven.⁶¹ Rather, Shakespeare has given us an insight

⁵⁸ This prayer displays another quality of the Christianized Hercules which appears to be lurking behind Shakespeare's treatment of Henry--his piety.

⁵⁹ Political Characters of Shakespeare, p. 235.

⁶⁰ "Henry V and the Bees' Commonwealth," p. 65.

⁶¹ See Palmer, Political Characters of Shakespeare, p. 242.

into the moral struggles a political leader must undergo if he is to be a true Christian prince. At the beginning of this sequence, Henry, through his powers of argumentation, tried to evade some serious issues that Bates and Williams had thrown at him concerning this war. The two soldiers could not keep up with his skill in disputation, however, and retreated from the discussion. But left alone, Henry muses on the most important issue the soldiers have brought up--the awesome responsibility of a man in power. Like his prototype in the Herculean myth, Henry is an isolated hero, but, unlike the pagan demigod, Henry accepts the fact that power is not an end in itself, that it carries with it tremendous burdens and responsibilities which he must be prepared to accept.

Henry's Hamlet-like questioning in this scene shows him trying to come to terms with what it is to be a king. He can no longer pick up various masks, cloak his kingship, and be but a man as he could when he was Prince Hal. The kingship has added a new dimension to his identity, and he must accommodate it, whether he wants to or not. When we see him again, driving courage into his men in his mighty St. Crispin's speech, he is once more the king. This insight into Henry's vulnerability does not undercut the heroic stature that Shakespeare has so carefully

constructed for his hero in the course of the play but adds to it. His courage on the field of Agincourt has not been easily won. He has had to struggle for it, to subdue his private fears and apprehension and selfishness, and to put his trust ultimately in his God in order to attain the status of the new Christian hero. In other words, his great courage does not spring from a glib eloquence and is not stupidly arrogant as was Hotspur's but comes from a profound sense of human frailty, including his own.

iii.

Because of his leadership qualities, particularly his eloquence, Henry is able, like his pagan counterpart Hercules, to command a devotion and loyalty that almost amount to veneration. In the most magnificent of poetry the Chorus describes Henry as a warlike "Mars" (1 Chorus, 6), a "young Phoebus" (3 Chorus, 6), a "conqu'ring Caesar" (5 Chorus, 28), "the star of England" (Epilogue, 6), and in the most famous description of all, "the mirror of all Christian kings" (2 Chorus, 6). We have already seen that the Chorus has been depicted as a hero-worshipper, but the praise of Henry is not limited to this character. Exeter, in his role of messenger to the French in Act Two, also uses cosmic images to describe the impending wrath of his

lord. He tells the French king that unless France surrenders, Henry will come in a "fierce tempest . . . in thunder and in earthquake like a Jove" (2. 4. 99-100). And even the French themselves begrudgingly acknowledge Henry's greatness. In chiding the young Dauphin for his mistaken assessment of Henry, the Constable enumerates the virtues of the young English king:

You are too much mistaken in this king:
 Question your grace the late ambassadors,
 With what great state he heard their embassy,
 How well supplied with noble counsellors,
 How modest in execution, and withal
 How terrible in constant resolution,
 And you shall find his vanities forespent
 Were but the outside of the Roman Brutus,
 Covering discretion with a coat of folly;
 As gardeners do with ordure hide those roots
 That shall first spring and be most delicate.
 (2. 4. 31-40)

Further on in this same scene, the French King also acknowledges Henry's greatness by recalling his glorious ancestry--witness, he says, the French defeat at the hands of Edward III and his son the Black Prince. This linking of Henry to a mighty line of heroes (the rhetorical trope called anamnesis)⁶² has the effect of further building his heroic image. And the love and praise Henry inspires in his men is everywhere evident. For example, even the

⁶² Lanham, Handlist, p. 7.

gregarious Pistol inadvertently praises Henry to his face:

The king's a bawcock, and a heart of gold,
A lad of life, an imp of fame;
Of parents good, of fist most valiant:
I kiss his dirty shoe, and from heart-string
I love the lovely bully. (4. 1. 44-48)

The most sustained and eloquent praise of Henry, however, comes from the two bishops in Act One. In the midst of their political debate over the Church possessions issue, they pause for a moment and indulge in an expansive encomium of their monarch. Canterbury begins his praise with a reference to Henry's wayward youth and his sudden "conversion." He describes this change of heart in a run of metaphors and similes all suggesting a profound spiritual experience Henry must have undergone. So Henry's wildness was "mortified" and died, the "offending Adam" was "whipp'd" out of him, "leaving his body as a paradise" (1. 1. 26-30). Such language, as Prior points out, echoes St. Paul and the Book of Common Prayer and thereby associates Henry with the new ideal of heroic spirituality.⁶³ But the main quality Canterbury chooses to emphasize is Henry's new-found eloquence. He is most

⁶³ The Drama of Power, p. 322. See also Walter's "Introduction," pp. xvii-xxii, for a detailed analysis of this speech in the light of Pauline doctrine.

impressed with the young King's ability to "reason in divinity," to "debate of commonwealth affairs," "to discourse of war," and to discuss "any cause of policy" (l. l. 38-45). Indeed, continues Canterbury,

. . . when he speaks,
The air, a charter'd libertine, is still,
And the mute wonder lurketh in men's ears,
To steal his sweet and honey'd sentences.
(l. l. 47-50)

Nor is such a conversion out of line with the character of Henry that Shakespeare has carefully developed in 1 and 2 Henry IV. He points out to us, through Ely's metaphor of the strawberry growing beneath the nettle (l. l. 60-63), that Hal's greatness had always been there; Henry only needed, to continue the metaphor, the proper fertile ground--i.e. the kingship--to show his true kingliness.

Traversi calls this praise of Henry unreal, fraught with servility and a cloying persuasiveness, and Palmer agrees that the circumstances of political chicanery surrounding this outburst somewhat diminish its effectiveness.⁶⁴ If one accepts the negative reading of this play, then certainly irony can be associated with this speech. But the two Bishops have nothing to gain by

⁶⁴ Traversi, Richard II to Henry V, p. 167; Palmer, Political Characters of Shakespeare, p. 220.

praising Henry under these circumstances. There is no one else present to witness their admiration; consequently, it cannot be interpreted as obsequious fawning. Further, the speeches of Ely and Canterbury are set pieces of description marked by *energia*,⁶⁵ models for which can be found in any formulary, and are meant to be taken at face value as rhetorical exercises in characterization. It makes much more sense to read the praises of the two bishops as something of a digression, as an attempt by Shakespeare to reinforce for us Henry's grand heroic reputation, suggested by the opening Chorus, in this first scene of the play through characters who knew him and who were in a position to judge him objectively. Indeed, even the self-interested Bishops recognize this paragon and interrupt their Machiavellian planning to pay tribute to his greatness.

iv

A final display of Henry's superb rhetorical power shines in his courtship of Katharine in Act Five. Like so much else in this play, the scene has been praised and

⁶⁵ Vivid description, vigor of style. See Lanham, Handlist, p. 40.

severely criticized. Samuel Johnson, although generally favorable toward the play, dismissed the final act as totally unnecessary: "the truth is, that the poet's matter failed him in the fifth act, and he was glad to fill it up with whatever he could get the great defect of this play is the emptiness and narrowness of the last act, which a very little diligence might have easily avoided."⁶⁶ Schlegel also decried the inappropriateness of this last act: "a heroic drama turns out a comedy ending in a marriage of convenience."⁶⁷ Van Doren is much more critical. The figure of Henry, he says, "collapses here into a mere good fellow, a hearty undergraduate with enormous initials on his chest."⁶⁸ Tillyard is also embarrassed by this scene: "The coarseness of Henry's courtship of Katharine is curiously exaggerated; one can almost say hectic: as if Shakespeare took a perverse delight in writing up something he had begun to

⁶⁶ Samuel Johnson On Shakespeare, ed. W. K. Wimsatt, Jr. (New York: Hill and Wang, 1960), p. 26.

⁶⁷ Lectures on Dramatic Art and Literature, selections reprinted in Shakespeare: Henry V, Casebook Series, p. 36.

⁶⁸ Shakespeare (New York: Holt, 1939); selections reprinted in Shakespeare: Henry V, Casebook Series, p. 176.

hate."⁶⁹ Ornstein, on the whole, defends the scene but still finds Henry less attractive as a lover than as a soldier.⁷⁰ John Dover Wilson, however, praises Henry's overflowing spirits and frankness in the wooing scene, and Reese agrees that Henry comes across as the light-hearted gallant.⁷¹ Palmer finds that Henry here displays those characteristics which are most admired in the legendary Englishman--bluntness, good humor, courtesy, familiarity--and both Walter and Traversi defend this final scene as necessary to round out Henry's status as the ideal king.⁷²

In assessing the appropriateness of this scene we must remember that an important modification had come into the Renaissance epic tradition through the medieval romance. In his Iliad and Odyssey, Homer presented his

⁶⁹ Shakespeare's History Plays (London: Chatto & Windus, 1944; rpt. New York: Barnes and Noble, 1964), p. 313.

⁷⁰ A Kingdom for a Stage, p. 198.

⁷¹ John Dover Wilson, The Fortunes of Falstaff (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1944; rpt. Cambridge: Cambridge University Paperback, 1964); M. M. Reese, The Cease of Majesty: A Study of Shakespeare's History Plays (London: Arnold, 1961), p. 331.

⁷² Palmer, Political Characters of Shakespeare, p. 245; Walter, "Introduction," p. xxxi; Traversi, An Approach to Shakespeare, p. 72.

heroes involved with women, as did Vergil in his Aeneid. But in these classical epics women are portrayed as intellectually inferior to men, and they either give in to irrational emotions or become man's temptresses. The advent of the courtly love poetry in the Middle Ages, however, vastly changed attitudes toward women. Beginning as an object of impassioned adoration, the woman became the symbol of a high spiritual goal, and at times she was even associated with the Virgin Mary. Thus, suggest Kellogg and Steele, "the sensibilities of literate [medieval] Europe were centered upon the gracious lady as a symbol of the highest values of the age."⁷³

When the material of romance was introduced into the epic, not only was the theme of love given a much greater importance than it had in classical times, but it was also given symbolic treatment. Consequently, the Renaissance Herculean hero's love for a woman became, as Waith points out, "identified with his areté."⁷⁴ In other words, the totality of his grand claim to be the ideal Christian hero included romantic involvement.

⁷³ Robert Kellogg and Oliver Steele, "Introduction" to their edition of Books I and II of the Faerie Queene, The Mutability Cantos, and Selections from the Minor Poetry (New York: Odyssey, 1965), p. 5.

⁷⁴ Waith, The Herculean Hero, p. 54.

In the light of this tradition, then, the wooing of Katharine by Henry in this final scene is not superfluous; it is part of his heroic stature as Shakespeare develops it. And while their marriage is certainly of practical value in cementing the final peace treaty that temporarily brought an end to the hostilities between England and France, it also takes on symbolic value. During Henry's wooing of Katharine, he is aware that he is not just getting himself a wife; he is also proposing to his future Queen, who will add to his own heroic personality and who will serve as a symbol of all that is good and harmonious in the relationship between the two countries.

Thoroughly aware of the significance of his forthcoming marriage, then, Henry woos his bride-to-be with consummate skill. The situation, as he comes upon it, is entirely to his advantage. He has already demanded Katharine as part of a treaty with France in his initial overtures to the French before the wars ever started, and he makes it evident in the negotiations here "that she is our capital demand" (5. 2. 96). This scene, in other words, is not an intimate exchange between two people deeply in love but is a formalized ritual, the outcome of which is highly significant for the future of the two countries. Henry knows that his future marriage depends

on the results of the treaty negotiations going on in the next room, not on his ability to woo Katharine.

Consequently, his persuasive efforts are focused on charming his future bride and on allaying her fears about marrying an enemy of France.

The ethos Henry tries to project in order to accomplish his persuasive aims is that of the plain, humble, blunt soldier unaccustomed to the finer arts of wooing.⁷⁵ As he puts it, "if you would put me to verses or to dance for your sake, Kate, why you undid me: for the one, I have neither words nor measure, and for the other, I have no strength in measure" (5. 2. 136-40). One gets the feeling that Henry is protesting too much. Anyone capable of the heights of poetry he attained in some of his orations and in his one soliloquy surely is capable of the poetry of love. But Henry does not choose to play this role given his audience and the political nature of this situation. Rather, he assumes the facade of the rough and ready, lusty soldier-turned-lover who "cannot look greenly nor gasp out my eloquence" (5. 2. 147).

⁷⁵ Paul Jorgenson in his article, "The Courtship Scene in *Henry V*," *Modern Language Quarterly*, 11 (1950), 180-88, defends Henry's blunt approach here since it is in keeping with Elizabethan preconceptions about soldiers.

He recognizes that Katharine is one of the spoils of war whose affections at the moment are beyond his to command, so the rhetorical eloquence of love poetry would be somewhat hypocritical. He speaks in prose, in a jocular vein, simply to ease a difficult situation. In other words, the language of love is not really inappropriate for Henry but for the situation at hand, and he is master rhetorician enough to recognize that it is. His many verbal puns and fine turns of language show him capable of wooing in holiday terms had he the inclination, but lacking the appropriate audience, he wisely decides otherwise.

Besides, Katharine would not have understood him. Even as it is, he barely communicates with her and has to depend on Alice to interpret for him. His fine sense of the awkwardness of both their positions belies the rough and ready persona he seeks to project. To my mind, Babula completely misses the point when he says that we now see a Henry who has "rejected the deceptive arts of rhetoric," who insists on honesty of style, of covering nothing with art.⁷⁶ Henry is as much the rhetorician in this scene as

⁷⁶ "Whatever Happened to Prince Hal? An Essay on Henry V," Shakespeare Survey, 30 (1977), 58.

he ever was, adjusting himself in his dealings with others as the occasion demands. His sense of humor, his gentle mocking of their struggles to communicate, all point to his desire to make this scene as painless as possible because he knows, as La Guardia has indicated, that their wooing is as much a piece of imperial policy as the war itself.⁷⁷

On the immediate and practical level, then, Henry is sensitive to the various overtones in the scene. He has conquered Katharine's homeland, and he knows she is bound to be in awe of him. Further, Katharine knows, as does Henry, that she is little more than a political pawn in issues that are much larger than herself. Henry's deliberately assumed persona of the jocular, plain soldier who rejects the finer arts of wooing is, in part, an attempt to soften his awesome reputation and points to a significant deviation from his pagan Herculean ancestry. Henry is no longer the self-engrossed demigod; he is fully capable of sensing the awkwardness of another's situation and of doing everything in his power to put that

⁷⁷ Eric La Guardia, "Ceremony and History: The Problem of Symbol from Richard II to Henry V," Pacific Coast Studies in Shakespeare, ed. W. F. MacNeir and T. N. Greenfield (Oregon: University of Oregon Press, 1967), p. 84.

person at ease.⁷⁸ But more important, Henry is also trying to raise Katharine to new heights, to a level where she is worthy to be the partner of this great hero. He calls her "angel" (5. 2. 111), his "devin déesse" (1. 233), tells her England, Ireland, France, and Henry Plantagenet are hers, that she will be "queen of all" (1. 264), and that "when France is mine and I am yours, then yours is France and you are mine" (11. 184-85). Then, when she objects to him kissing her because it is not the custom in France for unwed maidens to kiss, Henry grandly sweeps aside this petty obstacle:

O Kate, nice customs curtsy to great kings.
 Dear Kate, you and I cannot be confined within
 the weak list of a country's fashion: we
 are the makers of manners, Kate. (11. 293-96)

Not only will they be the makers of custom instead of its followers; they will also "compound a boy, half French, half English, that shall go to Constantinople and take the Turk by the beard" (11. 221-23). In other words, they will together, as equals, produce a new generation of

⁷⁸ Marilyn Williamson argues that in this scene Henry is too self-engrossed to care whether the woman he is wooing can understand his long speeches. See "The Courtship of Katharine and the Second Tetralogy," Criticism, 17 (1975), 334. I would argue exactly the opposite, that Henry is totally aware of the feelings of his audience and tries as hard as he can to make her feel comfortable.

heroes.⁷⁹

Throughout this scene, Henry has used a number of rhetorical ploys to give Katharine a status befitting her new position. The major one is hyperbole, most evident in the passages above quoted where he promises her the world as his partner. Then, he uses the many figures of repetition to pledge his love and constancy. For example, he tells her three times he loves her and asks her five times to return his love and marry him.

In the course of his wooing of Katharine and in the subsequent interchange with Burgundy, Henry also indulges in extensive word-play and risqué banter.⁸⁰ This bawdy double talk has called into question the propriety of Henry's approach to wooing and the relevance of this Act to the play as a whole. The persona that Henry is trying to project in this sequence can best be explained in terms of New Comedy. The main theme of the Menandrine tradition concerns the successful efforts of a young man to outwit

⁷⁹ The Epilogue tells us that no hero results from this union and reminds the audience that Henry VI's great failure as a king "oft our stage has shown." This historical fact, however, does not nullify the grand effect of Henry's claim in the context of this final scene.

⁸⁰ The figures of asteismus, "facetious or mocking answer that plays on a word" and cacemphaton, or "double entendres." See Lanham, Handlist, pp. 18, 20.

an opponent and to possess the girl of his choice. The opponent is usually the father (senex), whose objections are overcome in the course of the play, and the young man's maneuverings are rewarded with marriage.⁸¹

The mistress Henry pursues in this play is France herself, and in possessing Katharine, Henry is symbolically possessing France. Consequently, the sexual innuendoes in Henry's banter with Burgundy and the French King at the end of the play apply both to Katharine and to the country he has conquered. As the French King says, the French cities have "turned into a maid; for they are all girdled with maiden walls that war hath never entered" (ll. 349-50). When the King then agrees to give his daughter in marriage, Henry responds, "I am content; so the maiden cities you talk of may wait on her: so the maid that stood in the way for my wish shall show me the way to my will" (ll. 353-55).

Further, as Frye has pointed out, "the action of New Comedy tends to become probable rather than fantastic, and it moves toward realism and away from myth and

⁸¹ Northrop Frye, "The Argument of Comedy," English Institute Essays 1948, ed. D. A. Robertson (New York: Columbia University Press, 1949), pp. 58-73; reprinted in Modern Shakespearean Criticism, ed. Alvin B. Kernan (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 1970), pp. 165-66.

romance."⁸² When Henry uses blunt language, when he protests he is a plain soldier who cannot play the role of the articulate courtly lover, he is not being arch, as Rabkin suggests,⁸³ but is being true to the realistic lover-hero of New Comedy.

When the French King and Queen return to the stage at the end of the wooing sequence, and once the final terms of the treaty have been agreed upon, the tone of the scene rises to one of celebration.⁸⁴ As the French King hands his daughter to Henry, he prays that the marriage will bring about peace and harmony between the two nations:

Take her, fair son, and from her blood raise up
Issue to me; that the contending kingdoms
Of France and England, whose very shores look pale
With envy of each other's happiness,
May cease their hatred, and this dear conjunction
Plant neighbourhood and Christian-like accord
In their sweet bosoms, that never war advance
His bleeding sword 'twixt England and fair France.
(11. 376-83)

Once again, this new harmony is in keeping with the social reconciliation Frye observes as part of the essential

⁸² Frye, p. 166.

⁸³ "Rabbits, Ducks, and Henry V," p. 292.

⁸⁴ The figures of paeanismus, an exclamation of joy and a victory hymn. See Lanham, Handlist, p. 70.

comic resolution of the Menandrine tradition.⁸⁵

That the play should end with the willing union of Katharine and Henry, then, is entirely in keeping with the victorious theme of this play, and their marriage represents not only the crown of Henry's great accomplishments, but is also a symbol of the new peace that is to be forged between the two nations. In other words, despite what Johnson and the others have said, this scene does make sense in the context of the play as a whole. The structure of the play has been a series of static grand scenes, each one revealing a particular side of Henry's heroic nature and each one calling on his powers of reasoning and on his ability to judge and move his audience. His courtship of Katharine is merely the final touch of Shakespeare in rounding out his conception of Henry, not as the old epic hero but as the new "mirror of all Christian kings."

v

In this play, then, Henry displays great affinity with the old Herculean tradition. He is capable of anger and violence, not only in words but also in action. His

⁸⁵ Frye, p. 167.

denunciation of the three conspirators is full of wrath, he initiates a war of aggression, and he orders the French prisoners to be killed. Further, in his claim to the French kingdom, Henry is giving vent to his drive for self-expansion, and in the course of the war he displays great valor.

But Henry, as Shakespeare presents him in this play, is much more than the self-obsessed Hercules of classical antiquity. His anger is always justified and moderated by reason. He displays the kingly virtues of prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance that the humanists insisted on as essential for the ideal magistrate, and in addition, he also possesses the values of piety, humility and magnificence, which are central to the new Christian prince. The great difference between Henry and the classical Hercules thus lies in the manner of his accomplishment. The old Hercules defined his greatness in terms of physical deeds; Henry's greatness springs from his power with language. The classical Hercules possessed a primitive strength which was never refined by civilized ideals; Henry is educated, refined, intelligent, sensitive, and rhetorically masterful. This last characteristic accounts for his true greatness as Shakespeare has presented him in this play.

CHAPTER V

OF CLOWNS AND KINGS: THE RHETORIC OF ANTI-HEROISM

The previous chapters of this dissertation have attempted to prove how Shakespeare used the arts of language to invest his play with epic dimensions. Any attempt at proving that Shakespeare was successful in creating an epic play, however, must take into account the many comic scenes that are scattered throughout Henry's story. Derek Traversi finds that the comic element in this play comes nowhere near equalling the exuberance of the two Henry IV plays and that there is about these scenes "a certain dessiccated flatness."¹ Both Tillyard and Van Doren claim that the lack of organic function in the comic scenes and their detachment from the serious action show signs of weak construction in a play intended as an English epic, and Sidney Lee agrees that "the comic scenes have no

¹ Derek Traversi, "Henry the Fifth," Scrutiny, 9 (1940), 370.

organic function with the central thread of the play."² Helen Schwartz, however, argues that these scenes do have "an integral and important function in the plotting of a national epic and a drama of an heroic king." The comic scenes, she insists, "give evidence both of Henry's ability as a monarch and of the potential of English subjects to achieve glory."³ Leonard Dean also points out that the comic patterns, tones, and purposes are "joined with other elements in the play to become a rich heroic composition."⁴ It is the contention of this chapter that the comic scenes in this play are completely organic to its heroic vision.

A purely epic play in which the values of heroism and military glory are offered as a total view of life is foreign to Shakespeare's complex and ambiguous vision. In

² E. M. W. Tillyard, Shakespeare's History Plays (London: Chatto and Windus, 1944; rpt. New York: Barnes and Noble, 1964), pp. 353-54. Mark Van Doren, Shakespeare (New York: Holt, 1939), selections reprinted in Shakespeare: Henry V, Casebook Series, ed. Michael Quinn (London: Macmillan and Co., 1969), pp. 150-52; Sidney Lee, ed., The Complete Works of Shakespeare (New York: Harper and Bros., 1900), p. xiii.

³ Helen J. Schwartz, "The Comic Scenes in Henry V," Hebrew University Studies in Literature, 4 (1976), 26.

⁴ Leonard F. Dean, "Richard II to Henry V: A Closer View," in Studies in Honor of De Witt T. Starnes, ed. Thomas P. Harrison et. al. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1968), p. 49.

the two parts of Henry IV, Falstaff provided the necessary ironic commentary on those who would take themselves too seriously. But Henry has rejected Falstaff and all he represents in keeping with his new role in life as the model Christian prince. Further, the epic scope and dignity of this play presupposes an ideal hero, not one still flawed by the vices of the flesh and of civil irresponsibility. Henry has left his youthful wildness to go on to greater things, and still to associate him with the vices Falstaff represents would be alien to the epic heroism of the play. As Harley Granville-Barker puts it, "had Falstaff gone to France, how could Henry's new dignity suffer the old ruffian's ironic comments on it?"⁵ But in writing Falstaff out of his play, Shakespeare sacrificed a great deal. Falstaff was immensely popular on the stage, and, further, his penetrating comic wit added much to the complexity and depth of the two plays in which he appears. In order to compensate for this loss of Falstaff's rhetorical wit, Shakespeare provides us with two main comic characters in this play, Ancient Pistol and the Welsh Captain Fluellen. These two characters give us

⁵ Harley Granville-Barker, "From Henry V to Hamlet," 1925, revised ed., 1933; selections reprinted in Shakespeare: Henry V, Casebook Series, p. 62.

the needed comic interest in a play that is in danger of taking itself too seriously, but, far more important, they set the grand heroism of Henry in comic relief and thereby act as comic reflectors.

Those critics who would uphold the purist epic view of Henry V are forced either to ignore the comic scenes entirely or to dismiss them as gratuitous and irrelevant to the central majesty of the play.⁶ The other group of critics who would read the play as a vicious satire on warmaking in general and Henry V in particular must read the comic sequences as ironic undercuttings.⁷ This chapter will attempt to prove that the comic scenes focusing on Pistol and Fluellen are neither gratuitous nor ironic; rather, they provide a clownage which intensifies the more serious concerns of the play, and, through the

⁶ Such is the case with John Dover Wilson, The Fortunes of Falstaff (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1944; rpt. Cambridge: Cambridge University paperback, 1964), J. H. Walter, "Introduction" to Henry V, Arden edition (London: Methuen and Co., 1954), and Geoffrey Bullough, "Introduction to Henry V," in Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare (New York: Columbia University Press, 1962).

⁷ See particularly Alan Gilbert's "Patriotism and Satire in Henry V," Studies in Shakespeare, ed. Arthur D. Matthews and Clark M. Emery (Florida: University of Miami Publications in English and American Literature, 1953), I.

language of anti-heroism, they set off the rhetorical eloquence of Henry.

i

Of the two characters who provide us with a comic reflection of Henry's heroism, Pistol is by far the more important and more interesting. Much of the early scholarly material on Pistol dismisses him as a purely conventional figure, a miles gloriosus, right out of Roman comedy.⁸ Samuel Johnson, however, suggests Pistol is the model of all the bullies that had yet appeared on the Elizabethan stage.⁹ Derek Traversi is as harsh on Pistol as he is on the play in general: "the chief quality of Pistol," he says, "is emptiness, a bombastic show that wordily covers vacancy." Pistol is empty of sense and of the comedy that goes with it; he is a mere camp follower and a scavenger of fortune.¹⁰

⁸ See E. E. Stoll, Shakespeare Studies (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1927), p. 429; Edward Dowden, Shakspeare: A Critical Study of His Mind and Art, 1875; selections reprinted in Shakespeare: Henry V, Casebook Series, p. 45.

⁹ Samuel Johnson on Shakespeare, ed. W. K. Wimsatt, Jr. (New York: Hill and Wang, 1960), p. 26.

¹⁰ From Richard II to Henry V (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1957), pp. 68-69.

The main critical problem with Pistol and the comic scenes in which he appears is to discern their dramatic function in a play that is so ostensibly epic. Pistol and his crew have no contact with Henry--except for Pistol's brief encounter on the eve of Agincourt with Henry in disguise--and they do nothing to further plot action. Both Goddard and Battenhouse, in keeping with their ironic reading of the play, argue that the antics of Pistol and his friends parody and undercut the main action, and Cook agrees that this line of action provides an ironic contrast with Henry and his behavior.¹¹ To view the comic element in this play as performing an ironic function seems justified if one studies the positioning of these comic sub-scenes. For example, the Chorus in his second prologue promises us scenes of English Mercuries preparing for war with great expectation, but then follows the squabble between the dimwitted Nym and the wily Pistol over Nell Quickly. Also, following Henry's just denunciation of

¹¹ Harold C. Goddard, The Meaning of Shakespeare (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951; rpt. Phoenix Books, 1960), I, 215-68; Roy W. Battenhouse, "Henry V as Heroic Comedy," in Essays in Honor of Hardin Craig, ed. Richard Hosley (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1962), pp. 176-80; Dorothy Cook, "Henry V: Maturing of Man and Majesty," Studies in the Literary Imagination, 5 (1972), 114.

Cambridge, Gray, and Scroop comes Quickly's famous report of the death of another friend Henry has rejected, Falstaff. And subsequent to Henry's ringing battle oration to his soldiers at Harfleur we have Bardolph, Nym, and Pistol being driven to the breach like reluctant dogs. It seems strange that the only actual battle scene we have on stage is Pistol's infamous capturing of a French soldier. Finally, between the fifth prologue and the treaty and wooing scenes, we have Pistol being soundly cudgelled by the angry Fluellen.

I suggest that the actions of Pistol and his Boar's Head friends do not undermine the heroic vision of the play but serve as a counterpoint. Pistol's boasting and high astounding terms offer an inversion of the epic language of the king and of the aristocratic bellicosity and sententiousness of both the English and French nobility. When he and Nym square off against each other over Mistress Quickly in Act Two, Pistol's braggadocio is marvelously displayed. To Nym's insult of "host," Pistol flings back the epithet "base tike" and follows up with "Iceland dog," and "prick-ear'd cur of Ireland" (2. 1. 30-35). Pistol rises to his true grandeur, however, when he responds to Nym's taunt that he will have him "solus":

"Solus," egregious dog? O viper vile!
The "solus" in thy most mervailous face!

The "solus" in thy teeth, and in thy throat,
 And in thy hateful lungs, yea, in thy maw, perdy!
 And, which is worse, within thy nasty mouth!
 I do retort the "solus" in thy bowels;
 For I can take, and Pistol's cock is up,
 And flashing fire will follow. (2. 1. 49-56)

As Hardin Craig has pointed out, the speech is a parody of the service of exorcism¹² and contains just about every language vice. The main one Pistol indulges in is bomphiologia¹³ evident in the pompous Latinate word "egregious" in line 49 and the extensive play on the actual Latin word "solus."¹⁴ Also, Pistol often deliberately transposes his word order for effect and indulges in highly affected and indiscriminate alliteration.¹⁵ So

¹² The Complete Works of Shakespeare (Glenview, Ill.: Scott, Foresman and Co., 1973), note 57, p. 744.

¹³ Booming, buzzing words; pompous, bombastic speech. See Richard Lanham, A Handlist of Rhetorical Terms (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969), p. 19.

¹⁴ Leslie Hotson suggests this word throws Pistol into a rage because it means "unmarried." See "Ancient Pistol," Yale Review, 38 (1948), 60. Also, the vice of soriasmus is operative here. Lanham defines it as a "mingling of languages ignorantly or affectedly." See Handlist, p. 93.

¹⁵ The vices of cacosyntheton and cacemphaton respectively. See Lanham, Handlist, p. 20. Cacemphaton is also used to describe a scurrilous jest or double entendre, evident in line 55 above. Hotson points out that Pistol's speech is, with a few exceptions, surprisingly clean. See "Ancient Pistol," p. 54.

he calls Nym a "viper vile," warns him that "flashing fire will follow" and, in his next speech, that "the grave doth gape, and doting death is near" (l. 64).

To reinforce his bombast, Pistol often uses extravagant epithets such as those noted above, misquoted tags from current plays, which must have made him immensely funny to the original audience, and scraps of foreign languages, often mispronounced for effect. So he draws on Nym with the sonorous challenge "couple a gorge" (l. 75) and flings out at him another thunderous epithet, "O hound of Crete" (l. 77). Then, when Nym demands the eight shillings he won at betting, Pistol pulls himself up to full height with the proverb, "base is the slave that pays" (l. 100). This penchant for proverbial bombast is even more evident in his parting advice to his wife two scenes later. "Let senses rule," he tells her, and continues:

. . . the word is "Pitch and Pay:"
Trust none;
For oaths are straws, men's faiths are wafer-cakes,
And hold-fast is the only dog, my duck:
Therefore, Caveto be thy counsellor. (2. 3. 51-55)

Pistol's bombastic speech patterns, his rant and fustian, his exaggerated mighty lines, and his mangling of languages are particularly evident during the battle at Agincourt. Having cornered a French soldier, Pistol

demands his name, to which the poor soldier calls on his God, "O Seigneur Dieu!" (4. 41. 6). "Signieur Dew should be a gentleman," retorts Pistol, who warns him he is about to die unless he gives "egregious ransom." The comic misunderstandings continue as the quaking soldier begs for mercy. Unlike Henry, who understands and does not take advantage of Katharine's French, Pistol constantly misinterprets here. Finding out that his prisoner's name is Monsieur Fer, Pistol thunders out, "I fer him, and firk him, and ferret him; discuss the same in French unto him" (4. 4. 32-33); but the poor boy is at a loss to translate Pistol's horrendous barbarisms: "I do not know the French for fer, and ferret, and firk," he answers.¹⁶ Pistol's language is indeed untranslatable, carrying its own booming resonance and high-sounding eloquence as he struts and threatens with grand rhetorical effect. Hotson calls his language a "verse-and-glory fixation" highly appropriate to the comedy of human folly, and believes that to dismiss Pistol's fustian with contempt is to miss its point. Pistol is a humor character, and his exaggerated melodramatic rant is a caricature of every

¹⁶ Barbarisms: unnatural word-coinage. See Lanham, Handlist, p. 19.

man's wish to sound well and appear bold and commanding.¹⁷

But more important, Pistol's rant is a comic inversion of Henry's eloquence. Heroic language, if used with propriety, reflects the heroic nature of the speaker. Heroic language uncontrolled disintegrates into bombast and exposes the emptiness of the speaker. In other words, Pistol is attempting to use language as a substitute for his essentially unheroic nature. Leslie Hotson beautifully sums up Pistol's character when he observes the following:

To his various acquaintance Pistol is nine times a rogue, and, into the bargain, a moldy rogue, and the foul-mouth'dst rogue in England. A rascal four-fold; and for good measure a swaggering rascal, a fustian rascal, a bottle-ale rascal, a cutpurse rascal, a cony-catching rascal, and an arrant counterfeit rascal. Further, he is twice a slave, a rascally slave, and a rascally, bragging slave. He is likewise a cheater, a tame cheater, an abominable damned cheater, and a poor, base, rascally cheating, lack-linen mate. To add to this, he is a scurvy, lousy knave twice over, thrice a scald knave; a counterfeit cowardly knave, a rascally, scald, beggarly, lousy, bragging knave; a cogging companion, a scurvy companion, and a fellow, look you now, of no merits. What is more, he is a bawd, a villain, a fool, and a gull; a basket-hilt stale juggler, a roaring devil (and coward), and a swasher. He is, finally, a cutpurse and

¹⁷ "Ancient Pistol," p. 65.

a filthy bung; and, in sum, an unconfinable baseness and a slander of the age.¹⁸

This passage particularly emphasizes the emptiness and falsity of the ethos Pistol is trying to project. As the Boy comments about Pistol at the siege of Harfleur, he "hath a killing tongue and a quiet sword" (3. 2. 35). Then after Agincourt, he sums up Pistol for us when he observes, "I did never know so full a voice issue from so empty a heart: but the saying is true, 'The empty vessel makes the greatest sound'" (4. 4. 71-73).

This incongruity between Pistol's language and his unheroic personality, then, accounts for his great comic appeal. But there are darker sides to Pistol's character which cannot be ignored. Unlike Falstaff, he does not possess a critical self-awareness, so his struttings and imperial posings render him ridiculous. Further, he is a coward. When it looks as if Nym is actually going to strike him and swears he will run him "up to the hilts, as I am a soldier," Pistol backs off with his characteristic bravado:

An oath of mickle might; and fury shall abate.
Give me thy fist, thy fore-foot to me give:
Thy spirits are most tall. (2. 1. 67-72)

¹⁸ "Ancient Pistol," pp. 53-54.

Then, when Bardolph has to intervene a few lines later at Nym's renewed oath that he will kill Pistol, the latter once again backs off and sheaths his sword with an equivocation Falstaff would have been proud of: "Sword is an oath, and oaths must have their course" (2. 1. 105). Unlike his model Henry, who always carries through on his oaths, Pistol sheaths his when challenged. At Harfleur Bardolph is temporarily inflamed by Henry's mighty battle oration, but Pistol is not. He dances around singing snips of old songs and is finally driven, squalling, into the breach with the flat side of Fluellen's sword. He is brave enough when he is sure no harm will come to him, however, and so delivers a nice insult to Fluellen in Act Five after Agincourt by bringing him salt and bread to eat with his leek. Fluellen bides his time and later gives Pistol a thorough trouncing as he forces him to eat a leek in retaliation. After Fluellen's exit, Pistol has his last line of defiance as he flings at the departing Captain: "All hell shall stir for this" (5. 1. 71). But we know Pistol's words are empty because he is, as Gower points out, "a counterfeit, cowardly knave" (5. 1. 72). Boughner nicely sums up Pistol's character when he observes that "Pistol's ups and downs form a slice-of-life picture of the roaring boy, who on his more respectable side is a

follower of the fashions and a pretender to gentlemanly attributes, but on his seamier side is the petty thief and haunter of the tavern and the brothel."¹⁹ In contrast to Henry, who is the true gentleman, Pistol is only a pretender, a fake.

If Pistol is such a thoroughgoing villain, wherein, one might ask, lies his great comic attraction? The answer lies in the simple fact that he is one of Shakespeare's finest comic conceptions. Actually, he is an anti-hero, providing us with an extreme and distorted mirror image of the heroic protagonist. He is a man who aspires to the heroic life but lacks the necessary aristocratic status, the greatness of soul, the command of language, and the balance and self-awareness necessary to assume such a demanding role. Unlike Henry, he has no sense of humor or sense of the ridiculous. Consequently, he is totally unaware of the outrageous ethos he projects. As Anne Barton points out, he lives in a wholly private world, a heightened and extravagant realm where everything

¹⁹ Daniel Boughner, "Pistol and the Roaring Boys," Shakespeare Association Bulletin, 11 (1936), 227.

appears twice life size.²⁰ He is, suggests Leslie Hotson, a player king, strutting around the stage constantly performing and fantasizing that he is essentially a Locrine, a Cambyses, a Tamberlaine.²¹ Acting the role of antic majesty, he always plays to the crowd, blustering and bellowing with excellent comic effect, every bit the "roaring devil i' the old play" (4. 4. 75).

Yet, in a sense, there is something pathetic about Pistol. Despite the pettiness and viciousness of his mercenary concerns, there is a touch of the desperate in his swaggering braggadocio. Henry is everything he is not, and the more he tries to become like Henry, particularly by imitating Henry's grand language, the more he renders himself ridiculous. In his one meeting with Henry, he expresses in his own inimitable style and language his admiration for his king, calling him a "bawcock, and a heart of gold / A lad of life, an imp of fame" (4. 1. 44-45). Striving to be what he considers great, Pistol succeeds only in becoming an inversion of

²⁰ Anne Barton, "The King Disguised: Shakespeare's Henry V and the Comical History," in The Triple Bond: Plays Mainly Shakespearean, in Performance, ed. Joseph G. Price (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1975), pp. 99-100.

²¹ "Ancient Pistol," pp. 54-55.

greatness and thereby provides us with a reverse image of the truly heroic in Henry.

Nowhere, however, do Pistol's language or behavior serve to call into question the integrity of the protagonist in the manner of other war plays such as Julius Caesar, Troilus and Cressida, and Antony and Cleopatra. Rather, Pistol and his friends represent figures of misrule in the world of this play. At first they are highly amusing and seemingly harmless, but as the play progresses, the cowardice of Pistol is exposed and then first Bardolph and later Nym are hanged for theft.²² There are people like Pistol, Bardolph, and Nym in the most dedicated of armies, and even though Hal has rejected their view of life as no longer viable for himself, he has to admit that such people exist. They are part of the infinite variety of the human comedy, and Shakespeare was far too realistic to present us with a play, even an idealized heroic play, without these touches of low-life self-interest. But when such characters step out of line and threaten the order of the heroic enterprise, Henry deals with them as swiftly as he deals with treason on a higher level in the actions

²² See Helen Schwartz, "The Comic Scenes in Henry V," p. 22.

of Scroop, Cambridge, and Gray. In keeping with the high morality of epic concerns, Henry has proven the truly magnanimous ruler, pardoning those who deserve it and dispensing justice where necessary. If Pistol has entertained us in the past with his anti-heroic actions and language, such behavior can no longer be tolerated when it is at odds with the national interest. Far from undermining and contaminating Henry's heroic dignity, Pistol's presence in this play serves to set off Henry's great abilities as a monarch, his just and wise handling of the unruly part of his commonwealth, and his tolerance and patience, indeed good humor, with those mortals lesser than himself.

ii

The other main comic character who sets off the high seriousness of Henry's magnificent oratory is the Welsh Captain Fluellen. Fluellen's chief function in this play is to provide us with another comic reflection of Henry's heroic ethos. Like Pistol, Fluellen is a humor character. He has a roaring temper when aroused, first directed at the unsuspecting Williams and finally at the justly deserving Pistol. His main humor, however, is his obsession with the proper way to conduct a war. When

Captain Macmorris, another minor humor character, comes onstage muttering about a temporary retreat during the siege at Harfleur, Fluellen takes the opportunity to discourse with him on the conduct of the Roman wars. Macmorris has no patience with Fluellen's pedantic windiness and cuts him off:

It is no time to discourse, so Chrish save me:
the day is hot, and the weather, and the wars, and
the king and the dukes: it is no time to discourse.
The town is beseeched, and the trumpet call us to
the breach, and we talk, and be Chrish do nothing.
(3. 2. 112-16)

On the eve of Agincourt, Fluellen is distressed at the behavior of some of the English soldiers who are, to his mind, being too loud. He silences Captain Gower by telling him, "if you would take the pains but to examine the wars of Pompey the Great, you shall find, I warrant you, that there is no tiddle taddle nor pibble pabble in Pompey's camp" (4. 1. 68-70). When Gower protests that the French are loud, Fluellen neatly puts him in his place with a nice piece of logic:

If the enemy is an ass and a fool and a prating
coxcomb, is it meet, think you, that we should
also, look you, be an ass and a fool and a prating
coxcomb? in your own conscience, now? (4. 1. 78-81)

And Fluellen is incensed at Agincourt when the French kill the baggage boys because "'tis expressly against the law of arms" (4. 7. 1-2). Lacking the heroic ethos that Henry

projects, Fluellen attempts to swell out his self-image by quoting the exploits of great Roman generals. While Pistol takes refuge in bombastic language to compensate for his inadequacies, Fluellen props himself up with pedantic book-learning.

This quaint pedantry also finds expression in Fluellen's penchant for drawing morals. When Pistol, in his own inimitable fashion, describes Bardolph as caught by "giddy Fortune's furious fickle wheel" (3. 6. 28), Fluellen cuts him off and attempts to be eloquent for some ten lines on the moral of Fortune's mutability:

By your patience, Aunchient Pistol. Fortune is painted blind, with a muffler afore her eyes, to signify to you that Fortune is blind; and she is painted also with a wheel, to signify to you, which is the moral of it, that she is turning, and inconstant, and mutability, and variation, and her foot, look you, is fixed upon a spherical stone, which rolls, and rolls, and rolls: in good truth, the poet makes a most excellent description of it: Fortune is an excellent moral. (3. 6. 31-40)

His most famous piece of attempted heroic moral-making, however, occurs in Act Four when he compares Henry to "Alexander the Pig," and concludes illogically that because both Monmouth and Macedon have rivers running through them, and salmon in these rivers, then Alexander and Henry have much in common. Further, they both cast aside friends, but whereas Alexander killed his friend

Cleitus "in his ales and his angers" (4. 7. 47-48), Henry cast aside Falstaff "being in his right wits and good judgments" (4. 7. 48-49). Fluellen turns this last piece of extreme figure hunting into a nice bit of praise for Henry.²³

Fluellen's most amusing humor, however, is his speech patterns. Because of his ethnic origins, he has trouble with his "p"s and "b"s, so we have words like "pridge," "prave passages," "porn," and the most humorous of all, "Alexander the Pig." Further, Fluellen often combines his Welsh lisp with pedantic malapropisms to give us words like "voutsafe" (3. 2. 101), "athversary" (3. 6. 98), and "prerogatifes" (4. 1. 67). And his language is fraught with horrendous solecisms. So, he comes up with such grammatical blunders as "th' athversary was have possession of the pridge; but he is enforced to retire" (3. 6. 98-99), "the situations, look you, is both alike" (4. 7. 26-27), "if your majesties is remembered of it" (4. 7. 101-02), "I hope your majesty is pear me testimony

²³ Fluellen's extreme and illogical comparisons led Richard Levin to call this type of excessive critical figure hunting "the Fluellenian Method." His castigation of such critical activity led to an exchange between himself and Paul N. Siegel. See "Figure Hunting," and "The Fluellenian Method," PMLA, 90 (1973), 117-20; 292-93.

and witness, and will avouchment" (4. 7. 37-38), and "your affections and your appetites and your disgestions doos not agree with it" (5. 1. 26-27). Further, in keeping with his strutting self-importance, Fluellen makes liberal use of word heaps and draws out anything he has to say into a long-winded speech.²⁴ For example, he says to Captain Macmorris:

Captain Macmorris, I beseech you now, will you voutsafe me, look you, a few disputations with you, as partly touching or concerning the disciplines of the war, the Roman wars, in the way of argument, look you, and friendly communication; partly to satisfy my opinion, and partly for the satisfaction, look you, of my mind, as touching the direction of the military discipline; that is the point.
(3. 2. 100-07)

This unnecessary repetition of the same idea in different words²⁵ is perhaps Fluellen's most recurrent habit of speech. He can never say anything once and be done with it. So he loves the Duke of Exeter "with my soul, and my heart, and my duty, and my life, and my living, and my uttermost power" (3. 6. 7-9) and orders Pistol to start eating the leek with "I peseech you heartily, scurvy, lousy knave, at my desires, and my requests, and my

²⁴ The schemes of congeries and macrologia respectively. See Lanham, Handlist, pp. 27, 64.

²⁵ The vice of tautology. See Lanham, Handlist, p. 98.

petitions, to eat, look you, this leek" (5. 1. 23-25). When Pistol protests, "must I bite?" Fluellen curtly responds, "yes, certainly, and out of doubt and out of question too, and ambiguities" (5. 1. 46-47). To further swell out his speech, Fluellen repeats stock phrases such as "look you now" interminably, and wanders all around a point, qualifying and repeating and circling in an ever-closer radius until he finally hits it.

As does Pistol, Fluellen loves an audience and will do all he can to hang on to their attention and to impress them with his verbal effusiveness. Also like Pistol, Fluellen is a character who aspires to the heroic but who always comes up short. He has made an extensive study of ancient warfare, trying to use a pedantic scholarship to compensate for his unheroic stature; but he succeeds only in boring his colleagues and in making himself appear ridiculous. Once again, Henry's superiority to such artificial attempts at greatness is obvious. But whereas Pistol's attempts to appear brave and commanding reveal a disturbing insecurity that eventually causes his moral disintegration, Fluellen's idiosyncrasies are entertaining and harmless. As Walter puts it, Fluellen's quaint pedantry and self-conscious dignity do not detract from his essential manliness and his love for Henry that shines

through his oddities.²⁶ And Reese agrees that honesty and loyalty are Fluellen's most significant virtues.²⁷ Even though he will never be a great hero, there is nothing petty about this Welsh captain. He is intensely loyal to his Welsh ancestry and to his king and is a good captain and a good man. As Henry so nicely puts it, "though it appear a little out of fashion, / There is much care and valor in this Welshman" (4. 1. 84-85).

iii

Because this play has committed itself from the beginning to an idealized and exalted approach to the reign of Henry V, it would be unfitting for the young king to associate directly with his one-time tavern buddies. The trick he plays on Williams and Fluellen where he, unknown to them, sets them against each other shows his essential good nature and good humor, a touch of the old mad-cap prince.²⁸ But this episode comes nowhere near

²⁶ J. H. Walter, "Introduction" to Henry V, Arden ed. (London: Methuen & Co., 1954), p. xxxiii.

²⁷ The Cease of Majesty: A Study of Shakespeare's History Plays (London: Arnold, 1961), p. 330.

²⁸ Craig does not agree. "We suggest," he says, "that Hal is 'using' people again, bolstering his public image as the King with the common touch, borrowing a little Welsh color for myth-making purposes." See The Complete Works, p. 738.

equalling the interplay of high spirits and wit we saw whenever Falstaff was on the stage. Shakespeare has attempted to compensate for the loss of Falstaff's penetrating comic vision in this play by splitting the focus of comic interest into two characters. The evil represented by the world of misrule and vice that Henry has left still exists in the character of Pistol and his tavern colleagues but at a fitting distance from Henry's person. There is much in Pistol and his friends Bardolph and Nym that is still highly amusing, but their thievery and bawdiness no longer are at one with the innocent tavern horseplay in 1 Henry IV. We can be amused at Pistol's bombast but are finally turned off when he plans to creep back to England to resume a life of sordid vice. The temptations of the world and the flesh have finally been put to rest for Henry. But to write the comic element out of Henry's life entirely is contrary to Shakespeare's view of the human condition. The fundamental human desire for foolery finds a healthier outlet than that offered by Pistol in the ethnic and idiosyncratic peculiarities of Fluellen and his fellow captains where we have our touch of comic realism allowed in the epic genre without the contaminating pettiness and moral decadence of the Boar's Head parasites. In a sense, both Pistol and

Fluellen offer us a comic inversion of Henry's rhetorical prowess, but whereas Pistol represents misrule and uses as his idiom a fundamental and a rhetorical bombast that is contrary to the nature of epic heroism, Fluellen represents the good-natured middle-class citizen who in his fumbling, bumbling way gives us an example of the devotion and loyalty a truly great king can inspire in his people. Finally, both Pistol and Fluellen are characters who aspire to be heroic but who are circumscribed by their own personalities and their language; and even though neither character lives up to his own image of himself, they both reinforce Henry's heroic position by underlining for us how much superior is Henry to the common run of men.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

From the foregoing study it is obvious that in composing Henry V, Shakespeare made a deliberate and a sustained effort to write an epic play. If we compare Tillyard's description of the English epic to this play, most of the qualities he considers essential to the Renaissance epic are here present.¹ For example, Henry is an idealized and isolated leader, grandly eloquent in his many public appearances and a model of justness and of courage to his people. Further, he is the ideal Christian leader, as evidenced by his piety and his distribution of mercy and forgiveness whenever possible. Also, in re-creating the story of Henry's glorious reign, Shakespeare is careful to include the necessary epic qualities of amplitude and inclusiveness in the events and characters he chose to portray. So the story covers all the significant events of Henry's reign found in Holinshed and includes a whole cast of characters all the way from

¹ The English Epic and Its Background (New York: Oxford Press, 1966), Chapter 1. See discussion on pp. 10-12 of this dissertation.

the historical nobles down to the unhistorical captains and even further down to the scoundrels from the Boar's Head. Finally, the story of Henry's campaign against the French is retold with all the high moral seriousness of the ancient epics as well as the moral demands of the Renaissance system of ethics. So Henry is the model of Renaissance magnificence, the aristocratic leader who justly condemns Cambridge, Scroop, and Gray for their treason, who agrees to the hanging of Bardolph and Nym for thievery, and who keeps the low-life, rascally Pistol at a fitting distance from his royal person. The play, in essence, is about kingship and about how a country prospers and is successful under a wise and decisive monarch. In other words, the successful reign of Henry V as Shakespeare presents it also fulfills the requirement that the epic poet speak to his own age about an issue of vital concern to it. In this case the play presents us with a definition of the model Christian prince. But far more important to our purposes, Henry V is most epic in its language. In writing this play, Shakespeare has mustered all the resources of the English language in order to build the heroic tone and atmosphere so essential to the epic.

From one point of view, then, Henry V is an epic play serving to glorify Henry V, England, and the English wars against the French which resulted in the stunning English victory at Agincourt. A good many critics have read the play exactly this way. Starting with Samuel Johnson and continuing into this century with such critics as John Dover Wilson and J. H. Walter, we have writers who admire the play's conception and accept its values.² For such critics, Olivier's romantic film version, which came out in 1944, was the apotheosis of Shakespeare's intentions for Henry V. Other voices, starting with Hazlitt and continuing on down through such writers as Mark Van Doren, H. C. Goddard, Roy W. Battenhouse, and H. M. Richmond, see the play in a less favorable light both in dramatic construction and in the view of life it offers.³

² Samuel Johnson on Shakespeare, ed. W. K. Wimsatt, Jr. (New York: Hill and Wang, 1960); John Dover Wilson, The Fortunes of Falstaff (New York: Macmillan Co., 1944; rpt. Cambridge: Cambridge University paperback, 1964); J. H. Walter, "Introduction" to Henry V, Arden ed. (London: Methuen & Co., 1954).

³ William Hazlitt, Characters of Shakespeare's Plays (London, 1890), selections reprinted in Shakespeare: Henry V, Casebook Series, ed. Michael Quinn (London: Macmillan & Co., 1969); Mark Van Doren, Shakespeare (New York: Holt, 1939), selections reprinted in Shakespeare: Henry V, Casebook Series; Harold C. Goddard, The Meaning of Shakespeare, vol. 1 (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1951; rpt. Phoenix Books, 1960); Roy W. Battenhouse, "Henry V as Heroic Comedy," in Essays in Honor of Hardin

Whether an audience views the play as an exercise in jingoism or patriotism depends, in the final analysis, on personal attitudes toward such issues as war and glory and political power. But no reader or viewer, whatever his political philosophy, can fail to appreciate Shakespeare's brilliant use of the arts of poetic and rhetoric in this play. It is indeed curious that one of the major criticisms leveled at the play has been its extensive use of rhetoric which supposedly has obscured the higher interests of dramatic poetry.⁴ If the use of rhetorical forms in a play stops the forward movement of events and draws attention to the language itself as mere oratorical display, then we do indeed have a violation of dramatic integrity.⁵ But such is not the case in Henry V.

Craig, pp. 163-82, ed. Richard Hosley (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1962); H. M. Richmond, Shakespeare's Political Plays (New York: Random House, 1967).

⁴ Mark Van Doren calls Henry's oratory "the golden throatings of a hollow god." See Shakespeare, p. 124.

⁵ Excessive speechifying and linguistic display are characteristic of early Elizabethan drama. Milton Kennedy points out that what makes early Elizabethan drama a tedious morass of reading today is the interminable speech-making through which one has to wade to get to the end. See The Oration in Shakespeare (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1942), p. 44.

All of the six formal orations grow out of the dramatic context, are fully in keeping with the personalities of the speakers, and are essential to plot progression. For example, Canterbury's oration in Act One is occasioned by a direct request from Henry to explain to him his claim to the French throne, and its devious logic is fully in keeping with Canterbury's devious mind and devious purposes. Further, the speech convinces Henry and leads to his decision to declare war. And each of Henry's long orations is similarly demanded by the circumstances and reflects its speaker's superb command over language as well as his ability to assess his audience and the situation at hand. The orations of the Chorus, while obviously not part of the plot structure, are intimately tied to the play by poetically setting the individual tone of each act and the epic tone of the play in general.

Further, the many schemes and tropes that Shakespeare has used in this play are not mere ornaments and surface display but are used throughout in an organic relationship with the epic subject matter. Brian Vickers has argued that Renaissance literary theory insisted on the functional, organic nature of rhetoric, particularly of the schemes and tropes. To them, the figures were not "husks" or "dry formulae" superimposed on normal speech

patterns to achieve a higher poetic style. Rather, they were the important manipulations of language that resulted in a more forceful expression of thought and feeling.⁶ Used properly, the figures of rhetoric, suggests Vickers, become "little reservoirs of energy, each having its own general scope, which is then given a particular form and pressure by its context in a literary work."⁷ Simply identifying and coming up with a statistical count of Shakespeare's use of figures in this play is only the first stage in a true rhetorical analysis. The challenge is to integrate the appreciation of stylistic detail into a response to the work as a whole. The foregoing study has attempted not only to isolate the many figures Shakespeare used throughout Henry V but has also attempted to describe their function both within their own particular contexts and in relation to the epic spirit of the play in general. For example, the figures of metonymy, synecdoche, metaphor, and the whole class of repetitive figures dominate Henry's speech patterns. This clustering of figures helps to exalt Henry's many public addresses into the grand eloquence of the high style, the idiom peculiar to epic

⁶ Classical Rhetoric in English Poetry (Macmillan and Co., 1970), pp. 92-121.

⁷ P. 122.

heroes. In contrast, the French lords display their triviality by using those figures such as asteismus, paronomasia, and antanaclassis which juggle and play on the meaning of words, and the Dauphin exhibits his inanity mainly through the trope of bomphiologia, the exaggerated inflation of both words and matter. Pistol, in keeping with his futile attempt to be a hero, uses the figures of exaggeration, particularly that of bombast, while Fluellen's anti-heroism emerges in his malapropisms, his dialectical lisp, and his horrendous solecisms.

It is true that in his early history plays Shakespeare was guilty of using the two hundred or so schemes and tropes, probably learned during the course of his education, merely to decorate and to dazzle. However, as his dramatic skills matured, he did not move away from rhetoric, suggests Vickers, but absorbed it "into the tissue of living dramatic speech until it re-created thought and feeling with a freshness which conceals art."⁸ The great achievement of Henry V is the brilliant way Shakespeare used the devices of rhetoric to reveal

⁸ "Shakespeare's Use of Rhetoric" in A New Companion to Shakespeare Studies, pp. 83-98, ed. K. Muir and S. Schoenbaum (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971), p. 91.

character and to build up the epic-heroic tone of his play. In perhaps no other play has Shakespeare so extensively used the entire body of rhetoric in such a way that nature swallows art. Far from being mere surface ornament, the many schemes and tropes in this play are essential for its epic significance.⁹

That there are problems with this play, in dramatic structure, in the portrayal of the epic hero, and in its attitude toward war, is undeniable. Indeed, Norman Rabkin would like to add this play to the growing list of so-called problem plays.¹⁰ There are many dark corners in the life of Henry V as Shakespeare presents it, and to ignore them is to ignore the nuances of the play. To read the play as nothing but a glorious paean to Henry of Monmouth and his war-making policies is as much a violation of the intent of the play as a whole as it is to see the play as a vicious and systematic exposure of hypocrisy and ruthlessness. The truth, as Rabkin so expertly points out, lies somewhere between. The conclusion to his article

⁹ It is interesting to speculate that one reason we no longer have epics could be that our composition theory no longer supports ornamented language.

¹⁰ "Rabbits, Ducks, and Henry V," Shakespeare Quarterly, 28 (1977), 279-96.

is perhaps the best judgment recent criticism has made on the ambiguity at the heart of this play:

The terrible fact about Henry V is that Shakespeare seems equally tempted by both its rival gestalts. . . . Henry V is most valuable for us not because it points to a crisis in Shakespeare's spiritual life, but because it shows us something about ourselves: the simultaneity of our deepest hopes and fears about the world of political action. In this play, Shakespeare reveals the conflicts between the private selves with which we are born and the public selves we must become, between our longing that authority figures can be like us and our suspicion that they must have traded away their inwardness for the sake of power. The play contrasts our hope that society can solve our problems with our knowledge that society has never done so. The inscrutability of Henry V is the inscrutability of history. And for a unique moment in Shakespeare's work ambiguity is the heart of the matter, the single most important fact we must confront in plucking out the mystery of the world we live in.¹¹

It is interesting to remember that this is the last history play Shakespeare wrote, that he leaves the somewhat idealized vision projected in this play to explore in his great tragedies the meaning of political action and heroism on a much more profound level. But we must be careful not to approach Henry V backwards, through the later tragedies where justice is far more complex and much more difficult to attain. Despite its murky shadows,

¹¹ Rabkin, p. 296.

Henry V is a play celebrating heroism, and even though Shakespeare is soon to abandon its rather idealistic vision of life in general and warfare in particular, we can still appreciate, indeed marvel at, his superb use of the arts of language in order to dramatize that vision.

Shakespeare's great accomplishment in this play is the skill with which he used the art of rhetoric to overcome the limitations of the dramatic form and thereby to produce an epic play. His contribution to the Renaissance dramatic tradition as a whole, however, lies in his new definition of the epic hero. No longer is the hero merely a doer; he is also a speaker, a man who accomplishes through his ability to move others to action through language, not the sword. As we move into Jacobean drama, this emphasis on language becomes more pronounced as mighty words substitute for mighty action. In Henry V, however, we have the perfect blend of language and action, a blend which accounts for the greatness of this play and also for its significance in the evolution of Renaissance drama as a whole.

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